

Tisha B'Av

 Temple
Beth El

By the Rivers of Babylon, Psalm 137:1

By the rivers of Babylon,
there we sat,
sat and wept,
as we thought of Zion.

עַל נְהָרוֹתַי בְּבַל שָׁם יָשַׁבְנוּ גַם-בְּכִינֵנוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת-צִיּוֹן:

Cause Us to Turn

In the midst of destruction, in the horror of devastation, we searched for God, but God was hidden. It seemed that *Adonai* our God, who had led us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, was deaf to our cries. It appeared that the Holy One, who had brought us to Mount Sinai to give us our sacred Torah, had forsaken the covenant.

Where were you, O God?

Where were you when they ravished women in Zion, when the blood of your people flowed through the hallowed streets of Jerusalem, when your holy Temple was engulfed in flame and laid desolate and bare?

Where were you when the Crusaders massacred our communities along the Rhine, pretending to pillage for the sake of your Holy name?

Where were you when the Inquisition forced us to choose between death and profaning your Holy name?

Where were you, O God? Where were you?

Behold, we find you.

We find you in the evolution of the synagogue and personal prayer, which has risen up in the face of destruction of your holy Temple.

We find you in the words of midrash and commentary, which have survived years of exile and devastation.

We find you in the growth of new modes of Jewish expression, which have been born in each new community and in every succeeding age.

We find you in the birth of the State of Israel, in rebuilding the glory of your ancient city, wherein the poetry of your sages, the commentary of your scholars, and the passion of your faithful find loud voice in the shadow of your holy mountain.

We find you in the spiritual journeys of our lives. We open ourselves to the dialogue with you that has sustained us through each and every trial, listening carefully to the voices of others, and adding to it the expression of our soul. As we are bound to each other, so are we bound to all who have come before. We are bound to those who have rejoiced, and those who have suffered, all of whose voices echo in the collective memory of Jewish tradition, ringing together in what we pray will someday be the harmonious chord of diverse, and yet unified Jewish voice.

Hashiveinu - Lamentations 5:21

Take us back, Adonai, to Yourself,
And let us come back;
Renew our days as of old!

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשְׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

Hashiveinnu Adonai eleicha v'nashuva chadesh yameinu k'kedem

Lamentations 1:1-2

אֵיכָה! יָשְׁבָה בְדוֹד הָעִיר רַבַּתִּי עַם הָיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה רַבַּתִּי בְּגוֹלִים שְׂרָתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת
הָיְתָה לְמָס: {ס}

Alas!
Lonely sits the city
Once great with people!
She that was great among nations
Has become like a widow;
The princess among states
Is become a thrall.

בְּכֹל תַּבְּכָהּ בַּלַּיְלָה וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לַחֲיָהּ אֵין לָהּ מְנַחֵם מִכָּל-אַהֲבָיָה כָּל-רֵעֵיהָ
בְּגָדוּ בָּהּ הָיוּ לָהּ לְאַיִבִים: {ס}

Bitterly she weeps in the night,
Her cheek wet with tears.
There is none to comfort her

Of all her friends.
All her allies have betrayed her;
They have become her foes.

O How She Sat Alone: A Lamentation

Nurit Hirschfeld-Skupinsky, survivor of the slaughter in Kibbutz Nahal Oz

O How She Sat Alone
Nir Oz, full of blood
Sderot, was like a widow
A city stunned, and who is faithful to her?

O How They Sat Alone
In the shelter room
One family, and another,
And another, and another one.

O How They Sat Alone
The many-eyed women at the observation posts
And there was no listening,
And deliverance – none.

O How They Sat Alone
Young women and young men
Hiding in pits and shrubs.
Their dancing halted,
And who will rescue them?

O How They Sat Alone
Captive women and captive men
And sitting there, still:
120 men, women, elders and children.
Crying, they are crying at night
Tears on their cheeks
And there is no one who comforts.

Psalm 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יִי רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר:
בְּנֵאֻת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל־מֵי מְנַחֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי:
נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְּלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶּךְ בְּגִיא צְלָמוֹת לֹא־אֵירָא רָע כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי שְׁבִטָּךְ וּמִשְׁעֲנִיתֶךָ הַמָּה יִנְחַמְנִי:
תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנָי שְׁלָחוֹ נֶגֶד צַרְרֵי דַשְׁנֵת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רִוְיָה:
אֵדָן טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבַיִת־ יִי לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:

Adonai, You are my Shepherd; I shall not want
God makes me lie down in green pastures,
Leads me beside the still waters, and restores my soul.
You lead me in right paths for the sake of Your name.
Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff- they comfort me.
You have set a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in God's house forever.

Destruction of the 1st and 2nd Temples in Jerusalem, 586 BCE and 70 CE, 9th of Av

In the heart of Jerusalem, under a sky filled with smoke and flame, I stood, paralyzed, as the sacred stones of our Temple crumbled. Before me, the holy Temple—the dwelling place of God—was engulfed in a fierce inferno. The golden Menorah, once a symbol of divine light, now twisted and melted. The sacred tapestries, the backdrop to our prayers and sacrifices, were consumed by voracious flames, their intricate patterns reduced to ash and memory. The Temple was not just a building; it was the heart of our connection to the Divine, the center of our spiritual universe. To see it burn was to watch a part of ourselves die. The sound of our lamentations rose to the heavens, a haunting melody of sorrow and despair. Around me, people fell to their knees, tearing their garments in mourning.

Lamentations 1:3-4

גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה מֵעֲנִי וּמֵרַב עֲבֹדָה הִיא יֹשְׁבָה בְּגוֹלִים לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ כָּל־רֹדְפֶיהָ
הַשִּׁיגוּהָ בֵּין הַמִּצָּרִים: {ס}

Judah has gone into exile

Because of misery and harsh oppression;
When she settled among the nations,
She found no rest;
All her pursuers overtook her
In the narrow places.

דַּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת מִבְּלִי בָּאֵי מוֹעֵד כָּל־שְׁעָרֶיהָ שׁוֹמְמִין כִּהְנִיחָה נְאֻנְחִים בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ
נוֹגְוֹת וְהִיא מֵרֶלֶה: {ס}

Zion's roads are in mourning,
Empty of festival pilgrims;
All her gates are deserted.
Her priests sigh,
Her maidens are unhappy—
She is utterly disconsolate!

Im Eshkachech - Psalm 137:5

If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to work. Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.

אִם אֶשְׁכַּחְךָ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי.
תִּדְבַק לְשׁוֹנֵי לְחֻכֵי אִם לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶכִי,
אִם לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ שִׁמְחָתִי

*Im eshcachech, Yerushalayim, tishkach yemini.
Tidbak lishoni, lichiki,
Im lo ezkerechi,
Im eshcachech, Yerushalayim, tishkach yemini.
Tidbak lishoni, lichiki,
Im lo ezkerechi,
im lo a'a'leh, et Yerushalayim al rosh simchati.
al rosh, al rosh simchati.*

Lamentations 1:5-6

הִיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ אֲיֻבֶיהָ שָׁלוֹן כִּי־ יִי הוֹגָה עַל רֵב־פְּשָׁעֶיהָ עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי
לִפְנֵי־צָרָה: {ס}

Her enemies are now the masters,

Her foes are at ease,
Because Adonai has afflicted her
For her many transgressions;
Her infants have gone into captivity
Before the enemy.

וַיֵּצֵא מִבֵּית צִיּוֹן כָּל־הַדָּרָה הָיוּ שָׂרֵיהָ כְּאֵילִים לֹא־מִצְאָו מִרְעָה וַיִּלְכּוּ בְלֹא־כֶחַ לִפְנֵי
רוֹדְף: {ס}

Gone from Fair Zion are all
That were her glory;
Her leaders were like stags
That found no pasture;
They could only walk feebly
Before the pursuer.

The Spanish Inquisition, July 31, 1492, 9th of Av

In a personal testimony, Rav Yitzchak Abarbanel, financier and adviser to the Spanish monarchy, who left the country with thousands of his fellow Jews, said:

When the King of Spain decreed the expulsion against all the Jews in his kingdom, the date of expulsion was set at the end of three months from the day when the decree was proclaimed. It turned out that the day set for the departure of the Jews from Spain was the ninth of Av. But the King did not know the character of the day when he issued his edict. It is a day of destruction and mourning for our people. Now it is a day that marks the expulsion from our home, our personal tragedy.

Lamentations 1:7-8

זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְמֵי עֲנִיָּהּ וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ כֹּל מַחֲמֵדֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיַּמֵּי קֹדֶם בְּנִפְלַע עֲמָה
בְּיַד־צָר וָאֵין עֹזָר לָהּ רְאוּהָ צָרִים שָׁחֲקוּ עַל מִשְׁבֶּתֶיהָ: {ס}

All the precious things she had
In the days of old
Jerusalem recalled
In her days of woe and sorrow,
When her people fell by enemy hands
With none to help her;
When enemies looked on and gloated
Over her downfall.

חָטָא חָטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עַל־כֵּן לְנִידָה הָיְתָה כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הַזֵּילוּהָ כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוֹתֶיהָ
גַּם־הִיא נֶאֱנָחָה וַתִּשָׁב אַחֲזֹר: {ס}

Jerusalem has greatly sinned,
Therefore she is become a mockery.
All who admired her despise her,
For they have seen her disgraced;
And she can only sigh
And shrink back.

Min Hametzar - Psalm 118: 5-6

From the narrow I called on God
God answered me and brought me relief
God is on my side, I have no fear
what can man do to me?

מִן־הַמִּצָּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה
עֲנֵנִי בַמְּרֻחָב יְהוָה
יִי לִי לֹא אֶירָא
מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לִי אָדָם

*Min hameitzar karati Yah
Anani bamerchav Yah
Adonai li, lo irah
Mah ya'aseh li adam*

The Deportation of the Warsaw Ghetto, July 22, 1942, 9th of Av

On July 22, 1942, the systematic deportation of the Warsaw ghetto begins. Thousands of men, women and children are rounded up daily and transported to a newly constructed concentration camp, Treblinka, in Poland. Within the first seven weeks of Himmler's order, more than 250,000 Jews were taken to Treblinka by rail and gassed to death, marking the largest single act of destruction of any population. Knowing that he was going to die, 19 year old Dawid Graber, wrote the following in a letter, found in the ghetto:

*What we were unable to cry and shriek out to the world we buried in the ground. . .
I would love to see the moment in which the great treasure will be dug up and
scream the truth at the world. So the world may know all. So the ones who did not*

live through it may be glad, and we may feel like veterans with medals on our chest. We would be the fathers, the teachers and educators of the future. . . But no, we shall certainly not live to see it, and therefore I write my last will. May the treasure fall into good hands, may it last into better times, may it alarm and alert the world to what happened . . . in the twentieth century. . . We may now die in peace. We fulfilled our mission. May history attest for us.

Acheinu - Machzor Vitry, 12th Century Prayerbook

As for our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who are given over to trouble or captivity, whether they abide on the sea or on the dry land: May the Holy One have mercy upon them, and bring them forth from trouble to enlargement from darkness to light, and from subjection to redemption, now speedily and at a near time.

אַחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַנְּתוּנִים בְּצָרָה וּבַשְּׂבִיָּה, הָעוֹמְדִים בֵּין בַּיִם וּבֵין בַּיַּבְשָׁה,
הַמְּקוּם יָרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם, וַיּוֹצִיאֵם מִצָּרָה לְרִוְחָה, וּמֵאֲפֵלָה לְאוֹרָה, וּמִשְׁעִבּוּד לְגִאּוּלָּה,
הַשְּׂתָא בְּעִגְלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב.

Acheinu kol beit yisrael,

han'tunim b'tzara uvashivyah, haomdim bein bayam uvein bayabasha. Hamakom y'racheim aleihem v'yotziem mitzara l'irvacha, umi'afaila l'orah umishibud lig'ulah, hashta ba'agala uvizman kariv.

The Bombing of the AMIA Jewish Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 18, 1994, 9th of Av

On July 18th 1994, a bomb exploded in Buenos Aires, Argentina, targeting the AMIA Jewish Center. Horacio Neuah was there by chance. He was driving in his car when suddenly everything went black. Thirty years later, this is what he remembers:

“I didn’t understand why my car was creaking so much and the windows were shattering. I soon realized that the car wasn’t moving along the ground: it was being propelled through the air.

It was like hell. An incredible blast. Everything went pitch-dark. In the near distance, the entire front of the building was gone and the street was covered in debris. It’s like it happened yesterday instead of the 30 years that have passed since we lost the lives of 85 people and experienced the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentine history. Thirty years later, my soul is empty. Having survived is a gift, but it didn’t come without consequences. It’s a burden that stays with me.”

Hashiveinu - Lamentations 5:21

Take us back, Adonai, to Yourself,
And let us come back;
Renew our days as of old!

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

Hashiveinnu Adonai eleicha v'nashuva chadesh yameinu k'kedem

12 Spies Return from the Promised Land with their Report, 9th of Av

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses sent twelve spies to scout the land and its inhabitants. They set out on a mission filled with hope and wonder. Forty days later, the spies returned. Joshua and Caleb exclaimed that it is a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey. But the other ten returned to the wilderness frightened. Seeing the inhabitants as giants, they felt like grasshoppers. It is believed that on Tisha B'Av, the spies reported back to the Israelites and that, as a people, we lost hope.

Despite our loss of hope, we continued our journey, moving forward, eventually reaching the Promised Land. As a people, we don't dwell in our lament. Together, we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We mourn and we grieve. Then, we persevere and move forward in hope.

Hatikvah

As long as within our hearts
The Jewish soul sings,
As long as forward to the East
To Zion, looks the eye –
Our hope is not yet lost,
It is two thousand years old,
To be a free people in our land
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבָּב פְּנִימָה
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמְיָה
וּלְפָאֲתֵי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה
עוֹד לֹא אֶבְדָּה תִקְוַתְנוּ
הַתִּקְוָה בַּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים
לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

*Kol od ba'le'vav p'nima, Nefesh yehudi ho'miyah.
U'lefa-atei mizrach kadimah,
Ayin le'Tziyyon tzofiyah.
Od lo avda tikva-teinu,
Ha'tikvah bat sh'not al-payim
Lih-yot am chofshi b'ar-tzeinu
Eretz Tziyyon v'Yerushalayim.*



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