

The Seeds of Destruction are Found in the Baseless Hatred of the Other

Tisha B'Av can be a challenging day for many Reform Jews to relate to and the draw to observe this traditional day of mourning has not been that strong for many in our community. Tisha B'Av, the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av, is a somber fast day commemorating the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 bce and 70 ce, respectively. What connection do we really have to those age-old places of sacrifice lost so long ago? Why mourn when we don't really want to see the cult of sacrifice reinstated, anyway? And can we still mourn the loss of Israel's autonomy when Israel, herself, is a modern, independent Jewish homeland today? And, yet, we have an opportunity, now, to take a second look at this ancient day that often gets overlooked in the latter days of summer. Indeed, there are deeper messages to be learned from this holy day that are incredibly relevant for our times.

The rabbis in the Talmud (Yoma 9b) wondered why the second Temple was destroyed. The answer, they teach, was that it was because of baseless hatred towards others, in Hebrew, *sinat chinam*, that the Temple was destroyed. How can hating someone for no reason actually cause such calamity? From this teaching, we can learn an important lesson about the destructive power that hatred perpetrated for no real reason can have on a society. Hatred can shake a nation to its core. Hatred can infect relationships and communal and religious institutions to the point that they start devouring each other. For the rabbis, this is, in fact, what led to the Temple's demise a long time ago.

But baseless hatred is not a relic of the past. It is alive and well in our own country. And we know, first hand, its power to destroy. We have seen despicable examples of this recently from the highest quarters of our land and certainly over the last few years where hateful things have been said about entire groups of people—immigrants, Mexicans, African Americans, Muslims, and Jews, too—that were completely baseless. And, yet, these words take on a life of their own and stir up feelings of animosity in people towards those who are different or have been portrayed as other. Soon, what started simply as feelings, slides easily into behaviors like bullying, discrimination and even, as we have seen very recently, the mass murder of innocent individuals by people who have been infected by this baseless hatred. Baseless hatred taken to the most violent, hateful extreme leads to actions that are so destructive that they tear at the very fabric of our society. When we start singling out groups and individuals and pick on them, there can be no question that this behavior will lead to cruelty, abuse and death.

That is why it is so important that we stand up and speak out, not only against manufactured hatred, but the behaviors that result from this hatred, as well. This is particularly true of the tragedy that is being perpetrated against immigrants and asylum seekers coming to our country! Why are we witnessing today the mass incarceration of immigrants and asylum seekers? The forced separation of families? The deportation of those who are simply seeking a better life? It all began with making these people appear as other, as different, as less than, and less deserving; hated and feared.

On this Tisha B'Av, let us learn to truly see the destructive nature of hate. We should learn to practice *ahavat chinam*, baseless love for our fellow human beings! Modern-day asylum seekers and immigrants deserve to be welcomed with open arms, not packed into detention camps. As Jews, we will not stand idly by. We are commanded to love the stranger.

Erev Tisha B'Av
August 10th, 2019
 Yuba County Jail
 215 5th St. Marysville, Ca
 7 - 9 pm

Join Jewish Action NorCal, Rabbi Wolfe of Congregation Bet Haverim, NorCal Resist, the National Council for Jewish Women, interfaith brothers and sisters, and many others, for a service and vigil in commemoration of Tisha B'Av, a dark day in Jewish history. The service will include a Havdalah Service, reading Megillat Eikhah, the Scroll of Lamentations, and talk by clergy, activists, and scholars about how Tisha B'Av connects to the suffering seen today at the hands of our government.

- We will meet on 5th St. between B and C Streets in Marysville, Ca.
- For More Information about the Event go to: <http://bit.ly/2Kmi18w>
- For Information About Sponsoring a verse of Eikhah, please go to: <http://bit.ly/2KqnM7v>
- To Learn More about Jewish Action NorCal, please go to: <http://bit.ly/2M5s9LM>
- For carpool needs, please contact the CBH Office.

Logos: T'ruah, BEND THE ARC, HIAS, J Street, NCJW 125, Torah Trumps Hate, "You shall love the immigrant."

Click to view larger image

Join us this Saturday night, August 10th, for an interfaith vigil and observance of Tisha B'Av organized by Jewish Action NorCal at the last ICE detention facility in Northern California at the Yuba County Jail in Marysville. We will gather for a program from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. of speakers and song, readings and ritual as one of 50 vigils nationwide co-sponsored by T'ruah, Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice, Torah Trumps Hate, J Street, HIAS, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Everyone, Jewish or not, is welcome. We will also commemorate Tisha B'Av by the traditional reading Megillat Eikhah, the Scroll of Lamentations, in English, Hebrew, and Spanish (and maybe other languages, too!) and hearing talks by clergy, activists, and scholars about lament, suffering, and justice in the Jewish tradition, and what it all means today. We invite [donations to "sponsor" a verse of Eikhah](#), which we will recite on the sponsor's behalf, whether or not they can attend.

Proceeds will go directly to bond funds for people inside like D., a father of four who has been living in the United States since age 5 and has not held his 6-week old baby because of a "paperwork error," and Miguel, a much loved Sacramento musician and teacher, also in the United States since childhood, imprisoned because of an old fine he was unable to pay.

We have partnered with NorCal Resist, who know the stories and needs of the people held in Yuba County Jail, so we can offer appropriate help where it is most needed. With each verse we recite, someone will be closer to being free. Everyone of us here is an immigrant and we cannot turn our backs on today's refugees arriving on our shores and our immigrant neighbors who are already here. Together let our tears of lament roll down like the waters of justice and let our voices ring throughout the land in a heavenly chorus demanding an end to this unfolding modern catastrophe.

Blessings,

Rabbi Greg

P.S. If you are able to drive others or would like to ride in a carpool, please contact the CBH Office, at office@bethaverim.org. Please put "9 b'Av carpool" in the subject line. It takes about an hour to get to Marysville. Carpools should plan to gather around 5:45 or 6:00 p.m.