

THE THREE WEEKS

Information:

The Three Weeks, otherwise known as “Bein Hametzarim”, is the name of this period, which falls during the summer months.

“The Three Weeks” start with the fast day “Shiva Asar B’Tamuz”, the seventeenth day of the month of Tamuz (July 20th), and end with the fast day of Tisha B’Av, the ninth of Av (August 10th).

The Seventeenth of Tamuz commemorates the day when the walls of Yerushalayim were broken through by the enemy, during the time of the First Beit Hamikdash, and the second Beit Hamikdash.

On both occasions, the victories of the enemies came after Yerushalayim had been besieged for many months and Bnei Yisrael suffered sickness and hunger. Even though there was no food and water and the people and soldiers were very weak, they carried on fighting very courageously.

Bnei Yisrael fought to keep their holiest place, the Beit Hamikdash.

Both times, the enemy was too strong and three weeks after entering Yerushalayim, the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed.

Tisha B’Av is the day that we remember both of these horrible occasions, and we daven and are sad and fast on that day.

On Tisha B’Av, we read from the book of Eicha (Lamentations), where it tells the story of how Yermiyahu who is upset at the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The book ends with the hope that Hashem will keep His promise and that He will never leave us.

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Laws and Customs:

Since the three weeks are a period of sadness, we do not celebrate weddings and happy occasions. We avoid entertainment and music. Many people have the custom not to eat meat from the first day of Av until noon of the tenth day of Av, except on Shabbat.

The day of Tisha B'Av is observed as a day of sadness. Adults do not eat from sunset on the eighth of Av – for twenty-five hours – until nightfall on the ninth of Av.

Also on Tisha B'Av, we do not wear leather shoes (leather is a sign of luxury); grownups do not eat, drink, or wash, and they sit on low chairs.

Activities for young children:

- Children can understand what it means to feel sad. Explain to them that sometimes sad things happen and that it is okay to remember them from time to time. Then explain that the Jewish people are sad because the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. We remember this on Tisha B'Av and we daven that Hashem will soon bring us together and build the Beit Hamikdash again.
- Talk about Yerushalayim and show the children pictures of the city and the Kotel. Explain that this is now the only wall left of the Beit Hamikdash and that it is a place of Kavod (honor), and that many Jews go there to daven as often as they can.
- Ani Maamin is a song that is appropriate for Tisha B'Av and talks about the coming of Mashiach.