

**Tisha B'Av: Causes of Destruction, Seeds of Hope**  
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**Sources and Questions**

1) **Zech 8:19**

זכריה ח, יט פה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת, צוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי וְצוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
 וְצוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵית יְהוּדָה לְשִׂשׁוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה, וּלְמַעֲדִים טוֹבִים.

'Thus said the LORD of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month (17 Tamuz), the fast of the fifth month (9 Av), the fast of the seventh month (3 Tishre [Gedaliah]), and the fast of the tenth month (10 Tevet), shall become occasions of joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Judah.'

Zechariah lived in the century following the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE). Which two fasts in the Jewish calendar does he not mentioned (see Lev. 16:29 and Esther 4:16)? Why not?

2) **Mishna Taanit 4:6**

חמשה דברים ארעו את אבותינו בשבעה עשר בתמוז וחמשה בתשעה באב...בתשעה באב נגזר על אבותינו שלא יכנסו לארץ, וחרב הבית בראשונה ובשניה, ונלכדה ביתר, ונחרשה העיר.  
 There were five events that happened to our ancestors on the seventeenth of Tammuz and five on the ninth of Av...On the ninth of Av i) It was decreed that our ancestors should not enter the land (see Numbers 14:28-35); ii) The Temple was destroyed the first time; iii) and the second time (70 CE); iv) Betar was captured; and v) the city was ploughed up (iv and v refer to the Bar Kochba revolt, around 135 CE).

How many of these events are from the Bible?

What were the Rabbis telling us by putting these events together on this date?

3) **Babylonian Talmud Yoma 9b**

<p>Why was the first Sanctuary destroyed?                  Because of three things which prevailed there: idolatry, incest/adultery, and bloodshed...                  But why was the second Sanctuary destroyed, seeing that in its time they occupied themselves with Torah, the [observance of] mitzvot, and the practice of lovingkindness?                  Because therein prevailed hatred without cause. That teaches you that groundless hatred is considered as grave as the three sins of idolatry, incest/adultery, and bloodshed together.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף ט עמוד ב</b></p> <p>מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב? מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו: עבודה זרה, וגלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים...</p> <p>אבל מקדש שני, שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם. ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות: עבודה זרה, גלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים.</p>
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Do you note anything special about the sins mentioned in First Temple times? See TB Sanhedrin 74a - Rabbi Yonatan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon son of Yehozadak what they discussed and voted on in Nitza's attic, in Lod: "For all the transgressions in the Torah, if a person is told "transgress or be killed", he should transgress and **not** be killed, with the exception of idolatry, incest/adultery and bloodshed. Why are these sins considered so serious?

How does the text compare Jewish society in the First and Second Temple periods?

Do you think the punishment fits the crime? Equally in both cases?

How do you think the Talmud is explaining the cause of the Second Temple's destruction?

#### 4) Babylonian Talmud Gittin 55b

The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamza and a Bar Kamza. A certain man had a friend Kamza and an enemy Bar Kamza. He once made a party and said to his servant, "Go and bring Kamza." The servant went and brought Bar Kamza.

When the man [the host] found him there he said, "See, you tell tales about me; what are you doing here? Get out." Said the other (Bar Kamza): "Since I am here, let me stay, and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink." He (the host) said No. "Then let me give you half the cost of the party." No, said the host. "Then let me pay for the whole party." He still said, No, and he took him by the hand and threw him out.

Said the other (Bar Kamza), "Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and inform against then, to the (Roman) Government."

**תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף נה עמוד ב**  
אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים, דההוא גברא דרחמיה קמצא ובעל דבביה בר קמצא, עבד סעודתא, אמר ליה לשמעיה: זיל אייתי לי קמצא, אזל אייתי ליה בר קמצא. אתא אשכחיה דהוה יתיב, אמר ליה: מכדי ההוא גברא בעל דבבא דההוא גברא הוא, מאי בעית הכא? קום פוק! אמר ליה: הואיל ואתאי שבקן, ויהיבנא לך דמי מה דאכילנא ושתינא, אמר ליה: לא. אמר ליה: יהיבנא לך דמי פלגא דסעודתיך! אמר ליה: לא. אמר ליה: יהיבנא לך דמי כולה סעודתיך! א"ל: לא. נקטיה בידיה ואוקמיה ואפקיה. אמר: הואיל והווי יתבי רבנן ולא מחו ביה, ש"מ קא ניחא להו, איזיל איכול בהו קורצא בי מלכא.

Read the story carefully.

Who are the parties who contributed to the result? What was the fault of each?

What was "the straw that broke the camel's back"?

Do the "behaviors" and social tensions in this story arise in modern contexts?

#### 5) Babylonian Talmud Metzia 30b

"That they shall do" - this means [acts] 'beyond the requirements of the law.' For R. Johanan said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they gave judgments therein in accordance with the law of the Torah.

Were they to have judged in accordance with untrained arbitrators? But say thus: because they based their judgments upon the law of the Torah, and did not go beyond the requirements of the law.

#### **תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף ל עמוד ב**

אשר יעשון - זו לפני משורת הדין. דאמר רבי יוחנן: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא על שדנו בה דין תורה. אלא דיני דמגזיתא לדיינו? אלא אימא: שהעמידו דיניהם על דין תורה, ולא עבדו לפני משורת הדין.

What do you think it means "not to go beyond the strict requirements of the law"?

What is problematic about basing judgments strictly on the letter of the law?

Is this an attribute that can be applied to people as well as courts?

What are the positive and negative contributions of such people to the society (or family or organization)?

### 6) Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 119b

<p>Abaye said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they [its inhabitants] desecrated the Sabbath there</p> <p>R. Abbahu said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they stopped the reading of the <i>shema</i> morning and evening</p> <p>R. Hamnuna said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they neglected [the education of] school children;</p> <p>'Ulla said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they had no shame (of sin) one before the other</p> <p>R. Isaac said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because the small and the great were made equal</p> <p>R. Amram son of R. Simeon b. Abba said in R. Simeon b. Abba's name in R. Hanina's name: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they did not rebuke each other</p> <p>Rab Judah said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they held scholars in contempt there</p> <p>Raba said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because people of integrity there ceased...</p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קיט עמוד ב</b> אמר אביי: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שחללו בה את השבת, ...</p> <p>אמר רבי אבהו: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שביטלו קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית... אמר רב המנונא: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שביטלו בה תינוקות של בית רבן, ... אמר עולא: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא מפני שלא היה להם בושת פנים זה מזה, ... אמר רבי יצחק: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שהושוו קטן וגדול... אמר רב עמרם בריה דרבי שמעון בר אבא אמר רבי שמעון בר אבא אמר רבי חנינא: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שלא הוכיחו זה את זה... אמר רבי יהודה: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שביזו בה תלמידי חכמים... ואמר רבא: לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שפסקו ממנה אנשי אמנה...</p>
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What do you think about this list? Do you think the rabbis intended this literally?

What do you think Raba means, in the last explanation?

To what period of time were they directing their words?

7) Would you say that your community/Jewish society today has sins/faults which threaten its existence?

If so, what are they?

8) The Midrash in Jerusalem Talmud Brachot 2:4 tells a strange story of an Arab who explains to a Jew that the shrieking of the Jew's ox was a sign that the Temple was destroyed and that its second shrieking is a sign that the Messiah, named Menachem,

was born, in the area of Bethlehem. The Jew sold the ox and bought cloths to sell as diapers, in an attempt to find the mother and child. He went from town to town selling his wares till he encountered a mother who would not buy for her baby because "he was born on day the Temple was destroyed," which she takes as a curse. The seller convinces her to buy, even though she has no money, saying that "on the date it was destroyed the Temple will be rebuilt." He offers to come by to collect at a later date. When he returns and asks about the child, she says that the day they spoke previously a "stormy wind" occurred and swept the baby away and she has not seen him since. The Midrash continues, with a Rabbi Bon rejecting that story as proof, "when we have explicit verses," and quotes two adjacent phrases from Isaiah: "and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one" (10:34, referring to the Temple) and "And a shoot shall come forth from the stock of Jesse" (11:1, referring to the Messiah).

How do you like/explain each of the ways the idea is presented that the birth of the Messiah is tied to the *Churban*?

The sequence of events is the same in each case. What comes first? When does the second event happen in each - past or future? Is it significant?