

## Summer 2017 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

According to Jewish tradition, in addition to having been the living embodiment of wisdom itself, King Solomon was also a master builder. Chief among his construction achievements was the Great Temple in Jerusalem. Built in the year 957 BCE, the Temple functioned as our focal point for holy sacrifice for almost four centuries, notwithstanding a number of significant military challenges along the way. Eventually, in 586 BCE, the Great Temple succumbed to final destruction at the hands of the Babylonian Empire, which resulted in our first national exile from the Land of Israel.

Forty-seven years later, in 539 BCE, when the Babylonian Empire fell to Cyrus the Great of Persia, we were finally permitted to return to the Land and, in 538 BCE, commence construction of our Second Temple. Though, like its predecessor, the Second Temple did find itself having to stave off various attacks over the years, this Temple managed to remain functioning not for four centuries, but for closer to six, until it was captured and destroyed by Roman forces in the year 70 C.E.

According to tradition, one of the many things the First and Second Temples have in common is that they were both destroyed on the same day of the year, on the ninth day of the month of Av, which in Hebrew is *Tisha b'Av*, a day of national mourning and fasting for Jews around the world. As I write this message to you today, it is now the tenth day of Av. In keeping with Jewish tradition, I have spent the last 25 hours deep in thought, pondering the question of "why?". Why did our two ancient Temples fall? What led to their destruction?

Countless academicians over the years have invested untold hours seeking to explain the geo-political factors that resulted in the two destructions. As a proponent of the scientific study of history myself, I find great importance in trying to understand the precipitating factors that led to the destruction. In the end, however, I believe the far more meaningful lesson comes not from objective, dispassionate, detached historical inquiry, but rather from our theologically charged and spiritually challenging Rabbinic tradition.

The Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 9b) asks (and explains):

Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because of three [evil] things which prevailed there: idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed . . . And why was the Second Temple destroyed, seeing that in its time they were occupying themselves with Torah, [observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity? Because therein prevailed *Sinat Chinam*, Hebrew for "*hatred without cause*". That teaches you that **groundless hatred is considered to be of even gravity with the three sins of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed combined** (my emphasis).

Friends, I am concerned that too many of us have fallen into a state of surrender, a state in which not only do we accept *Sinat Chinam* as our basic national reality, but a state in which we all too often find even our own selves to be active participants. Rather than behaving as a nation in which we attempt to convince those with whom we disagree that our political perspectives are best for a prosperous future, we have become a people for whom it is so much easier and more natural simply to hate those with whom we disagree. Our Rabbis of blessed memory saw the danger in such an approach. It is up to us to listen. Until we attack and reverse the current threat of *Sinat Chinam*, of “*hatred without cause*,” we too, like our Holy Temples in Jerusalem, are will remain headed towards destruction.

So, with the commemoration of *Tisha b'Av* behind us, my challenge to each and every one of us is to seek out someone with whom we have deep political disagreement and engage in discussion. It can be done in person, by text, over e-mail, through Facebook, or in any way that works for you. But it is important. So important, Jewish tradition might say, that our very existence depends on it.

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Dubin

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