

**Congregation Beit Mashiach**  
**Pastor Andrew Ketel**  
**Shabbat Message**  
**July 29, 2017**

**Title:** Lament or Repent.

**Text:** Jeremiah 9:11-14

This past Monday, on the day of the New Moon, Rosh Chodesh, began the nine days of morning of Av which comes to its climax this coming Tuesday on the ninth of Av, what is referred to as Tisha B'Av. It is upon this day that the destruction of both Jerusalem Temples is mourned and lamented by the people of Israel. This is the most solemn day on the Jewish calendar besides Yom Kippur. It is an official day of fasting which begins at sunrise until sunset, separating oneself from anything that would bring pleasure.

I can clearly remember this Shabbat twenty-four years ago when I formerly stepped into my calling as the leader of Congregation Beit Mashiach. On that Shabbat, I was to deliver my first sermon to both Beit Mashiach and Beth Shechinah and an inner struggle ensued related to the fast of Tisha B'Av. In many ways, this struggle has not diminished over the years that deep questioning of our observance of this fast. It has always been my practise to seek grounding in the Scriptures for any practise or observance. Much to my surprise what I thought was a 'manmade' observance I discovered it mentioned in the Scriptures and not as a mistranslation as Easter is in the King James. But in Zechariah 7:3 it asks the question whether Judah should observe this fast now that the second Temple is about half built. What took me back was that Zechariah never questions the practice of observance, but states in Zechariah 8:19 that this fast will be transformed into a day of feasting within the Millennium Kingdom. So, this raise the question what would transform a day of fasting into a day of feasting, could it merely be that change in whose upon the throne?

The irony of this observance is that its solution sits obviously before us so why do we need to continue to lament. To understand what is implied in this statement we must allow Scripture to reveal why these disastrous events as the destruction of the both Temples would occur upon that particular day. The prophet Jeremiah makes the point in our passage that this event did not happen randomly or unexpectedly. He makes it very clear that this disaster came about, "*because they had forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it. (Jer. 9:13)*" The key thought in this passage is the **forsaking of the Torah**; in other words, an apostasy from the directives and commandments given at Mount Sinai. Yes! This is referring to the written Torah which sat before the Ark of the Covenant and was to be read to the community on a regular basis. The error of the people was to take the Torah lightly and diminish its authority and create a lifestyle that was shaped and formed by their own insight and wisdom. In verse fourteen it implies that this self styling was not an occurrence that was limited to this generation which Jeremiah was addressing, but had been taught to them by their fathers who went before them. What Jeremiah is saying that this disregard of Torah was something that generations within the community of Judah

have practised. Verse thirteen goes on to say that, they ***have not obeyed My voice***. When I read this statement, I was wondering if this could imply the voice of Adonai at Mount Sinai or that small inner voice which many of us can relate to. But this **'voice'** is that of His prophets when they came to Adonai's people with the warning that judgement would be pending if they did not repent from their sinful ways. The call of all the true prophets was to return to the ways prescribed by the Torah. The prophetic books record Israel's and Judah's resistance to the ministry of the prophets. Their everyday walk or ***Halachah*** bore this truth out that their feet did not follow the ancient paths (Jer. 6:16, 17) as prescribed by Adonai.

The story at the heart of Scripture is interwoven with the story of mankind's exile from Adonai's presence because of disobedience. Consider for a moment several major events recorded in the Scriptures: **i)** The exile from the Garden, **ii)** Cain's exile from society, **iii)** The scattering of the world population from Babel, **iv)** The Northern ten tribes' captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C.E., **v)** The Southern tribes' captivity by Babylon in 586 B.C.E., **vi)** The scattering of the Jewish people in 70 C.E. by the Romans, **vii)** the exile of the Jewish people after the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 135 C.E. Everyone if these **'events'** was not the result of Adonai abandoning them, but of their abandoning Adonai through their complete disregard for their covenant obligations. In every situation, there was a choice made to turn their back on Adonai's path and chart a path of their own. The solution is simple and straight forward and that is repentance, a return to the ways of Adonai. Today as we consider Tisha B'Av, should not repentance be at the very heart of this day's observance?

We have the honour and privilege to live in North America which up to recent history has been a peaceful and prosperous place. For many Canada and USA are seen as the Promised Land, the land of endless opportunity. But since 9/11 this ideal is questioned and we as a community have realized that we have lost that sense of absolute safety and peacefulness. In recent years, we have come to realize that most likely that our children will not be able to improve upon what we have achieved and will be challenged just to maintain the present level of wealth and prosperity. We have become a community that lives in the shadow of fear and every time we travel we must pass through the senseless array of security. And we ask why? I believe what we as a community are experiencing is the direct result of a spiritual change that is taking place in our land. The change that has been witnessed over the past few decades is a total disregard for the directives of Scripture; Torah is being set aside, ignored as irrelevant. We are being told to be multicultural, tolerant of other cultures and languages and all the time as we are being taught this new message, paganism and the worship of the gods of other nations are finding a place in our land. Even the Christian community does not honour the Torah centered practises which it did so faithfully in its past. What we have forgotten, is that it was because of this land's faithful observance of the Scriptures that we were blessed and rested in Adonai's presence. Exile is our destiny if we do not return to the ways of Adonai.

As we observe the Fast of Tisha B'Av may we begin this observance by evaluating the prominence of Torah within our own households and our own daily walk. It would be meaningless to ***'fast' and 'lament'*** if we do not address the heart cause of these disasters. Tisha B'Av should be a day of ***repentance*** or intercession that the ***'spirit' of repentance*** will touch our community and country. There will be no need for the third

Temple until the ***ancient paths*** have been restored within the community of Adonai. Such simple observance as honouring the Shabbat could affect the very fabric of our society. We will never again experience the innocence of a peaceful and prosperous society until justice of the Torah is restored. The only just society that ever existed is one upon which its very foundations were established upon the commandments of the Torah. Tisha B'Av is a call to return to those ancient paths which invoke the presence of Adonai.