



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"Grieving the Wrong Ruins: Tish B'Av"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts: Ezekiel 8:1-6; 11:13-20; Jeremiah 24:1-10; Jer. 29:10-14. Ps 50; Is. 1

Tisha B'Av, the 9th of Av, is a somber day in Jewish history—a day when our people reflect on generations of devastation, from the destruction of both Temples to massacres, expulsions, and forced exiles. But as followers of Messiah Yeshua, we're called to go deeper. The real tragedy isn't the rubble of stones—it's the ruin of relationship. We've often grieved over visible losses while ignoring the invisible decay of our hearts. The true exile began not in Babylon or Rome, but in Eden—when humanity was first cast out of God's presence.

This mourning season challenges us to discern between what looks tragic and what actually is. Do we grieve the broken buildings, or do we mourn the loss of intimacy with God? Tisha B'Av is not merely about history; it's about spiritual reality. Our hearts break not only for past events but for present exile—the fact that many of our people still live apart from the Messiah who was sent to restore them.

1. WHILE THE EXILES WEPT, GOD WAS ALREADY AT WORK

When the first waves of Jewish exiles were taken to Babylon, it looked like God had abandoned them. Teenagers like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were ripped from their homes, renamed, and placed in a pagan culture. Yet even in that painful place, God was already moving. Daniel was promoted to a position of influence. Ezekiel, a priest, received visions from God and was appointed as a prophet. The Lord had not forgotten His people—He was preparing the soil of exile for a greater work of restoration.

This truth challenges us: even when everything feels like it's falling apart, God is quietly and powerfully at work behind the scenes. Babylon wasn't just a punishment—it was a preservation. The faithful remnant was God's "safety deposit box," set aside for future use. In our own seasons of suffering or displacement, we can trust that God sees, prepares, and preserves us for purposes we can't yet comprehend.

2. WHEN THE PRESENCE DEPARTS, STONES DON'T MATTER

The destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE was horrifying, but the true loss occurred earlier—when the glory of God departed (Ezekiel 10:18). What Israel grieved in stone had already been lost in spirit. The Temple had become a shell, a religious artifact devoid of the Presence it was built to house. The people trusted in rituals, in sacred architecture, and in the illusion of righteousness, even as they rejected God's voice and ignored His prophets.

This point strikes to the heart of our spiritual condition today. We often grieve the loss of things—ministries, traditions, buildings—without realizing the Presence left long ago. But God doesn't dwell in relics or routines. He dwells in people surrendered to Him. If our worship is hollow, if our lives resist His Spirit, then even the grandest sanctuary becomes rubble in His eyes.

3. WHEN THE FUTURE LOOKS LOST, GOD IS PLANTING AGAIN

To the exiles in Babylon, it seemed like all was lost. But through Jeremiah, God gave a surprising word: the exiles were the good figs, the firstfruits of a future harvest (Jeremiah 24:5-7). While Jerusalem still stood, God had already begun replanting His people. The exile wasn't the end—it was the field for His next season of growth. In the foreign soil of Babylon, God was forming a people who would return with whole hearts and new spirits.

Even in desolation, God sees potential. What feels like devastation to us is often preparation to Him. He isn't just preserving you—He's planting you. His promise remains: "I know the plans that I have in mind for you... plans for shalom and not calamity" (Jeremiah 29:11, TLV). In exile, the people finally saw that their hope was in God alone. And from that place of humility, repentance, and hunger, restoration was born.

CONCLUSION

Tisha B'Av invites us to mourn—but not as those without hope. Yes, we remember the tragic losses of our people. But as followers of Yeshua, we also grieve over spiritual exile—especially the continued rejection of the Messiah by most of our Jewish brothers and sisters. We don't just mourn the past—we long for the future when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). And until that day, we are called to be vessels of restoration.

This day is a call to action. To intercede. To proclaim. To love. To live with holy urgency. The true temple today is not made of stone—it is made of people. And we are the living stones, built together as a dwelling for the Spirit of God. Let us not grieve over what is broken without committing ourselves to build what God is restoring.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways have you grieved over "stones" rather than the loss of God's presence?
2. What can you learn from Daniel and Ezekiel about faithfulness in exile?
3. How can you discern when God is planting something new in your life, even when it feels like loss?
4. Why do you think God considered the exiles "good figs" and the ones who remained in Jerusalem "bad"?
5. How can we become "living temples" that carry the presence of God in our daily lives?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Adonai, You are the God who sees, who remembers, and who restores. On this day of mourning, we come before You with broken hearts—not only over what has been lost, but over what we have often neglected: Your presence. We ask for Your forgiveness where we have trusted in buildings and traditions instead of seeking Your face. Thank You that even in exile, You are working. Thank You for being our sanctuary when everything else is stripped away. Fill us with Your Spirit. Teach us to walk in Your ways, and give us boldness to share the hope of Yeshua with our people. May we never grieve the wrong ruins again.

In the name of our Messiah, Yeshua, Amen.