

5th Month of God's Year (Av)

So we are about to enter the 5th month of the God's calendar, after sunset (on Sunday 4th August). As I have said before, God never named the days of the week OR the months of the year. The man given name for this fifth month, Av, literally means "father" and is Babylonian in origin, and appeared in the Talmud around the 3rd century, BUT this is another month that thankfully is only ever referred to in the Tanach as the Fifth Month, never as Av.

So as we say farewell to the 4th month, Tammuz, which is seen as the saddest month of the year, we continue through the three weeks of mourning, which began on the 17th Tammuz.

This three weeks, called Bein Ha-Metzarim (between the straits), which I said last month, is historically the time between when the walls of Jerusalem were breached and before the first Temple was destroyed. The three weeks end on the 9th Day of this 5th month or as it is now called, Tisha B'Av, which as you know, I am sure, is the exact same day that both the 1st Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, in 586 before Yeshua and the 2nd Temple by the Romans in 70 after Yeshua, – same day 656 years apart.

Interestingly in the synagogue services the Haftarot (the selected reading after the Torah reading from the Nevi'im, the books of the Prophets) during this 3 week period, instead of being connected to the weekly Torah reading change, and they are all readings of Admonition, and tell of God's disappointment with Israel's faithlessness, and the impending tragedy that would befall them if they will not mend their ways.

FIRST from the Prophet Jeremiah chapter 1: 1 – 2:3 Starting with The Lord telling Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, I separated you for myself. And I have

appointed you to be a prophet to the nations;" 1:7 Then Jeremiah protests, a bit like Moshe did: "I am a child, I do not know how to speak." Well The Lord reprimands him saying: "You will go to whomever I send you and speak whatever I order you, and do not be afraid of them..."

The SECOND week also from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 2: 4 – 28 (which was the Haftara reading last week): "What did your ancestors find wrong with me to make them go so far away from me, to make them go after idols, and become themselves idolaters?"

The THIRD week from prophet Isaiah 1: 1 – 27 (which is this week's Haftara portion) "Hear heaven, Listen earth. For The Lord is speaking: I raised and brought up children, but they rebelled against me..." Oh dear, does not sound good does it? ...and still going on today- You can almost feel the disappointment in God. He blesses, He provides, He guides, the perfect Heavenly Father, But.....what did the Children find wrong with him?

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So on Tisha B'Av there is a 25 hour fast. During services in the synagogues on this day lights are dimmed, the Aron HaKodesh is draped in black, and the crowns with the tinkling bells are removed from the Torah scrolls. The congregants may remove leather shoes, and do not greet each other.

Then the Shabbat following the Fast is called Shabbat Nachamu, Shabbat of Comfort, and the period following 9th Av is called Menachem Av, the Comforter of Av.

So after the three weeks of readings of Admonition we now we have 7 weeks, where the readings from the Haftara are readings of comfort, and consolation, leading up to Yom HaTeruah. (or as it is incorrectly called now by most people, Rosh HaShana) which reminds me to tell you AGAIN that it was man who decided

to mess with God's calendar and introduced a Civil Year which starts on the 1st of God's 7th month. Again I will say, just 'cos I like to, I am not interested at all in this man made Civil Year, and I am sure God is NOT EITHER!

The Prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied and witnessed the destruction of the temple, later wrote the scroll of Lamentations (קללות) to commemorate this tragic time. With all five chapters written in a wonderful acrostic, with chapters 1,2, 4 and 5, having 22 verses each, beginning with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the middle chapter 3, 66 verses. Sadly all this is lost in any translation.

So apart from knowing that the Temple was destroyed during this 5th month, other times the 5th month is mentioned in the Tanach are:

In Numbers 33:38 (which was part of the Torah portion this week) we read: Moshe's brother Aaron died on the 1st day of the 5th month on Mount Hor, 40 years after the people had left Egypt, and this is the only date of someone's death that is explicitly mentioned by date.

In Ezra 7:8 we read: Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the 5th month. He had left Bavel in the 1st month and arrived in the 5th month having set his heart on studying and practicing the Torah of the Lord and teaching Israel the laws and rulings – well that's good isn't it? Let's pray for more Ezra's to arrive this month!!!

Then in Jeremiah 28:1: At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah King of Judah in the 5th month, Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet spoke to Jeremiah in the Lord's house in front of the Cohanim and all the people saying This is what The Lord Tzavot, the God of Israel says: "I have broken the yoke of the king of Bavel, within two years I will restore to this place all the articles from The Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar King of Bavel removed" – yeah!

Lastly Ezekial 20: 1: "On the 10th day of the 5th month some of the leaders of Israel came to enquire of The Lord, and sat with me Then the word of the Lord came to me "It was that simple!! they came to enquire of the Lord and the word of the Lord came!!! Of course they probably did not really want to hear what He then had to say... and in fact they would have been sitting with Ezekiel a long time, because then we have the whole of chapter 20 21, 22 and 23 in which The Lord reminds them On the day I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the Land of Egypt, I told them I am the Lord your God, He reminds them He brought them out of Egypt into a Land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all the lands. He reminds them that He told them to throw away the abominations which are before your eyes, do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt, but.....they rebelled again, did not obey... so I acted for My Names Sake

And so it goes on: I gave them my Torah showed them my judgements, I gave them My Shabbats, to be a sign between them and me, but they rebelled, nevertheless I spared them from destruction, I did not make an end of them in the wilderness, BUT I said to their children do not walk in the statutes of your fathers,

But, guess what, they rebelled again. "They profaned my shabbats" Nothing new under the sun.

And so it goes on: And The Word of the Lord came to me, The Word of The Lord came to me again, Moreover the Word of The Lord came saying... For Thus Said The Lord. 116 verses of it... Finishing with "They shall repay you for your lewdness and you shall pay for your idolatrous sins. Then you shall know that I am The Lord God. Phew!

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To finish a few historical events that happened in this 5th month, and you might notice none of it is happy, just all very sad...

On 9th Av in 1290 – Jews were expelled from England by the Edict of Expulsion of King Edward I, and were not permitted to legally return for 350 years.

In 1492, the Golden Age of Spain came to a close when Queen Isabella and her husband Ferdinand ordered that the Jews be banished from the land. The edict of expulsion was signed on March 31, 1492, and the Jews were given exactly four months to put their affairs in order and leave the country. The Hebrew date on which no Jew was allowed any longer to remain in the land where he had enjoyed welcome and prosperity—the 9th of Av

And on the 17 Av 1929 The Hebron Massacre. When 67 Jewish adults and children were killed and many wounded by Arabs in Hebron. The Arabs rioted for 3 days crying “Slaughter to the Jews” This massacre destroyed the ancient Jewish community of Hebron which had existed there for centuries.

Jews would not return until after the 6 day war in 1967. And as you probably know a few years ago the UN’s World Heritage body voted to recognize the old city of Hebron as a PALESTINIAN world heritage site!! Really? PM Netanyahu responded to that by quoting from Genesis saying the evidence connecting the Jewish People with Hebron and the tombs of Avraham Yitzhak and Ya’acov and their wives is irrevocable. Oh and by the way they were all buried in Hebron 2,000 years BEFORE Islam was founded!

The First world war began on 28th July 1914 which was the 5 Av.

More recently, on the 10 Av 2005 to our shame, 10,000 Jews were forcibly evacuated from 25 towns and settlements in the SW edge of Gaza believing that then we would have peace with our neighbors, ha ha.

Of course it just brought the rockets, fire kites and balloons, and more even nearer, until 7th October, when it brought the most horrendous horrific genocidal day in the history of the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

So we have a 5th month full of tragedy, and they said last month was seen as one of the saddest months. But it is also a month which will turn that sadness into comfort, then repentance and then restoration to our God, The God of Israel, The God of Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'acov. Because, as you know, as I said again last month, we read in Zecharia that the Fasts of the 4th 5th 7th and 10th months are to become times of joy, gladness and cheer for the house of Yehudah.

BUT I think it is important to remind ourselves that the fast of Tisha B'Av was man instituted, and we read in Zechariah what he prophesies to the Children of Israel: The Lord said to Zecharia: "Speak to all the people of the land and to the Cohanim. Tell them, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months throughout these 70 years, were you really fasting for me? Was it for me? Rather, when you eat and drink, it's just to please yourselves, isn't it? Reminding them when they were prosperous. Adonai Tzvaot also reminds them to administer true justice, let everyone show mercy and compassion to his brother, do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners or poor people. Do not plot evil against each other, BUT THEY WOULD NOT LISTEN, they would not hear the Torah and the messages that Adonai Tzvaot sent through the earlier prophets. This is why great anger came from Adonai Tzvaot, and He dispersed them among the nations.

So, a good reminder that there are definitely consequences to NOT listening to His Word.

Heavenly father as we welcome and enter this new portion of time, may we be your children who find absolutely NOTHING WRONG IN YOU, You the creator of all things seen and unseen, The only God who is faithful and just, There is none like You.

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