

Tisha b'Av - Jerusalem of Gold

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EQ: What meaning does Jerusalem bear for us today, as modern Reform Jews?

Goals:

- To have students identify a personal relationship with Jerusalem, the holy city, even if they have never been there
- To have students choose and discuss a text or image which describes their relationship with Jerusalem
- To introduce students to the concept of "lament theology"
- To teach students a few lines of Eicha trope
- To connect students with the land of Israel, specifically the city of Jerusalem

Objectives: (Students Will Be Able To...)

- Recall a personal memory from Jerusalem
- Describe a relationship or lack thereof with Jerusalem
- Identify a meaningful text or image which captures their relationship with Jerusalem
- Articulate why the Book of Eicha (Lamentations) is an appropriate read on Tisha b'Av
- Discuss commentaries on the destruction of the temple
- Analyze the Yehuda Amichai poem, "If I Forget thee, Jerusalem"
- Sing a few lines of "Eicha" (Lamentations) trope

Materials:

Pictures of Jerusalem, printed and placed around the room
Quotes on Jerusalem, printed and placed around the room
Small notepads or pieces of paper for writing
Pens or pencils
Copies of "The Theology of Lament" article to take home
Text packet – including all poems and pieces
Laptop with Me'ir Banai playing

Timeline:

00-10 – Arrivals
10-15 – Set induction and reading of "My Heart is in the East"
15-30 – "Museum" walk-through
30-50 – Discussion
50-60 – Yehuda Amichai poem
60-75 – Lamentations and Eicha
75-77 – Conclusion

10-15 – Set Induction:

Jaclyn will begin by welcoming everyone to the event. Ask everyone to introduce themselves and say the ONE word that comes to mind when they think of Jerusalem.

Once everyone has shared, Jaclyn will read the following:

My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west--

How can I find savor in food? How shall it be sweet to me?

How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet...

Zion lies beneath the binds of Edom, and I in Arab chains?

A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain

Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the desolate
sanctuary.

-Yehuda haLevi, circa 1140

Jaclyn will say:

- What emotion do you think this poem is trying to capture?
- What essence of Jerusalem is Yehuda haLevi trying to convey?
- How does this poem resonate with your ONE word you mentioned?

After people share, Jaclyn will continue: today's learning will be all about Jerusalem: the ancient city and modern metropolis, the symbol of holiness for Judaism and source of war and strife for Jews and Arabs alike.

Today we will have a chance to explore our relationship with the city as a way of commemorating Tisha b'Av. Tisha b'Av, the day on which we believe both the First and Second Temples were destroyed and we were sent into exile. It's also the day that is believed to commemorate the failure of the Bar Kochba rebellion, the declaration of the Crusades, the beginning of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto. Yet – today, Jerusalem is for the Jewish people. It remains a symbol of ancient times as it also functions as a modern, bustling city.

Today, we will commemorate Tisha b'Av by examining our relationships with the city of gold – Yerushalayim shel Zahav.

15-30 – Museum “Walk Through”

Jaclyn will invite participants to take notepads or paper and walk around the library, stopping to read text quotes and look at pictures of Jerusalem. On the paper they will take notes. Which images/texts resonate? What memories do these pictures or texts evoke? Participants will have about fifteen minutes to do this.

30-50 – Discussion

First, Jaclyn will pass out a packet with the different quotes and images posted around the room so people can follow along. Once everyone has had a chance to look around the room, we will sit back down at the table and go through the different observations. This will mostly be a free-for-all; Jaclyn will have a secondary packet of commentaries and bios.

50-60 – Yehuda Amichai poem

Jaclyn will next pass out the Yehuda Amichai poem, “Jerusalem, if I forget thee,” followed by a brief synthesis discussion.

60-75 – The Theology of Lament

Jaclyn will first introduce that the text we are commanded to read on Tisha b’Av is the book of Eicha, or Lamentations. What are Laments? What is the power of lamenting, or expressing tremendous grief, and what does it have to do with Tisha b’Av? Jaclyn will share a few brief quotes from Rachel Adler’s paper, “For These I Weep: A Theology of Lament.” (The entire article will be available for people following the session) → Jaclyn’s quotes will be highlighted in the text

Lamentations Notes:

- Eicha – *How?*
- Unknown author
- Chanted on Tisha b’Av
- Laments the destruction of the Temple
- Acrostic poem – runs the gamut of disaster from A to Z
- Everything you know has been destroyed, but you still have language, so you try to rebuild the world and re-introduce order (Richard Levy) Acrostic is all of those things; an opportunity or way of containing all the trouble / giving it closure
- Who are the voices:
 - The city
 - The individual Judean in exile (God’s servant who has been abused)
 - We – the people
- The abuser: GOD – in chapter five, not about what Israel has done but *what God has done to Israel*.

75-77 – Closing

Jaclyn will teach a *niggun* using the trope of Eicha to participants, leaving them humming the tune of lamentations as they go.

Texts for "Jerusalem of Gold:"

1. My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west
How can I find savor in food? How shall it be sweet to me?
How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet...
Zion lies beneath the binds of Edom, and I in Arab chains?
A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of
Spain
Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the
desolate sanctuary.

-Yehuda haLevi, circa 1140

2. When Vespasian had subdued the city [of Jerusalem] he assigned the destruction of its four ramparts to four generals, the western gate being allotted to Pangar. Now it had been decreed by Heaven that this gate should never be destroyed. Why not? Because the Presence abides in the west, as Rav Aha said: The presence will never move from the Temple's western wall, for it is said, "Behold, he stands behind our wall."

The other three demolished the parts assigned to them, but Pangar did not demolish his. Vespasian sent for him and asked, "Why did you not destroy the part I assigned to you?" He replied, "By your life, I acted as I did for the honor of Rome. If I had demolished it, mortals would never have known what fortified installations you destroyed. But now when people look [at the Western Wall] they will exclaim, 'Behold Vespasian's might! What a strong fortification he demolished!'"

(Midrash Rabbah Lamentations 1:31)

3. Rav Hanina bar Papa said: The Holy One wished to confine Jerusalem within definite measurements, for it is said: "Then said I: Whither goest thou?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof?" But the ministering angels spoke up before the Holy One: "Master of the universe, You have created in Your world many cities for the nations of the earth, and You did not fix the measure of their length or the measure of their breadth. Yet now for Jerusalem, in whose midst is Your name, in whose midst is

Your sanctuary, in whose midst are the righteous – for it You fix a measure?” Thereupon one angel speaking to another said unto him: “Run, speak to this young man and say: **Jerusalem shall be inhabited without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein.**”

(Zechariah 2:8)

4. “Ten portions of suffering are in the world – nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.

Ten portions of physical strength are in the world – nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.

Ten portions of wisdom are in the world – nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.

Ten portions of hypocrisy are in the world – nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.

Ten portions of Torah are in the world – nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.”

(Midrash)

5. Jerusalem is destined to be widened and to rise upward, until it reaches God’s throne of glory and says, “This place is too narrow for me.”

(Isaiah 49:20)

6. “In consideration of the maxim, ‘you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone,’ the site of the Temple became, in many ways, more sacred after its destruction. It became a symbol, a metaphor for our broken relationship with God and a memory of how things could be again. When the Temple was destroyed, it was as if the “master of the house,” God, had picked up and left, abandoning God’s own People because we failed to live up to God’s moral teaching; failed to live up to the Covenant.”

(Rabbi Karen Bender)

7. "True, as soon as Jerusalem was destroyed that joy was darkened and the gladness of the whole earth was exiled. But when the Holy One rebuilds Jerusalem, God will restore to it all the joy, as it is said, "The Eternal has comforted Zion... Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

(Isaiah 51:3)

8. "For three thousand years, Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of exile, Jerusalem remained alive in the hearts of Jews everywhere as the focal point of Jewish history, the symbol of ancient glory, spiritual fulfillment and modern renewal. This heart and soul of the Jewish people engenders the thought that if you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be 'Jerusalem.'"

(Teddy Kollek, former mayor of Jerusalem)

9. "Without Jerusalem, the land of Israel is as a body without a soul."

(Elhanan Leib Lewinsky)

10. "There are three gates to *Gehinam* (purgatory) – one of them is in Jerusalem."

(Talmud: Eruvin 19a)

If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem

Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000)

If I forget thee, Jerusalem,
Then let my right be forgotten.
Let my right be forgotten, and my left remember.
Let my left remember, and your right close
And your mouth open near the gate.

I shall remember Jerusalem
And forget the forest -- my love will remember,
Will open her hair, will close my window,
will forget my right,
Will forget my left.

If the west wind does not come
I'll never forgive the walls,
Or the sea, or myself.
Should my right forget
My left shall forgive,
I shall forget all water,
I shall forget my mother.

If I forget thee, Jerusalem,
Let my blood be forgotten.
I shall touch your forehead,
Forget my own,
My voice change
For the second and last time
To the most terrible of voices --
Or silence.