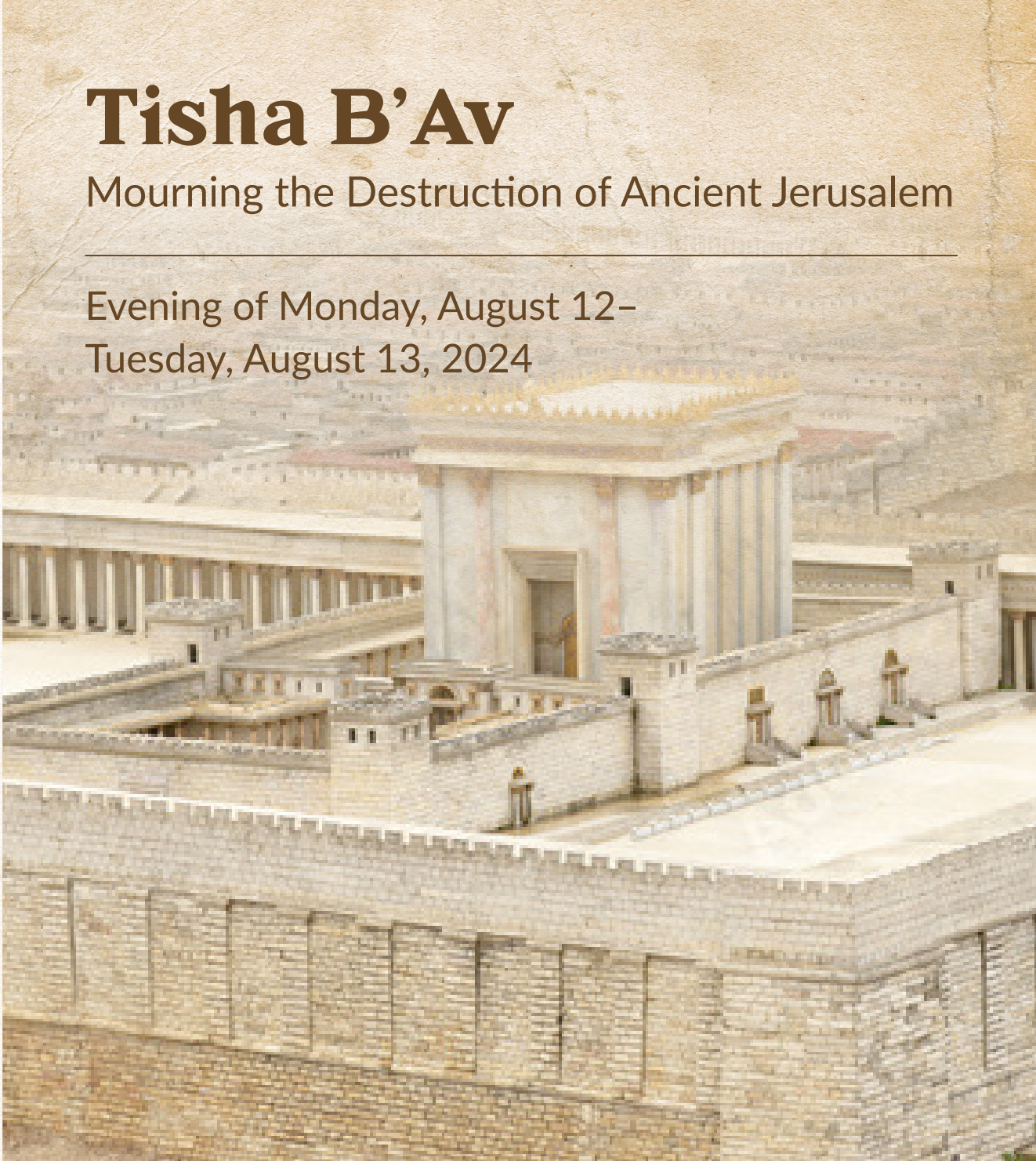


# Tisha B'Av

Mourning the Destruction of Ancient Jerusalem

Evening of Monday, August 12–  
Tuesday, August 13, 2024



AN ALIGNED  
GRANTS PROGRAM  
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The PJCC is proud to be a part of the Koret Initiative on Jewish Peoplehood. We are honored to present this program through the Taube Center for Jewish Peoplehood at the PJCC.



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**Tisha B'Av**, the ninth day of the month of Av (which this year falls on August 12–13), is a major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar. Although numerous disasters are said to have befallen the Jews on this day, we focus on the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, in the years 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E., respectively. Tisha B'Av is traditionally observed with a one-day fast and the chanting of the biblical Book of Lamentations.

The three weeks preceding Tisha B'Av have historically been days of misfortune and calamity for the Jewish people. These days are referred to as the period "within the straits" (*bein hametzarim*), in accordance with the verse: "All her oppressors have overtaken her within the straits" (Lamentations 1:3).

During this time, various aspects of mourning may be observed. No weddings are held, and some Jews do not listen to music or attend celebrations and some avoid shaving or haircuts. The expressions of mourning take on greater intensity as we approach

the day of Tisha B'Av. The period commencing with Rosh Chodesh Av is called the "Nine Days." During these last nine days of this three week period, a stricter level of mourning is observed, in accordance with the Talmudic dictum (Ta'anit 26): "When the month of Av begins, we reduce our joy."

The list of tragedies thought to have occurred during this window of mourning include:

- The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians (586 BCE)
- The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans (70 CE)
- The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by Roman Emperor Hadrian (135 CE)
- The expulsion from Spain in 1492
- The outbreak of World War One in 1914
- The mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942



The Arch of Titus, depicting the triumphal procession after the Roman victory and the fall of Jerusalem

## “Why was the Second Temple destroyed? Due to baseless hatred.”

—Talmud, Yoma 9

This psalm, which reflects the time of exile following the Jerusalem's destruction, is often recited on Tisha B'Av.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat,  
sat and wept,

as we thought of Zion.

There on the poplars

we hung up our lyres,

for our captors asked us there

for songs,

our tormentors, for amusement:

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

How can we sing a song of Adonai  
in a strange land?

— Psalm 137

While historians might suggest that the destruction of the biblical Temple and burning of Jerusalem had to do with the complex geopolitical realities of the time, the rabbis of the Talmud had only one explanation for the destruction of God's house: divine punishment for sin.

The Book of Lamentations (“*Eikhah*”) is read publicly on the fast of Tisha B'Av. This is one of the five *megillot* (scrolls), and is part of the section of the Hebrew Bible called Writings. Eikhah laments the destruction of the Temple, along with the exile of the tribe of Judah. Later attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, this book poetically describes the suffering of Jerusalem and its former inhabitants and grapples with theological explanations for that suffering.

In modern times, many Jews understand Tishah B'Av as a day to remember many tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people throughout history, and to reflect on the suffering that still occurs in our world. From ancient times until today, the Jewish community has been targeted for violence, and expelled from the lands in which we lived.

So what can Tisha B'Av mean for us today? We can learn from the lessons of the past. Jewish tradition holds that the Temple was destroyed as punishment for senseless hatred, division and cruel speech. Now more than ever we must be mindful of our words and how we treat each other. We are all one community.