

**Jewish Voice
for Peace**

קול יהודי לשלום



**Israelis and Palestinians.
Two Peoples, One Future.**

TISHA B'AV GAZA MOURNING RITUAL **2014 • 5774**

This ritual was created by the JVP Rabbinical Council for use in public gatherings, perhaps at a strategic location that draws attention to organization that are supportive of and/or complicit in the current assault on Gaza. For help organizing your public action, email organizing@jvp.org.

Supplies Needed

- Yahrzeit candle/s
- Matches/lighter
- Large piece of fabric
- Printouts of names
- Printout of ritual for multiple readers

I. Welcome & Introduction

Can be read by leader or group of leaders, or if enough handouts for all, can go around and read, each participant reading one paragraph.

Tisha B'av (the 9th of Av) is a fast day marking the destruction of both Temples - the first by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. and the second by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Traditionally, Jews mourn the destructions by sitting on low stools or on the bare floor as they chant Eicha (The Book of Lamentations) and kinot (a series of liturgical poems describing the destruction of the Temples). There is a tradition that the Messiah will be born on Tisha B'Av and thus that out of destruction, redemption is born.

Today as we gather together, Jews and friends who are working, struggling and seeking justice for all people, we are supported by the wisdom of Jewish tradition that inspires us to trust that out of occupation, liberation can be born.

The holiday commemorates a series tragedies that we traditionally mark as coincidentally having occurred throughout history on the very same day of Tisha B'Av. Marking tragedy after tragedy on one intense day of mourning requires us to hold multiple sadnesses at once, not only the deep despair of the destruction of the Holy Temple. Today as we gather together, Jews and friends who are holding many tragedies at once, we mourn, we beat our chests, we rend our clothes in guilt and sadness

The creation of the Golden Calf, the manifestation of the Israelites' fear and doubt. Today we lament the fear and doubt that, when provoked by politicians, can whip citizens into a frenzied call for blood. For the readiness of the the Jewish people to deamonize the Other, and become immune to the humanity of Gazans.

The expulsion of the Jewish people from Spain, France, England, the loss of home, community, and safety, also said to have happened on the 9th of Av. Today we bear witness to the loss of home, community, and safety for Palestinians in Gaza at the hands of the IDF.

The false witness given by the spies sent out to scout the land of Israel, before the Israelites' entered in the book of Numbers. Theirs was a testimony that stirred up doubt, fighting amongst ourselves, and the subsequent destruction of a generation. Today we are held accountable for the decimation of generations of lives in Gaza at this very moment.

We also remember the people and stories, the tragedies that cake like stratum around our hearts, the pain that builds generation on generation. Today we come together to lament, to bear witness, and to be accountable to the greatest tragedies of our time. We come together to hold our past and present catastrophes, and in our coming together, we mobilize for a better future.

II. Lament

As we read the book of Lamentations, we cry out against the horrors around us.

"How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave" (Lamentations 1:1)

After a moment of silence, light a yartzeit candle, or many candles. Hold the silence.

Optional: Reading #1 here

III. Bear Witness

"We are become orphans and Fatherless, our mothers are as widows." (Lamentations 5:3)

If one person has died, it is as if the whole world has ended (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). As the death toll rises, the list of names, of worlds, rises as well. When we once may have publicly recited the names of the dead, the process of reading names aloud has become laborious, clunky, too long. But we remember, and we are not stifled by time, nor fear, nor doubt. We remember.

Each participant has a list of names written out. The day's updated list of names should be divided and each name should be given to someone.

We read aloud each person's name, simultaneously. The loudness of our grief crashes around our ears. We lift their memories higher still.

Participants begin reading, and should read louder or quieter as feels moving. Upon closing, hold the silence for a moment.

Facilitator should choose to read either excerpts from Under Siege, or a few biographies of the deceased, from humanizepalestine.com

IV. Account

If not done already, lay out the large piece of fabric in the center of the gathering/circle

When Jacob saw his son Joseph's bloody coat and thought his most beloved son had died, he rent his clothing in the deepest of grief. When David learned of Saul's death, and as Job suffered calamity after calamity, they rent their clothing. A tear, a physical rip in the fabric of our lives, we hold grief, the grief that bursts out of us, that pours forth. And for many of us, the rip in our Jewish communities is painful, silencing, and must be mourned.

We rip this fabric, we tear at our clothing in grief.

Starting at one end, facilitator begins to tear. Participants should join them and take turns ripping. After moments of silence, move into a niggun, a wordless melody, or move to section V.

V. Conclusion

If possible, wrap the now torn fabric around all who are gathered, or hold it up like a sukkah/huppah over the gathering, or hold in the air all together like a parachute. if gathering is too large, some subset can hold it or stand beneath it symbolically.

3:22 Surely the Lord's mercies are not Consumed, surely God's Compassions fail not.

Optional: insert reading #3 here

ALL read together:

let me be strong as history
let me join those who refuse
let there be time
let it be possible
let no faction keep me
from those who suffer
let no faction keep me from those who needed a home
and found one
[let no faction keep me from those who had homes
and lost them: stolen, walled off, razed, occupied]
let no faction keep me from those
who need a home now

by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. "There Was No Farewell"

by Taha Muhammad Ali

We did not weep
when we were leaving -
for we had neither
time nor tears,
and there was no farewell.
We did not know
at the moment of parting
that it was a parting,
so where would our weeping
have come from?
We did not stay
awake all night
(and did not doze)
the night of our leaving.
That night we had
neither night nor light,
and no moon rose.
That night we lost our star,
our lamp misled us;
we didn't receive our share
of sleeplessness -
so where
would wakefulness have come from?

2. Excerpts from "Under Siege"

by Mahmoud Darwish

Here on the slopes of hills, facing the dusk and
the cannon of time
Close to the gardens of broken shadows,
We do what prisoners do,
And what the jobless do:
We cultivate hope.
Here there is no "I".
Here Adam remembers the dust of his clay.
When the planes disappear, the white, white
doves
Fly off and wash the cheeks of heaven
With unbound wings taking radiance back again,
taking possession
Of the ether and of play. Higher, higher still, the
white, white doves
Fly off. Ah, if only the sky
Were real [a man passing between two bombs
said to me].

3. "Dirge Without Music"

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the
love,—
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not
approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.