

Shalom,

Have you seen the moon recently? If so, you might have noticed it's fullness earlier in the week. That tells us that it was the middle of the Jewish month, and so we are now in the waning moon cycle. In fact, this Shabbat will be the 17th of the Hebrew month of Tammuz. What does that mean? Several things!

1. In general it's a day for fasting from food and drink from dawn until just past sunset. However, since it falls on Shabbat this year the fast and commemoration are postponed to the following day, meaning Sunday dawn until just past sunset.
2. It's when our tradition understands that Moshe broke the tablets when he was coming down from Mt. Sinai.
3. It is also part of our commemoration of time, for on this day, in 70 CE, the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem. A short three weeks later, on 9 Av (Tisha b'Av) the Temple fell. The "western wall" and other connected remains (like the southern wall) that many visit when traveling to Jerusalem were supporting walls at the base of the Temple, and what we have left from that sacred site.

If we aren't really sad that we no longer have all the Temple sacrifices, then in our day and age what does it mean to have a minor fast day, especially the 3 that relate to the destruction of the Temple? (Check [here](#) for more info on the 4 minor fast days).

I'd like to suggest that the minor fast days are *ripe* for reconstructing! If we step back from the details of the walls being breached on the way to the ultimate destruction of the Temple, we can instead examine what was going on from an "on the balcony" perspective. From that perspective, we arrived at the critical moment when our religious and political system was so compromised that they were on a trajectory to be changed forever. On the one hand, there was death, destruction, and much suffering. On the other hand, the new reality forced our ancestors to use their creativity to adapt how they related to Judaism on just about all levels. In this process they explored what a relationship to it might offer themselves, their community, and the world, and came up with what we now know as "Rabbinic Judaism." I am very grateful for their ingenuity, dedication, and perseverance.

And still, what might we do with a minor fast day like the 17th of Tammuz today? A question for you: perhaps we can apply this same framework to the reality in our day. We do not know that a "Tisha b'Av" is exactly coming in three weeks from now, but at this day and age we very clearly know that the world is changing around us. Some things will never be the same. Whether we look at the trends in how Jews are making meaning of and relating to Judaism, or whether we look at climate change, or the craziness in politics around the world, or any of the other issues that constantly bombard us in our present reality, the minor fast days, starting with the 17th of Tammuz, can serve as opportunities to do that difficult practice of making space for what arises for each one of us at this time that can be overwhelmingly scary.

Just as on Shabbat when we can weekly sink into what nourishes our souls, the minor fast days make space for the suffering, fear, confusion, and other emotions that arise for many of us at these times. Instead of hurrying onward to the next news feed, or blatant distraction, we can allow ourselves to "lean in" and make space for what is true and real inside. Only by making space can we be as grounded and clear as possible at this time that desperately needs us to be leading with our best selves. We don't do this for days, or weeks, but simply one sun cycle: from dawn to sunset.

May we allow the rhythm of the sun, and the wisdom of our minor fast days to support us with clarity and love at these challenging times. Amen.