A prayer for democracy everywhere, that it may not fall or fail, with Israel, Ukraine and U.S. foremost in mind. May we gain inspiration and power from the mass movement to protect Israeli democracy and an independent judiciary, and may all Israel realize that occupation is inimical to democracy:

May You tear out autocracy, tyranny and despotism, rend the power of those who cheat and deceive, and upend those who oppress the vulnerable. 
Make the reign of the arrogant disappear from all lands. 
May the people attacking democracies everywhere stumble and fail, and may their plans be as nought. 
Stop them, humble them, bring on their downfall, soon, in our days, for You humble the arrogant.

May You give to all the peoples of the world the strength and will to pursue righteousness and establish justice, and to seek peace as a unified force, so that violence be uprooted, and healing, good life and peace may flourish, for You are the Ruler who loves righteous justice. (Amen.)

This prayer is based on neohasid.org's voting prayer. Add specific issues at the end of this prayer according to the moment.
To imagine what happened to Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael, picture Russia’s war against Ukraine. The cruel targeting of civilians, the destruction of everything that supports normal life, the images of senseless death. We can vividly picture how “death has come up through our windows” (Jer. 9:5). But in the Jewish people’s timeline, the Roman invader took over Jerusalem, wreaking destruction, murder and enslavement.

Tisha B’Av was never primarily about the Temple and sacrifices. It’s an opportunity to empathize with the refugee and the persecuted. And it’s a call to become aware of the ways we may abuse the power and privilege we have, whether in the United States, Israel and Palestine, or anywhere we gather, and to stop and do t’shuvah before cataclysm strikes. This includes all the ways the human species is willfully disrupting the climate, extinguishing the Life we are commanded to choose, turning vulnerable people and species into refugees.

As the world also struggles to face so many plagues, including racism and global climate disruption, Jews also face growing anti-Semitism, along with pressure to say that anti-Semitism isn’t real because Jews are privileged and so many Jews present as white. And as the storms and fires of this summer remind us, climate cataclysm edges ever closer. Oy meh hayah lanu! (July 2023)

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Use the Omer Counter app to count the seven weeks between Tisha B’Av and Rosh Hashanah. Go to: neohasid.org/omer/apps/

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The hotspot in the struggle for justice in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is now Masafer Yatta, where 1300 Palestinians stand to lose their homes. Isaiah 1:27 says there is no Zion, no viable state of Israel, without justice. Let us fight for justice now rather than mourn later. Learn more:

facebook.com/BreakingTheSilenceIsrael/videos/ll38797826880167/

“Zion through justice will be redeemed.” (Isaiah 1:27)

What does it mean today to be Aveilei Tziyon—one among the “mourners of Zion”—when Jerusalem is rebuilt, when her development and rebuilding knows no bounds, to the point of eating up the countryside; when the state of Israel has one of the most powerful militaries in the world, but uses its power to take what land it wants? What does it mean when the state that liberated the Jews from exile looks so different from the redemption envisioned by the prophets? When social reality for the foreigner and the poor, for the Christian or Muslim vs. the Jew, can look so different than justice—especially in the territories of ancient Israel, now called the West Bank or Judea and Samaria? When the government threatens to neuter the courts? When the settlers most passionate about “redemption” lead pogroms against Palestinians in places like Turmus Ayya. Is this the beginning of “our redemption”? Or a thwarting of redemption? If our covenant is real, that covenant promises: a state that rules through injustice and carries out such injustice cannot stand.

If the conditional promise of the land is that any state founded on violent injustice would be destroyed, should we pre-emptively anticipate that destruction? Or reject the thought of it? Perhaps by mourning now—and by using what insights come to unknot injustice—we can avert such destruction. That is what the rabbis and prophets of old believed. That is something all lovers of justice can get behind, whether or not we call ourselves Zionist, or emphasize doikeit, the power of living in diaspora. That is a meaning of Aveilei Tziyon we can all embrace, facing a Jerusalem built on injustice.

On the day that we cried out and no one answered us, We said: “It shall not be thus in our places.” “When the time comes,” we promised, “we will rise up at the head of the people.” And yet here is the day, and where is our reaction? where is our outcry? We mumble “God have mercy” and we just say another prayer. “And in truth, it is amazing that the world is still standing after so many cries for help such as these” Is this the fast that I would choose—a day in which people hunger for bread? Is this not the fast we would choose: a day on which we rise to righteousness.

excerpt from R. Aryeh Cohen, אראוייהוּ כֹּהֵן, אַלְכַּלָּהַ בָּשָׂרָה, "Woe to the Heart that is not Broken", https://opensiddur.org/?p=29657

If you are an Aveil leTziyon, a mourner for Zion, join us on fb: Aveilei Zion (fb.com/groups/991520568829574).
This translation of Laments, the book of mourning poems read on Tish’a B’Av, uses principles of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible. It strives to be “concordant”, translating related Hebrew words with related English words and following the order and syntax of the Hebrew where possible. It also focuses on the more physical, earthy meaning of words, in order to draw the modern reader towards more ancient ways of seeing and feeling. Sometimes alternate translations are given, indicated by a slash. (When reading aloud, simply pick one of the translations. For YHVH, you can read Adonai or Hashem or “the Eternal”.

James Moffat’s 1922 translation was consulted. As a somewhat literal translation, Laments uses “He” and “His” as pronouns for God, though Torah and common sense command us not to make an exclusively male or female image of God. If you are using Laments liturgically, please feel encouraged to change the pronouns. For brief essays on the theology of Eikhah, refugees, the Earth, and more, see the end of this booklet.


Find more Tisha B’Av resources, songs, and teachings online at: theshalomcenter.org/node/1733 and neohasid.org/zman/tisha_bav/.

Laments ©2019 (v.4.2.1) by David Mevorach Seidenberg. First published by neohasid.org in 2007, based on translations for the Aleph Kallah and National Havurah Institute in 2002 and 2003; translation begun 1993. Layout based on 2003 design by Mark Frydenberg. This booklet contains the sacred name in Hebrew for God. Please do not destroy or dispose of improperly. Download this booklet at: neohasid.org/resources/laments Rights granted for ten copies per download. To donate go to:

This work is dedicated to all refuges fleeing war and upheaval, and to our remembering their needs.
Her priests are moaning, 
her girls grieving; 
And she – it is bitterness for her.

5 Her tormentors were at the head, 
her enemies had ease 
For YHVH / the Eternal aggrieved her 
for the greatness of her sins. 
Her babes walked captive 
before foe; 
6 and all her splendor went out from 
daughter Zion! 
Her ministers were like deer, 
not finding a place to graze; 
and (so) they walked, without strength, 
before a pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembered 
the days of her poverty / affliction 
and her downsiding, 
all her precious things 
which were from days long ago, 
while her people fell into a foe’s hand; 
and there is no help for her. 
They saw her, her tormentors, 
laughing over her becoming stilled.

8 Sinning she sinned, Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 1

1 Eikhah! How can it be – 
she sat alone, 
the city so great / so swelled with people? 
She was like a widow. 
The one great among the nations, 
ministering among the states, 
became a slave caste.

2 Crying, she will cry in the night, 
her tear upon her cheek 
There is none for her, no comforter, 
from all her lovers. 
All her companions 
played traitor with her. 
They became for her enemies.

3 She, Judah, was exiled, 
by poverty, and by (so) much hard labor 
She sat among the nations, 
not finding any rest; 
All her pursuers caught up with her 
between the confined places.

4 Zion’s roads are mourning 
from being without festival-goers, 
all her gates desolated;
all who pass on the way.

(All of you) look, and see—
could there be pain like my pain
which was doled out to me,
which YHVH caused to grieve
in the day of His furious anger?

13 From a height He sent fire
in my bones and overwhelmed them.

He spread out a net for my feet;
He turned me / repelled me backward;
He made me desolate,
all day — sickness.

14 The harness of my sins lashed on,
they were tied down by His hand,
brought up onto my neck,
making my strength fail.

Adonai gave me over into (such) hands
that I am unable to stand up.

15 Adonai spurned
all my mighty warriors within me,
He called out over me a feast
for breaking my boys;
a winepress—Adonai stomped—
for daughter Judah’s girl.

16 Over these, I am crying;

For this an outcast / nidah she became.
All who honor her despise her,
for they saw her nakedness.
Also her, she is moaning,
and turned around backward.

9 Her blood / tum’ah in her skirts,
she didn’t remember her end after,
she descended wondrously.
There is no comforter for her.
YHVH, see my poverty / my humiliation,
for an enemy became great.

10 A foe / Trauma spread out his hand
over all her precious things;
She saw other nations
come within her holy place,
which You commanded her:
“They won’t come in
with the community to you.”

11 All her people are moaning
seeking bread;
They gave up their precious things
for food to restore life.
See, YHVH,
and look (at how) I was despised.

12 Never to you,
my heart overturned within me,
for rebelling I rebelled.
From outside sword bereaving;
In the house, like death itself.

21 They listened – for I am moaning,
there is no comforter for me.
All my enemies listened
for my evil (doom).
They rejoiced, for You did it,
You brought the day You called for –
and let them be(come) like me.

22 May all their evil come before You,
and deal to them as
You dealt to me for all my sins.
For so much are my sighs,
and my heart is sickened.

CHAPTER 2

1 Eikhah! How can it be –
in His anger Adonai / the Lord
clouded over daughter Zion.
He cast down, from skies (to) earth,
Israel’s glory,

my eye, my eye, she drops water.
For so far from me is any comforter,
a restorer for my life.
My children were decimated,
for an enemy overwhelmed / triumphed.

17 Zion spread out with her hands,
there is no comforter for her.
YHVH commanded for Jacob,
surrounding him, his tormentors.
Jerusalem became
outcast / nidah between them.

18 Righteous is YHVH,
for His mouth I rebelled (against).
Listen, please—all peoples—
and see my pain!
My girls and my boys
walked captive / into captivity.

19 I called to my lovers.
Those deceived me.
My priests, and my elders,
they wasted away in the city,
while they sought food for themselves
(that) would bring back their life / soul.

20 See YHVH – for mine is torment,
my guts were churning,
and didn’t remember
His foot’s resting place
in His day of anger.

2 Adonai devoured—He had no pity—
all of Jacob’s pastures.
He tore down with His burning
daughter Judah’s fortifications;
He reached to the very ground.
He violated kingdom and her ministers.

3 With ferocious anger He hacked off
all of Israel’s horn.
He turned His right hand backward
before the enemy.
Burning into Jacob, like fire
flaming, consuming (all) around.

4 He worked His bow like an enemy,
He stood firm His right hand
as a foe / a tormentor
and He murdered everything
precious to the eye;
In daughter Zion’s tent
He poured out His wrath like the fire.

5 Adonai was like an enemy;
He devoured / swallowed Israel.
He devoured all her citadels,
For great, like the sea, is your shattering
– who will bring healing to you?

14 For you did your prophets envision
deception, and irrelevance,
reveling nothing for your wrong
to turn back your destiny / your captivity,
and they envisioned for you
a burden of deceit and dejections.

15 They struck their hands over you,
all who passed on the road,
they hissed and they shook their head
over daughter Jerusalem:
“Is this it? The city they said (was)
beauty’s completion,
joy’s source for all the earth?”

16 They crack open their mouth over you,
all your enemies.
They hissed, and they grit teeth.
They said: We swallowed;
_Akh!_ This day that we hoped for,
we found, we saw!

17 _YHVH_ did what He conspired;
He pushed through His saying.
21 Laid down to the earth (in the) streets, 
young and old, my girls and my boys, 
they fell by sword; 
You murdered in the day of Your anger. 
You slaughtered, You had no pity.

22 You would call, like a festival day, 
(for) my neighbors from all around; 
and (so) in YHVH's day of anger 
there weren't any escaped or remaining 
which I had nursed and raised – 
my enemy finished them all.

CHAPTER 3

1 I am the man who saw affliction 
through the rod of His burning anger.

2 Me did He drive and He led – 
darkness and no light;

3 Akh – Even against me He turned 
upending His hand, all the day.

4 He wore away my flesh and my skin, 
He broke my bones;

5 He built against me and surrounded 
– gall and wormwood.

which He commanded from early days. 
He tore down and showed no pity. 
He made an enemy rejoice over you; 
your tormentors' horn was exalted.

18 Their heart screamed out to Adonai.

Wall of daughter Zion, 
let down a tear like a torrent, 
day and night. 
Don’t give yourself any break; 
Don’t let your daughter eye fall silent.

19 Get up! Sing out in the night 
to the first of the nightwatches: 
Pour out your heart like water right before Adonai!

Lift your palms toward Him – 
for the life of your babies 
stretched out by famine 
at every street head!

20 See, YHVH, and look: 
to whom did You deal thus? 
If women will eat their fruit, 
coddled babies—!

If priest and prophet are murdered 
in Adonai’s holy place—!
16 He broke my teeth with gravel,  
and pressed me into the ashes.  

17 My soul was spurned from peace;  
I forgot goodness,  
18 and I said, “I have lost from YHVH  
my endurance and my hope!”  

19 Remember my affliction and  
my scattering – wormwood and gall;  
20 Remembering, she will remember,  
my soul, and will sink down upon me.  
21 (Still) this will I turn toward my heart,  
for so will I hope:  

22 YHVH's love / kindnesses  
– they are never done,  
for His mercies were not used up.  
23 They are new by every morning;  
great is Your trust / faithfulness!  
24 My portion is YHVH  
—said my soul—  
therefore so will I hope for Him.  
25 Good is YHVH  
to those waiting for Him,
struggle – wouldn’t Adonai see (that)?

37 Who is this who spoke and it was
– didn’t Adonai so command?

38 From the mouth of the Highest
don’t the evils and the good come out?

39 How could a living person complain,
a man, (if punished) for his sins?

40 Let us search our ways and dig deep,
and let us return until YHVH,

41 Let us lift our hearts
up to our hands (stretching them)
toward God in the heavens.

42 Us, we sinned and rebelled.
You – You did not pardon.

43 You took shelter in such anger,
and You would pursue us,
You murdered without pitying;

44 You sheltered Yourself within a
cloud, far beyond prayer;

45 Scum and refuse
You would make us
in the midst of the peoples.

to a soul / person that would seek Him.

26 Good – and he should wait and
be silent, wait for YHVH’s salvation.

27 Good it is for a man
that he carry a yoke in his youth.

28 Let him sit alone and be silent,
since He laid (it) on him;

29 he should put his mouth in the dust –
maybe there is hope;

30 Put out his cheek for the one who
strikes, be satiated with shame.

31 For Adonai would not
spurn forever;

32 for if He aggrieved and showed mercy,
it is according to His love’s abundance;

33 for He did not afflict from His heart
and aggrieve human beings.

34 To crush under His feet
all imprisoned of the land,

35 to make bent a man’s judgment,
right to the face of the Highest,

36 to twist / wrong a person in his
Don’t hide / conceal your ear
to my (plea for) relief, to my cry.

57 You were near the day I would call,
You said, “Don’t fear.”

58 Adonai, You struggled (in) my
soul’s struggles; You saved my life.

59 You saw my twisting;
(now) judge my judgment!

60 You saw all their vengeance
all their designs for me.

61 You heard their shaming, YHVH,
all their designs against me,

62 the speech of those rising at me,
their obsession over me every day,

63 (whether) sitting or rising up –
Look! I am their singsong!

64 You will pay them back, YHVH,
according to the work of their hands;

65 You will make theirs a heart walled
up – let Your curse be for them!

66 Pursue in anger and destroy them
from under YHVH’s heavens.

46 All our enemies crack open
their mouth against us;

47 Trepidation and trap were ours,
the ruination and the shattering.

48 My eye drops floods of water
for my daughter people’s shattering;

49 My eye streams
and won’t silence herself,
(she cries) with no breaks / no stutters,

50 until YHVH would look down
and see from heaven.

51 My eye doles sorrow to my soul
over all my city’s daughters.

52 Hunting, they hunted me, like a bird,
(becoming) my enemies for no reason;

53 they sealed off my life in the pit,
and cast stone against me;

54 waters flowed over my head,
“"I am cut off,” I said.

55 I called Your name, YHVH,
from a pit far underground.

56 You heard my voice:
grew great, beyond the sin of Sodom, 
the one overthrown, as (in) a moment, 
and no hands were laid on her.

7 Her Nazirites were pure beyond snow, 
clearer than milk, 
red of bone, more than rubies, 
their cut shape sapphire crystal.

8 (Now) darkened beyond black soot 
is their form, 
they are not recognized in the streets, 
their skin stretched taut over their bone, 
it was dried out like a stick.

9 Better were the sword-slain 
than the famine-slain, 
for those drain away, stabbed through 
from (want of) produce of the field.

10 Merciful hands of merciful women 
stewed their children – 
they became provision for them 
in the shattering of my daughter people.

11 YHVH used up His fury, 
poured out His burning anger, 
and He kindled a fire in Zion, 
and she consumed her foundations.

12 They would not have believed,
In our seeking, we sought / we peered toward a nation not (able to) save.

18 They hunted / tracked our steps, (driven) from going in our squares.

Our end draws close, our days filled, for our end has come.

19 Swift were they, our pursuers, more than eagles of the heavens. Over the mountains they chased us, in the wilderness they laid ambush for us.

20 Breath of our nose, YHVH’s anointed, he was trapped by their destructions, (the one) whom we said, “In his shade we will live with the nations.”

21 Rejoice and be happy, daughter Edom, dwelling in the land of Utz – a cup will also pass over (to) you, you will drink and strip yourself naked.

22 Complete be your iniquity, daughter Zion, no more to be exiled / exposed.

He has charged your iniquity, daughter Edom, exposed (you) for your sins.

kings of the earth
all the inhabitants of the world, that tormentor and enemy would come into the gates of Jerusalem –

13 because of her prophets’ sins, her priests’ wrongs / iniquities, the ones who poured out inside her the blood of righteous people.

14 They were shaking / staggering, blind in the streets, defiled with the blood, with none able / none willing (to) come in contact with their clothes.

15 “Get out! Contaminated! / Tamei!” they would call to them, “Get out! Get out! Don't touch!”

For they fled, even staggered. They said in the nations, they will no more (be allowed) to dwell.

16 YHVH’s presence / face divided them, He would no more look at them / notice them – (for) priest’s faces they did not lift up, and (to) elders they did not show grace.

17 Still will our eyes be used up / failing, toward our help, (which is) emptiness.
12 Ministers by their hand were hung.
   Elders’ faces shown no majesty / respect.

13 Boys would carry a millstone,
   and youths, stumbling with wood.

14 Elders ceased from gate,
   boys from their play.

15 Our heart ceased / stopped any joy,
   our dance overturned into mourning.

16 The crown on our head is fallen;
   Our inheritance overturned to strangers,
   boys from their play.

17 For this our heart was sickened.
   For these our eyes darkened.

18 For Mount Zion, that was desolated,
   we wouldered their iniquities.

19 You, YHVH
   will sit for all world-time,
   Your throne (lasts) for generations.

20 Why would you forget us forever?
   Abandon us for the span of time’s days?

21 Turn us, YHVH, toward you,
   and we will turn.
   Renew our days, like long before,
   for (what) if rejecting you did reject
   us / loath us, were enraged over us,
   so very much—!

25 This work is dedicated to all refuges fleeing war and upheaval, and to our remembering their needs.

CHAPTER 5

1 YHVH, remember what was ours.
   Look, and see
   our abuse / our shame!

2 Our inheritance overturned to strangers,
   our houses to foreigners.

3 We were orphans, there is no father,
   our mothers like widows.

4 Our water we drank for money;
   our wood came (only) with a price.

5 On our neck were we pursued,
   weary, and none would let us (rest).

6 Egypt, we stretched a hand,
   Assyria, to satisfy bread.

7 Our fathers sinned and are not,
   and we shouldered their iniquities.

8 Slaves ruled us.
   None can break us out from their hand.

9 For our lives we bring our bread,
   from before the wilderness’s sword.

10 Our skin like a furnace, glowing,
   from before the delirium of hunger.

11 Women in Zion were victimized,
   girls, in Judah’s towns.
Some notes on the theology of Eikhah:

1. Tish’a B’Av could not be more relevant than it is today, when the crisis of war refugees and fear of terrorism have overwhelmed the political process in so many countries. We think of Tish’a B’Av as a time of mourning, but it is more importantly a call to identify with the experience of refugees who are forced to risk their lives and even their children’s lives in order to escape violence, hunger, devastation. That’s what the Jewish people went through when the Temple, and the nation and society it stood for, were destroyed, when they became “like deer, not finding a place to graze, walking without strength before a pursuer.” (1:6)

2. The idea that tragedy and disaster are punishment for sins seems alien to many modern Jews. This is also why it can be hard to connect the Holocaust with Tish’a B’Av. But this theology can also be consoling, because it allows people to find meaning in tragedy.

3. The author(s) of Eikhah (traditionally Jeremiah) believed that what happened to Jerusalem expressed divine judgment. For our ancestors, the choice was to believe either that the destruction was God’s punishment, or that God no longer cared about what happened to them. It is easy to imagine people choosing a punishing God over an uncaring God (though the latter possibility is also suggested in the last verse of Eikhah). Even though Eikhah sounds like it’s about God punishing us, it’s not really a theodicy, a justification of God. Rather, it expresses the hope that tragedy proves that God cares about us, instead of proving the opposite.

4. That doesn’t mean we need to accept that theology – even in Eikhah itself, this idea is questioned. Only in chapter three is Zion’s destruction consistently seen as fair and just punishment. In all the other chapters, the degree of divine punishment is described as excessive and abusive. In every chapter, the poet begs God to pay attention: “See, YHVH, and look: to whom did You deal thus? If women will eat their fruit, coddled babes – !” (2:20; also 1:9, 1:11, 1:20, 3:63, 4:16, 5:1). It’s as if other people could see and understand the tragedy that unfolded (1:12), but God could not.

5. This suggests one way to confront the images of sexual abuse in Eikhah: “All who honor her despise her, for they saw her nakedness.” (1:8; also 1:10, 4:21, 5:11) In the prophets, such abuse is a metaphor for the “just” punishment that follows Israel’s “adulterous” pursuit of other gods. But in Eikhah, the metaphor is used to hold up a mirror to God, to show that the punishment was intolerably abusive.

6. The real theology of Eikhah is summed up in the verse, “What can I compare to you, daughter Jerusalem, that I may comfort you?” (2:13) What images, what words, can help people bear the memory of tragedy? The poet is willing to say whatever is needed to enable the people to find meaning.

7. There is another way to understand the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah, the reason for the exile was that Israel did not let the land rest every seven years after they entered the land. (2 Chron. 36:21) Since 490 years had passed without a sabbatical year, Israel had to go into exile for 70 years.

The observances of Tish’a B’Av

The observances of Tish’a B’Av—not wearing fresh clothes, not washing, fasting from eating and drinking and sexual contact, not greeting each other, not sitting anywhere, not eating and drinking and sexual contact, except on the ground—are closer to the experience of being a refugee than to being a mourner. The destruction of the Temple stands not just for the destruction of Jerusalem, but for the city being turned into a war zone, and the people becoming prey to hunger, violence, and death. Tish’a B’Av is not primarily about the Temple – Chaza”l, the rabbis, figured out how to live without the Temple long ago. Rather, Tish’a B’Av is about homelessness, fleeing from war into famine, being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection – things all too present in our world. It’s an opportunity to empathize, to confront the ways we abuse our power, as individuals, as a society, as a people, and as a species, turning other people and other species into refugees.
8. What does this mean? The Torah portrays the land as a subject with rights and interests that take priority over our needs. Especially in the flood story and the laws of Jubilee and sabbatical years (Lev. 25)—and in the consequences that are supposed to befall the people if they do not observe these laws (Lev. 26)—the Torah teaches that God will take the side of the land against the people if forced to. The land will “enjoy her Sabbaths” (Lev. 26:34,43) – even if that means the people are exiled or wiped out. From the divine perspective, the land can sue for justice. What has intrinsic value is not humanity but justice, which is humanity’s potential. See: neohasid.org/torah/genesis-shmitah

9. The Torah outlines six curses for not observing the sabbatical year that describe an unraveling relationship between people and land. Two curses involve children being eaten – by wild animals (v.22), then by their parents (v.29). That image is repeated in Eikhah (2:20, 4:10), and it is the main connection between Eikhah and Leviticus. The final curse in Leviticus is that “you will be lost in the nations and the land of your enemies will eat you” (v.38). The last curse does not sound like the worst. But if the land eats us, this represents a complete reversal of the right relationship between the people and the land.

10. In ancient times, people believed that the Temple existed to promote fertility and abundance. Temple rituals were performed for the sake of the land and for all life, not just for the Jews or even for all humanity. The Temple’s purpose had already been destroyed by the way people treated the land.

11. The idea that destruction came because of how the Jewish people treated the land is not found in Eikhah, where identification of the land with the people is total. Instead, Jerusalem’s downfall results from the moral downfall in relationships between human beings. In Jeremiah too, the fate of Jerusalem is sealed only after the rich, who briefly set their slaves free, re-enslave them when it looks like the danger has passed. (Jer. 34) How we treat the stranger, the poor, the refugee, is what determines if we have the right to be in the land.

12. Creation is compared to a sacred Temple (Tanchuma Pekudei, P’ri Eitz Hadar). In an age when our ecological “sins” are coming home to roost, the connection between natural disaster and divine retribution is not farfetched. However, when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, there were other lands to flee to. If we destroy the Temple that is this Earth, there will be no place to flee. (Cantor Richard Kaplan’s Kinah L’churban Gan Eden, on neohasid.org, can help you focus on this theme.)

13. We can expect more wars over resources, as well as people fleeing areas that have flooded or become deserts, as climate change puts more pressure on our ecosystems and our social systems. We need all the spiritual resources we can muster to stay open to the humanity of the refugee and the stranger while also taking care of each other. Eikhah is an invitation to move towards justice for all people, for all species, and for the land herself.

Rabbi David Mevorach Seidenberg 2018/5778. Some of this material is taken from Kabbalah and Ecology.
Al eleh anu bokhim, anu bokhim, For these we weep

For the Amazon, the lungs of the world,
and for the greed that goads people to burn the jungles
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the ocean’s rising acidity,
and for the heat that bleaches wondrous corals
Al eleh anu bokhim

For Redwoods clearcut
and for their multitudes of species that have lost their homes – Al eleh anu bokhim

For plastic found in deepest ocean and upon highest mountain,
and for a throwaway culture that devalues everything in our lives
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the murder of elephants, rhinos, pangolins,
and for the retribution their extinction must deserve
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the birds and insects gone silent,
and for the starlight smothered by our lights
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the generations whose home we are ruining,
and for the generation that knows this but doesn’t change course
Al eleh anu bokhot

For the Antarctica glaciers and the polar ice caps,
and for the penguins and polar bears endangered
Al eleh anu bokhim

For snowpack and glaciers everywhere,
and for the billions whose cities will be drowned, and whose farms will have no water
Al eleh anu bokhim

For drought drying forests and expanding deserts,
and for desert habitats shrinking from before human development, and for the Saharan cheetah, the fringe-toed lizard, and the addax
Al eleh anu bokhot

For the undiscovered species whose lives we will never know,
and for the loss of wisdom, truth and beauty each one embodies on this planet
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the billions of animals living lives of torture to satisfy human gluttony,
and for the pandemics and plagues that can spread from them to humanity
Al eleh anu bokhot

For the untold losses and annihilations suffered by the creatures of the Earth,
and for the ignorance that sees not, and the callous hearts not broken
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the wicked who prosper from war, homelessness, poverty, and from the land’s ruin,
and for the horror they bring on all of us, while they shelter in their mansions
– Alas, how long will they prosper?
Al eleh anu bokhot

For the governments refusing to act,
and for the leaders who thwart and reverse policies that would save species, habitats, ecosystems,
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the wounding of God’s works, and for the wounding of God’s image,
Al eleh anu bokhim

For the Breath of Life, desecrated, destroyed, defiled!
Can You hear us, can You save us from ourselves?
Al eleh anu bokhot, for these we cry

Teach us to care, teach us to sit still, to understand, for the time is late.
Impel us to act, participate, triumph, at least enough, lest there be no one left to
Eli Tsiyon, selected verses

Eli Tsiyon v’areha
k’mo ishah v’tsireha
v’khivtulah chagurat sak
al ba’al n’ureha

My God, Zion and her towns,
like a woman in travail of labor,
like a virgin wearing sackcloth
for the husband of her youth

Alei hegyon m’choleha
asher damam b’areha
V’al va’ad asher shamam
uvitul sanhed’reha

For her dancers’ lyricism
now silenced in her towns
and for the mob that destroyed,
and ended her high court of justice

Alei galut m’shartei El
n’imei shir z’mareha
V’al kolot m’charpeha
b’eit rabu f’gareha

For the exile of God’s servants
sweet singers of her songs
and for her scorners clamoring
while the corpses piled up

Alei pesha asher av’tah
s’lol derekh ashureha
V’al tsiv’ot k’haleha
sh’zufeha sh’choreha

For the perversion she twisted
paving the path of the well-off
and for her amassed community
her field workers, her brown,
her black people

Alei shimkha asher chural
b’fi kamai m’tseireha
V’al tachan y’tsavchu lakh
Kashuv ush’ma amareha.

For Your name desecrated
in the mouth (of those) who stood
over her oppressed,
and for the plea they scream to You –
focus and listen to her message

Kaddish for Human Minyan, facing this sacred reality and its destruction, neohasid.org/resources/humankaddish/

Tisha B’Av is about the destruction of the Temple and becoming refugees, but the Temple itself is about sustaining Creation and is modeled on Creation. The greatest sacred Temple is the Earth itself. When we destroy ecosystems, when we turn species into refugees, we bring extinction. When our actions disrupt the climate, we turn vast numbers of people into refugees. It is imperative that we learn to pay attention to what we are doing to our sacred planet, and that also means learning to grieve what is being lost.

Mourners/Leaders: May the Name that fills all names be blessed and strengthened in this created world. May the Breath of Life that fills all breaths fill us with Life, and may it guide and rule our actions and visions, in our lives and in our time, now in this world, and in every moment to come. And let us say: Amen.

Everyone: Amen. May that great Name be blessed within us and in all worlds, for all time.

Mourners: May Holiness stream forth from its Source, full of blessing and beauty. May the Name that weaves together all Life and all creatures be blessed and praised, made beautiful and resplendent, lifted up and exalted, to the highest and most majestic…

Everyone: Blessed be!

Mourners: …beyond all the praises and blessings and songs and prayers that can ever be said in the whole world. And let us say: Amen. Everyone: Amen.

Mourners: May our prayers be received by the One who is our source, and may we be nourished and sustained along with everyone everywhere who seeks to embrace this Name and this holiness. May the Life and Love within us and between us be strengthened. May the Breath that fills all breaths fill all Creation with Peace, and may Peace and Life flow to us, to our community, to all peoples, and to all beings in this world. And let us say: Amen. Everyone: Amen.

Mourners: The One who makes Peace in the furthest reaches of Creation will bring Peace to us and to all living beings. And let us say: Amen.

Everyone: Amen.