

**Were Both Temples Really Destroyed on the Same Day? The Meaning of
History and Memory
Tisha Bav 2024
Rabbi Adam Mintz**

II Kings 25: 8-9

ובחֲדָשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי בְּשִׁבְעָה לַחֲדָשׁ הִיא שְׁנַת תְּשַׁע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל כָּא נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן
רַב־טַבָּחִים עָבַד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם:

On the seventh day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, an officer of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֶת־בַּיִת־יְהוָה וְאֶת־בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵת כָּל־בָּתֵּי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת־כָּל־בַּיִת גְּדוֹל שָׂרָף בָּאֵשׁ:
He burned the House of GOD, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person.

Jeremiah 52:12

ובחֲדָשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי בְּעֶשְׂרִי לַחֲדָשׁ הִיא שְׁנַת תְּשַׁע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל כָּא נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן
רַב־טַבָּחִים עָמַד לְפָנָי מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

On the tenth day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, came to represent the king of Babylon in Jerusalem.

Taanit 29a

וּכְתִיב: "וַתִּשָּׂא כָל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּכְפוּ הָעַם בְּלִילָה הַהוּא", אָמַר רַבָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אוֹתוֹ
לִילָה לַיִל תְּשַׁעָה בָּאָב הִיא. אָמַר לָהֶם הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אַתֶּם בְּכִיתֶם בְּכִיָּה שָׁל חֲנָם — וְאֲנִי קוֹבֵעַ לָכֶם
בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת.

And it is further written: “And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept that night”(Numbers 14:1). Rabba said that Rabbi Yohanan said: That night was the night of the Ninth of Av. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: You wept needlessly that night, and I will therefore establish for you a true tragedy over which there will be weeping in future generations.

קרוב הבית בראשונה, דכתיב: "ובחדש החמישי בשבעה לחדש היא שנת תשע עשרה שנה למלך נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל בא נבוכדנאצר רב טבחים עבד מלך בבל ירושלים וישוף את בית ה' וגו'", וכתיב: "ובחדש החמישי בעשור לחדש היא שנת תשע עשרה שנה למלך נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל בא נבוכדנאצר רב טבחים עמד לפני מלך בבל בירושלם וגו'".

§ The mishna further taught that on the Ninth of Av **the Temple was destroyed the first time**. The Gemara explains that this is as it is written: “**And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the King of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the Lord**” (II Kings 25:8–9). **And it is also written: “And in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the Lord”** (Jeremiah 52:12–13).

ותניא: אי אפשר לומר בשבעה, שהרי כבר נאמר "בעשור". ואי אפשר לומר בעשור, שהרי כבר נאמר "בשבעה", הא כיצד? בשבעה נכנסו נכרים להיכל, ואכלו וקלקלו בו שביעי שמיני.

And it is taught in a baraita: It is impossible to say that the Temple was burned on the seventh of Av, as it has already been stated, in Jeremiah, that it was destroyed on the tenth. And it is also impossible to say that the Temple was burned on the tenth of Av, as it has already been stated that it was destroyed on the seventh, in II Kings 25:8–9. How so; what actually occurred? On the seventh of Av, gentiles entered the Sanctuary, and on the seventh and the eighth they atethere and desecrated it, by engaging in acts of fornication.

ותשיעי סמוך לתשיכה הציתו בו את האור, והיה דולק והולך כל היום כולו, שנאמר: "אוי לנו כי פנה היום פי ינטו צללי ערב". והיינו דאמר רבי יוחנן: אלמלי הייתי באותו הדור לא קבעתיו אלא בעשירי, מפני שרובו של היכל בו נשרף. ורבנן — אתחלתא דפורענותא עדיפא.

And on the ninth, adjacent to nightfall, they set fire to it, and it continuously burned the entire day, as it is stated: “Woe unto us, for the day has declined, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out” (Jeremiah 4:6). This verse is interpreted as a prophecy about the evening when the Temple was burned. **And this is what Rabbi Yohanan meant when he said: Had I been alive in that generation, I would have established the fast only on the tenth of Av because**

most of the Sanctuary was burned on that day. And the Sages, who established the fast on the ninth, how do they respond to that comment? They maintain that it is preferable to mark the beginning of the tragedy.

ובשננה מנלן, דתנא: מגלגלין זכות ליום זפאי, וחובה ליום תייב.

And the mishna further taught that the Temple was destroyed **for the second time** also on the Ninth of Av. The Gemara asks: **From where do we** derive that the Second Temple was destroyed on this date? **It is taught** in a *baraita*: **A meritorious matter is brought about on an auspicious day, and a deleterious matter on an inauspicious day**, e.g., the Ninth of Av, on which several tragedies had already occurred.

Josephus The Jewish War Chapter 6

AND NOW two of the Legions had completed their banks, on the eighth day of the month Lous [Ab]. Whereupon Titus gave orders that the battering rams should be brought, and set over against the western edifice of the inner temple. But when Titus perceived that his endeavours to spare a foreign temple, turned to the damage of his soldiers, and made them be killed, he gave order to set the gates on fire.

But then, on the next day, Titus commanded part of his army to quench the fire, and to make a road for the more easy marching up of the legions; while he himself gathered the commanders together themselves:

Now it is true, that on this day the Jews were so weary, and under such a consternation, that they refrained from any attacks.

So Titus retired into the tower of Antonia; and resolved to storm the temple, the next day, early in the morning, with his whole army: and to encamp round about the holy house. **But as for that house, God had, for certain, long ago doomed it to the fire. And now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages: it was the tenth day of the month Lous [Ab, A.D. 70]: upon which it was formerly burnt by the King of Babylon.** Although these flames took their rise from the Jews themselves, and were occasioned by them. For upon Titus's retiring, the seditious lay still for a little while, and then attacked the Romans again; when those that guarded the holy house fought with those that quenched the fire that was burning the inner [court of the] temple. But these Romans put the Jews to flight; and proceeded as far as the holy house itself. At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking; and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out

of the materials that were on fire: and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward, the Jews made a great clamour, such as so mighty an affliction required; and ran together to prevent it. And now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered any thing to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, for whose sake it was that they kept such a guard about it.

Abarbanel on Jeremiah 2:24

וכמה עוד מהשמדות והגרושים היו בחודש ההוא לישראל. ומה אוסיף עוד לדבר והנה כשגזר מלך ספרד גרוש על כל היהודים אשר בכל מדינות מלכותו שיצאו כמשלש חדשים נשלם והיה יום היציאה ט' באב. והוא לא ידע מזה הזמן דבר כאילו מן השמים הדריכוהו.

And several other destructions and expulsions of the Jews took place on this month. What more can I say, when the King of Spain decreed that the Jews must leave Spain in three months, the date of the expulsion was Tisha Bav. He did not know anything about this date – it must have been driven from heaven.

Edict of Expulsion of Jews of Spain, March 31, 1492

Therefore, we, with the counsel and advice of prelates, great noblemen of our kingdoms, and other persons of learning and wisdom of our Council, having taken deliberation about this matter, resolve to order the said Jews and Jewesses of our kingdoms to depart and never to return or come back to them or to any of them. And concerning this we command this our charter to be given, by which we order all Jews and Jewesses of whatever age they may be, who live, reside, and exist in our said kingdoms and lordships, as much those who are natives as those who are not, who by whatever manner or whatever cause have come to live and reside therein, **that by the end of the month of July next of the present year, they depart from all of these our said realms and lordships**, along with their sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants, Jewish familiars, those who are great as well as the lesser folk, of whatever age they may be, and they shall not dare to return to those places, nor to reside in them, nor to live in any part of them, neither temporarily on the way to somewhere else nor in any other manner, under pain that if they do not perform and comply with this command and should be found in our said kingdom and lordships and should in any manner live in them, they incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their

possessions by our Chamber of Finance, incurring these penalties by the act itself, without further trial, sentence, or declaration. And we command and forbid that any person or persons of the said kingdoms, of whatever estate, condition, or dignity that they may be, shall dare to receive, protect, defend, nor hold publicly or secretly any Jew or Jewess beyond the date of the end of July and from henceforth forever, in their lands, houses, or in other parts of any of our said kingdoms and lordships, under pain of losing all their possessions, vassals, fortified places, and other inheritances, and beyond this of losing whatever financial grants they hold from us by our Chamber of Finance.