**Tisha B’Av**

 

*Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem, Rembrandt*

 Tisha B’Av, the most solemn day in the Jewish year, commemorates the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Tisha B’Av is literally translated as the 9th of Av, which is the date on the Jewish calendar marking the event. This year, Tisha B’Av begins at sundown on Monday, July 31 and continues through Tuesday, August 1.

 The Three Weeks leading up to Tisha B’Av is a national period of mourning, referred to simply as “The Three Weeks.” This 21 day period sets the serious, melancholic tone inherent to this time of year, where we recall not only the destruction of the Temples, but the exile of the Jewish people that resulted from this epic tragedy.

 To help us connect with the intensity of this loss, we lessen our own joy. During the Three Weeks, it is traditional to not get married, have parties, play instruments, get haircuts, etc.  A minor fast day is observed on 17 Tammuz (the first day of the 21 day period) and a full fast is observed on Tisha B’av.

 On erev Tisha B’Av, we read from *Eicha,* the book of Lamentations. This collection of five poetic laments details the destruction of Jerusalem. As a sign of the national time of mourning Tisha b’Av represents for the Jewish people, it is traditional to read *Eicha* in the dark with flashlights, while sitting on the floor.

 While we connect with the themes of loss, destruction, and exile during this time of mourning, we are also reminded of hope. The three haftarot we read during the Three Weeks include strong prophetic messages about the perils and consequences of a sinful way of life. Yet each haftarah plants the seed of hope with the promise of redemption.