

Newsbytes

The First Watch

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Tonight: The 9th of Av/Tisha b’Av

Purpose of Tisha B’Av

Tisha B’Av, which lands on the ninth day of the month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem (586 B.C. and A.D. 70), as well as other tragedies in Jewish history. It has overshadowed all other fast days in Jewish tradition and is observed with solemnity and mourning. Characterized by various prohibitions, Tisha B’Av “is considered the saddest day on our calendar.”

Origin of Tisha B’Av

Tisha B’Av originated in the first century A.D. as a fast day to mourn five tragedies in Jewish history, all of which were said to have occurred on that same day. As time went on, more catastrophes were added to the list. Tisha B’Av now commemorates the following:

- Ten of our spies brought a bad report to Moses about the land of Israel and we refused to enter the land. As such, God forced that generation to wander forty years and die in the wilderness (Numbers 14)
- Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.
- The Roman destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70
- The annihilation of Bar Kokhba’s rebellion
- The plowing of the Temple area in Jerusalem by Roman general Turnus Rufus
- The massacre of the entire Jewish population of York, England in 1190 due to the Christian “blood libel”
- The banishment of all Jewish people from England in 1290 by King Edward
- The final day for Jewish people to leave Spain after the expulsion order of 1492
- The beginning of the Nazis’ deportation of Jewish people from Warsaw to Treblinka in 1942

How Tisha B’Av Is Observed

Tisha B’Av is generally observed through fasting. The Mishnah sets out various additional prohibitions for the week preceding Tisha B’Av:

“During the week of Tisha B’Av, it is forbidden to cut hair or bathe... On the afternoon before Tisha B’Av [when having the last meal before the fast] a person may not eat two cooked foods... nor may he eat meat, or drink wine” (Ta’anit 4).

According to rabbinic tradition, Jewish people are also not to engage in study of the Torah on Tisha

B'Av. The Torah gladdens our hearts and is a source of pleasure; therefore, it is forbidden on a day of mourning.

Today, many religious Jewish people observe the holiday by fasting, and some also adhere to the additional prohibitions.

Huge Kingdom of Judah government complex found near US Embassy in Jerusalem

Among the 2,700-year-old finds: 120 inscribed seal impressions on jars at storage facility holding food collected as taxes for kings Hezekiah, Menashe in First Temple times

By AMANDA BORSCHEL-DAN 22 July 2020



An Israel Antiquities Authority excavation on the slopes of the Jerusalem neighborhood of Arnona uncovered an administrative complex from 2,700 years ago. (Yaniv Berman, Israel Antiquities Authority)



Two-winged royal ancient Hebrew 'LMLK' seal impression -- 'Belonging to the King' -- found at the 2,700-year-old administrative complex in Jerusalem's Arnona neighborhood. (Yaniv Berman, Israel Antiquities)

Clay figurines of women and animals were also found at the Arnona, Jerusalem excavation site.

One of the largest collections of royal Kingdom of Judah seal impressions has been uncovered at a massive First Temple-period public tax collection and storage complex being excavated near the new United States Embassy in Jerusalem. The main Iron Age structure is exceptional in terms of both its size and architectural style, said Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Neri Saper, who co-directed the excavation.

Uncovered only three kilometers (1.8 mile) outside the Old City, the compound is believed by Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologists to have served as an administrative center during the reigns of Judean kings Hezekiah and Menashe (8th century to the middle of the 7th century BCE).

Over 120 jar handles stamped 2,700 years ago with ancient Hebrew script seal impressions were

discovered at the site, clearly indicating the location's use as a storage and tax center, according to an IAA press release Wednesday. Prevalent among the stamped inscriptions is "LMLK," "LamMeLeKh," or "Belonging to the King," a way of marking that the foodstuffs stored in the jars had been tithed to the Judean ruler.

This trove of LMLK seal impressions adds to the over 2,000 similar seals previously discovered at excavations and allows archaeologists to rethink the administrative and tax collection systems of the Kingdom of Judah.

"This is one of the most significant discoveries from the period of the Kings in Jerusalem made in recent years. At the site we excavated, there are signs that governmental activity managed and distributed food supplies not only for shortage but administered agricultural surplus amassing commodities and wealth," said IAA excavation co-directors Sapir and Nathan Ben-Ari in a press release Wednesday.

So Many Jews are Returning to Israel that the Government is Worried they Won't be Able to Absorb Them

by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz | Jul 13, 2020 | Biblical News

Unlike immigration to other countries, olim to Israel are welcomed as long-lost brothers, educated and housed at great public expense. A combination of coronavirus and anti-Semitism is creating conditions expected to bring millions of Jews home. But the Israeli government, already stretched to the limit, is concerned they may not be able to fulfill the prophecy in the proper manner.

The Knesset's Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee met last Wednesday to discuss a major dilemma: Jewish immigration is expected to double next year but budgetary constraints will make it difficult, if not impossible to absorb them into Israeli society.

Earlier this month, Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog reported to the committee that an estimated 250,000 people, mostly young people, will immigrate to Israel within the next three to five years. Herzog added that the number of people who have contacted the Jewish Agency about Aliyah from English-speaking countries has increased by 50%, and by 70% from French-speaking countries.

Israel could receive as many as 90,000 new immigrants in 2021 – nearly three times the number of immigrants in 2019.

Jewish Agency CEO Amira Ahronoviz presented the official Aliyah statistics for 2019: 35,000 immigrants, including 24,651 from the Commonwealth of Independent States; 3,963 from European countries; 3,539 from North America; 1,746 from Latin America; 663 from Ethiopia; 442 from South Africa; 318 from Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries; and 189 from Australia and New Zealand. In 2009, only 16,000 people made Aliyah.

Though these declarations are certainly cause for celebration as manifestations of the prophesied ingathering of the exiles, coping with immigration to Israel requires preparing physical vessels to receive the divine blessings.

MK David Bitan (Likud) emphasized that Israel must prepare for a large wave of immigration in the next year and a half due to the fact that large Jewish communities overseas have seen a significant number of corona-related deaths, alongside the rising anti-Semitism around the world.

The Israeli government goes to great efforts to help new immigrants with job placement, housing options, scholarships for new immigrant university students, and language skills. In the meeting on this subject last week, Bitan noted that immigration to Israel was being hampered by a shortage of consuls in Israeli embassies in the US. He also noted a shortage of manpower in Nativ, an independent administrative unit in the Prime Minister's Office that is in charge of determining the eligibility to immigrate to Israel from the US and Eastern Europe based on the Law of Return.

The Law of Return gives Jews the right to come and live in Israel and to gain Israeli citizenship. Though simple in concept, the law raises issues of defining Jewish identity and, as a result, is controversial and complicated.

The committee called for making the citizenship process shorter than it currently is. Requests to make aliyah are processed in roughly four months. The pandemic has made the process longer and more difficult.

MK Zeev Elkin (Likud), who is in charge of Nativ, said that even prior to the corona crisis, people would have to wait about six months for an appointment at the Israeli Embassy in Moscow to check their eligibility for immigration. "The significance of this is that anyone who decides to make Aliyah will be able to actually do it only a year from now," he said. "In the meantime, he can, of course, change his mind, and we will lose this oleh (immigrant)."

According to Minister Elkin, Nativ's budget for 2015 was \$23.2 million but was reduced due to budgetary constraints to its current amount of \$16.2 million.

Nativ Director Neta Briskin-Peleg told the committee, "There are no shortcuts in checking eligibility. It is a complex, gentle (process) that takes time." During the process, she explained, Nativ also has to deal with the "document forging industry."

Rabbi Jeremy Gimpel, founder of the Land of Israel Fellowship Program, noted that immigration to Israel embodies the prophecy as described by Jeremiah.

Lo, I am sending for many fishermen —declares Hashem— And they shall haul them out; And after that I will send for many hunters, And they shall hunt them Out of every mountain and out of every hill And out of the clefts of the rocks. Jeremiah 16:16

"The prophet Jeremiah speaks of two stages of the ingathering of the Jewish People back to the land of Israel," Rabbi Gimpel told Breaking Israel News, noting that we are clearly entering a new stage of this prophecy. "Looking at history, it seems as though country by country, the exile is being shut down. From Arab countries, Ethiopia, Russia, France, and the rest of Europe... Now America is being shaken. It seems to be a new part of this larger process of return."

Rabbi Gimpel emphasized that despite being prophecy, aliyah is, after all, produced through real-world means, requiring money.

"Israel has absorbed more immigrants per capita than any other country in the world," Rabbi Gimpel said. "It isn't easy but it the foundational purpose of the State of Israel is to provide a national home for the Jewish People."

New Poll: Americans See The Hand Of God At Work In Current Events

prophecynewswatch.com

2020 has been an incredibly bizarre year up to this point, and this has many people wondering if the hand of God is at work. And the worse things get, the more this sort of speculation will heat up.

When things get crazy, people search for answers, and that can be a good thing. Because the truth is that during normal times most of us are way too self-absorbed and most of us spend far too little time thinking about the things that really matter.

2020 has really shaken up a large portion of the U.S. population, and we should hope that all of this shaking ultimately moves our society in a more positive direction.

Right now, COVID-19 is dominating the headlines day after day, and the debates that I have seen on social media platforms about this pandemic have often gotten quite heated.

I knew that many people had extremely passionate opinions about COVID-19, but what I didn't realize is that a large percentage of them are also convinced that God is somehow involved.

In fact, an Associated Press/NORC survey found that 63 percent of all religious Americans believe that this pandemic is "a sign from God"...

Sixty-three percent of religious Americans say that the novel coronavirus pandemic is a sign from God, telling humanity to change its ways of living, according to a new poll.

The poll, which was conducted by the Associated Press/NORC, surveyed 1,002 U.S. adults who say they believe in God.

I was stunned to see a number that high. The Bible does tell us that there will be "pestilences" in the last days, and it would have been very interesting to see how many respondents to that survey believe that this COVID-19 pandemic is one of those pestilences.

In any event, if this pandemic actually does inspire vast numbers of Americans to live better lives, that would definitely be a positive outcome.

Unfortunately, that does not appear to be happening. Instead, surveys have shown that Americans are increasingly turning to drugs, alcohol and television during this pandemic, and a survey that was released just this week found that Bible reading in the United States dropped precipitously "between January and June"...

The number of American adults the American Bible Society considers "Scripture engaged" based on how frequently they read Scripture and its impact on their relationships and choices dropped significantly from 28% to 22.7% between January and June, according to additional data collected by the organization in June.

Another thing that has many Americans speculating is the very unusual storm that hit New York City on Wednesday. A massive thunderstorm sent wind gusts of up to 75 mph howling through the city, and at one point "purple lightning bolts" were photographed striking One World Trade Center...

Dramatic photos captured the moment purple lightning bolts struck the tip of One World Trade Center -

while smaller bolts scattered across the sky in New York City.

Huge bolts of lightning were also photographed hitting the middle of the Hudson River, near Lower Manhattan - making an eerie sight.

Could that lightning strike have some sort of spiritual significance?

I certainly do not know. But when video footage emerged of lightning hitting "on or behind" the Statue of Liberty, that fueled the speculation even more...

Video footage captured the moment lightning bolts struck on or behind Lady Liberty with dark clouds seen overhead.

In addition, a lightning bolt also hit the steeple of a church, and this caused a very dangerous fire...

The FDNY responded to the fire at the Spirit and Truth Christian Church on Sutter Avenue just after 7:30 p.m.

Crews worked hard to save the house of worship as flames raced up the front of the building, right beneath the steeple.

Neighbors say the clap of thunder that preceded the fire was even more dramatic than the actual flames.

Witnesses say the steeple took a direct hit from a lightning bolt.

In normal times, perhaps a thunderstorm of this nature would be largely ignored.

But these are not normal times.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, people are buzzing about the fact that the locust armies that have been absolutely devastating parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia have now made their way to Europe.

Farms on the Italian island of Sardinia are now being ravaged by desert locusts, and one British news source is using the term "biblical plague" to describe what is happening...

In a situation reminiscent of a biblical plague, the insects have stripped large areas of the island's agricultural regions of crops, in what the World Bank has already been branded the most serious such invasion the world has faced in 70 years.

The epicentre is formed by the municipalities of Orani, Ottana and Bolotana in the Tirso valley, with insects having arrived from the Middle East and Africa, where 23 countries have experienced similar problems.

Over the past several months, I have written several articles about this very unusual plague and the impact that it is having on the global food supply. Some of the swarms are as large as major cities, and when the locusts descend upon a farm they can literally eat everything there in as little as 30 seconds.

Lastly, I wanted to mention a very close encounter that we will have with an asteroid on November 2nd. Apparently, a rock known as "2018 VP1" is supposed to pass very close to our planet on that day...

There's a video on Youtube saying we are about to have another "very-close encounter" with an asteroid. What the Jet Propulsion Lab in California calls "Near-Earth-Objects" or NEOs. Now keep in mind asteroids have been coming close or have hit our planet for millions of years, and many do daily. The bulk of

asteroids and debris in space as you may remember from science class get burned up in the atmosphere, caused by the friction from the air as objects hit the atmosphere going many thousands of miles per hour.

However, one Youtube video says an asteroid called "2018 VP1", which is about 6 feet diameter will pass within about 300 miles of our planet on November 2, 2020. However, some experts are saying this nothing to fear. First off there's the math, asteroid "2018 VP1" is projected to come 0.02 times the distance between the earth and the moon. Given that the moon is 239,000 miles away, 0.02 equates to 4,780 miles.

Now your thinking that's far off right? What's the big deal? Well, when they compute this stuff through orbital mechanics, they use the center of the celestial body, in this case, the earth. The earth is 7,917 miles across, and half that is 3,958 miles. That is where the video correctly gets its 300-mile estimate from, or a drive from Metro Detroit to Sault Sainte Marie in the UP to put it in perspective.

The good news is that this asteroid is so small that it is not likely to cause any damage even if it enters our atmosphere.

But I have noticed that there is a tremendous amount of discussion about asteroids on social media lately, and scientists assure us that it is just a matter of time before a very large rock does slam into our planet.

A lot of people do not like to be reminded of such things, but realizing how dependent we are on God for every breath that we take leads to humility. Sometimes we need something to shake us up so that we will turn back to Him.

It is so easy to lose sight of what really matters, and that is why we should be thankful for events that come along that cause us to step back and consider the bigger picture.