

## Tish'ah be'Av Kinnot

*One of the main things that we do on Tish'ah Be'Av is reading the special Tish'ah Be'Av poems, called kinnot. These poems are meant to help us reflect on some of the main events of today and to help us to imagine how Jews must have experienced these tragedies when they happened. Because the full Kinnot are very long and can be pretty hard to understand, we have created a packet with some key pieces of different kinnot for you to learn as a chavruta.*

**Imagine** that you are walking down the street, and you meet someone who has never heard of Tish'ah Be'Av before and is very curious to learn more. He says, "I heard that it's some kind of fast day for Jews today, and that it's supposed to be a very sad day or something." You tell him a little bit about some of the other things we do on Tish'ah Be'Av, like sitting on the floor and not wearing leather shoes. He's very impressed with all of this, but he still doesn't really understand. "Ok, so I get that you're doing all of this mourning and stuff, but what's the point of all of it? Why is today so sad?"

*How do you explain Tish'ah Be'Av to somebody who has never even heard of it before?*



### **Tish'ah Be'Av: What Happened?**

Let's first go over the main events that the Kinnot talk about. Kinnot were written throughout Jewish History, beginning with the Megillah of Eichah that we read last night. Here are the main tragedies that the kinnot talk about:

- The Destruction of the 1st Beit HaMikdash (9th of Av, 586 B.C.E.)
- The Destruction of the 2nd Beit HaMikdash and the Exile (9th of Av, 70 C.E.)
- The First Crusade, where the Crusaders attacked and destroyed Jewish communities in Germany and France (1096)
- The Spanish Inquisition and Expulsion, where Jews were either attacked and forced to convert to Christianity or were kicked out of Spain (7th of Av, 1492)
- The Holocaust

Now that we understand the history of Tish'ah Be'Av, we still have to work on the emotions. Imagine you were one of these Jewish poets and you had to write a kinnah about Tish'ah Be'Av. You have to get Jewish communities around the world to understand why Tish'ah Be'Av is so important and what the main emotions are. What would you write? What kind of feelings would you focus on?

**Kinnot of the Destruction of the Beit HaMikdash**



Rabbi Elazar HaKalir wrote several *kinnot* about the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Let's look at a few pieces of his poem. What feelings does he focus on?

Kinnah 6, Rabbi Elazar HaKalir	
<p>Happiness has ceased, "Get away from me!" I hear around me. Those who were once my friends call me dirty and disgusting. You have hidden Your Temple, You hid Yourself and allowed the defeat of my great men, my enemies cheer when I stumble, trampling on all my warriors.</p> <p>Zion spreads out its hands in sorrow.</p> <p>I called upon my ally Gibeon but they acted as strangers to me; I called to the Arabs but they mocked me; I called to my lovers but they tricked me.</p>	<p>שְׁבַת סוּרוּ מִנִּי שְׂמֵעוּנִי עוֹבְרֵי. סָחִי וּמְאוֹס  הַשִּׁימוּנִי בְּעֵדְרֵי חֲבֵרֵי. סְכוּתָהּ מִשְׁכַּן  מִסְכּוֹת דְּבִירֵי. סְכוּת וְהִבְלִגּוּ גְבוּרֵי. סִפְקוּ  כָּף וּמַעַדוֹ אֶבְרֵי. כִּסְלָה כָּל אֲבִירֵי:  פִּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ:  קָרָאתִי לְיוֹשְׁבֵי גְבְעוֹן עוֹד הֵם זָרְמוּנֵי.  קוּלִי לְהַשְׁמִיעַ בְּעֶרְבַּ הַגְּרִימוּנֵי. קוּמִי  עֲבוּרֵי בְּהַתֵּל הָעֵרִימוּנֵי. קָרָאתִי לְמֵאֲהָבֵי  הַמָּה רְמוּנֵי:</p>

*One feeling that comes up over and over again is loneliness, isolation from all other nations. Everyone is against us, or refuses to help us.*

*How can we relate to this sense of feeling alone? How might our recent experiences of quarantine and social distancing help us relate to this?*

Kinnah 7, Rabbi Elazar HaKalir

How could You rush Your anger and allow Your faithful people to perish at the hands of the Romans? and not remember Your promise to our forefathers who were tested. And so, we cry out, “Remember God what has happened to us”.

How could You abandon Your Sanctuary in anger, for strangers to ruin it? and not remember the wedding vows [at the giving of the Torah] at Chorev, whose laws You carved in stone. And so, we state: “Remember God what has happened to us”.

איכה אצת באפך לאבד ביד אדומים  
אמוניך. ולא זכרת ברית בין הבתרים  
אשר בררת לבחוניך. ובכנ בטינו. זכור  
:: מה ה'ה לנו:

איכה זנחת בזעמך לזלזל ביד זרים  
זבולך. ולא זכרת חתון חקי חורב  
אשר חקקת לחמוליך. ובכנ חוינו. זכור  
:: מה ה'ה לנו:

*Another theme that we find on Tish'ah Be'Av is “Eichah”, how. We ask God how He could allow all of this to happen, and we ask Him to remember everything that happened.*

*How is it okay for us to question God?*

*What does it mean for God to “remember” us, doesn't he know everything already?*

### Kinnot for the First Crusades



*In the year 1096, Christian Crusaders began marching to conquer Jerusalem from the Muslims, but some decided to attack the Jews who lived near them instead, destroying whole communities.*

Kinnah 25, Rabbi Klonymus Ben Yehudah

And on the great leaders of the community of Mainz, faster than

ועל אדירי קהל מגנצא ההדורה. מנשרים

eagles and stronger than lions; together they gave their lives for the Name [of God], and for them, I will scream bitterly, for the destruction of both Temples today, and for the destruction of the mini-Temples [synagogues] and Batei Midrash of Torah. For the house of Israel and the people of God who have been killed by the sword.

Take this to heart, and write a bitter eulogy, as the mourning over their murder is equal to the burning of the House of God. And since we cannot add a day of mourning, today I will express my grief, and I will mourn and cry with a bitter soul, groaning from dawn to dusk. For the house of Israel and the people of God who have been killed by the sword.

קָלוּ מֵאֲרִיּוֹת לְהִתְגַּבְּרָה, הַשְּׁלִימוּ נַפְשֵׁם עַל  
 יְחִיד שֵׁם הַנוֹרָא, וְעַלֵּיהֶם זַעֲקַת שֹׁבֵר  
 אֲשֶׁעֲרָה, עַל שְׁנֵי מִקְדָּשֵׁי יְסוּדֵם כְּהַיּוֹם  
 עֲרַעְרָה, וְעַל חֲרֻבוֹת מַעַט מִקְדָּשֵׁי וּמִדְרָשֵׁי  
 הַתּוֹרָה. עַל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יִי כִּי נָפְלוּ  
 בַּחֶרֶב:

שִׁימוּ נָא עַל לְבַבְכֶם מִסֵּפֶד מֵר לְקִשְׁרָה, כִּי  
 שְׁקוּלָה הִרְיָגְתֶּם לְהִתְאַבֵּל וּלְהִתְעַפְּרָה,  
 כְּשֶׁרַפַּת בַּיִת אֶלְקִינוּ הָאוֹלָם וְהַבִּירָה, וְכִי אֵין  
 לְהוֹסִיף מוֹעֵד שֹׁבֵר וְתַבְעֵרָה, וְאֵין לְהַקְדִּים  
 זִלְתִּי לְאַחֲרָה, תַּחַת כֵּן הַיּוֹם לוֹיְתִי אֶעוֹרְרָה,  
 וְאֶסְפְּדָה וְאֵילִילָה וְאֶבְכֶּה בְּנַפְשׁ מִרָה,  
 וְאֶנְחָתִי כְּבִדָּה מִבְּקָר עַד עֶרֶב. עַל בַּיִת  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יִי כִּי נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב:

*One big loss that is emphasized here is the loss of the community leaders, Shuls, and Batei Midrash. How can we relate to these losses, especially in light of our experiences of quarantine?*

*This poem tells us that “we cannot add a day of mourning”. Why doesn’t the Crusades get its own day to fast or mourn? Why would it make sense to commemorate all of our historical tragedies on Tish’ah Be’Av?*

*Is there some connection between the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and all of these other tragedies, since they all happened in Exile?*

**Kinnot for Tzion**



*The next big group of kinnot that we say begins with the word “Tzion”, each expressing the dream to return to Yerushalayim.*

Kinnah 36, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi	
Tzion, surely you will ask about your imprisoned ones, those who look out for you, the leftover members of your flock.	צִיּוֹן, הֲלֹא תִשְׁאֲלֵי לְשִׁלוֹם אֲסִירֶיךָ, דּוֹרְשֵׁי שְׁלוֹמְךָ וְהֵם יִתְרַעְדְּרֶיךָ:

There God's Presence is near, and their God has opened up the gates of Heaven opposite your gates... You are the royal palace and the throne of God, and how do slaves now sit on the thrones of your princes?

Tzion, perfectly beautiful, you have been tied up with love and kindness long ago, tied up with your friends. They are the ones who are happy when you are peaceful, and are pained by your destruction, who cry about your ruin. From the prisoners' dungeon they think of you and bow from their place, toward your gates. Your flocks, who have been scattered from mountain to hill, have not forgotten your walls.

שֵׁם הַשְּׁכִינָה שְׁכָנָה לָךְ, וְהִיוּצֶרֶךְ פֶּתַח  
לְמוֹל שְׁעָרֵי שַׁחַק שְׁעָרֶיךָ... אֶת בֵּית  
מְלוּכָה וְאֶת כְּסֵא ה', וְאִיךָ יֵשְׁבוּ עֲבָדִים עָלֶי  
כְּסֻאוֹת גְּבוּרֶיךָ?

צִיּוֹן כְּלִילַת יָפִי, אֶהְבֶּה וְחֹן תִּקְשְׁרֵי מֵאֶז, וְכִךְ נִקְשְׁרוּ נִפְשׁוֹת חֲבֵרֶיךָ – הֵם הַשְּׂמִיחִים  
לְשִׁלּוֹתְךָ וְהַכּוֹאֲבִים עַל שׁוֹמְמוֹתֶיךָ וּבּוֹכִים  
עַל שְׁבָרֶיךָ. מִבּוֹר שְׁבִי שׁוֹאֲפִים נִגְדֶּךְ  
וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים אִישׁ מִמְקוֹמוֹ אֵלַי נִכַח שְׁעָרֶיךָ,  
עֲדָרֵי הַמּוֹנֵךְ, אֲשֶׁר גָּלוּ וְהִתְפָּזְרוּ מֵהָר  
לְגִבְעָה וְלֹא שָׁכְחוּ גְדֵרֶיךָ.

*This kinnah talks about how much we look towards tzion while in Exile. How can we relate to this today, now that we have returned to Israel and Jerusalem?*

*Why is it important to emphasize that we have not forgotten Yerushalayim, especially today?*

### **Kinnot for the Holocaust**



#### **Kinnah for the Holocaust, Rabbi Shimon Schwab**

And so we are left, like a shocked orphan, without even graves to pray at, no tombstones for the tears and cries from our hearts. Their only memorial is the blood of their sacrifice, blood that will bubble and never be forgotten, and the mountains of their ashes on the altars of their sacrifice.

Who could express the pain of Israel, minds overwhelmed with sadness, shattered pieces of its former glory, and how its greatness was crushed.

ובכן נשאר עם, כיתום נדהם, בלי קברים  
להשתטח,  
ולא מצבות, איפה לבכות, יבבות לבב רותח,  
רק נסכי-הדם, אזכרותם, תוססים בלי שוכח,  
והרי אפרי עקדתם, תרומות דשני מזבח.

מי ימלל, צער ישראל, אשר דעתו מכאב  
נטרפת,

ושארית הפאר, כמעט מזעיר, ואיך קומתה  
היום נכפפת.

*Why does the kinnah emphasize that we don't have graves for those who died in the Holocaust? How does that make our suffering worse?*

*Why can't the pain of the Holocaust be expressed? What about it makes it beyond words?*

### **The Last Kinnah: Eli Tzion**



*The last kinnah that we say (and the one that we sing), is Eli Tzion, where we return to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash.*

Eli Tziyon (Kinnah 45)	
<p><b>Mourn</b> for Zion and her cities, like a woman giving birth, like a young woman wrapped in sack-cloth [mourning] for the husband of her youth.</p> <p><b>Mourn</b> for the palace that was abandoned because of the sin of her sheep, and for the entry of those who curse God into her holy sanctuary.</p> <p><b>Mourn</b> for God's exiled servants who beautifully sang her songs, and for their blood that was spilled like the waters of her rivers.</p> <p><b>Mourn</b> for the lyrics of her dances, now silenced in her cities, and for the assembly that was destroyed and the ending of her court [the Sanhedrin].</p>	<p>אֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וְעֶרְיָה, כְּמוֹ אִשָּׁה בְּצִירָיָה, וְכַבְתּוּלָה חֲגוּרַת שֶׁקַּי, עַל בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ.</p> <p>עָלֵי אַרְמוֹן אֲשֶׁר נִטַּשׁ, בְּאַשְׁמַת צֶאֱן עֲדָרֶיהָ, וְעַל בֵּית מְחַרְפֵי אֵל, בְּתוֹךְ מִקְדָּשׁ חֲדָרֶיהָ.</p> <p>עָלֵי גְלוֹת מְשַׁרְתֵי אֵל, נְעִימֵי שִׁיר זְמֶרְיָה, וְעַל דָּמָם אֲשֶׁר שִׁפַּךְ כְּמוֹ מֵימֵי יְאוּרֶיהָ.</p> <p>עָלֵי הַגִּיּוֹן מְחֻלְיָה, אֲשֶׁר דָּמָם בְּעֶרְיָה, וְעַל וַעַד אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַם וּבִטּוֹל סִנְהֶדְרֶיהָ.</p>

*Again, we focus on different things that we used to have in Jerusalem but now have lost.*

*How can we tell someone to mourn if they don't feel it, how do we make ourselves feel sadness over something we've never experienced?*

Here is a link to the full text of Eli Tzion:

[https://www.sefaria.org/Kinnot\\_for\\_Tisha\\_B'Av\\_\(Ashkenaz\)%2C\\_Kinot\\_for\\_Tisha\\_B'Av\\_Day.45?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Kinnot_for_Tisha_B'Av_(Ashkenaz)%2C_Kinot_for_Tisha_B'Av_Day.45?lang=bi)

And here is a recording of the kinnah, for you to sing along:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jb89N-uPqwI>

If you want to learn more or look into other kinnot as well, feel free to open up your own kinnot books, or you can access them online at Sefaria:

[https://www.sefaria.org/Kinnot\\_for\\_Tisha\\_B'Av\\_\(Ashkenaz\)%2C\\_Kinot\\_for\\_Tisha\\_B'Av\\_Day.6?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Kinnot_for_Tisha_B'Av_(Ashkenaz)%2C_Kinot_for_Tisha_B'Av_Day.6?lang=bi)