THE TENTH OF TEBET

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The 10th of Tebet is a fast day on which we say additional selihot in our prayers in order to remember the sad events that took place in the Temple Era during this time of year. Tzidkiyahu, the last king from the family of King David ruled over the Kingdom of Yehudah. The Temple stood in its glory in Yerushalayim, a bustling metropolis full of an active populous. Yirmiyahu, the prophet, went from place to place throughout the city begging people to make repentance and return Kedushah -- holiness -- to their lives. He said that if the people refused to heed Hashem's warnings - - the results would be disastrous. The people ignored the holy messenger and some even made fun of him. Nevuzardan, a high officer of King Nebuchadnezar, came with many battalions and laid siege to our holy capital. The siege began on the 10th of Tebet and resulted in the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash 2 1/2 years later.

The purpose of fasting almost 2500 years after the events of the destruction took place is to awaken our hearts today to repentance. Our sages teach that anyone who lives at a time when there is no Bet Hamikdash must realize that had he or she lived when the Temple stood that his or her behavior would contribute to its destruction. Should we mend our ways and remove from our lives the behavior that brings destruction we will bring about the construction of the third Temple -- the one that will never be destroyed -- and the coming of Mashiah speedily in our days. May we all spend the day productively contributing to that end -- Amen.

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