

“NO ONE NEED GRIEVE ALONE”

From the 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of Av is a period of three weeks of mourning for the destruction of the Temple. The mourning gradually increases in intensity, culminating in a day of fasting and remembrance.

When someone close to us dies, the process is reversed. Gradually there is a decrease of intensity, from the week of Shiva, to Shloshim -- the thirty days following mourning -- to the year of saying Kaddish, the mourning prayer.

Why does the first process grow and the second diminish? Because, teaches Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik, each is designed to connect the mourner to the Jewish people. The individual mourner must be brought back to people, out of private grief. And the worshiper approaching Tisha B'av must be induced to take part in the collective memory of the Jewish people. Each needs to join something larger than himself, one through community, the other through history.

When private tragedy strikes, we need the warmth of others. When there is a collective tragedy, the calamities of others must become ours as well. Mourning is a letting go and a rejoining. Miguel De Unamuno wrote “The great sanctity of a Temple is that it is where men go to weep together.” Our tradition teaches us that no one need grieve alone.