

## Message from the Rabbi on Tisha B'Av

To be a Jew is to be “Jew”bilant. We love to celebrate simchas with great joy and every Shabbat service is followed by the “oneg” Shabbat, (the joy of the Sabbath) in which we celebrate the joy of Creation, freedom and the love we have for our heritage and one another.

However, Jews have also suffered our share of tragedies and then some. To avoid having to mourn all the horrors that we have experienced throughout our long history, the architects of Judaism imagined that many of these catastrophic events happened on the same day, so we could express our grief for many different events all at once. Thus, we were told that the destruction of the first Temple and the second Temple and many other calamities all happened on Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of Av.

As we commemorate Tisha B'Av we recognize the genius and the eternal optimism of our ancestors by not only mourning our past, but for daring to envision a better tomorrow by creating a new paradigm for our future in response to catastrophic loss. When the second Temple was destroyed, Jews replaced the sacrificial system of the Temple with a more rational and productive way to try to live up to our highest potential and Jewish ideals. Sacrifice of innocent animals was replaced by the sacrifice of our time, our energy and our funds for a higher purpose, with Mitzvahs, study, and striving to serve as a light unto the nations becoming the hallmark of Judaism.

This summer, it is becoming clear even to the most clueless among us that the climate is changing for the worse, and a hellish dystopia awaits our species and our planet if we do not take immediate action to change our ways. We have become too powerful to ignore the dire consequences of burning fossil fuels to provide energy. Unprecedented floods, fires and drought are merely a prelude to far more lethal consequences if we do not develop a new paradigm in which we are no longer addicted to fossil fuels. After all, a fossil is dead, and we Jews celebrate life.

As the movie Oppenheimer shows us, during World War II, the Greatest Generation realized that the Nazis may succeed in developing an atomic bomb before we did, which could change the balance of power for ever and cause the Nazis to succeed in their diabolical effort to rule the world. Despite our reluctance at first to enter the fray, once we were attacked, America recognized the threat and mobilized our resources to confront it. We assembled the greatest scientists to develop new technology that led to the atom bomb, as well as radar and the first computer, called ENIAC, to save England from aerial attack.

It is way past time for America and the world to open our eyes to the grave threat of climate change and to launch a “Manhattan Project” to save the world and to protect all future generations. Let us learn from the Greatest Generation and from our Jewish ancestors and tradition to not only recognize the threat, but to change our ways by liberating ourselves from our fossil fuel addiction.

Tisha B'Av is the perfect time to launch such an initiative. If we are successful in this regard, we will also avoid the horrible spectacle of sending a great proportion of our wealth to hostile regimes who are out to destroy us, every time we fill our gas tanks at the pump. Such technology is now being developed, but we need to recognize the crisis and step up such efforts.

The recent pandemic showed us how quickly science can be used to come up with a vaccine if we provide the resources to scientists to help solve our problems. Let us as a society come up with a vaccine to ward off continued climate change by developing alternative energy. Just as Jews led the way in the Manhattan Project and the development of the coronavirus vaccine, may we help lead the way towards helping mankind to create a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for allowing me to share.

With Shalom,  
Rabbi Barry Silver