

## Rabbi's Column

Tisha B'Av is coming up. This day commemorates the destruction of both the 1st and 2nd Temples. I just wanted to make a couple of points.

The tale of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza is one that the Rabbis of the Talmud use to describe why the second Temple was destroyed. [Abbreviated version: rich guy throws party and an invitation is accidentally sent to his enemy, and not his friend. He refuses to let the enemy in, even when the enemy offers to pay for the party - and there were Rabbis in the room who should have noticed the commotion. He gets back at the Rabbis by creating a reason for the Temple to be destroyed.] One part of the reason was reasonless hatred of one Jew for another. The other contributing factor was the inability of certain leaders of the community to either notice when somebody was being publicly embarrassed or to be flexible in their interpretation of halacha when this lack of notice resulted in potential slander to the Romans about the Jews. Feel free to make your own connections to events happening in Israel and elsewhere.

This event was traumatic, and a number of customs arose to maintain the memory of what had happened. One of these was to fast for 25 hours.

It is one thing to fast when you know you have food at home available for after the fast (just like it is one thing to try to limit yourself to foodstamp amounts for a day or week). It is quite another when there is no guarantee that there will be food, and this 25 hour fast might be followed by another one or more.

Communities throughout time have treated those who are hungry in various ways. Some of them have been rather benevolent, all things being equal. Like the agricultural rules in the Torah which were designed to help the impoverished and food insecure have a somewhat steady source of food (at least in good years.) Cheyenne's many traditions in helping those who have less is among the more benevolent. (It is not perfect, but we are always trying to do better.) Synagogue members help prepare meals for families in Family Promise, who might not be as able to do the hard work needed to get out of their temporary slump if they needed to also worry about dinner for their children. The COMEA shelter serves many thousands of meals a year (I had the exact figures somewhere, and I even saw it recently - but today it is in hiding). Misfortune can strike anyone. As long as we can help those less fortunate than ourselves and we do, we are fulfilling at least part of our job as God's partners. Each time we act helpfully, we counterbalance (in a way) the reasonless hatred which caused the Temple to be destroyed by displaying reasonless kindness.

May the day come when being in need will never mean not having something to eat.