

I have always appreciated how Jewish tradition deals with death: the honoring of the body, the rituals of *shiva* (7 days of intensive support for the mourners), *shloshim* (thirty days of mourning) and the year of Kaddish. We make public space for the slow process of grief.

These rituals, like so many other things, have been disrupted by a year of COVID. We have had to negotiate mourning without in-person community. Now, as we gather in person more, this is (of course) an opportunity for rejoicing. It is also an opportunity to deliberately mourn together.

Jewish tradition in its wisdom recognizes that we need space for collective as well as private grief. Our season of mourning, the Three Weeks from the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz to Tisha B'Av, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, commemorates the greatest catastrophes that historically and mythologically befell the Jewish people. The Three Weeks are a time for communal mourning and lament, and for germinating the seeds of *teshuvah*, as we ask ourselves, "What do we need to remember?" and "How can we envision something better?"

This year, I invite us to use the Three Weeks to engage in a collective expression of grief and memory, not only for the ancient, cosmic Jewish losses, but also for our individual and collective losses. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz (June 27<sup>th</sup>), you should have received an email inviting you to contribute to a Communal Lamentation, which we will read on Tisha B'Av. You can find instructions in this newsletter as well. We also will be inviting you to contribute to a collective art installation. On Tisha B'Av itself, we will offer forums for expressing both our ancient and contemporary laments.

In August, the month of Elul will start, opening the season of *teshuvah*--of collective repentance and repair. As we move out of the Three Weeks towards Elul, we will invite the community to create our aspirations for the future, and to gather on Rosh Chodesh Elul to set new intentions together.

I have so enjoyed beginning to gather with some of you in person. And I look forward to continuing to honor our griefs and our joys together.