

A Day's Deferral

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A Sacred Time

Av 2

The Ninth of Av is the harshest day of the Jewish calendar. But, this year, the fast falls out on Shabbat, and that makes a very big difference.

On Shabbat we're not permitted to fast, mourn, or fall into sadness. Shabbat is a day for experiencing a deep inner joy that is rooted in the world to come. Shabbat is the spiritual high point of every week, a day of liberation from our material concerns.

Shabbat and Tisha b'Av do have something in common, though; both are days when we yearn for G-d and spirituality. On Tisha b'Av, our yearning is powered by a recognition of how far we are. We literally sit low down in or near the dust, to feel our distance from heaven. On Shabbat, we feel G-d's closeness and yearn to hold it with us throughout the rest of the week.

This year, though, the actual ninth of Av is going to arrive on Shabbat—the day itself will be its usual celebration. And when we fast on Sunday, a lot of the harshness of the fast is

tempered because it's not being observed on the "hard day." So, this year, the fast is a time to focus on G-d's deep and infinite love for the Jewish people. Despite the destruction of our Sanctuary, we are still the apple of our Creator's eye. Our mourning stems from hope that this love-bond will become fully manifest.

As Rebbe Nachman declared: "If you believe you can destroy, believe you can repair!"