



TISHA B'AV, "SINAT CHINAM" AND A VISION OF CONTINUITY

Sergio Edelstein

During their millenary journey through centuries of history, the Jewish people have been characterized by successfully facing a myriad of challenges which, on more than one occasion, threatened their existence and cast doubt on their continuity.

Throughout this long journey, one of the symbols of the pain we have faced on several significant occasions is the the day of Tisha B'Av (the ninth day of the month of Av of the Hebrew calendar), which commemorates several historical events that symbolize the pain of loss among our people. The breaking of the Tablets of the Law and the destruction of the first and second Temple are among these significant events.

The symbolism of these events is a pattern, a guide to the narrative of the Jewish people in the challenge of strengthening the Jewish identity in our present, thus ensuring the continuity of the millenary message that characterizes us for generations to come. And when trying to understand the roots which led to the events threatening the Jewish people's continuity, we must look in the mirror that, according to many philosophers, confronts us with the moral dilemma of learning, understanding and thus avoiding, as much as possible, occurrences that put in doubt the continuity of the Jewish people.

The concept of "Sinat Chinam" (baseless hatred) is one of the most notorious references in the Jewish narrative and one of the factors that led to the destruction of the Second Temple. We must recognize the consequences that internal struggles, disputes, distrust, inequality and abuse had on our people. And if we do not learn, our own existence may be jeopardized again, and might not get a second opportunity to be rebuilt.

Tisha B'Av must guide us; it must allow us to understand that the Jewish people do not have the privilege of embracing differences of opinion, inequality, indifference and intolerance towards one another, whether they are Jews or non-Jews. And above all, we must avoid the lack of respect, solidarity and compassion. Five days after Tisha B'Av, the Hebrew calendar grants us a beautiful and unique opportunity to put this thought into practice in Tu B'Av (the fifteenth of Av) with Chag HaAhava, The Holiday of Love, which according to Jewish tradition is a day of joy, love, solidarity and respect for others.