



Context of Drowning out the Voice of God

By Marcus Lander (August 2011)

This poem was written at the time of Tisha B'Av (the 9th day of the Jewish Month of Av). This is a day of fasting and mourning throughout the Jewish world and although Holocaust Remembrance Day takes place a few months prior, this is arguably the saddest day in the Hebrew Calendar. The Talmud tells us that five specific calamities took place on this day. Namely:-

- It was decreed that Israel should not enter the Promised Land on account of their disobedience.
- The first and second temples were destroyed.
- The Bar Kochba revolt was finally crushed at the fortress of Betar resulting in terrible loss of life as the Romans exacted their revenge.
- And the city of Jerusalem was ploughed up.

Thus this day has been a time of mourning since biblical times, as can be seen in Zachariah chapter 7. But over the centuries more disasters have added themselves to this list.

- King Edward I signed an edict expelling all Jews from England in 1290
- In 1492 they were expelled from Spain on this day
- The commencement of World War I in 1914
- Himmler presented his plan for the 'Final Solution' to the Nazi Party
- And the Nazis began deporting Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka.

On this day it is customary to read from the Book of Lamentations in which the prophet Jeremiah graphically describes the fall of Jerusalem. The name of this book in Hebrew is taken from its first word – Eichah – How? For the prophet asks 'How could this happen? This is often our natural response when faced with suffering and tragedy – to search for a reason. The answer he concludes is the sin of God's people. Thus on the ninth of Av, the Rabbi's say, one is to mourn not the calamities themselves, but rather the cause of those calamities – our sin (our turning away from God).

The Bible is God's word to us, but it is also as I see it, an account chronicling God's attempts to engage mankind in dialogue, and, on the whole man's attempts to ignore God's voice. In my poem I endeavour to explore this theme. It is, for those who like to read Stephen Hawking, 'A Brief History of Time' from the perspective of the Bible. I have called it 'Drowning Out the Voice of God'.

Being an account of Time from God's perspective I have made reference to God's appointed times or Mo'edim – his feast days, which he established as prophetic voices to prepare us for what would transpire, and to enable us to understand his plan both for mankind and for us as individuals.