



כולל רבנים
רבינו צבי אשכנזי

An Initiative of Amsterdam Community Kollel

THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

13 Tammuz

- First printed edition of Sefer HaChinuch, 1523.
- Minsk (Russia) was captured by the Germans, 1942 trapping about 40,000 Jews in the city.

14 Tammuz

- 30 Jews of Schaffhausen (Switzerland) were burned at the stake on ritual murder charges, 1401.

15 Tammuz

- Yahrzeit of the Shaagas Aryeh, 1785

16 Tammuz

- Chur was killed attempting to dissuade the people from demanding the golden calf.

17 Tammuz

- The first Luchot were broken.
- The Korban Tamid was discontinued in the first Beis HaMikdash.
- The wall of Yerushalayim were breached by the Romans, in 69 CE.
- Apostomos burned a Sefer Torah.
- King Menashe placed an idol in the Beis HaMikdash.

18 Tammuz

- Moshe Rabeinu destroyed the Golden Calf
- Louis IX decreed that all Jews must wear the distinctive yellow badge.

19 Tammuz

- Moshe ascended Har Sinai a second time.
- Yahrzeit of Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog, first chief rabbi of the State of Israel, 1959.

BETWEEN THE BORDERS

We're now entering the saddest period of the Jewish calendar, the interim period between the fast of the 17th of Tamuz and Tisha B'Av, commonly referred to as 'the Three Weeks'. In halachic literature, this period is called '*bein hametzarim*', a phrase whose origin is found in the tragic verses of the book of Eicha, in reference to our national suffering: 'all her enemies have pursued her "*bein hametzarim*"' (Eicha 1:3).

The phrase '*bein hametzarim*' has a number of possible meanings. *Metzarim* could refer to *metzar*, a border or a strait (as in, the now infamous 'strait of Hormuz'); and thus, the meaning of the above *pasuk* would be 'our enemies have pursued us into a tight spot where we could not escape'. An alternative possibility is that the word has its origins in the word '*tzarab*' meaning trouble. In this sense, our enemies pursued us through challenging times.

The use of this expression to mark these three weeks of the year is apt in light of the second explanation. These days are indeed troublesome and challenging times. But can we find a connection to the first explanation as well?

Consider the three *parshiyos* which are almost always read during the Three Weeks: Pinchas, Matos and Masei. Although many different episodes are discussed in these *parshiyos*, there is one theme which appears in all three *parshiyos*: the division of the land of Israel according to its borders.

Amongst other subjects, we read of the first instruction pertaining to the manner of the division of the land (Pinchas), the actual detail of the borders of the land (Masei), the list of representatives who would be responsible to divide the land (*ibid.*) and the request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad to be granted their land inheritance in the trans-Jordan (Matos and Masei). So these three weeks are truly *bein hametzarim*, between the 'borders'.

Reading about the land of Israel, its division, sanctity, and importance for the Jewish people, is particularly pertinent for the time of year in which we mourn the loss of our ancestral heritage and our long and dark exile from her borders. Even in an era where we have been granted the precious gift of being able to repopulate the land, her borders are still not secure; enemies stand on all sides, poised to attack, *r"l*. Our hope and prayer is that this year, we do not find ourselves *pursued* between her borders, but *tranquil* between her borders, **ושקט ושאנן ואין מחריד**.