

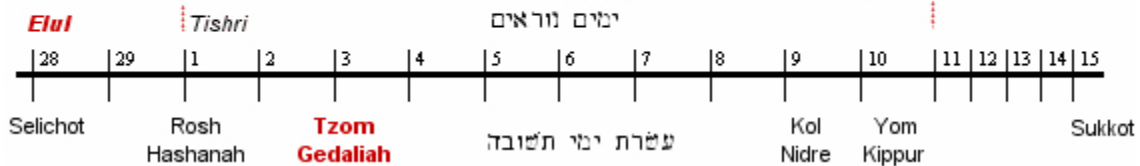


Tzom Gedaliah -

The Consequences of Sin

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Days of Awe



After the destruction of the First Temple (and Jerusalem) by the armies of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE, the majority of the Jews who had lived in the land of Judah were exiled. However a remnant was permitted to remain. Nebuchadnezzar appointed a man named Gedaliah (*Gedalyahu ben-Achikam*) to be his governor over Judah.



Gedaliah, along with the prophet Jeremiah, advised the Jews to accept the yoke of Babylonian rule and to work towards restoring the country. However, certain zealots arose who opposed Gedaliah's subservience to Nebuchadnezzar -- and they murdered him.

After Gedaliah's murder, the Jews feared reprisal from the King and thought to flee to Egypt to save themselves. They turned to the prophet Jeremiah to ask for counsel.

Jeremiah sought the LORD and then warned them that should they flee to Egypt, the sword from which they were running would slay them there. Unfortunately, the people did not listen and they fled to Egypt anyway. Worse still, they abducted Jeremiah and took him with them! Thus, the occupation of the land that began with an exodus *from* Egypt ended with a self-imposed exile *to* Egypt!



A few years later Babylon conquered Egypt and tens of thousands of these Jewish refugees were killed. The only survivor of this *shoah* was Jeremiah. The word of the LORD had proven painfully true.

This tragic set of events is remembered as a fast day -- *Tzom Gedaliah* -- because it cost Jewish lives and brought the end of Jewish settlement in Judah for many years.



Fast of Gedaliah
צוֹם גְּדַלְיָה

Tzom Gedaliah occurs on Tishri 3 (according to the Talmud, the date when Gedaliah was murdered [tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 18b]), the day following (the second day of) Rosh Hashanah. During the fast, no food or water may be ingested from sunrise to sunset. Among Orthodox Jews, *Tzom Gedaliah* is considered a prelude to Yom Kippur.

Note: If Tishri 3 is a Sabbath (as it is was in the year 5765), the fast is normally placed a day ahead in the calendar.

Gedaliah's story is told in 2 Kings 25:22-26 and Jeremiah 39:13-14; 40:1-41:18. In the Prophetic Writings this fast is called 'The Fast of the Seventh' in allusion to Tishri, the seventh month (Zech 8:19) of the Hebrew calendar.