


down and rejuvenate. Judaism also offers just that chance in the summer months in some surprising ways.

The Hebrew months overlapping with July and August are Tammuz and Av. During Tammuz, we commemorate the 17th day of the month on which long ago, the Romans first breached the city walls of Jerusalem. Not long after this date, on the 9th of Av, the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish inhabitants were sent into exile. Traditionally, both days are marked with fasting and other prohibitions associated with days of mourning.

Tisha B'Av and the 17th of Tammuz hardly seem opportunities for peace and renewal. The three weeks they stand at opposite ends of are one of the saddest times of our calendar year, reminding us not only of the destruction of both Temples, but also of the many other calamities and upheavals embedded in our history. These weeks are also a disquieting reminder that anti-Jewish sentiment around the world and in our own communities goes on ... not nearly as much of a relic of the past as we once hoped.



application to the Jewish Theological Seminary included a commitment to keep both Shabbat and kashrut, I realized that I had some soul searching to do.

I called one of the rabbis in the administration to ask about this requirement. Keeping Shabbat made sense to me. It would be a sacrifice, but I could see how much I would gain from it as well. Kashrut, on the other hand, made no sense at all. Why, exactly, would it enrich my life to separate milk and meat? To stop eating shellfish and pork? And why did the school get to determine what food I put into my body?

This kind rabbi said two words to me: *na'aseh v'nishma*, we will do and we will hear. He told me the story of Moses reading the covenant of God's laws to the Israelites, and of their response, "*na'aseh v'nishma*", they would first act on the laws, and then learn their meaning through that action. He assured me that I needed to start keeping kosher in order to understand why it was meaningful. I agreed, albeit with hesitation.

As it turns out, he was right. I have been keeping kosher for almost 20 years and I can't imagine eating any other way