Many have the impression that the main function of the Beit HaMikdash is to offer korbanot.

However, when Shlomo HaMelech offered his famous tefilla upon the dedication of the Beit HaMikdash, he did not mention the offering of korbanot.

He described the Beit HaMikdash as the makom tefilla, that everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike, should come to daven to G-d in this place: וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה” – “And they will pray and supplicate to You in this Temple” (Melachim I 8:33).

All prayer is supposed to be directed towards the Beit HaMikdash.

This is the “office” in which the prayers may be accepted. Yeshayahu (56:7) also referred to the Beit HaMikdash in this way when he said, כי יקרא בית תפילה מקום כל העמים – “for My House will be called a House of Prayer for all the peoples.”

That is why, as a result of churban HaBayit, our situation is described by the pasuk, דְּגוּ גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאוֹרָה שָׂתַם תְּפִלָּתִי וּבָעוּתְהוֹן – “Though I would cry out and plead, He shut out my prayer” (Eicha 3:8).

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 559:4) rules that we do not recite Tachanun on this day, since this day is referred to as a moed.

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The Gemara recounts that from the time that Rabban Gamliel placed Rabbi Eliezer, his brother-in-law, in cherem, the wife of Rabbi Eliezer made a point of interrupting Rabbi Eliezer after he completed his Shemoneh Esrei, thus preventing him from reciting Tachanun immediately. She feared that if Rabbi Eliezer were to recite Tachanun, her brother, Rabban Gamliel, would be harmed.

On one occasion, she failed to interrupt him, and on that day, since Rabbi Eliezer’s tefillot were fully accepted, Rabban Gamliel died.

From this Gemara, we see that when we recite Tachanun immediately after Shemoneh Esrei, our tefillot are more readily accepted. On Tisha B’Av, we have the minhag to omit the phrase, וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה – “May the prayers and supplications be accepted,” from the Kaddish after Shacharit, since the Gemara in Berachot (32b) teaches, “From the time the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, the heavenly gates of prayer were locked.” The Gemara’s source is the pasuk cited earlier in reference to the Churban, גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֲשַׁוֵּעַ שָׂתַם תְּפִלָּתִי.

Perhaps we refrain from reciting Tachanun on this day to demonstrate that our tefillot are not answered to the same extent they would be if there was a Beit HaMikdash (See Nefesh HaRav, 1994 ed., p. 200).

Adapted from Rav Schachter on Tefillah.