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Not Fasting on Both The 9th and 17th of Tammuz

Even though, at the time of the destruction of the first Beth Hamiqdash (Temple), the walls were breached on the ninth (9th) of Tammuz, since, when the second Temple was destroyed the walls were breached on the seventeenth (17th) of Tammuz, that was the day that was designated as a fast day. The reason being that the destruction of the second Temple is more serious for us.

Our Hakhamim of blessed memory could have also designated the 9th of Tammuz as a fast day since the walls of the first Beth Hamiqdash were breached then, but did not wish to place an additional burden on us. Neither should a person take this fast upon himself as a private fast.

In addition, it is written in the Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud) that at the time of the destruction of the first Temple the walls were also breached on the 17th of Tammuz, but because of all their suffering they erred in its calculation.

(See MM, Sefer Hilkhoth Hagimim,
Maran Mordekhai Eliyahu, 'a"n)

פרשת בלק 5779

Balaq: Why Did Bil'aam Say the Children of Israel Could Not Be Counted?

"Who can count the dust of Jacob and the number of a quarter of Israel?" (Bamidbar 23:10). According to the simple meaning, the children of Jacob are so numerous, just like the dust, that they can not be counted -- not even a quarter of them can be counted.

According to Midrash Tanhuma, the verse is saying, "Who can count all the commandments that the Jewish people perform, that are connected to dust. One example is the prohibition of plowing with an ox and a donkey (Debarim 22:10). Another is the prohibition of planting a field with mixed seeds (Wayiqra 19:19). And there are others. Rabbenu Bahya comments, that in truth, these commandments are really few in number. Therefore, it must be that what the Midrash really means is that the reward for performing these commandments is unlimited.

It says in Dibrei Mordekhai, quoting the Targum Yonathan Ben 'Uzziel, that when Bil'aam saw that the Jewish people circumcised their children and put the 'Orlah (skin that is removed), in the dust, he said, "Who can count all these merits [of the Jewish people], because they even have commandments connected with the dust".

(Rabbenu Bahya, Parashath Balaq. Midrash Tanhuma, Balaq, 12. Dibrei Mordekhai, Parashath Balaq)



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If One Has No Wine on Friday Night for the Qiddush

If one has no wine at all for Qiddush on Friday night, the Qiddush is made on the bread as follows:

Before starting the Qiddush, one must do *Netilat Yadayim* (washing of hands for eating bread) in order to say the *Berakha* (blessing) of *Hamotzi* on the bread. Then one sits in one's place and recites *Waykhullu* while the bread is still covered. It should then be uncovered and the bread held in both hands and the blessing of *Hamotzi* is recited, but without breaking the bread at this point.

After that, the blessing of the Qiddush is recited with both one's hands still on the bread, and when one finishes, one breaks the bread and eats it.

It states in *Ben Ish Hai* that, strictly speaking, it is sufficient to leave only one hand holding the bread during the blessing of the Qiddush, the same way that we hold the cup of wine with one hand. However, since one had both hands on the bread for the blessing of *Hamotzi*, it is not correct to remove one for the blessing of the Qiddush.

(See *Shulchan Arukh* 272:9. *Ben Ish Hai*, 2nd year, *Bereshith*, 28)

Without Peace Between Us the Creation Cannot Exist

Peace is what makes the entire Creation exist. When one sees a wall made of lots of stones, when they are all connected together, the wall can stand. If, figuratively speaking, one of the stones in the wall would shout out, "why am I under the stone that is above me and not above it?", and would, therefore, separate itself from the rest of the wall, the wall would simply collapse.

Similarly, if the roots of a tree, which are meant to be in the earth, would complain that this is too lowly for it and wanted to be above the ground, the tree would not be able to produce fruit and would quite possibly fall over. If all stones behaved like this, there would be no buildings. If all trees behaved in this manner, there would be no food in the world.

From this we can understand that when peace is destroyed because of divisiveness and lack of unity, the entire Creation of the world is negatively affected. From this we can learn the importance of harmony and unity among humanity, and especially the Jewish people.

(See *Shebet Mussar* 37:15)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"h

Our Mouth - A Powerful Weapon

Our Mouth, the "Battle Field" (The 17th of Tammuz) The Seventeen of Tammuz is a fast day and the first of the twenty two days of the saddest period in the Jewish history. Naturally, a fast day signifies refraining from the consumption of food. The tool used for the action of eating and drinking is the mouth.

It is interesting to note that one of the ways the prophet Yeshayahu (Yeshayahu 41,14) refers to the Jewish people is: *Tola'ath Ya'aqob*, (worm Jacob). One may wonder about the unusual connection between the two seemingly unrelated words.

Hakham Yosef Hayyim 'a"h, brings an insightful explanation to this question. He explains that just as the power of a worm is in its mouth – a soft worm can easily consume hard wood – so too, the power of the Jewish people lies in their mouth.

To Be Continued.