

NOTE

In the list of the 613 commandments prefixed to the Code, this commandment appears as No. 59 of the Positive Commandments in the following form:

To sound trumpets when sacrifices are offered and in times of trouble, as it is said, *Ye shall sound an alarm with the trumpets* (Num. 10:9).

CHAPTER I

1. A positive Scriptural commandment prescribes prayer and the sounding of an alarm with trumpets whenever trouble befalls the community. For when Scripture says, *Against the adversary that oppresseth you, then ye shall sound an alarm with the trumpets* (Num. 10:9), the meaning is: Cry out in prayer and sound an alarm against whatsoever is oppressing you, be it famine, pestilence, locusts, or the like.

2. This procedure is one of the roads to repentance, for as the community cries out in prayer and sounds an alarm when overtaken by trouble, everyone is bound to realize that evil has come upon them as a consequence of their own evil deeds, as it is written, *Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good from you* (Jer. 5:25), and that their repentance will cause the trouble to be removed from them.

③ If, on the other hand, the people do not cry out in prayer and do not sound an alarm, but merely say that it is the way of the world for such a thing to happen to them, and that their trouble is a matter of pure chance, they have chosen a cruel path which will cause them to persevere in their evil deeds and thus bring additional troubles upon them. For when Scripture says, *But walk contrary unto Me; then I will walk contrary unto you in fury* (Lev. 26:27-28), the meaning is: If, when I bring trouble upon you in order to cause you to repent, you say that the trouble is purely accidental, then I will add to your trouble the fury appropriate to such an "accident."

4. On the authority of the Scribes, fasting is required whenever trouble befalls the community, until mercy is vouchsafed to it from heaven. During such fasts people should cry out in prayer and supplication, and should sound an alarm, but with trumpets only. In the Temple, they used to sound the alarm with both trumpets and ram's horn, a short blast from the ram's

horn and a long blast from the trumpets, since the commandment concerning the day specified only trumpets. It was only in the Temple that both trumpets and ram's horn were sounded, in accordance with the verse, *With trumpets and sound of the horn shout ye before the King, the Lord* (Ps. 98:6).

5. Such fasts, imposed because of trouble which has befallen the community, should not be observed on consecutive days, seeing that the majority of the community would be unable to endure so great a strain. Initially fasts should be appointed on Monday, the following Thursday, and the Monday after that, and the same sequence of Monday-Thursday-Monday should be repeated until mercy is obtained.

6. Communal fasts may not be imposed on Sabbaths or festivals. Similarly, neither ram's horn nor trumpets may be sounded on those days, nor may there be any crying out in supplication and prayer, unless a town is surrounded by a heathen enemy or by a river in flood, or a ship is storm-tossed at sea, or even a single individual is pursued by heathens, bandits, or an evil spirit. In such cases it is permissible to fast on the Sabbath and to cry out in prayer and supplication, but not to sound trumpets or ram's horn, except for the purpose of summoning people to assist in the rescue.

7. Similarly, a fast day should not be appointed initially on new moons, on Hanukkah, on Purim, or on the intermediate days of festivals. If, however, even one fast day has already been observed because of some misfortune, and a subsequent fast day coincides with one of the days just mentioned, the whole of that day may be observed as a fast day.

8. Expectant and nursing mothers and minors are not required to fast on fast days observed because of some misfortune. It is also permissible to eat during the preceding night, even though the next day will be spent in fasting. Fasts for rain, however, are exceptions to this rule, as will be explained. Whenever it is permissible to eat during the night preceding a

communal or private fast day, it is permissible to eat and drink until dawn, provided that one does not fall asleep. If one has gone to sleep, he may not eat thereafter.

9. Just as a community should fast when in trouble, so should an individual fast when in trouble. Thus, if a dear one is ill, or if one is lost in the wilderness or is confined in prison, it is his duty to fast on this account and to solicit God's mercy by reciting the prayer beginning, "Answer us, O Lord," etc., during each of the daily services. However, one should not fast on Sabbaths, festivals, new moons, Hanukkah, or Purim.

10. If an individual does not undertake to fast on the preceding day, the subsequent fast is not effective. How does one undertake to fast? When he has finished the afternoon prayer he should say, "Tomorrow I shall observe a fast day," and should resolve to fast on the morrow. Even if he eats during the following night, he in no way detracts from the fast. Similarly, if he resolves and undertakes to fast for three or four consecutive days, he does not detract from his fast if he eats on each intervening night. Nor need he express his intention for each of the several days on each preceding day.

11. If one undertakes during the day to fast on the morrow only, and does so fast on the next day, and then during the night decides to fast on the following day as well, the second day's fast is not effective, even if he does not break his fast during the preceding night; for this latter fast was not undertaken during the preceding day. Needless to say, if one eats and drinks during the night and then decides early in the morning to fast, such a fast is not at all effective.

12. If one has a bad dream, he should fast on the next day, so that he might look searchingly into his conduct and repent. He should observe such a fast even if the next day is a Sabbath, and should during each service recite the prayer beginning, "Answer us, O Lord," notwithstanding that his fast was not undertaken during the preceding day. If one fasts on a Sabbath

after a bad dream, he must afterward observe another day of fasting in penance for having failed to make the Sabbath a delight.

13. One may fast for a number of hours only, that is, by eating nothing at all for the remainder of the day. Thus, if one is so preoccupied with attending to his affairs and needs that he does not eat before noon or before the ninth daylight hour, and then decides to fast for the remaining hours of that day, he may fast during these hours and recite the prayer beginning with "Answer us, O Lord." For he had arrived at his decision to fast before the period of the fast began. Similarly, if one has already eaten and drunk, and then begins to fast for the rest of the day, this is regarded as a fast for a number of hours.

14. If one is fasting—whether because he himself is in trouble or has had a bad dream, or because he is participating in a communal fast observed because of a common calamity—he should not pamper himself, nor act frivolously, nor be joyful and glad of heart, but should fret and mourn after the manner indicated in the verse, *How mournful should a living man be, a strong man because of his sins?* (Lam. 3:39).

One is permitted to taste of cooked food, even as much as a quarter *log* of it, provided that the mouthful is not swallowed, but is savored and expelled. If one forgets and eats on a fast day, he may nevertheless complete his fast.

15. If while an individual is fasting his dear one recovers his health or his trouble passes away, he must nevertheless complete his fast. If one goes from a place where a fast is being observed to a place where there is no fast, he himself must continue his fast to its completion. If one goes from a place where there is no fast to a place where a fast day is being observed, he must join in the fast. If he forgets and eats and drinks, he should not let himself be seen, nor should he pamper himself.

16. If a community observes a fast day because it needs rain, and rain begins to fall, the rule is as follows: If the rain falls

before noon, the fast day need not be completed, rather everyone should eat and drink, and then assemble to recite the Great Hallel. For the Great Hallel may be recited only after one's hunger has been satisfied and one's stomach is full. If the rain falls in the afternoon, the fast day must be completed, seeing that most of the day has already been spent in a state of holiness.

The same rule applies to a fast day observed because of some trouble, if the trouble has passed away, or because of some oppressive decree, if the decree has been withdrawn. If it is still before noon, the fast need not be completed; if it is afternoon, it must be completed.

17. On each fast day undertaken by a community beset by troubles, the court and the elders should remain in session at the synagogue from the end of the morning service until midday, to examine into the conduct of the citizens and to remove the obstacles to righteous living provided by transgressions. They should carefully search and inquire after those guilty of extortion and similar crimes, in order to set them apart, and those who act high-handedly, in order to humble them, and after other such matters. From midday until evening should be spent as follows: For the third quarter of the day, the Scriptural blessings and imprecations should be read, in accordance with the verse, *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither spurn thou His correction* (Prov. 3:11), with the lesson from the Prophets consisting of admonitions having reference to the particular trouble involved. During the last quarter of the day, the afternoon service should be held and everyone, to the best of his ability, should recite supplications, cry out in prayer, and confess his sins.

CHAPTER II

1. The following are the afflictions for which a community should fast and sound an alarm: oppression of Israel by their enemies, war, pestilence, wild beasts, locusts, crickets, blasting

of crops, mildew, collapse of buildings, epidemics, economic crisis, and excess or deficiency of rain.

2. Whenever a city suffers one of the aforementioned afflictions, the city itself should fast and sound the alarm until the trouble is past. All neighboring cities should also fast, but without sounding an alarm, and should pray for mercy in behalf of the afflicted city.

Neither crying out in prayer nor sounding the alarm is permissible anywhere on the Sabbath, as we have already stated; however, this does not apply to an economic crisis, when crying out—but not sounding the alarm with trumpets—is permitted even on a Sabbath.

3. What is to be understood by oppression of Israel by their enemies? If heathens come to wage war against Israel, or to exact tribute from them, or to annex their land, or to enforce a decree interfering with the observance of even a simple commandment, the community affected should fast and sound an alarm, until mercy is vouchsafed to them from heaven. All neighboring cities should likewise fast, but need not sound an alarm, unless its purpose is to assemble a rescuing force.

4. What is to be understood by war? This includes even an army with whom the city itself is at peace. Thus, if two heathen armies are fighting each other and one of them passes through a place inhabited by Israelites, this is to be regarded as an affliction, even though there is no state of war between the heathens and the Israelites, and the latter should therefore fast on this account. For when Scripture says, *Neither shall the sword go through your land* (Lev. 26:6), it implies that even the mere sight of war is an affliction.

5. What is to be regarded as pestilence? If a city contains five hundred able-bodied men, and three of them die on three consecutive days, this is to be considered pestilence. If all three die on the same day, or if they die over a period of four days, it is not pestilence. If the city contains a thousand able-bodied men, and six of them die during three consecutive days, this is pes-

tilence. If they die on the same day or over a period of four days, it is not pestilence. The same proportion holds for any other number of able-bodied citizens. Women, minors, and elderly persons retired from work are not included in a city's total population for this purpose.

6. If there is pestilence in the Land of Israel, the Israelites in the Dispersion should fast in its behalf. If there is pestilence in one city, and caravans ply between it and another city, both cities should fast, even if they are a considerable distance apart.

7. Fasts should not be imposed on account of wild beasts unless they constitute a visitation. Thus, if they appear in the town in daytime, they are a visitation. If a wild beast is seen in the field in daylight, but does not run away at the sight of two human beings, it too is a visitation. If the field adjoins uncleared land the rule is as follows: If when confronted with two human beings, the beast chases them, it is a visitation; if it does not chase them, it is not a visitation. If the beast is seen on uncleared land, it does not constitute a visitation even if it chases two human beings, unless it tears them both but devours only one of them. If it devours both of them it does not constitute a visitation, because uncleared land is its natural habitat, and it tore the two human beings because it was hungry, not because it was a visitation.

8. Since wilderness and desert are the haunts of packs of wild beasts, houses built there are subject to the following rule: If a wild beast climbs to the roof to snatch an infant from his cradle, it is a visitation; if it has not yet grown so bold, it is not a visitation, for it is the human inhabitants themselves who have placed their lives in jeopardy by coming to live in the natural habitat of wild beasts.

9. If there is a plague of other noxious species of terrestrial or flying vermin—such as snakes or scorpions, or needless to say, hornets, mosquitoes, and the like—no fast need be proclaimed nor an alarm sounded, but prayers may be recited without the accompaniment of an alarm.

10. A community should fast at the appearance of locusts or crickets. Even if only a single specimen of these appears anywhere in the whole Land of Israel, it is sufficient cause for fasting and sounding an alarm. The same applies to the species of locust called *gobai*, regardless of the number of specimens seen. In the case of grasshoppers, however, no fast need be proclaimed nor an alarm sounded, prayers alone being sufficient.

11. In the case of blast and mildew, a fast is to be proclaimed and an alarm sounded as soon as they begin to attack crops—even if the initial area affected is no larger than the mouth of an oven.

12. What is to be understood by collapse of buildings? If an increasingly large number of sound walls not situated near a river collapses, this is an affliction, and a fast should be proclaimed and an alarm sounded. The same should be done if an earthquake or a windstorm causes buildings to collapse and kill human beings.

13. What is to be understood by epidemics? If the identical disease—for example, croup, fever, or the like—strikes many people in a city, and the victims die from it, it is to be regarded as a communal affliction, and a fast should be proclaimed and an alarm sounded. Similarly, a suppurating itch is regarded as equivalent to the *spreading boils* (Exod. 9:9), and if the majority of the community is affected by it, a fast should be proclaimed and an alarm sounded. If the itch is a dry one, however, only prayers need be recited.

14. What is to be understood by an economic crisis? If the merchandise from which the majority of the inhabitants of a city derive their livelihood—such as linen goods in Babylonia, or wine and oil in the Land of Israel—declines in price, and trade is reduced to such an extent that a merchant is compelled to offer goods worth ten denars for six in order to find a buyer, this constitutes a communal affliction, and an alarm should be sounded and prayers recited on this account, even on the Sabbath.

15. What is to be understood by excess or deficiency of rain? If so much rain falls that it causes distress, prayers should be recited on that account, since no affliction can be worse than this, for if the deluge should cause houses to collapse, people's homes would become their graves. In the Land of Israel, however, prayers need not be recited if rain is excessive, because the country is hilly and the houses are built of stone. Excess rain there is therefore beneficial, and a fast may not be proclaimed to cause a benefit to cease.

16. If grain has already sprouted and there is no rain, so that the sprouts begin to dry up, a fast should be proclaimed and prayers recited, until rain falls or until the sprouts dry up completely. Similarly, if no rain has fallen in the Land of Israel by Passover or thereabout—this being the season when trees blossom there—a fast should be proclaimed and prayers recited, until the rain needed by the trees has fallen, or until the blossoming-season has passed.

17. Similarly, if the heavy rainfall required to fill cisterns, ditches, and storage caves has not taken place by the Feast of Tabernacles, a fast should be proclaimed until enough rain has fallen to fill the cisterns. If there is a shortage of drinking water, a fast for rain should be observed as long as the shortage lasts—even during the summer.

18. If during the rainy season more than forty days elapse between one rainfall and the next, this is regarded as a visitation of the drought, and a fast should be proclaimed and prayers recited until rain falls, or until the rainy season has passed.

CHAPTER III

1. If no rain at all has fallen since the beginning of the rainy season, the rule is as follows: If no rain falls by the seventeenth of Marheshvan, a fast should be observed by scholars only on the next Monday and Thursday, and on the following Monday. All students are eligible to observe this fast.

2. If no rain falls by the first of Kisleb, the court should proclaim three public fast days for the next Monday and Thursday and the following Monday. It is permissible to eat and drink during the night preceding each of these fast days. Members of the priestly watch, however, did not participate in these fast days, because of their preoccupation with the Temple service. The whole population should go to the synagogues and cry out in prayer and supplication, exactly as on other communal fast days.

3. If after these fasts are past their prayers remain unanswered, the court should proclaim three more public fast days, again on Monday, Thursday, and the following Monday. Eating and drinking should be confined this time to the day preceding each of these fast days, just as in the case of the Day of Atonement. Members of the priestly watch used to fast for part of such a fast day, but not the whole day, while members of the section engaged in the Temple service on that day did not fast at all.

Whenever eating and drinking are confined to the day preceding a fast day, if one has resolved after a meal not to eat any more on that day, he may not eat again, even if some daytime is still left.

4. During these three fast days, the whole population is forbidden to work during the day, but work during the night is permitted. It is also forbidden to take a warm bath—although it is permissible to wash one's face, hands, and feet with warm water—so that public baths must be kept closed. It is also forbidden to anoint one's self with oil, but if the purpose is to remove grime, anointing is permitted. Marital intercourse is forbidden, and so is the wearing of leather sandals inside a town, although they may be worn on a journey. In the synagogues, prayers and supplications should be recited, as on other fast days.

5. If after this second series of fast days their prayers are still unanswered, the court should proclaim a new sequence of seven fast days, as follows: Monday, Thursday, Monday, Thursday, Monday, Thursday, Monday. It is only on these seven fast

days that expectant and nursing mothers must also fast; on other fast days they need not do so. However, while exempt from fasting, they should not pamper themselves with delicacies, but should eat and drink only whatever is necessary to maintain the health of the child.

6. During these seven fast days the members of the priestly watch used to fast all through the day, while the members of the section on duty would fast for part of the day only and not the whole day. Everything forbidden during the preceding series of three fast days is also forbidden during these seven fast days.

7. The following additional rules apply to these seven fast days: On them alone is an alarm sounded and prayers offered in the town's market place; an elder is deputized to admonish the congregation in order to induce them to repent and mend their ways; six benedictions are added to the morning and afternoon services, so that each of these now consists of twenty-four benedictions; and shops are kept shut. On Mondays, shops may be partially opened toward evening, but on Thursdays they may be kept open all day in order to supply what is required for the honoring of the Sabbath. If a shop has two doors, one may be opened while the other is kept closed. If a shop has a raised platform in front, it may be opened as usual on Thursdays without further concern.

8. If their prayers are still unanswered after these seven fast days are past, business transactions should be curtailed, and so should all construction for pleasure—such as painting and decorating—and all planting for pleasure, as of myrtle and aloe trees. Betrothals and weddings should be held only if the bridegroom has not yet fulfilled the commandment to beget children; one who has already fulfilled this commandment is forbidden to have marital intercourse during years of famine. People should exchange greetings as sparingly as possible, while scholars should avoid greetings altogether, unless they do so in the manner of persons who have been reprimanded and banned

by God. However, if an ignorant person greets a scholar first, the latter should return the greeting in a soft voice and with grave mien.

9. Scholars alone should continue to fast on Monday, Thursday, and Monday until the end of Nisan in the astronomical calendar. The general public need not do so, because the court should never impose on the general public on account of deficiency of rain more than the thirteen fasts mentioned above. Individuals who fast until the end of Nisan are permitted to eat during the night preceding a fast day, and are likewise permitted to work, to bathe in warm water, to anoint themselves with oil, to have marital intercourse, and to wear sandals—exactly as on other fast days. They should also interrupt the sequence of fasts on new moons and on Purim.

After the end of Nisan in the astronomical calendar, which is the time when the sun reaches the beginning of the constellation of Taurus, there should be no further fasting, because rain would now be a curse and not a blessing, inasmuch as no rain at all has fallen since the beginning of the year.

10. What was described above is the procedure in the Land of Israel and in similar countries. In places where the rainy season begins before or after the seventeenth of Marheshvan, the procedure is as follows: If no rain falls at the usual time, individuals should fast on Monday, Thursday, and Monday, interrupting this sequence on new moons, Hanukkah, and Purim. They should then wait for about seven days, and if there is still no rainfall, the court should impose on the community a total of thirteen fast days, in the order mentioned above.

11. Whenever a fast day is imposed on the general public outside the Land of Israel, it is permissible to eat during the preceding night, and the rules governing such fasts are the same as those which govern ordinary fast days. Fasts resembling in rigor the Day of Atonement may be imposed only in the Land of Israel, and then only because of deficiency of rain and within

the sequence of ten fast days consisting of the middle group of three and the final group of seven.

CHAPTER IV

1. On each of the last seven fast days imposed on the whole community on account of deficiency of rain, the order of prayer used to be as follows: The Ark was taken out to the town's market place, and the whole population assembled attired in sackcloth. Ashes were placed upon the Ark and upon the Scroll of the Law, in order to intensify the weeping and humble the people's hearts. One of the people then took some of the ashes and placed them upon the head of the patriarch and upon the head of the chief member of the court, at the spot where the phylacteries are worn, to make them feel ashamed and cause them to repent. Then everyone else took some ashes and put them on his own head.

2. Thereupon, while everybody was seated, an elder scholar stood up amongst them—if there was no elder scholar present, a younger scholar stood up in his place; if there was neither an elder nor a younger scholar present, someone of imposing appearance stood up instead. Addressing words of exhortation to the gathering, he spoke as follows: "My brethren, neither sackcloth nor fasting is of any avail, only repentance and good deeds, as we find in the case of Nineveh, for Scripture does not say of the men of Nineveh, 'God saw their sackcloth and their fasting,' but *God saw their works* (Jonah 3:10), and the Prophet says further, *Rend your hearts and not your garments* (Joel 2:13)." The speaker then added further exhortations along these lines, to the best of his ability, until he reduced his listeners' hearts to submission and caused them to repent completely.

3. After the speaker finished his words of exhortation, they proceeded to recite the service, appointing as reader someone eligible to recite the prayers on such fast days. If the speaker who had addressed them with words of exhortation was eligible,

א' ב' ג'
ד' ה' ו'
ז' ח' ט'

he was deputed to act also as reader; otherwise another person was appointed.

4. Who was regarded as eligible to recite the prayers on such fast days? A person who was accustomed to reciting prayers and reading from the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings; one who had small children, yet was without means and was dependent upon his labor in the field; one whose household was free from transgression—i.e. none of whose sons, household members, relatives, or other dependents was a transgressor—and who had a blameless reputation in his youth; a person of humble disposition, and held in favor by the people, and one who understood melody and had a sweet voice. If an elder could be found with all these qualifications, he was given preference; otherwise one who was not an elder was appointed to lead the congregation in prayer, so long as he answered all these requirements.

5. The reader began with the prayer of Eighteen Benedictions, and continued it up to the benediction which ends with "Redeemer of Israel." Then he recited Memorial texts and Ram's Horn texts appropriate to the affliction being experienced, and recited also Psalms 120, 121, 130, and 102, which begin respectively with *In my distress I called unto the Lord and He answered me; I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains; Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord;* and, *A prayer of the afflicted, when he fainteth.*

6. He then added supplicatory prayers, to the best of his ability, and continued with the seventh benediction, which begins "O look unto our affliction, plead our cause, and hasten to redeem us." After additional supplication, he concluded as follows: "May He who answered our father Abraham on Mount Moriah also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel."

7. He then added the six supplementary benedictions, one after the other. To each of them he appended supplicatory pray-

ers and verses familiar to him from the Prophets and the Writings, concluding them in turn with the following perorations:

8. The conclusion of the first supplementary benediction was: "May He who answered Moses and our fathers at the Red Sea also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who rememberest forgotten things." ①

9. The second supplementary benediction he concluded as follows: "May He who answered Joshua in Gilgal also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hearkenest unto the ram's horn sounding the alarm." ②

10. The third supplementary benediction he concluded as follows: "May He who answered Samuel in Mizpah also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hearkenest unto the cry of distress." ③

11. The fourth supplementary benediction he concluded as follows: "May He who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hearkenest unto prayer." ④

12. The fifth supplementary benediction he concluded as follows: "May He who answered Jonah in the belly of the fish also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who answerest in time of trouble." ⑤

13. The sixth supplementary benediction he concluded as follows: "May He who answered David and Solomon, his son, in Jerusalem, also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who showest mercy to the earth." ⑥

The people answered "Amen!" after each of these benedictions, just as they did after the other benedictions.

14. He next resumed with the benediction which begins: "Heal us, O Lord, so that we may be healed," and continued in the proper order to the end of the prayer of Eighteen Benedictions. After this trumpets were sounded. This was the order of service everywhere.

15. When it was necessary to hold this service in Jerusalem, the assembly point was the Temple Mount, opposite the Eastern Gate. The order of service described above was followed, but when the reader reached the point at which he would normally have said "May He who answered Abraham," he said instead, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, God of Israel, from everlasting unto everlasting. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel"; and the congregation responded "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingship for ever and ever." The synagogue supervisor then said to the trumpeters, "Blow, ye sons of Aaron, blow!" while the reader continued: "May He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day." Thereupon the priests sounded a sustained blast, a tremolo, and another sustained blast.

16. Similarly, in the next benediction—the first of the six supplementary benedictions—the reader concluded: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, God of Israel, from everlasting unto everlasting. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who rememberest forgotten things"; and the congregation responded: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingship for ever and ever." Again the synagogue supervisor said to the trumpeters, "Sound an alarm, ye sons of Aaron, sound an alarm!" Whereupon the reader recited: "May He who answered Moses and our fathers at the Red Sea also answer you and listen to the sound of your outcry on this day"; and then a tremolo, a sustained blast, and another tremolo were sounded.

17. Similarly, the supervisor said alternately "Blow" or "Sound an alarm" at the end of each of the benedictions which followed, until all seven special benedictions were completed. In this

manner the priests sounded now a sustained blast followed by a tremolo and another sustained blast, and now a tremolo followed by a sustained blast and another tremolo, seven times in all. This procedure, however, was confined to the Temple Mount alone. Furthermore, the sustained blasts and tremolos were sounded there on both trumpets and ram's horn, as stated above.

18. After the service is over—no matter where the seven fast days here described are observed—the whole congregation should repair to the cemetery to weep and recite supplications there, in order to impress upon them that they too will die if they do not repent of their ways. Furthermore, on every fast day imposed on a community—no matter where it is situated—on account of trouble, there should be an additional service at the close of the day.

19. If rain begins to fall, how long must it continue falling before the community may discontinue its fast? In parched soil, until the rain has penetrated to a depth of a handbreadth; in medium-hard soil, to a depth of two handbreadths; and in tilled soil, to a depth of three handbreadths.

CHAPTER V

1. There are days which are observed by all Israel as fasts because tragic events happened on them, the object being to stir the hearts to open roads to repentance, and to remind us of our own evil deeds, and of our fathers' deeds which were like ours, as a consequence of which these tragic afflictions came upon them and upon us. For as we remember these things we ought to repent and do good, in accordance with the Scriptural verse, *And they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers*, etc. (Lev. 26:40).

2. These fast days are the following:
Tishri 3rd, because Gedaliah the son of Ahikam was slain on

that day, thus extinguishing the last remaining ember of Israel's independence and making her exile complete.

Tebeth 10th, because wicked Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invested Jerusalem on that day, placing it under siege and in sore straits.

Tammuz 17th, on which five things happened: the tables of the Law were broken, the daily burnt offering ceased just before the destruction of the first Temple, the walls of Jerusalem were breached just before the destruction of the second Temple, wicked Apostomos burned the Law and set up an idol in the Temple.

3. Ab 9th, on which five things happened: the decree was issued in the wilderness that the Israelites were not to enter the Holy Land, the Temple was destroyed both the first time and the second time, a great city named Bettar was captured—it contained thousands and myriads of Israelites and had a great king whom all Israel, including the greatest scholars, thought to be the King Messiah, but he fell into the hands of the Romans who slew them all, a calamity as great as that of the destruction of the Temple—and finally, on that day predestined to misfortune, the wicked Turnus Rufus plowed up the Temple site and its surroundings, in fulfillment of the Scriptural verse, *Zion shall be plowed as a field* (Micah 3:12; Jer. 26:18).

4. The aforementioned four fast days are expressly referred to in the Prophetic Books, which speak of *The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth* (Zech. 8:19). *The fast of the fourth month* is Tammuz 17th, which is in the fourth month; *the fast of the fifth* is Ab 9th, which is in the fifth month; *the fast of the seventh* is Tishri 3rd, which is in the seventh month; and *the fast of the tenth* is Tebet 10th, which is in the tenth month.

5. It is the custom in all Israel nowadays to fast also on the thirteenth of Adar, as a memorial of the fast observed in Haman's time, as it is said, *The matters of the fastings and their*

cry (Esther 9:31). If the thirteenth of Adar falls on a Sabbath, the fast is held on the preceding Thursday, the eleventh. If one of the other four fast days falls on the Sabbath, it is postponed until after the Sabbath. If it falls on a Friday, the fast is held on the Friday.

On none of these fast days is an alarm to be sounded with trumpets, nor is there an additional service at the close of the day. The Law, however, is to be read during both morning and afternoon services, the lesson being the one beginning, *And Moses besought the Lord* (Exod. 32:11). On all these fast days, with the exception of Ab 9th, one may eat and drink during the night preceding the fast.

6. After the month of Ab has begun, all enjoyment should be reduced. During the week of the ninth of Ab and until after the fast, it is forbidden to cut one's hair, wash one's clothes, or put on ironed clothing—even linen clothing. It is forbidden even to wash clothing which is to be put away until after the fast is over. It has long been the custom in Israel also to eat no meat nor go to the bathhouse during this week, until after the fast. In some places it is customary to suspend the ritual slaughter of meat from the first of the month until the fast day.

7. The night preceding the ninth of Ab and the following fast day are alike in every way. One may eat only during the preceding day, twilight being a forbidden time in this respect, just as it is on the Day of Atonement. At the final meal before the fast, one may neither eat meat nor drink wine. However, one may drink wine straight from the vat, if it is three days old or less, and eat salt meat if it is three days old or more. One may not eat two courses at this meal.

8. This rule applies only to a meal eaten after midday on the eve of the ninth of Ab. At a meal eaten before midday, even if it is the final meal before the fast, one may eat whatever he pleases. Again, if the eve of the ninth of Ab falls on the Sabbath, one may eat and drink as much as he needs, and even put on

the table a meal as bountiful as King Solomon's. Similarly, if the ninth of Ab itself falls on the Sabbath, there is no need to forego anything.

9. The aforementioned rule applies to the general public who cannot endure excessive privation. The practice of the pious men of old, however, was as follows: On the eve of the ninth of Ab, each man in his solitude would be served with dry bread and salt, and he would dip this in water and eat it while seated between the oven and the stove. He would wash it down with a pitcher of water, drunk in sadness, desolation, and tears, like a person seated before his dead kinsman. This procedure, or one very much like it, is the one appropriate to scholars. In all my life, I have never eaten cooked food—even cooked lentils—on the eve of the ninth of Ab, unless this day was a Sabbath.

10. Expectant and nursing mothers must fast all day on the ninth of Ab. As on the Day of Atonement, it is forbidden to bathe in either warm or cold water—or even to dip a finger in water—to anoint oneself for pleasure, to wear sandals, or to have marital intercourse. If the local custom is to work on that day, work may be done; if not, work is forbidden. Scholars should abstain from work everywhere. Indeed, the Sages have said that he who works on the ninth of Ab will never see a sign of blessing in that work.

11. Scholars should not exchange greetings on the ninth of Ab, but should sit repining and sighing like mourners. If an ignorant person greets them, however, they should return the greeting in a soft voice and with grave mien.

On the ninth of Ab it is forbidden to read in the Law, the Prophets, the Writings, the Mishnah, the *Halakot*, the Gemara, or the *'Aggadot*. Only the Book of Job, the Book of Lamentations, or the calamitous parts of the Book of Jeremiah may be read. School children should be given no lessons on that day; some scholars also put no phylactery upon their heads.

12. After the Temple was destroyed, the Sages of that generation ruled that one should never again paint and decorate a building in the manner of royal edifices. Instead, when plastering and whitewashing the walls of a house, one should leave bare an area a cubit square opposite the door. If, however, one purchases a homestead that is already painted and decorated, it may remain in this state, and he is not obligated to peel the decoration from the walls.

13. A similar regulation by the Sages requires that when arranging a banquet for guests, something should be omitted, so that part of the table would be left without the tableware that should normally be there. Again, when a woman has a set of silver or gold jewelry made, one of the components usually included should be left out, so that the set would remain incomplete. Also, a bridegroom about to be married should place ashes upon his head at the spot where the phylactery is worn. All these were to be reminders of Jerusalem, in accordance with the verse, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy* (Ps. 137:5-6).

14. Another decree of the Sages forbade the playing of musical instruments, and the enjoyment of melody and song of any kind, on account of the destruction of the Temple. Even vocal singing over wine is forbidden, in accordance with the verse, *They drink not wine with a song* (Is. 24:9). It has long been customary, however, throughout Israel, to recite words of praise and sing songs of thanksgiving to God, and the like, over wine.

15. The Sages also forbade bridegrooms to wear any garlands whatsoever, or to put any kind of crown upon their heads, in accordance with the verse, *The miter shall be removed, and the crown taken off* (Ezek. 21:31). They also forbade brides to wear garlands of silver or gold; garlands of twisted thread, however, are permitted.

16. A person who beholds the ruined cities of Judea should say, *Thy holy cities are become a wilderness* (Is. 64:9), and should rend his garment. If he beholds the ruins of Jerusalem, he should say, *Jerusalem, a desolation* (*ibid.*) and likewise rend his garment. If he beholds the ruins of the Temple, he should say, *Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire* (Is. 64:10), and again rend his garment.

At what point on the approach to Jerusalem is one obliged to rend his garment? When he is past Mount Scopus. Then, when he reaches the Temple, he must rend his garment again. If, however, one comes upon the Temple first, by approaching from the direction of the wilderness, he should rend his garment first for the Temple, and then enlarge the rent for Jerusalem.

17. The rending of the garments just referred to must in every case be done by hand, and while standing. Furthermore, one must rend every garment he is wearing, until his heart is laid bare. The rent may never be sewn up with regular stitching, but may be basted, hemmed, gathered, or sewn with a ladder-stitch.

18. If one visits Jerusalem repeatedly, the rule is as follows: Within thirty days of a previous visit, one need not rend his garments anew; but after thirty days, he must rend them again.

19. All the fast days mentioned above are destined to be abolished in the time of the Messiah; indeed, they are destined to be turned into festive days, days of rejoicing and gladness, in accordance with the verse, *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful seasons; therefore love ye truth and peace* (Zech. 8:19).

TREATISE X

LAWS CONCERNING THE MEGILLAH AND HANUKKAH

Involving Two Positive Commandments
introduced on the authority of the Scribes and
not included in the enumeration of
the 613 Scriptural Commandments.
An exposition of these commandments
is contained in the following chapters.