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# צוּמִים

## *Fasts*

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Not every appointed day in the Hebrew calendar is one of celebration. We not only remember those days of joy and celebration throughout our history, but also days upon which bad things happened to our people. On these days, rather than having special meals with lots of good food, we fast. We restrict our eating to remind us that in the past there were times when our people were in great danger and sorrow. We fast to identify with these events of our history, as well as to pray to our G-d for His forgiveness and help, that we might not experience in our day the calamities of our past.

Zechariah mentions four fast days:

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’ (Zechariah 8:19)

Here the prophet tells us of the future when the days we remember the bad things that have happened to us will be replaced by festivals of joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts!

What are the four fasts Zechariah mentions? They are:

- 1) The fast of the fourth month: the 17th of Tammuz. This commemorates the time during the Babylonian siege on Jerusalem that the walls of the city were first breached. This spelled sure destruction for the city and the exile of our people.
- 2) The fast of the fifth month: the 9th of Av. This commemorates the actual day when the Temple was destroyed, both in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and later when the Second Temple was destroyed by Titus.
- 3) The fast of the seventh month: the 3rd of Tishri. This commemorates the time when Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of Judah, was assassinated.
- 4) The fast of the tenth month: the 10th of Tevet. This commemorates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

On these days, which are minor fast days in the Hebrew calendar, we abstain from eating from sunrise to sunset, and spend time in prayer.

But these are days not only to look back and remember the trouble our people have undergone, they also are times to look at the present and the future, asking HaShem to fulfill His promises, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and to bring peace through the rule of His Messiah, Yeshua.

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Zech. 8:19