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HOW?????

The fast of Tisha B'Av, the 9th day of Av, falls Thursday July 18th this year. It is a hard day for Jewish memory. We mourn the destruction of the Temple and the exile that immediately followed.

The Mishna in the tractate Ta'anit teaches that "When Av enters we diminish our joy." It is a time to reflect on how our behavior has brought national calamity. It is a time when we acknowledge that individual indiscretions rarely remain individual; they always affect someone else.

Tisha B'Av has a redemptive feature as well, as the day passes its peak we reclaim our optimism in measured modules. We begin to greet each other and tefillin find their place on heads during the afternoon prayer. We look toward the moment when we will eat again and be allowed to believe in a good future which we will help to bring; when wine will be brought to our table and optimism returns to memory.

Tisha B'Av is the time when we consider seriously that things may not be getting better. The following Midrash on the book of Lamentations, the book attributed Jeremiah, which is known as AYKaH (literally "How" -- as in "how could this have happened?!") It considers that the corruption of Adam foreshadows the corruption in the people, and brings forward the question: "How is it that we never learn from our mistakes?" "How is it that we are doomed to repeat them?"

The midrash quotes a verse from Hosea, which alludes to "Adam." The word "Adam" can refer to the first human or to people in general. This midrash defines the word literally as the first human and then traces his fall by analogizing to the fall of Israel millennia later.

When the midrash is making this comparison, what is it trying to say, and how does it relate to the Temple's destruction?

Midrash Rabbah - Lamentations Prologue IV

R. Abbahu opened his discourse with the text, "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant" (Hos. 6:7). This alludes to the first man, of whom the Holy One, said, 'I brought him into the Garden of Eden and imposed a command upon him, but he transgressed it; so I punished him by driving him out and sending him forth, and lamented over him, AYKaH.'

I brought him into the Garden of Eden,' as it is said, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden" (Gen. 2:15). 'I imposed a command upon him,' as it is said, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying" (ib. 16). 'But he transgressed My command,' as it is said, "Have you eaten of the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?" (ib. 3:11).

'So I punished him by driving him out,' as it is said, "So He drove out the man" (ib. 24), and 'by sending him forth', as it is said, "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth" (ib. 23), and 'lamented over him, AYKaH', as it is said, "Where are you?" --(-AYeKaH) (ib. 9), this being written with the same letters as AYKaH.

Similarly with his descendants: 'I brought them into the land of Israel,' as it is said, "And I brought you into a land of fruitful fields" (Jer. 2:7). 'I gave them commandments,' as it is said, "Command the children of Israel" (Lev. 24:2). 'They transgressed My ordinances,' as it is said, "Yea, all Israel have transgressed Your law" (Dan. 9:11).

'So I punished them by driving them out,' as it is said, "I will drive them out of My house" (Hos. 9:15), 'and by sending them forth,' as it is said, "Cast them out of My sight and let them go forth" (Jer. 15.); and I lamented over them, 'AYKaH, How sitteth solitary?'

YOUR MIDRASH NAVIGATOR

1. Read the Garden of Eden story in Genesis chapter 3. In verse 9 when God asks Adam "Where are you?" the Hebrew for this is "Ayekah" which is spelled the same as "AYKaH" but vocalized differently. When you read this story and God asks Adam "AyeKaH" (literally "Where are you?") Does that question make sense to you?
2. Now read the same story having God say AYKaH (which means "HOW?") Does that make more sense?

A WORD

The Torah is written without vowels literally without voice, the vocalization of the Torah is the way tradition has consented to read it, but new voices, or, in this case different vowel sounds bring a new and equally possible reading. This literally is the interplay between the written and oral law.

AyeKaH, may ask the question, "Where are you spiritually that you allowed yourself to decline so quickly?" AYKaH is a more visceral and primal response, "How did you do this to me," or "How did you make Me do this to You," or "How do you keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again?" "How do you disappoint Me and make Me dwell alone?"