A Sefer Tora Burned, and A Breach In The Wall

APOSTOMUS BURNED A SEFER TORA

A Jewish commando attacked an expedition of Romans who brought weapons and supplies to the invading army. The Roman governor, Komanos, besieged the city of Bet-Horon from where this attack was organized, and ordered that the attackers be seized and brought to him. The Roman soldiers complied with the governor's orders, but exceeded them. A Roman military man named Apostomus took a Sefer Tora and burned it publicly. This occurred on the 17th of Tammuz. The Yehudim heard this great tragedy –it was the first time this happened but unfortunately, not the last one– and started a great revolt, which was only appeased when the Romans executed the soldier who had committed this aberration.

A BREACH IN THE WALL

The Jews' rebellion against the Romans did not prosper, and the Romans ended up destroying the Bet haMiqdash in 68 of the common era. The Jews living inside Yerushalayim defended themselves behind the walls, which were originally built in the days of King Solomon. The walls of the second Bet haMiqdash were built by Nehemiah, 5th century BCE. These walls were obviously there to keep the enemies out of the city and were especially strong. The people fought with bravery and ingenuity to defend the city and repel the powerful enemies. But the Romans, the most powerful world superpower at that time, had very advanced military technology. They used catapults to throw very heavy rocks that struck and broke the walls. They also built towers to climb the walls and weaken the Jewish defenses. The enemy soldiers carried in these towers a "battering ram'", an enormous trunk with an iron ending with the image of a ram's head, to strike and damage

the walls and gates of the city.

On the 17th of Tammuz one of the walls of Yerushalayim –the fortress of Antonia, built by Herod 40 years before, in honor of the Emperor Marcus Antonius– yielded, and the Roman soldiers began to enter the city. This was the beginning of the end of Yerushalayim.

The Jews fought ferociously from within the walls, but they were not united, and were fighting with one another. And as our Sages explained, when this happens (*sinat chinam)*, HaShem is not with us.