



The Four Minor Fasts

There are four minor fast days in the Jewish calendar, which last from dawn: first light | 72 minutes before *hanetz hachamah* (sunrise), to nightfall: full dark | 40 minutes after *shki'ah* (sunset) on the same day. Three of these fasts are connected to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, while one is connected to the holiday of Purim.

1. *Tzom Gedaliah* | Tuesday, September 18, 2023

The Fast of Gedaliah occurs on the third of Tishrei, the day following Rosh Hashana. It commemorates the tragic death of Gedaliah ben Achikam at the hands of other Jews in the year 586 BCE. He was the Babylonian-appointed Jewish governor of the Jewish population remaining in Judah after the destruction of the Temple. Gedaliah's death was seen as the moment the Jews lost hope that Babylonian sovereignty would end, and the Jewish state would survive in the land of Israel.

Times

5:27am: Fast begins 6:00am: Shacharit

6:35pm: Mincha/Maariv 7:40pm: Fast ends

2. *Tzom Asarah B'Tevet* | Friday, December 22, 2023

The Tenth of Tevet is a fast day commemorating the start of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem which ultimately resulted in the destruction of the First Temple. *Asarah B'Tevet* is also known as the General Kaddish Day (*Yom HaKaddish Haklali*). The Chief Rabbinate of Israel designated the Tenth of Tevet as a public day of Kaddish to allow the relatives of Holocaust victims whose *yahrzeits* are unknown to observe this day as a *yahrzeit* day.

Special Notes for Erev Shabbat:

1. *Asarah B'Tevet* is the only fast day that can take place on Erev Shabbat. We break our fast after nightfall when we make kiddush on Friday night, after Maariv.
2. Fast Day Mincha is recited, excluding *Tachanun* and *Avinu Malkein*.
3. *Kabbalat Shabbat/Maariv* is expedited to allow getting home close to the end of the fast.



4. There is a strong *halachic* position to adopt an earlier end time for this fast when it falls out on Friday - please see more information [here](#).
5. Those at home who wish to break their fast at fast end time before those at shul have returned home should make Kiddush and eat (including *mezonot*) and wait for others to return home for *Hamotzi*.
6. *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishet Chayil* may be deferred until during the meal.

Times

6:05am: Fast begins 6:25am: Shacharit
4:13pm: Candle lighting
4:08pm: Mincha/Maariv 5:11pm: Fast ends

3. Ta'anit Esther | Thursday, March 21st, 2024

Purim is preceded by *Ta'anit Esther*, the Fast of Esther, which is generally observed on the 13th of Adar, and in a leap year, on the 13th of Adar II. However this year, the 13th of Adar II falls on Shabbat and so it is moved to the preceding Thursday¹. Therefore, we observe *Ta'anit Esther* on **Thursday, March 21st, 11 Adar II**. This fast, according to many, commemorates the preparation the Jews undertook before standing up for their lives on the 14th of Adar.

Times

5:44am: Fast begins 6:00am: Shacharit
6:35pm: Mincha/Maariv 7:50pm: Fast ends

4. Shiva Asara BeTammuz | Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024

The period of the Three Weeks begins with the Fast of Tammuz, usually called the Seventeenth of Tammuz. This fast commemorates 5 tragic events that befell the Jewish people:

1. Moses smashed the tablets.
2. The *Tamid* (daily) offering was suspended during the siege of Jerusalem².
3. The walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans, leading to the destruction of the Second Temple on Tisha B'Av.

¹ The only fast day which is observed on a Friday is *Asarah B'Tevet*

² There are conflicting traditions and interpretations about whether this event refers to the First Temple period, the Second Temple period, or both.



4. The Roman general Apostamos burned a Torah scroll (Second Temple).
5. The Roman general Apostamos placed an idol in the Temple courtyard (Second Temple).

Times

4:32am: Fast begins	6:00am: Shacharit
7:50pm: Mincha/Maariv	9:00pm: Fast ends

Laws and Customs of the Minor Fasts

Tefillah

1. Shacharit:

- a. The ש"י (Shliach Tzibur) adds *Aneinu* to *Chazarat Hasha"tz* between the *Re'eh* and *Refa'einu* blessings
- b. *Selichot* and *Avinu Malkeinu* are recited
- c. *Keri'at HaTorah* for the fast day (see below)

2. Mincha:

- a. *Keriat HaTorah* (see below for more information)
- b. *Haftarah* - **Isaiah 55:6-56:8**
[Koren: pp. 1112-1113, Transliterated p. 594]
- c. Those who are fasting* recite *Aneinu* in the Shema Koleinu blessing of the *Amidah* and the Sha"tz says *Aneinu* in *Chazarat HaSha"tz* between *Re'eh* and *Refa'einu* blessings
- d. All say *Sim Shalom* instead of *Shalom Rav* in the *Amidah*
- e. *Elokeinu V'Elokei Avoteinu* of *Birkat Kohanim* in *Chazarat HaSha"tz*.
- f. *Avinu Malkenu* is also recited at Mincha, except on *Erev Shabbat* and *Erev Purim*.

3. Laws for the *Aliyot* in Torah reading:

- a. This Torah reading is the portion read on most fast days:
Exodus 32:11-14, 34:1-10 (some verses read aloud by the congregation) [Koren: p. 1112, Transliterated: p. 593]
- b. Only a person who has been fasting* is eligible to be called to the Torah or to read from the Torah.



- c. If a Kohen is present in shul but hasn't been fasting*, they should step out to make room for a Yisrael who has been fasting to be called to the Torah.

*A person is **not** considered to have broken their fast if they eat **less** than a *kezayit* (28.8gr=app. the size of a golf ball) of food OR drink less than a cheekful of liquid (45cc=1.52oz). Therefore that person could still be called to the Torah, read from the Torah, and say *Aneinu*. A likely scenario for this would be to drink a bit of water to take medication.

Fasting

On minor fast days eating and drinking are prohibited. However, since they were regulated by the Sages (*Derabbanan*), those who are weak, sick, or unwell with even minor ailments do not need fast and may eat and drink as usual. Still, one should eat and drink whatever is necessary for them, but should not eat or drink for pleasure as it is a day of fasting and mourning.

Exemptions to Fasting

- **Women** who are pregnant, nursing, or have just given birth, are **exempt** from fasting.
- **Sickness** is generally defined as the inability to continue one's routine and the need to lie down in bed.
- **Anyone** elderly, weak, or recovering from sickness who is worried that fasting would cause them to be ill should refrain from fasting. If you have any doubt please contact your doctor or a member of our Rabbinic team.
- Children who are not yet Bar or Bat mitzvah are not expected to fast. It is customary to gradually get them used to fasting as they near Bar/Bat Mitzvah age.
- If you have any questions please feel free to contact and consult with any member of our rabbinic team at the Bayit.

Note: For those who would like to rise early to eat and drink before the fast begins, it is best to have in mind to do so before going to sleep the previous evening.