

Tisha B'Av Observances

Erev Tisha B'Av (Afternoon):

The custom is to eat a final meal after mincha and before sunset. Many treat this meal like the meal of a shiva house. One eats cold hard-boiled eggs. Some also eat while seated low or on the ground. Many have the tradition to dip a portion of bread in ashes in memory of Jerusalem.

Eating and Drinking

After 8:07 pm on Wednesday, July 29, 2020, all eating and drinking is forbidden. Swallowing medicinal capsules, tablets or liquid medicine without water **is definitely permitted**.

The ill or elderly as well as pregnant and nursing women are required to fast if strong and healthy, or unless a doctor says they may not. Boys up to twelve years old and girls up to eleven are **not required to fast the entire day**. Those not required to fast should eat only what is needed to preserve their health.

Bathing and Washing

All bathing for *pleasure* is prohibited, even in cold water including the hands, face and feet.

Washing upon waking, after using the bathroom, or before praying **is permitted**. One may wash dirty or sullied portions of the body (including cleaning the eyes), and if necessary, may use soap or warm water to remove dirt or odors. **Washing for cooking or for medical reasons is permitted**.

Anointing:

The use of fragrances, alcohols, cream, ointment, perfume, etc. is **not** permitted. Any of the above need for medical reasons is permitted.

Marital Relations:

Spousal intimacy is **not** permitted on Tisha B'Av.

Wearing Leather Shoes

Wearing shoes of leather is prohibited. Shoes made of cloth, rubber or plastic are permitted. Many do not wear any leather including that which is merely adornments or decorative (like belts, yarmulkes, or leather accents on athletic shoes) – however there are sources that do not call for such observances.

Learning Torah

Since the study of Torah is consoling, it is prohibited to learn topics other than those relevant to Tisha B'Av or mourning. For example one may learn Lamentations with midrash and commentaries that deal with tragedy or destruction, the third chapter of Moed Katan (which deals with mourning), the story of the destruction (in Gittin 56b-58a, Sanhedrin 104, and in Josephus), and the halachot of Tisha B'Av and mourning.

Additional Restrictions

Many try to express the grief of the day by depriving themselves of some comfort in sleep. Some reduce the number of pillows, some sleep on the floor. **Pregnant women, the elderly and the ill are exempt.** Sitting on a normal chair is forbidden until midday. One may sit on a low bench or chair, or on a cushion on the floor.

Greeting someone with "good morning" or similarly is prohibited.

Daily Work and Employment

The custom is to refrain until midday from any time-consuming work that diverts one from mourning. In a case of financial loss, some concessions may be made, contact the Rabbi for more information.

Prayer

Ashkenazim do not wear tefillin at Shacharit, nor is a blessing made on tzitzit. At Mincha, tefillin is worn and those who wear a tallit gadol make the blessing then.

The Day After Tisha B'Av: Sources in the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch (as well as the historian Josephus) relate that the Temple's destruction started on the Ninth of Av but continued through the Tenth of Av. Therefore, we are encouraged to refrain from meat or alcohol on the 10th of Av as well. Ashkenazi Jewry observe these restrictions until midday on the 10th of Av. There are authorities who permit one to cut one's hair and do laundry immediately after the fast however, common custom is to refrain from these activities until midday on the 10th of Av, as well.

The Talmud teaches us "Anyone who mourns over Jerusalem will merit seeing it in its joy." May we merit seeing a rebuilt Jerusalem full of joy and peace.