

## **NINE DAYS & TISHA B'AV**

### **LAWS AND CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PERIOD**

**During the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz until after Tisha B'Av, the custom is to observe some aspects of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple. The following guidelines have been adapted from the website of Ohr Somayach. Please note that the following is all according to the Ashkenazic custom; for the Sephardic custom please consult an appropriate rabbinic authority from the Sephardic community.**

#### **The Three Weeks - 17 Tammuz through 9 Av**

1. Weddings should not be performed during this period.
2. Engagements may take place with a meal until the 1st of Av. From the 1st of Av until after Tisha B'Av they may take place with refreshments only.
3. Dancing and playing or listening to music is prohibited. A musician who earns his living by playing for non-Jews may do so until the 1st of Av.
4. The custom is to refrain from reciting the blessing "sh'hecheyanu" on new garments or fruit, except on Shabbat. Pregnant women or ill people who need the fruit may eat it normally, without "sh'hecheyanu".
5. The custom is to refrain from taking a haircut, including the beard. An adult may not give a haircut to a child (under bar- or bat-mitzva).
6. Trimming one's mustache is permitted if it interferes with eating.
7. A person who usually shaves daily (in a permitted manner) and would suffer business or financial loss by not shaving, may do so until the 1st of Av, or at most until the Friday before Tisha B'Av. Whatever one's situation, shaving on Tisha B'Av is not permitted.

#### **The 9 Days - 1 Av until after Tisha B'Av**

1. One should not purchase an object of joy that will be available after Tisha B'Av for the same price.
2. Construction for aesthetic reasons should be suspended.
3. Construction for a mitzvah like a synagogue, place of Torah study, or a mikva is permitted.
4. The custom is to refrain from eating meat and poultry or drinking wine and grape juice during the nine days. This prohibition also applies to children.
5. Eating meat and drinking wine is permitted on Shabbat during the nine days. Even if one brings Shabbat in early on Friday afternoon before sunset, or extends the third meal of Shabbat into Saturday night, one may eat meat and drink wine at those times.
6. One may drink the wine of Havdallah. Some have the custom to give the wine to a child of 6-9 years old, or to use beer for Havdallah.
7. Meat and wine are permitted at a meal in honor of a mitzvah like brit milah, pidyon haben (redemption of the first born), and at a siyum to celebrate the completion of a Talmud tractate.
8. A person who requires meat because of weakness or illness, including small children and pregnant or nursing women who have difficulty eating dairy, may of course eat meat. However, if possible, poultry is preferable to meat.
9. Laundering is prohibited even for use after Tisha B'Av. This includes giving clothing to a non-Jewish cleaner. One may give clothes in to a non-Jewish cleaner before the 1st of Av, even though it will be washed during the nine days.

10. The prohibition of laundering includes linens, tablecloths, and towels.
11. A person who has no clean clothes may wash what he needs until the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av.
12. Children's diapers and clothing that constantly get dirty may be washed by need even during the week of Tisha B'Av, but it must be done privately, in other words not taking to storefront cleaner.
13. Laundering for the purpose of a mitzvah is permitted.
14. It is forbidden to wear freshly laundered clothing during the nine days. This includes all clothing except undergarments etc. and sports clothing worn for workouts.
15. One should prepare for the nine days by wearing freshly laundered suits, pants, shirts, dresses, blouses and the like for a short time before the onset of the nine days, so that they may be worn during the nine days. Socks, undershirts and underwear need not be prepared.
16. One may wear freshly laundered Shabbat clothing, as well as use clean tablecloths and towels.
17. Since one may wear freshly laundered garments on Shabbat, if one forgot or was unable to prepare enough garments before the nine days, he may change for Friday night and then change again on Shabbat morning. These garments may then be worn during the week. This applies only to clothing that is suitable to wear on Shabbat, since wearing a garment on Shabbat for the sole purpose of wearing it during the week is forbidden.
18. Fresh garments and Shabbat clothing may be worn in honor of a mitzvah for example at a brit milah for you are the parent, mohel, or sandek.
19. While wearing new clothing that doesn't require the blessing "sh'hecheyanu" is permitted until the 1st of Av, during the nine days it is prohibited even on Shabbat.
20. One may not buy new clothes or shoes even for use after Tisha B'Av, except in a case of great necessity, for example for one's wedding.
21. If one forgot or was unable to buy special shoes needed for Tisha B'Av, one may do so during the nine days.
22. The custom is not to bathe for pleasure during the nine days. One may bathe for medical reasons, or to remove dirt or perspiration, in water that is not very hot, in other words colder than the normal bathing temperature. The same applies to showering.
23. Swimming is prohibited except for medical reasons.
24. There is no restriction to the bathing one does in honor of Shabbat.

### **The fast of Tisha B'av**

Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning and repentance on which we recall the destruction of the First and Second Temples, and other tragic events that took place on this day in our history. By carefully observing the laws and customs instituted by our Sages, we are able to feel the full impact of what we have lost.

1. If a brit milah or redemption of the first-born occurs on the day before Tisha B'Av (Tisha B'Av in the evening), if meat is being served the meal must be held before noon.
2. Since the study of Torah is pleasurable, from noon some people refrain from learning topics other than what is relevant to Tisha B'Av or mourning. However, many people learn all topics of Torah until sunset.
3. Since Tisha B'Av is called a 'moed' (holiday or appointed day), no tachanun is said at mincha in the afternoon before Tisha B'Av (nor on Tisha B'Av itself).
4. The custom is to eat a final meal after mincha and before sunset, consisting of bread, cold hard-boiled eggs and water. The meal is eaten while seated on the ground, a portion of the bread should be dipped in ashes and eaten, and no mezuman is said in Birkat Hamazon.
5. After the meal, one may sit normally until sunset. Shoes may be worn all day until sunset.

### **Eating and Drinking**

1. All eating and drinking is forbidden on Tisha B'Av. This includes rinsing one's mouth out and brushing one's teeth, except in a case of great distress.
2. Swallowing capsules or medical tablets or liquid medicine without water is permitted.
3. The ill or elderly, as well as pregnant and nursing women, are required to fast, unless a doctor says that fasting may injure their health.
4. A woman within 7 days of childbirth may not fast, and within thirty days should not fast.
5. Boys up to twelve years old and girls up to eleven are not required to fast the entire day. There are various opinions as to whether they should fast part of the day.
6. Those not required to fast should eat only what is needed to keep them going for the day.
7. When Tisha B'Av is observed on Sunday, a person who is not required to fast should recite Havdallah over beer, coffee or tea.

### **Bathing and Washing**

1. All bathing is prohibited even in cold water including just the hands, face and feet.
2. Ritual washing upon waking, after using the bathroom, etc., is permitted, but only up to the knuckles.
3. One may wash away dirt (including cleaning the eyes), and if necessary may use soap or warm water to remove the dirt or bad odor.
4. Washing one's hands before cooking or for medical reasons is permitted.

### **Wearing Leather Shoes**

1. Even shoes made partially of leather are prohibited. Shoes made of cloth, rubber or plastic are permitted.
2. Wearing leather shoes is permitted for medical reasons.

## **The Study of Torah**

1. Since the study of Torah is pleasurable, as already mentioned, it is prohibited to learn topics other than those relevant to Tisha B'Av or mourning.
2. One may learn: Eicha with its midrash and commentaries, any portion of the Prophets that deal with tragedy or destruction, the third chapter of Tractate Moed Katan (which deals with mourning), the story of the destruction (in Tractate Gittin 56b-58a, Tractate Sanhedrin 104, and in Josephus), and the halachot of Tisha B'Av and mourning.

## **Additional Restrictions**

1. One should deprive oneself of some comfort in sleep. Some people reduce the number of pillows, the elderly and the ill are exempt. Obviously this only applies if it is not going to cause medical problems.
2. 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.
3. Greeting someone with "good morning" and the like is prohibited. One who is greeted should answer softly and, if possible, inform the person of the prohibition.
4. One should not give a gift except to the needy.
5. Things that divert one from mourning such as idle talk, reading the newspaper, taking a walk for pleasure, etc. are prohibited.
6. The custom is to refrain until midday from any time-consuming work that diverts one from mourning.

## **Prayer**

1. Ashkenazim do not wear tefillin at Shacharit, nor is a blessing made on tzitzit.
2. At Mincha, tefillin is worn and those who wear a tallit gadol make the blessing then.
3. At Mincha, the prayers Nacheim and Aneinu are added to the Shmonah Esrei during the blessing "Veliyerushalayim" and "Shma Koleinu" respectively. "Sim Shalom" is said in place of "Shalom Rav." If one forgot them and completed that bracha, one need not repeat the prayer.

## **Miscellaneous Information**

1. The limitations of the "Three Weeks" and the "Nine Days" continue until midday of the 10th of Av. This includes the prohibition of music, haircuts, meat and wine, laundering and bathing.
2. When Tisha B'Av is observed on the 10th of Av (the 9th was Shabbat and observance of Tisha B'Av was postponed to Sunday the 10th), haircuts, laundering and bathing are permitted Sunday night, the 11th of Av. However, meat and wine are still prohibited until Monday morning.
3. When Tisha B'Av is on Thursday so that the 10th of Av is on Friday, in honor of Shabbat laundering may be permitted Thursday night; haircuts and bathing Friday morning; and music in the afternoon.
4. The custom is to sanctify the new moon the night after Tisha B'Av, preferably after having eaten something. When Tisha B'Av is on Thursday, the custom is to wait until Saturday night when the service can be said with greater joy.