



## **Halachah Guide: Asarah b'Tevet**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner – [rabbi@ecdp.info](mailto:rabbi@ecdp.info), 516-456-1721

### **Eighth, Ninth and Tenth of Tevet**

We are taught that the eighth, ninth and tenth of Tevet are dark days on the Jewish calendar.

- On 8 Tevet the Torah was translated into Greek; this was tragic either because the translation was inadequate or because spreading access to Torah reduced the special character of the Jewish people.
- The Shulchan Aruch states that the tragedy of 9 Tevet is unknown. Some say it is the yahrzeit of Ezra HaSofer, the great leader of the Jews at the start of the second Beit HaMikdash.
- On 10 Tevet (“Asarah b’Tevet”) Nevuchadnezzar began the siege of Jerusalem; this led to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and the murder and exile of almost all of the Jews in Israel. For more, see Melachim II 25 and Yirmiyahu 52.

Each of these days would be worthy of a fast, but due to our inability to fast for three days we only fast on the tenth of Tevet. This year, that is Friday December 22.

In recent times the tenth of Tevet has gained added significance. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate has designated this day as *Yom HaKaddish HaKlali*, a day of kaddish for victims of the Shoah whose yahrzeit is unknown.

### **The Fast**

**When** - This year the fast starts at 5:47 AM and ends at 5:06 PM, on Friday December 22.

**Eating Before Dawn** – One who intends to wake up before dawn to eat should declare that intention, at least mentally, before going to sleep. One who did not declare it may still drink before the fast begins. Note that one who is having a meal of bread or *mezonot* products should begin more than 30 minutes before the fast begins.

**Restrictions** – One may use inedible mouthwash. We do not bathe enjoyably on fast days, but see below. One who has difficulty swallowing necessary medication without water may drink the minimum amount of water needed to swallow the medication. One who mistakenly eats should still complete the fast.

**Davening** - One who is not fasting omits *Aneinu*. One says *Avinu Malkeinu* even if not fasting, and even alone.

### **A Friday Fast Day**

Friday fast days are unusual; the only fast day which can occur on Friday in the current Jewish calendar is the Tenth of Tevet. This happens irregularly and infrequently. It last happened in 5781 (Dec. 25 2020). If the Beit HaMikdash is not rebuilt, it will occur again next year in 5785 (Jan. 10 2025), and then again in 5795 (Dec. 22 2034).

Having a fast day on Friday creates a conflict with Shabbat, as Shabbat begins when we light candles before sunset but the fast extends until nightfall. The fast overrides Shabbat, continuing until the stars emerge. One may not even taste the Shabbat food in advance to ensure its quality, even though this is normally a mitzvah. However, one may sing *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishet Chayil* before nightfall, and just wait until 5:06 PM for kiddush.

Honoring Shabbat overrides fast day customs which are not firm requirements. Therefore, even though some people do not bathe enjoyably, shave or have haircuts on fasts, one should do so to prepare for Shabbat.

At minchah, we do not say *Avinu Malkeinu* or *Tachanun*.

### **Zecharyah’s Message**

May we soon see the realization of Zecharyah’s promise and imperative, “The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month and the fast of the tenth month will be for the house of Yehudah [days of] joy and happiness and great occasions. Love truth and peace!” (Zecharyah 8:19)