

THE LAWS OF THE THREE WEEKS

The Prophet Zechariah tells us that the fast days of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av, 3 Tishrei and 10 Tevet, will eventually be days of rejoicing for the Jewish people. Yet after the Babylonian Exile had ceased and Jews were returning to Eretz Yisrael, they would keep these national fast days until the prophet would instruct them otherwise. The prophet's words taught the people a fundamental thought about these fast days: If a nation knows how to commemorate its tragic days of destruction and establishes them as days of fasting and prayer, this nation would be strong enough to merit a return to glorified days of old.

Once the second Holy Temple was built, the fast days remembering the loss of the first Temple were abolished. After the second Temple was destroyed, the fast days were reinstated. Today, when we see the beginning of redemption with an independent State of Israel, we do not experience the full redemption of our people. Hence, we must keep these fast days, hoping for their abolishment soon with the coming of Mashiach and the building of the third Temple.

These national fast days arouse us to introspection and feelings of penitence. We remember the events that befell our nation and the sins that caused them, and we note that the sins of our ancestors have not left us. Hence we feel the need to reflect and repent.

The three week period of mourning begins with the 17th of Tammuz and culminates with the 9th of Av. This year it is observed from June 30 through July 22.

Historically on the 17th of Tammuz, five tragedies occurred:

1. The first tablets containing the Ten Commandments were broken.
2. The **קרבן המיד**, the two daily sacrifices, were suspended during the time of the first Holy Temple.
3. The enemy penetrated the walls of Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the second Holy Temple.
4. The wicked Apostomos burned the Torah.
5. An idol was erected in the Holy Temple.

The 9th of Av also marks five tragedies that befell our nation:

1. It was decreed that our forefathers will remain in the desert and not enter Eretz Yisrael.
2. The first Holy Temple was destroyed.
3. The second Holy Temple was destroyed.
4. The city of Betar was captured and tens of thousands of Jews were killed.
5. The wicked Turnus Rufus plowed the site of the Temple and its surroundings.

Our custom is to observe some conduct of mourning during the entire three weeks, but we see that there are various degrees of intensity of mourning as we get closer to Tisha B'Av.

LAWS OF THE THREE WEEKS

1. Although the fast day of the 17th of Tammuz begins in the morning of July 1, the mourning restrictions of the three weeks begins June 30th after Shabbat.
2. Prohibited during the Three Weeks are:

- a) Haircutting and shaving (for men, women and children; women are allowed to shave their legs).
- b) Listening to music.
- c) Weddings.
- d) Reciting a shehechyanu (e.g. over new clothes, fruit, et al).

3. Permitted during the Three Weeks are:

- a) Swimming.
- b) Attending a program or sports event where musical entertainment is incidental to the main event.
- c) Reciting shehechyanu on Shabbat.
- d) Singing Shabbat zmirot on Shabbat.
- e) Getting engaged to be married.

FAST OF 17TH OF TAMMUZ

1. The fasting begins at 5:12 a.m. on Sunday, July 1 and ends at 8:56 p.m.
2. a) One who intends to eat in the morning of the fast day prior to 5:12 a.m. but after sleeping during the night, must declare the intent to do so before going to bed.
b) The same law applies to drinking unless one usually has something to drink upon arising in the morning.
3. One may brush his teeth or rinse his mouth with mouthwash during the fast day if he is careful not to swallow. This is prohibited on Tisha B'Av and Yom Kippur.
4. If one eats by mistake on a fast day, he should continue to fast after realizing his error.
5. Swallowing capsules, bitter medicine tablets or bitter liquid medicine without water may be permitted if medically necessary. Consult with the Rabbi.

LAWS FOR THE NINE DAYS

1. The Nine Days begin with sunset of Rosh Chodesh Av, Thursday evening, July 12 (8:16 p.m.)
2. One should not eat meat or poultry or drink wine or grape juice during the Nine Days, excluding Shabbat. (If one begins Shabbat early, one may consume wine and meat). Pareve food cooked in a meat vessel may be eaten during the Nine Days.
3. Beers and whiskeys et al (not containing wine) may be consumed during this period.
4. At Havdallah on July 14, a child under bar mitzvah age should drink the wine. If no child is available, the person making Havdallah may drink the wine.
5. Swimming is prohibited. If one swims for medical reasons (e.g. exercising or for removing dirt and sweat in a short dip), it is permitted.
6. Children under bar mitzvah age may go swimming.
7. Bathing during the Nine Days for pleasure is prohibited. Bathing for hygiene is permitted but should be done quicker and in cooler water than usual.
8. If possible, one should not clean clothes during the Nine Days.
9. One should not mend clothes or make home improvements (e.g. painting, plastering, laying carpet, etc.), but one is permitted to plant trees or plants.
10. Elective surgery should be delayed until after Tisha B'Av.

WHEN TISHA B'AV COINCIDES WITH SHABBAT

1. This year the 9th of Av occurs on Shabbat. Although the fast day is observed on Sunday, July 22 this has an effect on the Shabbat.
2. One may not have marital relations on this Shabbat unless the wife is going to the mikveh that night.
3. One should not take pleasurable walks.
4. One may review the parsha that day but after midday one should limit learning to those matters appropriate to the actual observance of the fast.
5. The laws of the final meal (Seudah HaMafseket) do not apply and one may even eat meat or drink wine.
6. One may eat only until sunset (8:13 p.m.)
7. Birkat HaMazon may be recited B'Zimun (three or more men).
8. People davening Maariv in shul on Saturday night should wait until after *Barchu* to remove their shoes, or recite *Baruch HaMavdil Bain Kodesh L'Chol*, change from shoes to sneakers and then daven Maariv commencing with *Barchu*.
NOTE:
Sneakers or other non-leather shoes should not be brought to shul on Shabbat for the purpose of wearing them after Shabbat. Bring them to shul before Shabbat on Friday. Sneakers should not be worn to shul on Shabbat as they are not Bichvod Shabbat.
9. Regular Havdallah is not said.
 - a) The blessing over the fire is said on Saturday night.
 - b) The blessing over wine and HaMavdil are said on Sunday night.
 - c) No blessing over the spices is said at all.
10. On Shabbat, July 21, (Tisha B'Av) the rabbi will not give the class normally scheduled for before Minchah, allowing us to eat Seudah Shlishit at home.
11. Minchah will be at 7:55 p.m. followed by a relevant lecture by Rabbi Weinstock.
12. Maariv will be at 8:52 p.m. followed by reading of Megillat Eichah.

LAWS OF TISHA B'AV

1. The fast begins at sunset (8:13 p.m.) on July 21, and ends at 8:50 p.m. on July 22.
2. Prohibited are:
 - a) Eating and drinking.
 - b) Washing one's body.
 - c) Marital relations.
 - d) Wearing leather shoes, even if only partially made of leather.
 - e) Anointing with oil.
3. Using deodorant is permitted.
4. Using mouthwash or brushing one's teeth is not permitted.
5. Learning Torah is prohibited. Learning about the destruction of the Temple is permitted (e.g. Job, Jeremiah, Talmud Gittin 56b).
6. Our custom is to abstain from work until midday (1:27 p.m.)

7. One does not greet a friend on Tisha B'Av with Shalom Aleichem.
8. Tallit and Tephilin are not worn in the morning. We put them on for Minchah.

FOLLOWING THE FAST

1. Many prohibitions of the Nine Days normally continue into the next day, the 10th of Av. This year, though, the fast is observed on the 10th of Av.
2. Eating meat, drinking wine and grape juice is prohibited on Sunday night.
3. All other restrictions (haircuts, washing, etc.) are lifted immediately after the fast.

THE SOUTHERN WALL EXCAVATIONS

These excavations begun in 1968 were the largest earth-moving archaeological projects in Israel.

See <http://www.bibleplaces.com/southernmt/>

Southern Steps

The western flight of stairs leading to the main entrances of the Temple Mount was 200 feet wide. Excavators uncovered the easternmost part of this staircase with its alternating long and short steps. Some suggest that the fifteen long steps may have been one of the locations where pilgrims sang the fifteen Psalms of Ascent (120-34) as they went up to worship.

**Double Gate**

The Double Gates and Triple Gates provided access to the Temple Mount through subterranean passageways. Half of the lintel stone and relieving arch of this Herodian gateway is visible above the later protruding arch. Above and to the right is a stone with an inscription mentioning Hadrian's son (AD 138). Its position upside down clearly indicates that it is in secondary use.

