

HALACHOS OF THE THREE WEEKS 5781

The three-week period beginning with the 17th of Tammuz and ending with the fast of the 9th of Av is a period of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem and the two Batei Mikdash. The mourning intensifies as we move closer to Tisha B'Av. Each stage of the Aveilus is parallel to a stage in the personal Aveilus a person undergoes after the loss of a loved one, *lo aleinu*. The 3 weeks until Rosh Chodesh are like the 12 months of Aveilus for a parent, the 9 days are like the Shloshim and Tisha B'Av is like the Shiva itself. The restrictions we observe are reminders of the deficiency of our current state missing the Beis Hamikdash, may we see it rebuilt speedily in our days.

Restrictions of “The Three Weeks”

The period of mourning of the three weeks begins on the night of Shiva Asar BeTamuz, this year Motzei Shabbos Balak, June 26th

Weddings/Engagements

- Weddings are prohibited.
- Engagements are permitted until Rosh Chodesh Av, though engagement parties should be postponed until after the Three Weeks.

Music

- It is prohibited to play or listen to music.
 - According to most, this prohibition includes taped music. Although it may be permissible to listen to tapes with singing alone (“acappella”), it is preferable to refrain from the joy associated with music altogether.
- Singing is permitted on Shabbos.
- Students who practice regularly may continue practicing as they usually would.

Haircuts and Shaving

- Haircuts are prohibited for both men and women.
- Shaving is prohibited according to most authorities, if not needed for business purposes.

Important Purchases

- Purchases that would require the berachah of “shehechyanu” should be avoided, i.e. a new car, sheitel, expensive clothing, major appliances, furniture and the like.
 - This does not apply to undergarments.
- If there is a major sale which will not be available later, or one is left without a car or important appliance, these objects may be purchased even during the Nine Days.
- If one forgot or was unable to buy special shoes for Tisha B'Av, one may do so even during the Nine Days.
- Repairing torn garments or shoes is permitted.

Restrictions during “The Nine Days”

With Rosh Chodesh Av (Friday Night, July 9th), the more intense period of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Batei Mikdash begins.

Home Repairs

- All building for pleasure purposes or cosmetic enhancement, not required for dwelling, should be suspended or postponed. Painting, wallpapering and general home decoration should not be done.
- Similarly, one should not plant new plants or landscape one's property for pleasure.
- Functional home repairs can be made and repairing pressing damages may be done during this period.
- If the job was started with a contractor beforehand and the job is lagging on, a Shayla should be asked.

Meat and Wine

- The custom is to refrain from eating meat/poultry and drinking wine/grape juice.
- This pertains to young children as well.
- The prohibition of meat includes foods cooked *with* meat or meat fat.

- Food cooked in a clean “meat vessel” may be eaten.
- Eating meat and drinking wine is permitted on Shabbos. Even one who has ushered in Shabbos on Friday afternoon before sunset, or extends the seudah shlishis into Saturday night, may eat meat and drink wine at those times
- One may not eat leftovers for Melava Malka after Shabbos.
- A child who usually eats early Shabbos dinner on Friday afternoon may continue to do so.
- One may taste meaty dishes being prepared to ensure that they taste right for Shabbos after midday on Friday afternoon.
- For Havdalah during the 9 days, one may give the cup of Havdalah to a child below bar/bat mitzvah. If that is not an option, one may drink as one normally would.
- Meat and wine are also permitted at a seudas mitzvah such as a bris mila, pidyon haben or a siyum.
 - One should not, however, intentionally schedule a siyum specially for the Nine Days.

Laundrying

- Laundrying is prohibited, even for use after Tisha B’Av.
- One may not give clothing to a non-Jewish launderer for them to clean the clothes.
- The prohibition of laundrying includes linens, tablecloths and towels.
- A person who has no clean clothes may wash individual garments in private as needed.
- While one may polish shoes with liquid or wax polish, shining shoes should be avoided.

Wearing Freshly Laundered Clothing

- It is forbidden to wear freshly laundered clothing.
- This does not apply to undergarments, socks or other clothing worn directly on the body which are changed when one perspires.
- The prohibition of using freshly laundered items includes linens, tablecloths and towels.
- It is advisable to prepare *before* the Nine Days by using freshly laundered linens, tablecloths and towels and wearing freshly laundered suits, pants, dresses and the like. If they are used or worn even for a short period of time before the Nine Days, they may be used or worn during the Nine Days.
- One may wear freshly laundered clothing for Shabbos and use freshly laundered tablecloths and towels. *New* garments are prohibited, even on Shabbos.

Bathing and Swimming

- The custom is not to bathe *for pleasure*, even in cold water.
- Showering is permitted *when necessary* but should be done as quickly as possible and with lukewarm water.
- One may bathe with hot water on Friday, in honor of Shabbos.
- A woman at the conclusion of her Seven Clean Days bathes, washes herself and immerses as usual.
- Some permit instructional swim, but one should only do it when someone else is with them as it is a time of *sakana* (danger).

Nail Cutting

- One should only cut nails for the need of a mitzvah during the 9 days, for example on erev Shabbos in honor of Shabbos or a woman who is preparing for the mikvah, even not on erev Shabbos.

Laws of Erev Tisha B'Av (Shabbos Chazon, July 16-17th)

This year Erev Tisha B’Av falls out on Shabbos

- One may have regular Shabbat meals with meat and wine.
- One may sing Zemiros.
- One may have guests if that is what one does on a regular Shabbos.
- Marital relations are not permitted on Friday night Tisha B`Av nor Motzei Shabbos. However, a woman whose night to immerse in a Mikvah is Friday night Tisha B`Av may go to the Mikvah and may have relations.
- Because Torah-study heightens Simcha, it is the Minhag to learn only those portions of Torah relating to Churban, from Chatzos on Erev Tisha B`Av (Shabbat afternoon) until after Tisha B`Av.
 - One may fulfill Shnayim Mikra V`echad Targum all day Shabbos.

- The meal immediately before the fast is Seudah Shlishis and there is no typical Seudah Hamafsek. Meat and wine are permitted at Seudah Shlishis. Guests may attend if having guests for Seudah Shlishis is the host's normal custom. Zemiros may be sung, but the mood at Seudah Shlishis should be somewhat subdued.
- Mincha is scheduled for 1:40pm, 6:00pm and 7:00pm to ensure time for the Seudah Shlishis at home. There will NOT be Seudah Shlishis at shul.
- After the seuda hamafsek one may continue to eat and drink (before sunset), however one should stipulate out loud that they intend to continue eating even after this meal.

Laws of Tisha B'Av (Motzei Shabbos and Sunday July 17-18th)

Night of Tisha B'Av

- The fast begins at sunset - 8:23pm this year. However, no changing of clothing or shoes should be performed until after Shabbat is over at 9:14pm.
- After Shabbos ends one recites the words "Baruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh L'chol". From that point on all the restrictions of Tisha B'Av begin.
- The Bracha on fire (Borei Me'orei Ha'aish) is recited by all on Motzei Shabbat. The rest of Havdalah is to be recited after the fast is over.
- Maariv followed by Eicha is scheduled for 9:30pm at shul.

Eating and Drinking

- Eating and drinking are forbidden.
- This includes rinsing one's mouth and brushing one's teeth.
- Swallowing capsules or bitter tablets without water is permitted.
- Infirm or elderly people, as well as pregnant or nursing women, who suspect that fasting may be harmful to them or their babies, should consult with the Rabbi.
- Those not required to fast should eat only what is needed to preserve their health.

Bathing and Washing

- All bathing or washing for pleasure is prohibited - in both hot and cold water. This includes hands, face and feet.
- One may wash dirty or sullied portions of the body including cleaning the eyes of glutinous material upon waking.
If necessary, one may use soap or warm water to remove the dirt or odor.
- Washing one's hands upon waking, after using the bathroom, after touching covered parts of one's body and before praying is permitted up to the knuckles.
- Washing for medical reasons or to prepare for a *hefsek tahara* is permitted.

Anointing

- Anointing for pleasure is prohibited.
- This includes oil, soap, alcohol, cream, ointment and perfume.
- Anointing for medical reasons is permitted.
- Deodorant to avoid or prevent a bad odor is permitted but not add a pleasant scent.

Marital Relations

- Marital relations are prohibited.
- Couples should keep all of the "harchakos" and general rules pertaining to the time of nidus throughout Tisha B'Av night.
- These additional restrictions are relaxed in the daytime.

Wearing Leather Shoes

- Even shoes made partially of leather are prohibited.
- Shoes made of cloth, rubber or plastic are permitted.
- Wearing leather shoes for medical reasons is permitted.
- Other leather garments or belts are permitted.

Learning Torah

- Since the study of Torah brings enjoyment, it is prohibited to learn Torah on Tisha B'Av.

- One is only permitted to study topics relevant to Tisha B'Av and mourning. Amongst the items and books that one may learn are: the laws of Tisha B'Av and mourning, the book of Iyov and its commentaries, Megillas Eicha with its medrash and commentaries, the portions of Jeremiah and other prophets which deal with tragedy and destruction e) the third chapter of Moed Katan - which deals with mourning, works of mussar, the story of the destruction in Gittin 56B-58A, Sanhedrin 104 and in Josephus.

Sleep

- One should deprive one's self of some comfort during sleep.
 - Some reduce the number of pillows, while others sleep on the floor.
- Pregnant women, the elderly and infirm are exempt.

Greeting

- Greeting someone with "good evening", "good morning" and the like is prohibited.
- One who is greeted should respond softly, to show that greeting is prohibited.

Fasting Exceptions

- A woman who gave birth within the past 30 days does not fast.
- Nursing mothers and pregnant women must fast if they do not feel exceedingly weak. If they should become very weak, they should break their fast immediately. They then eat normally and do not need to only consume small measures of less than a Shiur of food and drink as they would on Yom Kippur.
- A Choleh (someone who is ill) with any illness that might be significantly affected by fasting does not fast.
 - Please reach out to ask a Shayla if one is concerned about a specific situation.

Other Guidelines

- Sitting on a normal chair is prohibited until midday (1:00 PM).
- One may sit on a low bench or chair (under 12 inches) or on a cushion on the floor.
- The custom is to refrain from work that diverts one's attention from mourning until after midday.
- Gifts should not be sent on Tisha B'Av, except to a person in need.

Tefilla on Tisha B'Av

- Ashkenazim do not wear tefillin or a tallis at Shacharis. Men wear tzitzis without reciting a blessing.
- Tallis and tefilin are worn with a blessing at Mincha. One who doesn't wear a talis should touch his tzizis and recite the blessing at this time.
- At Mincha, the prayers Nacheim and Aneinu are added to the Shemone Esrei during the blessings of "VeliYerushalayim" and "Shema Koleinu", respectively.
- "Sim Shalom" is said in place of "Shalom Rav."
 - If one forgot any of these changes, Shemone Esrei need not be repeated.

Motzai Tisha B'Av (Sunday Night July 18th)

- The fast ends at 9:05pm
- Kiddush Levana is recited.
- Havdalah is recited Sunday night after the fast, beginning with Borei Pri Hagafen, without Besamim and without a candle. It is preferable for a child to consume the wine if Havdalah was made on wine. If that is not an option, the person reciting Havdalah may drink the wine.
- The restrictions of the 9 Days remain in place until Monday at chatzos (1:01 PM).

כל המתאבל על ירושלים - זוכה ורואה בשמחתה

All those who mourn over Yerushalayim will merit to see it's rejoicing

Taanit 30b

In the merit of our sincere observance of this time of mourning, may we merit the fulfillment of our hopes and prayers for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim speedily in our days.