

The following are some of the more prevalent laws pertaining to the Three Week period.

A) FAST OF SHIVA A'SAR B'TAAMUZ

- 1) All adult men and women must fast except:
 - a) One who is ill (even though not life threatening)
 - b) Women, for thirty days after childbirth
 - c) Pregnant and nursing mothers
- 2) Children below Bar and Bas Mitzvah age are exempt from fasting. However, children who are above the age of 8 and understand the concept of mourning the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, should be instructed not to indulge in delicacies so that they join with the rest of the tzibur in some aspect of communal mourning.
- 3) One may rinse the front part of his mouth on this fast day (i.e. with mouthwash) exercising caution not to swallow any liquid.
- 4) A person who forgot and made a bracha on food or drink and then realized that it is a fast day, should taste something in order to avoid a bracha levatala.
- 5) Even if one ate or drank by accident, he should still continue to fast.
- 6) An individual who is still fasting at the time of Mincha (e.g. Mincha Gedola) recites "Aneinu" in Shemone Esrei even though he will be breaking the fast after Mincha due to weakness or illness.
- 7) A person who feels weak or has pain and wants to take Advil, Tylenol, etc., may do so (even with a drop of water if he is not able to swallow it without the liquid), and is still considered to be fasting.

B) THE THREE WEEKS

- 1) The Ashkenazi minhag is that haircutting and shaving are prohibited during the Three Weeks for men and women. A person may get a haircut or shave if this will cause him a financial loss or create difficulty in his business. However, if it would suffice for him to shave even once or twice a week, he should do so as opposed to shaving every day.
- 2) A married woman, or one of marriageable age (e.g. a girl dating), may shave her legs even during the Nine Days.
- 3) Dancing and playing musical instruments are forbidden during this period. It is the custom to refrain from listening to any music, whether live or recorded.
- 4) A music teacher may teach his students during the three week period, even after Rosh Chodesh Av. Similarly, one may learn music and practice during this period of time even if it's not for one's livelihood.
- 5) It is permitted to listen to music to assist exercising.
- 6) Similarly, it is permitted to listen to music if the purpose is to avoid difficulty. For example, a) for the driver to play music if he is fearful that he might fall asleep at the wheel. b) in a household with young children where music will reduce the tension.
- 7) Many poskim permit music tapes without instruments (e.g. acapella) during this period of time.
- 8) On Shabbos one should sing the usual "Zemiros."
- 9) It is customary not to recite a Birchas She'hechyanu during the Three Weeks. Hence, one should not purchase, or wear for the first time, a garment that would require such a brocha (e.g. suits, gowns, etc.). Clothing that does not require a She'hechyanu (e.g. shoes, socks, shirts, pants, etc.), may be purchased and worn until Rosh Chodesh Av.
- 10) A person should not purchase a new home during the three week period. However, it is permissible to go to contract and even to give a down payment.
- 11) Cutting nails is permitted up until the week of Tisha B'Av.
- 12) General home improvements are permitted until Rosh Chodesh Av. In specific cases, please consult the rabbi.
- 13) There is no halachic prohibition to take a flight during the entire three week period inclusive of the entire nine days. Many poskim discourage flying during the 9 Days, except to Israel.
- 14) There is a difference of opinion amongst the poskim if elective surgery should be scheduled during the three week period. Please consult the rabbi.

C) THE NINE DAYS

Beginning with sunset before Rosh Chodesh Av, (Thursday evening, July 12th) the Nine-Day period commences.

MEAT & WINE

- 1) Except for Shabbos, one may not eat meat or poultry, or consume any food containing meat or poultry.

- 2) Food cooked in a clean meat pot may be eaten, (even if the pot had been used for meat within the last 24 hours).
- 3) At a Siyum Mesechta, all participants who would normally be invited to such a Siyum would be permitted to eat meat. A Siyum may be made throughout the Nine Day period until Erev Tisha B'Av.
- 4) One is permitted to eat meat and drink wine at a seudas mitzvah such as at a bris, Pidyon Haben and Bar Mitzvah (Bo Bayom).
- 5) One who is ill, pregnant or nursing may eat meat if needed. Chicken would be preferable, if possible.
- 6) Wine or grape juice may not be consumed except for Shabbos or at a Seudas Mitzvah.
- 7) The prohibition of meat and drinking wine includes children above the age of 6, if they are healthy.

BATHING

- 1) During the Nine Days a person may not shower or bathe for pleasure, even in cold water. Swimming or using a sauna is likewise forbidden.
If, however, a person is perspired or dirty, he may shower or bathe in lukewarm water and even use soap or shampoo if he or she will not become clean otherwise.
- 2) Under any circumstance, washing one's hands, face and feet in cold water is permitted.
- 3) It is permitted to shower regularly in hot water if Rosh Chodesh falls out on Erev Shabbos.
- 4) There are numerous Poskim who permit showering or bathing in hot water with soap and shampoo on Erev Shabbos during the Nine Days, including Erev Shabbos Chazon. Other Poskim forbid the use of soap or shampoo unless one cannot become clean otherwise.

LAUNDRY, CLOTHING & CLEANING

- 1) It is forbidden to wash or dry clean clothing & linen, even if cleaned by a non-Jew. Ironing clothing is also prohibited.
- 2) One is permitted to polish silver or wash one's car; however, shampooing rugs is prohibited.
- 3) A sheitel is considered a garment according to halacha and may not be washed during the Nine Days. However, you may wear a freshly washed sheitel and you may also blow dry any sheitel.
- 4) It is forbidden however to cut, dye or add hair, even to an old sheitel.
- 5) It is permitted to wash out a stain from a garment.
- 6) Even giving garments to a dry cleaner during the Nine Days to be picked up after the Nine Days is not allowed. However, one may give clothing to the cleaners before Rosh Chodesh if he picks them up after Tisha B'Av.
- 7) Baby and toddler clothing may be washed during the Nine Days.
- 8) Although one may not generally wash clothing during the Nine Days, there is nothing wrong with placing a garment that got wet (e.g. sprinkler or sudden rain shower) in the dryer.
- 9) One may not wear new or freshly laundered clothing or linen during the Nine Days except for underwear or socks. Some permit wearing freshly laundered shirts. It is preferable however, to wear all shirts briefly before the Nine Days commence. Suits, blouses, shirts, etc. from the dry cleaners must also be worn for a short period of time before the Nine Days.
- 10) According to most Poskim, one may wear freshly laundered or cleaned suits for Shabbos even when Tisha B'Av occurs on Shabbos.
- 11) Purchasing new clothing is forbidden during the Nine Days, even if they will be worn after the Nine Days. This prohibition includes all types of clothing, even those upon which a She'hecheyanu is not recited. However, Tisha B'Av sneakers may be bought if one was unable to buy them previously.
- 12) It is permissible to go window shopping during the Nine Days, even if you enjoy doing so.
- 13) It is permissible to *purchase* clothing, furniture, appliances, etc. during the Nine Days if they are on sale or you'll suffer a substantial loss if you will delay the purchase. Included in this category would be an individual who finds himself in a particular locale during the Nine Days where these items can be found but are not readily available in their neighborhood.
- 14) Items that were purchased prior to Rosh Chodesh may be exchanged during the Nine days even though you are receiving a new item in return.
- 15) It is permissible to wash a kitchen or dining room floor made out of wood, stone, linoleum, etc.
- 16) It is permissible to apply shoe shine to cover over scuff marks on shoes but they should not be shined, except *lekvod* Shabbos.
- 17) It is permissible to sew a tear or to sew on a button.
- 18) Although knitting and needlepoint are forbidden, crocheting (only tying knots. Prohibition only applies to weaving process) is permissible.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 1) Any form of home decorating should not be done during the Nine Days including planting trees or flowers in the garden. It is, however, permissible to water, mow the lawn or prune trees during this period of time.
- 2) Children above the age of 6 should minimize various pleasurable activities during the Nine Day period (e.g. going to an amusement park).
- 3) It is forbidden to give an expensive gift item during the Nine Days.

D) THE WEEK OF TISHA B'AV- Shavua Shechal Bo

- 1) It is forbidden to shave or take a haircut even if it will negatively affect one's business.
- 2) Many Poskim forbid cutting nails with an instrument, except for erev shabbos and for a woman before Tevila. Biting/pulling with fingers is always permitted.
[When Tisha B'av falls out on Shabbos, and the fast is nidche [pushed off] to the following Sunday, the Shulchan Aruch records a dispute whether the halachos of Shavua Shechal Bo apply for the entire week prior to Tisha B'av, or do not apply at all. Me'ikar Hadin we rule like the opinion that there is NO Shavua shechal bo. However, it is proper, where possible, to be machmir to treat the entire week before Tisha B'av as Shavua Shechal Bo.]

E) EREV TISHA B'AV THAT FALLS ON A WEEKDAY

- 1) Prior to the fast one should eat a regular meal so as to be properly prepared to fast.
- 2) Following this meal, close to the fast one should eat the *Seuda Hamafsekas*.

F) LAWS REGARDING SEUDA HAMAFSEKES

Regardless of the foods that a person eats on erev tisha b'av to prepare for the fast, the last meal before the fast begins, the *seuda hamafsekas*, has specific guidelines:

- 1) **It is prohibited to consume more than 1 cooked dish during this meal.** Therefore, after whatever pre-fast foods are eaten (with a bracha achrona), one should break for a short while, then wash hamotzee and eat **bread and hardboiled egg** *[according to Ashkenazi minhag]* followed by Birkas Hamazon.
 1. At the outset of the meal one should say "This is Seudas Tisha B'Av."
 2. Spreads/dips should not be put on the bread [since they are often cooked/pasteurized, they may constitute a second cooked dish, which is prohibited].
 3. It is proper to dip the bread into ashes.
 4. This meal should be eaten on the floor, although after bentching, one may sit on regular chairs until the fast begins.
 5. Leather shoes can be worn during the meal.
 6. The meal should not be eaten as a family/group, but each individual should eat alone.
 7. After one finishes eating the bread & egg and bentches, it IS PERMITTED to continue eating snacks/fruits/drinks [just not a full meal] until the fast begins, EVEN if one did NOT have in mind to continue eating. Only if one said that they will not eat anymore, or that they accept the fast, is eating prohibited.
 8. It is, nevertheless, proper to think or say "*I may eat more,*" before bentching.

G) TISHA B'AV

- 1) Pregnant and nursing mothers (who are in good health) should begin fasting. If in the duration of the fast they feel ill, faint or exceedingly weak, they may eat regularly (especially this year when Tisha B'Av is a nidcheh). If there are any specific circumstances a rabbi should be consulted prior to the fast.
- 2) A woman who gave birth is exempt from fasting for 30 days after the actual birth.
- 3) Even an individual who is not classified as ill but has minor pain, may swallow a *[non sucrose coated]* Tylenol or Ibuprofen pill, etc. preferably without water. If a minimal amount of water is needed, this would be permitted.
- 4) It is forbidden to wear shoes or sneakers that contain any leather in their construction. (Ornamental strips of leather are permitted).
- 5) It is forbidden to wash any part of one's body, even with cold water. Upon rising in the morning or after using the washroom, one should wash his hands three times to the end of the knuckles.
- 6) There is no prohibition to wash any part of the body that becomes soiled with dirt. Similarly, women who are preparing food for after the fast may wash food even if their hands will get wet.
- 7) If one is accustomed to sleep with two pillows, he should only use one pillow.

- 8) Sitting on a chair is permissible after midday, which this year is 1:01 P.M. There is no problem of sitting in a car prior to that time.
- 9) A woman who recently gave birth, or is pregnant or nursing, and finds it difficult to sit on a low chair may sit on a regular chair even on the night of Tisha B'Av.
- 10) An older person or one who is not feeling well, who has difficulty sitting on a low chair may sit on a regular chair.
- 11) One does not greet his fellow man on Tisha B'Av. If you are greeted by someone, you may nod your head in response or respond softly, thus indicating that regular greeting is not permissible.
- 12) It is however permissible to wish a family member or child good night or to wish a Refuah Shleimah or even birchas Mazal Tov on Tisha B'Av.
- 13) Perfumes or colognes are not permissible. Anti-perspirants/deodorants are permitted to prevent unpleasant odors.
- 14) It is not proper for a woman to apply make up on Tisha B'Av.
- 15) It is not proper to use mouthwash or brush one's teeth on Tisha B'Av. In a situation of great distress, a shaila should be asked.
- 16) Although housework e.g. cleaning floors, making beds, washing dishes, etc. should not be done prior to chatzos, it is permissible to do grocery shopping for after the fast even prior to chatzos.
- 17) Due to the fact that our focus of concentration should be on the aveilus of the day, it is **inappropriate** to play games, watch shows or read novels or magazines.
- 18) One who is accustomed to saying perakim of Tehilim may do so after Chatzos. Tehilim for a choleh may be said at any time throughout the day.

H) AFTER TISHA B'AV

- 1) Since the fires of destruction burned on the tenth of Av, the following prohibitions extend until chatzos (1:01 pm) of Motzei Tisha B'av: meat, wine, music, showering, haircuts, laundry, cutting nails.
- 2) There is no special havdala said when Tisha B'Av falls out on a weekday.

I) EREV TISHA B'AV THAT FALLS ON SHABBOS

- 1) Prior to *Mincha*, one should eat a regular meal so as to be properly prepared to fast.
- 2) When Erev Tisha B'Av is on Shabbos, there is no Seuda Ha'mafsek.
- 3) One must stop eating prior to sunset (shkiya).
- 4) Non-leather shoes should be brought to shul **prior to** or **after** Shabbos.
- 5) One should not take time release capsules on Shabbos to ease the fast.
- 6) If one needs to do melacha/drive to shul after shabbos, one should first say "*Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lechol.*"
On *Motza'ei Shabbos*, *Havdala* is omitted, yet "*Borei me'orei ha'esh*" is recited on a flame. This beracha will be recited in shul prior to Eicha. If one does not hear the beracha in shul, both men and women should recite the beracha at home.
- 7) Low chairs should be used after hearing/reciting *Havdala*.
- 8) A man or woman who needs to eat on Tisha B'Av for medical reasons should recite havdala (*only shahakol and hamavdil*) on Chamer Medina (*beer, orange juice, tea with sugar*).
On Sunday night, *Havdala* is recited on wine, which is drunk normally, but *besamim* and *ner* are not used.

J) WHEN TISHA B'AV FALLS ON SHABBOS (Nidcheh)

- 1) When the fast is pushed off to Sunday, pregnant and nursing women who feel weak are not required to fast.
- 2) When Tisha B'Av falls out on Shabbos, marital relations are prohibited, unless it is Mikvah night.
- 3) On Sunday night, after the fast, *Havdala* is recited on wine, which is drunk normally, but *besamim* and *ner* are not used.
- 4) When Tisha B'Av is a *nidcheh*, all restrictions are permitted immediately with the conclusion of the fast on Sunday night [including bathing, shaving, music, etc...], with the exception of consuming wine [other than for *Havdala*] and meat, which become permitted at daybreak of Monday morning.

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