

17th of Tammuz

The Mishnah in the final chapter of Ta'anit tells us that five tragedies befell the Jewish people on the 17th of Tammuz: Moses broke the original tablets containing the Ten Commandments (in response to the sin of the golden calf); they stopped offering the daily sacrifice (korban Tamid); the city walls of Jerusalem were breached leading to the destruction of the Temple ; an idol was placed in the Temple and prior to the Great Revolt, the Roman general Apostamos burned a Torah scroll. This year, the 17th of Tammuz falls out on Shabbat. In accordance with halakha, we delay the fast until Sunday (tzom nidcheh). All customs are otherwise the same.

Fast

To commemorate these events we fast from dawn (alot ha-shachar) until nighttime (tzeit ha-kochavim). The fast precludes all types of eating, including tasting foods. However, some authorities permitted people who experience great discomfort to wash their mouth out with caution, thus most modern authorities allow brushing teeth (just don't swallow any of it).

The 17th of Tammuz is considered a minor fast – bathing and wearing leather shoes is permitted. Given that the fast is considered “minor” (and this year, a nidcheh), those who are seriously ill or chronically ill may be exempt. Please consult a competent halakhic authority to discuss your situation. Pregnant and nursing women are exempt. If you are taking important medication, such as antibiotics: if you can do so without water, then do that, otherwise, mix something unpleasant (like mouthwash) into the water before using it to wash down your pill. Those who are not fasting for medical reasons should limit their food to nutrition and may not indulge or eat to excess.

Please consult myzmanim.com for the correct start and end time of the fast in your locale. One can rely on the earlier time of R. Tukaccinsky, as this fast is non-Biblical.

Tefillah

We make the same additions to Davening as we do on other fast days throughout the year. In Shaharit we recite Selichot, Avinu Malkeinu and read the Torah. Sephardim add Aneinu to the Shaharit Amidah. At Mincha we read the Torah and Ashkenazim add a Haftarah. All insert Aneinu in the Amidah and Ashkenazim recite Sim Shalom instead of Shalom Rav. Avinu Malkeinu is also said at Mincha.

The Three Weeks

The period from the 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of Av is known as the "three weeks" or yemei bein ha-metzarim (literally between the straits; see Eicha 1:3). They commemorate the period of time between the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, this is a further time of contemplation and teshuva.

The three week period can be subdivided based on the intensity of the mourning that we express. The least severe period is from the 17th of Tammuz until Rosh Chodesh Av (Friday July 17th). Our practice parallels that of someone in the 12 month period of mourning for a parent. Weddings are prohibited (but getting engaged is permitted). Large social gatherings are avoided, as is listening to live music. Customs vary regarding listening to recorded music, going to the movies, etc. Ashkenazim have the custom to not take haircuts, and men to not shave, during this time (Sephardim begin this practice during shavua she-chal bo, below). Men who have to shave to maintain a professional appearance in order to prevent monetary loss may do so. (Note, however, that those many who shave on Fridays during Sefirah do not have that practice during the Three Weeks.) One may cut one's nails until the week of Tisha b'Av.

Lastly, the custom is to not say the Beracha of Shehechiyanu during the three weeks. The details of

this custom vary, but the main point is to not make purchases that bring enough joy to warrant making a blessing thanking God for bringing us to this time, a time for which we are indeed remorseful.

Rosh Chodesh Av

With the onset of the month of Av, our mourning practices become more intense, and parallel those of Sheloshim (the first 30 days after the loss of a relative). As the Mishna states: "When Av enters, we reduce our happiness" (a direct parallel to the opposite statement about Adar).

Bathing

Recreational bathing and swimming is to be avoided. Since we live in a society where we bathe regularly, one may shower for hygienic purposes. However, it is best to avoid long leisurely showers and baths. Some people have the custom to make their shower cooler than normal. If one swims for exercise or is working as a lifeguard or as a counselor in camp, they may swim if their job requires it.

Eating

We do not eat meat or drink wine during the nine days, with the exception of Shabbat. The reason for this is that meat and wine are associated with festive occasions, or perhaps because they are associated with the Temple, the loss of which we are now mourning. One may eat food prepared in "Meat" utensils. One may/should have meat and wine on Shabbat, and may even taste the Shabbat food while cooking it on Friday.

The Shulhan Aruch and the Gra permit using wine for Havdallah, although the Rama and subsequent Ashkenazic authorities prohibit. One way to observe the stricture of the Rama is to recite Havdallah over wine/grape juice and give it to a small child (who is old enough to understand Havdallah, but not old enough to understand mourning for Jerusalem) to drink. Others drink it themselves. Some have the custom to recite Havdallah over a beverage other than wine or grape juice during the Nine Days. Any beverage other than water can be used (beer and orange juice are the most popular alternatives). Remember to say the appropriate Beracha! Follow your family or communal practice.

Laundry

Because we are in a state of mourning, we do not wear freshly laundered clothing during the nine days (with the exception of Shabbat). We also do not do laundry during this period (even in order to be worn afterwards). There is a custom to wear all of the clothing that one plans to wear during this time before Rosh Chodesh, so that it is no longer considered freshly laundered. Alternatively, some suggest throwing your clean clothes on the floor to achieve the same effect. The restriction does not apply to underwear, socks, or any other garments worn directly on the skin.

Major Purchases

We also avoid making major purchases and having major work done on our homes during this time. If delaying the purchase/work will cause a significant financial loss, one may make the purchase. The item should not be used until after Tisha b'Av.

The Week of Tisha B'Av

The Sephardic community does not enact the stringencies of the 9 days until the week in which Tisha B'Av falls (shavua she-chal bo), i.e. beginning Saturday night of Shabbat Hazon. This year, due to the anomalous calendar, there is no shavua sh'cal bo, and Sephardim need not take on the heightened restrictions leading up to Tisha b'Av, except perhaps not taking haircuts the week prior.

Tisha b Av

Particular Halachot for Years Tisha Be'av is Pushed Off from Shabbat to Sunday:

- **Shabbat, the 9th of Av:** On Shabbat, which is technically the 9th of Av, doing enjoyable things that one doesn't do every Shabbat is prohibited. This includes taking walks, learning enjoyable parts of Torah (especially on Shabbat afternoon), and marital relations (unless immediately following Tevilah). This is because, even though public mourning is prohibited on Shabbat, private (or, better, unnoticeable) mourning is mandated when the 9th of Av falls on Shabbat.

- **Transitioning from Shabbat to the Fast:** One must finish eating food Saturday at sundown, which is 8:15 pm in New Haven. However, one should not remove one's leather shoes until after Shabbat is over, at 9:04 pm in New Haven. (Of course, all usual Shabbat prohibitions run until that point.) Because there is a prohibition against preparing for weekdays on Shabbat, one also cannot prepare their Tisha Be'av shoes or other materials by bringing them to Shul or the like before 9:04 pm. For this reason we are starting Maariv a bit later, at 9:30 pm (which replaces the previously announced time), so that people have sufficient time to be prepared without violating this prohibition.

- **Havdalah:** For those who are fasting, one says Havdala in Shemoneh Esrei as usual, as well as Boreh Me'orei Ha-Esh on Saturday night, and then says Boreh Peri Hagafen and Hamavdil on Sunday night. Boreh Minei Besamim is not said. For those who are fasting, they say all of these Berachos (excluding, once again, Boreh Minei Besamim) Saturday night, but should not drink grape juice.

- **End of Nine Days/Three Weeks:** With respect to everything other than eating meat and drinking wine, the periods of mourning end this year immediately with the end of Tisha Be'av, at 9:03 pm.

General Halachot for Tisha Be'av

Prohibitions on Tisha Be'av: There are several prohibitions for Tisha Be'av that apply, on account of the mourning and somber aspects of the day. Many of these parallel prohibitions that apply to those who have lost a close relative. As above, these prohibitions take effect at sundown Saturday night (8:15 PM) and run until the end of Tisha Ba'av on Sunday night (9:03 PM):

1. Eating and drinking: those who are not ill fast on Tisha Be'av. If one has a question they should feel free to be in touch with me (and there may be some additional degree of leniency, given that the fast is deferred).
2. Marital relations: given the mourning of the day, such relations are prohibited. Additionally, couples traditionally keep *harchakot* at night, and during the day, to varying degrees of stringency.
3. Washing: Any washing that is not for basic cleaning purposes is prohibited.
4. Oils and lotions: Use of any oils and lotions for non-medical purposes is prohibited.
5. Wearing shoes: Wearing leather shoes is prohibited on Tisha Be'av. There is no prohibition on other leather clothing.
6. Torah study: On Tisha Be'av, study of Torah, which makes people happy, is prohibited. This includes the recitation of Tehillim not found in the central liturgy. Exceptions include sad parts of Torah, including depictions of the Temple's destruction in Jeremiah and Gittin, the book of Job, and the laws of mourning, which do not have the usual heartening aspects of Torah.
7. Saying hello: Offering greetings to people is prohibited. If one offers you greetings, you can respond, but in a somber tone.

Some prohibitions apply only until midday (12:58 PM) on Tisha Be'av:

1. The prohibition to sit on a chair higher than 3 tefachim (approx. 9.5 in).
2. Ashkenazim and some Sefaradim refrain from wearing *tefillin* and *tallit gadol* until the afternoon.

3. Working before midday is discouraged.

In addition, because it is a fast day and because of particular aspects of Tisha Ba'av, certain aspects of the usual prayers are changed:

1. A reading of the book of Eicha follows Arvit services.
2. Various lamentations, or *kinnot*, are read communally both at night following Eicha and in the morning following Shacharit.
3. The Torah section Ki Tolid Banim is read in the morning and Vayechal in the afternoon.
4. Tachanun and Lamenatzeach are omitted, on account of Tisha Ba'av being considered a *mo'ed*.
5. The verse Vaani Zot Beriti (in Uva Letzion) is omitted, on account of Tisha Ba'av being a day of mourning.
6. The Shir Shel Yom is recited with Mincha rather than with Shacharit.
7. At Mincha, Sim Shalom is read in place of Shalom Rav.
8. At Mincha, there are two insertions in the private Amidah: A. Nahem in Vilirushalayim. B. Anenu in Shema Kolenu.

If you have any questions, feel free to send me an email at shlomezuckier@gmail.com.