

## Abbreviated laws of Tisha B'Av

**Tisha B'Av**, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, is the day on which we mourn all Jewish tragedies throughout our history, most notably the destruction of both the First and Second Temple. Below is a summary of some of the laws of *Tisha B'Av*, many of which are similar to the practices of *Shiva* as we mourn the loss of our Temple as though it has just happened.

This year, 9<sup>th</sup> Av begins on **Wednesday evening 25<sup>th</sup> July at 8:58pm** and ends on **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July at 9:49pm**.

- Prior to the beginning of the fast, many have a small, solitary meal, known as a "*seudah hamafseket*" (lit. "separation meal"). This usually consists of bread with something simple, such as a boiled egg, and is traditionally eaten on a low chair or sitting on the floor.
- One can drink throughout this meal. One may eat a larger meal prior to this to have strength for the fast.
- Although it is best to daven *mincha* prior to this meal, those attending a Shul which davens *mincha* just before the fast begins may complete this meal before *mincha* instead.
- In Shul we read *eicha* and say *kinnot* together following *maariv*. Both of these can be read at home and there are many online programmes to connect with.

Our Sages laid out a few main prohibitions on the day of *Tisha B'Av* itself, including:

- **Eating and drinking.** One who is fully healthy should not eat throughout the fast. One who is unwell, frail, or with a specific at-risk medical condition may be required to eat. **As this is a summer fast, it is likely to be a hot day. If you plan to fast, please make sure to drink plenty of water in advance and stay cool on the day. If you think you should fast but are concerned about whether it is advisable, make sure to discuss with a medical professional in advance. If you would like halachic guidance on whether to fast, please be in touch with me directly. If you feel unwell or concerned about dehydration, do not continue fasting.**
- **One should not wash or bathe** other than for hygiene or halachic ritual. Washing "*al netilat yadayim*" in the morning is restricted to the fingers up to the knuckles. After using the bathroom one should wash as necessary for hygiene but no more. Washing parts of oneself to clean specific dirt is permitted.
- **Cosmetics** should not be used on *Tisha B'Av*, however, they can be applied before the fast begins even though they may last through the day. Deodorant may be used but aftershave or perfume should not be.
- **Shoes made of leather** should not be worn.
- **Learning Torah is restricted** to topics of *Tisha B'Av*, mourning, biblical prophecies regarding the Temple's destruction and other similar topics. This prohibition begins from the afternoon prior to when the fast begins.
- **We sit on or close to the floor** (e.g. on a *shiva* chair) from the eve of *Tisha B'Av* until halachic midday (1:07pm) on *Tisha B'Av* day. Those with back problems or similar should sit on a regular chair.
- **We do not exchange greetings** or make social conversation on *Tisha B'Av*, as we join together in silent mourning for the destruction of the two Temples and many subsequent tragedies. If one is greeted, one may respond in a soft voice so as not to embarrass or offend the other person. These restrictions apply to virtual communications as well.
- **Tallit and Tefillin are not worn on Tisha B'Av morning** (*Tzitzit* should be worn without a blessing). *Tallit* and *Tefillin* are put on at *Mincha*, with the *brachot* (blessings).
- After the fast the limitations of the Three Weeks and Nine Days, including music, laundry, haircuts, drinking wine and eating of meat, continue until midday the following day.

"כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה"

One who mourns for Jerusalem, will merit to see to its rejoicing  
May it come speedily, in our days.



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