

Abbreviated laws for the *Fast of Tamuz* and the 'Three Weeks'

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 is the **Fast of Tamuz**. This is the day on which the walls of Jerusalem were breached prior to the destruction of the Second Temple although there have been many tragedies in our history on this day, from the smashing of the first Tablets by Moses at the foot of Mt Sinai to atrocities in the Holocaust including the liquidation of the Kovno Ghetto.

**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.**

Here is a short summary of some of the laws of the fast:

- The fast begins at dawn (1:05am) and continues until the end of the day (10:17pm).
- Medications prescribed by a doctor may be taken on this fast day. If swallowing pills without water is difficult, one may drink a small amount of water required to swallow the medicine.
- If a healthy person accidentally ate or drank, the fast should be resumed and completed.
- *Selichot* are recited at *Shacharit* and *Avinu Malkeinu* is said in the morning and afternoon. *Mincha* in Shul also includes *leining*.

The *Fast of Tamuz* also begins a period known as the '**Three Weeks**'. It is a time that we reflect on many communal tragedies throughout our history, most notably, the destruction of the First and Second Temple. Restrictions include:

- Taking haircuts.
- Weddings and parties, except *mitzvah* celebrations (e.g. *Brit*, *Pidyon HaBen*, etc).
- Listening to music or dancing. If music is necessary to lift one's spirits rather than for entertainment alone, in many cases it is permitted.
- New clothing and fruit (which would necessitate the blessing of "*Shehechyanu*") should not be purchased, worn or eaten.

From *Rosh Chodesh Av* (19<sup>th</sup> July 2023), the mourning intensifies for the '**Nine Days**' and further restrictions include:

- Shaving (for men). If one is unable to avoid shaving for the full nine-days (e.g. for work), one should avoid shaving on the week in which *Tisha B'Av* falls, and certainly on *Tisha B'Av* itself.
- Freshly dry-cleaned or laundered outer clothing (e.g. shirts, suits, etc. as opposed to undergarments) should be avoided on weekdays. Clothes should not be cleaned or laundered during the Nine Days unless there is no other option (e.g. for young children or if one runs out).
- New clothing may not be purchased or worn (even without the blessing of "*Shehechyanu*"). If necessary, non-leather shoes for *Tisha B'Av* may be purchased.
- Meat and wine/grape juice may not be eaten/drunk, except on Shabbat (even if you start Shabbat early) or at a *Mitzvah* celebration (e.g. *Brit*, *Pidyon HaBen*, etc.).
- *Havdallah* after Shabbat should be made on wine or grape juice as usual. If possible a child should drink the grape juice but if not, one can drink it oneself.
- Swimming and bathing for pleasure is restricted. However, it is permitted to wash for cleanliness although one should ideally do so in colder water than usual. Washing in warm water is permitted on Friday in honour of *Shabbat*.
- Unnecessary, long trips should be avoided during the nine days, though travel for education or business is permitted.

