

Abbreviated laws for the Fast of Tammuz and the 'Three Weeks' – 2026/5786

Thursday 2nd July 2026 is the Fast of Tammuz. 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.

Before the Fast

In the event of very high temperatures, drink plenty of water today and try to stay indoors or in shaded, cool areas throughout the day.

Who Should Not Fast

- Those with Pre-Existing Illness: Anyone suffering from health conditions such as being bedridden with a severe cold, flu or migraine is exempt from fasting.
- People with Gastrointestinal Symptoms: Individuals experiencing vomiting or diarrhoea are at high risk of dehydration and should not fast, even if they are not confined to bed.
- Pregnant and Nursing Women
- Frail or Elderly Individuals

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 (10:20pm).
- 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 Tammuz 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 "Shehechianu") should not be purchased, worn or eaten.

From Rosh Chodesh Av (15th July 2026), 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 on 18th July 2026 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.