

TISHA B'AV

OVERVIEW AND LAWS OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE NINTH OF AV?

On Tisha B'Av, five national calamities occurred

1. During the time of Moses, Jews in the desert accepted the slanderous report of the 10 spies, and the decree was issued forbidding them from entering the land of Israel. (1312 BCE)
2. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar. 100,000 Jews were slaughtered and millions more exiled. (586 BCE)
3. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, led by Titus. Some two million Jews died, and another one million were exiled. (70 CE)
4. The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by Roman Emperor Hadrian. The city of Betar - the Jews' last stand against the Romans - was captured and liquidated. Over 100,000 Jews were slaughtered. (135 CE)
5. The Temple area and its surroundings were plowed under by the Roman general Turnus Rufus. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city - renamed Aelia Capitolina - and access was forbidden to Jews.

Other grave misfortunes throughout Jewish history occurred on the Ninth of Av, including:

1. The Spanish Inquisition culminated with the expulsion of Jews from Spain on Tisha B'Av in 1492.
2. World War One broke out on the eve of Tisha B'Av in 1914 when Germany declared war on Russia. German resentment from the war set the stage for the Holocaust.
3. On the eve of Tisha B'Av 1942, the mass deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, en route to Treblinka.

Aspects of Mourning: The Afternoon Before Tisha B'Av

During the afternoon prior to Tisha B'Av, it is customary to eat a full meal in preparation for the fast.

At the end of the afternoon, we eat the Seudah Hamaf-seket - a meal consisting only of bread, water, and a hard-boiled egg.

The egg has two symbols: The round shape reminds us of a sign of the cycle of life. Also, the egg is the only food which gets harder the more it is cooked - a symbol of the Jewish people's ability to withstand persecution.

Food eaten at the Seudah Hamaf-seket is dipped in ashes, symbolic of mourning. The meal should preferably be eaten alone, while seated on the ground in mourner's fashion.

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RESTRICTIONS ON TISHA B'AV

Upon sundown, the laws of Tisha B'Av commence - consisting of the following expressions of mourning:

1. No eating or drinking until nightfall the following evening.

- Pregnant and nursing women are also required to fast. If one suspects it could be harmful to the baby or mother, a rabbi should be consulted.
- A woman within 30 days after birth need not fast.
- Others who are old, weak, or ill should consult with a rabbi. (MB 554:11)
- Medicine may be taken on Tisha B'Av, preferably without water.
- In case of great discomfort, the mouth may be rinsed with water. Great care should be taken not to swallow anything. (MB 567:11)

2. Other prohibitions include:

- Any bathing or washing, except for removing specific dirt - e.g. gook in the eyes (OC 554:9, 11). (Upon rising in the morning, before prayers, or after using the bathroom, one washes only the fingers. See OC 554:10, OC 613:3, MB 554:26)
- Anointing oneself for pleasure. (Deodorant is permitted.)
- Having marital relations.
- Wearing leather shoes. (Leather belts may be worn.) (see: [Laws of Shoes and Chairs](#))
- Learning Torah, since this is a joyful activity. It is permitted to learn texts relevant to Tisha B'Av and mourning - e.g. the Book of Lamentations, Book of Job, parts of Tractate Moed Katan, Gittin 56-58, Sanhedrin 104, Yerushalmi end of Ta'anis, and the Laws of Mourning. In-depth study should be avoided. (MB 554:4)

3. Other mourning practices include:

- Sitting no higher than a foot off the ground. After midday, one may sit on a chair. (OC 559:3) (see: [Laws of Shoes and Chairs](#))
- Not engaging in business or other distracting labors, unless it will result in a substantial loss. (OC 554:23)
- Refraining from greeting others or offering gifts. (OC 554:20)
- Avoiding idle chatter or leisure activities.

PRAYER ON TISHA B'AV

- Lights in the synagogue are dimmed, candles are lit, and the curtain is removed from the Ark. The cantor leads the prayers in a low, mournful voice. This reminds us of the Divine Presence which departed from the Holy Temple.
- The Book of Eicha (Lamentations), Jeremiah's poetic lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple, is read both at night and during the day.
- Following both the night and day service, special "Kinot" (elegies) are recited.

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- In the morning, the Torah portion of Deuteronomy 4:25-40 is read, containing the prophecy regarding Israel's future iniquity and exile. This is followed by the Haftorah from Jeremiah (8:13, 9:1-23) describing the desolation of Zion.
- In the afternoon, Exodus 32:11-14 is read. This is followed by the Haftorah from Isaiah 55-56.
- Since Tallis and Tefillin represent glory and decoration, they are not worn at Shacharit. Rather, they are worn at Mincha, as certain mourning restrictions are lifted.
- Birkat Kohanim is said only at Mincha, not at Shacharit.
- Prayers for comforting Zion and "Aleinu" are inserted into the Amidah prayer at Mincha.
- Shortly after the fast is broken, it is customary to say Kiddush Lavana.

SPECIAL LAWS THAT APPLY WHEN THE TISHA B'AV OBSERVANCE BEGINS ON SATURDAY NIGHT

NOTE:

The following laws are based on Ashkenazi tradition, and some points are subject to varying opinion. When in doubt, AYLOR (ask your local Orthodox rabbi)

1. What are the main changes when Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat or Sunday?

When Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat, the main changes are:

- The fast is postponed until Sunday.
- Bathing is permitted on Rosh Chodesh.
- Marital relations are forbidden on Friday night. (Though see #3 below if Friday night is the mikvah night).
- Washing any part of the body with hot water is forbidden on Shabbat.

When Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat or Sunday, the main changes are:

- There is no special *Seuda Hamafseket* before the fast.
- Some of the laws of Tisha B'Av begin only at nightfall on Saturday night, instead of at sunset.
- Havdalah is postponed until Sunday night.

2. When Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat and is postponed until Sunday, is the preceding week considered as "the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs"?

There are different opinions about this. Therefore:

One should be strict about this concerning laundering and haircuts.

One may be lenient about matters concerning cutting nails and making clothes. As for meat and wine, Sefardim could eat without restriction; for Ashkenazim certain leniencies apply (for example, regarding who can eat meat at a Bris).

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3. May a woman immerse in a mikveh on Friday night that is Tisha B'Av?

Yes. In this case, marital relations are permitted. (On a regular year, a woman does not go to the mikvah on the night of Tisha B'Av, but waits till the next night after breaking the fast.)

4. Are there any changes to the prayers in this situation?

Tzidkas'cha is not said at Mincha.

Pirkei Avot is not said at Mincha.

5. May one hold a public kiddush on this Shabbat?

If the kiddush can be held on a different Shabbat, it is preferable to defer it.

If the kiddush cannot be held on a different Shabbat -- e.g. for an *aufruff* (groom prior to his wedding), it is permitted.

6. May one eat meat and drink wine at the Shabbat meals?

Yes. This is permitted even at *Seuda Shlishit*.

7. May one invite guests to the Shabbat meals?

Yes. However, one should not invite guests for *Seuda Shlishit* unless he does so regularly.

8. May one sing *zemirot* at the Shabbat meals?

Yes. This is permitted even at *Seuda Shlishit*.

9. May one go for a stroll on this Shabbat?

When the ninth of Av is Sunday, one may not go for a stroll on Shabbat after halachic noon.

When the ninth of Av is Shabbat, one may not go for a stroll at any time of the day.

10. May one visit family or friends?

No.

11. May one learn Torah on this Shabbat?

Before halachic midday, it is permitted to learn Torah.

After halachic midday, many opinions permit learning Torah. If a person can limit himself to the topics that are permitted on Tisha B'Av, it is praiseworthy.

It is permitted to read the weekly parsha and its translation all day.

12. May one take pills on Shabbat to alleviate the pains of fasting?

It is permitted to take them on Shabbat until sunset only if they are mixed with a food or drink.

One should preferably prepare the mixture before Shabbat.

One may take them without water even on Saturday night, unless they are pleasant tasting.

13. May a communal *Seuda Shlishit* be held in shul?

No. Everyone should eat at home.

14. Are there any changes to *Seuda Shlishit*?

Although any food may be served, including meat and wine, and *zemirot* may be sung, the mood should be somewhat subdued.

A person should not say that he is eating in order to have strength to fast, but he may think this.

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One must stop eating and drinking before sunset, since the fast begins at this time. People should be reminded about this, as it is unlike a regular Shabbat.

15. Must one say Grace After Meals before sunset?

It is permitted to say the Grace after sunset, but one should try to wash *mayim acharonim* (after waters) before sunset, if possible.

16. May one say Grace After Meals with a 3-man *zimun*?

Yes (unlike when the eve of Tisha B'Av falls on a regular weekday, where one should not make a *zimun*).

17. May one eat or drink after *Seuda Shlishit*?

If one said Grace After Meals before sunset, one may eat or drink until sunset. It is not necessary to have this in mind when saying Grace After Meals.

18. Which prohibitions of Tisha B'Av commence at sunset?

All the prohibitions except wearing shoes and sitting on a chair commence at sunset. These two activities are permitted until nightfall.

19. When should one change one's shoes and Shabbat clothes?

There are two customs:

Some go to shul before nightfall and begin Ma'ariv at the usual time of Saturday night.

The *chazzan* should say "baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lechol," remove his shoes, and then say "barchu." The congregation should respond to "barchu" and then remove their shoes. Care must be taken not to touch one's shoes when removing them. The Shabbat clothes are not removed until one returns home after Ma'ariv. This is the prevalent custom in the Diaspora.

Some shuls delay the commencement of Ma'ariv, allowing people to remain at home until nightfall. At the time of nightfall, everyone should say the phrase "baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lechol," remove his shoes, and change into weekday clothes before Ma'ariv. This is the prevalent custom in Israel.

20. According to the first custom, may one bring Tisha B'Av footwear to shul before Ma'ariv?

Even if there is an *eiruv* this is forbidden, since one may not prepare on Shabbat for after Shabbat. It is also forbidden to change one's shoes before going to shul, since this is disgracing the Shabbat. It is therefore advisable to leave suitable footwear in shul before Shabbat to wear after Shabbat.

21. Is the blessing recited over the spices?

No. It is forbidden to smell spices, since a person must refrain from such a pleasure on Tisha B'Av.

22. Is the blessing recited over a Havdalah candle?

Yes. According to one custom, it is recited in shul before the reading of Lamentations. According to another custom, it is recited at home before Ma'ariv, if there is time. According to some opinions, the blessing should be recited over two regular candles and not over a braided Havdalah candle.

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23. May one wash the Shabbat dishes on Saturday night?

No. They may not be washed until Tisha B'Av afternoon.

24. Should a person who is not fasting recite Havdalah before eating?

Yes. However, if he only needs to drink water throughout the fast, he should not recite Havdalah.

25. Should such a person recite Havdalah immediately after Shabbat, or wait until he needs to eat?

He should wait until he needs to eat.

26. When needing to eat on the fast day [in this case, Sunday the 10th of Av], which sections of Havdalah are recited?

The introductory verses and the blessing over spices should be omitted. The blessing over a candle should be omitted if he already recited or heard it at the termination of Shabbat, or if he is reciting Havdalah during the day.

27. Should Havdalah be recited over wine, grape juice, or another drink?

According to most opinions, beer is the most preferred drink.

If this is not possible, some opinions prefer the use of a drink that has national importance. (A rabbi should be consulted to ascertain which drinks qualify for this purpose.) Other opinions question the use of such drinks and prefer the use of grape juice. If nothing else is available, wine may be used.

28. If wine or grape juice is used, should the cup be given to a child to drink?

If a child above the age of six is available, the cup should be given to him.

If not, the person who recites Havdalah should drink the cup himself.

29. How much of the cup should be drunk?

A cheerful only.

30. Are children obligated to recite Havdalah before they eat?

According to most opinions, they do not recite Havdalah before eating.