

## HALACHOT – LAWS OF THE THREE WEEKS AND TISHA B'AV

The 17th of Tammuz through Tisha B'Av (The 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av) is the period we refer to as “The Three Weeks”. During this time, we mourn the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash (The Holy Temple). On the 17th of Tammuz, the enemy breached the walls of Jerusalem. On Tisha B'Av, both the first and second temples were destroyed.

Our mourning begins on the 17th of Tammuz and intensifies as Tisha B'Av approaches. There are 5 periods of mourning that we go through. (1) From the 17th of Tammuz until the 1st of Av. (2) The first nine days of the month of Av (referred to as The Nine Days). (3) The week in which Tisha B'Av occurs. (4) Erev Tisha B'Av—the day before Tisha B'Av. (5) Tisha B'Av day.

### **The Three Weeks (starting from the 17th of Tammuz)**

- No weddings are held.
- Dancing, playing musical instruments, and listening to music are not permitted
- We do not shave or get haircuts. An adult may not give a haircut to a child. However, a person who will incur financial loss if he does not shave is permitted to shave until the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs.
- We refrain from reciting the blessing of shehechyanu. Therefore, we do not purchase or wear new garments or eat a new fruit for the first time. Shoes, undergarments, socks, and shirts do not require the blessing of shehechyanu and may be purchased or worn until the 1st of Av. On Shabbat, the above is permitted, and shehechyanu may be recited.

### **The Nine Days (starting the first day of Av)**

- We do not eat meat or drink wine. However, on Shabbat we are permitted to do so. “Meat” includes fowl and food cooked with meat or meat fat or gravy. Food cooked in a meat vessel without meat ingredients may be eaten.
- Wine is permitted for havdallah on Saturday night. Some give the wine to a small child, while others use beer.
- We refrain from laundering. However, children’s clothing that constantly soil with dirt and the like may be laundered. Additionally, clothing may be given to a non-Jewish cleaner before the 1st of Av even if it will be cleaned afterwards.
- We refrain from wearing freshly laundered clothing. If one wears their clothing for a short time before the 1st of Av, they can then be used during The Nine Days. Undergarments, socks, and pajamas, which are worn directly on the body, may be changed where irritation and discomfort will develop. Also, we may not purchase or make any new garments. Knitting and needlecraft are prohibited, but one may repair or patch torn garments. If one forgot to buy sneakers for Tisha B'Av, they may do so.
- We also refrain from changing bed linen and using fresh tablecloths and towels.
- On Shabbat one may wear freshly cleaned clothing or use fresh towels and tablecloths. Changing bed linen is prohibited.
- We may not wear any new garments even on Shabbat. Shabbat garments may not be worn on weekdays during The Nine Days.
- Bathing for pleasure is prohibited. For cleaning oneself, one may not use hot or warm water unless the dirt or perspiration will not come off otherwise. One may add hot water to cold water in order to take out the chill.

- For Shabbat, one may bathe with hot water (if one does so every Friday for Shabbat). A woman may go to the mikva during The Nine Days.
- Construction is suspended unless it is required for living purposes or to prevent damage. Home decorating is not permitted. If a non-Jew was contracted before the 1st of Av, he may work during The Nine Days. Gardening is suspended.
- Objects of joy, such as silver for a wedding, which will be available after Tisha B'Av for the same price, may not be purchased.
- One may not cut their nails during the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs. For Shabbat or as preparation for mikva use, it is permissible.

### **Erev Tisha B'Av**

We do not say Tachanun at Mincha. We eat a regular meal before Mincha, and afterwards we eat the Se'udah Hamafseket—the final meal before the fast. It consists of bread dipped in ashes, an egg and water—and is eaten while sitting on the floor or in a low chair. It's not necessary to remove leather shoes for this. One should not eat this meal with a group, but should sit and eat alone.

If one plans to continue eating after this meal, he should think or say before reciting Bircat haMazon (Grace after meals) that he is not yet beginning the fast.

The fast and restrictions begin at sundown (8:14 p.m., Monday, July 23). Leather shoes are removed before the fast begins.

### **Tisha B'Av**

- Everyone is required to fast on Tisha B'Av. If a person is weak and may become ill from fasting, a rabbi should be consulted. If fasting is dangerous to one's health, it is forbidden to fast.
- Swallowing capsules or bitter medicine in liquid or tablet form is permitted.
- Washing is prohibited. If an area of the body becomes dirty, then that area may be washed. One may wash his hands up to the knuckles when awakening in the morning, after using the bathroom, and before davening.
- After drying the hands in the morning, one may wipe his eyes and face as long as his hands are not very damp.
- Cohabitation and anointing are forbidden. Wearing perfume or cologne is forbidden. For medical purposes, such as a skin condition, anointing is permissible.
- Wearing leather shoes—even those partially made of leather or covered with leather—is forbidden. If one must wear leather shoes for medical reasons, a rabbi should be consulted.
- On Tisha B'Av, one may only study the subjects of Torah that relate to Tisha B'Av or mourning.
- We may not greet one another or send gifts on Tisha B'Av. Giving tzedaka is permitted.
- Until chatzot (halachic mid-day—or 12:50 p.m.), one may not sit on a chair that is 12 inches or higher off the ground.
- Work that diverts one's mind from mourning—or business transactions—are prohibited until chatzot. Housework should also be postponed until then. Preparation for the break-fast meal is done after chatzot.
- Tallit and tefillin aren't worn at Shacharit, but at Mincha instead.