



Halachic Rules and Procedures for the Three Weeks

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The taanis (fast) of the 17th of Tammuz commences the observance of a three-week national mourning period concluding with Tisha B'Av. This period is called *Bein HaMetzarim*, which means "between the straits", an expression gotten from a verse in *Lamentations* - (1:3): "And her pursuers overtook her between the straits." The straits refer to the tragic days for the three weeks i.e. between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av.
2. Special Haftorahs are read on the Shabbosos prior to Tisha B'Av. These Haftorahs are called *Haftorah D'Puronusa* i.e. the Haftorahs of the tragedies. They are special selections from *Jeremiah* 1:1-2:3; 2:4-28; 3:4 and *Isaiah*, 1:1-27 which spell out the trouble that befall Israel when it is disloyal to the Torah of Hashem. The third Haftorah, which is the first chapter of the Book of *Isaiah* begins with the word "Chazon" i.e. vision. Thus, the name of the Shabbos- Shabbos Chazon.
3. On the seven Shabbosos following Tisha B'Av, selections from the Book of *Isaiah* that preach words of consolation, comfort, and hope are chanted. This series is called the *Haftorahs of Consolation*. The first Haftorah (Chapter 40:1-26) of this series begins with the words, "Nahamu, Nahamu, Ami" – "Be comforted, my people". Thus, the name of Shabbos Nahamu.
4. Five national tragedies befell Israel on the 17th of Tammuz:
 - a. The first set of tablets upon which were recorded the Ten Commandments were broken by Moshe Rabbeinu when he descended the mountain and witnessed the golden calf and the accompanying feasting and dancing (*Shemos* 32:19).
 - b. The daily sacrificial offerings were stopped during the destruction period of the First Temple.
 - c. During the Second Temple destruction period, the walls around Jerusalem were breached by the Romans.
 - d. The wicked Apostomos burned the Torah (year unknown).
 - e. An idol was placed in the Temple (year unknown).

B. SUMMARY OF RULES FOR THE 17TH OF TAMMUZ

1. The Taanis- Fast of the 17th of Tammuz commences at the break of dawn- unlike Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av which begin on the preceding sunset.
2. One who is ill is not required to fast even if the person is not in serious danger.
3. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are exempt from fasting.
4. Minors are also exempt.
5. Those who are permitted to eat should eat only that which is necessary to sustain them for the day.
6. One who retires for the night and wakes up before the break of dawn may still eat. This is permitted only on the condition that he or she stipulated before retiring otherwise the Taanis-fast – has commenced.
7. Bathing is permitted. However, it is preferable to avoid a hot bath or shower.

C. GENERAL RULES FOR THE THREE WEEKS

1. Haircuts are prohibited.



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2. Weddings may not take place.
3. Engagements may take place, provided a formal seudah is not served. Light refreshments, such as cakes and the like, are permitted.
4. One should not attend musical events.
5. Programs, sports events, and the like where musical entertainment is incidental are permitted.
6. Children may practice their music lessons.
7. The bracha ברכה – Shehecheyanu, before eating a new fruit (i.e. fruit eaten for the first time during the season) may be recited only on Shabbos.
8. New garments that do not require the bracha ברכה – Shehecheyanu may be worn for the first time till Rosh Chodesh Av.
9. Clothing that do require the blessing ברכה – Shehecheyanu may be worn for the first time on the Shabbos prior to Rosh Chodesh Av. It is preferable not to purchase such garments during the three weeks.

D. ADDITIONAL RULES FOR THE NINE DAYS

1. The time designated as the “Nine Days” begins with sunset Erev Rosh Chodesh Av and concludes midday on the tenth day of Av.
2. Activities and purchases for simcha should be avoided during the period, e.g.:
 - a. Items for simcha occasions, such as expenses for weddings, etc. which will be available at the same price after Tisha B’Av should not be purchased.
 - b. New garments or furniture should not be bought.
 - c. Building or construction not for dwelling (e.g. a patio) should not take place.
 - d. Painting, wallpapering, and other forms of home decorating should be avoided.
 - e. Construction for a mitzvah purpose, e.g. Shul, Bais Hamidrash, or a mikvah is permissible.
3. During the Nine Days, one should abstain from eating meat or drinking wine.
 - a. This prohibition is suspended on Shabbos or at a Seudat Mitzvah, e.g. Bris Milah or Pidyon Haben.
 - b. It is permitted to eat meat if required because of illness. This permissibility applies to pregnant and nursing women if a diet consisting solely of dairy dishes proves to be inadequate.
 - c. The stricture against eating meat applies to children as well.
4. Cleaning garments should be avoided during the Nine Days. If there are extenuating circumstances, a Rav should be consulted. However, washing children’s garments, which are constantly being soiled, may be washed.
5. During the Nine Days, bathing or swimming for pleasure are not permitted.
 - a. This restriction does not apply if required for medical reasons or if dirt or perspiration cannot be removed otherwise.
 - b. Women requiring preparation for Tevillah are permitted to bathe in the usual way, except, of course, on Tisha B’Av.
 - c. On Erev Shabbos, the restrictions do not apply.

E. EREV TISHA B’AV

1. The final meal before Tisha B’Av is called סעודת האמאפסקה – Seudas HaMafsekes. At this time the mourning experience is further intensified.
 - a. This meal is eaten anytime from midday till sunset.



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- b. A regular meal may be eaten earlier. Then, after Mincha, the Seudah HaMafsekes takes place.
2. During the Seudah HaMafsekes, one may eat only one prepared food, i.e. foods which were cooked, fried, baked, or broiled. Other foods such as fruits and vegetables may be included in this meal.
3. Additional procedures pertaining to the Seudah HaMafsekes are as follows:
 - a. Three or more people should not sit together so that a Zemun (Mezuman) will not be required.
 - b. The meal is eaten while sitting on the floor or on a low stool. Shoes may still be worn until sunset.
4. When Erev Tisha B'Av occurs on Shabbos, the rules of Seudah Ha Mafsekes do apply. One may even eat meat or drink wine during the Seudah HaMafsekes.

F. TISHA B'AV- NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

1. Five major tragedies of historic importance occurred on Tisha B'Av. (Mishna Taanis).
 - a. The first generation of Israelites were informed that they were not permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael but must continue to wander in the wilderness. After forty years, during which time the first generation died, the second generation was then permitted to conquer Eretz Yisrael under the leadership of Joshua.
 - b. The first Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple) was destroyed in 486 BCE and the Jews were driven into the Babylonian Exile.
 - c. The second Bais HaMikdash was destroyed by the Roman Legions in 70 CE.
 - d. During the Bar Kochba Rebellion seventy years later, the city of Betar was utterly destroyed and countless thousands of Jews were killed.
 - e. Turnus Rufus plowed under the site of the Bais HaMikdash and the surrounding areas.
2. The following matters are prohibited on Tisha B'Av:
 - a. Eating and drinking.
 - b. Washing and anointing.
 - c. Marital relations.
 - d. Wearing leather shoes.
 - e. Learning Torah except those portions which relate to the destruction or laws of Tisha B'Av.
3. Eating and Drinking
 - a. A person who is very ill or very weak is not required to fast. A Rav should be consulted for the Psak.
 - b. Pregnant or nursing women are required to fast unless there are medical concerns. However, a woman who gave birth within thirty days of Tisha B'Av is not required to fast an entire day.
 - c. Boys or girls who have not attained the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah are not required to fast an entire day.
 - d. Those individuals who are permitted to eat should not eat more than that which is medically required.
 - e. One should abstain from rinsing the mouth or using mouthwash.
4. Washing and Anointing
 - a. Washing in either hot or cold water is not permitted.
 - b. One may wash only those parts of the body that are dirty or soiled but not more.



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- c. Upon arising in the morning or after using the rest room facilities, the hands should be washed to the knuckles.
- d. Washing or anointing for medical reasons is permitted.
- e. Perfumes, beauty aids and the like are prohibited, but the use of deodorant is permitted.

5. Additional Rules

- a. One should sit on the ground or stool till midday.
- b. If possible, one should minimize business activities till midday.
- c. One does not extend Shalom or any other form of greeting on Tisha B'Av.
- d. Preparation for the meal breaking the fast should not be done before midday.

G. TENTH OF AV

Since the Bais HaMikdash was set on fire on the Ninth, but the fire continued raging on the Tenth, certain restrictions are retained till midday- namely washing clothes, showering, haircutting, eating meat, or drinking wine.

H. ??????????????– DELAYED TISHA B'AV

1. When the Tisha B'Av occurs on Shabbos, the observance of the fast is postponed to Sunday.
2. The restrictions which are in effect on the day following Tisha B'Av till midday are permitted immediately Monday morning.
3. Eating meat is still prohibited on Sunday night.
4. A pregnant woman need not fast if she feels uncomfortable.
5. If a Bris Milah (circumcision) is scheduled for this day, the mother, father, Mohel, and Sandek may wash their faces and after Mincha they may eat a Seudah in honor of the mitzvah. Some Poskim, however, suggest it is preferable to postpone the Seudah to the evening.
6. In all other matters, the restrictions and observances of Tisha B'Av apply to a delayed Tisha B'Av.