



Laws and Customs: 17th of Tammuz & Three Weeks

For the year 5785

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☞ THREE WEEKS

The laws of the three weeks begin as soon as *Shabbos* concludes.

During the Three Weeks, the following activities are forbidden:

- Haircuts – even an *Opshernish*. (Other practices associated with an *Opshernish* – such as training the child to wear *Tzitzis* and recite *Brochos*, *Shma* and *Bentching* – should **not** be deferred.)
- Weddings.
- Eating new fruit, unless for health purposes.
- Wearing new clothing, or buying new clothing that can be purchased later at the same price. (These restrictions do not apply to undergarments or socks.)
- Listening to live music.
- Listening to recorded music for enjoyment or festive purposes.

During the Three Weeks, the following activities should be avoided:

- Travel for leisure. Whenever travel is necessary, it is appropriate to at least begin preparations (such as starting to pack) beforehand.
- Non-urgent medical procedures.
- *Siyum Sefer Torah*.

The following activities are permitted:

- Engagement *L'Chaims* (without music or dancing).
- Cutting nails.
- A man may trim his moustache if it interferes with eating. Similarly, a married woman may groom or wax her eyebrows etc.

During these days, it is appropriate to increase one's Torah studies, with particular focus on the *Halachos* of the Three Weeks, as well as topics relating

to the *Beis Hamikdash* (e.g. chapters 40-48 of *Yechezkel*, tractates *Middos* and *Tomid*, and *Hilchos Beis Habechira* in the *Rambam*).

It is appropriate to give increased amounts of *Tzedakah*, especially towards the upkeep of a *Mikdash Me'at* (e.g. a *Shule* or *Beis Midrash*).

On each *Shabbos* of the Three Weeks, care is taken not to display any signs of mourning. In fact, one should be even more joyous than usual. Even so, the prohibitions of the Three Weeks still apply on *Shabbos*.

See separate [Halacha Guide](#) for laws and customs of the Nine Days.

☞ SHIVAH ASSAR B'TAMMUZ

Five tragedies occurred on this day:

- The first set of *Luchos* were broken.
- The daily *Avoidah* was discontinued three weeks before the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*.
- The walls of *Yerushalayim* were breached three weeks before the second *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed.
- The Roman general *Apostomus* burned a *Sefer Torah*.
- A graven image was placed in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

☞ WHO MUST FAST?

All must fast, including a *Chosson* and *Kallah* during the week of *Sheva Brochos*, and *Baalei Habris* (i.e. the *Mohel*, the *Sandek*, and the father of the baby).

One who mistakenly ate during the fast must immediately resume fasting.

Mothers who are pregnant or nursing, or who have difficulty fasting while

tending to their young children, should consult a *Rov*. [One shouldn't be unduly strict in this regard, so as not to compromise the wellbeing of mother and baby.]

One who is ill or elderly should consult a *Rav*.

Children below *Bar/Bas Mitzvah* need not fast. From age nine, the custom is to train children to fast for several hours, according to the child's ability. [One should not be unduly strict in this regard.]

An individual exempt from fasting should eat in private only, and avoid meat, delicacies or excessive intake. Similarly, children old enough to understand the concept of a fast should avoid meat, delicacies or treats.

☞ EATING PRIOR TO THE FAST

One may eat and drink the entire evening until dawn (6:10am), provided that **either** of these conditions are met:

- One didn't go to sleep for the night. [Dozing off is not regarded as such.]
- One stipulated (preferably verbally) before going to sleep that he intends to eat upon awakening. In this case, one washes *Neggel Vasser* and recites the morning *Brochos* before eating.

☞ LAWS OF FASTING

One shouldn't brush one's teeth or rinse one's mouth. [If this will cause great aggravation, there is room to be lenient, provided that one leans forward to prevent any liquid from flowing down one's throat; that one uses inedible substances (e.g. Listerine); and that one rinses with less than 86 ml.]

Non-chewable pills may be taken for medical purposes, without water. A *Rav* should be consulted regarding other medicines.

One may shower, bathe and apply ointments and creams.

When a *Bris* occurs on a fast, the *Seudah* takes place at night, after the fast.

One may touch food and engage in its preparation. However, one may not taste food to determine whether it requires salt/spices. Nevertheless, when preparing food for a *Seudas Mitzvah* scheduled for the night immediately following the fast, one may taste the food, provided that **all** these conditions are met:

- One expels it without swallowing.
- One tastes only an absolute minimum.
- One does not taste more than 86 ml in total throughout the day.

🕯 CONDUCT ON A FAST DAY

One should learn *Torah* related to the theme of the fast.

The *Rebbe* instructed that one learn the passages of *Nevi'im* associated with the fast of the 17th of *Tammuz*. These can be found in *Melachim II* 25:3-8, *Yirmiyahu* 39:2-7 and *Zecharya* 8:18-19.

One should give increased *Tzedakah*, especially before *davening*. It is proper to give the value of the meals forgone – especially if one is exempt from fasting.

The purpose of fasting is to make a *Cheshbon Hanefesh* (reckoning of one's deeds) and do *Teshuvah*. Idling away one's time, or partaking in joyous or entertaining activities, is not in the spirit of the fast.

One should be especially careful to avoid anger.

🕯 CHAZZAN'S ANEINU

During *Shacharis*, only the *Chazzan* recites *Aneinu*. Therefore, one who is

not fasting (or who anticipates that he won't be able to finish the fast) shouldn't serve as *Chazzan*.

[In the unlikely event that the *Chazzan* won't be fasting, or fewer than three congregants will be fasting: Instead of reciting *Aneinu* between *Goel Yisroel* and *R'foeinu*, the *Chazzan* includes *Aneinu* in the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, and concludes the *Brocho* regularly; i.e. *Shomea Tefillah*.]

A *Chazzan* who forgot to recite *Aneinu*:

- if he remembered before reciting *Hashem's* name at the end of the *Brocho* of *R'foeinu*, he recites *Aneinu* immediately, and then repeats the *Brocho* of *R'foeinu*;
- if he already concluded the *Brocho* of *R'foeinu*, he recites *Aneinu* in the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, and concludes the *Brocho* with a double conclusion; i.e. *Ha'one B'eis Tzara V'shomea Tefillah*;
- if he already concluded the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, he recites *Aneinu* as a separate *Brocho* immediately after the *Brocho* of *Sim Shalom*.

🕯 SELICHOS & AVINU MALKEINU

Selichos is recited. It is customary to stand for the entire *Selichos*. [An infirm person may sit. If possible, he should at least stand for each recitation of the *Yud-Gimel Midos*.]

One who *davens* without a *Minyan* omits the *Yud-Gimel Midos-Harachamim*.

The long *Avinu Malkeinu* is recited. [It is not our custom to recite it verse by verse after the *Chazzan*.]

If *Tachnun* is not recited (e.g. when a *Chosson* or one of the *Baalei Habris* are present), *Selichos* is still recited, whereas *Avinu Malkeinu* is omitted.

One who is not fasting must still recite *Selichos* and *Avinu Malkeinu*.

🕯 TORAH READING

The passage of *Vayechal* is read,

provided that at least three congregants are fasting.

An individual who won't be fasting must still hear the *Krias Hatorah* of *Vayechal*, but is not called up for an *Aliya*. [If he is the only *Kohen* or *Levi*, he should absent himself.] If he is called up, and declining the *Aliya* will pain him or minimize the honour of the *Torah*, he may accept the *Aliya*. In any case, he may perform *Hagbah* or *Gelilah*.

A non-fasting individual shouldn't serve as the *Ba'al Koreh*, unless no one else can.

When the congregation recites the verses aloud, the *Ba'al Koreh* waits for silence before resuming. The *Oileh* begins these verses with the congregation but concludes with the *Ba'al Koreh*.

🕯 MINCHA

Mincha is longer than usual (due to *Krias Hatorah* and *Haftorah*) and should be timed to conclude before sunset (5:18pm).

Krias Hatorah should not begin prior to *Mincha Gedolah* (12:51pm). *Shmoneh Esrei* must certainly not begin before then.

After *Haftorah*, the *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish* slowly while the *Torah* is returned to the *Aron Hakodesh*, similar to *Mincha* on *Shabbos*.

An individual who forgot *Aneinu* may recite it in the passage *Elokai N'tzor*, before the second *Yih'yu L'ratzon*. If he didn't remember until he ended *Shmoneh Esrei*, he does not repeat it. [A non-fasting individual does not recite *Aneinu*.]

The *Chazzan* recites *Aneinu* between *Goel Yisroel* and *R'foeinu*, and also recites *Birchas Kohanim* towards the end of *Shmoneh Esrei*.

The *Rebbe* reinstated the custom of addressing the congregation after *Mincha* to arouse them to *Teshuvah*.

The fast concludes at 5:48pm.