



RABBI SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

**MARA D'ATRA
KEHILAT ZICHRON YOSEF**



A Practical Guide to the Nine Days

The days prior to Tisha B'Av are days of mourning, sadness, and reflection, both national and personal. The Mishnah (*Ta'anit* 4:6) instructs: "When [the month of] Av enters, we reduce our joy." As we approach Tisha B'Av, our national day of mourning - the day on which we mourn the destruction of our Holy Temple and Jerusalem, along with national tragedies and calamities throughout Jewish history - we begin to observe a number of restrictions and customs of mourning. Refraining from some of life's simple pleasures reminds us that our lives are incomplete without our Holy Temple standing. The Talmud (*Ta'anit* 30b) relates, "All who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to see her in her joy." Below is a practical guide to the laws and customs of the Nine Days, to

help make them easier and more meaningful.

MEAT AND WINE

During the Nine Days, Ashkenazim abstain from eating meat (including poultry) and drinking wine (including grape juice, according to many authorities), with the exception of Shabbat or at a Se'udat Mitzvah, like a Brit, Pidyon HaBen, or Siyum, where meat and wine may be enjoyed. Included in the prohibition are dishes cooked with meat which have absorbed the flavor of the meat.

Havdallah may be made on wine, and the custom among many Ashkenazim is to give some of the wine to a child who does not know how to properly mourn for Jerusalem. If no child is available, one may drink the wine himself. Alternatively, one may use grape juice or a popular beverage, ideally one which contains alcohol like beer, but beverages like coffee, tea and soft drinks are also acceptable.

Sfardim do not eat meat beginning from the day after Rosh Chodesh Av, and may drink wine at Havdallah.

BATHING

Bathing for pleasure and swimming are prohibited during the Nine Days. It is permitted to bathe for hygiene by showering in cooler water than normal, and for a shorter duration than usual.

Sfardim may bathe until 'Shavua She'chal Bo Tisha B'Av - the week in which Tisha B'Av falls.' As this year Tisha B'Av occurs on a Sunday, there is no *Shavua She'chal Bo*, Sfardim may bathe without restriction up until Shabbat Chazon.



LAUNDERING CLOTHES

Ashkenazim abstain from laundering clothes and wearing freshly laundered clothing during the Nine Days. Included in the prohibition are linens, towels, and tablecloths. Many authorities permit wearing clean undergarments and socks, since they are changed frequently. Stains on clothing may be removed to avoid embarrassment.

One may prepare by briefly pre-wearing his clothes ahead of the Nine Days. One who did not do so may place them on the floor prior to wearing, so they are no longer considered freshly laundered.

One who has no clean clothes to wear may wash his clothes. In addition, many authorities permit laundering the clothing of small children, as they constantly soil their clothes and change them frequently.

On Shabbat, including Shabbat Chazon, it is permitted to wear freshly laundered, clean Shabbat clothing. A father, mohel, and Sandek may wear freshly laundered dress clothes at a Brit.

Sfardim may launder clothing and linens and wear freshly laundered garments during the Nine Days, up until '*Shavua She'chal Bo Tisha B'Av* - the week in which Tisha B'Av falls.' As this year Tisha B'Av occurs on a Sunday, there is no *Shavua She'chal Bo*, and Sefaradim may wear freshly laundered clothing up until Tisha B'Av.

HAIRCUTS AND SHAVING

Ashkenazim abstain from haircuts and shaving the entire Three Weeks, while some authorities permit shaving before Shabbat. One who shaves during the Three Weeks for professional or personal reasons should abstain during the Nine Days. Many authorities permit one to cut his nails, especially in

honor of Shabbat.

A father, mohel, and Sandek may cut their hair and shave before a Brit.

Sfardim may cut their hair and shave up until '*Shavua She'chal Bo Tisha B'Av* - the week in which Tisha B'Av falls.' As this year Tisha B'Av occurs on a Sunday, there is no *Shavua She'chal Bo*, and Sefaradim may cut their hair and shave until Shabbat Chazon, but many authorities rule that it is improper for Sefaradim to enter Tisha B'Av looking freshly shaven.

MUSIC AND CELEBRATIONS

The common custom is to refrain from listening to music and dancing during the Three Weeks. Celebrations and festive gatherings should not be held during the Nine Days. It is permitted to get engaged during the Nine Days, but engagement parties should not be held until after Tisha B'Av.

SHEHECHIYANU, NEW CLOTHING, AND NEW PURCHASES

The blessing of Shehechyanu is not recited during the Three Weeks, with the exception of a Brit or Pidyon HaBen.

During the Nine Days we abstain from purchasing new clothing or making any purchases that cause one joy, such as jewelry. Essential purchases may be made, including items that would impose a financial loss if not made during the Nine Days.

Religious articles or items necessary for the performance of Mitzvot, such as Tefillin, Sefarim, etc., may be purchased, including items needed for a wedding following Tisha B'Av.

Newly purchased garments may not be worn, and new clothing should not be made, but repairs may be made to torn clothing.

BUILDING, REPAIRS, AND PLANTING

Construction, repairs, and home improvements should not be made during the Nine

Day unless such repairs are urgent and cannot wait, or one won't be able to make such repairs after Tisha B'Av. Similarly, one should not plant trees or plants during the Nine Days.

Construction and repairs for the sake of a mitzvah, such repairs to a synagogue for example, are permitted.

TRIPS AND VACATIONS

One should abstain from making unnecessary trips or taking vacations during the Nine Days. Business trips, or trips necessary for one's livelihood, are permitted.

Next week we will explore the laws and customs of Shabbat Chazon and Tisha B'Av. ■

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