

# SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO THE HALACHOS OF TISHA B'AV

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

*Reviewed by Rabbi Yosef Eisen Shlit" a*



“Whoever mourns Yerushalayim will merit and see its rebuilding”  
May we merit to see the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash in our times.  
*Please note that the laws and customs contained in this article follow  
the Asheknazi custom*

## EREV TISHA B'AV

From after midway on Erev Tisha B'av, we refrain from taking any pleasure trip, stroll, tour or the like. Someone who is accustomed to walking for exercise is permitted to do so.

## SEUDAH HAMAFSEKES

After eating the pre-fast meal, we eat a final meal called the “Seudah Hamafsekkes.” During the Seudah Hamafsekkes, we eat foods normally eaten by a mourner, because it a meal of mourning for the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Even people who will not be fasting (for medical reasons, etc) should eat the Seudah Hamafsekkes, because although they are exempt from fasting, they are not exempt from mourning the Destruction. Children who are old enough to understand should partake in the meal as well. The most prevalent custom is that the meal should consist of bread and hard-boiled eggs dipped in ashes.

While eating the Seudah Hamafsekkes, we sit on the ground or on a low stool, no more than 3 tefachim (approx. 9 inches) from the ground. After finishing eating, you may sit on a regular chair as long as you have not yet accepted the fast. It is permitted to wear leather shoes while eating the Seudah Hamafsekkes.

You may continue to eat and drink after the Seudah Hamafsekkes, unless you accepted the fast. Before bentching, it is preferable to say or think that we aren't accepting the fast until sunset. All restrictions of Tisha B'Av begin at sunset.

## RESTRICTIONS

It is forbidden to eat or drink. Someone who is elderly, weak or ill should consult with a Rav for guidance on their particular situation. Medications may be taken on Tisha B'Av if needed, without water. Someone who requires medication for their health and cannot take it without water may take it with a drop of water.

It is forbidden to wash the body, including the hands for pleasure. Washing hands for “negel vasser” or after using the bathroom is permitted until the knuckles. A woman who is washing dishes (after chatzos-midday) or washing foods to prepare for after the fast may wash in the regular manner, even if this will inadvertently cause her hands to be completely submersed in water. Someone who is not fasting on Tisha B'av (due to illness, etc) should wash for bread in the regular manner (washing the entire hand), since this washing is a mitzvah and not for pleasure.

It is forbidden to apply creams and lotions on Tisha B'av for pleasure. Accordingly, a woman should not wear skin products and makeup. Wearing deodorant is permitted. Applying lip balm to dry, cracked lips is permitted. Wearing sunscreen to prevent sunburn is permitted.

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It is forbidden to wear leather shoes on Tisha B'av. Shoes made of canvas, rubber, or other non-leather materials may be worn. Children who are of the age of chinuch (old enough to understand) should not wear leather shoes.

## LAWS OF MOURNING ON ט' באב

On Tisha B'av, it is forbidden to work and do regular household chores until after chatzos (midday). Making beds should be postponed until after chatzos. Cleaning the house should be done after chatzos. Washing dishes (by hand) should only be done after chatzos. Loading and setting a dishwasher are allowed even before chatzos. Buying food to prepare for after the fast is permitted before chatzos, but cooking should be done after chatzos.

We do not sit on a regular chair, couch or other seat until after chatzos on Tisha B'av. Instead, we sit on the floor or on a low stool no higher than 3 tefachim (approx. 9 inches) from the ground. Someone who is elderly or unwell and finds it difficult to sit in this manner may sit on a regular chair. Riding in a car or bus in the regular manner is permitted before chatzos, even though the seat is above 3 tefachim.

Similar to mourners, we do not greet each other on Tisha B'Av. This includes saying "Hello," "Good morning," and the like. Nodding is permitted. If someone greets you, you may return the greeting in a low voice and serious manner.

Giving gifts on Tisha B'av is forbidden. Giving tzedakah is allowed. Learning Torah (aside from topics of Tisha B'av and Aveilus) is forbidden for men and women alike.

When going to sleep on Tisha B'av, you should diminish the usual comfort of your sleep. For example, someone who typically sleeps with 2 pillows should sleep with one. This applies both to nighttime sleep and to a daytime rest.

## CHANGES TO DAVENING

- Megillas Eicha is read after Ma'ariv and Shacharis, followed by Kinnos.
- During the Shemoneh Esrei of mincha, we add "Nachem" to the blessing of "Bone Yerushalayim" and "Aneinu" in the blessing of "Shema Koleinu". Those who daven nussach Ashkenaz say "Sim Shalom" instead of "Shalom Rav".
- Someone who is not fasting should add Nachem in bentching.

Women who have sons at home should be aware of the following laws. Men and boys wear tzitzis on Tisha B'av, but do not make the blessing until after chatzos. Tefillin are not worn in the morning, but instead are put on before Mincha with a blessing and worn until after mincha.

## MOURNING ON THE 10TH OF AV

The fires of the Bais Hamikdash continued to burn well into the 10th of Av. Therefore, the laws of mourning which we observed in the Nine Days continue to be in effect until chatzos of the tenth day of Av. This includes refraining from haircuts, bathing, washing clothing, eating meat, drinking wine, and listening to music.

*When Tisha B'av falls on Thursday, one may take a haircut, shave, bathe, and wash clothing beginning Friday morning, provided that these activities are undertaken with the sole purpose of preparing for Shabbos. Clothing may only be washed Friday morning if they will be needed for Shabbos. However, if you are putting up a load of laundry for Shabbos, you may add other clothes that are not necessary for Shabbos, as well. In case of need, one may take haircuts, shave, and wash laundry on Thursday night (ie. Someone will be going away for Shabbos).*

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## WHEN TISHA B'AV FALLS ON SHABBOS

When the 9th of Av falls on Shabbos, the fast and all the relevant laws are observed on Sunday, the 10th of Av. Accordingly, some laws pertaining to Erev Tisha B'Av and the day following Tisha B'Av differ from the usual.

### AVOIDING PREPARING FOR AFTER SHABBOS

It is forbidden to prepare on Shabbos for after Shabbos. Therefore, one may not prepare Kinnos, pillows, stools, or any other item needed for the fast while it is still Shabbos. It is permitted to eat more than usual on Shabbos in order to have energy to fast. Rav Elyashiv points out that one should be careful to avoid verbalizing that the purpose of the eating is for the fast. There are different opinions regarding taking a pill on Shabbos to fast better.

### SHABBOS MEALS

Public mourning is forbidden on Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch writes that when Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbos, one should eat and drink all the delicacies that one would enjoy on any other Shabbos, including chicken and meat. Even Seudas Shlishis, eaten during the part of the day when the Seudah Hamafsek would normally occur, could be lavish. One may eat meat, drink wine, and sing zemiros like one would on any other Shabbos. It is recommended to begin Seudas Shlishis earlier, since it is forbidden to eat or drink after sundown. If you bentched before it is sundown, you may still eat and drink until the time of sundown.

### AFTER SUNDOWN

Once the time of sundown arrives, it is forbidden to eat, drink, or wash hands. After using the bathroom, one may wash up to the knuckles. One may sit on a regular chair and wear leather shoes until nightfall. When Shabbos is over, one should say "Baruch Hamavdil" and remove leather shoes. It is also proper to change out of Shabbos clothes. All the laws of Tisha B'Av are in effect at that point.

### HAVDALAH

When Shabbos is followed by Tisha B'Av, then Havdalah in its entirety is postponed until after Tisha B'Av. After Shabbos, the blessing of "Borei Meorei HaEish" is said in shul before Eicha. Someone who will not be in shul should wait until nightfall, say "Boruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh L'Chol," and then make the blessing of "Borei Meorei Haeish."

Someone who is Halachically permitted to eat on Tisha B'Av (due to illness, etc) must make havdalah before eating. The beginning verses of "Hinei kel yeshuasi" are omitted, and only the blessings are said.

It is preferable to make havdalah on beer instead of using wine or grape juice. If only wine or grape juice are available, it should be drunk by a child who is above the age of Chinuch but does not yet understand the concept of mourning. If no child is available, one may drink the minimum amount of wine/grape juice.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky holds that a child above the age of 9 should make havdalah before eating on Tisha B'Av.

### AFTER THE FAST

The laws of the Nine Days continue until after midday on the 10th of Av. A year that Tisha B'Av is a postponed one day due to Shabbos, some activities that are normally forbidden until midday of the day following Tisha B'Av are permitted earlier.

Cutting hair, bathing, and doing laundry are permissible immediately following havdalah.

Eating meat or chicken is not allowed immediately, but is permitted the morning after the fast.

Halachic opinions differ with regard to when one may listen to music in such a year. Some hold that one may listen to music immediately after the fast has ended. Other opinions require one to wait until the next morning.