

Shofar
Tammuz-Av 5779
בין המצרים תשע"ט



שפכי כמים לבך (איכה ב' יט')

Pour Out Your Heart Like Water (Lamentations 2:19)

Congregation B'nai Torah

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SHIVAH ASAR B'TAMUZ AND THE 3 WEEKS

The Fast of the 17th Day of Tammuz marks the beginning of the Three Weeks. On this day the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the invading Babylonian army and 490 years later by the Roman army. The Three Weeks culminate with the Fast of the 9th of Av which is the saddest and most tragic day of the year. It commemorates the destruction of both the first and the second Temples in Jerusalem. The first Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and the second Temple by the Romans, with the second Temple being destroyed in the year 68 of the Common Era.

Approximately six decades after the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, Bar Kochba led a revolt against the Romans in an attempt to re-establish Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. The revolt, while successful at first, was bitterly crushed with the fall of the city of Betar, which also took place on the 9th day of Av, in the year 135. In subsequent centuries, Tisha B'Av became identified with other Jewish tragedies. It was on Tishah B'Av, 1492, that the decree issued by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain went into effect. The decree ordered the expulsion of all Jews from Spain on the 9th Day of Av, the alternatives being only death or conversion to Christianity. Three-hundred thousand Jews led by the Abarbanel, were forcibly expelled on that day.

The Three Weeks between the Fast of the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av are considered a period of mourning. During these three weeks it is customary not to cut one's hair and not to schedule any marriages. The mourning period intensifies during the Nine Days (beginning this year on Thursday night, August 1). During this period of time one should refrain from washing clothing, although babies' diapers and other small children's clothing may be washed, if necessary. Pleasure bathing and swimming are prohibited during this period as well. One should not eat meat or drink wine during the Nine Days, except on Shabbos. In addition, it is permissible to eat meat at a Seudas Mitzvah; such as a Bris (circumcision) or a Pidyon Haben (redemption of first-born).

The Fast of the 17th Day of Tammuz begins at dawn (5:21 am) Sunday, morning, July 21 and concludes Sunday night (after 9:58 pm), while the Fast of Tishah B'Av begins Saturday night, August 10 at 8:47 pm, and ends Sunday night, August 11 after 9:46 pm. Pregnant and nursing women, as well as sick persons, even those who are not critically ill, should consult a rabbi as to their requirements with regard to fasting.

On Motzei Shabbos, Saturday night, August 3, when reciting Havdalah one should use beer, juice, or milk rather than wine due to the prohibition against drinking wine at that time. The prohibition against drinking wine extends to grape juice as well. If one does not have beer, juice, or milk then the Havdalah should be recited as usual, over wine or grape juice, but given to a child to drink. If one uses beer or juice, then the blessing to be recited is Shehakol.

This year since Tishah B'Av occurs on Shabbos, the fast is postponed until Saturday night and Sunday. On Motzai Shabbos, Saturday night, August 10, following Maariv Services, Megillas Eicha, the Book of Lamentations, is read in the traditional mournful tune associated with it. Following services in the evening as well as in the morning, the Kinos Liturgy is recited while sitting on the ground or on low seats. To emphasize the mournful nature of the day, it is customary to pull back the curtain from the Holy Ark and the covers from the readers' tables, providing a stark appearance. As a rule, the lights in the synagogue are dimmed during the reading of Megillas Eicha and the recital of Kinos. The practice of sitting on the ground or low seats is in effect until "Chatzos", which is 1:50 p.m. this year in Indianapolis.

Because a Tallis and Tefillin are considered religious symbols of beauty, neither is worn at the morning services of Tisha B'Av. The Tallis and Tefillin are worn later for the Mincha Service.

Wearing leather shoes is prohibited on Tishah B'Av: However, there are no prohibitions against footwear made from cloth, rubber, or other non-leather materials. Washing or applying lotions, as well as marital relations, are prohibited. The prohibition against washing does not apply to washing off dirt or the like. Applying creams for medical purposes is permitted.

This year on Saturday night (August 10) due to the fast day, Havdalah is not recited, and is postponed until after the fast is over on Sunday night. Spices are not used in this Havdalah nor is the candle used. The bracha over the candle, however, is made on Saturday night before reading Eicha.

Although the Fast of Tisha B'Av ends at nightfall, one should refrain from eating meat or drinking wine until “chatzos” of the following day. “Chatzos” is the midpoint between sunrise and sunset. This custom is observed because the Temple burned all through the night following Tisha B'Av and through the next day. Because of this, weddings on the night immediately following Tisha B'Av are forbidden. However, this year since the fast is being observed on the 10th of Av due to Shabbos, the restrictions normally observed until Chatzos on the day following Tisha B'Av are limited to the night following the fast day.

Kiddush Livanah (sanctification of the new moon) is a mitzvah to be performed with joy, and therefore is not recited during the Nine Days. It should be recited after Maariv services at the conclusion of the Tisha B'av Fast.

It has been prophesized that with the coming of the Messiah and the subsequent rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, the fast days will undergo a metamorphosis – days of national mourning will become joyful holidays. May G-d grant that the fulfillment of this prophesy take place speedily and in our time.



Rabbi Acha said: “The Divine Presence never leaves the Western Wall of the Holy Temple.”