

Three Weeks in Ten Minutes

A Summary of Timely Laws
In a Clear and Simple Style

Contents

❖ Shiva Asar B'Tamuz – The 17 th of Tamuz	3
❖ The Three Weeks	3
Music	3
Haircuts and Shaving	3
Shehechyanu	4
Dangerous Activities	4
❖ The Nine Days	4
General Restrictions	4
Clothes, Towels and Linen	5
Showering, Bathing and Swimming	5
Food Limitations	6

Designed for fully observant Jews



By Rabbi Yochanan Schnall
Minneapolis, MN

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בס"ד

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אשירה לד' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

Much thanks as well to the Minneapolis Community Kollel for their resources.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.
It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of the laws and sources are from the following seforim:

Halachos of the Thre Weeks by Rabbi Shimon D. Eider זצ"ל,
קונטרס שיעורי הלכה מתוך שיעורים של רב שמואל פעלדער שליט"א
Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks by Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen שליט"א

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Tammuz 5773

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❖ Shiva Asar B'Tamuz – The 17th of Tamuz (June 25, 2013)

The 17th of Tamuz is a fast day that marks many tragedies that occurred on this day: The golden calf was worshipped and as a result, the Luchos (Tablets) were broken. A few hundred years later, the walls of Yerushalayim were breached, and an idol was erected in the Beis Hamikdosh.

- This fast day begins at dawn and should conclude 50 minutes after sunset. It may be concluded 41 minutes afterwards when necessary.¹
- Tasteless medicine may be taken with a sufficient amount of water. Regarding medicine that has an enjoyable taste, a rabbi should be consulted.²
- Pregnant, nursing, elderly or infirm people that find it difficult to fast should speak to a rabbi for possible leniencies.³
- Even those who are exempt from fasting may not eat particularly tasty foods or treats.⁴

❖ The Three Weeks (June 25 through July 16, 2013)

The Three Weeks commemorate tragedies that occurred throughout our history - most notably events pertaining to the destruction of the first and second Batei Mikdosh (Temples). They begin with Shiva Asar B'tamuz, and they lead up to Tisha B'Av (the 9th of Av) the day that the Batei Mikdash began to burn. Some degree of mourning lingers into the day following Tisha B'Av as well.

Note that although the fast of Shiva Asar B'tamuz – The 17th of Tamuz begins in the morning, these restrictions begin the evening before (on June 24, 2013).

Music

Playing and listening to music for recreation, is prohibited⁵.

- Music that is not intended for recreation is permitted. Therefore:
 - One may play music as a source of income (to tutor young children or to benefit non-Jews).⁶ Note that this becomes forbidden during the Nine Days.
 - Rhythmic music that is necessary for exercise is permitted.⁷
 - It is permitted to play music for young children.⁸
 - Passively hearing music as it is played for children, while on hold during a phone call or shopping in a store is permitted.⁹
- It is a matter of dispute whether “A Cappella” style music has the same status as regular music. One should consult his or her rabbi regarding its status.
- Most authorities permit singing without musical accompaniment.¹⁰
- Dancing without music is generally not allowed either but it is permitted at a Sheva Brachos.¹¹

Haircuts and Shaving

Haircuts and shaving are not permitted during this time.¹²

- If not shaving could cause someone to lose a job or incur a significant financial loss, it is permitted to shave at least until The Nine Days begin.¹³ See ❖ **The Nine Days** regarding shaving during that time.
- Women are also included in the prohibition of taking haircuts¹⁴. Nonetheless: Tweezing is permitted¹⁵, women of marriageable age may shave as necessary¹⁶, and married women who have hair growing by their temples may remove it for *tznius* purposes.¹⁷
- A mustache that interferes with eating may be trimmed.¹⁸

By: R' Yochanan Schnall

- Brushing or combing hair is permitted.¹⁹
- Cutting and/or washing a sheitel is permitted until The Nine Days begin.²⁰
- It is questionable if children can receive a haircut during this time.²¹ One may be lenient when there is a pressing need.²²
Some examples of a “pressing need” are: bangs obstruct the child’s vision, gum is entangled in the hair or a concern of lice.²³
- If a bris occurs during the Three Weeks, the parents, mohel and sandek (the one who holds the baby during the circumcision) are allowed to take a haircut and shave that day²⁴ in honor of the mitzvah.²⁵

Shehechyanu

During The Three Weeks, activities that require recitation of the Shehechyanu blessing are avoided. Examples of such activities are performing a mitzvah for the first time, wearing new, important clothing (such as an expensive suit) and eating a seasonal fruit or vegetable that one enjoys and has not yet tasted since its season began.²⁶

- On a Shabbos that occurs during The Three Weeks a new fruit may be eaten and the Shehechyanu blessing recited.²⁷
- A rare opportunity that will not present itself again after the Three Weeks may be fulfilled with the accompanying Shehechyanu blessing.²⁸
- One who wishes to buy a car, house or significant new appliance during this time should consult a rabbi for proper guidelines.²⁹

Dangerous Activities

Potentially dangerous activities are avoided during The Three Weeks since it is an ominous time of year³⁰.

❖ The Nine Days (July 8 through July 16, 2013)

The Nine Days begin at the start of the Jewish month of Av. Since the destruction of the Batei Mikdosh occurred during this month, there is an increased level of mourning. The mourning intensifies again during the week in which Tisha B’Av falls.

General Restrictions

- Home improvements such as building, painting or planting are only allowed if they are of an urgent nature.³¹
 - Construction through a contractor that began before the Nine Days may continue. If one is in the position to persuade the contractor (monetarily or otherwise) to postpone work until after the Tisha B’Av, it is virtuous to do so.³²
- Since this time of year is beset with misfortune, it is advisable not to schedule elective surgeries or court cases during this time. If possible, these should be postponed until Elul – the next Jewish calendar month (beginning on August 7, 2013).³³
- Even those who were permitted to shave for financial reasons during The Three Weeks should refrain from doing so during The Nine Days.
 - During the week in which Tisha B’Av occurs the prohibition to shave is more severe. If shaving is financially unavoidable, a rabbi should be consulted.³⁴
- Cutting nails is permitted until the week in which Tisha B’Av occurs. During that week, cutting nails is only permitted for Shabbos and any other mitzvah need.³⁵
- Becoming engaged is permitted but it may not be celebrated with a meal.³⁶
- Musical instruments are not played, even on a professional basis.³⁷
- It is commendable to avoid making purchases that bring one joy.³⁸

Clothes, Towels and Linen

– Purchasing

New clothing, towels or linen may not be purchased during this time.³⁹

- These items may not be purchased even if it is for after The Nine Days.⁴⁰ In cases of necessity, a rabbi should be consulted.⁴¹
- It is permitted to repair garments during this time unless the repair will be so extensive that the garment will look like new or if the garment will need to be cleaned in order to repair it.⁴²
- New clothing, towels or linen may not be worn or used during this time.⁴³

– Washing/Ironing

Clothing, towels or linen may not be washed or ironed⁴⁴ during the Nine Days irrespective of when they will be used and by whom.⁴⁵

- These items may not even be given during this time to a non-Jew for immediate cleaning and laundering.⁴⁶
- Small stains may be removed with some water.⁴⁷
- Children's clothing that constantly become dirty may be washed⁴⁸ but only in a discreet manner.⁴⁹
- Regarding someone who has no clean clothes to wear, a rabbi should be consulted.⁵⁰

– Freshly Laundered

Freshly laundered clothes, towels or linen are not worn or used during The Nine Days.⁵¹ This means that for these items to be worn or used, they must have already been worn/used at least one time since they were last washed.

Even after wearing something for a short time⁵², it is no longer considered freshly laundered. Therefore, it is advisable to wear a number of changes of clothing for short time-periods before the Nine Days begin so that these non-freshly laundered but still clean clothes will be available for The Nine Days.

Since the restriction does not apply on Shabbos, this preparation may also be done on Shabbos during the Nine Days. Preparing then is only permitted for garments that are suitable for Shabbos.⁵³ In addition, the preparatory intent may not be verbalized or apparent.⁵⁴

- It is appropriate to wear undergarments and socks in advance as well⁵⁵ but if this will cause irritation or discomfort, freshly laundered ones may be worn.⁵⁶
- Children who are too young to comprehend the concept of mourning or who are constantly dirtying themselves are not subject to this restriction.
- For Shabbos, freshly laundered clothes and towels are permitted but bed linen remains restricted.⁵⁷
- Houseguests that arrive during The Nine Days may be given fresh linen.⁵⁸
- If a bris occurs during The Nine Days, the parents, mohel and sandek are allowed to wear freshly laundered clothes in honor of the mitzvah.⁵⁹
- One who is meeting a prospective date for the first time may also wear freshly laundered clothes.⁶⁰

Showering, Bathing and Swimming

Unnecessary showering, bathing or swimming is forbidden during this time.⁶¹

- Showering to remove dirt or sweat is permitted.⁶² The showering time must be limited to what is needed and the water may only be as hot as is necessary to remove the dirt or sweat.⁶³
- For mitzvah purposes, showering and bathing with hot water is permitted⁶⁴. According to many opinions, this includes taking a shower as usual in honor of Shabbos.⁶⁵

By: R' Yochanan Schnall

- Men who use the mikvah every single Friday may use it this week as well⁶⁶ as long as the mikvah is not hot⁶⁷.
- Swimming for a therapeutic purpose is permitted during The Nine Days.⁶⁸
- Children under the age of six may swim in a “kiddy pool” or run through a sprinkler but this may not be done as a group or in a public location.⁶⁹

Food Limitations

Wine, grape juice, beef⁷⁰, chicken⁷¹ and any of their derivatives may not be consumed during this time.⁷²

- In this context, the definition of “derivatives” is if it would make a consumer fleishig, and in the context of wine, if its taste is discernible.⁷³
- These foods are permissible at a meal honoring a mitzvah such as the Shabbos meals, a bris or pidyon haben⁷⁴.
- These foods should not be fed to children (of any age) unless it is necessary for their health.⁷⁵

Siyum

A siyum is a meal that celebrates a completion of a significant book of Torah. This includes a Gemara tractate, a seder of Mishna, or a book of Tanach that was studied with the Rishonim (early commentaries)⁷⁶. Since this meal celebrates a mitzvah, it may include meat and wine.⁷⁷

- One should not rush to complete a book in order to make a siyum specifically during this time. Likewise, one should not celebrate the completion with a festive meal if he does not normally do so the rest of the year.⁷⁸
- Up until the week in which Tisha B'Av falls, all guests that would normally be invited throughout the year may participate.⁷⁹
- During the week in which Tisha B'Av falls, only those who have completed the texts, their immediate family and an additional minyan of men may be included⁸⁰. In institutions that all members usually eat together (such as a camp,) all may participate in the siyum meal.⁸¹

Havdalah

During The Nine Days, the wine or grape juice used for havdalah is preferably given to a young child to drink⁸².

- This child should be too young to understand the concept of mourning but old enough to comprehend the concept of making blessings⁸³ - approximately six years old⁸⁴.
- The child does not recite his own blessing before drinking but relies on the *Hagafen* that was mentioned during havdalah.
- If no child is available, one should drink the wine himself.⁸⁵
- Some have a custom to use beer for havdalah during this time.⁸⁶

¹ Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 4 #62
² Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 16
³ See Shulchan Aruch 550:1
⁴ Mishna Berura 550:5
⁵ Mishna Berura 551:16; see Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 35
⁶ Biur Halacha 551 "Me'matim; see Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 3 #87
⁷ Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁸ Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁹ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 36
¹⁰ A Summary of Halachos of the Three Weeks page 2
¹¹ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 36
¹² Rema 551:4
¹³ Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 4 #102
¹⁴ Mishna Berura 551:79. In extenuating circumstances, a woman may take a haircut see Iggras Moshe Yoreh Deiya volume 2 #137
¹⁵ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 32
¹⁶ A Summary of Halachos of the Three Weeks page 4
¹⁷ Mishna Berura 551:79
¹⁸ Shulchan Aruch 551:13, Mishna Berura 551:80
¹⁹ Mishna Berura 551:20
²⁰ Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
²¹ Mishna Berura 551:81,82
²² Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
²³ These reasons would permit an adult to take a haircut as well see Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
²⁴ If the shaving/ haircut will cause the bris to be postponed, it may be done the night before. See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder in the name of the S'dey Chemed
²⁵ See Sha'ar Hatziyun 551:4; Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
²⁶ Shulchan Aruch 551:17
²⁷ Mishna Berura 551:98
²⁸ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 551:17
²⁹ See Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 3 #80, Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder and Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pgs. 42-43
³⁰ Shulchan Aruch 551:18 see Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
³¹ Shulchan Aruch 551:2
³² Mishna Berura 551:12
³³ Shulchan Aruch 551:1
³⁴ See Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 5 24:9
³⁵ Mishna Berura 551:20
³⁶ Shulchan Aruch 551:2; see Mishna Berura 551:16
³⁷ Biur Halacha 551 "Me'matim; see Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 3 #87
³⁸ Sha'ar Hatziyun 551:13
³⁹ Rema 551:6
⁴⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 551:7
⁴¹ See Mishna Berura 551:46
⁴² See Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 3 #79
⁴³ Rema 551:6

⁴⁴ Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 3 #83
⁴⁵ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 551:3
⁴⁶ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 551:3
⁴⁷ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 77
⁴⁸ Rema 551:14
⁴⁹ Mishna Berura 551:83
⁵⁰ See Halachos of the Three Weeks III D 11
⁵¹ Rema 551:3
⁵² It is hard to give a rule for what a "short time" is but it should be long enough that the clothes no longer feel freshly laundered
⁵³ Halachos of the Three Weeks III D 10
⁵⁴ See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁵⁵ See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁵⁶ Halachos of the Three Weeks III D 8 ל"ז משה ר' בשם ר'
⁵⁷ Halachos the Three Weeks III D 10; see Mishna Berura 651:33
⁵⁸ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks pg 88
⁵⁹ Rema 551:1
⁶⁰ See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁶¹ Rema 551:16
⁶² Iggras Moshe Even Haezer volume 4 84:4, see also Mishna Berura 613:2
⁶³ See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder, Halachos of the Three Weeks III F 1, 2
⁶⁴ Rema 551:16, Biur Halacha 551 "Uletzorech"
⁶⁵ Halachos of the Three Weeks III F 7, 8
⁶⁶ Mishna Berura 551:95
⁶⁷ Sha'ar Hatziyun 551:98
⁶⁸ Mishna Berura 551:88
⁶⁹ Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁷⁰ Shulchan Aruch 551:9, Mishna Berura 551:58
⁷¹ Shulchan Aruch 551:10
⁷² Shulchan Aruch 551:9, Mishna Berura 551:58
⁷³ Mishna Berura 551:63, Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁷⁴ Rema 551:9
⁷⁵ Mishna Berura 551:70
⁷⁶ Iggras Moshe Orach Chayim volume 1 #157
⁷⁷ Rema 551:10
⁷⁸ Mishna Berura 551:73
⁷⁹ Rema 551:10, Mishna Berura 551:75
⁸⁰ Rema 551:10, Mishna Berura 551:77
⁸¹ Halachos of the Three Weeks III C 9
⁸² Rema 551:10
⁸³ Mishna Berura 551:70
⁸⁴ Mishna Berura 128:123
⁸⁵ Rema 551:10
⁸⁶ Oruch Hashulchan 551:26