

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה



CONGREGATION  
EDMOND J. SAFRA

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## **Laws of Ben Ha-Messarim:**

### **The Three Weeks Between 17 Tammuz and 9 Ab**

The following are some general guidelines regarding the restrictions between the Fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz and the Fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Ab.

#### **Starting with the Fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, we refrain from the following:**

1. **Weddings:** Although one may get married according to the Shulhan Arukh until Rosh Hodesh Ab, the custom in our community is to refrain from marriage starting with 17 Tammuz, as this is considered an inauspicious time to get married. Engagements, however, may be announced even up to 9 Ab and families and friends may get together, but without dancing or music.
2. **Music:** We do not listen to music – live or taped during this period. During a happy occasion, such as a Berit Milah, Pidyon Haben, Bar Missva or Siyyum Masekhet it is permissible to listen to live music. Singing Pizmonim acapella (without musical accompaniment) is permissible. A musician may play as part of his livelihood until the “week in which 9 Ab falls.” He may also teach a student, and likewise a student may learn how to play an instrument. However, this is only proper until Rosh Hodesh Ab.
3. **Shehehiyanu:** It is best to avoid reciting the Shehehiyanu blessing during this period, in which we thank G-d for sustaining us until such time, for it is an inauspicious time in our calendar. We usually recite this blessing over an important piece of clothing, such as a suit or nice dress, or a new fruit. It is permissible to recite this blessing on the first two Sabbaths after 17 Tammuz; on the Sabbath before 9 Ab it is preferable to avoid it. Pregnant women or someone eating a new fruit for health reasons may certainly say Shehehiyanu during this period. New clothing may be purchased during this time up until Rosh Hodesh Ab; however, one should not wear them until after 9 Ab.

### **Starting with Rosh Hodesh Ab, we refrain from the following:**

1. ***Joyous things:*** We are told that with the beginning of Ab, we are to diminish our joy. This means that we refrain from purchasing new items, such as furniture and jewelry, etc. It is recommended to be strict about things such as new homes and new cars, which although we may be lenient in purchasing, we try not to bring them into our possession at this time. Exceptions are made in certain cases, such as all the needs for a Hatan and Kallah who are getting married immediately within the week after 9 Ab, especially if these items will be more expensive should they wait to purchase them. **Since this is a very subjective area, one should consult the rabbi if they have any questions.**
2. ***Beautification:*** We do not do anything at this time for the beautification of our homes which is not immediately necessary. This includes interior and exterior design, as well as planting and gardening; all which may bring us joy. Repairs that are absolutely necessary, may be done. A Jewish contractor may complete a job for his livelihood if it means that he must finish by a certain date or otherwise will suffer monetary penalties. **Again, due to the subjectivity of this matter, please consult with the rabbi if you have any questions.**
3. ***Meat and Wine:*** Starting with the day after Rosh Hodesh, it is the custom of our community to abstain from meat and wine. We continue this restriction until the end of 10 Ab. **[If 9 Ab falls on a Shabbat, in which case the fast is pushed to a Sunday, this restriction is lifted immediately after the conclusion of the fast of 9 Ab.]** On Rosh Hodesh itself, it is permissible to eat meat and drink wine. Similarly, we partake of meat and wine on Shabbat as usual, as there are never public manifestations of mourning on Shabbat. It is also permissible to taste a meat dish on Ereb Shabbat if it is for Shabbat, and to finish meat leftovers at the "Fourth Meal" on Mossaey Shabbat. One who makes a bona-fide siyyum is allowed to eat meat as well during this period. A sick person, including a new mother in her first month, as well as a nursing mother who is weak, is allowed to eat meat during this period as well.

### **Starting with the 'Week in which 9 Ab falls', we refrain from the following:**

1. ***Haircuts and Shaving:*** We refrain from taking Haircuts and shaving during the week in which 9 Ab falls. Since we begin the week from Saturday night, practically speaking, this means that the last opportunity one has to take a haircut or shave is on Ereb Shabbat Hazon – the Shabbat immediately preceding 9 Ab. **In a year in which 9 Ab falls on a Sunday or a Shabbat, in which case the fast is pushed to a Sunday, and there is no 'Week in which**

**9 Ab falls', one should still refrain from shaving or taking a haircut on Erebb Shabbat Hazon so that they will enter into Tish'a B'Ab looking unkempt.**

2. ***Laundering and Wearing Freshly Laundered Clothing:*** We refrain from laundering clothing at this time and in giving out clothing to be laundered – even if the intention is not to wear them until after 9 Ab. Included in the restriction of laundering are towels, tablecloths, sheets, etc. However, it is permissible to launder young children's clothing which are always getting soiled. In the same vein, we refrain from wearing freshly laundered clothing at this time. We do not wear fresh clothing even if they were laundered prior to this time and not worn. It is customary, therefore, to try on some clothing prior to the week in which 9 Ab falls, and wear them for a while, and in such a manner to "prepare" them for the week in which 9 Ab falls. If one did not have enough time to do so, they are allowed to put on fresh clothing prior to the Shabbat before 9 Ab and during the course of Shabbat, change their clothing several times, after having worn them for a reasonable duration of time – with a period of interruption between changes of clothing. The restriction of freshly laundered clothing does not apply to undergarments or socks.
3. ***Bathing:*** It is forbidden to bathe with hot water during the week of 9 Ab. It is permissible to bathe with cold water, and one may add some hot water in order to remove the chill. One may also use soap, shampoo and deodorant as usual during the week of 9 Ab. A woman who needs to immerse in a Mikveh during the week of 9 Ab may prepare herself for immersion as usual – including using hot water - since this is for the purposes of a missva. The accepted custom is to refrain from recreational swimming during the week of 9 Ab. One who swims for health reasons is allowed to do so during this week.

**[Please note: In a year in which 9 Ab falls on a Sunday or a Shabbat, in which case the fast is pushed to a Sunday, there is no 'Week in which 9 Ab falls' and this group of restrictions do not apply.]**

**It is important to note that there are many laws and customs regarding this time of the year and it is necessary to study them in order to know how to conduct oneself. As always, when one has a question, they should turn to the rabbi for guidance.**

**May we be privileged to witness the redemption in our own days and may Boreh Olam turn these days of sadness into days of redemption, joy and gladness.**

**תזכו לראות בנחמת ציון ובבנינה**