



Guidelines for the Ill on Tisha B'Av

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*Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance in a
Hospital*
Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner

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H. Fast Days (other than *Tisha B'Av* & *Yom Kippur*)

There are four annual “minor” fast days on which traditionally observant Jews refrain from eating or drinking from dawn until nightfall that same day. In addition to these days, some Jews fast on other specific days throughout the year, such as the day before Passover, “*Taanit B'chorot*.”

- 1a. A sick person in the category of non-life-threatening serious illness [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept] should not fast on the Fast of *Gedalyah*, Tenth of *Tevet* or the Seventeenth of *Tammuz*, even if they wish to fast.⁴⁸⁰
- 1b. There is room for those who are not well to be even more lenient with regard to fasting on *Taanit Esther* than on the above three fast days.⁴⁸¹
2. A woman who is pregnant or nursing is also not obligated to fast on these days, particularly if the fast distresses her. If fasting distresses her a great deal it is forbidden for her to fast. However, only enough food should be eaten to ensure the well-being of the pregnant woman or the nursing mother and her child, rather than a hearty meal.⁴⁸²
3. A healthy person who is fasting and suffers pain, such as a headache, may take pain-relief pills without water as long as there is not a good flavor associated with the medication. If it does have flavor, it may only be taken in capsule form (or wrapped in thin paper).⁴⁸³

I. *Tisha B'Av*

Tisha B'Av is a fast of more than 24 hours, commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The three weeks leading up to *Tisha B'Av* begin this season of mourning, which intensifies nine days before the fast, and even more during the week of the fast, culminating in this day of solemnity, prayer and various ritual observances.

- 1a. Although it is customary to refrain from hot baths during the nine days prior to *Tisha B'Av*, a pregnant woman or anyone who is ill may take a hot bath during this time if it gives relief or comfort,⁴⁸⁴ though this should not be done on *Tisha B'Av* itself.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁰ *Mishnah Berurah* 550:4.

⁴⁸¹ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 686:2, *Rema*.

⁴⁸² *Shulchan Aruch OH* 554:5; *Mishnah Berurah* 550:5; *Shaar Hatziyun* 550:3; *Lev Avraham* 21:5.

⁴⁸³ *Lev Avraham* 21:8.

⁴⁸⁴ *Mishnah Berurah* 551:88.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, *Shaar Hatziyun* 94.

- 1b. Although it is customary to abstain from eating meat or drinking wine during the week or nine days leading up to *Tisha B'av* (with the exclusion of Shabbat),⁴⁸⁶ a patient suffering from even a minor illness [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept], is permitted meat and wine if necessary.⁴⁸⁷
- 1c. One who must eat animal protein during these days should choose poultry over red meat, unless such meat is more advisable for health reasons, in which case it should be eaten.⁴⁸⁸
- 1d. One who must have a surgery or procedure during this time period may do so, unless it is elective and can wait, in which case it should be postponed until after *Tisha B'av*.⁴⁸⁹
- 2a. One who is suffering minor discomfort must still fast.⁴⁹⁰ However, one who is sick (bedridden), even with a non-life-threatening illness [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept], need not fast on *Tisha B'av* and may eat what is necessary in their normal manner.⁴⁹¹ However, one who is healthy but has reason to fear that fasting will lead to illness, should eat only in measurements (see chapter on *Yom Kippur*, “Eating in ‘Measurements’”).⁴⁹²
- 2b. One who only needs to drink but can avoid eating, for example to prevent a kidney stone, should drink something but not eat. If they must drink normal amounts they may do so; otherwise, they should drink only in measurements.⁴⁹³
- 2c. One who needs to eat should try to eat later than usual so that they fast for at least some time, unless it would be dangerous for them to do so.⁴⁹⁴ One who must eat should also consume only the amount needed for their physical well-being.⁴⁹⁵
3. One who has been ill and has now recovered, but is still very weak and in great pain and there is concern that their illness will return, should eat as they regularly do, but should at least avoid eating sweets.⁴⁹⁶
4. One who is experiencing difficulty with their retina, such that dehydration resulting from fasting could lead to loss of vision, even though this is not life-threatening, may drink as their doctor advises (but not eat).⁴⁹⁷
- 5a. One who is healthy and is fasting, but would like to take a pill to relieve pain, such as from a headache, may take a pill without water, as long as it does not have a good flavor. However, one may not take a pill if they have enjoyment from it in their mouth or throat.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁸⁶ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 551:9, though *Sefardim* begin these prohibitions only on *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

⁴⁸⁷ *Mishnah Berurah* 551:61, though rarely would wine be necessary.

⁴⁸⁸ *Mishnah Berurah* 551:64.

⁴⁸⁹ *Torat Hayoledet*, 308.

⁴⁹⁰ *Aruch Hashulchan OH* 554:7.

⁴⁹¹ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 554:11.

⁴⁹² *Lev Avraham* 22:4 in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 554:6 *Rema* & *Mishnah Berurah* 13-15.

⁴⁹⁵ *Chayei Adam* 135:2.

⁴⁹⁶ *Lev Avraham* 22:5.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22:3.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22:6.

- 5b. One who is a “*Choleh She’ain Bo Sakana*,” (non-life-threatening serious illness) [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept], whose doctor orders them to continue taking their medication on *Tisha B’av*, but is not able to swallow it without water, may take some water (the smallest quantity necessary) to help them swallow the pill.⁴⁹⁹ Alternatively, one may follow the guidelines in the chapter on *Yom Kippur*, section titled, “Taking Medication on *Yom Kippur*” # 1.

i. Pregnancy and Childbirth

- 1a. A pregnant woman who feels well should fast on *Tisha B’av* regardless of which month of pregnancy she is in.⁵⁰⁰
- 1b. However, if she does not feel well, or did not feel well at the beginning of her pregnancy, she should not fast.⁵⁰¹
- 1c. A pregnant woman who feels well, but is weak and is afraid that she will become ill as a result of fasting, should eat in measurements (see chapter on *Yom Kippur*, “Eating in ‘Measurements’”).⁵⁰²
2. A woman who is nursing and is afraid that she won’t produce sufficient milk as a result of fasting, and the baby does not drink formula, should drink normal amounts of fluids, unless she can produce enough milk by drinking only in measurements (see chapter on *Yom Kippur*, “Eating in ‘Measurements’”).⁵⁰³
3. One who has just given birth is not obligated to fast within thirty days of the birth, and should not fast during the first seven days, even if she feels capable.⁵⁰⁴ One who miscarried after forty days since conception has the same ruling as a woman who has recently given birth.⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 554:5; *Rema* 550:1; *Lev Avraham* 22:2.

⁵⁰¹ *Mishnah Berurah* 554:3 & *Shaar Hatziyun* 2.

⁵⁰² *Lev Avraham* 22:2, in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ *Mishnah Berurah* 554:13.

⁵⁰⁵ *Lev Avraham* 22:2.