

ליקוטי ופסקי הלכות "חוקי חיים"

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Halachos of the Nine Days

Parshas Matos-Masei 5784

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Minimizing Joy

1. When Av arrives, we decrease our level of joy (ש"ע תקנ"א ס"א). Some say this means we do not rejoice at all (מ"ב סק"א); others say we just rejoice less than usual (שעה"צ סק"א). It is appropriate for one to minimize speech in these days other than what's necessary, direct his heart to mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, to minimize mundane things which distract from the mourning and rather concentrate to lament the destruction of Hashem's house and the tragic disaster that befell the holy nation in these days (יסוד ושורש העבודה).
2. **Minimizing joy until after Tishah B'Av.** Some say that the halacha about avoiding litigation with non-Jews in the month of Av only applies until after Tishah B'Av; others say it applies the entire month of Av, until Rosh Chodesh Elul (מ"ב סק"ב).

Construction, Renovations

3. During the Nine Days, one may not build a structure which brings joy, e.g. a building for a child's wedding or for decoration. The same is true of any building that is for luxury as opposed to necessary residence (מ"ב סק"ב).
4. One should not begin unnecessary construction after Rosh Chodesh Av, but if he started before, he may continue. However, one must stop painting his house during the Nine Days even if he started before Rosh Chodesh (בא"ח דברים אות ג').
5. In places where plaster deteriorated due to moisture, mold, or the like, one may reapply plaster even during the week of Tishah B'Av since it is not done for luxury (קובץ מבית לוי ח"ג עמ' כ"ג).
6. If a non-Jewish contractor began construction before Rosh Chodesh, he may continue with everything since he is doing it for himself (מ"ב שם), unless he can be paid a bit to postpone it.
7. **Moving.** Strictly speaking, one may move to a new house during the Nine Days if he must since Chazal only forbade building a house (שו"ת לבוש מרדכי ח"א ס' ק"א). However, since we don't say Shehecheyanu during these days, it should be avoided. If one is moving with his wife and children though, the brachah is not Shehecheyanu; it is Hatov V'hameitiv (סי' רכ"ג ס"ג), which can be said during these days (שו"ת סי' תקנ"א, שו"ת אג"מ ח"ג סי' פ').

Laundry

8. The issur of the Mishnah to do laundry is only during the week of Tishah B'Av; this is the minhag of most of Eidot Mizrach. The Ashkenazi minhag, however, is not to launder or iron clothes starting from Rosh Chodesh even if they will not be worn before Tishah B'Av, as the very act of doing laundry distracts from aveilus.
9. One may not even give clothes to a non-Jew to wash. However, one may give clothes to a non-Jew before laundry is forbidden, even if the non-Jew will do it when it is forbidden (רמ"א סי' ג').
10. One may not iron clothes during the Nine Days even if they will not be worn until afterward (ש"ע סי' ג').
11. One may spot-clean a stain, as that is not considered a form laundry that preoccupies a person to the extent that he loses focus on the aveilus (הגרש"א, קובץ מבקשי תורה קובץ כ"ו עמ' ת"ל).

12. **Children's clothes.** During the Nine Days, one may wash clothes worn by a child who completely soils them [until about 3 or 4]. The minhag is to be meikel for clothes worn by older children too [until about 6 or 7] (רמ"א שם סי' ד'). Lechatchila, one should only launder a small amount at a time, but now that we use washing machines, one may put a lot of clothes [children's clothes only] into the load.
13. **Hanging laundry outside.** It is not a problem of maris ayin to hang children's clothes out to dry. However, in a case where one may launder a regular garment [e.g., the person has no other clothes, or a nursing woman's clothes which her baby constantly gets dirty], it should not be hung outside to dry due to maris ayin. Also, one should not hang towels, bedsheets, and the like out to dry.
14. **Sheitel.** A sheitel is no different than a garment with respect to the issur to do laundry. Thus, one may not wash a sheitel during the Nine Days, even if it is only needed for after Tishah B'Av (הגר"ש). (וואזנר, קובץ מבית לוי בין המצרים עמ' י"ד).
15. **Cleaning shoes.** One may remove accumulated dirt from his shoes (הגר"ש ווזנר, קובץ מבית לוי עמ' כ"ט סי'). One may also blacken faded shoes, but one may not shine them (שו"ת אג"מ אור"ח ח"ג סי' פ'), unless he is doing so in honor of Shabbos.
16. **Car wash.** Strictly speaking, one may wash a car during the Nine Days, as the issur is only to wash clothes. However, doing so is improper and not in the spirit of the aveilus.

Preparing Clean Clothes before the Nine Days

17. Ashkenazim may not wear laundered clothes during the Nine Days, even if they were laundered prior, unless they were worn for some time before the Nine Days. The Rama (י"ד סי' שפ"ט ס"א) writes "one hour," but this is not literal; they just have to be worn for some time (ש"ך שם סק"ד), and the poskim say half an hour is enough. If one prepares a shirt in advance in a hot place and he perspires, ten minutes is enough if he is wearing it outdoors.
18. This year [5784/2024], Rosh Chodesh Av falls on Monday, that means Sunday evening. Thus, a wise person will have the foresight to prepare his laundered clothes by wearing them early on Sunday morning, better still, before Shabbos.
19. **Preparing on Shabbos.** The minhag today is to wear clean clothes on Shabbos, as not doing so is a public display of aveilus. In the event one didn't prepare enough clothes for the Nine Days, he may put on new clothes each time he gets dressed to enable those clothes to be worn for the rest of the Nine Days. He can wear one pair on Friday night, another in the morning, and a third after an afternoon nap. One should not do more than that, as that is like preparing on Shabbos for the week.
20. **Bed linens, towels.** The issur to use laundered clothes also applies to bed linens, towels, and the like, so they should be used before the Nine Days. However, one may provide clean linens for guests.
21. **Multiple garments at once.** Some poskim allow putting on multiple garments at once before the Nine Days to prepare them for use during the Nine Days. However, this is not so simple, as the outer clothes are not affected by being worn. Therefore, lechatchila one should not rely on this unless the outer garments will also get creased somewhat (הגר"ח קנייבסקי).

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22. **Stepping on clothes.** If one did not prepare his clothes by wearing them before Rosh Chodesh, bedieved he may place them on the ground and step on them so that they lose their freshness and crispness. Merely putting them on the floor and picking them right back up does not work. Also, stepping on them with socks on a carpet does not accomplish anything.

23. **Underclothes.** In very hot climates, one may change into clean, fresh underclothes during the Nine Days. However, it is proper not to change them as often as he regularly does, to whatever extent possible.

24. Women's shells are considered underclothes for these purposes.

New Clothes

25. One may not mend or buy clothes or shoes during the Nine Days (שו"ע ס"ז). One may not even buy secondhand clothes if they will cause him to feel pleasure and joy (שע"ת סק"י).

26. One may not make an old garment into a new one, especially if doing so requires a professional (שו"ע ס"ז).

27. One may tailor or prepare clothes for a wedding that will take place after the Nine Days if he cannot do it earlier since it is for a mitzvah (מ"ב סק"ד).

28. **Cutting a sheitel.** Therefore, a woman may not cut her sheitel for beauty purposes in a way that gives it a new look since that brings a woman joy akin to a new sheitel. If she is cutting her sheitel for tznius or halacha purposes, however, it is a mitzvah and a zechus for her, and she may do so during the Nine Days.

29. Women with the new lace top/front sheitels, which were recently forbidden by the major poskim in a public statement, must fix them properly according to halacha. They may send their sheitels to get fixed, even during the Nine Days, to eliminate this troubling obstacle.

Showering

30. Chazal only forbade bathing for pleasure; one may bathe for healing purposes. Thus, if a person's skin is itchy, he may shower. Also, one may wash a dirty area of his body with lukewarm water and no soap. If the dirt will only come off with soap, he may use soap.

31. **Hot climates.** In hot climates, a person's whole body often becomes full of perspiration, making him very uncomfortable. The smell can also make those around him, e.g., his wife, uncomfortable. In such a place, one may wash his entire body with lukewarm water and soap, but he should make sure to only wash one limb at a time.

32. **Istenis.** If someone showers daily, feels actual physical and psychological discomfort when he does not, and cannot bear not showering, he may shower as he needs to. However, he should minimize it in some way. It is important to note that not everyone is an istenis – only some individuals have the status of an istenis.

33. **Brushing teeth.** One may brush his teeth; that is not considered washing.

Going to the Mikveh

34. **Tevilah for a mitzvah.** Chazal only forbade bathing for pleasure; one may bathe for a mitzvah purpose (רמ"א ס"ז).

35. **Mikveh every day.** Someone who goes to the mikveh every day before davening and learning for extra kedushah may continue this practice during the Nine Days. However, someone who does not usually do this should not be meikel during these days (ערוך השלחן). When going to the mikveh, one should make sure the water is not hot. The mikveh attendant should see to it that it is not as hot as usual. (שו"ת שבת ה"י ס"ז פ"א סק"ו).

36. **Tevilas Ezra.** Someone who does tevilas Ezra may do so during the Nine Days (רמ"א סק"ז).

37. **Sofer.** A sofer who is careful to go to the mikveh before writing (שו"ת אור לציון) may do so during the Nine Days (קטת הסופר ס"ז ס"ח).

38. **Showering before the mikveh.** Some mikvaos require everyone to shower before using the mikveh for health reasons and to maintain the cleanliness of the water. When going to such a mikveh, one may shower beforehand. He should rinse himself with body-temperature water, and he should not enjoy himself in the shower. Unless he has one of the heteirim to use soap (above, 30), he should not use soap. If he always makes sure to rinse his body after the mikveh as well, he may do so in the manner prescribed above.

Mopping the House

39. Some people in Eretz Yisroel do not mop their houses ["sponja"] during the Nine Days (שו"ת שלמות חיים להגרי"ח זונפלד ח"ד סי' ד' אות כ"ד, ארחות רבינו). In most places in the world, people do not follow this minhag. If the floor is dirty, everyone agrees it is permissible.

Meat, Wine

40. We do not eat meat or drink wine during these days (שו"ע ס"ט). The reason for this is because korbanos [meat] and nisuch hayayin [wine] were discontinued in those days.

41. **Rosh Chodesh.** Even on Rosh Chodesh Av, the minhag is not to eat meat or drink wine (מ"ב סק"ה) starting from the eve. Of Rosh Chodesh (מ"ב סק"ו), therefore one should avoid meat dishes [this year, 2024] from Sunday evening from nightfall, even if the wife accidentally prepared a meaty dinner.

42. Chicken, food cooked with fleishigs, and chicken soup are all assur. However, one may cook parve food in a fleishige pot.

43. Children below chinuch age who do not eat a lot may be given chicken or even meat if necessary.

44. A nursing woman may eat chicken during the Nine Days if it is necessary to improve the quality of her milk.

Cutting Nails

45. One may cut his nails during the Nine Days, before the week of Tish'oh B'ov, e.g., on erev Shabbos Chazon. During the week of Tish'oh B'ov, some hold it is muttar (מג"א סק"א); others hold it is assur (מ"ב סק"ב), unless it is for a mitzvah, such as to remove a chatzitzoh for netilas yodayim (ה' סק"ג), or a mohel cutting his nails for the miloh (קצושי"ע ס"ז קכ"ב ס"ה).

Siyum

Seudas Mitzvah

46. At a seudas mitzvah, e.g., a bris, pidyon haben, or siyum masechta, anyone connected to the seudah may eat meat and drink wine (רמ"א ס"ז). This refers to any family member or friend who is close enough to have attended this seudah whenever it may have occurred (מ"ב סק"ה).

Siyum on a Mesechta

47. To make a valid siyum, one must have learned and understood the sugyos of the masechta even without Rashi or Tosafos. Even if one is sharp and finished a whole mesechta in one day, that counts (שו"ת). If he just read the words without understanding them, it is not considered a siyum (הגרי"ח ע"ב נ"ז).

48. If multiple people finished a mesechta but no single person learned the entire mesechta, the siyum is not considered a seudas mitzvah for these purposes (הגרי"ח).

49. **Mishnayos.** A siyum Mishnayos is only a seudas mitzvah to allow consumption of meat and wine if one finished an entire seder, not just one mesechta (הגרי"ח ע"ב נ"ז).

50. **Aiming to finish during the Nine Days.** When one happens to complete a mesechta during the Nine Days, he may make a seudah with meat and wine with the participation of others who did not learn the mesechta if that is what he usually does. One should not aim to finish during the Nine Days in order to eat meat by rushing or slowing down (א"ר, הובא במ"ב סק"ג); that shows that his joy is mainly in eating meat, not finishing the mesechta (שו"ת מנח"ם ח"ב ס"ז).

51. However, if the time one is scheduled to finish a mesechta is an inconvenient time to make a seudah, he may push off finishing it until a better time, even if that happens to be during the Nine Days, as long as his joy is truly in the siyum, not the meat (שו"ת מנח"ם שם). Some learn mesechtos during these days to enable them to make siyumim to rejoice in the joy of Torah and increase brotherhood and unity during these days (שו"ת אריה דבי עלאי בקונטרס אבני זכרון ס"א, אוצר החיים). Those with this minhag have poskim to rely on.

52. **Restaurants with siyumim.** Thus, it is inappropriate during the Nine Days for fleishige restaurants [like some in America] to serve fleishige food as usual, as if we have a mizbeiach to bring korbanos on... and pay an avreich to make siyumim throughout the day in order to satisfy people's covetousness for meat (ע"פ ערוך השלחן ס"ח).

May we be zocheh that these halachos be for the sake of learning but no longer relevant this year, with the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, במהרה בימינו אמן.

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