Music during the three weeks (Part 1)

Yesterday we explained that during the three weeks between the 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Ab we keep certain traditions of mourning like not celebrating wedding or not reciting Shehecheyanu (see **here**).

In Jewish sources playing music is seen as one of the highest expressions of happiness. What is the opinion of modern Rabbis regarding playing or listening to music during these three weeks?

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed (*Penine Halakha, Zemanim,* 141-146) explains that not all music should be banned during these days.

In his opinion the original rabbinic restriction (which theoretically should be applied beyond these three weeks, see Mishne Tora Ta'aniot 5:14) forbids playing music in remembrance of the destruction of the Bet haMiqdash, whenever music is played as a celebration of happiness, for example, when music invites to dancing (weddings, Bar Mitzva, etc.) or at a live concert. But, he explains, not all music is an expression of happiness.

The Talmud relates that in ancient Israel they use to play music—sad, melancholic music—in funerals with a type of flute which brought peoples minds to a mood of grief (Shabbat 151a).

Music lessons or the National Anthem or most classical music are other examples of non-celebratory or inspirational music, where happiness is not involved.

Based on this distinction, in the opinion of Rabbi Melamed,

1. One should avoid listening to happy music (any live concerts, parties, etc.) during the three weeks. Music lessons are permitted until the week of the 9th of Ab. The Rabbi suggests, however, that during these days the students should not practice cheerful melodies.
2. Until the beginning of the month of Ab, one could listen to inspirational or non-celebratory music, and then, from that day until the 9th of Ab, only melancholic Jewish music should be allowed.

This is, by the way, the criteria the Israeli national

religious radio station Arutz Sheva follows during these days.
Tomorrow, B'H, we will compare Rabbi Melamed's opinion with Rabbi Obadya Yosef's opinion on this subject.

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