9 of Ab: avoiding happiness on a day of mourning

Tish’a be-Ab is the Jewish National Day of Mourning. This year, it will be observed from Monday night July 15th until Tuesday night July 16th. Tisha be-Ab is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. Yesterday we explained that besides fasting we avoid activities that bring us pleasure or happiness as well as things that will distract us from a mood of grief and mourning. Some examples:

WORK: On Tish’a be-Ab it is not recommended to work. Working would divert our minds from a feeling of grief. Refraining from work on Tish’a be-Ab, however, is not a formal prohibition but rather on one’s community’s tradition (*minhag hamaqom*) and in every individual’s financial or professional situation. In any case, it is permitted to work if one would incur in losses or if his or her job position will be compromised. Our rabbis said that whoever works on Tish’a be-Ab unnecessarily won’t see from that day’s gains a source of blessing.

LIMUD TORA: On Tish’a be-Ab we refrain from studying Tora, because studying Tora is considered a joyous and pleasurable activity. We only read and study books or texts with a ‘sad’ content such as the book of Iyob or Ekha, some Psalms, mo’ed qatan, etc.

TEFILIN: We do not use Tefilin in the morning. Tefilin is a signal of honor and pride: a crown in our heads which declares that we are the people of God. In most Sephardic communities men wear Talit and Tefilin just in Minha. In Syrian communities the tradition is that before going to the Synagogue in the morning one says Qaddesh Li and the Shema Israel at home with Talit and Tefilin. In other communities men would wear Tefilin and Tallit as normal in the morning (minhag Yerushalayim).

SHE-ELAT SHALOM: We don’t greet each other as usual, because our mood is a mourner’s mood. If someone greets us, we can discreetly and politely acknowledge the gesture.

SITTING ON THE FLOOR: The general custom is that during the reading of Megilat Ekha people don’t sit on the Synagogue’s benches but on the floor, like mourners, while the lights are dimmed.Sitting on the floor is also an indication of mourning.

May we all soon rejoice for Binyan Yerushalayim! AMEN

Shabbat Shalom!

Candle lighting in NYC: 8:08 pm

Shabbat ends in NYC: 9:07 pm

Shabbat Hazon

Tomorrow is a special Shabbat called: “Shabbat Hazon (“Sabbath of “the vision” = □□□□). “Hazon” refers to the prophetic vision of Yesha’ayahu in which he rebuked the people of Israel, and particularly Yerushalayim, for their crimes, their lack of integrity and corruption. This text is found in Isaiah 1:1-27 and it is read as the Haftarah tomorrow.

Click here to learn more about this Haftarah from “Haftorahman” (Mr. Reuben Ebrahimoff)