The Week of Tish’a BeAb

Tish’a beAb is for the Jews the national day of mourning. And we take it very seriously. The Sages indicated that on that day we should feel as if “we were in front of the lifeless body of a recently deceased relative.” This is why during Ab 9 we practice the same ways of mourning as during SHIB’A, the first seven days of mourning for a close relative: for example, we do not study Tora, we do not wear leather shoes, we sit on the floor, we refrain from marital relations, we do not greet each other, we do not wash our bodies, we do not put on freshly laundered clothes, and of course we do not shave or cut our hair, etc.

In preparation for this day of mourning, during the week in which Tish’a BeAb falls, and in addition to the restrictions we were already taking upon ourselves (no parties, no celebrations, no shehecheyanu, no celebratory music, no meat, no wine, etc.) we begin to behave in certain ways as if we were actual “mourners”. For this reason, as of this Saturday night, men do not shave or cut their hair, we do not shower or take a bath with hot water, we do not wash our clothes and we only wear clothes that are “in use” (we don’t wear, for example, a shirt that has been washed and has not been worn again.)

Last year and the year before (2018 and 2019) Tisha BeAb fell on a Sunday, that is, immediately after Shabbat and therefore, for two years in a row we did not have the experience of the week of Tisha BeAb. This year, the week of Tisha beAb is as long as it can be: from this Saturday night to the end of Tisha beAb, which ends on Thursday night.

Yosef Bitton