10th Of Tebet: Holocaust Remembrance Day

YOM HAKADDISH HAKELALI

In modern Israel, the 10th of Tebet is also set as the day of the Kaddish haKelaly. According to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, on the Tenth of Tebet a remembrance-candle should be light in the Synagogue, and the Hazkara leChalale haShoah, the memorial prayer for the victims of the Holocaust, should be recited. Additionally, it is traditional in Ashkenazi communities that all those whose parents are not alive should say Kaddish Yatom in 'asara beTebet (Rabbanut haRashit LeIsrael, luah dinim uminhaguim 5772, pages. 55,109).
This point requires more explanation.
In 1949, and before the day of Yom HaShoah was established, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel decided that the Tenth of Tebet should be assigned as the national remembrance day for the victims of the Holocaust. They recommended traditional Jewish ways of remembering the dead, such as the study of Mishna Miqvaot, recitation of Tehilim, lighting a candle and a collective recitation of the Kaddish for the victims of the Holocaust, *particularly for those whose names and date of death remain unknown*. Fasting, the most common Jewish expression of sorrow, was already prescribed for this day.
In Israel many people felt that the horror of the Holocaust should be remembered on its own, and a special day, in which nothing else is remembered, should be dedicated to the Shoah's victims' memory. *"For the survivors there was only one day worthy of being a memorial anniversary for the Holocaust, April 19, the beginning day of the Warsaw ghetto revolt the greatest revolt of them all, the uprisings that had held the Nazis at bay for a longer period than the great French army"* (I. Greenberg). That is how the 27 of Nissan (April 19, 1943) was chosen to commemorate Yom haShoah. Yom HaShoah was inaugurated in 1953, by a law signed by the Prime Minister of Israel David ben Gurion.
Since then, and in practical terms, there are two days in

which we mourn for the Holocaust: Yom haShoah, the official day, and ‘asara beTebet, in which many people would say the Kaddish haKelaly to remember the victims of the Nazi genocide, whose names remain unknown.
On the 10th of Tebet there are only two restrictions: eating and drinking. NO additional limitations apply, such as the prohibition of wearing leather shoes, working, driving, washing the body, etc. Most contemporary Rabbis (for example Rab O. Yosef z”l, or Rab E. Melamed) authorize washing one’s mouth or brush one’s teeth in this fast day if needed, provided you are careful to lower your head, avoiding swallowing water unintentionally.

WHO NEEDS TO FAST AND WHO DOES NOT?

*Minors: boys under 13 and girls under 12 years old are completely exempted from fasting.
*Nursing women: According to the Sephardic tradition after giving birth women are exempted from fasting for 24 months, even if they are not actually nursing their baby. Rab Obadia Yosef says that this applies if a women feels weak. Otherwise, if she is not nursing her baby she should fast.
*Pregnant women, especially after the first 3 months, are exempted from fasting.
*A person who feels sick—for example, flu or fever— or one who has a chronic disease—for example diabetes— should not fast.
*Elders should consult with their physicians if the fast will not affect their health. If it will, they are exempted (and in some cases, prohibited) from fasting.