The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Mon, Jul 21, 2025 ■ כ"ה תמוז, תשפ"ה
סימן תק"נ סעיף א'-ב'

Overview

Siman 550 Seif 1:

Everyone is obligated to fast on these four fasts and it is prohibited to breach this fence, nevertheless, pregnant and nursing women who experience great discomfort should not fast. Even if they will not experience discomfort they are not obligated to fast but the custom is that they fast. This is limited to the three fasts but on 9th of Av they are obligated to complete the fast.

- When the Jewish People accepted these fasts they were lenient regarding pregnant and nursing women. (M.B. 2)
- A woman is considered pregnant when the presence of fetus is recognizable but it is possible that 40 days from conception if a woman would experience discomfort if she were to fast she may be lenient. If it is not 40 days from conception she is like any other woman unless she has great distress. If fasting makes her feel very weak she should not be stringent at all. (M.B. 3)
- If someone is ill, even if not deathly ill he is exempt from fasting and it is prohibited for him to fast. (M.B. 4)
- If a pregnant or nursing woman feels weak she should not fast but she should not eat meat or drink wine and should limit herself to the minimum that she needs. (M.B. 5)
- Although there is no obligation to train children to fast, if they are old enough to understand the meaning of mourning they should be trained to eat only simple foods. (M.B. 5)

Siman 550 Seif 2:

One is permitted on these fasts, other than 9th of Av, to bathe, anoint, wear leather shoes, have relations and one is not required to stop eating while it is yet day.

- A *ba'al nefesh* will be stringent regarding these activities as is required on 9th of Av. If a woman will immerse on the night of a fast the *mitzvah* of *onah* should be fulfilled. One should also wear leather shoes on the other fasts. When 10th of Teves falls on *erev* Shabbos one should not be stringent and avoid bathing in hot water. (M.B. 6)

Halacha Highlight

Do pregnant and nursing women fast?

Rema Siman 550 Seif 1

מיהו עוברות ומניקות שמצטערות הרבה אין להתענות

Nevertheless, pregnant and nursing women who experience great discomfort should not fast

Rema (סע' א') writes that pregnant and nursing women who will experience discomfort do not fast. Even if they would not experience discomfort they are not obligated to fast, although the custom is to be stringent. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) explains that a woman is considered pregnant when it is recognizable that she is pregnant. In the event that a woman would experience discomfort it is possible that she could be lenient and consider herself pregnant if it is forty days from conception. Shevet HaLevi (ח"ז סי' פ') writes that as soon as a woman knows that she is pregnant she is categorized as pregnant for this *halacha*. Sefer Chaye Moshe (סי' תק"נ הע ז') cites Orchos Chaim who explains that when Rema refers to a pregnant or nursing woman who will experience discomfort he does not mean that she must begin fast until she is experiencing discomfort. Rather, the intent is that if a woman estimates that she will experience discomfort she should not fast. Chaye Moshe also cites Mikor Chaim who asserts that the term הרבה – great – used by Rema is not truly necessary and as long as a pregnant or nursing woman experiences discomfort she is not to fast.

Rema writes further that a pregnant or nursing woman who will not experience discomfort is not obligated to fast but the custom is for them to fast. There are those who write that nowadays it is assumed that pregnant and nursing women will experience discomfort if they were to fast and thus they do not fast on the 17th of Tamuz, 3rd of Tishrei, 10th of Teves or *ta'anis Esther*. According to some opinions, pregnant and nursing women are categorized as those who are sick and may eat as soon as they wake up in the morning. According to others, pregnant and nursing women who are healthy should make an effort to fast until they experience discomfort (פסקי תשובות אות א' והע' 2).

Stories to Share

Regular Practice

מ"ב סי' תק"ן, ס"ק ו': ובעל נפש יחמיר בכולן...ורחיצה בצונן מותרת בכל הצומות

A certain person liked to go to the pool and swim for his health. He would take vigorous exercise which would energize him for the entire day. When he learned that some people are stringent with all five inuyim on all fast days he began to wonder if he could keep up his swimming practice through the minor fast days. "After all," he said to himself, "Surely this is a frivolous pursuit on a fast day. Although I try never to miss a day, I sometimes do. So perhaps I must put off swimming during this time? And even if swimming is permitted, what about taking a shower afterwards?"

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that swimming for one's health is permitted on the minor fast days. "One is not required to keep the chumros of the nine days on a regular fast. Yet one should refrain from washing in hot water if there is no need to do so. ולמעשה כן איתא בשער הציון כאן ס"ק ח'. One is permitted to swim for his health during a regular fast day, however. This is the same as washing in cold water, which is permitted on a fast day."

But when asked about swimming during the nine days, he ruled that this is forbidden. "Although it is permitted to swim during the first part of the three weeks, the nine days are different. Since the custom of Ashkenazim is to forbid washing oneself even in cold water, it is forbidden to swim during these days."

לקנות חכמה, בין מהצרים, ע' הלכות ומנהגי בין המצרים, ע' ל"ד