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Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Wed, July 8 2026 ■ כ"ג תמוז, תשפ"ו
סימן תקנ"ד סעיף א'-ג'

Halacha Highlight

The mitzvah to study Torah on Tisha B'Av

Shulchan Aruch Siman 554 Seif 1
ואסור לקרות בתורה
It is prohibited to study Torah

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') presents the activities that are prohibited on Tisha B'Av. One of the prohibited activities is the study of most sections of Torah. The pasuk in Tehillim relates that the study of Torah brings joy to a person and that joy is inconsistent with the mood of the day. There are certain sections of Torah that one may study, including Sefer Iyov, passages in Sefer Yirmiyah that relate to the tragedy of the destruction, Midrash Eicha, Perek Ellu Migalchin as well as the description of the destruction found in Masseches Gittin and Masseches Sanhedrin. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) in the name of Taz emphasizes that even when studying those sections that one may study on Tisha B'Av, that study may not involve anything more than a simple study of the material but may not involve in depth study.

Poskim debate whether the mitzvah to study on Tisha B'Av was suspended altogether but there are certain sections that one is permitted to study if he chooses, or perhaps the mitzvah to study Torah remains in full force but is limited to those sections that relate to the tragedy of the destruction of the bais hamikdash. Sefer Shulchan Gavo'ah subscribes to the first approach and explains that although Chazal do not have the authority to suspend a Biblical mitzvah, nevertheless, since it is permitted to read shema and the mishnayos in the chapter of איזהו מקומן, the mitzvah of studying Torah can still be fulfilled. Others reject Shulchan Gavo'ah's question altogether. Since a person is permitted to study those sections that relate to the tragedy of the destruction, it is clear that they never suspended the mitzvah of Torah study and the question how Chazal could suspend a mitzvah does not even begin. It must be noted that even according to those authorities who maintain that the mitzvah to study Torah is suspended on Tisha B'av, one may not read other material that will distract one from the focus of the day which is the destruction of the bais hamikdash (פסקי תשובות אות א' ובהע' שם).

Overview

Siman 554 Seif 1:

On Tisha B'Av it is prohibited to bathe, anoint, wear shoes, have marital relations, to study Torah, Nevi'im, Kesuvim, Mishnah, Midrash, Gemara, halachos or agadata based on the pasuk, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב. School children are also idle on this day but one may study Iyov, the bad sections in Sefer Yirmiyah but if there are pesukim of consolation, they must be skipped.

- These restrictions apply the entire day, from bein hashemashos until tzeis hakochavim. Those who are working with gentiles in the afternoon may put on shoes but this leniency does not apply for others. (M.B. 1)
- One may not read about bad things that happen to other nations. With children one may only teach the story of the destruction. Some authorities maintain that it is permitted to teach children about tragedies and the only restriction is to teach them chumash and Gemara according to their regular schedule. (M.B. 2)

Siman 554 Seif 2:

It is permitted to study Midrash Eicha and the chapter of אלו מגלחין as well as to study the commentary to Eicha and Iyov.

- It is also permitted to study about the destruction in פרק חלק and פרק הנזקין as well as the description of the destruction in Josephus. (M.B. 3)
- It is prohibited to delve into the intricacies of halacha. Taz also writes that even topics that are permitted to study may only be studied on a basic level and not to explore the depths of the concepts. (M.B. 4)

Siman 554 Seif 3:

There is an opinion that maintains that it is even prohibited to study Torah mentally.