

[Rav Menachem Copperman](#), [Kehillat Ahavat Zion](#), Ramat Beit Shemesh

Dear KAT Members,

Asara beTevet and the Vaccine – Some Thoughts and Halachot

Tomorrow is Asara beTevet, which marks the beginning of the King of Babylon's siege of Jerusalem. At the same time, we are in a very challenging period where, on the one hand, we are experiencing an increase in confirmed cases and a third lockdown, and, on the other hand, we have the chance to get vaccinated and, BEH, we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The special importance of the fast of Asara beTevet is that it reminds us that the destruction of the Temple was not the beginning of the troubles but **the culmination of a process that began long before with something much smaller** but significant: the Babylonian siege. Processes take a long time. Sometimes only at the end do we realize where it all actually started.

So, as we enter this exciting time when with Hashem's help - "who gave His wisdom to flesh and blood" - we will be able to get vaccinated, we thank Hashem and are reminded of the words of Chazal that **"Hashem will not afflict Israel unless He first creates a cure for them"** (Megilla, 13:). We see the vaccine now and understand that God is taking us through a process that we need to learn and grow from.

Remarkably, the special "Aneinu" prayer for Taanot Tzibbur is situated right in the middle: between the beracha of "Goel Yisrael", the prayer for the complete redemption of the Am Yisrael, and the beracha of Refua "Who heals the sick of His people Israel". We pray that both of these be fulfilled soon. In Aneinu we say: "Before they call - I will answer, they will still be speaking - and I will hear" - Amen Vechen Yehi Ratzon!

I would like to share with you here a number of **halachot relating to Tzom Asara beTevet** that takes place tomorrow, Friday, as well as some **halakhic points relating to the vaccine**:

Halachot of Tzom Asara BeTevet

1. According to the Hebrew calendar, Asara beTevet is the only fast that can fall on Friday / erev Shabbat.

According to halacha, we make sure to fast on that day (and do not postpone it to Sunday) because the verse in Yechezkel emphasizes the specific date of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem with the words "on that very day".

2. Fast times

The fast begins as usual at dawn and ends at Tzeit Hacoachavim on Leil Shabbat (~ 17: 10). However, one may only eat after making kiddush.

We will begin Arvit promptly at Tzeit Hacoachavim. When you get home, you can shorten "Shalom Aleichem" and "Eshet Chayil", and if necessary, sing them after Kiddush.

3. Bathing: One may wash oneself in honor of Shabbat in hot water as usual.

4. Mincha on the Fast

We will begin Mincha earlier at 4:15 pm *in order to have time to read the Torah and Haftara.

*Cohanim will say Birkat Cohanim.

As far as the order of the tefilla is concerned: we say "Aneinu" as usual in the silent Amida (in "Shomea Tefilah") and in the repetition, but we do not say Avinu Malkeinu or Tachanun because it is Erev Shabbat.

5. Yom HaKaddish Hakelali

After the establishment of the State, the Rabbanut Harashit designated the tenth of Tevet as a "general Kaddish Day" for all Holocaust martyrs whose time of death is unknown. All those who can say Kaddish (orphans) – may say Kaddish together for relatives who perished in the Holocaust.

Halachic Issues regarding the Vaccine

Priority in Vaccinations

Some Kuppot Cholim are allowing people who are not in the high-risk groups to get vaccinated right now. I was asked if this is allowed, as it may come at the expense of people who need it more?

The answer is that there is no problem with it, and it is permitted lechatchila.

The Kuppot who are in charge of vaccinating the population, set priorities and appointments according to specific criteria and guidelines, and have their own considerations. **The responsibility is theirs and not that of the individual.**

Therefore, if the Kuppa knows that you are not in the risk group and is still willing to make an appointment for you - this is allowed and appropriate lechatchila. It can also prevent the waste of vaccine doses, which might have gone to waste if not enough people came to get vaccinated.

Giving Thanks to Hashem

There is no doubt that the development and arrival of vaccines so rapidly since the outbreak of the virus is an exciting development and something we want to thank Hashem for. Having said that, one should not say "Shehecheyanu" or "Hatov veHameitiv" as those berachot were not designed to be said for healing.

Instead, **one should the special prayer** that appears in the Gemara and in the Shulchan Aruch (O.H. 230, 4):

* "יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקי שיהא עסק זה לי לרפואה כי רופא חינום אתה".*

יהי רצון שנזכה לרפואה שלמה וגאולה קרובה,

Shabbat Shalom, Rav Menachem