

HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

Volume 14 Issue 9



{ TOPIC }

Fasting on Erev Rosh Hashanah



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita* on current issues.

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Fasting on Erev Rosh Hashanah

The custom of most people is to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah. What is the source and reason for this? Does it apply to everyone? Until what time in the day does one have to fast? If one fasted most years and now he cannot do so anymore, does he have to undo his practice by *hataras nedarim*? Are people lenient today in regard to this fast? These and other questions relating to this fast will be discussed below.

Source

The *poskim* quote a medrash¹ which says that “great people of the generation” fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah. In doing so one gets one-third of his sins forgiven.² The custom is that all fast and not just great people.³

The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁴ says that it is not showing off if a simple person fasts on Erev Rosh Hashanah since all people want part of their sins forgiven.⁵ Others explain that Erev Rosh Hashanah is the last day of the year. If one does

1 *Midrash Vayikra* 30:7.

2 *Tur* 581, *Beis Yosef*. Some have a custom to fast during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and then another one-third of his sins are forgiven, and after Yom Kippur until Sukkos. When one is busy with Sukkos another one-third of his sins are forgiven (*Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra* 30). See *Aruch Hashulchan* 581:8.

3 *Tur* 581, *Beis Yosef*; *Darchoi Moshe*; *Magen Avraham* 9; *Pri Megadim*, *Eishel Avraham* 9; *Elyah Rabbah* 25; *Matei Ephraim* 581:38.

4 581:9.

5 Refer to *Magen Avraham* 9.

איך ללמוד להקדיש את היום האחרון של השנה לטובת הכלל (ברכות ח)



teshuvah on the last day of the year it is like he did *teshuvah* all year. Therefore, the custom is to fast as a sign of *teshuvah* on Erev Rosh Hashanah.⁶

Age

This fast applies to those who have reached bar and basmitzvah.⁷

Until When

The custom of many is that the fast only lasts until *chatzos*.⁸ Others have the custom to fast until *minchah gedolah*, which is a half hour after *chatzos*.⁹ According to this custom, one *davens* Minchah and then eats.¹⁰

Bris

If there is a *bris* on Erev Rosh Hashanah, then all invited to the *bris* may eat.¹¹ This includes the *mohel*, *sandek*, and *ba'al bris*.¹²

Weak

If one is weak and cannot fast,¹³ he may eat and does not need to do a *hataras nedarim*.¹⁴ The reason is that it can be

6 *Kaf Hachaim* 56.

7 *Magen Avraham* 9; *Elyah Rabbah* 30; *Machatzis Hashekel*; *Pri Megadim*, *Eishel Avraham* 9; *Mishnah Berurah* 16; *Kaf Hachaim* 57; *Matei Ephraim* 581:38; *Hakattan V'hilchosav* 1, page 96, 12. See *Hilchos Chag B'chag* 4, footnote 3.

8 *Halichos Shlomo*, *Moadim* 1, footnote 35.

9 *Machatzis Hashekel* 581; *Natei Gavriel*, *Rosh Hashanah* 16:15.

10 *Hilchos Chag B'chag* 4, footnote 5; opinion of Harav Elyashiv *zt"l* quoted in *Ashrei Ha'ish* 3:13, page 83:28.

11 *Aruch Hashulchan* 10. Refer to *Magen Avraham* 11.

12 *Ibid.*; *Mishnah Berurah* 1; *Matei Ephraim* 581:39. Refer to *Pri Megadim*, *Eishel Avraham* 11.

13 *Matei Ephraim* 581:38.

14 *Magen Avraham* 12; *Mishnah Berurah* 19.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

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assumed that when he originally started this custom, he never intended to fast if he is not well.¹⁵

Vayichal etc.

Vayichal is not *leined* on this fast.¹⁶

One who is fasting and *davens* Minchah recites *aneinu*, but the *shatz* does not recite it.¹⁷

Eating Before Alos

The custom of the non-Jews was to fast before daybreak on their holidays. Therefore, if we were not to eat beforehand it would be going in the ways of the non-Jews.¹⁸ However, this is not practiced these days; therefore, one may eat¹⁹ before *alos hashachar* on Erev Rosh Hashanah.²⁰ One may eat before *alos* even without declaring his intentions on the previous night²¹

Lenient

The fact is that not everyone has the custom to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah.²² The primary reason is that we are weaker today than in earlier years.²³

Some explain that we eat in the morning before the

15 *Aruch Hashulchan* 11.

16 *Darhei Moshe; Rema* 581:2; *Mishnah Berurah* 17.

17 *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham* 8.

18 *Aruch Hashulchan* 11. See *Magen Avraham* 12.

19 Some quote only to drink beforehand (See *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 12; *Mishnah Berurah* 21; *Likutei Maharich* 3, page 605, new).

20 *Aruch Hashulchan* 11. On this refer to *Birur Halachah* 581, pages 245-246 in depth.

21 *Darhei Moshe; Mishnah Berurah* 20.

22 In regard to whether hearing a *siyum* exempts one from fasting see *Elef L'magen* 581:39; *Ratz K'tzvi Pesach* pages 17-18; *Yoma Tova L'Rabbanan* 6:33; *Ohr Yisrael* 47, page 182. Refer to *Natei Gavriel, Rosh Hashanah* 16, footnote 27.

23 *Hilchos Chag B'chag* 4:3, footnote 8. See *Chayei Adam* 138:1. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv *zt"l* quoted in *Ashrei Ha'ish* 3:13, page 83, 27.

איז ער להקטף'ה בעולמו אלא די אמות של הלכה בלילי... (ברכות ה)



fast, and the Arizal says that one may not eat after *chatzos*. Therefore, it is better not to fast.²⁴

Against Those Being Lenient

Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt"l*²⁵ questioned how is it possible for one not to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah, as the *Shulchan Aruch* rules that one fasts on Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Custom to Fast but Changes Mind

If one has the custom to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah and now wishes not to fast for this year, there is no need to be *matir* his *neder*. However, if he wishes to do so for the future then he needs to be *matir* his *neder*.²⁶

כל השומה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

²⁴ Refer to *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 5:22:6.

²⁵ *Halichos Shlomo*, Moadim 1, footnote 35.

²⁶ *Yechaveh Daas* 1:50; *Yabia Omer*, Y.D. 1:16; *Yalkut Yosef* 13, page 21, 4. See *Matei Ephraim* 581:38.

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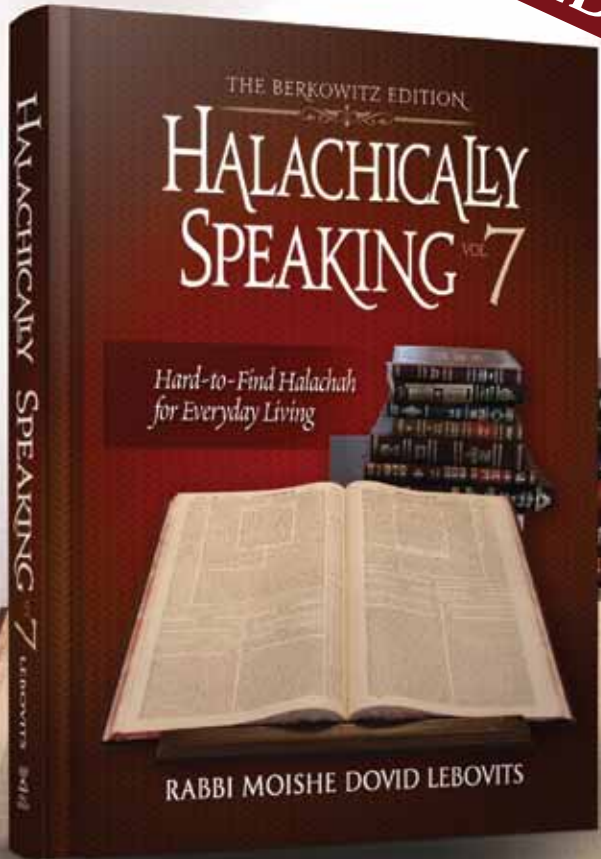


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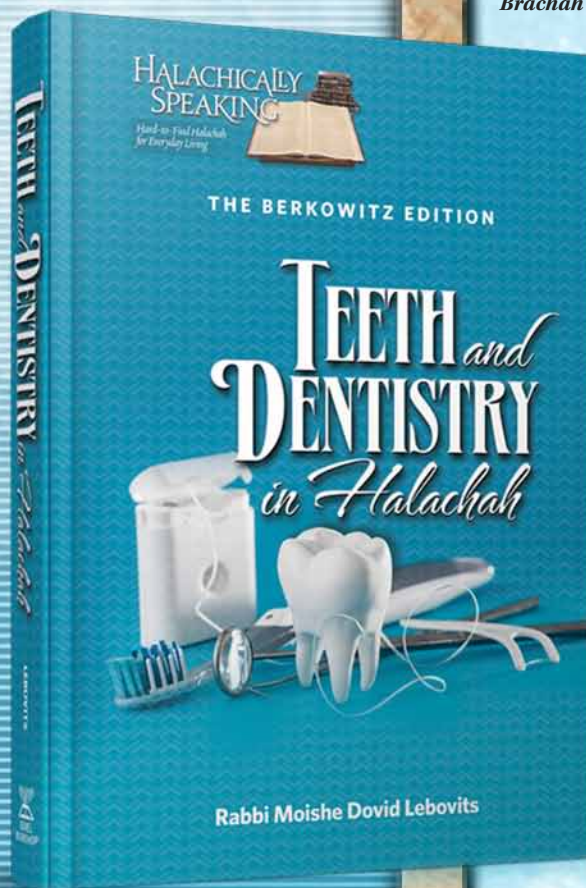


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