

**The Fast of** [**Tebet**](feasts.html) **10 - עשרה בטבת**

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)



In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine the implications and background for the Fast of [Tebet](feasts.html) 10 (the fast of the tenth month - Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) - עשרה בטבת). This is a day of fasting and [mourning](mourning.html).

[Tebet](feasts.html) 10 marks the [first](one.html) [event](feasts.html) in a chain, which resulted in the eventual destruction of [Jerusalem](city.html) and the [First](one.html) [Temple](temple.html)*,* and the [exile](galuyot.html) of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people.

The 10th of [Tebet](feasts.html), [known](daat.html) as Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) in [Hebrew](hebrew.html), is a fast day, marking the day, in the year 3336 from [Creation](bara.html), or 425 BCE, when the troops of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia surrounded [Jerusalem](city.html), beginning a 30-month siege, which ended with the destruction of the [city](city.html), the ruin of the Holy [Temple](temple.html), and death and enslavement of many of her citizens. This is seen as the catalyst for the [future](future.html) [exiles](galuyot.html) and a cataclysmic [event](feasts.html) from which we have never fully recovered, because even when the Second [Temple](temple.html) was finally built, it never returned to its full glory.

*The essential significance of the fast of the* [*Tenth of Tebet*](feasts.html)*, as well as that of the other fast days, is not primarily the grief and* [*mourning*](mourning.html) *which they evoke. Their aim is rather to awaken the hearts towards repentance; to recall to us, both the evil deeds of our* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, and our own evil deeds, which caused anguish to befall both them and us and thereby to cause us to return towards the good. As it is said (Vayikra 26): And they shall confess their transgressions and the transgressions of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

The tenth day of the tenth month – the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) (Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) - **עשרה בטבת**), is a fast day, the fast of [Tebet](feasts.html) 10. It falls out either [seven](seven.html) or [eight](eight.html) days after the conclusion of [Chanukah](chanukah.html), depending on whether [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) of [Tebet](feasts.html) that year is observed for [one](one.html) day or [two](two.html).

As with all minor fast days, the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) begins at dawn and concludes at nightfall. In accordance with the general rules of minor fasts as set forth in the Code of [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [Law](law.html)[[2]](#footnote-2), and in contrast to [Tisha B’Ab](tishabav.html), there are no additional [physical](physical.html) constraints beyond fasting from [food](food.html) and water (such as the prohibitions against bathing or of wearing leather shoes). Because it is a minor fast day, [halacha](walking.html) exempts from fasting those who are ill, even if their illnesses are not life threatening, and pregnant and nursing women who find fasting difficult.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Today our [calendar](calendar.html) calculation is such that the only public fast which can fall on Erev [Shabbat](sabbath.html) is the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html). When it does, we fast the entire day until [Shabbat](sabbath.html) kiddush.

**Dates**

* Friday, 25 December 2020 at dawn

(10th of [Tebet](feasts.html), 5781)

* Tuesday, 14 December 2021 at dawn

(10th of [Tebet](feasts.html), 5782)

[Tebet](feasts.html) 10 falls on

Sunday 30% of the [time](time.html),

Tuesday 28%,

Wednesday 4%,

Thursday 18%, and

Friday 20% of the [time](time.html).

Never on Monday or [Shabbat](sabbath.html). [Tebet](feasts.html) 10 is the only fast that can fall on Friday in our fixed [calendar](calendar.html).

Observations Dealing with the [Six](six.html) Fast Days
It should come as no surprise that Sunday and Thursday are the most “fasted on” days of the week. They have their own fasts as well as those moved from [Shabbat](sabbath.html). Note also that all [six](six.html) fasts can fall on Thursday - the only day of the week with that distinction.

The days on which our Sages decreed that we fast are connected in some fashion to our [nation](nations.html)’s [exile](galuyot.html). The Sages recognized that our [exile](galuyot.html) was an affliction put upon us out of love, by [HaShem](hashem.html), so that we would learn from our errors.

The [tenth day of the tenth month](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Cfeasts.html), the Fast of [Tebet](feasts.html), is [first](one.html) mentioned in:

***Zechariah 8:19*** *Thus saith* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *of hosts; The fast of the* [*fourth*](four.html) *[month], and the fast of the* [*fifth*](five.html)*, and the fast of the* [*seventh*](seven.html)*, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful* [*feasts*](feasts.html)*; therefore love the truth and peace.*

[Four](four.html) fast days are mentioned in this pasuk. The Prophet tells us that a day is [coming](coming.html) when these fasts days will become joyful feast days. This

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) tells us why we fast on these days:

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***18b*** *It has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: R. Simeon said: There are* [*four*](four.html) *expositions among those given by R. Akiba with which I do not agree. [He said]: ‘The fast of the* [*fourth*](four.html) *month’ — this is the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *of* [*Tammuz*](feasts.html)*, on which a breach was made in the walls of the* [*city*](city.html)*, as it says, On the* [*fourth*](four.html) *month on the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *of the month the* [*famine*](famine.html) *was sore in the* [*city*](city.html)*, so that there was no bread for the people of the land, and a breach was made in the* [*city*](city.html)*. Why is it called* [*fourth*](four.html)*? As being* [*fourth*](four.html) *in the order of months. ‘The fast of the* [*fifth*](five.html) *month’: this is the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *of Ab, on which the* [*House of our God*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Ctemple.html) *was burnt. Why is it called* [*fifth*](five.html)*? as being* [*fifth*](five.html) *in the order of months. ‘The fast of the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *month’: this is the* [*third*](three.html) *of* [*Tishri*](feasts.html) *on which* [*Gedaliah*](gedaliah.html) *the son of Ahikam was killed. Who killed him? Ishmael the son of Nethaniah killed him; and [the fact that a fast was instituted on this day] shows that the death of the righteous is put on a level with the burning of the House of our God. Why is it called the* [*seventh*](seven.html)*? As being the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *in the order of months. ‘The fast of the tenth month’: this is the tenth of Tebeth on which the king of* [*Babylon*](bavel.html) *invested* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, as it says, And the word of the Lord came unto me in the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *year in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, saying, Son of man, write thee the* [*name*](name.html) *of the day, even of this selfsame day; this selfsame day the king of* [*Babylon*](bavel.html) *hath invested* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*. Why is it called the tenth? As being the tenth in the order of months. [It might be asked], should not this have been mentioned* [*first*](one.html)*? Why then was it mentioned in this place [last]? So as to arrange the months in their proper order. I, however, [continued R. Simeon], do not explain thus. What I say is that ‘the fast of the tenth month, is the* [*fifth*](five.html) *of Tebeth on which news came to the Captivity that the* [*city*](city.html) *had been smitten, as it says, And it came to pass in the* [*twelfth*](twelve.html) *year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the* [*fifth*](five.html) *day of the month, that* [*one*](one.html) *who had escaped out of* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *came to me saying, The* [*city*](city.html) *is smitten, and they put the day of the report on the same footing as the day of burning. My view is more probable than his, because I make the* [*first*](one.html) *[mentioned by the prophet]* [*first*](one.html) *[chronologically] and the last last, whereas he makes the* [*first*](one.html) *last and the last* [*first*](one.html)*, he, however, following [only] the order of months I [also follow] the order of calamities.*

The Shulchan Aruch[[4]](#footnote-4) gives us an understanding of why the tenth day of the tenth month is significant. He writes that on the tenth day of [Tebet](feasts.html), the [wicked](wicked.html) Nebuchadnezzar, the king of [Bavel](bavel.html), laid siege to the [city](city.html) of [Jerusalem](city.html). [Three](three.html) years later, on the [17th of Tammuz](feasts.html), he broke through the [city](city.html) walls. The siege ended with the destruction of the [Temple](temple.html) [three](three.html) weeks later, on the [9th of Av](feasts.html), the end of the [first](one.html) Kingdoms and the [exile](galuyot.html) of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people to [Babylon](bavel.html). This was the end of southern Israel’s Kingdom of Judah.

[Tebet](feasts.html) 10 thus marks the beginning of the siege around [Jerusalem](city.html) by the Babylonians, prior to the destruction of the [first](one.html) [Temple](temple.html).

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) tells us that the [first](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed because the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people were steeped in [idol](idolatry.html) worship, illicit relations, and murder. These [sins](sin.html) were crimes against [HaShem](hashem.html), against [one](one.html)’s self, and against [one](one.html)’s neighbor. What was the root cause of the proliferation of these [three](three.html) evils? The pursuit of sensual pleasures, self gratification. The self was placed before anyone else. An individual was concerned solely for his welfare and benefit.

This [event](feasts.html) is mentioned in:

***Melachim (Kings) 25:1*** *And it came to pass in the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth [day] of the month, [that] Nebuchadnezzar king of* [*Babylon*](bavel.html) *came, he, and all his host, against* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about.*

At the [time](time.html) of this siege, there were already [Jews](gen-jew.html) who were in [exile](galuyot.html) in [Babel](bavel.html), where the prophet Yehezchel (Ezekiel) lived. [HaShem](hashem.html) came to Yehezchel in a prophecy, to inform him of the siege of [Jerusalem](city.html). This prophecy is related to us in:

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 24:1*** *Again in the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *year, in the tenth month, in the tenth [day] of the month, the word of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the* [*name*](name.html) *of the day, [even] of this specific day: the king of* [*Babylon*](bavel.html) *set himself against* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *this same day.*

Chazal [teach](teacher.html) that if the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) fell on [Shabbat](sabbath.html), it would not be postponed and we would fast on [Shabbat](sabbath.html). In our [calendar](calendar.html), this cannot happen; the point is of academic interest only. It is based upon the wording in Yehezchelthat speaks of the Siege being on the 10th of the month, on *this specific day*. This is the same terminology as is used in the Torah’s description of [Yom HaKippurim](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Ckippur.html), hence the similarity:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:27*** *Also on the tenth day of this* [*seventh*](seven.html) *month there shall be a day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html)*: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an* [*offering*](korbanot) *made by* [*fire*](fire.html) *unto* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. 28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html)*, to make an* [*atonement*](atonemen.html) *for you before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God. 29 For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that specific day, he shall be cut off from among his people. 30 And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. 31*

Why did [HaShem](hashem.html) want the Prophet to write down the tenth day of the tenth month? Chazal [teach](teacher.html) that this date was recorded to combat the false prophets who had declared that [Jerusalem](city.html) would never fall. Also, when we write a date down it is because that date will be meaningful in the [future](future.html).

The prophets tell us that when the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) comes these mournful days will become days of gladness and joy:

***Zechariah 8:19*** *Thus saith* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *of hosts; The fast of the* [*fourth*](four.html) *month, and the fast of the* [*fifth*](five.html)*, and the fast of the* [*seventh*](seven.html)*, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful* [*feasts*](feasts.html)*; therefore love the truth and peace.*

The [four](four.html) public fasts mentioned by the prophet are: Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) (Fast of the tenth month), Tzom [Gedaliah](gedaliah.html) (Fast of the [seventh](seven.html) month), [Shiva Asar B’Tammuz](feasts.html) (Fast of the [fourth](four.html) month), and [Tisha B’Ab](tishabav.html) (Fast of the [fifth](five.html) month). Thus we see that these fasts are prophetic of the Messianic age when there will be no more [mourning](mourning.html) and no more fasting.

The strength, both of the obligation to fast and its positive influences, of the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) stems from the fact that it commemorates the [first](one.html) of the tragedies associated with the destruction of the [Temple](temple.html). Thus this date begins the process of destruction. It is well [known](daat.html) that the beginning of any process contains more power than the subsequent [stages](stages.html) and for this reason, there is added power to the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html). The positive influences of the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) are connected to the fact that a fast day is a *day of will* when our [prayers](prayer.html) and teshuva (repentance) are more willingly accepted by [HaShem](hashem.html).

As we are [taught](teacher.html) that *the beginning is wedged in the end*,[[5]](#footnote-5) and the ultimate *end* purpose of the destruction of the Holy Temples will be the rebuilding of the [third](three.html) and eternal [Temple](temple.html), the Tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) is an auspicious day to hasten the [coming](coming.html) of the [redemption](redemption.html).

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 66:10*** *Rejoice with* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *and be glad with her, all of you who love her; rejoice with her with great rejoicing, all of you who* [*mourn*](mourning.html) *for her.*

“He who mourns [Jerusalem](city.html) will be privileged to see its rebuilding.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Torah Readings**

There are special Torah readings for the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html). The reading is [Exodus](exodus.html) 32:11-14; 34:1-10. The Haftarah is taken from Isaiah 55:6 – 56:8.

[**Events**](feasts.html)

The following [events](feasts.html) occurred on the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html):

Fast of the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html). ***Zechariah 8:19****,* [*Rosh HaShana*](teruah.html)*h 18b*

Water swells on the earth in the days of [Noah](noach.html). Day 12. ***Genesis 7:24***

[HaShem](hashem.html) tells Ezekiel to record this day for the siege of [Jerusalem](city.html). ***Ezekiel 24:1***

[Babylon](bavel.html) lays siege to [Jerusalem](city.html), in 586 BCE.[[7]](#footnote-7) ***Ezekiel 24:1***, ***2 Kings 25***

Jeremiah purchased a [field](field.html) and prophesied, in 587 BCE.***Jeremiah 32:9-15****; Zikhron Yemot Olam*

Zechariah dies. *DDD*

Malachi dies. *DDD*

We observe the completion of the Septuagint on this day, though it was completed on [Tebet](feasts.html) 8.

Herod captured [Yerushalayim](city.html), [37 BCE] **Megillat Taanit**.

After the Second [World](worlds.html) War, the Chief Rabbinate in Israel declared the tenth of [Tebet](feasts.html) to be a perpetual memorial to the victims of the Holocaust (January 11, 1949).

**How To Fast**

All the general regulations and customs associated with public fast days are observed, including the recitation of special *Selichot* on the particular theme of the day.

- The fast of Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) only starts from the break of dawn and ends at nightfall. [One](one.html) may [eat](eating.html) breakfast if [one](one.html) arises before dawn for the specific purpose of doing so.

- [One](one.html) who is ill need not fast at all. Pregnant and nursing mothers can observe the fast with lenience. [One](one.html) should consult with a Rabbi whether they are permitted to fast.

- Children below the age ofbar or bat [mitzva](cmds613.html) - 13 for boys and 12 for girls, do not fast. (In some [communities](community.html), it is customary for children to begin fasting a short [time](time.html) before they becomebar/bat [mitzva](cmds613.html).)

- Those permitted to [eat](eating.html) should still refrain from [eating](eating.html) meat, luxurious [food](food.html) and drink.

- Special additions to the [prayers](prayer.html), (Selichot and Aneinu), and Torahreadings (the Passages of Vayakhel *–* Shemot 32: 11-14 and 34: 1-10), are added during the day.

Our sages [teach](teacher.html) us that "Whoever mourns over [Jerusalem](city.html) is deserving to witness her joy".[[8]](#footnote-8) As it is written in Isaiah,[[9]](#footnote-9) "rejoice greatly with her, all who [mourn](mourning.html) her." The Fast of Asara B’[Tebet](feasts.html) is [one](one.html) way that we [mourn](mourning.html) [Jerusalem](city.html)*.*

Zechariah 8:19 lists the following [four](four.html) fasts as times of [mourning](mourning.html) which will be turned into times of joy:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FAST** | **DATE** | [**EVENT**](feasts.html) |
| [**Tebet**](feasts.html) **10** | **3336 AM** (424 BCE)**3758 AM** (68 CE) | The siege of [Jerusalem](city.html) by Nebuchadnezzar the [Babylonian](bavel.html).The siege of [Jerusalem](city.html) by Titus the [Roman](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Cedom.html). |
| [**Tammuz**](tamuz17.html) **17** | **3338 AM** (422 BCE)**3760 AM** (70 CE) | The breaching of the walls of [Jerusalem](city.html) by Nebuchadnezzar the [Babylonian](bavel.html). The breaching of the walls of [Jerusalem](city.html) by Titus the Roman.This was a major [event](feasts.html) leading up to the destruction of the [First](one.html) and second [Temples](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Ctemple.html). |
| [**Av**](feasts.html) **9** | **3338 AM** (422 BCE)**3760 AM** (70 CE) | The [first](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar the [Babylonian](bavel.html).The second [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed by Titus the Roman. |
| [**Tishri**](feasts.html) **3** | **3339 AM** (422 BCE) | Gedalia, governor of Israel, is slain. This was a critical [event](feasts.html) in the downfall of the [first](one.html) commonwealth. |

**[Adam](adam.html)’s** [**Festival**](festival.html)**[[10]](#footnote-10)**

[Adam](adam.html) was like an astronaut who had just landed on a different planet. It was his planet, our planet, but everything was completely [new](new.html), including [Adam](adam.html), himself. He journeyed through his [world](worlds.html) like a stranger in a foreign land, in which everything was unfamiliar and unknown.

[Adam](adam.html) was created in the autumn, on [Rosh Hashana](teruah.html)h. He did not [know](daat.html) about seasons or the shortening and lengthening of days, or the slow pace of different natural [cycles](cycles.html). After he was filled with anxiety when he [first](one.html) saw the setting [sun](hachama.html) and rejoiced over the [first](one.html) sunrise, he noticed, the [Talmud](orallaw.html) tells us,[[11]](#footnote-11) that the days were becoming shorter. The [world](worlds.html) is darkening, he thought, in a huge, multi-cyclical sunset. Soon, darkness will cover the planet. The reason for this was clear to him: This was a punishment for his [sin](sin.html), it was because he spurned God’s directive and [ate](eating.html) the fruit of the Tree of [Knowledge](thetree.html). God decided to return the [world](worlds.html) to its original chaotic state because He was disappointed in him. Actually, what else could he have thought?

[Adam](adam.html) decided to atone for his [sin](sin.html). He took upon himself to fast and [pray](prayer.html) to God until He would nullify His decree. He did this day after day after day. For a full [eight](eight.html) days he fasted and [prayed](prayer.html) until, suddenly something changed: [One](one.html) day, the [sun](hachama.html) set a bit later than the previous day. The days began to lengthen once again. [Adam](adam.html)’s joy [knew](daat.html) no bounds. He immediately declared [eight](eight.html) days of feasting and joy, parallel to the [eight](eight.html) days that he had fasted. From the next year and on (in the meantime he saw the days lengthening and shortening again and understood that this was a natural [cycle](cycles.html)), [Adam](adam.html) set these sixteen days, the [eight](eight.html) days that he had erroneously fasted and the [eight](eight.html) days that he celebrated – as [one](one.html) long [holiday](festival.html).

|  |
| --- |
| [**Adam**](adam.html) |
| **Fasting** | **Feasting** |
| [**Kislev**](feasts.html) **25 –** [**Tebet**](feasts.html) **2****(8 days)** | [**Tebet**](feasts.html) **3 –** [**Tebet**](feasts.html) **10****(8 days)** |
| Shammai(subtract a candle each day.) | Hillel (Add a candle each day.) |
| [Chanukah](chanukah.html) | ? |
| KalantesDecember 13-20  | SaturnaliaDecember 21-29 |
| 16 Days |

(Please be aware that [Kislev](feasts.html) can have either 29 or 30 days depending on the year. This means that sometimes [Adam](adam.html)’s fast ends on [Tebet](feasts.html) 2 and sometimes on [Tebet](feasts.html) 3. Conversely, [Adam](adam.html)’s feast sometimes begins on [Tebet](feasts.html) 4 and continues till [Tebet](feasts.html) 11.)

**\* \* \***

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1. Rambam: Hilchot Taanit Chapter 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 549-550, 561-562 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 550:2. The Mishnah Berurah notes that it is still commendable to observe all the restrictions of [Tisha B’Ab](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Ctishabav.html) on the minor fast days. Even so, he says, one should not refrain from bathing in preparation for [Shabbat](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Csabbath.html) when the Tenth of Tebet falls out on a Friday. (He probably singles out the Tenth of Tebet because it is the only minor fast day that can coincide with Friday with the current [Jewish calendar](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTevet%5Ccalendar.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Orech Chayim 549 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sefer Yetzirah 1:7, Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 46:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Baba Bathra 60b [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Tosefta Sotah 6:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Talmud Taanit 30b [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Chapter 66, verse 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Excerpted and translated from Rabbi Ginsburgh’s Hebrew book, *“Hanerot Hallalu”)* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Avodah Zarah 8a. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)