MACHON PUAH
Fasting on the Tenth of Av

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Since this Shabbat is 9Av and we will fast this Sunday, we will take a break from our regular series to discuss a relevant halachic question.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 559:9) writes that when 9Av is pushed off until Sunday a Brit can be performed during the day and the father can break his fast. The source is the Gemara (Eruvin 41a) that Rabbi Eliezer bar Tzadok describes how he had a Brit on such a Sunday and he broke the fast since it is considered to be a festival for him. However, on a regular year they would not be able to eat on the fast. From this source we can deduce that when 9Av is pushed off the severity of the fast is reduced. It should be mentioned that the Aruch Hashulchan stresses that he never saw the family have a meal for a Brit on 9Av since the circumcision can be performed towards the end of the day and the meal can be eaten after the fast.

Many poskim use this leniency in relation to the question of whether pregnant and nursing women need to fast. On regular years pregnant and nursing women must fast on 9Av (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 554:5) but do not fast on the other rabbinic fast days. The question is whether 9Av that is pushed off to Sunday is considered as a regular fast day or still retains the severity of Tish'a b'Av.

There is another issue; the whole point of fasting on 9Av is a communal mourning for the destruction of the Temple. Therefore everyone has to participate in this commemoration of the destruction; we do not greet each other, we do not work and we act as mourners. One cannot separate themselves from the mourning and sorrow.

Some hold that Tish'a b'Av this year has the status of any other fast day and therefore pregnant and nursing women do not fast, while others (see Bi'ur Halacha OC 559) is of the opinion that they do fast unless they feel ill.

Generally we would suggest that such women start the fast, if we have eaten well on Shabbat most people will be able to fast until the next morning. If during the fast they feel ill then they can break their fast. Even if someone does get permission to eat and drink on Tisha b'Av they should not eat lavish food and drink and should still have a sense of connection to the fast day and the mourning.

May we all merit to eat and drink on Tisha B'Av in the celebration of the complete redemption.