**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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Dedicated by Steven Weiner & Lisa Wise in tribute to

Mr. Yechiel Saiman of blessed memory.

His presence in our community was such a privilege and treat for us,

and he is very deeply missed.

We send our warmest wishes of comfort to his wife Chana

and to all of their children and grandchildren.

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Exemption from Minor Fasts

By Debbie Zimmerman

Must All Women fast? What if a woman is pregnant or breastfeeding? Postpartum or undergoing fertility treatments? Do the laws of the different fast days differ?

# Categories

As a rule, women are obligated to fast on all communal fast days. (Learn more here.) There are a number of exemptions from fasting, however, and some are related to child-bearing, and thus specific to women. In order to discuss when these exemptions apply, we first need to review the relevant halachic categories.

**I. Me'uberet** A pregnant woman. In a range of *halachot*, the Talmud considers a woman a *me'uberet* from the point at which “her fetus is recognizable,” defined as around three months of pregnancy, when many women start showing.

*Yevamot* 37a

A woman who gives birth after nine months; her fetus is recognizable after one third of her days [of pregnancy]

Mishna Berura explains that a woman may also be considered a *me'uberet* with respect to fasting earlier, if she knows that she is pregnant and feels attendant discomfort:

*Mishna Berura* 550:3

Pregnant and breastfeeding women – And it seems that pregnant is defined from when the fetus is recognizable, as this is established regarding the rules of anticipated menses. Nevertheless, it is possible that even after 40 days when the fetus is formed she is also considered pregnant for this matter, if she feels distress. But for less than this, it seems she is like all women in every matter, unless she is in severe distress.

This ruling leaves open the possibility of considering a woman *me'uberet* even before forty days from conception, the point at which Halacha considers the fetus to take form.[[1]](#footnote-1) Many modern halachic authorities agree.[[2]](#footnote-2) Given the widespread availability of early pregnancy testing, some even consider a woman *me'uberet* with respect to fasting from the moment she knows that she has conceived. (See, for example, Rav Eliezer Melamed, below.)

Two studies found increased deliveries directly following Yom Kippur (mostly at term), but another study was not able to reproduce this finding regarding Tisha B Av. Yet another study found more preterm deliveries among Jewish than non-Jewish patients on Yom Kippur. At the same time, in practice, thousands of women fast on these days without difficulty. In laboratory conditions, fasting has been shown to cause metabolic changes. However, it is not always clear what the clinical consequences of these changes are. Lack of drinking can bring on various levels of dehydration, depending on environmental circumstances, and dehydration can be a predecessor of early labor. The risk varies depending on the stage of the pregnancy and the medical history of the woman.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The need to stay current which new medical knowledge was stressed in a recent article by Rabbanit Dr. Chana Adler Lazarovits, who argues for greater precaution with pregnant women fasting in general than is often the current halachic norm.

Rabbanit Dr. Chana Adler-Lazarovits, “*Tzom Me’uberet Be-Yom Ha-kippurim – Pesikat Halacha Al Pi Metzi’ut Zemanenu*,” *Techumin* 40, 5780.

Current medical knowledge regarding the safety of fasting during pregnancy is not clear-cut. On the one hand, there exist clear accounts of potential harmful processes, and on the other hand these processes have not been demonstrated as causes of miscarriage or premature birth in the context of a 25-hour fast. The fact that the doctors themselves disagree about their conclusions makes the halachic determination even more difficult in the face of the serious prohibition of eating and drinking on Yom Kippur.

This clinical uncertainty underscores the need for individual consultation regarding the ability for a woman to fast when she is pregnant.

**II. Meineket** A nursing woman, or perhaps any woman within 24 months of childbirth.

In the context of the laws of *nidda*, the Talmud defines a *meineket* – who is not expected to menstruate – as a woman within 24 months postpartum:

*Nidda* 9a

The Rabbis taught: A *menika* whose child died within 24 months… according to Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon her limbs are displaced and her strength does not return until 24 months [post-partum].

According to this passage, a woman is considered a *meineket* even if she is not actively nursing (as after neonatal loss). Shulchan Aruch follows suit, and rules that *meineket* status does not depend on active breastfeeding.

*Shulchan Aruch* YD 189:33

She is a *menika* for 24 months after giving birth… even if the child died or she weaned him…

Does this definition of *meineket* extend to the laws of fasting?

Rabbi Yekusiel Yechiel Halberstam suggests that Shulchan Aruch himself implies a more narrow definition of *meineket* with respect to fasting:

Responsa *Divrei Yetziv Likutim v’Hashmatot* 45

Regarding what you wrote about a *meineket* on a *ta’anit tzibbur*, and you wanted to compare it to [the law] that there is no concern for anticipated menses until 24 months [postpartum] even if the child died or she weaned him … it is clear that this is not a good comparison, for there the reason is that her limbs are displaced and her strength does not return to her as it says in *Bechorot* 6b, and Rashi explains that “her [menstrual] blood does not return to her” … and this is not the case regarding a fast, for the sages were only lenient with her for the three fasts when she is a bit sickly (see Maggid Mishneh Laws of *Ta’aniyot* 5:10), and there to it is only a woman who is actively breastfeeding… for they eat and drink only enough to sustain the baby, as Shulchan Aruch rules there, and this is clear.

In contrast, Maharsham explicitly considers any woman within 24 months postpartum as a *meineket* even for fasting:

Maharsham *Da'at Torah* 550:1

And it should be investigated whether the laws of a *meineket* apply to a *meineket* who stopped breastfeeding within 24 months, and it seems that since her limbs are displaced and her strength does not return for 24 months… one should also be lenient in such a case…

How broadly to apply the laws of *meineket* with respect to fasting remains a matter of debate, and may depend on whether we focus on the child's health, in which case active nursing would be necessary to consider a woman a *meineket*, or on the health of its mother, in which case it would not be.

Much as with pregnancy, the medical effects of fasting on lactation in a twenty-five hour context have barely been studied. One study showed that a twenty-four-hour-plus fast does seem to alter slightly the composition of breastmilk on the day of the fast and the day after, but not beyond that, with biochemical changes that seem unlikely to be clinically significant. This study found that some breastfeeding women report fatigue, discomfort, and fussy babies on the day after the fast.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The main medical concern is if fasting will lead to reduction in milk supply. For most women, the supply will remain in the normal range and, if reduced, return quickly with re-feeding. However, in cases of newborns, preterm or ill infants or maternal lactation difficulties, these minor changes can be significant, so it is critical to seek individual medical and halachic guidance, especially regarding dehydration.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**III. Yoledet** A *yoledet*, sometimes called a *chaya* (following *Shemot* 1:19),[[6]](#footnote-6) is a woman just before childbirth or who has just given birth, so there is some overlap between this category and the *meineket*.

The Talmud teaches that a woman becomes a *yoledet* when she begins to bleed, is sitting on the birthing stool, or can no longer walk unassisted.

Shabbat 129a

A woman becomes a *yoledet* when any of these criteria is met, regardless of whether the fetus is viable.

Eshel Avraham argues that a woman in the first weeks after miscarriage is at least comparable to a nursing or pregnant woman, especially since the tragedy of pregnancy loss may exacerbate its physical hardship.

*Eshel Avraham* 550:1

*Meinikot* –As there are leniencies for *menikot* in distress during the three fasts, so too there are leniencies for a woman who miscarried in the past few weeks and feels distress. For we have established according to the sages that her limbs are displaced and she does not return [to full strength] for 24 months, and a woman who miscarried has more displacement and there is more concern and weakness because she does not have the live birth of the child to help her through it, and when she feels pain it is no less than that of a pregnant woman who has many leniencies.

Mishna Berura adds that a woman may be considered a *yoledet* with respect to fasting as soon as strong contractions begin:

Mishna Berura 617 s.k. 9

Even if she has not yet given birth but has only been seized by labor pangs … she is considered a *yoledet* for the matter of violating Shabbat, and, by the same law, is considered a *yoledet* for the matter of not fasting

A woman exits the *yoledet* status in stages, but aspects of it remain for up to thirty days post-partum.

**IV. Fertility Treatments** Given their recent vintage, the question of fertility treatments and fasting is relatively new to halachic literature. Women undergoing fertility treatments don't fit neatly into the above categories. In some situations, they may be considered unwell, however, and thus exempt from fasting.[[7]](#footnote-7)

# Minor Fast Days

The three fasts of 10 Tevet, 17 Tammuz, and Tzom Gedalya (3 Tishrei) are observed with the leniencies of a *ta’anit yachid*, an individual fast, such as beginning to fast only at dawn. This is the case even though they have been accepted as binding by the community. Ta’anit Esther (the fast on 13 Adar, the day before Purim) is treated with even greater leniency than the others. (See more here.)

The Tosefta exempts pregnant and nursing women from fasting on all these fast days[[8]](#footnote-8):

Tosefta *Ta’anit* 3:2

Pregnant and breastfeeding women fast on Tisha Be-Av and Yom Kippur… and they do not fast the remaining fasts. And they should not pamper themselves, rather they eat and drink enough to sustain the offspring.

Halachic authorities relate to the possibility of exempting a *me'uberet* or *meineket* from the minor fasts in one of three ways:

**I. Exemption for the Offspring's Health** The Tosefta above rules explicitly that a pregnant or nursing woman is exempt from minor fasts, even if she exhibits no particular signs of physical distress. When it details what she should eat, it specifies that she should "eat and drink enough to sustain the offspring,” implying that this is the purpose of her exemption.

According to this rationale, the term *meineket* refers specifically to women who are actively nursing. Otherwise, a woman's fasting would have no direct effect on her baby's health.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Rabbeinu Yerucham writes that the Geonim take this position a step further, not only exempting but prohibiting a pregnant or nursing woman from fasting on the minor fasts, on account of her offspring:

Rabbeinu Yerucham – *Toldot Adam Ve-Chava* 27:1

A pregnant woman is prohibited from fasting [on all fasts] except for Tisha Be-Av and Yom Kippur, because of the distress of the infant, as the Geonim wrote.

**II. Exemption for the Woman's Health** A second possible rationale relates to the woman's personal physical condition. For example, we saw above that a nursing woman's health is considered unstable. Similarly, albeit in a non-halachic context, Rashi describes a pregnant woman as a "*chola*," a sick person.

Rashi *Yoma* 47a, s.v. *ika de-amrei*

…and ordinary pregnant women are *cholot*

As we explore in more detail in our discussion of Tish'a Be-Av, someone who is sick may be exempt from fasting, and a *me'uberet*, *yoledet* or *meineket* may fall under this category.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Modern Israeli rabbi Rav Nachman Kahana, for example, rules that a pregnant or breastfeeding woman is exempt from fasting on the minor fast days because she is inherently considered a “*chola*,” an ill person too unwell to fast, even if she does not feel any unique physical distress:

*Orchot Chaim* 550

See Rashi *Yoma* 47a s.v. “*ika de-amrei*” [who states that] ordinary pregnant women are [considered] sick. And it seems that this is the reason they are not obligated to fast [the three minor fasts] even if they are not in distress, but they customarily act stringently [and fast], as Rema writes.

Since this exemption is based on a woman's own physical health, its logic would seem to apply whether or not a woman is actively nursing.

**III. Conditional Exemption** Both of the above approaches seem to exempt the entire class of pregnant and nursing women from fasting on minor fast days altogether. Hagahot Maimoniyot, however, implies otherwise. He specifies that a pregnant or nursing woman must eat on a fast day if she feels great physical distress:

Hagahot Maimoniyot Laws of Fasts 5:2

And it seems that even pregnant and breastfeeding women who are in great distress can eat on all these fast days except Tisha Be-Av.

We can infer from Hagahot Maimoniyot's wording that he conditions exemption of pregnant or nursing women from fasting on clear distress.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In Practice

In practice, Shulchan Aruch (paraphrasing the Tosefta) rules that a *me'uberet* or *meineket* is exempt from the minor fasts.

Shulchan Aruch OC 554:5

Pregnant and breastfeeding women fast on Tisha Be-Av as they fast the entirety of Yom Kippur. But on the other three fasts they are exempt from fasting. And even so, it is proper that they do not eat to enjoy the food and drink, but enough to sustain the baby.

Rema agrees that pregnant and nursing women are fundamentally exempt from the minor fast days, but he mentions a custom to be stringent unless fasting causes significant distress.

Rema OC 550:1

Gloss: But pregnant and breastfeeding women who are in significant distress should not fast. And even if they are not distressed they are not obligated to fast, but they customarily act stringently [and fast]. And this specifically refers to the [other] three fasts, but on Tisha Be-Av they are obligated to complete [the fast].

It would seem that Rema follows the opinion that a nursing or pregnant woman is exempt on account of her own health. That leaves room for encouraging her to fast if she feels up to it. At the same time, the language “she should not fast” indicates that it is forbidden for a *me'uberet* or *meineket* who feels great distress to continue her fast.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Sedei Chemed suggests that, even according to this opinion, a *me'uberet* or *meineket* need not wait until she actually experiences great distress to break her fast. There is room to predict based on her experience and current health whether fasting will cause her distress, and act accordingly:[[13]](#footnote-13)

Sdei Chemed, *Asifat Dinim Ma’arechet Bein Ha-metzarim* 1:10

The intent is not to say that she should fast until she feels distress, but rather that she should assess beforehand, on her own or through others, the state of her health. And if it is assessed that she will be in distress she may eat immediately.

**Ta'anit Esther** receives even more lenient treatment from Rema than the other minor fasts.[[14]](#footnote-14) He maintains that "this fast is not obligatory" for anyone, and thus there is no stringent custom for a *me'uberet* or *meineket* to fast on it at all:

Rema OC 686

Rema: This fast [Ta'anit Esther] is not obligatory, and so one should be lenient when necessary, such as pregnant or breastfeeding women or a sick person who is not in mortal danger…

Current widespread practice is for a pregnant or breastfeeding woman not to fast at all on any of the minor fast days, even if she usually follows Rema's halachic rulings. Rav Eliezer Melamed summarizes:[[15]](#footnote-15)

Rav Eliezer Melamed, *Peninei Halacha*, *Zemanim* 7:8

In any event, the prevalent custom today, even among Ashkenazi Jews, is that pregnant and nursing women do not observe the minor fast days.  And even if a particular woman wants to act stringently, it is preferable that she not fast if she has a hard time doing so.  From the moment a woman knows she’s pregnant, she is exempt from the fast.

The question of who is considered a *meineket* for these purposes remains a matter of debate, though a *yoledet* within thirty days is certainly included, even if she is not nursing or postpartum. Halacha typically considers a woman to have miscarried when she carried a pregnancy for over forty days. Women in the midst of fertility treatments may be advised not to fast on the minor fast days as well.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Recently, Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon has ruled that a *me'uberet*, *yoledet*, or *meineket* also need not fast at all when a minor fast day falls out on Shabbat and its observance is pushed to Sunday. He adds that in this case there is more room to be lenient regarding the definition of a *meineket.*[[17]](#footnote-17)

Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon, *Meineket U-me’uberet Be-ta’anit Dechuya*, Sulamot

In practice, pregnant and nursing women do not need to fast on minor fast days, especially in the case of a fast day that is pushed off….There are important *poskim* who were lenient about this and ruled that every woman within 24 months of childbirth is exempt from fasting, even if she is not nursing in practice… This discussion applies to a regular fast that is not pushed off, and for a fast that is pushed off one should certainly be more lenient.

With so much room for exemption, many women in their child-bearing years may go years without fasting on minor fast days, to the extent that not fasting has become the norm in some communities. Even so, a woman not fasting on the minor fast days should make an effort to find other ways in which to connect to the spirit of the day.

Aside from fasting, how else can we connect to the meaning of a fast?

Four of the fast days – Shiva Asar be-Tammuz, Tzom Gedalya, Asara Be-Tevet, and Ta’anit Esther – are ordinary workdays. They are also relatively lenient, which results in many people being exempt from fasting on them.

Especially if we aren’t fasting (sometimes, even if we are) it can be difficult to focus on the day's significance, and the introspection and teshuva it should entail, as we go about our usual routine.

There is a tendency to think of an exemption from fasting on a fast day as an exemption from experiencing the day. In an article for Mishpacha, Faigy Peritzman reflects on what this is like:[[18]](#footnote-18)

Faigy Peritzman, “Fast Thinking,” *Mishpacha* June 19, 2019

On the last few fasts, I ended up with a migraine that lasted a few days. The rav said I could stop fasting. All I had to do was Tishah B’Av and Yom Kippur. And boy, was I relieved. At the same time, I felt there was something skewed in my approach. And I was suddenly reminded of a very different reaction I’d had several months before when I’d been forced to cancel an upcoming trip to the States for health reasons….I was frustrated and disappointed that I’d had to cancel, despite any inconveniences the trip entailed….When the fast day arrived, I secretly drank my water, ate my cereal, and even had my coffee….But instead of breathing a sigh of relief, I tried to focus on what I was missing. It’s awfully hard to tune into the nuances of a fast day when you’re not fasting. It’s hard to remember to be sad when you feel content and full. I realized I’m missing out a lot by not missing out on food that day.

A fast day is ultimately a day of repentance, regardless of whether we fast. How can we be a part of that?

There are two other classic modes of repenting aside from fasting: tefilla and tzedaka.

A person not fasting can make an extra effort to give tzedaka on a fast day.

Additionally, making time to say prayers traditionally recited on a fast can facilitate teshuva and heighten awareness of the day's message. Such prayers include Selichot, Avinu Malkeinu, and special Torah and Haftara readings.

**Selichot** After Shemoneh Esrei, penitiential prayers (Selichot) are recited. It is permissible to recite Selichot without a minyan, either omitting the thirteen attributes of God or chanting them with Torah-reading cantillations.

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 565:5

An individual may not recite the thirteen attributes in the manner of prayer and asking for mercy, for they are a *davar she-bikdusha*, but if he says them in the manner of simply reading, he may say them.

**Avinu Malkeinu** Ashkenazim recite the prayer “Avinu Malkeinu” after Shacharit and Mincha, and may do so even when praying without a minyan.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Torah and Haftara Readings** On these fast days, we read the Torah at Shacharit and again at Mincha (Shemot 32). Ashkenazim add a Haftara at Mincha (Yeshaya 55:6-56-8). Someone praying alone can feel free to read the relevant portions to themselves.

Reciting some or all of these prayers provides an opportunity to focus our avodat Hashem on the themes of teshuva and collective responsibility, regardless of our personal circumstances. Still, despite our best efforts, sometimes we are not in position to maximize a fast.

In that case, we can keep in mind a note of encouragement by educator Sara Wolkenfeld, that she shares in a blogpost about Tish'a Be-Av with young children:[[20]](#footnote-20)

Sara Wolkenfeld, “Finding myself as a parent on Tisha B’Av,” Times of Israel

Jewish sources provide a robust model for viewing long historical periods as anomalous blips… All of us…are in exile…[W]e look ahead to when we will return to Jerusalem, with gladness and rejoicing. This intermediate time in our history will pass. So, too, our years of raising young children need not be the sole defining factor of our religious selves. The ways in which our texts speak about exile give me faith that it is okay to hold on to a vision of myself as a human that is not always in concert with my place in life right now. At its best, I hope that the image I hold up to myself is one that I can also speak about to my children, so they understand how Eema sees herself, and what those aspirations might mean in their lives.

We do our best at a given time and aspire to do more when that time passes, confident that exemptions from fasting are part of the framework of Halacha, and that God embraces our best efforts to come close to him with repentance.

1. *Bechorot* 21b

   Rav Chisda said: They said that the formation of the fetus within a woman – forty days. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Responsa *Yechaveh Da’at* I:35

   The definition of a pregnant women seems explained in Tractate *Nidda* (8b), she does not have the halachic status of a pregnant woman until her fetus is recognizable (i.e., she is showing), meaning that she has completed her third month of pregnancy. But really one should be lenient in this case even before three months, as long as she is suffering from vomiting or headaches or weakness and anything similar, and especially if she is 40 days into her pregnancy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See these links: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25123516/> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9223811/>  
   <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6876318/>  
   <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20121501/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0890334409331505> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19654284/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3309963,00.html>

   Thank you to Yoetzet Halacha Dr. Deena Zimmerman for reviewing the medical aspects of this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Shemot* 1:19

   And the midwives said to Pharaoh, for the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are *chayot*; before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For discussion regarding the major fast days, see here: https://www.yoatzot.org/fertility/fertility-treatments-tisha-bav/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In the Talmud, Rava teaches that a *me'uberet* or *meineket* is obligated to fast on Yom Kippur and on Tish'a Be-Av, and does not mention the minor fasts. His omission may imply that a pregnant woman (*me'uberet*) or nursing woman (*meineket*) is exempt from fasting on minor fasts.

   *Pesachim* 54b

   Rava taught: Pregnant and breastfeeding women fast the entirety on [Tisha Be-Av] as they do on Yom Kippur. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rav Soloveitchik expands on this rationale in more philosophical terms:

   Rav Yosef Dov Ha-levi Soloveichik*, Shiurei Ha-Rav al inyanei Tisha Be-Av* 23

   It seems from this that when a pregnant woman fasts the fetus also fasts, and there is no obligation for the fetus to fast, therefore the mother is also exempt from fasting since it is improper for her to force the fetus to fast (and this is also the case with a breastfeeding woman)… therefore it is fitting that she should not eat more than what is needed to sustain the fetus. And according to this we can explain the difference between Tish'a Be-Av and the other three fasts regarding pregnant and breastfeeding women. For it is only relevant to say that it is improper for a mother to force the fetus (or nursing child) to fast on a *ta’anit yachid*, since there is clearly no individual obligation on the fetus [to fast], and a *ta’anit yachid* is only an individual obligation. But on a *ta’anit tzibur*, which is the obligation of the community, it seems that there is no concern about including the fetus in the fast, since the fetus is also considered part of the community…

   Rav Soloveitchik explains that when a pregnant woman fasts, the fetus de facto fasts along with her. Similarly, when a breastfeeding woman fasts, her infant receives less nourishment. Since the offspring are not obligated to fast, these women are exempt from fasting. On Tish'a Be-Av, however, which has full *ta'anit tzibbur* status, the offspring is considered part of the *tzibbur* and thus in a sense are included in the fast, barring special health considerations. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See, for example Ramban's discussion of Tish'a Be-Av:

    Ramban *Torat Ha-Adam*

    A woman who has given birth within the past 30 days and a sick person who needs to eat, do not need to be assessed by a professional, rather we immediately give them food, as the rabbis did not include the sick in their decree. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Beit Yosef OC 554

    It seems from the words of Hagahot Maimoniyot that pregnant and breastfeeding women are not permitted to eat on the other three fasts unless they are in distress. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Aruch Ha-shulchan rules like Rema and states explicitly that great distress rules out fasting on the minor fast days for a *me'uberet* or *meineket*, even when there is no real danger to the woman's health or to her offspring's:

    *Aruch Ha-shulchan* OC 550:1

    Pregnant and breastfeeding women – they should not fast these three fasts, except for Tisha Be-Av. But healthy women have the custom of being stringent on the three fasts .....But when they are greatly distressed, it is prohibited for them to be strict [and fast], even if there is no danger to her or the baby. And similarly someone who is physically weak should not be stringent with themselves to fast, except for Tisha Be-Av. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Available here: <https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?sits=1&req=43672&st=%u05E9%u05EA%u05E8%u05D2%u05D9%u05E9&_rnd=0.4891887281159224> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Aruch HaShulchan explicitly rules that pregnant and breastfeeding women should not be stringent and fast on Ta’anit Esther.

    Aruch HaShulchan 554:7

    But on the three other fasts – they are exempt from fasting, and all the more so on Ta’anit Esther, and they should not be stringent with themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Available here: <https://ph.yhb.org.il/05-07-08/> and in English at: https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/05-07-08/

    See also Rav Ovadia Yosef, who writes that nowadays Ashkenazic women should be lenient since people are weaker than they used to be and they are probably considered greatly distressed by the fast, and therefore exempt even by Rema’s standards.

    Responsa *Yechaveh Da’at* I 35

    However it seems that in this time when weakness has descended into the world, also Ashkenazic woman who hold like Rema should be lenient, for typically they are considered in great distress and exempt from fasting… And it seems that even if they want to be stringent and fast that decision should be protested, since they weaken themselves and the fetus inside of them and the nursing infant, and so they are prohibited from acting stringently and fasting. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See the Yoatzot site approved by Rav Yehuda Henkin about a range of fertility treatments on major fast days, which would clearly apply to minor fast days as well, and Machon Puah on women after implantation: <https://www.yoatzot.org/fertility/fertility-treatments-tisha-bav/>

    And here: <https://puah.org.il/shut/%d7%a6%d7%95%d7%9d-%d7%9c%d7%90%d7%97%d7%a8-%d7%94%d7%97%d7%96%d7%a8%d7%aa-%d7%a2%d7%95%d7%91%d7%a8%d7%99%d7%9d-2/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Available here: <https://www.sulamot.org/%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%a0%d7%a7%d7%aa-%d7%95%d7%9e%d7%a2%d7%95%d7%91%d7%a8%d7%aa-%d7%91%d7%aa%d7%a2%d7%a0%d7%99%d7%aa-%d7%93%d7%97%d7%95%d7%99%d7%94/> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Available here: <https://mishpacha.com/fast-thinking/> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Mateh Efrayim 584:14

    Even one who prays alone without a *tzibbur* is permitted to recite *avinu malkeinu* after *tefilla*… [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Available here: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/finding-myself-as-a-parent-on-tisha-bav/> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)