

Shoel U'Mashiv

Feeding Children Meat During the 9 Days

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Q - “Even though I am not supposed to eat meat or drink wine during the 9 Days, can I feed my child meat during that time?”

A - What is the *Minhag* not to have meat or drink wine during the 9 Days?

The *Shulchan Aruch O.C. 551:9* cites the custom of not eating meat or drinking wine starting from *Rosh Chodesh Av*. The *Mishnah Berurah 551:59* says should not refrain from eating meat and drinking wine on *Shabbos*. He says this is even when *Tisha B'Av* itself falls on *Shabbos*. The *Aruch HaShulchan O.C. 551:23* says the reason for the *Minhag* is the meat is a remembrance of the *Karbanos* and the wine is a remembrance of the libations we no longer have since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed.

Who is included in this *Minhag*?

The *Shulchan Aruch O.C. 551:10* speaks about what to do with the wine used to make *Havdalah*. He says that the person who made *Havdalah* may drink the wine, even though *Shabbos* is over. The *Rema* recommends giving the wine to a minor and if there is no minor to give it to, then the one who made *Havdalah* should drink it himself. The *Mishnah Berurah 551:70* says giving to a minor is specifically in this case where it is a *Mitzvah*. Otherwise, he says, not to give a normal, healthy child meat or wine (i.e., grape juice) during the 9 Days, even if they don't know how to mourn. Meaning, the *Mishnah Berurah* is saying that even a very young child should not be given meat during the 9 Days. The *Piskei Teshuvos 551:45* quotes those who say a child that has not reached the age of *Chinuch* (i.e., under 6) can eat meat during the 9 Days and he adds some follow the *Magen Avraham* who says they can eat meat until they reach the age where they know how to mourn, which is 9 years old.

Can a person feed their child meat during the 9 Days?

Rav Moshe in *Igros Moshe O.C. 4:21* quotes the *Mishnah Berurah* that one should not feed a child meat during the 9 Days. However, he says a child who is not accustomed to staying up late on Friday night for the *Shabbos Seudah* can eat meat for dinner if it is just a few hours before *Shabbos*. The *Shaar HaTzion 551:76* quotes the *Chayei Adam* who follows the lenient opinion of the *Magen Avraham* and takes issue with it since many disagree with him. At the end of the day, those who want to be lenient with a young child certainly have what to rely upon. This is especially true with a very young child. However, being strict certainly has its merits and it is not particularly hard to do.