

Saying the bracha

שהחיינו



during the
Three Weeks
and the
Nine Days

*The following is culled from the sefer
AVEILUT HACHURBAN by R' Yoel Schwartz*

There are differing opinions on this issue.

According to Shulchan Aruch and the ARI z"l, one should not say this (joyous) bracha during the Three Weeks. Therefore, one should not buy a new fruit or new objects or clothing that would ordinarily prompt this bracha.

However, one should not "spoil" the joy of a mitzva during this period of time by not saying the bracha - therefore at a BRIT or a Pidyon HaBen (even if they were postponed) the bracha is said.

The Vilna Gaon holds that one need not refrain from this bracha during the Three Weeks.

The Mishna B'rura holds that one can say the bracha on Shabbat. Therefore a new fruit can be bought and held for Shabbat.

Furthermore, if a new fruit will not keep until Shabbat, then the bracha may be recited even during the week.

The Aruch HaShulchan holds that until Rosh Chodesh Av, one may say the bracha during the week, and thereafter, only on Shabbat.

Some poskim suggest that if refraining from SHEHECHEYANU will diminish one's ONEG SHABBAT, then the bracha can be said even according to those authorities who say not to say the bracha during the Three Weeks.

Ed. notes:

It would be simple to say that the bracha of SHEHECHEYANU is an expression of joy and it simply is out of place for the period of National Mourning known as the Three Weeks.

And that is close to what the Shulchan Aruch and the AR"l z"l say. But not quite. Because they allow it for the personal s'machot of Brit and Pidyon. And they even allow it for a fruit that will not be available after Tish'a b'Av.

This too is brought down in Aveilut HaChurban, with stages. If you can save the fruit for Shabbat, do so and make the bracha on Shabbat. But if the fruit will spoil by then, then you can eat it and make the bracha even during the week.

Wait. Stop. Reality check. Who says you have to eat a first-of-the-season fruit at any time? Why not avoid the clash of emotions by just skipping the new fruit for the Three Weeks? Simple, no? A mitzva is one thing, you might argue, but a fruit is just a fruit.

Obviously, not so. Even though it isn't obligatory, there is a special thing to

saying a SHEHECHEYANU on a new fruit. Whenever possible. It isn't the fruit per se that requires the bracha, it is the good feeling of being alive at the milestones along the journey of life - the big milestones, such as Chagim and certain mitzvot - and the small milestones, the little things that remind us, over and over, that B"H we are alive.

And this joyous feeling of thanks to G-d need not be eliminated from the otherwise mournful period.

We might add that the Vilna Gaon is not bothered by the clash in feelings. We often have mixed feelings and emotions throughout our lives. We can say, That's Life! Or, perhaps more accurately, That's Jewish Life. We break a glass at a wedding to remind us of the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and Yerushalayim specifically at the moment of our greatest joy. Shouldn't we be able to smile at the prune plum or the Anna apple that come out at this time of year?

This issue is apparently not simple. But what is? We need halachic guidelines as to how to cope with mixed emotions, rather than ignoring one or the other or suppressing one or the other.

In this particular issue, there is a range of opinions that allows us - perhaps - to handle things with a little flexibility, so that what we choose to do will be right for us, and with "on

whom to rely".

One last point to think about:

Why should there be so many different opinions on this issue? Why make such a big deal out of what seems almost trivial?

Because it isn't trivial. Both aspects of this issue are important. National mourning for the Churban... and expressing our appreciation to G-d.