With regard to the halakha itself, Rava said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. And Rava also said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. The Gemara remarks: And both of these rulings are intended as a leniency. And it is necessary for Rava to state both rulings, for had he taught us only that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, I would have said that the mourning practices are obligatory even from the New Moon, as maintained by Rabbi Meir. Therefore, Rava teaches us that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, that the restrictions of mourning do not apply until the week of the Ninth of Av.

And had he taught us only that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, I would have said that the prohibitions apply even after the fast, until the end of the week. Consequently, Rava teaches us that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. The prohibitions apply only until the end of the Ninth of Av itself, not afterward.

The mishna taught: On the eve of the Ninth of Av, a person may not eat two cooked dishes in one meal. Ray Yehuda said: They taught that one may not partake of a meal with two dishes only from six hours of the day and onward, but from six hours and earlier it is permitted. And Ray Yehuda also said: They taught that it is prohibited to eat two dishes only in the concluding meal before beginning the fast. However, in a non-concluding meal it is permitted to eat two cooked dishes.

The Gemara comments: And both of these rulings are intended as a leniency. And it is necessary for Ray Yehuda to state them both, for had he taught us that this halakha is referring only to the concluding meal, I would have said that this applies even from six hours and earlier. Ray Yehuda therefore teaches us that it applies only from six hours and onward. And had he taught us only that it is prohibited to eat two dishes from six hours and onward, I would have said that this applies even to a meal by which he does not stop eating. Ray Yehuda therefore teaches us that it applies only to the concluding meal.

The Gemara comments: It is taught in a baraita in accordance with the first version, and it is taught in a baraita in accordance with the second version. The Gemara elaborates: It is taught in a baraita in accordance with the second version, as follows: With regard to one who dines on the eve of the Ninth of Av, if he will eat another meal, he is permitted to eat meat and to drink wine during this first meal. But if he does not intend to eat another meal, he is prohibited to eat meat and to drink wine.

In the concluding meal – Ḥalakhah. When the eve of the Ninth of Av, it is prohibited to eat meat or drink wine during the last meal before the fast, if that meal is taken after midday. During that meal it is also prohibited to eat two cooked dishes. It is even customary to refrain from eating salted meat, fowl, and fish, and from drinking wine that has not yet fermented properly. If a single dish was cooked in two separate pots, the food is considered two cooked dishes. It is proper to act stringently and to refrain from eating even two foods cooked in the same pot, unless those two foods are regularly cooked in the same pot. Food that was cooked but could have been eaten raw is defined as a cooked dish for the purpose of this halakha. Some add that for this prohibition there is no difference between boiling and roasting (Rema; Shulḥan Arukh, Orah Hayim 552:1–3).
Prohibited to bathe – רבי יוחנן: The text found in many manuscripts, as well as the parallel baraita of the Tosafot, reads: With regard to any meal that is not being eaten in preparation for the Ninth of Av, it is permitted to eat meat and to drink wine, and it is permitted to bathe. Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, says in the name of his father: As long as it is permitted to eat, it is permitted to bathe.

Rashi cites both interpretations. The explanation of these two opinions is as follows. According to the Ramban, the first tanna maintains that once someone begins to eat his last meal before the fast of the Ninth of Av, it is prohibited for him to eat meat or to drink wine, and it is also prohibited for him to wash himself. Washing is prohibited because the benefit it provides lasts for a significant period of time, and therefore it would appear to be washing for the Ninth of Av itself. However, one is permitted to wear shoes and engage in the other activities that are prohibited on the Ninth of Av. Conversely, during the day, one is permitted to eat meat and to drink wine, and he may also wash himself at this stage. Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, disagrees with the initial ruling of the first tanna. Even if one has finished his last meal before the fast of the Ninth of Av, nevertheless, he is permitted to wash as long as he is still permitted to eat, i.e., until sunset.

According to the Ra’avad, the first tanna maintains that once someone has completed his last meal before the fast, during which it is prohibited for him to eat meat or to drink wine, it is prohibited for him to eat anything more, as he is considered to have accepted the fast upon himself, and it is for this reason that he is prohibited to wash. However, after eating the last meal before other fasts, during which it is permitted to consume meat and wine, one may not eat anymore at this stage. It is nevertheless permitted to wash. The explanation of the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, is the same as above.

All mitzvot practiced by a mourner – רבי יוחנן: One practical ramification of this principle that is not addressed by this baraita is the issue of donning phylacteries on the Ninth of Av. According to some early authorities, just as a mourner does not don phylacteries on the first day of mourning, nobody does phylacteries on the Ninth of Av (Ra’avad). Others argue that only the restrictions that apply to the entire seven days of mourning apply to the Ninth of Av, which means that phylacteries are worn on the Ninth of Av. Moreover, the mourning observed on the Ninth of Av does not override the Torah obligation to wear phylacteries (Rambam; Ritva). In actual practice, customs vary. Most Sephardic Jews don phylacteries on the Ninth of Av in the regular manner. Most Ashkenazic Jews do not phylacteries only after midday, when certain leniencies with regard to the mourning restrictions are allowed.

And reduce – רבי יוחנן: In the last meal before the fast of the Ninth of Av, one should adjust his regular habit and eat less than usual. Three adult males should not eat together, so as not to be obligated in the special blessing of zimmun (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 552:8).

All mitzvot practiced by a mourner are likewise practiced on the Ninth of Av – ד"ה לעמותת אשכולות אסתרו. As long as it is forbidden to wash oneself, to smear one’s body with oil, to wear leather shoes, or to engage in conjugal relations. It is likewise prohibited to read from the Torah, Prophets, or the Writings. One may not study Mishna, Gemara, midrash, halakhot, or aggadot. Even schoolchildren must abstain from their studies. However, it is permitted to read from the book of Job, the book of Lamentations, and prophecies of doom in Jeremiah. One may study the midrash on the book of Lamentations and the talmudic sections dealing with the destruction of the Temple. Some authorities render it prohibited for one to even think about the Torah sections that are prohibited for him to read and study. Nevertheless, it is permitted to read the Torah portions that have been incorporated into the daily liturgy, although it is customary to read some of those sections only after midday (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 552:4).
According to Rashi, the first tanna of the baraita permits one to study a biblical or talmudic section with which he is not familiar, as this study will cause him distress when he arrives at a passage that he does not understand (Rabbi Yehuda bar Natan).

As long as it is like peace-offerings – 
לִקְרוֹת הָרָﬠִים.

There are two versions of this passage: As long as it is like the peace-offerings, and As long as it is not like the peace-offerings. There is no practical difference between these two readings, as everyone agrees that peace-offerings may be eaten for two days and the intervening night, and that meat that has been heavily salted for that period of time no longer tastes like ordinary meat. According to the first reading, the Gemara is explaining how long heavily salted meat is considered as ordinary meat and is therefore included in the prohibition against eating meat in the last meal before the fast of the Ninth of Av. According to the alternative reading, the Gemara is referring to the time when heavily salted meat ceases to be treated as ordinary meat and is excluded from the prohibition.

The mishna taught that one may neither eat meat nor drink wine. A tanna taught in the Tosefta: However, one may eat heavily salted meat and drink wine from his press, i.e., wine that has not finished fermenting. The Gemara inquires: With regard to salted meat, how long must this meat remain in salt before it is permitted? Rav Hinnana bar Kahana said in the name of Shmuel: As long as it is like peace-offerings, which could be eaten for two days and one night after they were sacrificed. After this time has passed, it is no longer called meat. Therefore, if it was salted for longer than this, it may be eaten on the eve of the Ninth of Av.

The Gemara asks: And with regard to wine from his press, until when is wine considered from his press? As long as it is fermenting. A tanna taught in a baraita: Wine that is fermenting does not have a problem with regard to exposed liquids, as there is no concern that a snake will leave its venom in that wine. And how long is its fermenting period? Three days from the time the grapes were pressed.

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: This was the custom of Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Ilai. On the eve of the Ninth of Av, near the evening, they would bring him stale bread with salt, and he would sit.
And he would resemble one whose deceased relative is laid out unburied before him. 

Some commentaries note that this clause explains why it is permitted to act in the manner of a Torah scholar and refrain from working on the Ninth of Av (Rav Tzvi Hirsh Chajes). Elsewhere Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel stated that an ordinary individual may not act like a scholar in a matter that will garner him praise, but only in a manner that will simply cause him pain (ribi). Consequently, it is permitted to act as a scholar here because refraining from work on the Ninth of Av is a source of affliction, as he loses money.

Other commentaries offer two explanations for this prohibition. One should refrain from working on the Ninth of Av so as not to be involved in work and fail to experience properly the mourning of the day. Alternatively, one should not perform labor so as to preserve enough strength to observe the fast until its conclusion (Mikhmat).

And whose iniquities are upon their bones? Some commentaries explain that if one fails to mourn properly for Jerusalem, his punishment will be inflicted on his bones, as they will not take part in the resurrection that will accompany the rebuilding of the Temple (Ritva). This resurrection is promised only to those who mourn for Jerusalem and patiently await its salvation.

Others state that the iniquity of eating meat and drinking wine on the eve of the Ninth of Av will leave an imprint on an individual’s bones even after he is dead and his flesh has turned to dust (Maharsha).

We learned in a mishna there: In a place where people were accustomed to perform labor on the Ninth of Av, one performs labor. In a place where people were accustomed not to perform labor, one does not perform labor. And in all places, Torah scholars are idle and do not perform labor on the Ninth of Av. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: With regard to the Ninth of Av, a person should always conduct himself as a Torah scholar and refrain from performing labor. This is also taught in a baraita: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: A person should always conduct himself as a Torah scholar, so that he will feel the hardship of the fast.

It is taught in another baraita that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: Whoever eats and drinks on the Ninth of Av, although the prohibition was instituted by the Prophets, it is as though he eats and drinks on Yom Kippur. Rabbi Akiva says: Whoever performs labor on the Ninth of Av never sees a sign of a blessing from that work.

And the Sages say: Whoever performs labor on the Ninth of Av and does not mourn for Jerusalem will not see her future joy, as it is stated: “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all who mourn for her.” (Isaiah 66:10). From here it is stated: Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit and see her future joy, and whoever does not mourn for Jerusalem will not see her future joy. This is also taught in a baraita: Whoever eats meat or drinks wine in the meal before the Ninth of Av, about him the verse states: “And whose iniquities are upon their bones,” because the terror of the mighty was in the land of the living” (Ezekiel 32:27).
The Mishna taught: Rabbi Yehuda obligates one to overturn the bed, but the Rabbis did not agree with him. It is taught in a baraita that the Rabbinic said to Rabbi Yehuda: According to your statement, pregnant women and nursing women, who cannot sleep on the floor, what will become of them? Rabbi Yehuda said to them: I, too, spoke only with regard to those who are able.

This is also taught in another baraita: Rabbi Yehuda concedes to the Rabbis with regard to one who is unable to sleep on the floor, and the Rabbis concede to Rabbi Yehuda with regard to one who is able to do so. The Gemara asks: If so, what is the practical difference between them? The Gemara explains: The practical difference between them is the status of other beds.

As it is taught in a baraita: When the Rabbis said that a mourner is required to overturn the bed, they meant that he overturns not only his own bed, but also that he must overturn all the beds in the house. Rabbi Yehuda maintains that one must likewise overturn all the beds of one’s house on the Ninth of Av. Rava said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of the tanna of our mishna, and the Rabbis did not concede to Rabbi Yehuda at all, even with regard to one who is able. Therefore, there is no requirement to overturn one’s bed on the Ninth of Av.

The Mishna taught that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: There were no days as happy for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av and as Yom Kippur. The Gemara asks: Granted, Yom Kippur is a day of joy because it has the elements of pardon and forgiveness, and moreover, it is the day on which the last pair of tablets were given. However, what is the special joy of the fifteenth of Av? Rav Yehuda said that Shmu‘el said: This was the day on which the members of different tribes were permitted to enter one another’s tribe, by intermarriage. It was initially prohibited to intermarry between tribes, so as to keep each plot of land within the portion of the tribe that originally inherited it. This halakha was instituted by the Torah in the wake of a complaint by the relatives of the daughters of Zelophehad, who were worried that if these women married men from other tribes, the inheritance of Zelophehad would be lost from his tribe (see Numbers 36:1-12).

What did they expound, in support of their conclusion that this halakha was no longer in effect? The verse states: “This is the matter that the Lord has commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying: Let them marry whom they think best; only into the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry” (Numbers 36:5). They derived from the verse that this matter shall be practiced only in this generation, when Eretz Yisrael was divided among the tribes, but afterward members of different tribes were permitted to marry. On the day this barrier separating the tribes was removed, the Sages established a permanent day of rejoicing.

Rav Yosef said that Rav Nahman said: The fifteenth of Av was the day on which the tribe of Benjamin was permitted to enter the congregation of the Jewish people. After the tragic incident at Gibeah, for which the tribe of Benjamin was blamed, the other tribes ostracized them. They took an oath to prohibit themselves from marrying a member of the tribe of Benjamin, as it is stated: “And the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying: None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife” (Judges 21:1). The Gemara asks: What did they expound that enabled them to dissolve this oath? Rav said: They understood the verse literally, as it states: “None of us,” and not: None of our children, i.e., the oath applied only to the generation that took the oath, not their descendants.
The day on which the deaths in the wilderness ceased – רַּבְּבִּי הַיָּמִים. Many commentaries cite the following midrash:

Every year, on the eighth of Av, a herald proclaimed in the camp of the Jewish people in the wilderness: Let each individual dig his grave. Everyone dug his own grave and spent the night in it. The next day, a second herald proclaimed: Let the living separate themselves from the dead, and whoever was still alive would rise up from his grave. Every year about fifteen thousand Israelites died. However, on the ninth of Av of the fortieth year, all those who had lain in a grave rose up again in the morning. At first, they thought that they had miscalculated, and that it was not yet the ninth of Av. Consequently, they slept in their graves every night for a week. When the fifteenth of Av arrived, the full moon that shone that night convinced them that the Ninth of Av had passed and that all those who were destined to die had already perished (Rashi; Tosafot).

The early commentaries disagree as to whether all those who were supposed to die indeed perished in the wilderness or whether some of those who were supposed to die during the fortieth year were pardoned. In commemoration of the end of the period of mourning, on the fifteenth of Av, God’s direct communication with Moses was restored, and a holiday was declared that is still observed today (Tosafot on Bava Batra 121a).

Although God did in fact speak to Moses during the travels of the Jews through the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 2:22), it was only after the last members of the generation of the wilderness had died that the divine revelation took the form of a speech delivered to me, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me, saying” (Deuteronomy 2:16–17). The seventeenth-century German commentary Furerei hagodol (17). This indicates that only then, after the last members of that generation had died, was God’s speech delivered to me, i.e., Moses, but not beforehand. When the Jews realized that the decree that God would not speak to Moses had been lifted, they established that day as a permanent day of rejoicing.

Ulla said: The fifteenth of Av was the day on which King Hoshea, son of Ela, canceled the guards that Jeroboam, son of Nevat, placed on the roads so that the Jews would not ascend to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage Festival. And Hoshea, son of Ela, said:

The day on which the deaths in the wilderness ceased – רַּבְּבִּי הַיָּמִים. The Sages of the Mishna in Yavne instituted the institution of the day on which the deaths in the wilderness ceased. They instituted, Who is good and does good, at Yavne – תַּמּוּ מָר. The Sages of the Mishna in Yavne instituted the institution of: Who is good and does good, for after Meals, after those who died at Beitar were brought to burial (Rambam Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Beinahot 2:1).

They may ascend to wherever they wish, i.e., they may go to Jerusalem, Bethel, or Dan.

The speech delivered to me – דִּיבְּרֵי הַיָּמִים. Although God did in fact speak to Moses during the travels of the Jews through the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 2:22), it was only after the last members of the generation of the wilderness had died that the divine revelation took the form of a speech delivered to me, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me, saying” (Deuteronomy 2:16–17).

Rav Mattana said: There was an additional salvation on this day, as it was the day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial, several years after the battle at Beitar (see Gittin 57a). And Rav Mattana said: On the same day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial, they instituted the blessing: Who is good and does good, at Yavne. Who is good, thanking God that the corpses did not decompose while awaiting burial, and does good, thanking God that they were ultimately brought to burial.

They may ascend to wherever they wish – לְאֵיזֶה מַקיֵי מִדְבָּר נַפְּשֵׁים בְּיַבְנֶה. Hoshea was an evil king, as Rashi notes, as the verse states that Hoshea, son of Ela, “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him” (I Kings 17:2). Hoshea was not considered as evil as the kings before him because he removed Jeroboam’s guards, who were stationed to prevent people from ascending to Jerusalem on the pilgrimage Festivals. However, he was evil nevertheless, as he let the people choose whether to go to Jerusalem or attend the idolatrous sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan. In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is stated that Hoshea was punished for presenting the people of Israel with this choice. During his reign, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

The day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial – והָיָה יוֹם לַכְּבָּרָה בַּבּוֹ. Some commentators ask: The fifteenth of Av was evidently celebrated as a holiday during the Second Temple period, as the baraita cited below describes how the daughters of the High Priest, his deputy, and the priest anointed for war would each borrow cloth from each other on that day, and these priestly offices ceased with the destruction of the Temple. How, then, could the holiday celebrated on the fifteenth of Av have been instituted to commemorate the interment of the slain of Beitar, a joyous event that took place only after the destruction of the Temple? The Gemara in Av suggests that the baraita is referring to the celebration that accompanied Yom Kippur, whereas the holiday celebrated on the fifteenth of Av was in fact instituted after the Temple was destroyed. Alternatively, the holiday was indeed instituted in the time of the Second Temple, and Rav Mattana is saying that because several joyous events had already occurred on the fifteenth of Av, another joyous event took place on that same date. Moreover, he explains why the day is observed as a semi-holiday even nowadays.