# ***Purim Laws and Traditions***

***Ta'anit Esther - The Fast of Esther - Wednesday, February 28th (Starts 5:40 AM - Ends 6:55 PM)***

The day before Purim, the 13th day of Adar, is known as Ta'anit Esther, the Fast Day of Esther. This day was set aside by Haman for the execution of all Jews in the Persian Empire – men, women, children! It commemorates the fast which Queen Esther, Mordechai and all the Jews observed in their appeal to Hashem for rescue. Observing this day serves as a recurring reminder to the Jewish people that G-d is ready and willing to answer our prayers when we turn to Him with all our hearts.

Eating breakfast on Wednesday, February 28th before 5:40 am is permissible as long as one had specific intent to rise early to do so.

***Reading of the Megillah - Wednesday, February 28th (7:00 PM) & Thursday, March 1st*** **(7:30 AM)**

The Megillah is a vivid account of the story of Esther and how we were miraculously saved from the villainous Haman. Remembering this great event from the past will serve as a source of strength and inspiration for the future. Since all Jews – men, women, and children – were to be destroyed by Haman, the mitzvah of reading the Megillah applies to all, both in the evening and in the morning.

***Seudat Purim - Purim Dinner - Chofetz Chayim's Purim In China, Thursday, March 1st (5:00 PM)***

Although the mood on Purim night is festive, the mitzvah of the Purim meal is observed during Purim Day (which usually coincides with our Purim celebration). The entire family gathers around the festive table; some light candles (although no blessing is recited) at the table for the Purim feast, fulfilling the words of the Megillah: "Layihudim Hayta Orah V'simcha." (Purim brought light and joy for our people.)

***Mishloach Manot – The Sending of Food***

This mitzvah is observed on Purim Day by sending a gift to at least one person. The gift consists of a minimum of two types of food or drink which need no further cooking or preparation.

In Shushan we re-committed ourselves to the Torah as a loving and united people. The giving and sharing of gifts reinforces this feeling of Ahavat Yisroel (love and compassion for all our brethren).

***Matanot Li'Evyonim – Gifts for the Poor***

Purim is the most joyous day on our calendar. A fellow Jew who is in financial need cannot truly experience the joy of Purim. It is a mitzvah to shower him with gifts on Purim, to lift his spirits so that he, too, can enjoy the Simcha of Purim. In the shul on Purim night you will find a special plate which is marked "Gifts for the Poor." All monies placed in it are transmitted directly to needy families.

In the past years we have sent our Purim monies to Od Yosef Chai, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping needy Jewish families in Jerusalem. Our funds raised in Tucson will be distributed to families in need on

Purim Day after we call in the amount that we raised. Checks should be written to Od Yosef Chai.

***One-Half (1/2) Shekel***

During the days of our Temple, each Jewish male presented a contribution of 1/2 Shekel. It made no difference whether one was rich or poor, the amount of 1/2 Shekel remained the same. This mitzvah brought a feeling of equality and love for one another. In order to commemorate the collection of the 1/2 Shekel, which took place each year before Passover, we perform the mitzvah of giving the 1/2 Shekel on the fast day of Esther even today. At the Megillah readings, there will be a bowl in the shul marked "1/2 Shekel." In it will be 3 silver 1/2 dollars; the Rabbi will explain how to perform the mitzvah.

***Masquerade***

Purim is the most lively day in the Jewish calendar. Down through the generations young and old have dressed in costumes in honor of the day. These costumes certainly serve to stimulate a festive mood, but their real purpose strikes at the very core of our Jewishness.

The Talmud teaches us that deep in the heart of every Jew there is a profound feeling of Jewish pride and closeness to G-d. At times it is difficult to transform these feelings into action. Today, many of our people seem far removed from identifying with our tradition as Jews. However, the exterior appearance does not alter the deep-felt commitment of every Jew. Thus, when we don our costumes, we are saying to G-d that, in essence, despite our exterior appearance, deep down each of us is proud of who we are.

## PURIM SCHEDULE

### Fast of Esther - Wednesday, February 28th

- Shacharis - 6:45 am
- Mincha - 5:45 pm

### Purim Night - Wednesday, February 28th

**- Megillah Reading - 7:00 pm**

### Purim Day - Thursday, March 1st

- Shacharis - 7:00 am
**- Megillah Reading - 7:30 am**
- Mincha - 4:40 pm
- Purim Dinner & Celebration - 5:00 pm
- Maariv After Purim Dinner and Celebration

CONGREGATION CHOFETZ CHAYIM