

Dear Keshet Family,

Purim is a time of joy and celebration both in our community and at home. In addition to coming together with family, friends and members of the community to celebrate, this festive atmosphere is also cultivated through a number of mitzvot we perform on and around Purim.

Below, please find a detailed explanation of all the laws and customs surrounding the Purim holiday. If anyone has any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

1. תענית אסתר - The Fast of Esther- Purim is preceded by the Fast of Esther, which begins at dawn on the 13th of Adar and continues until nightfall. This fast commemorates the day on which Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people, and the battle that ensued where we defended ourselves against our attackers. **This year, the 13th of Adar is Monday, March 9. The Fast begins Monday morning at 6:04 AM and ends at 7:30 PM.** However, it is customary to wait until after the reading of the megillah on Wednesday night before eating, unless one is too sick to concentrate on the megillah. (note: with Taanit Esther and Purim this year being after daylight savings time begins, it is definitely possible people may need to have a small bite before megillah reading. Please feel free to be in touch to discuss should the need arise.)

2. Zecher LeMachatzit HaShekel- On the afternoon of Ta'anit Esther (or at any other time during the month of Adar), it is customary to give tzedaka in commemoration of the half shekel that was given when the Temple stood. In the Ashkenazic community, it is customary to give three coins that are half dollars. We will have half dollars in shul on the Fast day and on Purim evening and morning for those who wish to perform this custom at that time. Merely exchange your donation (however much it is) for the half dollars, lift them up to acquire them, and place them back into tzedaka. Sephardim are accustomed to give the value of 9.6 grams of silver (according to current market value).

On Purim itself (Monday night and Tuesday), there are four Mitzvot to fulfill:

1. **Reading the Megillah-** Both at night and during the day, everyone is obligated to read (or hear) every word of the Megillah - men, women, and children who have reached the age of understanding. Very small children who require supervision should not be in the shul during Megillah reading. Please note that this year the schedule for Megillah readings at Keshet will be as follows:

Monday night:

Maariv followed by Megillah - 7:25 PM

There will be a youth event during megillah reading for those kids too young to attend megillah reading. Following megillah reading there will be a short costume parade throughout the shul for all costumes children to show off their costumes.

CSS has requested that for security reasons members should not wear masks or carry toy weapons.

Women's reading - 8:50 PM

Late reading at Congregation Ahavath Torah - 9:30 PM

Thursday Morning:

Shacharit - 6:30 AM with megillah reading at approx. 6:45 AM

(Late shacharit minyanim with Megillah readings at Ahavath Torah at 8:30 AM, and East Hill Synagogue at 9:45 AM.)

Family Megillah reading - 10 AM at shul

One should have intention to fulfill their obligation via the reader's blessings. We recite "Shehechyanu" before both readings - in the morning, one should have intention to include the other mitzvot of the day: Mishloach Manot, Matanot L'evyonim and the Purim Seudah. (Sephardim only recite Shehechyanu before the evening reading.)

2. Matanot L'evyonim-Gifts to the Poor- On Purim day, every person is obligated to give charity to two poor Jews. This can only be fulfilled during the day and not at night, though one can give the money to a messenger any time on or before Purim day in order that the messenger give the money to the poor during the day of Purim itself. The charity can be money or food. This year, we will be distributing money locally through Project Ezra, and in Israel through Lema'an Achai. If one wishes to allocate funds for Matanot L'evyonim in advance (which also allows for doing so more discreetly, out of the public eye), one can do so on the shul website, by using the link in the matanot l'evyonim email that was sent out, or by mailing/dropping off a check to Ruth in the office. Otherwise, one may hand matanot l'evyonim directly to me in shul on Purim.

It is proper to increase one's gifts to the poor on Purim, both in the amount of money and the number of poor people. One should not be particular on Purim, and should give to all who request. Each family member should give themselves, and not rely on the charity given by a spouse or parent. One may not use Ma'aser (Tithe) money for this mitzvah.

3. Mishloach Manot- Sending of Portions- Every person is obligated to send at least two food portions to one Jew. This can only be fulfilled during the day and not the night. Each family member should send portions, and not rely on the portions sent by a spouse or a parent. The portions need to be items that are fit for eating or drinking as is (without further cooking). The two portions also should be different from each other; however, they need not be two different berachot - it is enough that they have different tastes, such as two types of cake, or two different types of meat, etc.

One should not send portions to someone who is in the year of mourning for their parents, yet one may send to the other members of the mourner's family. Those in mourning, however, are obligated to send portions.

The Keshet-sponsored Mishloach Manot does not suffice in fulfilling our mitzvah of Mishloach Manot, since we are partnering with the entire community to purchase the food items. In

addition to the Keshet Mishloach Manot, please be sure to give at least two food items to at least one other Jew on Purim day.

4. **Seudat Purim** -The Festive Purim Meal- All are obligated to have a festive meal on Purim day. The bulk of the meal should be consumed before sunset- 6:57 PM.

The Talmud records that "One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim, until one cannot distinguish between 'cursed be Haman' and 'blessed be Mordechai'". There are many opinions regarding this statement; the most prevalent custom is to drink slightly more than usual until one reaches a state of happiness for the festival and gratitude to God. Some are accustomed to fall asleep due to the more than normal quantity of wine, and thus reach a state [asleep] of being unable to distinguish between Haman and Mordechai. Those who do plan on drinking should do so in a manner which sets a positive example for those around them, especially our children. Of course, those under the legal drinking age and those who are driving should not under any circumstances participate in this aspect of the seudah.

We will have a mincha maariv at shul on Purim day at 6:45 PM.

Finally, as always, on Purim day everyone is invited to our backyard for hot dogs, from 12:30-2:30 PM. Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Again, if anyone has any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Chag Purim Sameach!

RAB