

Laws and Customs of Purim

Taanis Esther

The fast of Esther is a remembrance of the fast our ancestors observed when they went to war against their enemies on the 13th day of Adar. According to the Chofetz Chaim this fast serves as a reminder to us that G-D sees and listens when one reaches out to Him by fasting and repenting with a full heart in times of hardship just as if He did for Mordechai and Esther and the Jews of their time. This year the fast is on Wednesday, fast starts 5:33AM, and fast is over 6:56.

Machitzis Hashekel

There is an obligation to give half a coin to Tzedakah before Purim. This commemorates the annual half shekel coin the Jews gave in the month of Adar for the sacrifices in the Temple. The reason we give 3 half coins is because in Parshas Ki-Sisa it says תרומה 3 times. The custom is to give this money before Mincha on Taanis Esther. Each coin should have the value of half of the primary currency of the country in which the Mitzvah is being performed. Such as half Shekel in Israel, or a half dollar in the U.S.

Megillah Reading

It is an obligation to hear the reading of Megillahs Esther on Purim night and Purim day. The obligation is to hear every word of the Megillah. Therefore a practical method of ensuring that one hears the entire Megillah and does not miss one word is to follow along with the Ba'al Korei by pointing to each word as he reads it.

Mishloach Manos

There is a Mitzvah on the day of Purim to send at least two types of food to one friend. It may be two types of food or drink and it should be food which is ready to eat. It is best that each of the two foods or drinks should be a respectable amount. *Even if you are sending a Young Israel baskets for many people you should still give one person Mishloach Manos.*

Matanos L'evyonim

One of the great Mitzvos of Purim is Matanos L'evyonim (gifts to the poor). The obligation is to give at least 5 dollars each to two poor people on the day of Purim. One cannot use their Ma'aser funds to fulfill the minimum amount necessary for the Mitzvah of Matanos Le'evyonim. According to Halacha one should spend more money on Matanos Le'evyonim than Mishloach Manos.

Purim Meal

One is obligated to have a festive meal on Purim day. The majority of the meal should be eaten before sunset. It is also appropriate that candles be lit at the meal.

Davening on Purim

- **Tefillin:** One should not remove his tefillin before the reading of the Megillah.
- **Tachanun:** Tachanun is omitted on both the 14th and 15th of Adar
- **Hallel:** Hallel is not recited on Purim because the miracle of Purim was not a complete redemption from exile and the Megillah reading takes the place of Hallel.
- **La'me'natzei'zch:** On both the 14th and 15th days of Adar, La'me'natzie'ch (after Ashrei) and Kei Erech Apayim (at the conclusion of Shacharis before taking out the Torah) are not recited.
- **Al HaNissim in Shmoneh Esrei:** The Tefillah of Al HaNissim is recited during Shmoneh Esrei both at night and on the day of Purim.