

## **Laws and Customs of the Month of Adar**

As many of you are aware tomorrow is the first day of the Hebrew month, Adar. The Talmud tells us that when the month of Adar is ushered in, there is a special mitzvah to increase in joy. The major Jewish holiday is this month is Purim, which will take place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar in Jerusalem.

In most years, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar is known as **Taanis Esther (Fast of Esther)**. This year the fast of Esther will take place on Thursday 2/25/10 (11<sup>th</sup> of Adar). This is because Purim falls out on a Sunday and we do not fast on Shabbos or Friday so we push it back to Thursday. The fast begins at 5:24 AM and ends at 6:17 PM. No eating or drinking is permitted on this day. This fast was instituted because in the times of Mordechai and Esther the Jews needed to defend themselves on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar and they wanted to get mercy from G-d to protect them, therefore they fasted to beseech G-d to protect them from their enemies. We fast as a remembrance of those times.

The Shabbos before Purim is known as **Shabbos Zachor (Shabbos of Remembrance)**. This year it will be on 2/27/10. Make every effort to attend this reading. This is because we read from the Torah on that Shabbos three verses that have to do with remembering the wickedness of the Amalek nation. Once a year, we are commanded to remember those events. The Rabbis instituted to read those verses on the Shabbos before Purim because the tradition is that Haman came from Amalek and in order to juxtapose the actions of Amalek and the actions of Haman we read them very close to another.

On Saturday night, 2/27/10, the Purim holiday will be upon us. It is a mitzvah (commandment) to hear the Megillah (Scroll of Esther) read at night after dark. This mitzvah is incumbent upon men, women and children to come to synagogue and hear the Megillah.

On Sunday, 2/28/10, is **Purim Day**. There are four mitzvos that we are to perform. The first is there is a mitzvah to hear the **Megillah reading** again. The next is **Mishloach Manos (giving food gifts to others)**. The proper way to give is to have two food items (ex. Bottle of wine and a fruit or Challah and wine) to at least one person. The food items should be items that you can use at a meat meal. The next is a specific obligation to give money to poor people. This is called **Matanos Levyonim**. The proper way is to give an amount of money that will give two poor people two nice meals. If you would eat a nice meal for \$10, then you should give \$20. The fourth of the mitzvos is to have a big **Purim meal**. It is preferable to have a meat meal. Some say that there is an idea to have wine at the table and to share Torah thoughts and singing praises of G-d at this meal as well.

On Monday, 3/1/10, is a day known as **Shushan Purim**. The Jews in Shushan (capital city in the Persian Empire) continued fighting until the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, therefore they celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Today, any city that was walled from the time of Joshua celebrates Purim on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. Today, Jerusalem is the most major city that celebrates on that day.