

A quick resume of those things about which we need to know for Purim in Kenton United:

Wednesday – Taanit Esther

The Fast of Esther begins from day break which is 5.02 a.m. We will be reading Shacharit in the Shul at 6.30 a.m. The early time is because we will be reciting additional Selichot and reading the Torah for the Taanit. We fast as a reminder of how Esther and all the Jews in the Purim story fasted for three days on hearing about the decree against them. But there is a difference. Esther fasted on Pesach, we fast for one day before Purim.

The goal of the fast is to focus our minds on Teshuva and good deeds. Mincha will be read at 5.45 p.m with the addition of the Torah reading for a fast day and the *Aneinu* insert in the Amidah.

The prominent custom is to continue the fast until after the Megillah reading. If difficulty is experienced one may break the fast after 6.27 p.m. before Maariv.

It is a custom to give the *Machazit Hashekel* just prior to Purim. We use the money collected to distribute to the poor and charities on Purim itself. The prevailing minhag is to give three halves of the money of the country. In our case it makes £1.50. This is in memory of the original half a Shekel given in Temple times during the month of Adar for the upkeep of the Temple.

At 6.40 p.m. we will recite Maariv followed straight away with the Megillah reading ably interpreted by our very proficient reader; David Harris.

It is customary to dress up in Purim costumes and masks for the Megillah reading. We do this to symbolise the hidden face of G-d in the Purim miracle.

Care must be taken to listen to every single word of the reading. Noise is restricted to drowning out the name of Haman alone.

Thursday morning Shacharit will be at 6.30 a.m. We read the special portion from the end of Parashat Beshalach which speaks about the attack from the Amalekites against the Israelites as they departed from Egypt. This is followed by the Megillah reading.

At 10.00 a.m there will be another Megillah reading in the Shul for those people who were unable to attend the earlier one. All are very welcome to come along.

There is a Mitzvah to send *Mishloach Manot*- two items of foodstuff to at least one person on Purim day. They should comprise of at least two separate foodstuffs with different brachot. E.g: box of biscuits (the bracha is Borei Minei Mezonot) and little bottle of wine (the bracha is Borei pri Hagafen)

There is a Mitzvah to give *matanot le-eyyonim*- Gifts to the poor on Purim day to at least two poor people. The preference is to give directly to the poor on Purim day itself.

There is a mitzvah on Purim afternoon to sit down and enjoy a Purim Seudah- a festive meal together with family and friends and at that meal to say Lechaim. The best time to sit down to the meal is late in the afternoon just before sunset and to draw out the meal into the nighttime into Shushan Purim.

We must also remember in all our Amidot and Birchat Hamazon to add the insert Al HaNissim – thanking Him for all the kindnesses that He wrought for our Forefathers.

Purim Sameach- Happy Purim!!