

Overview

Halacha Highlight

Siman 686 Seif 1:

Regarding Chanukah and Purim it is permitted to fast before and after the holiday.

- ❖ Eulogies are also permitted. Bach asserts that it is prohibited to fast before Chanukah. (M.B. 1)

Siman 686 Seif 2:

We fast on the 13th of Adar. If Purim falls on Sunday the fast is observed on Thursday. This fast is not obligatory; therefore, one could be lenient in times of need. For example, a pregnant woman, a nursing woman or someone who is ill, although he is not in danger if these people are in a lot of pain they should not fast and repay the fast some other time. This is true even if it is merely his eyes that ache. Other healthy people should not separate themselves from the tzibbur. When Purim falls on Sunday so that the fast is observed on Thursday and a bris milah is performed on that day it is permitted to eat at that bris milah and the next day on Friday those who ate should fast.

- ❖ Since in the days of Purim they needed to go to battle and whenever the Jewish People go out to battle they would fast. The reason it is named for Esther is to recall that Hashem pays attention to every person who repents with all his heart. (M.B. 2)
- ❖ One who did not realize Ta'anis Esther was observed on Thursday and ate and that night realized that he was supposed to have fasted must fast on Friday. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ We do not recite צדקתך Shabbos when Purim falls on Sunday just as tachanun is not recited on Erev Purim. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ It is only the one whose eyes hurt who must be in great pain but a pregnant woman does not fast even if she is not in pain. Elya Rabba was stringent about this matter but even he is lenient for a woman for thirty days after she delivers. (M.B. 4)
- ❖ According to Yeshuos Yaakov the requirement to make up the fast is limited to one whose eyes hurt since he is essentially obligated to fast but a pregnant or nursing woman who are exempt from fasting are not required to make up the fast but this does not seem to be Bach's position. (M.B. 5)
- ❖ Even one who is traveling for whom fasting is difficult must fast. (M.B. 6)
- ❖ All those invited to the meal may eat even in the morning but they must fast on the following day. Taz and Elya Rabba disagree and contend that it is prohibited to eat when the fast is observed; even when it is observed early and the meal should be held at night. However, the ba'alei bris are permitted to eat on Thursday after the bris and are not required to make up the fast the next day. Pri Megadim writes that one who follows Rema's lenient position does not lose. (M.B. 7)

Siman 686 Seif 3:

Some fast for three days in commemoration of Esther's fast.

- ❖ Meaning one should fast on Monday, Thursday and Monday after Purim. (M.B. 8)
- ❖ When Adar arrives we increase our joy and someone who has a court case with a gentile should schedule the trial for Adar. (M.B. 8)
- ❖ Citizens of a city may establish for themselves a "Purim" in commemoration of a miracle that occurred. If the miracle occurred in Adar and one pledged to celebrate a "Purim," in a leap year it is observed in Adar II unless it occurred in Adar I. (M.B. 8)

Taanis Esther

Shulchan Aruch Siman 686 Seif 2

מתענין בי"ג באדר

We fast on the 13th of Adar

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ב' ט) mentions that obligation to fast on the 13th of Adar. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ב) explains that the Jews gathered together to fight their enemies on the 13th of Adar. He then mentions a Mechilta that teaches that when the Jewish People fought Amalek Moshe Rabbeinu fasted; therefore, it can be assumed that the Jewish People in the Purim story also fasted in advance of their battle. The reason the fast is called Taanis Esther is to raise our awareness that Hashem sees and hears each person in his time of distress as he fasts and repents as occurred in the Purim story. According to some authorities (נ"י חיי משה בשם Taanis Esther represents an enactment that was instituted after the completion of the Talmud since the fast is not mentioned explicitly in the Gemara. According to others, the words (Megilas Esther 9:31) דברי הצומות—words of fasting—refers to Taanis Esther.

Poskim note that Taanis Esther is fundamentally different than the other fasts that are observed over the course of the year. Generally, fast days commemorate a tragic occurrence in history, e.g. the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash or the execution of Gedaliah ben Achikam. Taanis Esther, on the other hand, commemorates that fact that in the Purim story the Jewish People fasted and their tefilos were answered. For that reason when the 13th of Adar falls on Friday or Shabbos the fast is observed on Thursday. This is in contrast to Tisha B'Av, for example, which if it falls on Shabbos the fast is pushed off until after Shabbos. The reason Tisha B'Av is pushed later is that we prefer to delay commemorating a tragedy rather than commemorate it earlier. The fact that Taanis Esther is observed earlier rather than later indicates that it does not commemorate a tragedy (חיי משה).

Stories to Share

The Fast of Esther

ש"ע תרפ"ו, א': "ואם חל פורים ביום א' שמתענין ביום ה' שלפניו וחל בו ברית מילה..."

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was very careful to always fast on Taanis Esther, even when he was weak. One year when Purim was on Sunday and Taanis Esther on the previous Thursday, Rav Shlomo Zalman was feeling especially unwell. As was often the case at the end of his life, he was slated to preside as sandek at a bris that day. As we find on today's amud, the Rema permits even those who attend a bris to break their fast afterward if it is held on Taanis Esther which was not on the thirteenth of Adar. Although others argue, it is certainly permitted for the ba'alei bris—including the sandek—to break his fast. Since Rav Shlomo Zalman was feeling so weak, he considered permitting himself to break his fast that morning, prior to the bris. He needed to test the students of Kol Torah as usual, and felt that he lacked the strength to give the test properly.

He sent one of the students to bring him a drink, but the moment it was placed before him he changed his mind, saying, "I will test the students and Hashem will help me fast until the bris."

When someone asked Rav Shlomo Zalman whether he could go to his dentist appointment on Taanis Esther, the rav permitted this. "Although it is possible that you will unwittingly swallow some water due to the treatment, since you are there for medical treatment and the water swallowed is part of the treatment, it is permitted."

הליכות שלמה, פורים, פי"ח, הערה 20, ועי' מ"ב, מ"ב, ס' תקס"ז, ס"ק י"א, וי"ב