

Zayin Adar: A Day to Honor the Work of Chesed shel Emes



As members of a chevra kadisha, we do our work *b'tzina*, modestly and quietly. Many of us do not even make our membership in this sacred society known.

However, one day a year, some chevros come together publicly, often inviting members of the community to join in honoring the mitzvah of chesed shel emes and those who perform it.

That day is **Zayin Adar**, the seventh day of the month of Adar, which in 2023 falls on Tuesday, February 28.

Zayin Adar is the *yahrzeit* of Moshe Rabbeinu, who personally involved himself with transporting the remains of Yosef from Mitzrayim and, as a reward, whose body was cared for by the ultimate Provider of chesed shel emes: Hashem Himself. By personally tending to the burial of Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem not only declared the extraordinary merits of his most trusted servant, He also communicated the significance of the work of caring for the deceased.

For this reason, Zayin Adar has become the day that we rededicate ourselves to this unique mitzvah, honoring the work itself as well as those with whom we perform it.

The following customs are classically kept by chevra kadisha members on this day.

Fasting. It is common practice to fast from *alos hashachar* until *tzeis hakoachavim*, from dawn till nightfall. Some only fast until *chatzos*. Those who cannot fast can give tzedakah instead. Those who will fast should accept the fast upon themselves at minchah on Monday.

Personal Introspection. It is appropriate to reflect on our obligation to treat those in our care in the most dignified manner, Some chevros review and consider ways to strengthen the commitment to *kovod hameis* and update the practices and procedures. Some visit the *beis hakvaros* and ask forgiveness of those interred for any slight we may have shown them.

Special Minchah. On Zayin Adar itself, minchah includes selichos (available below) and the leining of the kria on a taanis: Vayechal (Shemos 32:11-14, 34:1-10).

Seuda. Members of the chevra kadisha and community rabbis share a festive seuda. In some communities, the public is also invited. Divrei chizuk and divrei his'orerus, words of appreciation and inspiration, are delivered.

Learning Mishnayos. It is a minhag in many chevros to make a siyum mishnayos on Zayin Adar.