

# Igud Harabbanim / RAA

## פורים תשפ"א

### When Purim occurs on Friday

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This year, with the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar falling on Friday, changes to the regular order of Purim remain somewhat minimal, as outlined below. The major changes will be experienced only in cities that qualify as מוקף חומה מימות יהושע בן נון, walled at the time of Yehoshua's entry into the land of Israel, most notably Yerushalaim. Those cities, which usually read Megillas Esther on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, cannot do so this year, since the 15<sup>th</sup> is Shabbos and the Megillah is not read on Shabbos. Their Purim therefore spreads itself out over a 3-day period, from Friday through Sunday, as discussed below.

### Ta'anis Esther

The fast commemorates Esther's request that the Jews of Shushan fast on her behalf when she undertook the dangerous mission of entering the king's throne room uninvited and pleading for her people (Esther 4:16). Though that fast actually took place on Pesach (Talmud Megillah 15a), we observe it on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar because: 1) We don't decree a fast day in the month of Nisan, and 2) the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar additionally memorializes the Jews' battle against Haman's forces on the day originally set for the Jews' annihilation (R"osh Megillah 1:1).

### Fasting

1. The Halachos this year regarding fasting take into account the possible presence of the Corona virus and its weakening effect on the body. Thus:
  - a. Anyone who is symptomatic should not fast.

- b. Anyone who tested positive on the viral test (showing current infection) should not fast, even if not symptomatic.
  - c. Anyone with fever above 101 degrees Fahrenheit should not fast.
  - d. People in quarantine should fast, unless they suspect that they are symptomatic.
2. Any Choleh – sick person – who feels very weak should not fast.
  3. Nursing and pregnant women do not fast. (Ram" a OC 686:2)
  4. Though technically the fast ends at 6:28 pm (NYC time), one is not permitted to eat until after hearing the Megillah reading.

## **Machatzis Ha'shekel**

The Poskim mention the Minhag of giving a half-Shekel to Tzedaka prior to Purim, which commemorates the Mitzvah during the days of the Bais Hamikdash that each man donate a half-Shekel towards the purchase of the communal offerings. Since this was done during Adar, we do it in Adar as well; moreover, since the word "Terumah" – "lifting up," i.e., donation – appears three times in the Parsha, we give three coins (Ram" a OC 694:1). The custom is to give on Ta'anis Esther at Mincha time three half-coins of the realm; in the UK three half-pounds Sterling, in the EU three half-Euros, and the USA three half-dollars. The money generally is then given out on Purim to Aniyim, alongside the Matanos La'evyonim.

## **Megillah Reading**

Men and women are both required to listen to Megillas Esther. Though the reading is a time-dependent Mitzvah, from which women are usually exempt, the Megillah represents one of the exceptions to this principle, because as the Gemara explains, אף הן היו באותו הנס – they, too, participated in the miraculous salvation from Haman's plot.

Parents customarily bring children to the Megillah reading, as part of their Chinuch, and indeed many things that evening captivate the children: Dressing up in costumes, banging Haman, and the sheer excitement of the day. At the same time, each adult is required to hear every word of the reading; it is thus incumbent on parents to properly monitor their children that they remain seated and quiet throughout the K'riah. Additionally, parents must ensure that the 'klapping' of Haman continue for a reasonable length of time and no more. This all implies that very young children, under age 5 or 6, who cannot sit still during the approx. 50 minutes of the reading, should not be brought to shul.

## **Purim Day**

This year we will א"י be privileged to keep all the Mitzvos of the day, although in a somewhat compressed manner. If someone missed the reading of Parshas Zachor this past Shabbos, they can make it up by listening to the Torah leining on Purim morning, ויבא עמלק, (Mogen

Avraham 685). The Megillah leining follows immediately afterwards, preceded by all three Brachos.

**Matanos L'evyonim** – The Mitzvah consists of giving a gift of money to at least two poor people. The minimum amount of the gift is a subject of some debate; it is best to give each recipient sufficient money to buy a meal appropriate for Simchas Purim (see Mishnah Berurah 694:2). In contemporary terms, this would imply about \$10 each, or \$20 in total. On the other hand, the Poskim stress that it is far better to give Matanos generously to Evyonim, the poor, than to give excess Mishloach Manos.

**Mishloach Manos** – Here the obligation consists of two foods to one person. That is the extent of it; there is no requirement to give everyone on the block, every relative and Mechutan, members of your shul and bungalow colony, your business associates, people you carpool with, etc., etc. I have also not found any reference to “themes” in the entire Halachic literature on Purim. The text in the Posuk says: משלוח מנות איש לרעהו, “the sending of (two) foods, one man to his friend.” Clearly, this describes a fairly minimal amount, one that does not burden the recipient with large amounts of unneeded and unwanted cookies, hamantashen, and other Chometz just a few weeks before Pesach, enormous wads of wrapping paper, and enough sugary candy to keep all the dentists employed for the next six months. So perhaps this year, with Purim on a Friday, and less time than usual available to drive around delivering Mishloach Manos, we will confine ourselves to one or two meaningful offerings, perhaps to a family whose income was impaired in the pandemic.

**Seudas Purim** – This is where we act differently this year. Normally, the Minhag is to daven Mincha before the Seudah and then continue the Seudah basically until Maariv. On Erev Shabbos, though, the Ram”a (695:2) states that the Seudah should take place in the morning, in honor of Shabbos, because one should enter Shabbos with an appetite. Practically speaking, starting before 12:00 noon (NYC time), and thus in the morning before Chatzos, and ending by 3:00 pm, which is the “9-hour” mark of Halachic daylight (see OC 249:2), satisfies these requirements. This will give the participants the opportunity to 1) complete their preparations for Shabbos, 2) rebuild their appetite for the Shabbos Seudah, and 3) sober up sufficiently to welcome the Shabbos Queen. Speaking of which –

**Ad d’Lo Yadah** – Everyone’s favorite quote. The tradition in Ashkenaz since the days of the Rishonim is that a person should “drink somewhat more than his custom, so that he will rejoice more, cause the poor to rejoice, and comfort them” (Kol Bo, end of siman 45). Thus, the mild intoxication encouraged on Purim serves to uplift the spirits of impoverished Jews, and acts in conjunction with Matanos L’evyonim to ensure that we include all Jews, regardless of economic class, in the celebration of the day’s miracles. This contrasts with the perception of Ad d’Lo Yadah as a license to indulge in complete drunkenness, which results in physical and spiritual harm.

The statement (Talmud Meg. 7a) that a person is obligated to drink on Purim “until he knows not the difference between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai’” does not imply total inebriation. To the contrary, it means that the person’s faculties, while somewhat impaired, are still functioning: 1) He has difficulty calculating the Gematria (numerical value) of ארור המן and ברוך מרדכי, which are actually numerically equivalent, both adding up to 502 (Mogen Avraham). 2) He grapples with the ethical dilemma of which miracle was greater, the revenge against Haman or the elevation of Mordechai, and finds himself unable to resolve the issue (Ta”z). A moderate high, achieved by drinking before and during the Seudah, will suffice to satisfy both of these understandings. In any event, after 3:00 pm no more alcohol should be consumed, in order to allow the system enough time to re-orient itself, so that it is ready for the Shabbos Kiddush just a few hours later.

One more word about drinking on Purim: If you enter a vehicle, please make sure that the driver is not drinking. It violates Torah law and civil law to mix driving with alcohol. We love and care for every Jew, and want them to celebrate Purim appropriately and safely.

## **Shabbos: Shushan Purim**

In most communities, this is a fairly regular Shabbos; in fact, it serves as a break in the Four Parshi’os and thus requires only one Sefer Torah. Only two anomalies present themselves: we skip אב הרהמים before Musaf and צדקתך at Mincha.

In Yerushalaim, though, a complete upending of the regular order of Purim occurs. On Adar 14<sup>th</sup>, Thursday night and Friday, the residents read Megillas Esther and give Matanos L’evyonim. On Adar 15<sup>th</sup>, Shabbos, they say Al Hanissim in Shemoneh Esrei and in bentching, read ויבא עמלק for Maftir, and repeat last week’s Haftorah of Parshas Zachor, namely, פקדתי. Finally, on Adar 16<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, they eat the Seudas Purim, send Mishloach Manos, and yes, drink moderately, sufficiently to attain the exalted level of עד דלא ידע.

May we all merit to keep Purim in the Messianic age, as stated in the recessional Piyut of Parshas Zachor: ימי הפורים לא נבטלים – “the days of Purim will (eternally) not cease.”

ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה