

BS"D



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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON PURIM & TZAV - 5765

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From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: March 22, 2005  
Subject: The Uniqueness of Purim - Rabbi Yonasan Sacks to subscribe,  
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[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org) <http://www.torahweb.org/>  
RABBI YONASAN SACKS

### THE UNIQUENESS OF PURIM

The Medrash Sochar Tov (Mishlei, Parsha 9) distinguishes between Purim and the other festive days of the year:

"kol hamoadim betailim v'yemei haPurim lo yiheyu betailim shene'emar v'yemei haPurim ho'eille v'lo ya'avru mitoch haYehudim v'zichram lo yasuf mizaram' (Esther, 9:28) - All festivals will cease with the exception of Purim, as it is written, and these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, nor shall their remembrance perish from their descendants."

Throughout each yom tov we celebrate the nissim gluyim, overt and obvious miracles that Hashem performs for Klal Yisroel. Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkos are times when the hashgachas Hashem is undeniably revealed. Indeed, Ben Zoma maintains that l'asid lavo we will not mention yetsias Mitzrayim in our daily tefillos. The Gemara (Berachos 14b) explains that this view is based on the pasuk in Yirmiyahu (27:7-8):

"Hiney yamim boim neum Hashem v'lo yomru od chai Hashem asher he'ela es Bnai Yisroel mei'Eretz Mitzrayim, ki im chai Hashem asher he'ela v'asher heivi es zerah Beis Yisroel mei'Eretz Tzafona u'mikol ha'aratzos asher hidachtim shom" - Behold days are coming, the word of Hashem, when people will no longer swear, as Hashem lives, who brought Bnai Yisroel up from the land of Mitzrayim, but rather, as Hashem lives, who brought up and brought back the offspring of Bnai Yisroel from the land of the North and all the lands where he had dispersed them."

Accordingly the Midrash asserts that when we experience the geulah asidah bimeheira biyameinu we will no longer commemorate our yomim tovim in the same way, but rather we will celebrate the miracle of our current redemption.

Purim, however, teaches us a different lesson. Unlike other yomim tovim, during which we celebrate nissim gluyim, Purim, the Gra explains, teaches us to recognize and appreciate the yad Hashem in times of hester panim. Even in the darkness of galus, one finds and experiences hasra'as hashcheinah. This lesson endures forever - "v'zichram lo yasuf mizaram (Esther, 9:28)".

Indeed the Ramban so magnificently explains:

"Umin hanissim hagedolim hamefursamim adam modeh bnissim hanistarim sheheim yesod haTorah kulah. She'ein laadam cheilek b'Toras Moshe rabbeinu ad shena'amin bechol devarienu u'mikreinu shekulam nissim ein bohem tevah uminhago shel olam, bein b'rabbim, bein b'yachid" - through the great open miracles one comes to admit the

hidden miracles which constitute the foundation of the whole Torah. For no one can have a part in the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu unless he believes that all our words and our events are miraculous in scope, there being no natural or customary way of the world, whether affecting the public or the individual"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu at times performs nissim gluyim to hone our vision to recognize and appreciate nissim nistarim.

The gemara (Megillah 6b) asks why does Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel insist that we celebrate Purim during Adar Sheini? The gemara answers, "amar Rabbi Tevi, ta'ama d'Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel mismach geulah l'geulah adif - it is preferable to link the redemption of Purim with the redemption of Pesach. The connection between Pesach and Purim, between the nissim gluyim and nissim nistarim, underscores the infinite nissim and chassadim that Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestows on each one of us. May we be zoche to recognize and appreciate "nissecha sheb'chol yom imanu."

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From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com Sent: March 10, 2005

Subject: Breaking the Megilah Code by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss  
BREAKING THE MEGILAH CODE  
BY RABBI MOSHE MEIR WEISS

Of all the twenty-four books of the Scripture, Megilas Esther is the most enigmatic. One must be a Biblical cryptographer in order to discover the many secrets lurking under the surface of the thrilling Esther story. This is because Mordechai and Esther had to write the Megilah under the scrutiny of the anti-Semitic censures of Persia and Medes – for the Megilas Esther was included in its entirety in the chronicles of Paros and Madai. Therefore, from the very beginning, we find that Mordechai employed numerous codes to clue us in to the real story.

As a primary example, the name Mordechai gave to the Persian monarch, Xerxes, was Achashveirosh. The Gemora in Masechtas Megilah teaches us that this name, Achashveirosh, already gives us a wealth of information about the true nature of this very wicked Persian king. Rabbi Yochanan reveals that Achashveirosh is an anagram of the two Hebrew words, aish and v'shachor, fire and black, and it is therefore meant to convey that under his cruel rule the face of the Jews was blackened like fire blackens the bottom of a pot. Rav tells us that Achashveirosh is a composition of 'achiv shel rosh,' that Achashveirosh was a 'brother' to another head of state, the wicked Nevuchadnetzar – and just as Nevuchadnetzar destroyed the Temple, so too Achashveirosh halted the rebuilding of the Temple. Further, just like Nevuchadnetzar was a rabid Jew-hater, Achashveirosh was the same. The Gemora goes on to reveal that Achashveirosh is a composition of the words 'ach v'reish' which means 'woe for the poverty,' for Achashveirosh was a merciless tyrant who overtaxed his people and forced upon them a life of miserable destitution. Thus, already we see in Achashveirosh's name alone that the Megilah, in its clandestine fashion, paints the backdrop of the Esther story as an era where the Jews suffered under the tyrannical rule of an anti-Semitic monarch.

The Megilah is called Esther, which means 'hidden,' because the Divine Hand was cloaked under the guise of palace intrigue, and the lust and caprice of the royal court. Thus, without the tutelage of the Divine scriptures, we might mistakenly think that the downfall of Vashti was simple due to royal debauchery and marital stubbornness. However, again, the code-breaker will see that Hand of Hashem at every turn. He will discover that the Megilah says, after Vashti's execution, that the

king, “Zachar es Vashti v’es asher asah v’eis asher nigzar aleha – He remembered Vashti’s legendary beauty, what she did, and what was decreed upon her.” The Gemora says that the hidden meaning of this is that she used to unclothe the Jewish maidens and force them to work on Shabbos, and therefore she was asked to come unclothed on the Seventh Day, which led to her demise.

But this is only the very beginning of the Divine revelation of the attributes of midah k’neged midah, measure for measure that struck Achashveirosh and Vashti on that fateful day. The Gemora tells us that Achashveirosh made the one hundred and eighty day banquet in honor of the failure of Hashem to rebuild the Temple at the famous expected date known as the seventy year prophecy. Thus, Achashveirosh’s partying over the destruction of Hashem’s House led to the destruction of his home through the execution of his wife. The Medrash tells us that another reason why Achashveirosh first made the party in the third year of his reign was because he was making a copy of the awesome throne of Shlomo HaMelech (the original throne locked itself and would not allow him to sit upon it). In another example of poetic justice, for trying to sit upon a copy of the holy throne of Shlomo, he would be punished to sit in mourning over his wife. The Gemora also tells us that when it says that Achashveirosh showed ‘yakar tiferes gededulaso,’ the glory of his splendid greatness, this is similar to the terminology that is used to describe the splendid garments worn by the Kohein Gadol in the Temple. This phraseology is used to inform us that Achashveirosh wore the holy vestments of the Kohain Gadol at his party. For having the incredible temerity of donning the sacred garments of the Holy Kohein Gadol and wearing them at a drunken and promiscuous banquet, Achashveirosh was punished that through a sin of garments, namely Vashti’s refusal to appear without them, Achashveirosh lost his royal and beautiful wife.

When the king heard of Vashti’s astounding refusal to do his royal bidding, he turned to the ‘yodei ha’itim,’ to the sages who had a profound understanding of the mystery of time, namely the Sages of Israel who understood the complexities of the calendar, who to intercalate leap years etc. Perhaps intuitively, Achashveirosh, knowing the national sense of modesty of the Jewish people, was sure that they would issue a moderate verdict for his young wife understanding the mitigating circumstances of his obscene request. But, once again, the Megilah reveals the powerful hand of midah k’neged midah. The Sages of Israel declined to judge the case by explaining that since the Temple was destroyed, they no longer had the license to judge capital cases. Thus we see with frightening clarity that it was Achashveirosh and Vashti’s obsession to halt the building of the Temple that sealed her fate when the case was subsequently turned over to the capricious Persian judges.

Time and time again in this Megilah we see the attribute of measure for measure which precludes any element of chance, being revealed. Thus, Haman builds a gallows to hang Mordechai and on that very gallows he is hung. He and his cohorts ambitiously plot to annihilate Jewish men, women, and children, and providentially on the 13th of Adar, this fate befell the Jew haters. Achashveirosh kills his queen because of his friend, and then will subsequently kill his friend because of his queen.

May it be the will of Hashem that through the tutelage of Megilas Esther we absorb the great lesson of midah k’neged midah - that the way we treat people so we will be treated. Let it serve as a guide that we should not be strict with others and in that merit G-d won’t be strict with us. May it serve as an incentive that if we want to be recipients of warmth, patience, smiles, and caring, that we behave in such a fashion with others. And may it serve as an inhibition to us, to avoid improper behavior with our fellow man, in order that such treatment should not

boomerang back against us and in that merit may Hashem bless us all with good health, long life and everything wonderful.

From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com Sent: March 17, 2005 Subject: Timeless Purim Thoughts by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Timeless Purim Thoughts

By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

The Gemora tells us, “Esther b’ruach hakodesh nemra;” that the Book of Esther was divinely inspired. As the last of the twenty-four Scriptures, it shares with its predecessors a timeless nature. Its lessons, too, are for all time. As such, the sophisticated student will mine many contemporary values from this all-important Megilah. As a preface to elaborating upon Achashveirosh’s one hundred and eighty day royal banquet, the Megilah informs us what his motivation was for such an extravagance. “B’haroso es osher kavod malchuso – To show the wealth of his glorious kingdom.” In a similar vein, the Megilah informs us that his desire to produce Vashti in an immodest fashion was, “L’haros ha-amim v’hasorim es yafyah – To show the people and the officials her beauty.” Thus, the Megilah clearly portrays Achashveirosh as a royal showoff, and it was this that contributed to his ruination. When a person flaunts the extras that G-d gave to him, he makes himself vulnerable to the ayin hara, the evil eye, and he risks losing his extra privileges. Thus, Achashveirosh’s excesses generated the loss of his royal and fabulously beautiful bride, Vashti. In a similar vein, the Gemora tells us, in Berachos [31b], that Chanah prayed to Hashem, “V’nasata l’amosecha zera anoshim – Grant to your maidservant the seed of men,” which the Gemora homiletically explains to mean, ‘Give a child to me that blends in with other people;’ a child that is not foolish nor too wise. This sounds like a strange request. What’s wrong with having a brilliant son? Rashi explains that Chanah’s wish was that her son should not stand out and be the cause of people’s wonder, for then, says Rashi, he would be targeted by the evil eye. All the way at the end of Shas, in the final dafim of Masechtas Niddah, the Gemora relates an interesting question that came before the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Yochanan. A woman was having a distressing problem. After going to the mikvah, she would become disqualified to her husband even before arriving home. Rabbi Yochanan said to her that she was, perhaps, showing too much public affection to her husband. This public affection was thereby causing the envy of others and activating the evil eye. Rabbi Yochanan advised her to publicize her plight instead, and, as a result that would reverse the jealousy of others into pity, thereby removing any ayin hara.

From this very contemporary lesson, we should adopt a posture of modesty. Let’s be careful not to show off our new car to our neighbor who is out of work. Let’s be weary of passing around our children’s report cards to friends who can’t get their children into a yeshiva. Let’s be circumspect about talking about our mate’s kindness before a person who has marital woes. While we live in a society where people gauge success by possessions, we need to realize that flaunting our successes puts us in grave danger. Another modern day lesson can be found by studying the incredible description of Achashveirosh’s palace floor. The Megilah tells us, “Ritzpas bahat v’sheish v’dar v’sochores;” it was a floor of precious gems and marble, rows and rows of jewels going round about. Who ever heard of a floor studded with gems? What was the palace architect thinking? On one level we must know that the Gemora teaches us about Achashveirosh and Vashti that “Shneihem l’dvar aveira niskavnu,” both of them intended to get the Jews to sin with immorality at the banquet. The only reason that Vashti declined to come in an obscene manner was that the angel Gavriel and pinned a tail on her (she was the original pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey). Otherwise, she would have liked nothing better than to enflame the passions of the Jews with an obscene entrance. Bearing this in mind, this perhaps is why it was a jeweled studded floor – for having jewels on the floor trains the men’s

eyes downward tempting them to sin. I would like to suggest another reason. I can just hear Achashveirosh telling the palace planners, 'I want the palace to be different. I desire that it should be unique.' The architect catching the drift of this egomaniac suggested, 'Why not put diamonds on the floor? No one's ever had that before!' While this might sound babyish, think about how contemporary it really is. How many people go to the printer to order invitations saying that they want something very different, perhaps with a mirror or that glows in the dark or maybe one that talks to you? How many women go to a dressmaker and insist on a fabric that no one has ever worn before? How many people go to the caterer and want a one-in-a kind menu? This attitude of needing to be different was the foolish way of Achashveirosh who was screaming for attention – and the Megilah is teaching us that this is the antithesis of the ways of Torah. In the merit of our Megilah studies, may we be blessed with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com Sent: March 23, 2005 Subject: The Historic Thread of Midah K'neged Midah by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss  
The Historic Thread of Midah K'neged Midah  
By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

With Purim upon us and Pesach rapidly approaching, I would like to discuss a common thread that is Divinely woven through the tapestry of these two stories of miraculous Jewish redemption. That thread is the Heavenly attribute of midah k'neged midah, Hashem's way of rewarding and punishing measure for measure. We must understand that this is not simply G-d's method of 'poetic justice.' Rather, it is also Hashem's plan to mete out justice in this fashion so that the thinking man and woman will recognize the unmistakable Hand of G-d and not make the fundamental error that events of history are merely subject to the whims of fate and coincidental circumstances.

Midah k'neged midah was the astute observation of Yisro, Moshe Rabeinu's father-in-law, who commented when observing the downfall of the Egyptians. "Atah yadati ki gadol Hashem mikol ha-elohim ki badavar asher zadu aleihem - Now I know that Hashem is the true G-d for that which the Egyptians perpetrated against the Jews befell them." Although many 'scholarly essays' have been written that argue that the ten plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea can be explained away as a succession of amazing natural phenomena, Yisro pointed out that the perfect characteristic of measure for measure precludes any element of chance, but instead shows absolutely the active involvement of G-d in world events.

Let me discuss a fascinating illustration of midah k'neged midah from the Purim story. When Esther denounced Haman with the memorable declaration, "Ish tzar v'oyeiv, Haman hara hazeh – The man who is our adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman," the Megilah relates that Achashveirosh, in a fit of rage, stormed out of their wine party to the palace orchard in order to calm down. A smart man learns from his mistakes - and Achashveirosh probably realized that he already made one very rash decision by executing Vashti in a drunken rage - so he prudently went out to the garden to calm himself. Hashem, however, had a surprise in store for him. He sent down angels disguised as men who were chopping down his stately trees in the royal gardens. Aghast, Achashveirosh looked at them incredulously and asked, 'What are you doing? Do you know how long it took to grow these trees? Who gave the order to do this?' When they answered, 'Haman sent us,' he returned to the palace in an even greater fit of anger than when he left. When Achashveirosh reentered, Haman, on his hands and knees begging Esther to spare his life, was being pushed repeatedly by a Divine angel and propelled into Esther to make it look like he was trying to abduct the queen in the throne room. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. Achashveirosh said, "Hagam lichbosh es hamalkah imi babais? –

Do you want to conquer the queen while I am right here in the house?" (Achashveirosh meant to infer that Haman was already the cause of doing away with the previous queen, namely Vashti, for not coming into the house, and now he was attempting to hurt his present queen while she was in the house.)

While Hashem staged a beautiful coup against Haman, something troubled me greatly with this scenario. Why did Hashem need to orchestrate falsehoods against Haman in order to bring him down? Weren't there enough goods against the murderous Haman who plotted genocide against the Jewish people such that Hashem didn't need to manufacture a pack of lies to bring him down? After all, Haman did not order the workers to cut down the palace tress and he did not want to attack Esther. It would seem that this methodology is totally 'out of character' with the ways of Hashem, of Whom we are taught, "Chasomo shel HaKodosh Boruch Hu Ames," that the signature of Hashem, the way to know that something is truly Divine, is that it is always Absolute Truth. This, at first glance, would seem to be a remarkable departure. How could celestial angels, obviously on a mission from G-d, perpetrate such falsehoods when we are taught, "Doveir shekarim lo yikon neged Einai – Seekers of falsehood will never stand before My eyes"?

The answer to this mystifying puzzle is in the attribute of measure for measure. The Gemora tells us about the wicked Haman, may his name be blotted out forever, "Leka man d'yoda lishna beesha k'Haman – There is no man that knew how to slander like Haman," the Amaleiki. When persuading Achashveirosh to exterminate the Jews, he told the king, "[V]'es dosei hamelech einam osim v'lamelech ein shove l'hanicham – These (Jewish people) do not keep the king's laws and it is simply not worth it for the king to keep them." What amazing slander! Throughout the ages, the Jewish people have always been amazingly patriotic and have ardently adhered to the Talmudic principle of dina d'malchusa dina, that the law of the land is incorporated into the body of Jewish law and must be strictly followed. To make the blanket statement that the Jews disobeyed the laws of the land was a malicious smear of the Jewish people.

Adding that it wasn't worth it for the king to keep the Jews around was an even greater example of willful slander. Throughout the ages, the Jews have greatly enhanced any host country – whether in the banking industry, the mercantile industry, in the fields of medicine, science, or the arts, the Jewish people are always at the forefront of the contribution to the betterment of any land in which they've inhabited. To say that they weren't worth keeping around is a monumental piece of criminal libel. It was therefore Hashem's decision to punish Haman in kind by having him slandered for things that he didn't do so that the student of history should once again take note of the Divine attribute of midah k'neged midah. This, therefore, is not falsehood at all but rather the very truth of Hashem's justice.

So whether it's the midah k'neged midah of Purim or the hundreds of examples of measure for measure during the plagues of Egypt, such as the fact that the Jews were not allowed to bathe and became lice infested and therefore Hashem inflicted the plague of kinim, lice, on all of Egypt, or the fact that the Jews, as slaves, had no freedom to come and go and therefore all of Egypt became under house arrest during the plague of hail, for anyone who ventured outside was smashed to death by the huge hailstones, all of these events point to the unmistakable Hand of Hashem and strengthen our emunah in G-d's unswerving schar v'onesh, reward and punishment. In the merit of our Torah studies, may Hashem bless us that we always be the recipients of Hashem's rewards and be blessed with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

To receive a weekly cassette tape (\$20 monthly) or CD (\$26 monthly) directly from Rabbi Weiss, please send a check to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com . Attend Rabbi Weiss's weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush,

Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. (Sheldon Zeitlin transcribes Rabbi Weiss' articles. If you wish to receive Rabbi Weiss' articles by email, please send a note to ZeitlinShelley@aol.com.)

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From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND  
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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tzav

Modim: The Two-Phase Bracha

One of the Offerings mentioned in this week's parsha is the Korban Todah -- the sacrifice that people brought when they wanted to give Thanksgiving. The Medrash says that in the future all the other Korbanos will become nullified, there will be no need to bring them. But there will always be a Thanksgiving Offering -- for "Todah" will never be nullified: There's always a need to give thanks.

Rav Hutner, zt"l, makes a very interesting point. "Todah" comes from the noun "hoda-ah" meaning to give thanks. But the word "hoda-ah" also means something else in Hebrew. It means to admit.

Rav Hutner says that it is no coincidence that the word for "thanks" and the word for "admitting" are one and the same word. In order for a person to give thanks, he has to be able to admit that he needs help. The first step in being able to be grateful to someone for doing something for me, is that I have to admit that I needed someone else. I am not perfect; I am not all-powerful; I need others as well.

How do we know, asks Rav Hutner, when "Hoda-ah" means admission and when it means thanks? We have to look at the preposition that comes after the word. When using the word "hoda-ah" to mean admit, it is always followed by the pronoun 'she' (shin with a segol underneath). When using the word "hoda-ah" to mean thanks, it is always followed by the word 'al' (ayin lamed).

Rav Hutner points out that our Davening [prayers] contain the Blessing of Thanksgiving called "Modim." That Bracha reads "Modim anachnu lach SHEH..." -- the translation thus is not, "We Thank you G-d..." but "We admit to you G-d..." We admit to G-d that we are dependant on Him. Once we admit that we are dependent on Him, then we can thank Him, as we do at the end of the Bracha: "Nodeh lecha u'nesaper Tehilasecha AL..." -- "We Thank You and will tell Your Praises for..."

No Messenger Can Say "Thank You"

I saw a beautiful comment in name the Avudraham. When a Chazzan says "Modim" during the repetition of the Shmoneh Esrei, we say "Modim d'Rabbanan" (the "Rabbi's" Modim). Why is that?

The Avudraham says that we can utilize a shaliach (designated representative) for all blessings in the Shmoneh Esrei. We can utilize a shaliach for 'Heal Us' (Refaeinu). We can utilize a messenger for 'Grant us Sustenance' (Barech Aleinu). The Shaliach Tzibur can say all of these blessings for us. But there is one thing that no one can say for anyone else. Everyone has to say it for himself. That is 'Thank You'-as we say in Modim.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 88, Parshas Tzav. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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[BY RABBI AARON ROSS]

FREE FOOD! – THE MITZVA OF MISHLO'ACH MANOT

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the four mitzvot of the holiday of Purim (along with reading the Megilla, giving gifts to the poor, and eating a festive meal) is that of Mishlo'ach Manot, sending parcels of food to friends. This mitzva has its roots in Esther 9:9 and 9:22, where we are told that this practice was first kept among the Jews who were saved from the decrees of Haman, and then Mordechai later wrote it down for posterity.

The gemara in Megilla 7a serves as our Talmudic source for this law, noting that one fulfills this commandment by giving two food items to one person. This is based on the fact that in the verse "mishlo'ach manot ish rei'eihu" the word for food (manot) is plural while that connoting the recipient (rei'eihu) is singular. The gemara then presents several examples of how the Sages fulfilled this commandment, and concludes with the story of Abaye ban Avin and Rav Chanina bar Avin who fulfilled this commandment by switching their meals on Purim.

What is the exact nature of this commandment? This is a subject of debate, and the two views will guide many of the laws involved. According to the Terumat HaDeshen, the focus is ultimately on the meal and thus we give gifts of food to insure that everyone will have enough to eat, without having to rely on the embarrassment of receiving charity. This is consistent with the fact that Rambam groups the commandments of the meal, gifts to the poor, and mishlo'ach manot together as fulfillments of the obligation to be happy on Purim. The second view, that of the Manot Levi (Rav Shlomo Alkabetz), is that mishlo'ach manot counteracts Haman's claim that the Jews are a nation who are scattered throughout the world (Esther 3:8). Thus, we give gifts to each other to bring the nation together and to increase the love between man and his fellow man. Finally, Bach notes that the giving of mishlo'ach manot and of gifts to the poor allude to the joy of man with his friend on the joy of fulfilling Hashem's commands, as well as to the two gifts received by Mordechai at the end of the Purim story – the house of Haman and the king's signet ring.

II. WHO GIVES?

We will begin our study by investigating who should give mishlo'ach manot and to whom they should be given. It is clear that men have to give, since the verse says "ish." According to the Darchei Moshe (O.C. 695), women are also obligated, and the Mishne Berura explains that this is because they were also part of the miracle of Purim (similar to the reason they are obligated to hear the Megilla). On the other hand, The Pri Chadash is adamant that we follow the verse and only men are obligated in this mitzva. The Aruch HaShulchan counters this objection, noting that the Bible always uses the term "ish" as a default, but that in reality both men and women are often being referred to. He goes even further and claims that children should also have to give, since they should also be involved in the "rei'eihu" aspect, increasing friendship among Jews. The Magen Avraham writes that a man can give on behalf of his wife, but it is better for women to be strict and to give on their own.

The stickier issue is who is to receive the mishlo'ach manot. The easy part is found first in the Darchei Moshe (loc. cit.) who writes that a man should not give to a woman out of a fear that it would be considered to be the gifts that a groom usually send to his bride and thus we would have a situation of a doubtful betrothal (safek kiddushin). Others generally recommend that the sexes do not give to each other out of a sense of general propriety. However, the Darchei Moshe notes that a man may give gifts to the poor to a woman since it is done as charity and we do not worry in such cases.

What is a topic for discussion is giving mishlo'ach manot to the poor. Ritva writes that mishlo'ach manot are sent only to rich people (or at least those who are not poor). Rav Akiva Eiger and the Bi'ur Halacha cite the Turei Even, who is unsure if one could fulfill both mishlo'ach manot and matanot la'evyonim by giving food to a poor person (and then giving money to a second poor person, since it has to be given to two poor people). The Sdei Chemed seems to hold a compromise view – one has to give money to at least two poor people (and cannot accomplish both mitzvot with the same object since we do not bundle mitzvot together – Ktav Sofer). However, if one does so and then gives a proper mishlo'ach manot to a third poor person, that mishlo'ach manot is considered to fulfill that mitzva and not the mitzva of gifts to the poor, even though the recipient is himself poor.

The issue of rich and poor also plays a role in terms of how much has to be given. Normally, any law involving food has a certain measurement – usually a k'zayit (size of an olive) or a k'beitzah (size of an egg or two olives) for food, and a revi'it (3.3 ounces) for a drink. However, here the amounts are far more subjective. The footnotes in the Mossad HaRav Kook edition of Ritva claims that Ritva seems to be saying that one has to send something significant for mishlo'ach manot. However, the footnotes then point out that the beginning of Ritva's statement seems to imply that the amount sent depends on what the recipient would deem to be appropriate. Interestingly, the Sdei Chemed reads Ritva as requiring what is sent to be something that the giver would deem to be appropriate for himself. The Sdei Chemed himself aims to create an objective standard and writes that one must give something that is considered to be fitting in the eyes of most people. The Bach (citing Ran) rules that one must give food and drink to a rich person, but can give only one thing to a poor person, as that is considered to be a significant thing in his eyes. The Bi'ur Halacha goes so far as to say that if one sends something small to a rich person he has not fulfilled his obligation (Chayei Adam in the name of the Yerushalmi), and the Aruch HaShulchan says that the amount that should be given is the amount that would be respectful for the recipient.

### III. WHAT DID WE GET?

Our next issue is what exactly does one send? Rashi on the gemara points out that the word "manot" refers to food. Rambam (Hilchot Megilla 2:15) codifies this by saying that a person should send two gifts of meat or two cooked foods or two types of food to his friend (the Shulchan Aruch O.C. 695 has a similar wording). The Darchei Moshe (loc. cit.) writes in the name of Maharil and the Terumat HaDeshen that both food and drink are eligible to be sent as mishlo'ach manot. What emerges from these sources, as well as from the example cited in the gemara, is that the food must be ready to eat without requiring significant preparation, and thus the Magen Avraham quotes the Maharil who rules that any meat given should be already cooked. The Sdei Chemed writes that according to the Pri Chadash and the Ha'amek She'eilah (Netziv) one may give raw meat, since the word "manah" (singular of manot) is used in the Torah to refer to raw sacrificial meat. The Mishne Berura claims that raw meat is fine so long as it is ready to cook (which would apply to all of our meat today).

The Aruch HaShulchan adds that while one has to give two foods, they should be two different foods, and not two portions of the same food. Rav Moshe Harari writes (Mikra'ei Kodesh) that Rav Mordechai Eliyahu allows one to give two cookies or cakes, so long as they look or taste different from each other. Rav Harari goes on to say that it is certainly better to give bread and cooked foods (as the mitzva is connected to the festive meal), but the practice has become to mainly give sweet foods (a practice that was already noted by Chida in the 18th century). I have heard that one should give two foods that require two different blessings, but I have yet to find a single source that says this.

As a side point, there is a discussion about whether or not one has fulfilled his obligation if he send someone a chicken that is then found to be a treifah. The Be'ir Heitev is unsure, while the Chida permitted it. Any permissiveness in this matter derives from the fact that even if the food cannot be eaten, and thus the reason of the Terumat HaDeshen cannot be fulfilled, nevertheless the recipient has seen that his neighbor is befriending him, and thus the second rationale for this mitzva is accomplished.

### IV. MISCELLANEOUS

The Pitchei Teshuva cites the Binyan Tzion (responsa #44) who is unsure whether or not one can deliver mishlo'ach manot himself. Since the mitzva is known as mishlo'ach manot, it implies that they must be sent (shalach) via a messenger. The Sdei Chemed believes that the Binyan Tzion would allow one to deliver the mishlo'ach manot without use of a third party, although he feels that most poskim prefer the use of a messenger. He goes on to say that even though we normally say that it is preferable for one to fulfill a commandment and not have a messenger do it (even though one's messenger is tantamount to he himself doing the action), nevertheless here a messenger is preferable since that is the very nature of the mitzva (Rav Ovadiah Yoseif notes that one should give the messenger something for his labors). The Chatam Sofer held that a messenger is required, but the Nachalat Binyamin, Yalkut Yoseif (Rav Ovadiah Yoseif), and Yad HaLevi all say that it is better for a person to do a mitzva rather than send a messenger, and thus each person should deliver his own mishlo'ach manot.

There is no blessing recited directly on the giving of mishlo'ach manot. Why is this so? The Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim claims that it is the result of a curiosity in the law. A person has the right to refuse to accept mishlo'ach manot, and even so Ramo rules that the giver fulfills his obligation when rejected, since he has still managed to exhibit feelings of friendship. That being the case, it is possible for a person to not actually give food to anyone and still discharge his obligation. However, this would make any blessing into a bracha l'vatala (a blessing made for no purpose), and thus we leave it out. The Mor V'Ohalot (page 39b) writes that since the point of this mitzva is to increase friendship, there is no way of knowing if the recipient actually feels more favorably inclined towards the giver, and thus we do not make any blessing out of doubt.

Finally, there is the issue of giving mishlo'ach manot through a shul or another such organization. The general practice is that one gives a certain sum of money to the organization, who then send each person a basket of food complete with a list of everyone who contributed. Rav Asher Bush (in an article in Beit Yitzchak, volume 26) writes that one should not, and perhaps cannot, fulfill his obligation in this manner. One reason is that since we require that one give an amount that is befitting the recipient, it is likely that each individual's share in the basket will be less than that amount. Even in places where the amount given is increased as per the number of givers, people should still not rely on this practice for their total fulfillment of this mitzva. Rav Bush gives two reasons for this. First, it will deny children the chance to see their parents put baskets together, thus denying them a valuable educational opportunity. Finally, since a major focus of this mitzva is increasing friendship, it would seem that that works more when one gives a personalized mishlo'ach manot, and does not just appear as another name on an organization's card (although one could argue that such arrangements allow people to give to more people and thus friendship is increased even more).

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From: Yated USA [yatedusa@yated.com]  
MATANOS LA'EVYONIM  
BY RABBI YIRMIYOHU KAGANOFF

Megillas Esther teaches that one of the mitzvos established by Mordechai and Esther was “matanos la’evyonim,” giving gifts to the poor. Since the megillah states one should give gifts “La’evyonim,” which is plural, we derive that one must give a gift to at least two poor people (Gemara Megillah 7b; cf., however, Be’er Heiteiv 694:1).

#### WHAT IS THE MINIMUM GIFT TO FULFILL THE MITZVAH?

There are several opinions regarding the minimum gift needed to fulfill the mitzvah. The Maharasha contends that one must give each person an amount significant enough to be respectable (Chiddushei Agados Megillah 7a s.v. shadar).

Some contemporary poskim rule this way.

Zera Yaakov contends that it is sufficient if the poor person could purchase a minimum meal with the gift, which he defines as bread the size of three eggs (quoted in Pischei Teshuvah 694:1). Thus according to this opinion, one fulfills matanos la’evyonim if one gives three slices of bread to each of two poor people (or enough money for each to purchase three slices of bread).

Ritva contends that one is required to give only the value of a prutah, a copper coin worth only a few cents (Ritva, Megillah 7b; Shu”t Maharil #56). Mishnah Berurah rules this way (694:2).

#### MUST I GIVE MONEY?

No. One fulfills the mitzvah by giving the poor either food or money. However, one should give the poor person something that he can use to enhance his celebration of Purim (see Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 694:1).

#### MUST THE POOR PERSON USE THE MONEY FOR PURIM?

No. The poor person may do whatever he wants with the money (see Gemara Bava Metzia 78b).

#### MAY ONE FULFILL THE MITZVAH AT NIGHT?

One does not fulfill the mitzvos of matanos la’evyonim, shalach manos, or the Purim meal at night (see Machatzis HaShekel 694:1).

#### HOW MUCH SHOULD ONE STRIVE TO GIVE?

The above amounts are indeed extremely paltry matanos la’evyonim and only define the minimum amount to fulfill the mitzvah. There are two other rules that are important:

Firstly, one should give money to every person who asks for a tzedakah donation on Purim without verifying whether he has a legitimate tzedakah need (see Yerushalmi Megillah 1:4). We will explain the details of this halacha later. (It is obvious that one should not make a major donation without verifying that the need is legitimate.) Secondly, one should calculate how much one intends to spend for shalach manos and then designate a greater amount of money for matanos la’evyonim (Rambam, Hilchos Megillah 2:17).

#### MATANOS LA’EVYONIM VS. SHALACH MANOS

Question: Assuming that one has limited resources, which is more important to give, many gifts to the poor or a lot of shalach manos?

One should give a greater amount of matanos la’evyonim and limit how much shalach manos he sends (Rambam, Hilchos Megillah 2:17).

#### IS IT BETTER TO GIVE A LOT TO A FEW POOR, OR A LITTLE TO EACH?

The Bach rules that someone with 100 gold coins to distribute for matanos la’evyonim should distribute one coin to each of 100 poor people rather than give it all to one individual because this makes more people happy (Bach 695 s.v. v’tzarich lishloach). According to Rav Elyashiv, it is better to give two large gifts that will make two anyim happy than to give many small gifts that are insufficient to make the recipients happy (quoted in Shvus Yitzchok on Purim pg. 98).

These two Piskei halacha are not in conflict — quite the contrary, they complement one another. The mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim is to make as many poor people happy as possible. Receiving a very small gift does not place a smile on a poor man’s face, although it fulfills the minimal requirements of the mitzvah (according to most poskim) as noted above.

However, both the Bach’s gold coin and Rav Elyashiv’s large gift accomplish that the poor person becomes happy. Therefore, giving each person enough of a gift to bring a smile to his face is a bigger mitzvah than giving a very large gift to one person and being unable to bring a smile to the others. Thus, the optimal way to perform the mitzvah is to make as many people as possible happy.

#### MAY MATANOS LA’EVYONIM COME FROM MAASER FUNDS?

The minimal amount that I am required to give may not be from maaser funds just as one may not spend maaser money on other mitzvos (Shu”t Maharil #56; Magen Avraham 694:1). The additional money that I give may be from maaser (Magen Avraham 694:1). Thus, how much out-of-pocket money I give for matanos la’evyonim depends on the dispute quoted above about the minimum requirement of matanos la’evyonim:

According to the Maharasha, two respectful gifts must come from non-maaser funds; according to Zera Yaakov, the cost of six-egg-sizes of bread; and according to the Ritva, the value of two prutos. The balance may come from maaser money.

#### NON-JEWS RECEIVING MATANOS LA’EVYONIM

If a non-Jew asks me for money while I am distributing Matanos La’evyonim, should I give him a contribution?

The Gemara Yerushalmi states, “One should not be too meticulously careful when distributing tzedakah money on Purim. Rather one gives to whoever holds out his hand,” (Megillah 1:4). The Ramban explains that this includes even non-Jews (Nemukey Yosef on Bava Metzia 78b; Tur 694).

Other poskim rule that one should distribute matanos la’evyonim to non-Jews only in places where this is already accepted practice (Beis Yosef 694 quoting Hagahos Maimoni quoting Rashi), and this is how the Shulchan Aruch rules. In their opinion, the Yerushalmi that states that one should give to “everyone who holds out his hand” refers only to Jews, even if I am uncertain that their need is legitimate (Aruch HaShulchan 694:1). According to both opinions, one does not fulfill the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim by providing alms to a non-Jew.

#### DO I FULFILL THE MITZVAH WITH MONEY GIVEN BEFORE PURIM?

If the poor person received the money on Purim, one is yotzei (Be’er Heiteiv 695:7; Aruch HaShulchan 694:2).

Therefore, one can fulfill the mitzvah by mailing a contribution if one is certain that the poor person will receive it on Purim. If the poor person receives the money before Purim, one is not yotzei (Magen Avraham 694:1).

Similarly, one does not fulfill the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim if the ani does not receive the money until after Purim.

#### DO I FULFILL MATANOS LA’EVYONIM BY DONATING MONEY TO AN ORGANIZATION?

If the organization distributes the money to the poor on Purim, I can perform my mitzvah this way.

#### DOES GETTING A TAX DEDUCTION PRECLUDE ME FROM FULFILLING MATANOS LA’EVYONIM?

If I donate the money through an institution that will distribute the money on Purim, I can fulfill the mitzvah and also deduct the donation from my tax liability.

#### CAN I FULFILL THE MITZVAH BY CHECK?

If the poor person can convert the check into cash or food on Purim, then I fulfill the mitzvah (Shvus Yitzchok pg. 99, quoting Rav Elyashiv).

#### DOES MY WIFE NEED TO GIVE HER OWN MATANOS LA’EVYONIM?

A woman is obligated in matanos la’evyonim (Shulchan Aruch 695:4). Magen Avraham states “I did not see that people are careful about this, possibly because this rule applies only to a widow or other woman who does not have a husband but that a married woman fulfills her obligation by having her husband distribute for her. However, one should be more

machmir.” Thus according to the Magen Avraham, a woman should distribute her own money to the poor. It would be acceptable for a husband to tell his wife, “I am giving matanos la’evyonim specifically on your behalf,” but it is far better if he gives her the money for her to distribute or gives the money to a shaliach to be zocheh for her, and then gives the money to the ani. Although most poskim follow the Magen Avraham’s ruling, some rule that a married woman fulfills the mitzvah when her husband gives, even without making any special arrangements (Aruch HaShulchan 694:2).

#### HOW POOR MUST A PERSON BE TO QUALIFY FOR MATANOS LA’EVYONIM?

The Mishnah (Peah 8:8) states that someone who owns less than 200 zuz qualifies to collect most of the Torah’s gifts to the poor, including maaser ani, the second tithe reserved for the poor, and peah, the corner of the field left for them. What is the modern equivalent of owning 200 zuz? Contemporary poskim rule that someone whose income is insufficient to pay for his family’s expenses qualifies as a poor person for all halachos including matanos la’evyonim. This is assuming that he does not have enough income or savings to support his family without selling basic essentials (Piskei Teshuvos 694:2).

#### DOES A POOR PERSON HAVE A MITZVAH OF GIVING TO THE POOR?

Does the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim apply to the poor? Is there an easy way for him to perform it?

The Tur (694) states that “Chayov kol adam litein matanos la’aniyim,” “Every person is obligated to give matanos la’evyonim.” What is added by emphasizing “kol,” everyone? The Bach explains that this emphasizes that even a poor person, who is himself a tzedakah recipient, must also give.

Is there an inexpensive way for a poor person to give matanos la’evyonim?

Yes, he can give part of his seudas Purim to another poor person and the other poor person reciprocates. Thereby, they both fulfill matanos la’evyonim (Mishnah Berurah 694:2; based on Gemara Megillah 7b).

#### MAY ONE USE MONEY COLLECTED FOR MATANOS LA’EVYONIM FOR A DIFFERENT PURPOSE?

One may not use money collected for matanos la’evyonim for a different tzedakah (Gemara Bava Metziah 78b). This is because the people who donated the money expect to fulfill two mitzvos with their donation: tzedakah and the special mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim. Thus, if one uses the money for a different tzedakah purpose, they fulfilled the mitzvah of tzedakah, but not the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim.

If someone decided to give money for matanos la’evyonim, he is required to give it for this purpose even if he did not say so (Mishnah Berurah 694:6, quoting Hagahos Ashri).

#### PURIM VS. SHUSHAN PURIM

There is an interesting shaylah that is not relevant this year. In most years, residents of Yerushalayim and other ancient walled cities observe Purim on the fifteenth of Adar (often referred to as “Shushan Purim”). Contemporary poskim debate whether one observing Purim on the fourteenth fulfills the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim with money distributed to the poor of Yerushalayim on his Purim which is not yet their Purim.

However, this year when Purim is on Friday and Shushan Purim falls on Shabbos, the observances of Purim in Yerushalayim are spread across three days, referred to as “Purim Meshulash,” literally, “triple Purim.” Since the main day for fulfilling the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim during a Purim Meshulash is on Friday, one certainly fulfills the mitzvah of matanos la’evyonim with funds distributed in Yerushalayim on the fourteenth. (We will devote more time to discussing the interesting halachos of Purim Meshulash next week IY”H.) In the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:17), “It is more important to provide more

gifts to the poor than to have a more lavish Purim seudah or send more shalach manos. This is because there is no greater and honored joy than bringing happiness to orphans, widows and the needy. Someone who makes the unfortunate happy is likened to Hashem’s Divine Presence, as the pasuk says: ‘He who revives the spirit of the lowly and brings to life the heart of the crushed,’” (Yeshayah 57:15).

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From: Uri Jacobs <aljacobs@bankofny.com>

HILCHOS AND MINHAGEI PURIM 5765

Reviewed by Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

Taanis Esther Taanis Esther commemorates the fast proclaimed by Esther for all the Jews prior to her plea to Achashveirosh on behalf of Bnai Yisrael. It is our minhag not to break the fast until after hearing the Megilah. Those who will not hear the Megilah until later in the evening may break their fast at nightfall @ 6:54 PM, but should eat lightly i.e. eat and drink enough to make it until through the leining of the Megilah and have someone remind you to leave for the laining at the appropriate time.

Machatzis Hashekel Before the reading of the Megilah, everyone contributes half of the unit coin of the country to tzedaka, in remembrance of the Biblical half-shekel tax assigned toward the maintenance of Mishkan.

Today it is customary to give three "half shekels" (half dollars) to tzedaka because in the shekel portion of the Torah, the term terumah (offering) is written three times. Also, the Dor Hamabul donated three times towards the Mishkan (census, korbanos, upkeep etc...).

There is a widespread minhag to contribute half shekels for each member of the family. The half shekels are usually contributed prior to mincha on Ta’anis Esther. If one is unable to do so at that time, the half shekels should be given before Megilah reading on Purim morning.

Purim- Erev Shabbos - Prim Meshulash As Purim falls on Friday this year, special customs are observed. The most striking change will occur in those cities (such as Yerushalayim) which observe Purim on 15 Adar (Shushan Purim). Because 15 Adar is Shabbat, Purim’s observances are spread over three days. On Friday, all Jews throughout the world will read the Megilah and give gifts to the poor. In Yerushalayim and walled-cities, Shabbos will feature the special Torah reading for Purim. On Sunday – again in Yerushalayim and walled cities – the Purim meal with take place, as well as Mishloach Manot.

Here, the only change we will experience is the lively Friday, as the Purim se’uda should be eaten, or at least primarily eaten before halachic noon (12:07 PM) so as not to interfere with our appetite for the seudas Shabbas. If that cannot be done in a joyful manner, one should at least try to begin the seuda before chatzos. If that still cannot be done, one should try to eat before the tenth hour, approximately 3:00 PM.

As the Megilah has to be heard and Manos delivered Friday morning as well, expect to be busy.

Special Davenings Al Hanisim - All the shemona esraim of Purim as well as in Birkas Hamazon, Al Hanisim is recited. Al Hanisim briefly relates the story of Purim and offers praise to Hashem for having performed nisim for the Bnai Yisrael. If omitted, one should not go back to recite it but one can add it to the end of shemona esrei. Torah Reading - The encounter in the Toarh dealing with the war of Amalek is read on Purim morning. Since Haman was a descendant of Amalek, this Torah portion is most appropriate. If someone did not hear Parshas Zachor last week, one should have in mind to fulfill the mitzva of Zachor with this laining. The Ba’al Koreh should keep this same in mind.

Hallel - Despite the fact that Purim is a joyous holiday, we do not recite hallel because the miracle of Purim occurred outside Eretz Yisrael. Another reason is that the reading of the Megilah serves the same purpose as the recitation of hallel.

Megilas Esther – Mitzva #1 of Purim • The Megilah is read twice; once in the evening and again on Purim morning. (The daytime reading is the more important of the two.) •

Since Purim marks the salvation of all Jews - men, women and children, it is the responsibility of all Jews alike to hear the Megilah reading both times. • During the reading of the Megilah, one is not allowed to talk so as to hear every word in the Megilah. • If one is following along with a kosher megilah, they should quietly join in with the ba'al koreah, but not loud enough to disturb a neighbor. • One should not say “Baruch Hu Umevoroch Shemo” during the three introductory brachos of the reading since in order to be yotsee the brachos, no interruptions should be made during the brachos. Only Amen should be said. • Bringing age-appropriate children who can sit through the laining is very much encouraged.

Those who are unable to be present in shul must hear the Megilah at home. Please speak to the Rav, the Gabbaim or the President if you are unable to come to shul to hear the Megilah. Additional Megila reading times were announced and are posted. Those who are available to lain in a hospital or for homebound individuals should tell the Rav or Gabbai.

Groggers During the reading of the Megilah, we customarily sound groggers (noisemakers) at the sound of Haman's name. This expresses happiness at the frustration of Haman's plans and reflects the Biblical command to "Blot out the memory of Amalek." It was a custom in the past that children used to write Haman's name on two sticks or stons and beat them together to symbolize the eradication of the name of Haman. The joyous use of the groggers should not, however, serve to obstruct the proper reading of the Megilah, which, after all, is the focus of our celebration.

Matanos La'veyonim – Mitzva #2 of Purim • Every person must give tzedaka (money, food, commodities) to at least two needy persons on Purim day. • If one is unable to personally distribute this tzedaka, it may be accomplished through the auspices of the Rabbi's Discretionary fund or the “Cat-in-the-Hat” hat that is passed around. •

This mitzvah must be done during the day.

Mishloach Manos – Mitzva #3 of Purim • Mishloach manos enhances the spirit of friendliness and joy that is part of Purim. • On Purim day, one sends to a Jewish friend, a gift of two different foods. (They can be of the same bracha.) • Preferably, they should be suitable to be eaten at the seudas Purim. • These two items must be presented in an edible state that requires no further preparation by the recipient. • There is no maximum to the amount of manos that may be given. • NOTE: The mishloach manos that are being sent out from the shul will not motsee you from your obligation.

Aveilim - Those who are in the midst of the year's mourning period for the loss of a parent (or sheloshim for the loss of a spouse, sibling or child) are obligated in all of the mitzvos of Purim, including the sending of manos. However, the aveil should only send one Mishloach Manos but the family can send more without the involvement of the aveil. According to many poskim, one should not, however, send manos to aveilim. One can send to the spouse of an aveil though.

Se'udas Purim – Mitzva #4 of Purim • Normally, the Purim se'uda begins before sunset and lasts on into the night. As noted above, this year the Purim se'uda should be completed or primarily completed before halachic noon (12:07 PM). • It is a mitzva to light candles (without a beracha), drink wine and eat meat at this meal – even this year! • This is to be a festive occasion where family and friends gather together at a holiday-prepared table with song and merrymaking. •

While the obligation of the Purim se'uda can only be fulfilled on Purim day, it is proper to rejoice after the evening Megilah reading and to eat a festive meal on Purim night as well. • Everyone is invited to join the Rav and his Talmidim at the Rav's home tonight.

Hamantashen There are a few reasons given for Hamantashen, the three-cornered delicacy that is eaten on Purim, and is the German word for pocket. 1.

It is fashioned after Haman's triangular-shaped hat, which was the symbol of his high office. So why do we remember and glorify the hat of our enemy? Because Purim is the day of V'Nahapoch Hu – where everything gets turned upside down. That all evil decrees and intentions fell on their plotters' heads. 2. “Haman-Tash” is derived from the word “Tash Kocho” – may Haman's strength become weak. 3. The three corners of the pastry represents the three Avos, may their zechus save Bnai Yisroel.

Purim Costumes Masquerading has always been a special feature of Purim joy. Adults and children often wear special costumes and stage masquerades in a spirit of fun. Thus, they share and generate the joy which is a simcha shel mitzva. This has also been related to the Neis Nister which characterizes Purim where Hashem hid himself throughout.

Work on Purim It is very preferable for one not to work on Purim. Ideally, this day should be spent in joy with family and friends. Additionally, it is one of those few days of the year where our impressionable kids can really be involved in the mitzvos of joy of the day.

Shushan Purim - Shabbos In the city of Shushan, the war between the Jews and their enemies continued for an extra day. Shushan was the capital of Persia, the scene of the Purim story. Therefore, the Jews of Shushan celebrated Purim the day after the rest of their brethren. This day has become known as Shushan Purim.

In habitants of cities such as Tveria, which may have been walled during the days of Yehoshua, they read Megilas Esther on both the 14th and 15th of Adar. In Yerushalayim, the Megilah is read only on the 15th of Adar. On Shushan Purim, we are also required to rejoice; therefore, tachanun is not said on this day as well. This year, we will omit Av Harachamim and Tzidkascha Tzedek from the Shabbos davening.

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MEANING IN MITZVOT  
BY RABBI ASHER MEIR  
TWO DAYS OF PURIM

Each week we discuss one familiar halachic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

The Megila tells us that both the 14th and the 15th days of Adar are days of “feasting and joy, and sending portions” (Esther 9:22).

But it doesn't state explicitly why and how the holiday is spread over the two days. Thus, the Beit Yosef asks, “Why did they divide this mitzva into distinct days, fixing a distinct day for the unwalled cities and a distinct day for the walled cities, unlike any other mitzva?” (OC 688).

First the Beit Yosef brings the explanation of the Ran. The Ran explains that this is merely an extension of the first Purim, where all over the empire the Jews stood against their enemies on the 13th and rested on the 14th, but in the city of Shushan the Jews stood against their enemies an additional day and rested on the 15th.

Yet according to this explanation Purim should be celebrated on the 15th in Shushan alone, or at the very most in those cities which were walled at the time of the miracle. Why then is Purim celebrated on the 15th in cities which were walled at the time of Yehoshua's conquest, centuries earlier? The Ran answers, according to the Gemara, that to adopt this logical course of action would be an insult to the Land of Israel which then lay in ruins. It would result in Shushan enjoying a special status which Yerushalayim lacks! So in order to rectify this, it was established that the criterion would be which cities were walled in the earlier era. But Shushan itself does retain its special status, since it is the origin of the custom to celebrate on the 15th.

So according to the Ran, the fundamental distinction is between Shushan and the rest of the Persian empire, but as an “afterthought” the practical distinction is based on cities walled at the time of the conquest.



The Beit Yosef objects that the Gemara states that the Megilla's reference to "unwalled cities" (Esther 9:19) needs to be understood according to the use of the same word in the Torah (Devarim 3:5), where it refers to the cities unwalled on the eve of our entrance into the land of Israel. Only afterwards does the Gemara ask what then should be the status of Shushan; the conclusion is that due to the circumstances of the Purim miracle, it too should celebrate on the 15th.

So according to the Beit Yosef, the fundamental distinction is between walled and unwalled cities at the time of the first entry of Israel into the land; but as an "afterthought" Shushan was added to the cities celebrating on the 15th.

The Beit Yosef suggests that the honor of the Land of Israel was not a secondary consideration determining exactly which cities would celebrate on the 15th but rather the fundamental reason that the holiday is separated into two days. It would have been inappropriate to establish a national holiday lacking an inherent connection to the Land of Israel, especially since the land was then in ruins. The foundational means of creating this connection was by dividing the holiday into two days, one of which is special to Yerushalayim and to a few other cities that were enclosed at the time of the original sanctification of the Land.

Indeed, the Gemara gives a similar reason for the fact that Hallel is not said on Purim since "Hallel is not said on a miracle outside the Land [of Israel]" (Megila 14a).

We can deepen our understanding of this approach by comparing it with a somewhat similar phenomenon of a two-day holiday: the two days of holidays celebrated in the Diaspora. In that case, the real holiday falls on the 15th of the month, a day which "radiates" from Yerushalayim since the Beit Din there establishes the date of Rosh Chodesh. All other locations learn of the date only from Yerushalayim. Places which are far from Yerushalayim, specifically those outside of the Land of Israel, celebrate again on the 16th. (This is true for Pesach and Sukkot, the holidays whose date abroad inherently depends on timely news from Yerushalayim.)

The difference is that in Purim the "distant" cities celebrate first, whereas on Yom Tov they continue their celebration afterwards. This is itself a commemoration of the exile. When the custom of two-day holidays began, there was Jewish settlement in Yerushalayim. Distant residents were reminded by the second day that they were at the periphery of a still-living center. But at the time of the Megila, the center of Jewish life was actually in Persia. The main importance was not to remind Jews where they had been, but rather where they were going. Having the periphery celebrate first suggests the responsibility that existed then to begin the spiritual awakening in the Diaspora, but afterwards to reestablish it as soon as possible in the Land of Israel and Yerushalayim.

The division of Purim into two days, writes the Beit Yosef, is a commemoration of the past. But the fact that on Purim the order is "v'nahafokh hu" (opposite) so that unwalled cities celebrate first and walled ones, including especially Yerushalayim, next is a challenge for the future.

The OU/NCSY Israel Center - About TORAH tidbits

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From: Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: March 18, 2005 Subject: Kol Torah Parshat Vayikra

KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County Parshiot Vayikra-Zachor 8 Adar II 5765 March 19, 2005 Vol.14 No.26 This week's issue of Kol Torah has been sponsored by Barbara and Kenneth Strassman and Family, in the observance of the Shloshim of Barbara's mother, Elaine Kaiser A"H. This week's issue of Kol Torah has also been sponsored by Marcia and David Jacobowitz in loving memory of Abram Jacobowitz, Reb Avraham ben Dovid Hacoen on the occasion of his first Yahrzeit. May his memory be a blessing. This week's Kol Torah is dedicated to TABC's Mock Trial Team, which captured the New Jersey State Championship. We wish a Refuah Shleimah to Ari Schwartz, Aharon Dovid ben Elka Shprintza Machla.

## WHY DID ESTHER HIDE HER JEWISH IDENTITY? BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

There are many mysteries in Megillat Esther that are not explained in the text of the Megillah. For example, the text does not explain why Mordechai refused to bow to Haman. Another mystery is Hashem's purpose in arranging that Haman parade Mordechai around Shushan on the king's horse and wearing the king's clothes, while the edict of destruction against the Jews remained in full effect.

In this essay we will seek to gain insight into the mystery of why Esther did not reveal her Jewish identity. This behavior is

mentioned twice in the Megillah, both before (2:10) and after she became the queen (2:20). The repetition highlights its importance in the Megillah story. What is even more troubling is the fact that not only did Esther hide her Jewish identity, but also that Mordechai seems to emphasize his Jewish identity to the Persian government officials (see 3:4) in a manner that endangers the survival of the entire Jewish people. Why then did Mordechai instruct Esther to hide her Jewish identity?

We shall explore four answers that are presented by two classic commentators to the Megillah, Rashi and Ibn Ezra. We then will present a new approach to this issue that is suggested by Rav Avraham Shama in an essay that is printed in Esther Hee Hadassah, a publication of the Herzog Teacher's College, a branch of Yeshivat Har Etzion. The answers to this question teach many lessons of how Jews should behave and survive in the Exile, a major theme of Megillat Esther (see Reflections of the Rav 1:178-186). Our essay is an expansion and variation of Rav Shama's essay and is enhanced by the insights of the 5764 Senior Navi Shiur at the Torah Academy of Bergen County.

### Rashi's Approach

Rashi (commenting on 2:10) explains that she hid her Jewish identity in order that she would not be chosen as queen. Had she revealed her Jewish identity she would have had to reveal that she was a descendant of King Sha'ul. This, in turn, would have motivated Achashveirosh to choose Esther as queen. She hid her Jewish identity in order to create the impression that she was of ordinary lineage and unqualified to be chosen as queen.

Rashi believes that Esther did not want to be chosen as queen, as can be inferred from the Pesukim that state that Esther was first taken to the house of Achaveirsosh (2:8) and subsequently taken to Achashveirosh himself (2:16). The fact that Esther seems to make no effort to be chosen as queen (she requests no special oils or perfumes even though she would have been given anything she would have requested, 2:15), strongly supports this assertion.

Rashi's approach is rooted in Chazal who assert that Esther did not want to be chosen as queen. Chazal (Sanhedrin 74b) highlight this point to explain why Esther was not Halachically required to sacrifice her life in order to avoid the sin of consorting with Achashveirosh. Indeed, Chazal (Aggadat Esther, Parashah 2) compare Esther's being taken to Achashveirosh's palace to Sarah Imeinu's being taken to Pharaoh's palace (B'ereshit 12:15). We should note that Megillat Esther is unusually rich in allusions and parallels to other stories in Tanach (see the introduction to the Da'at Mikra commentary to Megillat Esther pp. 12-16 and Rav Amnon Bazak's essay in Esther Hee Hadassah). Rav Shama also notes the parallel between Mordechai watching out for his niece Esther as she is taken into the king's palace and Esther subsequently saving Mordechai to Miriam watching out for her brother Moshe as he was taken into the king's palace and Moshe subsequently saving Miriam.

Rashi also seems to derive his insight from the seemingly repetitive language of the Pasuk that states that she did not reveal her nation (Amah) or her descent (Moladtah). Rashi explains that she did not reveal her nation, as that would have forced her to reveal her descent from royalty. Rashi is also based on Chazal's assertion that Esther is a descendant of King Sha'ul. In fact, Chazal (Megillah 16a) state that Achashveirosh extended Esther more respect when Esther revealed her identity and (Chazal note) her royal pedigree.

Rav Shama notes that we should understand Chazal's assertion that Esther and Mordechai descend from King Sha'ul in light of Chazal's assertion that Haman descends from Amalek. The literary cues that point to these assertions are the association of Mordechai and Esther with Kish (2:5; Chazal assert that this refers to the father of King Sha'ul) and the Megillah's repeated referral to Haman as Aggagi (the book of Sh'muel records that Aggag was the king of Amalek).

Chazal view the battle of Mordechai and Esther against Haman as a re-creation of the battle between Sha'ul and Amalek. In fact, this battle can be seen as a Tikkun (correction) of the sin of Sha'ul in his taking of some of the booty in his battle against Amalek (Shmuel 1:15:9). This might explain the Megillah's recording no less than three times (in Chapter 9) that the Jews did not take from the booty of the battle, even though Achashveirosh's decree entitled them to do so.

It is interesting that according to Rashi, had Achashveirosh known that Esther was Jewish, he would have certainly chosen Esther as his queen. This seems to be one of countless examples of a major theme in Rashi's commentary to Tanach. It appears that Rashi never misses an opportunity to emphasize and highlight the special character of Am Yisrael (Rashi's introductions to each of the five books of the Chumash are an example of this phenomenon; see Rav Mordechai Breuer's Pirkei Bereshit 1:20-47).

Rav Berel Wein once commented that without Rashi's commentary to the Tanach we would have never survived the Exile. In contrast to the ridicule and humiliation that many of the Nochrin and their spiritual leaders heaped upon us in our troubled Exile, Rashi never ceases to constantly remind us (and quite often in a subtle manner, as in this case) that we are a very special nation.

It is also very interesting that Rashi seems to teach that a Jew should not seek a very high office while in Exile. Esther was suitable to be the queen of the Persian Empire, yet she made every effort to avoid being chosen. Nevertheless, Hashem subtly arranged for Esther to be chosen despite her efforts.

Rav Shama notes that Rashi's approach explains only why Esther concealed her Jewish identity before she was chosen as queen. However, it does not explain why Esther continued to conceal her Jewish identity even after she was chosen as queen. Perhaps Rashi would say that Esther and Mordechai were hoping that Esther would not be a "star" (despite the fact that her name Esther, means star in Persian; see Da'at Mikra to Esther 2:7) in Achashveirosh's palace and would hopefully be permitted to quietly leave the palace at some time in the future. This seems to be a viable approach in light of the fact that Esther was apparently not Achashveirosh's only wife (see Esther 2:19 and 4:11, as well as the Da'at Mikra commentary to Esther 2:19). Perhaps we can understand Mordechai's advising Esther after she was chosen (2:20-21), as planning a subtle and safe exit plan for Esther.

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Esther and Realpolitik Bar-Ilan University 's Parashat Hashavua Study Center Parashat Vayiqra-Shabbat Zakhor 5765/ March 19, 2005 Esther and Realpolitik

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When Mordecai charged Esther to "go to the king and to appeal to him and to plead with him for her people" (Esther 4:8), Esther put him off with a formal response: "Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days" (4:11). Only after Mordecai's sharp response did Esther understand the gravity of the situation and decide to take action: "Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish" (4:16). On a first reading it seems that Esther was taking a desperate step, almost suicidal. We shall attempt to show that far from being puppet theater, with extremes of rash actions, many of the moves taken by the characters in the Megillah may be understood as sophisticated

political moves. Esther too had a well-formed, realistic plan with a good chance of success. We shall cite some of her actions and try to understand them in the above light Delaying Tactics "On the third day, Esther put on royal apparel" (5:1). Wearing the clothes the king liked best, in order to appear pleasing to him, she stood at the entrance of the palace. The king, well aware of the prohibition against coming to the inner court, was astounded at seeing her and called out, "What troubles you, Queen Esther?" (5:3). He was eager to know what it was that was important enough to cause Esther to risk her life. But Esther avoided his question and instead invited him to a feast with Haman.

Now, to invite the king to a feast there was no need to risk one's life; a respectable invitation could have been sent by means of one of the eunuchs. Therefore at the feast the king seems to have been preoccupied in finding out what was on Esther's mind. The queen however did not give the slightest inkling as to the matter on her mind, while as a proper hostess, saw to it that the conversation never lagged. Finally the king turned to her, asking, "What is your wish? It shall be granted" (6:5). Esther was again in no hurry to satisfy the king's curiosity and promised to do the king's bidding at the feast that she would give the next day.

We may add that Esther may well have acted frivolously with Haman during the feast. As the Midrash Lekah Tov comments, "She played it up greatly, to display before the king that she loved Haman with all her soul, so that the king would be jealous of him and would say that it was not for naught that he had been invited two days in a row – given this great love – therefore the king had trouble sleeping that night." Indeed, Haman left the feast "happy and lighthearted."

Unfounded Suspicions?

Unlike Haman, Ahasuerus left the feast troubled and wondering. What was it that Esther wished? What important matter had led her to risk her life, appearing so dramatically in his inner court? It appears that another matter began to trouble him as well – the question of Esther's relations with Haman. What was Haman doing at a closed, private, family party of the king and queen? Moreover, when the queen invited both the king and Haman to the second feast, it was clear to Ahasuerus that it was not simply a chance occurrence. After all, the two feasts that Esther gave were not for the public at large, unlike the banquets which the king had given "for all his officials and courtiers" (1:3; 2:18).

Seizing the Queen and the Crown

The king's concern was not only on the romantic and personal level. According to the Midrash Ahasuerus was not actually the son of a king but had seized the throne by force.[1] He must have had many political rivals whom he feared might try to seize the crown from him. This may be the rationale behind the strict security measures taken with everyone, including the queen. Anyone who might enter the inner court without being summoned was liable to death. The earlier assassination attempt by Bigthana and Teresh is indicative of this atmosphere. Ahasuerus began to have misgivings that Haman's dizzying rise to power as prime minister had gone to his head, making him think of seizing the crown. Haman's demand that all the king's servants bow down before him (3:2) can be seen as pointing in this direction.

One of the ways of seizing the crown in ancient times was by first taking the king's wife as one's own.[2] as Rashi noted: "The beginning of sovereignty is in using the king's scepter." Opinion in the Talmud is divided as to whether Ahasuerus was smart or dumb, but it is clear that regarding women he was quite expert. Therefore, the relations between Haman and Esther that seemed to him to be emerging under his nose were a threat to his throne. He feared that Haman would use Esther for his own political purposes and since he could not meet Esther covertly, since one of the king's servants would surely report it, a banquet in the king's presence was chosen as a way for them to meet in the open. The king's fear that Haman was plotting against him worried him so much that he could not fall asleep: "That night, sleep deserted the king" (6:1) – that was the night between the first and second feasts. While the king had not forgotten the issue of Esther, concern over Haman held primacy of place at that moment.

Minister at Large

At this point we must clarify Mordecai's standing. It seems that Mordecai was a senior official in the Persian administration. The recurrent phrase, "when Mordecai was sitting in the palace gate" (2:21; 5:9, and others) means he held an important office there. He was one of Ahasuerus' ministers and therefore could visit Esther outside the women's court in order to find out how she was faring (2:11), and perhaps his position at the king's gate afforded him the possibility of uncovering the plot to assassinate the king and foiling that plot (2:22).

Given Mordecai's lofty station, we can understand why Haman, the prime minister, could not simply have him killed, but rather needed the king's approval for such a measure (6:4). Moreover, even if we take Ahasuerus to be an utter fool, although I do not think he was, it is difficult to understand why the king should have

appointed Mordecai prime minister after Haman's fall, had Mordecai not already been a minister in his kingdom.

Taking all the above into account, when the king found out that Haman had come to the palace court on the eve between the two private banquets, he decided to put him to the test. Ahasuerus asked Haman a seemingly innocent question:

"What should be done for a man whom the king desires to honor?" (6:6). Haman, convinced that the king meant him, suggested a symbolic coronation of the person whom the king wished to honor (v. 8). Thus Haman fell for the king's trick, revealing his hidden intentions of seizing the crown. Even if this was not proof of Haman's aspirations to be king, it certainly was an indication in this direction. Therefore the king decided to put Haman down. The king surely knew of the hostility between Haman and Mordecai, since presumably his servants who spied for him had reported this to him, and so Ahasuerus told Haman, "Get the garb and horse, as you have said, and do his to Mordecai the Jew, who sits in the king's gate. Omit nothing of all you have proposed" (6:10). The last sentence indicates that the king knew full well how hard it would be for Haman to carry out this order and therefore he cautioned him, "omit nothing." [3] The king arrived at the second feast plagued by great suspicions of Haman and curious to know what it was that Esther wished; Haman arrived at the feast in an abject state because of the honors he had had to give to Mordecai. Furthermore, the consultation he held at home had presaged his downfall. His wife and advisors said to him: "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not overcome him; you will fall before him to your ruin" (6:13). While the discussion at home was in full swing, before a solution had been proposed, Haman was rushed off to the feast and therefore was in a state of confusion when he arrived. At the second feast, as well, Esther did not bring up what was on her mind, despite its importance, but waited for the king's question. Finally, when Esther presented her problem – "For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, massacred, and exterminated" (7:4) – the king burst out, demanding to know: "Who is he and where is he who dared to do this?"

#### Transfer or Destruction

The king's wonderment is surprising, and even more difficult to understand is his wrath when Esther pointed to Haman as responsible for the plan to annihilate the Jews: "The adversary and enemy is this evil Haman" (7:6). For had not the king concluded an agreement with Haman when he gave him his ring, saying, "the people are yours to do with as you see fit" (3:11)? In other words, the king knew full well about the deal with Haman; so why did he pretend not to know? Perhaps one could argue that Ahasuerus was lying to Esther, and his rage was false. But one could also view the deal between Haman and the king in a different light. Haman sought "to do away with all the Jews throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus" (3:6), but Ahasuerus understood it differently. Genocide is not heard of in that period; it is a modern invention. Haman indeed accused the Jews of "not obeying the king's laws" (3:8), but in ancient times even political rebellion, which was more dangerous to the empire than civil disobedience, was not punished by genocide, rather by exile, as in the exile of the ten tribes and the exile of Zedekiah. Transferring entire populations from one area to another was an accepted method of punishment for rebels. It seems Ahasuerus must have thought that Haman was speaking of selling the Jews into slavery, for the money that Haman proposed to raise was intended as compensation to be given the coffers of the kingdom in exchange for the work force of the king's subject that would be lost. This explanation also accounts for Esther's remarks, "Had we only been sold as bondmen and bondwomen, I would have kept silent; for the adversary is not worthy of the king's trouble" (7:4). True, Haman had said, "let an edict be drawn for their destruction" (3:9), but had the Jews were sold into slavery they would cease to exist as a people, since the laws of the master become the laws of the slave. In the light of this explanation Ahasuerus' rage is fully authentic and understandable, for he had not given his consent to the destruction of an entire people, only to their exile. [4]

When the king charged out to the palace garden in a fury, Haman began to beg the queen for his life. But when upon returning the king saw Haman prostrated on the couch on which Esther was reclining, he perceived this as confirming his suspicions regarding Haman's relations with the queen: "Does he mean to ravish the queen in my own palace?" (7:8). Were it not for the king's earlier suspicions of Haman, it would be difficult to understand how the king might have thought that Haman would dare take advantage of the situation to seduce the queen.

Harbonah's remark that Haman had wished to hang Mordecai, "the man whose words saved the king" (7:9), without asking the king's leave, served as further proof to Ahasuerus regarding Haman's intentions to become king, for he had appropriated to himself authority that is reserved to the king (Haman had actually gone to request the king's permission to hang Mordecai, but he had not succeeded

in making his request – cf. 6:4). Thus Esther succeeded in removing Haman and then canceling his decree.

#### Esther's Plan

Now let us reconstruct Esther's plan. Esther was well acquainted with the atmosphere of palace intrigues, jealousies and suspicions. Likewise, she knew that important decisions are taken at feasts. Her problem was that in Persia women had no standing in running the kingdom; so how could she persuade the king to listen to her pleas regarding policy in the kingdom? Moreover, even the queen's status was inferior to that of the prime minister when it came to political agreements, so why should the king accept her position against the views of his prime minister?

Therefore Esther was forced to maneuver within the bounds of these limitations. Had she invited the king to a feast by sending him a written invitation, the king would have willingly come, but he would not have been ready to listen to her request. Therefore she appeared in person, at great risk to herself, thereby arousing the king's curiosity and interest. When she refused to bring up her request at the first feast, dragging the matter on from feast to feast, she kept up the king's attention and curiosity. Even at the second feast she did not bring her matter up, but let the king ask what she desired, [5] and thus she hoped that the king might listen to her claims and requests, even though they touched on political matters in the administration of the state. Esther's second challenge was to bring the king to prefer her position over the deal he had signed with Haman. Indeed, Esther's status was inferior to that of the prime minister in terms of politics, but there was one area in which the prime minister had no primacy over all the rest of the king's servants, and that was in affairs regarding the queen as his wife. Esther deliberately aroused jealousy in Ahasuerus and led him to believe that some sort of relations were developing between her and Haman. [6] Indeed, the king suspected Haman, and his cry, "Does he mean to ravish the queen in my own palace?" expresses his thoughts in this direction.

What would have happened had the king also suspected Esther? What would have happened had the king ordered both of them to be killed, in line with such laws as, "the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death" (Lev. 20:10)? That was why Esther had earlier said to Mordecai, "if I am to perish, I shall perish." We know see that she was not embarking on a suicidal course, rather setting in action an intricately thought-out plan while taking a calculated risk. [7] The Holy One, blessed be He, helped Esther carry out her plan and thus save the lives of her people.

[1] Cf. Megillah 11a; Rashi on Esther 1.1; Malbim on Esther 1.1. The coronation and victory banquet was not held until three years later (Esther 1:2-3), after he had succeeded in putting down the uprisings and riots in his country. [2] Greek legends tell of Oedipus saving Thebes from the Sphinx and, as his prize for doing so, marrying the queen, who was his mother, and thus becoming king of Thebes. Examples can also be brought from the Bible: Ahithophel advised Absalom to have intercourse with his father's concubines, "and when all Israel hears that you have dared the wrath of your father, all who support you will be encouraged" (II Sam. 16:21); Saul's son Ish-bosheth viewed the deed of Abner son of Ner, having intercourse with Saul's concubine Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, as an act of revolt against the crown, intending to depose the king (II Sam. 3:7). King Solomon, as well, took Adonijah son of Haggai's request to marry Abishag the Shunammite, who had been David's concubine, as indicating his aspiration for kingship: "Why request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Request the kingship for him!" (I Kings 2:22).

[3] Similarly, when the Lord sent Jeremiah to prophesy in the Temple courtyard, saying the words, "then I will make this House like Shiloh," the Lord warned him, "Do not omit anything" (Jer. 26:2), out of His recognition of the difficulty in delivering such a harsh prophecy as this in the House of the Lord. [4] Cf. M. Kascher, Torah Shelema: Megillat Esther (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 196, note 14.

[5] Some people believe that one may not introduce a subject before the king until the king has spoken first. While this is true at public forums it might not necessarily hold in the setting of a private feast between the king and queen.

[6] As Rashi wrote in his commentary on Esther 5:4.

[7] "R. Berakhya said in the name of R. Hiyyah Abuy that Esther acted heroically, pulling him [Haman] down onto her and saying, 'We shall be killed, he and I, but my people will be saved.'" Kascher, Torah Shelema, p. 198.

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From: office@etzion.org.il Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: March 22, 2005 To: yhe-holiday@etzion.org.il Subject: SPECIAL PURIM PACKAGE

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INSIGHTS INTO MEGILLAT ESTHER  
BY RAV YONATAN GROSSMAN & RAV YEHOShUA REISS  
Translated by Kaeren Fish

We would like to offer a number of short and unrelated insights into major themes and ideas in Megillat Esther, to serve as food for thought as you hear the Megilla this Purim. I. THE STORY'S STARTING POINT Every story that is made up of a chain of events has a starting point. However, it is not always clear from where the story should begin. The Sages debate the question, "From which point does a person read the Megilla in order to fulfill his obligation?" In fact, the parties to this debate reflect differing views as to where the crux of the story begins: Rabbi Meir says: The whole thing. Rabbi Yehuda says: From [the words, "There was] a Jewish man [in Shushan, the capital...]."  
Rabbi Yossi says: From "After these things, [King Achashverosh promoted Haman]." (Mishna Megilla 2:3, 19a) On the other hand, the Megilla conceivably could have started earlier than it actually does, such as with the coronation of Achashverosh, or with Mordekhai's adoption of Esther. In fact, the Megilla opens with Achashverosh's banquet for his servants, even though, at first glance, this seems to have nothing to do with the main plot. Attention should be paid to the fact that the main events of the Megilla take place in the twelfth year of Achashverosh's reign, but the story begins with the banquet in the third year of his reign. Apparently, this is meant to emphasize the foresight of Divine Providence: it was the removal of Vashti in the third year that prepared the ground for the salvation of the Jews in the twelfth year. At the time, her removal looked like a regular royal scandal, with no ramifications for history. Only a perspective of many years revealed this event to have paved the way for the salvation of Israel from the terrible fate that awaited them. In the Megilla, Divine Providence operates in hidden ways; therefore G-d's Name is not mentioned anywhere in it. This may be what the Sages allude to in their teaching: Where is there a hint to Esther in the Torah? [From the words (Devarim 31:18),] "Va-Anokhi haster astir, I shall surely hide [My face...]." (Chullin 139b)

Through the manner of its writing, Megillat Esther presents its readers with a challenge of faith: one has to seek the Divine Providence leading events to unfold the way we see them – even if G-d's hand is not clearly revealed in them.

II. THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE MEGILLA The two main characters of the Megilla – Mordekhai and Esther – bring about the salvation of the Jews. Why is the Megilla named after Esther and not after Mordekhai? If we seek the true main character of the story, we must divide the Megilla into two parts. Up until the moment when Mordekhai convinces Esther to appear before the king and to beseech him on behalf of her people (chapter 4), Mordekhai is presented as the main character. He is extremely active, while Esther is presented as subordinate to him and passive ("Whatever Mordekhai said, Esther would do"). In this first half, Mordekhai is the hero, and the plot revolves around him (his refusal to bow down before Haman, his overhearing Bigtan and Teresh, etc.). However, once Esther agrees, with great self-sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish people, to enter the king's presence, she begins to lead events, while Mordekhai becomes subordinate to her ("Mordekhai came before the king because Esther had told what he was to her"). Henceforth, the plot centers on her (the two parties that she hosts for the king and Haman, her accusation and request, etc.), and the Megilla as a whole is named after her. When festival is accepted by the Jews of all the provinces, we again find an emphasis on Esther's request rather than that of Mordekhai: "And Esther's word confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book" (9:32). The fact that the Megilla is named after her serves to emphasize the self-sacrifice that led to the eventual salvation. It was Esther's human action on behalf of her nation that brought to realization the machinations of hidden Divine Providence, and ultimately also the acceptance by the Jews of Shushan and of all the provinces of Esther's wish that thanks and praise be offered to G-d for their redemption from their enemies.

III. "HE HAS FALLEN IN THE PIT HE DUG" (TEHILLIM 7:16) Towards the end of the Megilla, the text describes the turnaround which is the essence of the story: "...On the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, it was turned upside down – that the Jews themselves would rule over their enemies" (9:1). The same idea finds expression in the

"boomerang" literary structure of the Megilla narrative, as we shall set forth.

In the first half of the story (episodes A-F below), Haman rises to power and causes the king to carry out his wish: a decree of annihilation against the Jews. This half concludes with Haman's relatives proposing "that Mordekhai be hanged... then go joyously with the king to the banquet..." (5:14). The second half of the story (episodes F1-A1) represents a symmetrical inverse, in which the star of Esther and Mordekhai rises, Haman himself is hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordekhai, and his decrees are nullified. This half of the story opens again with the advice of Haman's cronies: "If Mordekhai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish lineage, then you will not prevail against him; you will surely fall before him" (6:13). The turnaround itself takes place "on that night," when the king could not sleep (episode G). The Gemara expounds: "Rabbi Tanchum said: The King of the Universe was unable to sleep" (Megilla 15b). By the end of this fateful night, the king commands Haman to lead Mordekhai upon his own royal horse in the streets of the city. This image represents the turning point: Haman, instead of hanging Mordekhai, as he had planned, leads the horse upon which Mordekhai is seated. The point where the "turning" structure is most strikingly apparent is the contrasting parallel between Haman's letter and Mordekhai's letter (see below). It should be noted that the bookends of the story (see A and A1 below) focus specifically on Achashverosh, king of the Persian empire. This emphasizes the "hidden" nature of the miracle. To mortal eyes, it appears that Achashverosh – a mortal king – rules and controls his kingdom, but behind the scenes, the hand of Providence is apparent; it is this force that withholds sleep from the king on the fateful night. We may summarize the "boomerang" structure of the story as follows: A: Introduction: presentation of Achashverosh B: Achashverosh's banquet for all the provinces, and the special banquet for the inhabitants of Shushan C: Haman casts lots: war against the Jews set for 13th of Adar D: Haman's letter E: Esther's first party F: Haman consults with his cronies G: "ON THAT NIGHT THE KING COULD NOT SLEEP..." F1: Haman consults with his cronies E1: Esther's second party D1: Mordekhai's letter C1: "It was turned upside down" – the Jews' war against their enemies on the 13th of Adar B1: Banquet of the Jews in all the provinces (14th) and special banquet for the Jews of Shushan (15th) A1: Conclusion: Achashverosh's powerful reign

IV. "SOMETHING WRITTEN IN THE KING'S NAME CANNOT BE REVOKED" As demonstrated above, the structure of the Megilla reflects the concept of "turnaround." This is particularly striking in the parallel between the letters that Mordekhai writes, permitting the Jews to gather and defend themselves, and the writing and dispatching of the previous letters by Haman. The results of the dispatch of these two missives are similarly presented in a contrasting parallel: following Haman's letter, Mordekhai tears his clothes and dons sackcloth; after the second letters are sent, Mordekhai emerges from before the king "in royal robes." This parallel shows up Achashverosh in all his weakness and fickleness: he hands his ring to Mordekhai with the same ease with which he previously handed it to Haman, although the purposes to which he is committing himself are diametrically opposed. Ironically, it is the king himself who highlights his own absurdity when he tells Mordekhai and Esther, "You may write as you please concerning the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; but writing which has been written in the king's name, and which has been sealed with the king's ring, cannot be revoked" (8:8). Despite the unthinking "rule of the ring", the king repeats his mistake and hands the ring to whoever seeks it. On the other hand, this comparison also highlights the wheel of history, which turns in accordance with the wishes of the King of kings. That which Haman planned to do to the Jews ends up happening to him and to all the others who sought to cause evil to the Jewish nation.

V. MEGILLAT ESTHER AND THE STORY OF YOSEF The Megilla contains many expressions that are borrowed from the description of Yosef in Egypt, in Sefer Bereishit. The two narratives are indeed very similar in content: both concern a Jew who rises to power in a foreign country, and seeks the welfare of the Jewish people in dealing with the ruling powers. Chazal note this connection: "And it was, when they would tell him, day after day" (Esther 3:4) – R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Binyamin, son of R. Levi: The sons of Rachel (Yosef and Mordekhai) are equal in the miracle that they brought about and are also equal in their greatness. Their miracles are equal: There it is written, "And it was, when she [Potifar's wife] would speak to him [Yosef], DAY AFTER DAY" (Ber. 39:10), while here it is written, "And it was, when they would tell him [Mordekhai], DAY AFTER DAY." They are also equal in greatness: There it is written, "Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand it gave it into the hand of Yosef, and he had him dressed in clothes of fine linen" (Ber. 41:42), while here

it is written, "The king removed his ring, which he had transferred from Haman, and he gave it to Mordekhai" (Esther 8:2). Further on it is written, "He [Pharaoh] had him [Yosef] ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they called before him: Bow down!" (Ber. 41:43); here it is written (Esther 6:9), "Let the royal robes and the horse be handed over, and let them call before him: So shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!" (Esther Rabba, parasha 7) This connection hints at that which is left hidden in Megillat Esther but made explicit in the story of Yosef: just as G-d protected Yosef and brought success to all his endeavors in Egypt, so G-d watched over Esther and made her successful. However, the connection to Yosef may also hint at a teaching of the Sages that explains why Hallel is not recited on Purim: "For we were still the subjects of Achashverosh" (Megilla 14a). In other words, even after the happy ending of the Megilla, the Jews of Shushan were still in exile; this had not been a complete redemption. Through the veiled connection to the story of Yosef, the reader is reminded also of the continuation of that story – the bitter slavery in Egypt. Even if a Jew is placed at the very highest echelons of power in a foreign land, this is no guarantee for the safety of the Jewish nation so long as it dwells in exile. In the next generation, a new "Haman" may arise, "who did not know Yosef"...

VI. THE TIME OF THE STORY When did the story of the Megilla take place? This depends on the identity of King Achashverosh. According to the Sages (Megilla 11b), Achashverosh ruled immediately after Koresh (Cyrus), "at the end of seventy years of Babylonian exile," as Rashi explains (in his commentary on the beginning of the Megilla). This assumption appears to be based upon a unique chronological perception of the order of the Persian kings; even the early commentators note that this view does not sit well with the literal text. The generally accepted view identifies Achashverosh as Xerxes, who ruled during the years 486-465 B.C.E. This identification is supported by the record in the Book of Ezra: The people of the land weakened the hands of the nation of Yehuda... all the days of Koresh, king of Persia, until the reign of Daryavesh, king of Persia. And in the days of Achashverosh, at the beginning of his reign, they wrote to him accusing the inhabitants of Yehuda and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artachshasta..." (4:4-6)

In this list of kings, Achashverosh parallels Xerxes.

According to this identification, the story of the Megilla unfolds after the rebuilding of the Second Temple. At the same time Haman plotted in Shushan, the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was fighting for its survival (see Ezra's description of Achashverosh's decrees "upon the inhabitants of Yehuda and Jerusalem," which highlights the viewpoint of the returnees from Babylon).

Various midrashim contrast the description of Achashverosh's palace with the description of the Temple. Chazal explain, for example, that the vessels that Achashverosh used at his banquet were in fact vessels plundered from the Temple (Megilla 11b), that the clothes that Achashverosh wore during the banquet were the special garments of the Kohen Gadol (Megilla 12a), etc. Perhaps the point of these midrashim is to criticize the Jews of Shushan, who remained in Persia and enjoyed the banquets held at the royal palace, instead of serving G-d in the Temple. The shape of the king's palace is presented in the Megilla as being similar to the form of the Temple (an outer court and an inner court); similarly, an uninvited commoner who approaches the king's inner court is put to death, just as is one who approaches the Sanctuary of the King of kings without being entitled to do so. Esther, who enters the king's inner court while fasting, resembles the Kohen Gadol who enters the "inner court" of the Temple on Yom Kippur. This parallel hints at a condemnation of the Jews of Shushan, who have "traded" the King of kings, as it were, for a mortal king, whose person and whose reign are the subject of considerable mockery in the Megilla.

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From: jmlist@jewishmediaresources.org Date: 24 Mar 2005 11:23:12  
 To: "Mailing List" <jmlist@jewishmediaresources.org> Subject: Rosenblum in  
 London Jewish Tribune: "The double miracle of Purim"  
 THE DOUBLE MIRACLE OF PURIM  
 BY JONATHAN ROSENBLUM  
 London Jewish Tribune March 25, 2005  
 By virtue of our Redemption from Egypt, the Jewish people became slaves to Hashem. That servitude consists of two parts. We belong to Hashem because He

saved us from captivity. And as a consequence of His ownership, we are obligated to do His will. Throughout Jewish history, two distinct groups of enemies have attempted to interfere with one or another of these aspects of our relationship with Hashem. The Book of Daniel prophesies concerning four different kingdoms that will enslave the Jewish people. Those four kingdoms Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome or Edom contested Hashem's claim of ownership by asserting their own claims. A second group, the seven Canaanite nations, sought to prevent the Jewish people from entering into the Land of Israel and performing their Master's commandments, the majority of which can only be performed in Eretz Yisrael. Each of these groups has its progenitor. Egypt is the first of Kingdoms: Egypt is the first of My strength in the tents of Cham (Tehillim 78: 51). Egypt enslaved the Jewish people even prior to their acquisition by Hashem. Had we not been redeemed from Egypt, we would never have been acquired by Hashem in the first place. And Amalek is first among the nations (BaMidbar 24:20). Amalek attacked us as even before the Revelation at Sinai and therefore sought to prevent the Master from conveying His will. The Seven Nations sought to prevent our fulfillment of that Will after the Revelation at Sinai. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, ztl, offers a striking insight on the relationship of the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations with regard to Purim (see Pachad Yitzchak on Purim, Maamar 2 upon which this piece is based.) In general, the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations operate independently of one another. The unique aspect of the Purim story is the conjunction of the two groups. Achashverosh, a usurper, sits on the throne of Persia, the second of the Four Kingdoms enumerated in Daniel. His chief advisor, and the one behind the fiendish plan to to destroy, kill, and obliterate every Jew, is Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek. Our Sages noted the double threat posed by this conjunction of enemies. The Talmud asks, Where do we find Esther hinted to in the Written Torah, and answers by citing the verse, Anochi haster astir I will surely hide My face (Devarim 31:18). The double reference to Hashem's hiddenness in connection with Esther's story refers to the double threat posed by Haman/Amalek's ability to join the opposition of the Four Kingdoms with that of the Seven Nations. That intensified threat was to become the model for all modern Jewish history from the time the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. Indeed the threat has become internationalized in our fourth and final Exile, the Exile of Rome or Edom. The Ramban writes that each of the Four Kingdoms is foreshadowed by one of the four kings against whom Avraham went to war. The fourth of those kings is Tidal, the king of nations. Tidal alone of the four kings did not rule over a single kingdom, but many. And this says the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 42:7) parallels the Exile of Edom, who spreads incitement against the Jews to all the nations of the world. Our fourth and final exile is, in the language of our Sages, described interchangeably as the Exile of Rome or Edom. Edom refers to Esav, who dwelt there and was the ancestor of Amalek. In other words, our present exile partakes equally of the challenge of the Four Kingdoms and of Amalek, just as in the days of Achashverosh and Haman. And indeed both those elements are readily discerned today. The delegitimization of Israel, and the rejection of Jewish sovereignty, derives from the opposition of the Four Kingdoms. As Mark Lilla of the University of Chicago puts it, Jews are mocked today for their insistence on their national identity and entitlement to sovereignty, including the most important right of a sovereign people the right to defend itself. That right is denied Israel by the International Court of Justice, which declared Israel's security fence a violation of international law; it is denied by the U.N., which consistently applies a different standard to Israeli responses to terror attacks than are applied to any other nation; and it is denied by divestment campaigns, which single out Israel as a uniquely evil state. But if the idea of a Jewish state is an anachronism, as Professor Tony Judt claims, then Jews are forever destined to be subject to the rule of others. And that subjugation must of necessity impede our ability to be exclusively servants of Hashem. Jewish sovereignty is the pre-condition for our becoming Hashem's servants. That is why the efforts of the Four Kingdoms to substitute their claims upon us always began with exile from the Land. The insidious efforts of Amalek to prevent us from following Hashem's Will are equally evident in today's world. Amalek is the ultimate scoffer, denying any meaning or purpose to life. The verse do not reprove the scoffer (Mishlei 9:8), Chazal teach us, refers to Amalek. Because he cannot take anything seriously he has no possibility of change or growth, and thus there is no point in reproving him. Amalek's end can only be destruction. Never was our connection to Hashem so clear as during the exodus from Egypt. The nations all trembled in awe of the Jewish people, and none came forward to do battle. Except for Amalek. Amalek thrust the Jewish people back into the realm of history, removed from any transcendental context. Prior to Amalek's attack, no nation even conceived the possibility of waging war against us the miracles in Egypt made Hashem's protection too clear. Even though Amalek was routed, his attack

removed the awe. Now other nations could attribute his defeat to a strategic error of some kind, and devise their own superior strategies. That is what Chazal mean when they compare Amalek to one who leaps into a scalding bath and cools it off for all those who follow. Amalek cooled off awareness of Hashem, awareness of a world of meaning and purpose. The Torah describes how Amalek's ancestor Esav despised the birthright: And he ate and drank and got up and went and despised the birthright (Bereishis 25:34). The Torah's description of Esav in a series of short, action verbs captures his animal-like, unreflective nature. Celebrations of such instinctual, hedonistic behavior abound today. At our first encounter with Amalek, the latter cut off the sign of the covenant between Hashem and Avraham and cast it towards Heaven, as if to deny the existence of a transcendent G-d, and thus any reason to perform the mitzvos. And we live in a world filled with such denial today. The battle with Amalek is always described in the Torah as taking place tomorrow. Moshe tells Yehoshua, Go and battle with Amalek, tomorrow . . . (Shemos 17:9). David HaMelech is described as having defeated Amalek on the morrow (Shmuel I 30:17). And Esther requests from Achashveirosh as second day to kill the Amalekites in Shushan. Purim is harbinger of the future victory over Amalek and the poison that he spread among the nations. That is why on Purim alone we permit ourselves the full rejoicing normally reserved for the days of Mashiach: Then our mouths be filled with laughter (Tehillim 126:2). In reality, Purim belongs to a future time, to the morrow, the time of our final reckoning with Amalek and our victory over both the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations.

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TAANIS ESTHER

THURSDAY MORNING

Mar. 24, 13 ADAR II Public Fast Day. (It is not a Scriptural obligation as are the other four public fast days).

... MINCHA Ashrei; Half-Kaddish; we take out a Sefer Torah and read "Vayichal" as in the morning, no Half-Kaddish after the Torah is read; the third Aliyah is the Maftir. The Haftorah "Dirshu" Isaiah: 55:6-56:9 (until "Akevetz Ulov..") is the usual one for the afternoons of public fasts; Brachos after the Haftorah until Mogen Dovid; Yehalilu; Half-Kaddish; Shemonah Esrei including Aneinu in "Shema Koleinu"; Sim Shalom, during the Chazzan's Repetition, the Chazzan says Aneinu between Goel and Refaenu; Birkas Kohanim before Sim Shalom; (No Avinu Malkeinu and no Tachanun), Kaddish Tiskabel; Aleinu; Mourner's Kaddish.

Before Mincha everyone should give three half-dollar coins to Tzedakah. This money is in commemoration of the Half Shekel (Machtzis Hashekel) that was given at this time of year to the Beis HaMikdash for the purchase of new animal offerings, beginning with the coming month of Nisan. (One should remember that the obligation of "Machtzis Hashekel", as well as those of Matanos LaEvyonim on Purim, and Maos Chitim before Pesach can all be fulfilled through donations to Ezras Torah.)

(Thursday, 13 Adar, is the Yahrzeit of HaGaon HaRav Moshe ben HaGaon HaRav Dovid Feinstein, zt"l, who served as Honorary President of Ezras Torah for many years.)

PURIM

THURSDAY NIGHT Mar. 24, 14 ADAR II

MAARIV Shemonah Esrei with Al Hanisim. If one forgot to say Al Hanisim, and first recalled his omission only after he had already completed the Bracha that follows it, he does not begin the Shemonah Esrei again (the same holds true for Al Hanisim in the Blessing after Meals [Birkas Hamazon]). After Shemonah Esrei, Kaddish Tiskabel. The person who will read the Megillah for the entire congregation folds it like a letter, being careful that he does not damage any of the letters in the Megillah. The reader recites the following three Brachos on behalf of the entire congregation: "Mikra Megilah" "Sheasah Nisim and "Shehecheyanu".

[Rav Henkin noted that the Reading of the Megillah, both at night as well as in the morning, is an obligation incumbent upon every man and woman. Therefore, the reader must have a powerful voice that can be heard by everyone. He must read very precisely, without swallowing any words or even letters. For if anyone misses hearing even one word, he does not fulfill his obligation and must repeat the entire Megillah from that point on. Because of the noise that is made after the mention of Haman, many people do not hear the words, and thus fail to perform a Biblical

commandment. Those who initiated this custom of making noise at the mention of Haman's name, had the pure intentions of performing the Mitzvah in a superior fashion. But, today the interest is only in wanton levity and unruly conduct that is always prohibited. The Sefardim have a custom of making noise only at the mention of Haman during the singing of Shoshanas Yaakov, after the Reading of the Megillah is already over. This is a fitting custom that should be universally adopted. However, during the reading of the Megillah, we should tolerate no noise-making.]

After the reading and rewinding of the Megillah, the Reader makes the Bracha "Harav Es Reevanu". We then say "Asher Hanie" and "Shoshanas Yakov" followed by "Va'atah Kodesh" and Kaddish Tiskabel without Tiskabel; Aleinu; Mourner's Kaddish.

A mourner during Shiva who does not have a Minyan in his own home should go to Shul for the Megillah Reading.

The final time for the sanctification of the New Moon of Adar is the entire night of Thursday, (14 Adar).

FRIDAY MORNING, Mar. 25

SHACHRIS Al Hanisim in Shemonah Esrei; in the Chazzan's Repetition, many say special Piyutim known as the Krovetz L'Purim; no Tachanun; Half-Kaddish; we take out a Sefer Torah from the Aron HaKodesh; three Aliyahs in Parshas Beshalach ("Veyavo Amalek " till the end of the Parsha) Exodus 17:8-17; Half-Kaddish; Yehalilu; we return the Sefer Torah to the Aron HaKodesh; we read the Megillah; before beginning the Megillah, the Reader makes the three Brachos: "Al Mikra Megilah", "Sheasah Nisim" and "Shehecheyanu" (it should be announced that as the Bracha "Shehecheyanu" is made we should intend that it also apply to Mishloach Manos, Matanos LaEvyonim and the Seudas Purim). One may not remove his Tefillin until after the Megillah is read, rewound, and the remainder of Shachris completed. After the Megillah is read, the Reader makes the Bracha "Harav Es Reevanu". We say "Shoshanas Yakov" (no "Asher Hanie"), "Ashrei", "Uva Letzion" (no Lamenatzayach), Kaddish Tiskabel; Aleinu; Psalm of the Day; Mourner's Kaddish. (If one did not yet give his "Machtzis Hashekel", he should do so now.)

One should be very generous in his distribution of his "Gifts to the Poor." One should give to a minimum of two poor people presents of money or of food and drink. In fulfilling his obligation of "Sending Portions to his Friend," one should do this Mitzvah with food that may be eaten without further preparation, and with portions that reflect well on both the giver and the recipient.

One should not send "Mishloach Manos" to a mourner during his year of mourning. If the mourner is a poor man, one may send him money. A mourner is obligated to send "Mishloach Manos" to a friend. (If one lives in a town where the only other Jew is a mourner, he may send him foods that are not of a joyful nature, e.g., plain vegetables).

Fasting and eulogizing are prohibited on Purim and Shushan Purim.

It is better for a person to emphasize giving "Gifts to the Poor" in a generous and magnanimous fashion, rather than to emphasize the "Sending of Portions" or his own lavish Seudas Purim for there is no greater or more praiseworthy form of celebration than that of celebrating in a manner that gladdens the hearts of the needy, the widowed, the orphaned, and the friendless stranger. One who gladdens the heart of the unfortunate is compared to the Divine Presence, as it is said (Isaiah: 57:15), 'to revive the spirit of the downtrodden, and to restore the heart of the broken.'" (Rambam in Laws of the Megillah).

The Seudas Purim should be eaten today before noon so as not to interfere with the usual honoring of Shabbos.

We begin to inquire about and expound upon the laws of Pesach thirty days before, beginning on Purim itself.

We make all of our usual preparations for Shabbos; candle lighting at the proper time.

MINCHA Al Hanisim in Shemonah Esrei.

SHABBOS PARSHAS TZAV

SHUSHAN PURIM Mar. 26, 15 ADAR II

The Haftorah is read from Jeremiah 7:21-34, 8:1-3 and 9:22-23. We do not say Kel Malei or Av Harachamim. At Mincha we do not say Tzidkascha Tzedek.