

# HALACHOS OF PURIM 5785



This year, as Purim is Friday (for the last time in *twenty* years!) with a shorter time for Shalach Manos deliveries, we encourage all to make use of the Mesiba at Shul on Purim day, when hopefully a big part of the Kehilla will be joining together for Simchas Purim, to perhaps have the children and maybe even some adults have a Shalach Manos exchange, thus easing some of the stress from later in the day.

## Parshas Zachor

The Shabbos before Purim is known as Shabbos Zachor, or the Shabbos of Remembrance. This year the Torah reading of Parshas Zachor takes place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Adar, Parshas Tetzave, March 8<sup>th</sup>. A special Maftir portion of the Torah at the end of Ki Seitzei (Devorim 25:17-19) is read instructing us to remember what the people of Amalek did to our ancestors when they left Egypt. Since Haman was a descendant of Amalek, it is most fitting to read this Torah portion right before Purim. In addition, a special Haftorah is read that tells of the defeat of the kingdom of Amalek by Shaul HaMelech. It is a Torah commandment to remember the incident in the desert with Amalek, and we fulfill this through the reading of the Zachor portion. It is best for one to review these three verses and understand their meaning prior to the actual Torah reading in Shul. Even if he didn't, though, if he understands the concept of what is being read it is OK. One should make sure to hear each word of the reading clearly, but if he missed one word (if it wouldn't change the meaning) it is OK. One must have in mind to be Yotze (fulfill his obligation) with the Ba'al Koreh, and the Ba'al Koreh should have in mind to be Motzi himself and everyone else. There is no need to have in mind to be Yotze with the Brachos, since the obligation is *not* to read the Pesukim, but rather to remember Amalek *through* the reading. The Brachos only pertain to the one who receives the Aliyah.

Women don't have an obligation to come hear the reading of Zachor. Some reasons offered are: 1) Women do not wage war. 2) Hearing the reading is a Zman Grama (time dependent) Mitzva from which women are exempt. The custom is, however, that they try to come. **There will be a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of Parshas Zachor for women at 11 AM right before Kiddush, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> on Shabbos afternoon at 3:30 PM (coinciding with the end of Bnos).** The Kaf Hachaim says the actual Mitzva to remember is not Zman Grama; just the reading of Zachor is. Therefore, if they do not hear the reading in Shul, women should read it from a Chumash at home.

## Ta'anis Esther

The 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar, which is the day before Purim, is known as the Ta'anis Esther (Fast of Esther), commemorating the battle that the Jews fought on that date against their Amaleki enemies, during which the soldiers fasted, as was customary in those times. This year, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar falls out on Thursday March 13<sup>th</sup>. The fast begins at dawn 6:16 AM (72 minutes before sunrise) and ends that night at 8:03 PM. If one intends to eat in the morning before the fast begins, he should make a T'nai (say out loud that he is not accepting the fast until dawn) before he goes to sleep. One who forgot to make the T'nai but did in fact intend to wake up early to eat may still do so. One who intends to eat a full meal should start at least one-half hour before the fast begins, i.e., before 5:46 AM. A small snack may be started even later than that. Pregnant and nursing women need not fast at all on Ta'anis Esther. Even those who follow the chumra (stringent practice) not to bathe on the other fast days may bathe on Ta'anis Esther.

Special Selichos prayers are recited in the morning, and the Torah passage "Vay'chal" (in Parshas Ki Sisa) is read during Shacharis and Mincha. All those who are fasting should recite Aneinu during Shema Koleinu at Mincha. Avinu Malkeinu is said at Shacharis.

## Machatzis Hashekel

At Mincha on Thursday, Ta'anis Esther, the Minhag is for every man to contribute a half shekel to charity in remembrance of the biblical tax of one-half shekel assigned to the Korbanos Tzibur, the communal offerings. Today it is customary to give 3 half-dollar coins to Tzedaka because in the Shekalim portion of the Torah the word Terumah, offering, is written 3 times. Many have the custom to give Machatzis Hashekel for women and children as well. Once one has chosen to follow this custom (of including women and children), he should continue every year (unless the only reason he did it was because he thought he *had* to). If one does not have any half-dollar coins, he may give their value with other coins (preferably with coins, not bills). One should not use Ma'aser (tithing) funds for this Minhag, but for those who are accustomed to give for their wife and children, that may be given from Ma'aser funds, since that is an extra stringency. Machatzis Hashekel can be given after Purim also, up until Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

## Megillas Esther

The most prominent feature of the observance of Purim is listening to the reading of the Megilla twice, once in the evening at the start of the holiday and again in the morning. Chazal enacted this Mitzva for Pirsumei Nissa, to publicize the miracle that Hashem did for us. It therefore should be read B'rov Am, with a big crowd, and one should not make a private minyan for the Megilla if he can come to Shul. Since Purim marks the salvation of all Jews -- men women, and children -- everyone has an obligation to hear this reading both times. Those who can't be present for the public reading should read or hear it at home. One must hear every word of the Megilla; therefore, during the reading there is no talking. If you miss one word, read to yourself until you catch up to the Ba'al Koreh. Even if you are in doubt about a missed word, you must hear the Megilla again. To ensure that every word is heard, it is best to read along (quietly) from a kosher Megilla, or at least follow along in a Chumash. One must have in mind to be Yotze, *including* the Brachos. When everyone reads the ten sons of Haman aloud, they should try to do it in one breath. If a man is reading for a woman, the Bracha to recite is Lishmo'ah Megilla, and the woman should say the Bracha. If there are other women listening, one can say it for all of them. There is no Bracha at the end of the women's reading.

## Groggers

During the reading of the Megilla, we use groggers (noisemakers) each time Haman's name is mentioned to express our happiness at the frustration of Haman's plans and to "eradicate the name of Amalek." Parents should caution their children before Purim and (silently) during the Megilla reading not to make excessively long noise that disturbs others or interferes with their hearing every word.

## Purim Eve

The house should be Shabbosdik, with a Shabbos tablecloth and candles lit. There is an Inyan to have a bit of a Seuda. The Steipeler would have some wine, too.

## Purim Day

Purim is a one-day celebration observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar. This year, it begins Thursday evening, March 13<sup>th</sup> and continues until Friday evening. It commemorates the saving of the Jews living under Persian rule from Haman's plans to exterminate them. The name Purim comes from the word Pur, which means lottery. This is the method by which Haman selected the date for the massacre of the Jews. Haman's designs have had their unfortunate parallels throughout the centuries, as many of the rulers in whose lands the Jews have lived have followed his example. The precariousness of Jewish survival in many countries of



the Diaspora has had the fate of the Jews often subject to the whims of the local ruler and is epitomized by the story of Purim. The sudden twists and turns of events in the Purim story created a turn-about, which enabled the Jewish community to defend itself from its enemies. This story has provided hope and encouragement to oppressed and victimized Jewish communities throughout the centuries.



Magen Avraham says one should have in mind that the Bracha of Shehecheyanu at the morning Megilla reading should also cover the other Mitzvos of the day (Shalach Manos, Seuda and according to some Matanos La'evyonim).

### **Purim Tefillos**

The Al HaNisim prayer is recited during davening (Shmoneh Esrei) and bentching. One need not repeat davening/bentching if he left it out. One can insert it with the Harachamans at the end of bentching, or at the end of Shmoneh Esrei. Tachanun and Lamenatze'ach are omitted on Purim, and a special Torah reading telling of the war with Amalek is read in Shacharis before the Megilla reading. No Hallel is recited because the miracle of Purim occurred outside Eretz Israel and because the reading of the Megilla serves the same purpose as the recitation of Hallel.

### **Matanos La'Evyonim**

During the day of Purim, every person must give Tzedaka to at least 2 needy persons. This may be accomplished through the auspices of the Shul's Tzedaka Fund. The Rambam in Hilchos Megilla (2:7) writes, "It is better for a person to increase gifts to the poor than to expand his Purim feast and the gifts he sends to his friends, for there is no greater and glorious Simcha than to gladden the hearts of the indigent, orphans, widows and those who sojourn amongst us. For the one that gladdens the heart of the downtrodden is compared to the Shechinah, the Divine Presence of Hashem." Please give your generous contributions of Matanos La'Evyonim to the Rav, who will distribute your gifts to the needy in town on Purim day. You may contribute until Purim morning and still be included.

### **Misholach Manos**

There is a Mitzvah on Purim to send gifts of food to at least one friend, through a messenger. The gift is comprised of at least two different foods that are in an edible state and require no further preparation by the recipient. The Shalach Manos enhances the spirit of friendliness and joy that is part of the holiday. There is no maximum to the number of Shalach Manos that can be given. The minimum is 2 types of food to one friend. It is best to send it through a Shaliach (messenger); a child can also act as the messenger.

Those that are in the midst of year-long mourning (Rachmono Litzlon) for the loss of a parent, or in the month-long mourning for the loss of a spouse, sibling, or child, (R"l) are obligated in all the Mitzvos of Purim including the Mitzva of Shalach Manos. There are differing Halachic opinions as to whether one should send Shalach Manos *to* an Avel since gift-giving represents a form of greeting. If sent to the entire family, there is no problem at all.

### **Purim Seudah**

**This year since Purim is on Friday, *ideally* the Seuda should be eaten in the morning prior to Chatzos (midday – 1:22 PM) so as not to ruin one's appetite for the Shabbos meal on Friday night. If one did not eat his Seuda by then, he should at least eat the Seuda by the end of the ninth (proportional) hour of the day, at 4:20 PM. If one couldn't manage to finish by then, one should at *least* start by then. If one didn't even get to do that (although one should really try to adhere to this), he may still eat the Seuda after that.** (There IS a concept discussed in Halacha called Poreis Mappa which is a "legal loophole" on how to eat a Seuda later in the day on Friday and continue into the Seudas Shabbos. However, it is not recommended by the Poskim for many reasons and it is customary to rather follow the above procedures.)

The Seudah on Purim is referred to in the Megilla as Mishteh V'Simcha. It is customary to light candles without a blessing, to drink wine and eat meat at this meal, but meat is not obligatory. One is obligated, though, to eat bread. This is to be a festive occasion where family and friends gather to eat a Yom Tov meal with song and merrymaking. The Rama says there is an Inyan to learn something before the Seuda. One who goes Seuda hopping and wants to eat at all of them should have in mind when he washes that he will be continuing elsewhere, and make sure to eat a k'zayis of bread at each location.

The Mitzva to drink wine is *during* the Seuda. The Rama says one can fulfill this by drinking a little more than usual until he falls asleep. Someone who is drunk cannot be counted in a minyan. People who drink even a small amount should not drive!

### **Purim Costumes**

Many wear costumes as part of the Purim celebration. It is based on the statement in the Talmud, which explains Hashem's leniency towards the Persian Jews who bowed down to idols. "They only did so superficially," implying that in their hearts they remained devout. Cross-dressing is not permitted, except for very young children who don't understand the concept at all. Even though the Rama says that since it's only meant for simcha it is allowed, the Mishna Brura says to abolish the custom. The Aruch Hashulchan agrees and explains that the Rama was just trying to give some explanation to the prevalent custom. In addition, all the laws regarding Tzniusdik (modest) dress apply to Purim costumes as well.

### **Shushan Purim**

In Shushan, the scene of the Purim story, the war between the Jews and their enemies continued an extra day. Therefore, the Jews of Shushan celebrated Purim the day after their brethren elsewhere. In cities such as Jerusalem, which were surrounded by a wall in the days of Yehoshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Adar, just as it was celebrated on that day in the town of Shushan. This year that falls out on Shabbos and is known as "Purim Meshulash – Purim in triplicate," because the various Mitzvos of Purim are celebrated over a three-day span, from Friday to Sunday. The Halachos are fascinating, and many, but beyond the scope of this summary.

### **Looking ahead to Pesach**

Traditionally our Kehilla endeavors to assist those of our community who need financial assistance for the heavy expenses of Pesach preparation. The pre-Pesach appeal for funds is known as the Ma'os Chittim. Please contribute generously. Checks may be made out to Bais Yisroel Tzedakah fund, or you may donate online. Please specify with your contribution that it is for Ma'os Chittim.

Beginning sometime after Purim, the Rav will be available after davening each morning and evening to arrange the sale of your Chometz for Pesach. For other times please contact the Rav for an appointment. It is customary to give payment to the Rav for this service. Checks may be made out to the Rav or to Bais Yisroel Tzedaka Fund.