

Six 'mitzvot' of Purim... and more

Highly recommended that you consider these pages as being informational, and not necessarily as the final word on any issue. When unsure of something you read herein, check it out with your Rav.

Before we get into the mitzvot of Purim, let's review Taanit Esther and other matters...

Taanit Esther is on 13 Adar each year, for all - no difference between walled and open cities.

When 14 Adar is Sunday, the fast is pulled back (preponed) to Thursday, 11 Adar.

Taanit Esther this year is on Monday, March 2nd. (HB75N)

The fast begins at Alot HaShachar, 4:53am and ends at 6:05pm. Times are accurate for Yerushalayim. Adjust for your locale, if necessary.

When Megila is read immediately after Taanit Esther, one should fast until after Megila. Someone who is really thirsty to the point that he/she won't be able to concentrate on Megila, may drink something after stars-out, before Megila reading.

Why? Some say that we fast on Taanit Esther because of the fast that Esther declared upon the Jews of Shushan before she approached the king to plead for her people. That fast was in Nisan, and it is probably not the reason for Taanit Esther - but

is most likely the reason the fast was named for Esther.

Some say that on days when the Jewish People wage battles, they fast and pray for Divine help and guidance. Such a day was the 13th of Adar, hence a fast day.

Some say that the fast is actually mentioned in the Megila, which speaks of DIVREI HATZOMOT V'ZA'KATAM - ...the matters of the fasts and the wailing.

And some suggest that the fast was instituted as an atonement and TIKUN (repair) for the Jews of Shushan attending the parties of Achashveirosh, at which he flaunted the plunder of the Beit HaMikdash, paraded around in the garments of the Kohein Gadol, and at which he belittled G-d. The Jews had no business enjoying those parties. Therefore, abstaining from food and drink is an atonement and TIKUN.

Ironically, so is the eating and drinking of Purim day. There are two ways to atone for sins of eating and drinking. One is to abstain (fast), the other is to indulge, even to an excess... that is L'SHEIM SHAMAYIM,

for the sake of Heaven and for the fulfillment of a mitzva.

Taanit Esther embodies the serious side of Purim, which we tend to ignore on Purim day itself. It helps give Purim a sober (pun intended) balance.

Taanit Esther is not a sad and mournful day, like the four fasts for the Churban. But it is a serious day. A day of introspection. A day of T'shuva. As different as it is from "the Four Fasts", we still say Slichot, still read Vaychal, and the Dirshu HaShem haftara.

On the other hand, at Mincha, we don't say Tachanun or Avinu Malkeinu, as we do on other fast days (except when Taanit Esther is preponed to Thursday).

Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel

Before Megila reading, it is customary to give three half-shekel coins (or half of whatever currency is used in your country) in commemoration of the Silver Half-Shekel collected annually in the time of the Beit HaMikdash.

Some suggest giving a total of the value of the original Half-Shekel. Using today's silver prices (\$2.90 per gram) and today's shekel-dollar exchange rate (3.1NIS to the \$) and the actual weight of silver half-shekel coins found from the time of the

Second Beit HaMikdash (approx. 6.8 grams) - we are talking about 61NIS as the value of Machatzit HaShekel.

Minhag obligates a man to give 3 half-shekel coins; for women, it is optional. If a woman decides to give Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel, she should say B'LI NEDER so she can decide not to in the future. So too, if a man or woman decides to give the 61NIS, they should say B'LI NEDER so the practice won't become binding. Some give on behalf of each of their children. Same as above - say B'LI NEDER.

Please note: I spent a lot of time online to be able to calculate the current value of the Silver Half-Shekel. Others might compute it differently and come up with a different amount. It's your decision what to give. Just remember that the "regular" minhag is 3 of today's half-shekel coins.

[1] Megila reading - once at night and once during the day. Daytime reading is considered to be DIVREI KABALA, a higher level obligation than the Rabbinic rule of reading it also at night. Obviously, everyone - man, woman, child - should hear Megila both night and day.

[2] AL HANISIM is inserted in each Amida and Birkat HaMazon of Purim. Omitting AL HANISIM does not invalidate the Amida or the Bench-

ing, therefore one does not repeat either.

In each case there is a second place to insert AL HANISIM if you forgot to say it in its “official” place and have not yet completed the Amida or Benching.

For the Amida, one would say AL HANISIM right before YIH-YU L'RATZON IMREI FI... Going back is not an option once you finish the bracha within which AL HANISIM is said.

Similarly for benching. Once you conclude AL HAARETZ V'AL HAMA-ZON, don't go back, but say AL HANISIM as a HARACHAMAN, towards the end of the benching.

In these cases, a modified intro is used. It goes something like this (texts vary):

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ נִסִּים וְנִפְלְאוֹת כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Continue with- ... בְּיָמֵי מְרַדְכֵי וְאַסְתֵּר...

[3] Torah reading. After the Amida of Shacharit, before Megila reading, a 9-pasuk portion (Sh'mot 17:8-16) from the end of B'shalach is read (3 Aliyot), beginning with...

וַיְבֹא עִמְלֶק וְיָלְזֵם עִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְיָדָם:

Note that with a minimum requirement of 3 Aliyot and a minimum of 3

p'sukim per Aliya, this 9-pasuk reading is the shortest possible. However, no other reading suffices with the minimum (10 p'sukim is the shortest). The plain reason is that the portion of the Amalek battle is only 9 p'sukim long. The "extra touch" reason is that Amalek and Haman receive no more Torah reading than is absolutely necessary. (S'faradim double the last pasuk to read a total of 10 p'sukim.)

[4] Matanot LaEvyonim - gifts to the poor. Giving money to a Tzedaka fund that will not be distributing money to poor people on Purim day itself, is NOT an ideal way to fulfill this mitzva, and should be a last resort, when one has no access to poor people on Purim day. The requirement is to give to a minimum of two poor people. If one gives gifts to poor people on Purim eve, or even a couple of days before Purim, and the poor people will use the money on Purim day, there are opinions that this fulfills the mitzva of Matanot LaEvyonim. Ideally, the gifts to the poor should be given early in the morning of Purim day, so that the recipients can use the money for their Purim Seuda needs. This mitzva can be fulfilled with money or food. Ideally, one should give an amount at least equal to the cost of a meal, even though a much smaller amount technically fulfills the mitzva. Some

say that the gifts should be significant enough - or special enough - to bring joy to the recipients. One should not use "Maaser money" for Matanot LaEvyonim. Since women are also obligated on this mitzva, they should do it, or if they are relying on their husbands, the husband should have in mind that he is doing his mitzva, and for his wife. Children should do this mitzva on their own and not rely on their father's giving. When one spends a significant amount of money for his Purim Seuda and Mishlo'ach Manot, he should not just do Matanot LaEvyonim in a token fashion, but should do it generously.

[5] Mishlo'ach Manot. Main reason given for this mitzva is to show that Haman's statement about the Jewish people is a terrible lie. He said that we are a scattered people who don't care about each other. That we lack unity. This mitzva of giving gifts of food to fellow Jews, providing them with Purim delights, sharing with them, all point out Haman's lie. Some say that the mitzva of Mishlo'ach Manot should be done specifically through a SHALI'ACH, an agent. In other words, you give gifts of food to someone who will give them on your behalf to the intended recipient. Others do not consider a Shali'ach to be necessary. Sender and receiver should be aware of who will receive

and who sent, respectively. Sounds obvious, but there are situations that this rule addresses. For example, you bring Mishlo'ach Manot to someone who isn't home. You leave it on the door handle. If you don't identify the package as coming from you, or if the person does not get the package until after Purim, there is something lacking in this particular giving. Usually, people give to more than the minimum one recipient, so if there is something technically lacking in some of the Mishlo'ach Manot, it is most likely that the mitzva is fulfilled in some of the other Mishlo'achot. Some opinions hold that the sender and recipient need both be observing Purim on the day in question. This is particularly an issue for Yerushalmim sending to open-city folk and vice versa, when one is observing Purim on the 14th and the other on the 15th of Adar. Make sure that at least one person you send Mishlo'ach Manot to is observing Purim on the same day that you are, and on the same day you send the gifts. Manot is plural, and the practice is to send at least two different food items as Mishlo'ach Manot (they need not be of different brachot). The food should be ready to eat, rather than require cooking or baking, etc. Another reason for two gifts, besides the pluralness of the word MANOT, is to commemorate the two gifts that Achashveirosh gave to Esther - Beit

Haman and his royal ring. Most opinions say that drink can be counted as one (or both) of the gifts; others say that drinks - even wine - do not count for the two gifts. In "normal" situations, it is considered a proper practice to send Mishlo'ach Manot back to those who sent them to you. It is considered preferable to send back something different from what one received. This way, one's joy is increased in the receiving and sending. Some hold that one should fulfill the mitzva of Mishlo'ach Manot before he eats breakfast. Right after davening in the morning is ideal, because Shehecheyanu before Megila goes for the other mitzvot of the day, as well.

[6] Seudat Purim. This is a Purim Day mitzva, and a seuda at night is not considered a fulfillment of the mitzva. Nonetheless, one should also eat something special on Purim night. Although one can fulfill the mitzva of Seudat Purim in the morning, it is the widespread practice (except when Purim is on Erev Shabbat) to have the seuda after davening Mincha. The main fulfillment of Seudat Purim is during the day, but the common practice is to extend the seuda into the night. For 14th of Adar people, this has the advantage of also including the 15th as part of the Purim period. For 15th of Adar people, it is less clear that it

is praiseworthy to extend their seuda into the night. In either case, there are differing opinions as to where in Birkat HaMazon to say AL HANISIM when one is benching at night when it is officially not Purim anymore. Some posit to say it in its normal bracha, NODEH; others hold that it should be said as a HARACHAMAN (see earlier, #2). One should have something special to eat on the other day of Purim (Tuesday for Wednesday and vice versa). Seudat Purim should definitely have HaMotzi (even though some sources state that it is not a requirement). Ideally, one should have wine at his seuda (more than he usually has on other occasions). Wine is such a significant feature of the Megila, from the wine mentioned at the early parties of the king to the parties that Esther used to plead before the king. Some say that the "mitzva" of drinking applies only to wine. Others give a slightly different reason for drinking, and that can be fulfilled by other intoxicating beverages as well. According to some opinions, meat should be on the menu, because of its being part of the traditional definition of Simcha.

Part of the mitzva of drinking is to reach a point of not being able to distinguish between "Blessed is Mordechai" and "Cursed is Haman". Some say that this is achieved by

becoming inebriated. Others hold that drowsiness or sleep from the wine, accomplishes AD D'LO YADA. Many poskim of our time say that one should just drink a little more wine than he usually does; one should definitely not get drunk.

IMPORTANT: If there is any fear that one's drunkenness will cause improper frivolity or a disrespect or disregard for any mitzva or cause the person to be insulting or disrespectful to others - it would be forbidden to get drunk. Far better to go with the drowsy-sleep opinion to stay within the boundaries of SIMCHAT MITZVA. Special foods, enjoyable guests, and Divrei Torah all add to the SIMCHA that is be part of the Seuda.

People who do not enjoy eating meat, should eat foods that they do enjoy. Those who don't enjoy wine should at least have a little.

One should wear Shabbat & Yom Tov clothes on Purim, in honor of the day. (It seems reasonable to say that a costume is also in honor of the day, but not regular weekday clothing.)

According to Minhag Yerushalayim, there is a special chapter of T'hilim to say on Purim day, instead of the "regular" Song of the Day. Others will say both the regular one and the special one. Some add to the special one another one or two chapters (124

and/or 69). We include here just AYELET HASHACHAR, T'hilim 22, which is the Shir Shel HaYom for Purim. This Psalm is said on the day you observe as Purim. Some say this at night too.

שיר של יום לפורים תהלים כב

לְמַנְצַח עַל־אֵילַת הַשַּׁחַר מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד: אֵלֵי אֵלֵי
לְמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רְחוֹק מִיְשׁוּעָתִי דְבַרִי שְׁאֲגַתִּי:
אֵלֵהִי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא־דוֹמְיָה
לִי: וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהַלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּךָ בְּטַחוּ
אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּטַחוּ וְתַפְלִטְמוּ: אֵלֶיךָ זָעֲקוּ וְנִמְלָטוּ בְּךָ
בְּטַחוּ וְלֹא־בֹשׁוּ: וְאַנְכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא־אִישׁ חֲרַפַּת
אָדָם וּבְזוּי עָם: כָּל־רְאִי יִלְעָגוּ לִי יִפְטִירוּ בְּשִׁפְהָ
וְנִיעוּ רֹאשׁ: גַּל אֶלֵיִי יִפְלִטְהוּ יִצִּילְהוּ כִּי חֲפֵץ
בּוֹ: כִּי־אַתָּה גָּחִי מִבְּטָן מִבְּטִיחִי עַל־שִׁדֵי אִמִּי:
עֲלֶיךָ הִשְׁלַכְתִּי מִרְחֹם מִבְּטָן אִמִּי אֵלֵי אֲתָה:
אֶל־תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי כִּי־צָרָה קְרוֹבָה כִּי־אֵין עֹזֶר:
סָבְבוּנִי פְּרִים רַבִּים אֲבִירֵי בָשָׁן כְּתִירוּנִי: פָּצוּ עָלַי
פִּיהֶם אֲרִיֶּה טֹרֶף וְשֹׁאֵג: כַּמִּים נִשְׁפַּכְתִּי וְהִתְפָּרְדוּ
כָּל־עֲצָמוֹתַי הִיָּה לְבִי כְּדוֹנָג נִמַּס בְּתוֹךְ מַעִי: יָבֵשׁ
כַּחֲרֵשׁ | כַּחֲי וְלִשׁוֹנִי מְדַבֵּק מִלְּקוֹחֵי וְלַעֲפַר־מֹות
תִּשְׁפַּתְנִי: כִּי־סָבְבוּנִי כָּל־בָּיִם עַד־ת מְרַעִים הַקִּיפּוּנִי
כְּאֲרֵי יָדַי וְרַגְלֵי: אֲסַפֵּר כָּל־עֲצָמוֹתַי הֵמָּה יִבִּיטוּ
יְרֹאוּ־בִי: יַחֲלִקוּ בְּגִדֵי לֵהֶם וְעַל־לְבוּשֵׁי יִפִּילוּ
גֹרֶל: וְאַתָּה יי אֶל־תִּרְחַק אֵילוֹתַי לְעֹזֶרְתִּי
חֹשֶׁה: הַצִּילָה מִחֲרָב נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד־כָּל־ב יַחֲדִתִּי:
הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אֲרִיֶּה וּמִקְרָנִי רַמִּים עֲנִיתְנִי:
אֲסַפְּרָה שִׁמְךָ לְאַחֵי בְּתוֹךְ קֹהֵל אֲהַלְלֶךָ: יְרֹאֵי יי |
הִלְלוּהוּ כָּל־זֶרַע יַעֲקֹב כְּבָדוּהוּ וְגוּרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כָּל־זֶרַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי לֹא־בָזָה וְלֹא שִׁקַּץ עֲנוּת עָנִי
וְלֹא־הִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִמֶּנּוּ וּבִשְׁוֹעוֹ אֵלָיו שָׁמַע: מֵאַתָּה
תְּהַלְתִּי בְּקֹהֵל רַב נְדָרֵי אֲשַׁלֵּם נֶגֶד יְרֹאֵיו: יֹאכְלוּ
עָנּוּיִם | וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ יִהְלָלוּ יי דְרָשׁוּ יַחֲי לְבַבְכֶם
לְעַד: יִזְכְּרוּ | וַיִּשְׁבוּ אֶלֵיִי כָּל־אֲפִסֵּי־אָרֶץ
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לִפְנֵיךָ כָּל־מִשְׁפָּחוֹת גּוֹיִם: כִּי לִי
הַמְּלוּכָה וּמִשַׁל בְּגוֹיִם: אֲכָלוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ |
כָּל־דְּשָׁנֵי־אָרֶץ לִפְנֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ כָּל־יֹרְדֵי עֵפֶר וְנִפְשׁוּ
לֹא חִיָּה: זֶרַע יַעֲבֹדְנוּ יִסְפֹּר לֹא־דָנִי לְדָוִר: יִבְאוּ
וַיִּגִּדוּ צְדָקְתוֹ לְעַם נוֹלָד כִּי עָשָׂה:

If one is only saying this Shir, he/she should also say (choose your day of Purim):

היום יום שלישי/רביעי בשבת.

This is done to fulfill the mitzva of ZACHOR ET YOM HASHABBAT every day of the week.

There are only two cities mentioned in the Megila: Shushan, where the action took place, and Yerushalayim, mentioned as the place from which Mordechai was exiled to Shushan. Jerusalem at the time of the Purim events was in ruin. We can even say that we were vulnerable to Haman's threats and plot BECAUSE it was in ruin and devoid of its inhabitants. Almost as a prayer for the future Complete Geula, Jerusalem was given a special prominence in the celebration of Purim. It is today the prime celebrant of Shushan Purim. To give Jerusalem that status and honor, the focus was shifted to the time of Yehoshua, the first one to do battle against Amalek. As joyous as Purim is, it is sorely lacking rebuilt Jerusalem - may we see it soon.



Mathematical AD D'LO YADA

Here's an off-the-record way of measuring if a person reached AD D'LO YADA. Find the gimatriya of ARUR HAMAN:

$$1+200+6+200 (407) + 5+40+50 (95). \\ 407+95=502.$$

$$\text{BARUCH MORDECHAI: } 2+200+6+20 \\ (228) + 40+200+ 4+20+10 (274). \\ 228+274=502.$$

Gimatriya-wise, there is no difference between ARUR HAMAN and BARUCH MORDECHAI.

Let's look at AT-BASH gimatriya.

$$\text{ARUR HAMAN: } 400+3+80+3 (486) + \\ 90+10+9 (109). 486+109 =595.$$

$$\text{BARUCH MORDECHAI: } 300+3+80+30 \\ (413) + 10+3+100+30+40 (183). \\ 413+183= 596.$$

Just a difference of 1! If you have even a little bit of wine and can't add up these numbers without a calculator, then you have mathematically reached AD D'LO YADA.

SHLEPPS = שלפס

שיהיה לכם פורים שמח

