

Purim

March 15th-16th, 2014

פורים

זנת תשע"ד



Festival Schedule:

Ta'anit Esther/The Fast of Esther: Thursday, March 13th (lasts from sunrise to nightfall)

Erev Purim: Saturday night, March 15th, 2014

Check the schedule of your local synagogue for the time of Megillah Reading

Yom Purim: Sunday, March 16th, 2014

Megillah Reading

Delivery of *mishlo'ah manot* (sending of portions)

S'udat Mitzvah (festive meal)

Distribution of *matanot la'evyonim* (gifts to the poor)

Appropriate Greeting for the Festival:

חג פורים שמחה!

Hag Purim Samei'ah!

Happy Festival of Purim!



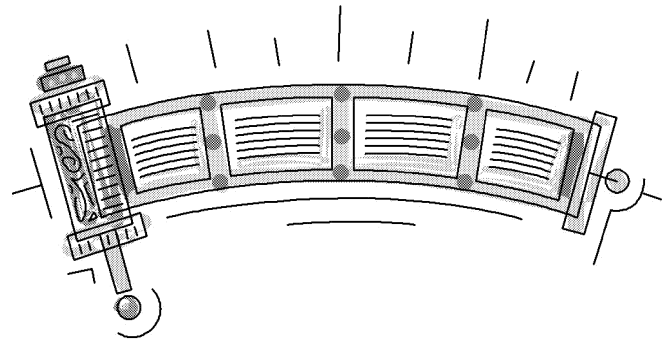
Origin of the Festival:

קימו וקבלו היהודים עליהם ועל־זרעם ועל כל־הנולדים עליהם ולא יעבור להיות עשים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכזמנם בכל־שנה ושנה: והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים בכל־דור ודור משפחה ומשפחה מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר וימי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם... לקים את־ימי הפורים האלה בזמניהם באשר קים עליהם מרדכי היהודי ואסתר המלכה וכאשר קימו על־נפשם ועל־זרעם דברי הצמות ונעקתם: (מגילת אסתר ט:כז-לא)

“The Jews undertook and irrevocably obligated themselves and their descendants, and all who might join them, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year. Consequently, the days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city. And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants...These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordekhai the Jew - and now Queen Esther - has obligated them to do, and just as they have assumed for themselves and their descendants the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations. (Scroll of Esther 9:27-31)

The festival of Purim is one of the “minor festivals” in the Jewish calendar. It possesses this status because it is not among the festivals that was ordained by the Torah. As the quotation above makes clear, it is a festival that was created and taken on exclusively by the Jewish community in the post-Torah period. Compared to Pesah, Shavu’ot, and Sukkot, it is a festival which came into being much later in Jewish history, likening it to Hannukkah.

The basic story of Purim, as recounted in *M’gilat Esther* (the Scroll of Esther), is fairly simple. The evil chief advisor to King Ahashveirosh of Persia, Haman, decides that the Jewish people needs to be destroyed because they follow their own rules and do not obey the edicts of the kingdom. Haman comes to this conclusion after Mordekhai, first cousin to the king’s wife Queen Esther, repeatedly refuses to bow down to him at the gates of the palace, where he would go to check on the queen. The king ignorantly grants Haman’s request to wage genocide against the Jews and when the news of the decree against the Jews comes to Mordekhai, he and Esther construct a plan to have the king revoke the decree and expose Haman for the evil man that he is. Esther is successful, the Jews are saved, Haman is put to death, and Mordekhai is elevated to the position of chief advisor to the king...(and they lived happily ever after). It is Mordekhai’s and Esther’s success in saving the Jews that is celebrated on Purim.



Festival Obligations:

Purim is not a festival of sacred time. We are not commanded to refrain from “prohibited work” as we are on the major festivals and Shabbat. However, there are a number of *mitzvot*/commandments, customs, and rituals associated with the festival of Purim. On the day prior to Purim, we commemorate Esther’s fast before having gone in to visit King Ahashveirosh with a minor fast of our own. It is minor because it is a half day fast, lasting from sun up to sundown. One is permitted to eat before sunrise and ends the fast after nightfall (when three stars appear in the night sky).

The only four *mitzvot*/commandments of the Purim day itself are derived directly from *Megilat Esther*/The Scroll of Esther itself. Contrary to popular thinking, these obligations must be fulfilled during the daylight hours of Purim itself, not during the evening or days before.

...ונזח בארבעה עשר בו ועשה אתו יום משתה ושמחה... על־בן היהודים הפרזים הישבים בערי הפרזות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו: ויכתב מרדכי את־הדברים האלה וישלח ספרים אל־כל־היהודים אשר בכל־מדינות המלך אחשוורוש הקרוכים והרחוקים: לקים עליהם להיות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר ואת יום־המשה עשר בו בכל־שנה ושנה: בימים אשר־נחו בהם היהודים מאויביהם והחדש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה ומאבל ליום טוב לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים: וקבל היהודים את אשר־החלו לעשות ואת אשר־כתב מרדכי אליהם: (מגילת אסתר ט:יז-כג)

And they rested on the fourteenth day [of the month of Adar] and made it a day of feasting and merrymaking...That is why village Jews, who live in unwalled towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make for it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday and an occasion for sending gifts to one another. Mordechai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahashveirosh, near and far, charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year - the same days of which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor. The Jews accordingly assumed as an obligation that which they had begun to practice and which Mordechai prescribed for them. (The Scroll of Esther 9:17-23)

Mikra M'gillab/The Public Reading & Hearing of the Scroll

The public retelling of the story occurs at least twice during the day, once the evening before and once in the morning. It is hearing the scroll read in the morning that fulfills one's obligation to hear the scroll read. While it is praiseworthy to attend the reading of the *megillab* at other times during Purim, these readings do not fulfill the obligation. However, they are a wonderful time to celebrate the festival together as a family. All Jews of *b'nei mitzvah* age are equally obligated for this *mitzvah*.



The chanting of *Megillat Esther* is according to a melodic trope system that is all its own. No other text is read with the same melody. During the reading of the *megillab*, the name of Haman is met with loud noisemaking in order to drown out its sound. The Torah commands us to erase the memory of the nation of Amalek and Haman, being a descendent of that nation, has his name symbolically erased with the noises of the *ra'ashanim* or *graggers* (noisemakers). Like the Torah, the *megillab* is read from a specially hand-written scroll that does not bear the melodic or vowel markings.

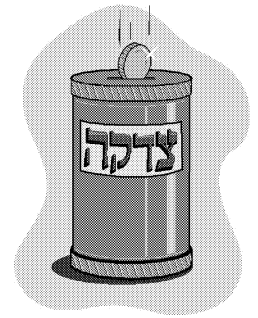
Mishloa'h Manot/The Sending of "Portions"

One of the most well known festival customs in Judaism is the packing of gift baskets to be distributed to friends and loved ones on Purim. Again, the fulfillment of this obligation occurs when these baskets are distributed on Purim day, preferably after one has attended a reading of the *megillab*. *Mishloa'h Manot* must contain at least two different types of food in amounts that are appropriate to the giver and recipient (the giver should give according to his ability and not less and the recipient should receive according to his or her customary portion). *Mishloa'h Manot* must also be given to at least two people in order for the commandment to be fulfilled. The custom has been created that sweets and treats form the content of these gift baskets, but there are no set requirements for the types of foodstuffs that should be given, only in what quantity and to how many people.



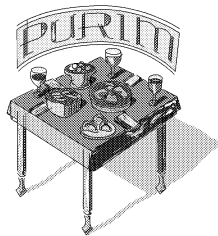
Matanot La'Evyonim / Gifts for the Less Fortunate

As always, the tradition dictates that we must have balance during our celebrations of the festivals. While we are joyous at the occasion, we also are required to remember those for whom festivals are not accompanied by the same amount of joy as we feel. Therefore, one of the commandments of Purim is to give gifts to the poor, *matanot la'evyonim*. In order to fulfill this obligation, one must give *tz'dakah* to at least two needy individuals in the amount of the approximate price of a full meal or give a donation to an organization which is distributing funds to the Jewish needy for Purim in that same amount.



Misbteb - S'udat Mitzvah / Festive Meal

Just as Purim was celebrated with feasting and merrymaking that first year in Shushan and throughout the Persian empire, so too do we observe Mordechai's instruction to make a festive meal on Purim. This meal takes place after the reading of the *megillah* in the morning as a luncheon or mid-afternoon meal. Because Purim is not a sacred festival, there is no *kiddush* over wine.



Purim falling on a Friday creates particular complications for how to have two festive meals in one day, for lunch and then for Shabbat dinner. You will find an article at the end of this booklet explaining options of how to deal with this challenge. In any year that Purim falls on a Friday, please consult this article.

Shushan Purim

Esther 9:18-19 makes mention of the celebration of Purim taking place in the city of Shushan on the fifteenth day of Adar, not the fourteenth as in the rest of the kingdom. From this, the Rabbis derived the law that cities (like Shushan) that were walled from the time of Joshua are meant to celebrate Purim on the fifteenth, while unwalled cities do so on the fourteenth. Among other such walled cities are Tiberias, Jaffa, Tzfat, Acco, and Lida. In these cities, Purim is celebrated on both the fourteenth and fifteenth, with the *megillah* reading occurring on the night of the fifteenth only, without the accompanying blessings.

Other Purim Customs:

Hamantaschen / *Oznei Haman*

Three-cornered cookies with various fillings are the traditional food associated with Purim. The origin of the triangular shape of hamantaschen is not completely clear, though it is believed that they are a reminder of the three-cornered hat that Haman wore. Also, it is told that Haman had triangle-shaped ears, and so the cookies (and their name in Hebrew meaning "Haman's Ears") took on that shape. Hamantaschen come in many varieties, including traditional favorites of poppy seed and prune to more contemporary delights of chocolate or fruit preserves. The name hamantaschen derives from the original yiddish name for the cookie: *muntaschen*, named for poppy seeds which are called "*mun*" in yiddish.



Dressing in Costumes

Dressing up in masks and costumes is one of the most entertaining customs of the Purim holiday. Children in particular enjoy dressing up as the characters found in the Scroll of Esther, including *King Abashverosh*, *Queen Vashti*, *Queen Esther*, *Mordechai*, and the evil *Haman*. Costumes and masks are worn to disguise the wearers' identity. Mistaken identity plays an important role in Purim, possibility originating from Esther's concealment of her Jewish heritage or in Haman's mistaken belief that the King's reward was meant for him. It is also evident in the Purim saying "that you are to drink until you can not distinguish between Haman and Mordechai." Whatever the origin, masks and costumes help to make Purim a very festive holiday.



Consumption of Alcohol

The Rabbis of the Talmud instruct the Jewish community that one aspect of the celebration of Purim is to become drunk so that one is unable to differentiate between "cursed Haman" and "blessed Mordechai." When read on its own, this directive stands at odds with the value that the Rabbis and Jewish tradition place on the preservation of life, health, and well-being. Tradition does not condone activities that have adverse effects on one's health. The consumption of alcohol on Purim is no exception - especially given the knowledge we now have regarding alcohol addictions, abuse, and the consequences of driving while intoxicated. Therefore, while wine can be used as a means to add to our joy on the festival (that being the main meaning of wine in the tradition), it may not be used to the detriment of the self or others. Furthermore, wine is the only form of alcohol which has been permitted for this purpose, not hard liquors or other spirits.



See the internet links below for more information on this important topic.

Changes to the Daily Liturgy:

Al HaNisim - "For the Miracles"

עַל הַנִּסִּים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקָן, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמְּלָחֳמוֹת, שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים
הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Al HaNism v'al ha'purkan v'al g'vurot v'al ha't'shu'ot v'al ha'mihamot she'asita la'avoteinu bayamim ha'hem ba'z'man ha'zeh.

[We thank You God] for the miracles, and for the salvation, and for the mighty deeds, and for the victories, and for the battles that You performed on behalf of our ancestors in those days and in this time.

A unique aspect of the Purim liturgy is the fact that Hallel is **not** recited. This distinguishes Purim from all other festivals in the Jewish calendar. The reason behind Hallel's omission is that even

though the Jews were fortunate enough to be delivered from Haman's evil decree, they still were subject to the foreign rule of King Ahashveirosh while in exile. Therefore, a full redemption could not be celebrated, symbolized in our day by the exclusion of Hallel from the liturgy.

General Information:

<http://www.judaism.about.com/od/purim> <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday9.htm>
http://www.everythingjewish.com/Purim/Purim_origins.htm

Information and Activities for the Whole Family:

<http://learn.jtsa.edu/topics/kids/together/purim/>

Purim and Alcohol:

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Purim/TO_Purim_Home/Meal_407/adloyada.htm
<http://www.ou.org/chagim/purim/alcohol.htm>

Hamantaschen Recipe:

http://hillel.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Purim/TO_Purim_Home/Foods/hamantaschen.htm

If you have any questions, please feel free to call the school at 604-736-7307 and be in touch with Rabbi Matthew Bellas at ext. 3403.