

דיני פורים

SOME DINNIM CONCERNING THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM

1. INTRODUCTION

In the time of Mordechai and Esther, over 2,000 years ago, on the thirteenth day of Addar, all Jews were assembled to defend themselves against their enemies who had been given permission by Royal Decree of King Achashverosh to destroy all Jews living in his realm. This decree, instigated by the evil Hommon ben Hamdosoh, who prided himself on being a descendant of Ammolayk, could not be annulled as it was a basic law of the Constitution of Persia that no Royal Decree could be annulled once it had been proclaimed. But as a result of the miraculous happenings which are set forth in Megillas Esther, another Royal Decree, instigated by Esther, was proclaimed, which modified the first one by giving the Jews advance warning and granting them the permission of Achashverosh to defend themselves and to be rid of their enemies. Thus there was to be a civil war of the subjects of Achashverosh — and the Jews were greatly outnumbered.

2. THE FAST OF ESTHER

It has always been the truly Jewish way that whenever trouble faces us, we turn to **הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** and fast and pray to Him that He should help us. The Jews of that time did likewise on the day before the thirteenth of Addar, the day before the battle, and indeed although serious battles were in fact fought throughout the realm of Achashverosh, no Jews came to any harm anywhere. To commemorate this, that **הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** always listens to the pleas and cries of those who return to Him, whoever, whenever and wherever it is, we fast nowadays on the day before Purim. This fast, called the Fast of Esther, is not as strict as the other fast days, in that an ill person is not required to fast, even if there is no chance of any danger if he would. (There are four fast days mentioned in NaCH when we fast because of troubles that befell the Jewish People. They are the Tenth of Taivais, the Seventeenth of Tammuz, the Ninth of Av and the Fast of Gedalyoh. Although we know that the Jews fasted on the day before the battle — as just mentioned, we invariably fast and pray to HaShem and implore Him to help us in a time of danger — nevertheless because this Fast of Esther is not mentioned explicitly in the Possuk, this is the reason for its leniency. Yom Kippur is not at all a day of mourning but is in fact a Yom Tov, albeit of great solemnity, on which the Torah commands us to fast.)

When Purim falls to be on a Sunday, Taanis Esther is brought forward to the preceding Thursday, instead of fasting on Shabbos.

3. THE READING OF THE MEGILLAH

One of the four Mitzvos of Purim is, of course, the Reading of Megillas Esther, in which is described the miraculous events which led up to the Festival. For this Reading, we wear our Shabbos clothes, lights should be burning brightly, and generally there should be a festive spirit on Purim Day. Before the Reading, it is the custom to give to Tzedokoh three halves of the coin of the realm (silver) in remembrance of the **מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל** (the annual half-Shekel contribution paid by every Jew towards the Service and upkeep of the Beis HaMikdash) for this half-Shekel was collected in this month in the time of the Beis HaMikdash. Some say that our obligation of nowadays giving this money to Tzedokoh comes at the age of thirteen, just as the annual half-Shekel was paid by everyone over Bar Mitzvah. Others say the obligation comes only at twenty, for the original half-Shekel collected for the building of the Mikdash was collected only from those aged twenty or older. As in all such matters, each person should follow his own family tradition. (In those years when Purim falls to be on a Sunday, the **מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל** is given on the preceding Thursday.)

4. Men and women are obliged to hear the Reading of the Megillah, and children too (though not so young as would disturb) are also taught to listen-in. The best place to hear the Megillah is with everybody else, in Shule. If this is not possible, then one should arrange to hear it at home (with a Minyan if possible).
5. The Megillah is read twice, once on Purim Eve and once in the morning of Purim Day and the Reader makes three Brochos before each of these Readings. (But Sefaraddim do not say the Brochoh **שְׁהַחֲיֵינוּ** before the Purim Day Reading.) They are:

1. **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִילָה :**

2. **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבּוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה :**

and 3. **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחֲיֵינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה :**

At the Reading on Purim morning, one should have in mind that the Brochoh **שְׁהַחֲיֵינוּ** is also for the other Mitzvos of Purim, namely, the Se'udoh, the Shelach Monnos and the Mattonos lo'Evyonim. The Brochoh said *after* the Reading is said only with a Minyan, and the paragraph **אֲשֶׁר הִנִּיא** is not said in the morning. In the morning, the Tefillin are not removed until after the Megillah has been read. One must have in mind when listening to the Reading of the Megillah the intention to fulfil one's obligation of this Mitzvah of hearing the Megillah and therefore one must be exceedingly careful to hear every single word, for it could be that if one missed even only one word one has not fulfilled one's obligation. (This will depend on which word was missed.) The clever person, therefore, will position himself near the Reader so as not to miss anything through the customary banging and noise. (The Halochoh says that little children who bang and stamp their feet in derision at the mention of Hommon's name in the Megillah need not be stopped.) One should not read aloud with the Reader from out of a Chumosh or a Megillah which is **פְּסוּל** (not Kosher) because then one cannot hear the Reader properly and one has not fulfilled one's obligation, and also because it is likely to disturb the concentration of others.

DINNIM OF PURIM

6. THE SENDING OF *SHELACH MONNOS* AND THE GIVING OF *MATTONOS LO'EVYONIM*

To fulfil the Mitzvah of Mishlo'ach Monnos (gifts to one's friend) one has to send at least two types of ready-to-be-eaten food or drink to at least one person; and to fulfil the Mitzvah of Mattonos lo'Evyonim (gifts to the poor) at least one gift of money to each of two people. The Shelach Monnos should reflect the standing of the sender and the recipient (but ostentation is to be avoided) and, as its very name implies, the Shelach Monnos should be sent *via* an intermediary. The more people one sends Shelach Monnos to — so much more is the sender praiseworthy (except that a mourner may send Shelach Monnos to only one person and he himself — but not his family — is not sent Shelach Monnos at all). Nevertheless, the giving of Mattonos lo'Evyonim is better than the Mitzvah of Se'udas Purim (the Purim Feast) or even Shelach Monnos, for Tzedokoh is the greatest joy of **הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** and a person who makes happy the poor and dejected is likened to **הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** Himself. On Purim one is not particular about to whom one is giving Tzedokoh — anyone who stretches out his hand for Tzedokoh is given something. The obligation of these Mitzvos is as much on women as on men and it is not correct to rely on one's father or husband regarding the discharge of these Mitzvos, but one should do them oneself. Concerning the sending of Shelach Monnos, each member of the family should fulfil this Mitzvah individually (and the recipient should know from whom the Shelach Monnos comes) with women and girls over Bas Mitzvah sending Shelach Monnos to women and girls while men and boys over Bar Mitzvah send to men and to boys. The time for doing the four Mitzvos of Purim is Purim Day (besides, obviously, the Reading of the Megillah on Purim Eve) and preferably before midday of Purim Day, except that the Se'udoh is held later and goes on into the night after Purim.

7. THE *SE'UDOH*

Everybody is obliged to eat, drink and be merry on Purim. The Se'udoh (the Purim Feast) has to be at day, and one should see to start it when it is yet bright day (and *davven* Minchah beforehand) so that the main part of the Se'udoh is at day. At the Se'udoh, meat and wine should be served and one should enjoy the Se'udoh in the company of family and friends. When Purim falls to be on a Friday, the Se'udoh is held early in the day, **מִשָּׁם כְּבוֹד שַׁבָּת**. Since a great part of the miracle of Purim occurred with wine, therefore did our **חֲכָמִים** say that it is a Mitzvah to become pleasantly tipsy on Purim, or at least to drink more than is usual.

8. PURIM “YOM TOV”

Hard work should not be done on Purim: those who *do* work on Purim will never see real success from that work, ever. However, through a non-Jew it is allowed, and likewise easy work, such as buying and selling, is also allowed, as is writing letters, writing-up accounts, etc..

9. “*AL HANISSIM*” AND *HALLEL*

עַל הַנִּסִּים is said on Purim as on Channukah, in both, the Amida (“the standing prayer,” also known as the Shemoneh Esre) in the **בְּרַכַּת מוֹדִים** and in Birchas HaMazzon. If one

DINNIM OF PURIM

forgot to insert it but reminded oneself before the שם of ברוך אתה יי, הטוב שמך וליך נאה, one goes back and says על הנסים, להודות, but if one remembered only after the שם, one finishes the Shemoneh Esre and one is not allowed to correct oneself. In Birchas HaMazzon likewise, (where על הנסים is inserted before וְעַל הַבַּל) if one remembers before the שם of על הארץ ועל המזון, one goes back to say על הנסים, but if one remembered only after the שם one is not allowed to correct oneself.

10. However, if one had said "ברוך אתה יי" and at that point — before saying another word — one reminded oneself of the omission, one adds the words "למדיני חוקיך", says על הנסים there, and then repeats the paragraph of "ועל בולם" and continues as usual to the end of the Amidah. The reason for this is because by adding the two words "למדיני חוקיך" to the phrase "ברוך אתה יי", those three words "ברוך אתה יי" are thus "converted" from being the formal end of the Brochah (after which one cannot make any correction to the Brochah) into an inserted Biblical verse of request and praise ("ברוך אתה יי למדיני חוקיך" is a Possuk in Tehillim 119, verse 12) and the phrase "ברוך אתה יי" is not then considered as the Brochah's end. This then allows us to rectify the omission there and then, because it is considered as if the Brochah has not been ended, as it were. In fact, this device is the preferred solution to all such cases where a correction must be made before the Brochah has been ended and where one has said the words "ברוך אתה יי" and at that point realized one's mistake.
11. After one has passed the point where this device can be used there is no way of correcting oneself in the Brochah itself. Instead, if the mistake was in the Shemoneh Esre, then before the פסוק of יהיו לרצון, after וכו' אלהי, נצור לשוני מרע, וכו' one says the following (*the words in brackets are variant texts, according to different customs*):

מודים אנחנו לך על הנסים וְעַל הַפּוֹרְקָן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת
(וְעַל הַנְּחֻמוֹת) שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

and continues בימי מרדכי ואסתר בשושן הבירה, etc.. After that, one says the sentence שמונה עשרה (again) and thus ends the עשרה.

If the mistake occurred in the Birchas HaMazzon and one had passed the point of being able to correct oneself in the Brochah, then before הַרְחֵמֵנוּ הוּא יִזְכְּרֵנוּ לְיָמֵי הַמְּשִׁיחַ one says the following:

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ הוּא יִזְכְּרֵנוּ לְיָמֵי הַמְּשִׁיחַ וְנִפְלְאוֹת כְּמוֹ שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

then continues בימי מרדכי ואסתר, etc., and ends the Birchas HaMazzon in the usual way after that.

12. During the Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah at Shacharis, short inserts are said by the congregation at the places indicated, each congregation according to its custom and after the Amidah the Torah is read. The Torah Reading is taken from שְׁמוֹת (the last paragraph of the Sidra בְּשַׁלַּח) and describes how the people of Ammolayk, the ancestor of Hommon, attacked us without provocation just after we had left Egypt and how we vanquished this ungodly people when HaShem commanded us to go out and do battle against them. There is no Haftarah.

Hallel is not said on Purim.

13. **“SHUSHAN PURIM”**

The fifteenth day of Addar is called Shushan Purim. Shushan (today’s town of Susa, on the river Karkeh, in the south west of today’s Iran, south of Teheran and north of the Persian Gulf) was the capital of the Persian Empire at the time of the events of Purim. The facts behind the special status of the day called Shushan Purim are these: Although we had been given advance warning of Hommon’s decree to annihilate us and, by the second Royal decree of Achashverosh we had been granted permission to defend ourselves (extending, apparently, even to Royal protection) (*see Paragraph 1, above*) after the events of that day Queen Esther had begged Achashverosh for an extra day in which we should be allowed to be rid of our known enemies, at least in the King’s capital city, and this, too, had been granted by Achashverosh. Thus, when the cowardly enemies of the Jewish people — who had run to ground like rats when it was made clear that the Jews were empowered and were indeed ready to be rid of their declared enemies on the day specified in the decree — when they resurfaced on the next day thinking that the danger to them was passed, they were still defiant in their hatred of us as before. These were the people who were targeted on the extra day granted to the Jews in Shushan and they received what they deserved. The Jews of Shushan were thus able to rest from fighting their enemies one day later than the Jews everywhere else. That is, the Jews elsewhere fought their enemies on the thirteenth of Addar and were able to rest from their battles and celebrate their rescue on the fourteenth, whereas the Jews of Shushan continued to fight on the fourteenth of Addar and were able to celebrate on the fifteenth of Addar. To commemorate this, our Chachommim of the day instituted that the celebration that is Purim should be on the fourteenth of Addar but the Jews living in Shushan the capital should celebrate on the fifteenth.

14. At the same time, the Chachommim instituted that all Jews who lived in other walled cities anywhere in the world, too, shall celebrate Purim on the fifteenth of Addar, with Shushan itself as the model. Of course, at the time of the events of Purim, we were in exile and had already witnessed the demise of the Babylonian Empire and the ascendancy of the Persian Empire (as indeed we would witness the Persian Empire being displaced by the Greek Empire and the Greek by the Roman, and so on.) At that time Eretz Yisroel was pretty much desolated, its cities with their walls in ruins since the Destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash by Nevuchadnetzar, the King of Babylon. Mindful of our everlasting connexion with our Holy Land, the Chachommim considered that it would be disrespectful toward Eretz Yisroel if none of her cities were accorded at least the status that Shushan the Persian capital and other walled cities of the time had. They therefore legislated that to qualify as a walled city in this regard, a town — anywhere in the world — had to have been in existence as a walled city way back in the days of Yehoshua bin Nune when we first took possession of Eretz Yisroel. In this way they ensured that it is Eretz Yisroel and its cities (and surprisingly, not Shushan!) that becomes the defining measure of a city’s status in relation to the Mitzvos of the festival of Purim. (Interestingly enough, even though the laws of Shushan Purim came about because of the events in that city, the town of Shushan itself is in fact the exception to this rule of walled cities — because Shushan was not in existence as a walled city, if it was in existence at all, that is, at the time of Yehoshua bin Nune!)

DINNIM OF PURIM

15. During our long and painful history we have been exiled again and again and Eretz Yisroel lay desolate for many generations before it was rebuilt into what it is today. And so it has come about that we do not have a clear knowledge regarding most of the cities and towns of present-day Eretz Yisroel. (As regards other cities in the world, the assumption is that they all date from after Yehoshua bin Nune.) Although it is true that some of them might possibly be built on the very sites of ancient walled cities which existed in the Land in the time of Yehoshua, nevertheless, we have to assume that each of these cities is the same as most and, so as not to “transgress” the date of Purim, everywhere Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth of Addar. There is one famous exception: we do know for sure that the present city of Yerushalaim is built on the same place as it always was and thus it is that Yerushalaim today celebrates Purim on the fifteenth of Addar. (There are one or two other towns concerning which there is a similar question among Halachic authorities regarding their status.)
16. As far as those people everywhere else who have already celebrated their Purim on the fourteenth of Addar, this day of Shushan Purim is nevertheless commemorated as a day of celebration: as on Purim proper no Tach’nun is said, nor **ל-א-ל אָרְךָ אַפִּים**, nor **לְמִנְצָה**, (nor **צִדְקָתְךָ** on Shabbos) and the joy of Purim is carried over to this day, too. One has more food and drink than is usual, but **עַל הַנְּסִים** is not said by us on this day.
17. In Eretz Yisroel, Purim being celebrated in different places on different days can afford an opportunity for a double celebration. Either people can celebrate Purim in their own towns on the fourteenth of Addar and then join family and friends in Yerushalaim on the following day or, conversely, they can join their family and friends as they celebrate Purim on the fourteenth of Addar and then celebrate Purim in their own town (Yerushalaim) on the fifteenth of Addar. In all such cases, however, one must be careful to remember that Purim is not just fun and games but one must be careful to respect all the Halachic implications of being in two places on the two days of Purim. First and foremost is the general obligation to celebrate Purim according to the place where one is. Thus, even someone who has already celebrated Purim in his hometown on the fourteenth of Addar but then travels to Yerushalaim on the fifteenth with the intention to spend his day there, becomes obligated to fulfil all the Mitzvos of Purim again. He must listen to the Reading of the Megillah, he must send Mishlo’ach Monnos, he must give Mattonos lo’Evyonim and he must participate in the Se’udoh. The same will apply to a Yerushalmi who spends the entire day of the fourteenth in an unwalled town. He is in duty bound to fulfil all the Mitzvos of Purim on the fourteenth of Addar and again when he returns to Yerushalaim on the fifteenth. A person wishing to avoid having to fulfil those obligations twice and wishing to only participate in the joy and celebration should be careful to arrive there later in the day and not spend the entire day in the other town. (In order to avoid the obligations of the day — which come upon him at the beginning of the day — it is best that he should also not be in the place that he is visiting before dawn.) In any case of doubt, a qualified Halachic authority should be consulted.
18. **“PURIM KOTTON”**
- On the fourteenth day of Addar I in a leap year, called **פּוּרִים קָטָן**, *Purim Kotton* (Purim Minor), Tach’nun is not said and one increases one’s jollification, and on the fifteenth of Addar I, Tach’nun, etc., is not said, as above.

