

The Jewish Weekly

ESTHER'S STORY: Providence, a Prisoner, and a Princess

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Sara Labkowski of Crown Heights told the following story about 40 years ago. At that time, she said the Lubavitcher Rebbe had requested of the man to whom this all happened, to write it down for others to know. The following is the account as I remember it.

Esther was raised in the former Soviet Union. She was 6 years old when her parents began fighting bitterly about her education. Her mother insisted that Esther had to know that she was Jewish and what that meant. And so, every night, Esther's mother said the 'Shema' with her and lovingly told her these words, "Esther, you are a Jewish girl. Esther, remember this - you are a Bas Yisroel (Daughter of Israel). Never forget, Esther, you are a Jewish girl."

Esther's father considered all this dangerous. He knew that Esther's teacher, a loyal communist of the USSR, would interrogate any student showing the least bit of religious sentiment and report it promptly to the authorities. Esther's father did not want to risk his own life, and certainly not that of his daughter's. Each night, as he stood in the doorway of little Esther's room, he listened with alarm to his wife's bedtime ritual. And each night, as his wife exited the room, he repeated how she was putting them all in danger.

Then, not long after this, Esther's mother passed away. Esther and her father were left alone. And now that there was no interference, Esther's father took his daughter's education into his own hands. No longer did Esther recite the Shema at bedtime, no longer did Esther hear those loving words telling her that she was a Bas Yisroel.

One night, Esther was awakened by the sounds of voices from another room in the house. Curious, she got out of bed and went to see what this midnight conversation was all about. When she got to the doorway, she saw her father deeply engrossed in conversation with a man she had never seen before. He was dressed strangely, with a long beard, a long black coat and white fringes on the ends of his garments. Unnoticed, Esther watched the scene for a while and then returned to her bed.

The following morning, Esther's teacher greeted the students as usual and then made an astonishing announcement:

"Children, last night a dangerous enemy of our Mother Russia visited someone's home. This man has a long beard, whiter fringes on his clothes and a long black coat. Anyone in our class who saw this person should immediately inform me. He is a very dangerous man and wants to harm you. You will be doing Mother Russia a great noble deed to let us know if you saw him."

Trusting her teacher completely, Esther raised her hand. "He was in my house last night. I saw him. He was talking to my father."

"What a good, loyal citizen you are, Esther," her teacher said with a broad smile. The teacher lost no time in sending a message to the principal who

hurried in and also praised Esther in front of the other students. When the lessons were over for the day, Esther went home. To her surprise, her father did not come home at his usual hour, nor did he come home later. In fact, though she waited, he never came home again. From then on, the Communist State took complete responsibility for Esther's upbringing.

Unbeknownst to Esther, her father had been sent to Siberia after interrogation and torture. All too late, he realized how right his wife had been. Had he continued his wife's lessons to Esther this would not have happened, for she would have understood what the man in the black coat represented. He himself should have taught her that despite the cruel pressure and dangers of the government, Judaism is not to be forfeited at any expense. Despite their despicable lies, Judaism is viable, good and eternal. Had he educated his daughter so, she would not have revealed what she did. Her loyalties would have been to Torah, and not to the State. Only now did he realize his mistake.

And worse than his own miserable plight were his anxieties for Esther's future. He knew only too well that his daughter was now in a government institution for orphans being indoctrinated with communist dogma.

Years passed and Esther grew into a fine young woman. A seemingly ardent member of the Communist Youth Movement, she was elected to be part of a group privileged to visit Mexico. What the Communist Youth Movement did not know, was that Esther had secretly decided to defect once she arrived in Mexico. She managed to hide herself until she was certain that her group had returned to Russia and had ceased searching for her.

In time, Esther married. Her husband was a traditional Jew and tried very hard to explain to her the importance of Jewish practices. Although she had no patience for this herself, she consented to his wishes for a kosher home.

One day, her husband was riding a city bus, when an elderly Jewish man in Chassidic garb approached him and spoke in Yiddish.

"Do you have a place for me to stay in your home?"

Esther's husband was a kind and hospitable man and quickly agreed to accommodate the stranger. When they arrived home, her husband had served him a good meal and showed him to a fine guest room. As the old man lay down to rest, he was disturbed by an intense argument in the next room.

"Why did you bring that man here? Who needs him? We have enough going on here!"

When the argument finally subsided, the old man emerged from his room with his suitcase packed and the excuse that he had forgotten something and would not be able to stay with them. Esther and her husband realized that their words had been overheard. Regretting her harsh words that had caused the old man pain and embarrassment, she insisted that he stay. The guest explained that he needed to travel extensively and would be gone for long periods of time, but if their home could be his base to which he could return after those excursions he would be most appreciative. Esther and her husband readily agreed.

And as the weeks and months passed, their guest became a beloved part of their home. In return, the old

It Once Happened...

man noticed that Esther and her husband disagreed on Jewish observance and gradually he was able to influence his hostess to a greater appreciation and observance of mitzvot.

One day, shortly before Purim, the old man requested a favor of his host and hostess.

"Every year, on Purim, it is my custom to don the clothing I wore as a prisoner in Russia in remembrance of the great miracles G-d did in enabling me to survive the cruel ordeals there. Would you accommodate the wishes of an old man? Would you be so kind as to invite your neighbors and friends for a Purim party and let me put on a Purim play?"

Esther and her husband readily agreed.

Purim arrived and their home was packed with friends and acquaintances. The tables were laden with Esther's delicious treats. When the Purim celebrations were at their peak, the old man took the floor and began to relate the ancient story of Purim. Everyone listened with rapt attention.

As the old man came to the part where the king's officers chose Mordechai's niece and he sees there is no alternative than she go to the palace, he recited these words:

"Esther, you are a Jewish girl. Esther, remember this - you are a Bas Yisroel. Never forget, Esther, you are a Jewish daughter."

Everyone in the house suddenly turned their attention to the hostess of the party who suddenly cried out and fainted. Her husband carried her away from the crowd, into their room and the old man rushed into the bedroom to inquire about the condition of his hostess.

"Don't worry," said her husband, "She worked very hard today preparing the party and is probably exhausted. I am sure she'll be okay."

As the old man stood over the bed looking with concern at Esther, his gaze was drawn to an old photograph at her bedside. And at the same moment, Esther regained consciousness.

"Where did you get that photograph?" he demanded in a choked voice.

Esther turned white. In all the years since her defection, her fear of being found never left her. "Why do you want to know?" she asked warily.

"That" he cried softly, "is my wife."

Esther's eyes filled with tears as she suddenly realized exactly who this old man was standing there in his tattered prison clothing.

"That," whispered Esther, "is my mother."

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Pekudei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:12	6:25	7:05
Tel Aviv	5:27	6:27	7:02
Haifa	5:18	6:26	7:04
Be'er Sheva	5:29	6:27	7:05



Preparing for a Message from Beyond

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

but the chasidim agreed among themselves not to mention a word to him about the Rebbe's passing. The answer was always the same: "the Rebbe is fine."

But Rabbi Landa sensed that something was wrong and kept asking, until somehow he got the one person that didn't know about this agreement, and he heard the bitter truth.

A normal person can understand what a terrible blow this must have been to him. A Rebbe is more than just a leader or even a father, the Rebbe virtually reveals the soul and true essence of the Chasid. But the relationship between Rabbi Landa and the Rebbe Reshab was even deeper and more personal than that; Rabbi Landa had been near the Rebbe day and night and his life was virtually tied up with his.

That night Rabbi Landa wrote a short letter to the Rebbe. He folded the letter up, put it in an envelope, and the next morning, when he was taken outside, he waited for the same man to pass, to whom he handed the letter and requested that he put it on the Rebbe's grave and tell no one about it.

In the letter he wrote that he wanted the Rebbe to take him away from this world. He wanted to be with the Rebbe because he felt that life was worth nothing without him.

Two days later the Rebbe's son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (who became the Rebbe in his father's stead) came to visit Rabbi Landa. He pulled up a chair, sat next to his bed where he was lying in the sunlight, and said, "I was just by my father's grave and he gave me a message to give over to you."

Rabbi Landa ushered up all his strength, propped himself up on the bed and prepared himself for the Rebbe's message from 'beyond.' When the Rebbe's son saw Rav Landa was ready, he continued.

"My father said: 'Stop making stupid requests!'"

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, www.ohrtmimim.org.



Shalom, of course means peace, hello and goodbye. But what's the fourth meaning? Shalom is also one of the names of Hashem. So central and crucial is the concept of peace in our tradition, that it is embodied within the very essence of the existence of the Almighty.

In parashat Pekudei, the Torah describes the great celebration that took place when we dedicated the new Mishkan, and the altar within it, in the wilderness. For the Haftorah, we have a matching passage from the Prophets, in the first book of Kings, which describes King Solomon's celebration when he dedicated the first Temple. At that time, Solomon reflected on the fact that his great father King David had wanted desperately to build the Temple. In fact, David saw this as his ultimate mission in life – and yet, he was denied this privilege! But why?

In the first book of Chronicles we are told that Hashem said to David "כי איש מלחמת אתה ודמים שפכת" - for you are a man of war and you have shed blood". Now of course, the purpose of all the wars that David fought and led our people into, was in order to preserve life, to protect us from our enemies who sought to destroy us. He engaged in wars through which he hearkened to the word of Hashem, to defend our people. Nonetheless, since he had blood on his hands, he was not the ideal person to build the House of Hashem.

Instead, his son Shlomo, coming from the route 'שלום' - meaning peace, was the ideal king to do it. Indeed, throughout his reign, King Solomon did not fight a single battle. We can now understand why in parashat Yitro Hashem tells us that for the purpose of a stone altar, we may not use hewn stones. And the reason is "כי חרבר הגפת עליה" - because for that purpose you would have had to use knives or swords which can be implements of war and therefore you would be defiling that altar.

That is why Shalom is the concluding word, it's the bottom line of all of our most important prayers. It's the last word of our Kaddish, it's the last word of our 'ברכת המזון' - Grace after meals'. It's the last word of 'ברכת כהנים' - the priestly blessings. It is the last word of the Amidah.

In 'The Ethics of the Fathers', Hillel taught that we should be the disciples of Aaron the High Priest, to be 'אוהב שלום ורודף שלום' - to love peace and pursue peace always'. Therefore the Gemarah in tractate Brachot tells us that it is so important, that every single morning in our prayers, we should praise Hashem who is 'עושה שלום ובורא' - He makes peace and He creates everything', indicating that nothing is of any value unless there is peace.

It is therefore so suitable that 'Shalom' is one of the names of the Almighty. When I greet you and I say "שלום עליכם", I am not just saying may peace be upon you, I am also saying may Hashem be with you. Of course, on Shabbat we want peace in our homes, and we want the spirit of Hashem to be with us. As a result, the blessing that we give is Shabbat Shalom. On Shabbat there is a stronger bond with Hashem so let's please join together to pray with all our hearts, for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, police officers, medical professionals, firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 0
MITZVOT ASEH: 0
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 92
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1182
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4432

HAFTORA
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Melachim I 7:51 - 8:21
Sephardim: Melachim I 7:40 - 50

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Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lescher's Halachah Sheets
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Yossi

Laws and Customs: Adar, Taanit Esther & Purim (for Jerusalem) בס"ד

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For the year 5784

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Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lescher's Halachah Sheets

Reviewed by Reb Elimelech Rabinowicz שליט"א, Rav of Tzeirei Kehal Chassidim, Shaarei Chesed

Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel in memory of his grandparents

ר' ראובן בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה וחיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה ע"ה רבינוביץ

ר' יוסף בן ר' אורי ע"ה ומלכה בת ר' יצחק צבי הלוי ע"ה פרנקל

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🕊 MONTH OF ADAR

Some say it is a big Segula to fast on Erev Rosh Chodesh Adar and to say the whole Tehillim.

משכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה - When Adar Begins we increase our joy. We increase our joy throughout the month of Adar, some say to increase the joy throughout Nissan too.

Some have the custom to hang up a sign of משכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה.

🕊 7TH ADAR - ז' באדר (SUNDAY 17/3/24)

7th Adar is the fast day for Tzadikim and most say Tachanun, however some have the custom not to.

There are those who are particular if possible not to make a wedding on 7th Adar, due to it being the fast day for the Tzadikim as well as being the Yahrzeit of Moshe Rabeinu.

Some have the custom to fast as well as to try to learn and do Mitzvot in memory of Moshe Rabeinu.

Most Chevra Kadishot have the custom to fast and go to graves of Tzadikim and to ask forgiveness from the dead in case they didn't handle the person with respect when burying, some also say Selichot.

In some communities, the Rabbi would give a Dvar Torah in memory of Moshe Rabeinu as well as other rabbis and Tzadikim who died during the year.

Some have the custom that a child who is born on 7th Adar should not be named Moshe after Moshe Rabeinu.

🕊 PURIM PREPARATIONS

An inspiring Purim is the product of diligent preparation. In the days prior to Purim, one should review the Halachot of Purim.

🕊 TAANIT ESTHER (THURSDAY 21/3/2024)

Taanit Esther is not one of the four public fasts instituted by the *Nevi'im*, and is generally more lenient. This year, Taanit Esther is even more lenient, for it is observed two days early (being that the 13th of Adar falls on Shabbat). One should not presume that the leniencies outlined below automatically apply to other fasts. Therefore, a *Chattan* and *Kallah* during the week of *Sheva Brachot* need not fast. Pregnant mothers, nursing mothers and anyone considerably weakened by illness or advanced age need not fast. [One should not be unduly strict in this regard.] Mothers who have difficulty fasting while tending to their young children should consult with a *Rav*.

When a *Brit* occurs on *Taanit Esther*, the *Baalei Habrit* (i.e. the *Mohel*, the *Sandak*, and the father of the baby) need not fast. However, all other attendees must fast. Therefore, the *Seudah* takes place at night, after the fast.

Aside from the exceptions enumerated above, all healthy adults must observe *Taanit Esther* scrupulously. If one inadvertently ate during

the fast, one must immediately resume fasting.

Anyone below *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* need not fast. From the age of nine upwards, the custom is to train children to fast for several hours, as per the child's abilities. [One should not be unduly strict in this regard.]

An individual exempt from fasting should eat in private only, and avoid meat, delicacies or excessive intake. Children old enough to understand the concept of a fast should avoid delicacies and meat.

🕊 EATING PRIOR TO THE FAST

One may eat and drink the entire evening until dawn (4:29am), provided that either of these conditions are met (this does not apply to water which can be drunk anytime up to the beginning of the fast):

- One didn't go to sleep for the night. [Dozing off is not regarded as such.]
- One stipulated (preferably verbally) before going to sleep that he would eat upon waking. In this case, one recites the morning *Brachot* before eating.

🕊 LAWS OF FASTING

One shouldn't brush one's teeth nor rinse one's mouth. [If this will cause great aggravation, there is room to be lenient, provided that one leans forward to prevent any liquid from flowing down one's throat; that one uses substances unfit for consumption (e.g. Listerine); and that one rinses with less than 86 ml.]

One may take non-chewable pills for medical purposes, without water. A *Rav* should be consulted regarding other medicines.

One may shower, bathe and apply ointments and creams. [Even one who is strict on other fast days may nevertheless be lenient on *Taanit Esther*.]

One may not taste food to determine whether it requires salt/spices. However, when preparing food for a *Seudat Mitzvah* scheduled for the night following the fast, one may taste the food, provided that all these conditions are met:

- One expels it without swallowing.
- One tastes only an absolute minimum.
- One does not taste more than 86 ml in total throughout the day.

🕊 CONDUCT ON TAANIT ESTHER

One should learn *Torah* connected to the topic of the fast.

One should give increased *Tzedakah*, especially before *davening*. It is proper to give the value of the forgone meals – especially if one is exempt from fasting.

The purpose of fasting is to arouse one to do *Teshuvah*. Idling away one's time, or partaking in joyous or entertaining activities, is not in the spirit of the fast.

One should be especially careful not to become angered.

🕊 TAANIT ESTHER: SHACHARIT

During *Shacharit*, only the *Chazzan* recites *Anenu*. Therefore, a non-fasting individual shouldn't serve as *Chazzan*.

[In the unlikely event that the *Chazzan* is not fasting, or less than three congregants are fasting: Instead of reciting *Anenu* between *Goal Yisrael* and *R'faenu*, the *Chazzan* includes *Anenu* in the *Brachah* of *Sh'ma Kolenu*, and concludes the *Brachah* regularly; i.e. *Shomea Tefillah*.]

A *Chazzan* who forgot to recite *Anenu*:

- if he remembered before reciting *Hashem's* name at the conclusion of the the *Brachah* of *R'faenu*, he recites *Anenu* immediately, and then repeats the *Brachah* of *R'faenu*;
- if he already concluded the *Brachah* of *R'faenu*, he recites *Anenu* in the *Brachah* of *Sh'ma Kolenu*, and concludes the *Brachah* with a double conclusion; i.e. *Ha'one B'eit Tzarah V'shomeah Tefillah*;
- if he already concluded the *Brachah* of *Sh'ma Kolenu*, he recites *Anenu* as a separate *Brachah* immediately after the *Brachah* of *Sim Shalom*.

One who is not fasting must still recite *Selichot* and *Avinu Malkeinu*.

One who *davens* without a *Minyan* omits the *Yud-Gimel Midot-Harachamim*.

Some hold that if *Tachnun* is not recited (e.g. when a *Chattan* is present), *Selichot* is still recited, whereas *Avinu Malkeinu* is not recited and some hold that *Selichot* ends after *Viduy*.

🕊 TAANIT ESTHER: KRIAH

The passage of *Vayechal* is read, provided that at least three congregants are fasting.

A non-fasting individual must still hear *Kriat Hatorah* of *Vayechal*, but is not called up for an *Aliyah*. [If he is the only *Kohen* or *Levi*, he should absent himself.] If he is called up, and refusing the *Aliyah* will cause him discomfort or minimize the honor of the *Torah*, he may accept the *Aliyah*. In any case, he may perform *Hagbah* or *Gelilah*.

A non-fasting individual shouldn't serve as the *Ba'al Koreh*, unless there is no one else who can do so.

When the congregation recites the verses aloud, the *Ba'al Koreh* waits for silence before resuming. The one receiving the *Aliyah* begins these verses with the congregation, but ends with the *Ba'al Koreh*.

🕊 MACHATZIT HASHEKEL

Before *Mincha*, most hold that males over *Bar-Mitzvah* give three halves of the local currency. [In Israel, three half-shekel pieces.]

One should not use *Maaser* money for his own *Machatzit Hashekel*.

In some communities it is also a custom to give *Machatzit Hashekel* on behalf of their wives and daughters, as well as for their sons under the age of *Bar Mitzvah*.

Where possible, boys below *Bar Mitzvah* should personally give *Machatzit Hashekel*.

It is preferable that the proceeds go to a *Shul* or *Beit Midrash*, just as the *Machatzit Hashekel* of old would be used for the *Beit Hamikdash*. Otherwise, the proceeds are distributed to the poor.

🕊️ TAANIT ESTHER: MINCHA

Mincha is longer than usual (due to *Kriat Hatorah* and *Haftorah*); care should be taken to conclude before sunset (5:55pm).

Ideally, *Kriat Hatorah* should not begin prior to *Mincha Gedolah* (12:16pm). *The Amidah* may certainly not begin before then.

After *Haftorah*, most communities return the Torah to the *Aron Hakodesh* before *Kaddish* and in some communities, the *Chazzan* slowly recites *Kaddish* while the Torah is returned to the *Aron Hakodesh*.

If an individual forgot to recite *Anenu* in the *Brachah* of *Sh'ma Kolenu*, he may recite it in the passage *Elokai N'tzor*, before the second *Yih'yu L'ratzon*. If one didn't remember until he concluded *the Amidah*, he does not repeat it. [A non-fasting individual does not recite *Anenu*.]

The *Chazzan* recites *Anenu* between *Goal Yisrael* and *R'faenu*. [see TAANIT ESTHER: SHACHARIT] According to some, if after *plag Hamincha*, *Birchat Kohanim* with *duchening* is done. Chabad do not *Duchan*, however, the *Chazzan* does recite *Birchat Kohanim* towards the end of *the Amidah*.

Tachnun and *Avinu Malkeinu* are recited, since it is not *Erev Purim*.

The fast concludes with the emergence of three medium stars (6:19pm).

🕊️ PARSHAT ZACHOR

It is a *Torah* obligation for all men and boys over the age of *Bar Mitzvah* to hear *Parshat Zachor*. [One who absolutely cannot attend a *Minyan* should read this passage from a *Sefer Torah* or *Chumash*, with the *Trop* (cantillation) if he knows it.]

Although women are ordinarily exempt from *Kriat Hatorah*, there is a dispute with regards to *Parshat Zachor*. Therefore, it is ideal for women to attend *Shul*. However, a woman who is unable to easily attend *Shul* (e.g. she is tending to her small children) **may** instead read this passage from the *Chumash*.

Ideally, the *Ba'al Koreh* should be old enough to have a beard. [If this is not possible, a *Bar Mitzvah* boy should serve as *Ba'al Koreh* only if puberty is established.]

The *Ba'al Koreh* should read loudly and clearly, and have in mind to be *Motzeh* everyone listening to the *Kriah*. Similarly, all the listeners should have in mind to be *Yotzei* the *Kriah* and

to fulfil the *Mitzvah* of remembering to eliminate *Amalek*.

The word *זכר* is first read with a *Tzeirei זְכַרְ -*, and then repeated again with a *Segol זָכַר -*.

Some repeat just the word, some repeat the phrase *זְכַרְ תִּמְחָה אֶת עַמְלֵק* whilst others repeat the whole *Passuk*.

Av Harachamim is recited before *Musaf*.

🕊️ CONCLUSION OF SHABBAT

As it is a normal *Motzei Shabbat* in Jerusalem, unlike the rest of the world, the normal *Motzei Shabbat* rituals are observed.

🕊️ **PURIM DRESS** (IN JERUSALEM PURIM STARTS ON SUNDAY NIGHT 24/3/2024 WHILST FOR THE REST OF ISRAEL PURIM STARTS ON MOTZEI SHABBAT 23/3/2024)

Israel's Education Ministry is warning of "panic-inducing costumes" ahead of Purim as the country continues to grapple with the Hamas war that began on October 7. In the shadow of the war and in accordance with the security reality and the characteristics of the current period, care must be taken to avoid dressing up in costumes that may cause fear, panic, or injury to another.

One should wear *Shabbat* clothing throughout *Purim*. However there is a custom especially for children to wear masks or costumes. One should ensure that costumes do not contain *Shatnez*.

Cross-dressing is absolutely forbidden throughout the year. Although the *Rema* and several other early *Achronim* rule leniently with regards to *Purim*, the overwhelming majority forbid it. This prohibition applies to all adults and children who are of the age of *Chinuch*.

Some people encourage children to shy away from dressing as *Haman* or other wicked people. [When a *Purim* play requires a child to act the part of *Haman*, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* indicated that this role be played without considerable enthusiasm.]

🕊️ V'AL HANISSIM

V'al Hanissim is recited in each *Amidah* of *Purim*.

If one forgot *V'al Hanissim* at the appropriate place in *the Amidah*, he may still recite it if he did not yet say *Hashem's* name at the end of that *Brachah*. After that point, he does not recite it.

If one forgot *V'al Hanissim* at the appropriate place in *Bentching*, he may still recite it if he did not yet say *Hashem's* name at the end of that *Brachah*. After that point, he should recite it as a *Harachamon*, as per the *Nusach* printed in many *Siddurim* and *Birkonim*.

🕊️ MAARIV (SUNDAY NIGHT 24/3/2024)

One should endeavor to hear the *Megillah* as soon as possible. [If circumstances require it to be read beforehand, a *Rav* should be consulted.] Nevertheless, the *Megillah* may be read the entire night until (4:23am).

One may not perform any activity that may distract him prior to reading the *Megillah*.

Therefore, one may not eat, drink, nap or perform work from half-hour prior to *Tzeit* (6:29pm) until after hearing the *Megillah*. [Nevertheless, if one feels ill or weak, one may eat or drink between *Maariv* and the *Megillah* reading. Even so, one should not eat more than a *K'beitzah* (57 grams) of bread or *Mezonot* – unless there are health concerns, in which case he should appoint a *Shomer* (guardian) to remind him to hear the *Megillah*.]

In many communities an *Avel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) may not serve as *Chazzan* on *Purim*, in some communities (including *Chabad*) an *Avel* does act as *Chazzan* on *Purim*.

The *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish Titkabel* immediately after *the Amidah*. The *Megillah* is read immediately afterwards.

After the *Megillah* is concluded, *V'atah Kaddosh* is recited, followed by the entire *Kaddish* but without *Titkabel*.

🕊️ MEGILLAH READING

All men and women over the age of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* must hear the *Megillah*.

Children (both boys and girls) should also attend the *Megillah* reading and quietly follow along according to their ability, unless they are too young and will create a disturbance. [An infant who cries or makes noise should be taken out of *Shul*.]

Ideally, one should attend a *Megillah* reading in a *Shul* where a large crowd has congregated. However, one can hear *Megillah* anywhere.

At the very least, one should hear the *Megillah* with a *Minyan*. [This applies even if he will be reading the *Megillah* later for individuals who could not attend a *Minyan*.] If this is also not possible, one should still endeavor to hear the *Megillah* with as many people as possible.

One does not fulfil the *Mitzvah* of *Megillah* when hearing it with the aid of a microphone, or over the phone or radio.

A perfectly *Kosher Megillah* should be used. [If that is unavailable, a *Megillah* may still be used if disqualified words or altogether missing words do not occur at its beginning or end, nor do they comprise an entire section or the majority of the *Megillah*. Needless to say, the *Ba'al Koreh* must still recite every single word even when using a *Megillah* with missing words.]

One may assume that his friend consents to his *Megillah* being borrowed for the sake of performing the *Mitzvah*, as long as it remains in the vicinity at all times and it is returned to exactly the same place in the same condition.

It is preferable that the listener follows along in a proper *Megillah* and recites the words in a barely audible whisper – but only if he is sufficiently familiar with the proper pronunciation of the words.

One who follows along from a *Chumash* should **not** recite the words at all, but must rather pay especially close attention to the *Ba'al Koreh*.

The *Megillah* is unrolled before the first *Brachot* are recited. [This also applies to everyone else following along with a proper *Megillah*.]

It is permissible to touch the parchment of the *Megillah* directly, unlike a *Sefer Torah*.

The *Ba'al Koreh* in *Shul* should be flanked by at least one person on his right and another on his left.

An *Avel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) should not serve as the *Ba'al Koreh* in *Shul*, unless this is his regular function, or there is nobody as fluent as him.

Everyone should stand for the *Brachot*, unless it is too difficult. During the actual *Megillah* reading in *Shul*, the *Ba'al Koreh* must stand (and may lean for support if necessary), but those listening don't need to stand. Nevertheless, most people do stand.

When the *Ba'al Koreh* recites the *Brachot*, he should have in mind to be *Motzeh* everyone who is listening to the *Brachot* and the entire *Megillah*. Similarly, everyone in attendance should have in mind to be *Yotzeh* the *Brachot* and the entire *Megillah*, and should not say "*Baruch Hu u'Varuch Shmoh*". [If one accidentally did so, he does not recite the *Brachot* again.]

If the *Ba'al Koreh* already heard the *Megillah*, the *Brachot* are recited by another man who did not yet hear the *Megillah*, and he is *Motzeh* everyone. If none of the men present are able to recite the *Brachot*, the *Ba'al Koreh* may recite it for them (or prompt them word by word).

When the *Megillah* is read for less than a minyan of men or for women only, and the *Ba'al Koreh* already heard the *Megillah*, the women recite the *Brachot* themselves (standing), however some hold that the last *Brachah*, *Harav Et Riveinu* is not said. They may either recite the *Brachot* individually, or have one woman be *Motzeh* all the others. The same applies when reading the *Megillah* for children under the age of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

One should not speak from the time of the *Brachot* until after the *Megillah* reading (and the last *Brachah*) is concluded, because unnecessary speech is considered an interruption, and also prevents him from hearing every word of the *Megillah*.

Whenever *Haman's* name is mentioned (according to Chabad only alongside a title), one stamps his feet vigorously. Children should be encouraged in spinning their *graggers* and stamping out *Haman's* name. The *Ba'al Koreh* should wait for absolute silence before resuming.

The following *Pesukim* are read aloud by the congregation, followed by the *Ba'al Koreh*: 2:5, 8:15, 8:16, 10:3.

The *Ba'al Koreh* raises his voice at "*Balailah Hahu*" (6:1).

The *Baal Koreh* reads "*Laharog U'abed; v'Laharog U'abed*" (8:11) and "*V'ish Lo Amad Bifenyhem; V'ish Lo Omad Lifenyhem*" (9:3).

The congregation reads the ten sons of *Haman* quickly in one breath, from the words "*Chamesh Meot Ish*" until "*Aseret*" (9:6-10), followed by the *Ba'al Koreh*. [Despite the speed, the *Ba'al Koreh* should ensure that he is looking at each word in the *Megillah* as he pronounces it.]

Some give the *Megillah* a light shake at the words "*Ha'igeret Hazot*" (9:26) and "*Ha'igeret Hapurim Hazot*" (9:29). [This also applies to everyone else following along with a proper *Megillah*.]

The final *Brachah* is recited by the *Ba'al Koreh* only when the *Megillah* was read with a *Minyan*. [Some would recite this *Brachah* even when they heard or read the *Megillah* without a *Minyan*.]

At the end of the *Megillah* reading, some hold it should remain unrolled until the conclusion of the *Brachah* recited afterwards and some hold it should be rolled before the concluding *Brachah*. [This also applies to everyone else following along with a proper *Megillah*.]

❧ INTERRUPTION DURING MEGILLAH

One who misses hearing even a single word is not *Yotzeh* the *Megillah* reading. Therefore, one should pay absolute attention whilst the *Ba'al Koreh* is reading the *Megillah*.

If one missed hearing a word, the best solution is to read from that word onwards, until he catches up with the *Ba'al Koreh*. [This is necessary because each word of the *Megillah* must be read/heard in the correct order.] This should be done even when one is following along in a *Chumash* and not a proper *Megillah*.

One need not recite the words with the *Trop* if this will detain or prevent him from catching up to the *Ba'al Koreh*. However, one must ensure that all the words are properly enunciated and vowelized.

If one missed a word and did not follow the guidelines above, or he left during the *Megillah* reading for even a short time, he must hear the *Megillah* again. Nevertheless, he does not need to start again from the beginning, but may instead resume hearing it from the place where he was interrupted. In such an instance, one does not repeat the *Brachot* unless he diverted his attention from the *Mitzvah* of *Megillah*.

As mentioned above, one should not speak during the *Megillah* reading. If one said anything unrelated to the *Megillah* between the *Brachot* and the very start of *Megillah*, he needs to recite the *Brachot* again. If one spoke after this time – even matters unrelated to the *Megillah* – he does not repeat the *Brachot* again. Nevertheless, being that he could not have properly heard the words that the *Ba'al Koreh* was reading whilst he was talking or repeating the *Brachot*, he must follow the guidelines above for one who missed a word.

One should not pause unnecessarily whilst reading the *Megillah*. Nevertheless, if one

paused even for an extended period of time, he may resume from the place where he paused. The exception is if he was forced to pause due to circumstances beyond his control, and the pause was for more time than it would have taken him to finish reading the *Megillah*. In such a case, one needs to start reading the *Megillah* again from the beginning.

❧ PURIM NIGHT

The table should be set with a tablecloth and candles. Even though there is no requirement to eat a festive meal, one should still rejoice and eat something special in honor of *Purim*. [One should moderate any festivities in order that they do not interfere with *Purim* morning.]

It is customary to eat seeds on *Purim*, such as poppy *Hamantashen*, to commemorate the seeds that Esther ate when keeping *Kosher* in the king's palace.

❧ SHACHARIT (MONDAY 25/3/2024)

Ideally, *Megillah* should be read after sunrise (5:36am). *Shacharit* should be timed to read the *Megillah* as soon as possible. In extenuating circumstances, one may read the *Megillah* after dawn (4:23am).

Ideally, men should not eat before hearing the *Megillah*. If this is difficult, or there is any concern that one will be unable to concentrate during *davening*, one may snack, but should not eat a *K'beitzah* (57 grams) of *Mezonot*. Nevertheless, one should not be stringent if there are any health concerns.

Al Hanissim is recited in the *Amidah*, and *Tachnun* is not recited.

If one did not hear *Parshat Zachor* on *Shabbat*, he should have in mind to fulfil his obligation through the *Kriat Hatorah* of *Purim*. [For this reason, the *Ba'al Koreh* should intend to be *Motzeh* anyone who did not hear *Parshat Zachor* on *Shabbat*.]

During *Kriat Hatorah*, the word *זכר* is first read with a *Segol* - זָכַר, then again with a *Tzeirei* – זִכַּר.

Some repeat just the word, some repeat the phrase *תִּמְחָה אֶת זְכָר עֲמֻלָּק* whilst others repeat the whole *Passuk*. (the reverse of *Parshat Zachor*).

Some hold the *Sefer Torah* is returned to the *Aron Hakodesh* and some including *Chabad* hold that the *Sefer Torah* remains out during the *Megillah* reading, and is returned only after *Kaddish Titkabel*, as usual. [The one who holds the *Sefer Torah* remains seated throughout the *Megillah* reading and associated *Brachot*.]

If one did not yet give *Machatzit Hashekel*, he should do so before the *Megillah* reading.

When the *Brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* is recited, all should have in mind the other *Mitzvot* of *Purim*; i.e. *Mishloach Manot*, *Matanot Lo'evyonim* and *Seudat Purim*. [Preferably, the *Gabbai* or *Ba'al Koreh* should announce this.]

One should wear his *Tefillin* until after the *Megillah* reading (and *davening*).

WORKING ON PURIM

One should not perform manual labor on *Purim*, unless for the sake of *Purim* or a *Mitzvah*; or he is so poor that he is without food; or in order to prevent a real loss.

One may also do light office-work or sell goods and merchandise, but should not allow that to distract him from the joy of *Purim*.

One may instruct a non-Jew to perform manual labor on *Purim*.

MISHLOACH MANOT

All men and women over *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* should send at least one *Mishloach Manot*. Children (of the age of *Chinuch*) should also do so. [The Lubavitcher *Rebbes* would distribute three *Mishloach Manot* packages – to a *Kohen*, *Levi* and *Yisrael*.]

The *Mishloach Manot* should contain at least two types of (respectable) ready-to-eat foods and/or beverages other than water. [The Lubavitcher *Rebbes* would include a food item as well as a beverage.]

Men should send their *Mishloach Manot* to men, and women should send their *Mishloach Manot* to women.

Some authorities hold that *Mishloach Manot* should be delivered through a *Shliach*. The *Shliach* may even be a child.

The *Mishloach Manot* should be both sent and delivered during *Purim* day (and not the night before or after).

It is praiseworthy to give *Mishloach Manot* to many people. [Technically, one doesn't need to adhere to the above-mentioned *Halachot* with regards to any additional optional *Mishloach Manot* that one sends. Nevertheless, it is commendable to do so.]

When giving *Mishloach Manot* to one who is not yet observant, one should remind him to make the appropriate *Brachot* on each food item.

Mishloach Manot may not be sent to an *Avel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing). However, the *Mishloach Manot* may be sent to an *Avel's* spouse or child. The *Avel* himself is required to send *Mishloach Manot*, but should send simple food items.

When sending *Mishloach Manot* in a new (non-disposable) utensil that requires *Tevilat Keilim*, it should be performed by the recipient and not by the sender. This is because *Tevilat Keilim* needs to be performed by the end user.

MATANOT LO'EVYONIM

All men and women over *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* should give *Matanot L'evyonim* to at least two needy people. Children (of the age of *Chinuch*) should also do so.

One should try to use local currency, and not use *Maaser* money. [This does not apply to any additional optional *Matanot L'evyonim* that one gives.]

Matanot L'evyonim must go specifically to needy people (or *Tzedakah* organizations

devoted to that purpose), and not to other *Tzedakah* causes.

One need not assess the financial circumstances of a poor person before giving him *Matanot L'evyonim*. Rather, "we give to whomever extends a hand."

Matanot L'evyonim should be delivered during *Purim* day (and not the night before or after).

If there are no poor people present, one must physically set aside *Matanot Lo'evyonim* – a verbal pledge is insufficient – and distribute it at the earliest opportunity.

It is preferable to allocate more of one's funds to *Matanot Lo'evyonim* than to *Mishloach Manot* and *Seudat Purim*.

SEUDAT PURIM

One must feast and rejoice on *Purim*. In fact, the joy of *Purim* is even greater than the joy of a regular *Chag*.

The feast is conducted in the late afternoon. Hence, *Mincha* is davened earlier than usual, prior to the *Seudah*.

Despite the hustle-and-bustle of *Purim*, one should make a point of learning *Torah* prior to the *Seudah*, for a short period of time. Since *Purim* is thirty days before *Pesach*, one should begin reviewing the laws of *Pesach*.

A fair part of the meal should take place during the daylight hours. At the very least, one should eat a *Kezayit* before sunset (5:46pm).

If circumstances do not allow one to conduct his *Seudah* in the late afternoon, he may eat this meal anytime during the daylight hours.

One should feast among family and friends, because a larger crowd increases the joy. One should also invite guests to the *Seudah*.

The table should be set with a tablecloth. Some have the custom of lighting candles.

The prevalent custom is to wash, and eat meat and other delicacies. It is also customary to eat *Kreplach*.

If one wishes to begin the *Seudah* in one place and continue it and *bentch* elsewhere, he must have this in mind when reciting the *Brachah* of *Hamotzie*. [If he did not have this in mind, he should not relocate during the meal. However, if he already did so, he may *bentch* in the place where he concluded eating.]

One should share words of *Torah* at the meal, especially words of *Torah* that are connected with the *Purim* story.

It is customary to share a *Purim Torah*. The intention is not to use *Torah* to make a joke or mockery, G-d forbid. Rather one should share a *Dvar Torah* of the sort that brings joy to those who hear it.

WINE AND ALCOHOL

Chazal instituted that one should drink wine on *Purim* "until he doesn't know the difference between *Arur Haman* and *Baruch Mordechai*". Many *Poskim* understand this to mean that one must drink to the point of intoxication.

At the same time, the *Poskim* caution against becoming inebriated when there is even the slightest chance of negative consequences. This especially applies to anyone with a medical issue or a weak constitution; to young teenagers; to anyone whose behavior may not completely conform with *Halachah* when inebriated (such as forgetting to make a *Brachah* properly, *bentch* or *daven Maariv*); to anyone who may cause damage or injury to himself or others; or to anyone who may cause a *Chillul Hashem* when inebriated. Anyone in this category should discharge their obligation by drinking only slightly more wine or alcohol than usual.

It goes without saying that drinking and driving can be deadly and is a severe violation of *Halachah*. It is also dangerous for an intoxicated person to cross the road himself, and he should therefore be escorted home safely.

The *Mitzvah* of drinking wine or alcohol does not apply to women and children.

The Lubavitcher *Rebbe* established a year-round ban against people under the age of forty drinking more than four *Kelitchlach* (shot cups) of alcohol. Some years, the *Rebbe* made an exception for *Purim*. However, on many other occasions, the *Rebbe* stated explicitly that this ban extends even to *Purim*. The *Rebbe* would especially caution the *Bochurim* about this, and suggested that they fulfil their obligation by increased involvement in "*Yeyna shel Torah*" (the wine of Torah).

MOTZOEI PURIM

V'al Hanissim is recited even when *bentching* after dark, as long as the meal began before nightfall and one has not yet *davened Maariv*. [For this reason, it is preferable to *bentch* before *davening Maariv*.]

On the night following *Purim*, one must not forget to *daven Maariv* as soon as possible. In any case, one should certainly *daven* before midnight (11:45pm).

