



בס"ד Laws and Customs: Taanis Esther/Purim

For the year 5786

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🕊️ PURIM PREPARATIONS

An inspiring *Purim* is the product of diligent preparation. In the days prior to *Purim*, one should review the *Halachos* of *Purim*, learn *Maamarim* which focus on the inner dimension of *Purim*, and make appropriate *Mivtzoim* preparations.

🕊️ PARSHAS ZACHOR

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

There is a dispute as to whether women must hear *Parshas Zachor*. It is thus ideal for women to attend *Shule*. However, a woman who cannot easily attend (e.g. she is tending to her small children) may instead read this passage from the *Chumash*.

Ordinarily, a *Sefer Torah* may not be moved to another location for one-time use. Nevertheless, one may do so to facilitate the *Kriah* of *Parshas Zachor*.

Ideally, the *Ba'al Koreh* should be old enough to have a beard. [If this is not possible, a boy over thirteen may serve as *Ba'al Koreh* only if it is established that he has reached puberty and has the *Halachic* status of a *Bar Mitzvah*.]

The *Ba'al Koreh* should read loudly and clearly, having in mind to be *Moitzie* everyone listening to the *Kriah*. Similarly, all the listeners should have in mind to be *Yoitzei* the *Kriah* and to fulfil the *Mitzvah* of remembering to eliminate *Amalek*.

The word *Zecher* is first read with a *Tzeirei*, and then again with a *Segol*.

Av Harachamim is recited.

🕊️ TAANIS ESTHER (MONDAY)

Taanis Esther is not one of the four public fasts instituted by the *Nevi'im*. One should not presume that leniencies outlined below automatically apply to other fasts. [Needless to say, aside from these leniencies, one must observe *Taanis Esther* scrupulously.]

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*.

A *Chosson* and *Kallah* during the week of *Sheva Brochos* need not fast.

When a *Bris* occurs on *Taanis Esther*, the *Ba'alei Habris* (i.e. the *Mohel*, the *Sandek*, 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 *Taanis Esther* scrupulously. One who inadvertently ate during the fast must immediately resume fasting.

Children below *Bar/Bas Mitzvah* need not fast. From age nine, the custom is to train children to fast for several hours, according to each child's ability. [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. Similarly, children old enough to understand the concept of a fast should avoid meat, delicacies or treats.

🕊️ EATING PRIOR TO THE FAST

One may eat and drink all night until dawn (5:44am), provided that either of these conditions is met:

- 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 will eat upon awakening. In this case, one washes *Neggel Vasser* and recites the morning *Brochos* before eating.

🕊️ LAWS OF FASTING

One shouldn't brush one's teeth or 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 inedible substances (e.g. Listerine); and that one rinses with less than 86 ml.]

When medically needed, one may take non-chewable pills without water. A *Rav* should be consulted about other medicines.

One may shower, bathe, apply ointments or creams, and cut nails or hair. [Even those

who choose to be strict on other fast days may nevertheless be lenient on *Taanis Esther*.]

One may touch food and engage in its preparation, but not taste it to determine whether it requires salt/spices. However, when preparing food for a *Seudas Mitzvah* scheduled for the night following the fast, one may taste the food if needed, 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.

🕊️ CHAZZAN'S RECITATION OF ANEINU

During *Shacharis*, only the *Chazzan* recites *Aneinu*. Therefore, one who won't be fasting shouldn't serve as *Chazzan*.

[In the unlikely event that the *Chazzan* won't be fasting, or fewer than three congregants will be fasting: Instead of reciting *Aneinu* between *Goel Yisroel* and *R'foeinu*, the *Chazzan* includes *Aneinu* in the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, and concludes the *Brocho* regularly, i.e. *Shomea Tefillah*.]

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

- if he remembered before reciting *Hashem's* name at the end of *R'foeinu*, he recites *Aneinu* immediately, then repeats the *Brocho* of *R'foeinu*;
- if he already concluded the *Brocho* of *R'foeinu*, he recites *Aneinu* in the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, ending the *Brocho* with a double conclusion; i.e. *Ha'one B'eis Tzara V'shomea Tefillah*;
- if he already concluded the *Brocho* of *Shema Koleinu*, he recites *Aneinu* as a separate *Brocho* immediately after the *Brocho* of *Sim Shalom*.

🕊️ SELICHOS & AVINU MALKEINU

Selichos is recited after *Misratzeh* at the end of the long Monday *Tachnun* addition, right before *Avinu Malkeinu*.

It is customary to stand for the entire *Selichos*. [An infirm person may sit. If possible, he should at least stand for each recitation of the *Yud-Gimel Midos*.]

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

The long *Avinu Malkeinu* is recited. [It is not our custom to recite it verse by verse after the *Chazzan*.]

If *Tachnun* is omitted (e.g. a *Chosson* is present), *Selichos* is still recited, whereas *Avinu Malkeinu* is omitted.

One who is not fasting must still recite *Selichos* and the long *Avinu Malkeinu*.

☞ TAANIS ESTHER: KRIAH

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

A non-fasting individual must still hear *Krias Hatorah* of *Vayechal*, but is not called up for an *Aliya*. [If he is the only *Kohen* or *Levi*, he should step out.] If he is called up at *Shacharis*, he may accept the *Aliya*, since Monday is always a day of *Kriah*. However, at *Mincha*, he should accept the *Aliya* only if declining it will pain him or diminish the honour of the *Torah*. In any case, he may always perform *Hagbah* or *Gelilah*.

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

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

☞ CONDUCT ON TAANIS ESTHER

One should learn *Torah* related to the theme of the fast.

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

The purpose of fasting is to make a *Cheshbon Hanefesh* (soul reckoning) and do *Teshuvah*. Idling away one's time, or engaging in joyful or entertaining activities, is not in the spirit of the fast. One should be especially careful to avoid anger.

☞ MACHATZIS HASHEKEL

Before *Mincha*, all males over *Bar Mitzvah* give three halves of the local currency. [In Australia, three 50-cent pieces.]

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

The *Rebbeim* would also give *Machatzis Hashekel* on behalf of their wives and daughters, as well as for their sons under the age of *Bar Mitzvah*. [*Sefer Haminhagim* qualifies that this is not a directive for the public. Nevertheless, it is prevalent amongst *Chassidim* to do so.]

Ideally, boys below *Bar Mitzvah* should give their *Machatzis Hashekel* personally.

It is preferable that the proceeds go to a *Shule* or *Beis Midrash*, just as the

Machatzis Hashekel of old would be used for the *Beis Hamikdash*. Alternatively, the proceeds are distributed to the poor.

☞ TAANIS ESTHER: MINCHA

Mincha is longer than usual (due to *Krias Hatorah* and *Haftorah*) and should be timed to conclude before sunset (7:59pm).

Krias Hatorah shouldn't begin prior to *Mincha Gedolah* (2:05pm). *Shmoneh Esrei* must certainly not begin before then.

After *Haftorah*, the *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish* slowly while the *Sefer Torah* is returned to the *Aron Hakodesh*, as at *Shabbos Mincha*.

One who forgot *Aneinu* may recite it in the passage *Elokai N'tzor*, before the second *Yih'yu L'ratzon*. If he remembered only afterward, he does not repeat *Shmoneh Esrei*. [A non-fasting individual does not recite *Aneinu*.]

The *Chazzan* recites *Aneinu* between *Goel Yisrael* and *R'foeinu*, and also recites *Birchas Kohanim* towards the end of *Shmoneh Esrei*.

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

The *Rebbe* reinstated the custom of addressing the congregation after *Mincha* to arouse them to *Teshuvah*.

☞ PURIM DRESS

The *Rebbeim* would wear *Shabbos* clothing throughout *Purim*. [*Sefer Haminhagim* qualifies that this isn't a public directive. Nevertheless, it is prevalent amongst *Chassidim* to dress accordingly. Some say that the *Rebbe* himself encouraged this.]

The custom is 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 regard to *Purim*, the overwhelming majority forbid it. This prohibition applies to all adults and children who are of the age of *Chinuch*.

The *Rebbe* encouraged 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 *Rebbe* indicated that this role be played without considerable enthusiasm.]

☞ V'AL HANISSIM

V'al Hanissim is recited in each *Shmoneh Esrei* of *Purim*. One should not intentionally

skip *V'al Hanissim* to recite *Kedushah* or *Modim* with the *Minyan*.

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

V'al Hanissim is recited each time one *bentches* on *Purim*. If one forgot *V'al Hanissim* at the appropriate place, he may recite it before saying *Hashem's* name at the end of that *Brocho*. After that point, he may recite it as a *Horachamon*, as per the *Nusach* printed in the *Siddur*.

Towards the end of *benching*, one recites *Magdil*, and not *Migdal*.

☞ END OF FAST & MAARIV

The fast concludes at 8:26pm. One should endeavour to hear the *Megillah* as soon as possible after this time. [If circumstances require it to be read beforehand, a *Rav* should be consulted.] Nevertheless, the *Megillah* may be read the entire night until dawn (5:45am).

One may not perform any activity that could distract him prior to reading the *Megillah*. Therefore, one may not eat, drink, nap or perform work from a half-hour prior to *Tzeis* until after hearing the *Megillah*.

The prohibition to eat and drink applies both to those who are fasting as well as to those who are not. [Nevertheless, one who feels ill or weak, or a woman who is awaiting her husband's return from *Shule*, 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 *Mezonos* – unless there are health concerns, in which case one should appoint a *Shomer* (guardian) to remind him to hear the *Megillah*.]

An *Ovel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) still serves as *Chazzan* on *Purim*.

The *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish Tiskabel* immediately after *Shmoneh Esrei*. The *Megillah* is read immediately afterwards.

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

☞ MEGILLAH READING

All men and women over the age of *Bar/Bas 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 *Shule*.]

Ideally, one should attend a *Megillah* reading in a *Shule* where a large crowd has congregated. [Despite this, one need not attend any *Shule* other than the one he ordinarily attends.]

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 endeavour to hear the *Megillah* with as many people as possible.

One does not fulfil the *Mitzvah* of *Megillah* when hearing it by way of a microphone, phone, radio, Zoom or any other electronic medium. [A person who uses hearing aids should consult a *Rav*.]

A perfectly Kosher *Megillah* should be used. [If that is unavailable, a *Megillah* with disqualified or missing letters/words may be used if they 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 – including the missing or disqualified words – when using such a *Megillah*.]

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 whisper audible only to himself – 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*.

Before the first *Brochos* are recited, the *Megillah* is unrolled and folded twice, to create three folds. The ends of the scroll should not dangle disrespectfully. [This also applies to everyone else following along with a proper *Megillah*.]

One may touch the parchment of the *Megillah* directly, unlike a *Sefer Torah*.

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

An *Ovel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) may read the *Megillah* for individuals. However, he should not serve as the *Ba'al Koreh* in a *Minyan*, unless

this is his regular function, or there is nobody as fluent as him.

Everyone should stand for the *Brochos*, unless it is too difficult. During the actual *Megillah* reading in *Shule*, the *Ba'al Koreh* must stand (and may lean for support if necessary), but those listening don't need to stand. Nevertheless, the *Rebbe* would stand, and this is the prevalent custom.

When the *Ba'al Koreh* recites the *Brochos*, he should have in mind to be *Moitzie* everyone as they listen to the *Brochos* and the entire *Megillah*. Similarly, all the listeners should intend to be *Yoitzei* the *Brochos* and the entire *Megillah*, and should not say "*Boruch Hu u'Voruch Shmoi*". [If one accidentally did so, he does not repeat the *Brochos*.]

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

When the *Megillah* is read for women only, and the *Ba'al Koreh* already heard the *Megillah*, the women recite the *Brochos* themselves (standing). They may either recite the *Brochos* individually, or have one woman be *Moitzie* all the others. The same applies when reading *Megillah* for children under *Bar/Bas Mitzvah*.

One should not speak from the time of the opening *Brochos* until the *Megillah* reading (and the last *Brocho*) is concluded, because unnecessary speech constitutes an interruption, and also prevents him from hearing every word of the *Megillah*.

Whenever *Haman's* name is mentioned alongside a title, one should stamp 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 *Ba'al Koreh* reads "*Laharog Ul'abeid; v'Laharog Ul'abeid*" (8:11) and "*V'ish Lo Omad Bifenyhem; V'ish Lo Omad Lifenyhem*" (9:3).

The congregation reads the ten sons of *Haman* quickly in one breath, from the words "*Chamesh Meios Ish*" until "*Aseres*" (9:6-10), followed by the *Ba'al Koreh*. [Despite the speed of reading and the large gaps that appear in the *Megillah* between these words, the *Ba'al Koreh* should ensure

that he is looking at each word as he pronounces it. Nevertheless, if he failed to do so, the *Megillah* reading is still valid.]

The *Megillah* is given a light shake at the words "*Ha'igeres Hazos*" (9:26) and "*Ha'igeres Hapurim Hazos*" (9:29). [This also applies to everyone else following along with a proper *Megillah*.]

The final *Brocho* is recited by the *Ba'al Koreh*, but only if the *Megillah* was read with a *Minyan*. [The *Rebbeim* would recite this *Brocho* even without a *Minyan*.] *Shoshanas Yaakov* is recited by everyone even when there is no *Minyan*.

The *Megillah* should remain unfurled until the conclusion of the last *Brocho*. [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 *Yoitzei* the *Megillah* reading. Therefore, one should pay absolute attention to every word whilst the *Ba'al Koreh* is reading the *Megillah*, and not allow his mind to wander.

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. It is best to do this using a proper *Megillah*, but a *Chumash* is still acceptable for this purpose (up to half of the *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 *Brochos* 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 *Brochos* and the very **start** of the *Megillah*, he needs to recite the *Brochos* again. If one spoke after this time – even matters unrelated to the *Megillah* – he does not repeat the *Brochos*. Nevertheless, since he could not have properly heard the words that the *Ba'al Koreh* was reading whilst he was talking or repeating the *Brochos*, he must follow the guidelines above for one who missed a word.

One should not pause unnecessarily during 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, but does not repeat the *Brochos*.

🌀 PURIM NIGHT

The table should be set with a tablecloth and candles. Even though there is no requirement to eat a festive meal at night, one should still rejoice and eat something special in honour 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-seed *Hamantashen*, to commemorate the seeds that Esther ate when keeping *Kosher* in the king's palace.

🌀 SHACHARIS

The *Megillah* is read after sunrise (7:06am). *Shacharis* should be timed to read the *Megillah* as soon as possible. In extenuating circumstances, one may read it between dawn (5:45am) and sunrise.

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 *Mezonos*. Nevertheless, one should not be stringent if there are any health concerns.

V'al Hanissim is recited in *Shmoneh Esrei*, and *Tachnun* is not recited.

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

During *Krias Hatorah*, the word *Zecher* is first read with a *Segol*, then again with a *Tzeirei* (the reverse of *Parshas Zachor*).

The *Sefer Torah* remains out during the *Megillah* reading, and is returned only after *Kaddish Tiskabel*, as usual. [The one who holds the *Sefer Torah* remains seated throughout the *Megillah* reading and associated *Brochos*.]

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

When the *Brocho* of *Shehecheyanu* is recited, all should have in mind the other *Mitzvos* of *Purim*; i.e. *Mishloach Manos*, *Matanos Lo'evyonim* and *Seudas Purim*. Preferably, the *Gabbai* or *Ba'al Koreh* should announce this.

One should wear his *Rashi Tefillin* until after the *Megillah* reading (and *davening*). The *Rebbe* would touch his *Tefillin Shel Rosh* at the word *Vikor* (8:16), for it refers to *Tefillin*.

A *Bris* performed at *Shule* is conducted right before the *Megillah*. A *Bris* performed at home is held after *davening*.

🌀 WORKING ON PURIM

One should not perform manual labour on *Purim* day (e.g. building, gardening, sewing, laundering, calligraphy and artistic drawing or painting) unless for the sake of *Purim* or a *Mitzvah*; or he is so poor that he is without food; or to prevent a financial loss.

One may do light office-work or sell goods and merchandise, but not to the point that it distracts him from the joy of *Purim*.

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

🌀 MISHLOACH MANOS

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

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

Men should send their *Mishloach Manos* to men, and women should send their *Mishloach Manos* to women. It should not be a group *Mishloach Manos*, nor should it be sent anonymously.

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

Mishloach Manos should be both sent and received during *Purim* day (and not the night before or after *Purim*).

It is praiseworthy to give *Mishloach Manos* to many people. [Technically, there is no need to adhere to the above-mentioned *Halachos* with regard to any additional optional *Mishloach Manos* that one sends. Nevertheless, it is commendable to do so.]

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

Mishloach Manos may not be sent to an *Ovel* (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing). If it was sent for whatever reason, the *Ovel* may accept it. One may send *Mishloach Manos* to an *Ovel's* spouse or child. The *Ovel* himself is required to send *Mishloach Manos*, but should send simple food items.

When sending *Mishloach Manos* in a new (non-disposable) utensil, *Tevilas Keilim* should be performed by the recipient and not by the sender. This is because *Tevilas Keilim* must be performed by the end user.

If the sender already *Toiveled* the utensil, the recipient must still *Toivel* it, but without a *Brocho*. The same applies if the recipient is unsure whether the sender *Toiveled* the utensil. Therefore, the sender should inform the recipient (e.g. with a label) that the item has not yet been *Toiveled*, in order that the recipient may *Toivel* it with a *Brocho*. [It is best that the *Mishloach Manos* food does not directly touch a non-*Toiveled* utensil.]

When it is doubtful that the recipient will *Toivel* the utensil, the sender may do so on his behalf, with a *Brocho*, if he first transfers ownership to the recipient, in his absence, via a *Kinyan* performed with a third-party.

🌀 MATANOS LO'EVYONIM

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

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

Matanos Lo'evyonim must go specifically to needy people (or *Tzedakah* organisations devoted to that purpose), and not to other *Tzedakah* causes.

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

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

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

appoint a *Shliach* who can distribute it for him in a different location.

It is preferable to allocate more of one's funds to *Matanos Lo'evyonim* than to *Mishloach Manos* and *Seudas Purim*.

One who thought to give a certain sum as *Matanos Lo'evyonim* may not retract, even though his pledge was not verbal.

❧ MIVTZOIM

One should do everything within his or her power to ensure that every Jew hears the *Megillah* and fulfils all the *Mitzvos* of *Purim*. This includes even children of the age of *Chinuch*.

One should arrange gatherings and events for adults and/or children who are not yet familiar with *Purim*, and utilize the opportunity to share the story and laws of *Purim*, as well as to fulfil the *Mitzvos* of *Purim* with each of them. These gatherings should be conducted in as public and exciting a manner as possible.

One should participate in visiting Jewish people who are in hospitals, aged-care facilities, in the army, or in jail.

If the *Megillah* is read for someone who may be too infirm or incompetent to listen to the whole reading properly, the *Brochos* should not be recited.

Where appropriate, one should involve his children in *Mivtzoim* activities.

One who cannot perform *Mivtzoim* personally should participate financially.

Megillah readings should conclude before sunset (7:57pm). In extenuating circumstances, the *Megillah* should be read (and concluded) before the advent of three stars (8:25pm), without the *Brochos*.

❧ SEUDAS PURIM

One must feast and rejoice on *Purim* day. In fact, the joy of *Purim* is even greater than the joy of *Yom-Tov*.

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*, at least 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 *Kezayis* before sunset (7:57pm).

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 to light 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 eating and *bentch* elsewhere, he must have this in mind when reciting *Hamotzie*. [If he didn't have this in mind, he should not relocate during the meal. However, if he did so, he may *bentch* in the place where he finishes eating.]

One should share words of *Torah* at the meal, especially on themes associated 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. [In a similar vein, it is forbidden to produce or read any satirical imitations of *Gemoro*, such as "*Masechta Shikorim*".]

❧ WINE AND ALCOHOL

Chazal instituted that one should drink wine on *Purim* "until he doesn't know the difference between *Orur Haman* and *Boruch 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 behaviour may not completely conform with *Halacha* when inebriated (such as forgetting to make a *Brocho* properly, to *bentch* or to *daven Maariv*); to anyone who may cause damage, injury or shame 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 *Halacha*. 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 *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*. 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).

❧ MOTZEI 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 best to *bentch* before *davening Maariv*.]

On the night following *Purim*, one must remember to *daven Maariv* as soon as possible. In any case, one should certainly *daven* before midnight (1:32am).

The night following *Purim* is an especially appropriate time for a *Chassidishe Farbrengen*, and is a fitting way to celebrate the joy of *Purim* in a manner of "*b'rov am hadras melech*."

Purim is an auspicious time for the *Daled Bavos* to be sung. Additionally, the *Rebbe* frequently instructed that *Hop Kozzak* and *Nyet Nyet Nikavo* be sung at the *Purim Farbrengens*.

❧ SHUSHAN PURIM

Tachnun is not recited.

Fasting is forbidden. Even though there is no requirement to eat a festive meal, one should still rejoice and eat something special in honour of *Shushan Purim*.

During the annual *Purim Farbrengens*, the *Rebbe* would note that *Shushan Purim* is a fitting time to begin:

- Giving *Maos Chittim*.
- Focusing on learning the *Halachos* of *Pesach*.
- Making *Mivtzoim* preparations for *Pesach*.
- Arranging the distribution of hand-made *Shmurah Matzah*.

Matzah is not eaten in the thirty days prior to *Pesach*. [One may eat *Matzah* balls or foods containing *Matzah* meal.]