

YOM KIPPUR**PURIM -- A DAY LIKE YOM KIPPUR??**

2011 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

Fast of Esther

Tomorrow, March 17, is a fast day. The Fast of Esther usually takes place on the day before Purim. However, this year Purim falls on a Sunday, and we don't fast on Shabbos (with the exception of Yom Kippur.) Therefore, the fast is scheduled early. The fast commemorates the war of the Jews of the Persian Empire against their enemies that took place on that date. In keeping with Jewish tradition, the Jews repented and fasted in hope for G-d's assistance in battling their enemies. Let us pray that He will continue to watch over us and protect us.

The fast begins Thursday at dawn, (72 minutes before sunrise.) It ends at dusk, (25-72 minutes after sunset, depending upon local custom.) For sunrise and sunset times for your community [click here](#).

Parshas Zachor

This Shabbos we will take out two Torah scrolls. In the first, we will read "Tzav", the regularly scheduled weekly Portion. The second Torah Reading, "Zachor," (Deuteronomy, 25:17-19) reminds us of the treachery of Amalek, the ancestor of Haman, the villain in the story of Purim. There is a special Mitzvah to remember this event by listening to this Torah reading. The Torah tells us that there is an ongoing war against Amalek in every generation.

Amalek. The very mention of the name awakens within the Jew the memory of countless persecutions, pogroms, and holocausts. Amalek is the symbol of the worst of anti-Semitism. Amalek, the grandson of Jacob's twin brother and archenemy Esau, was surely a source of pride and joy to his evil grandfather. Amalek was the ancestor of the nation that attacked the Israelites shortly after their Exodus from Egypt. Haman of Purim fame was a descendant of Amalek. Agag, an Amalekite king, was a cruel and heartless murderer. There is a tradition in the name of the Vilna Gaon (who lived in the 1700's) that the Germans are descendants of Amalek (Not a surprising tradition, considering the Amalek-like brutality that the Germans demonstrated a half century ago.)

Amalek has declared war against Israel, and G-d has declared war against Amalek. We symbolically obliterate the memory of Amalek by making noise on Purim whenever Haman's name is mentioned. Some Torah scribes test a new pen by writing the name "Amalek" and then crossing it out. Some people write "Amalek" or "Haman" on the bottom of their shoes, thereby erasing the name as they walk.

Purim

This Saturday night and Sunday will be Purim, the most festive day on the Jewish calendar. Learn about observing the Mitzvahs of Purim by clicking [here](#).

Did the Book of Esther 2300 Years Ago Predict the Nuremberg Executions?

The Purim story is about our enemy Haman and his downfall. Did Queen Esther receive permission from “The King” to hang 10 future “sons of Haman?” Check this [link](#).

-----“PURIM -- A DAY LIKE YOM KIPPUR??

On the surface, they couldn’t be more different. Yom Kippur is a somber day of fasting, contemplation, and prayer. Purim is a day of feasting, celebration, and, ok, prayer. On Yom Kippur, we focus on the spiritual. On Purim, it seems, we focus on the material.

I must confess that my choice of a title to this article was inaccurate. Purim is not like Yom Kippur; on the contrary, Yom Kippur is a day that attempts to be like Purim!

We can see it in the name: The full name of the Day of Atonement is Yom (Ha)Kippurim. The literal translation is, as we know, “The Day of Atonement.” However, there is an alternate translation. When used as a prefix, “Ki-....” means “Like.” Hence, “Yom Ki-Purim – A Day Like Purim.”

We accepted the Torah when we stood at Mount Sinai. In a sense, we had no choice. The lightning, the thunder, the Voice of G-d booming forth with the Ten Commandments – How could we possibly say “No”?!

The Jews of Persia were condemned to be annihilated. In G-d’s kindness, He arranged events to work out so that our People would survive and our enemies would be defeated.

In reference to the “new” holiday of Purim, we read that “...*The Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves ... to observe these ... days...* (Esther, 9:27)

Our Sages interpret ...*The Jews confirmed and undertook...*as meaning “they confirmed that which they had previously undertaken...” at Mount Sinai.

It is one level to accept G-d’s Commandments when you FEAR Him; it is a much higher level to accept G-d’s Commandments when you LOVE Him.

The Jews of Persia had been saved. They feasted; they ate and drank and joyfully accepted G-d once again and committed themselves to His Torah.

When the holy day of Yom Kippur comes around, it is nearly a Yom Ki-Purim; a day that tries to imitate Purim, but cannot. It cannot because Yom Kippur is a day of solemnity. You can accomplish great things through fasting, praying, and repenting on Yom Kippur. But through the properly channeled joy of Purim we can accomplish so much more.

Be happy this Purim. Go to shul and listen to the Megillah this Saturday night and Sunday. Fill yourself with the joy of G-d's love; become intoxicated with G-d's love.

Appreciate G-d's gifts and continue to have a happy (new) year.

Have a meaningful fast, a Good Shabbos, and a Happy Purim.

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