

the chabad times

A PUBLICATION OF CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF IDAHO

FEATURES:

- The Gragger & the Prince
- Can G-d & Facebook be Friends?
- Purim Guide & Story
- Kreplach
- Purim Puppet Show
- Sixty Days
- Esther & the Modern Jewish Woman
- Purim Italiano
- What is Love?

Happy Purim!



SUNDAY, MARCH 16

DETAILS ON
BACK COVER!

CONTENT

- 2 A Word from the Director
- 3 From Our Mailbox
- 4 Purim Guide
- 6 The Purim Story
- 7 The Gragger & The Prince
- 8 What is Love?
- 9 Can G-d & Facebook be Friends?
- 10 Sixty Days
- 11 Ask the Rabbi
- 12 Photos
- 13 Kreplach Recipe
- 14 Message from the Rebbe
- 15 Purim Puppet Show
- 16 Purim Italiano & Purim Schedule

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On the cover:
 Hamantaschen & Purim Mask

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 3813 W. State St.
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 208.853.9200
 chabad@jewishidaho.com
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Director: Rabbi Mendel Lifshitz
Editor: Deenie Lifshitz
 Contributing Editor: D. Smith
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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS



Dear Friend,

All Jewish holidays share the common factor of joy, and each has its distinct flavor. The joy of Purim is special in the sense that it is extreme. We dress up, share gifts and eat a festive meal. Virtually everything about the festival is over-the-top. What is the nature of this unusual joy, and where does it come from?

Throughout history, Jews have always found reasons to celebrate. Often, it is our salvation from oppression that gives way to our cheerful celebrations and traditions. Yet Purim is unique amongst that island of festive days. What is different about the deliverance in the days of Haman from the days of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans?

Every Jew has an intrinsic connection to G-d. In some, it's more revealed than in others, but it exists in every Jew. As we know, Mordechai pointedly refused to bow down to Haman, triggering the evil plot. Mordechai was driven by his innate connection with G-d, and could not submit to anyone besides for Him. This bond with G-d was put to the test in the Purim story.

Amazingly, it's also what ultimately led to the miracle that saved the Jews. Mordechai defiantly gathered Jewish children to pray in public. Esther revealed her Jewish identity to her impulsive dictator husband. The Jews fasted and prayed – to G-d – for their rescue.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe OBM explains that a Jew is able to defy the proverbial Haman with self-confidence by drawing on the deep connection with G-d. It is this immeasurably strong bond which enables the Jewish people to achieve that which would typically be off limits or even impossible.

This titanic, yet deep connection to G-d is the foundation and catalyst for the greatest joy possible. It's this joy – of our immutable relationship with our Creator – that is on display on Purim.

Now, that's reason to celebrate!

L'Chaim!

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Mendel & Esther Lifshitz

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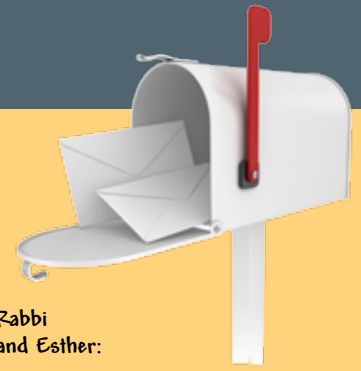
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FROM OUR MAILBOX & INBOX



Dearest Esther,

Greetings from Seattle! I hope all is well in Boise.

Enclosed is a donation for the amazing work you guys do in Idaho. I hope to come visit for Shabbos in the spring.

Thank you again for always making me feel welcome and teaching me the beauty of traditional Judaism. I am eternally grateful to you and Rabbi Mendel.

May your family be nothing but happy and healthy!

All the best,

Mandy (Mushka)

Rabbi,

I just wanted to write a short note to say thank you so very much for the time you spent with me to interview you regarding your religion for my college report. I learned many interesting facts that I previously was ignorant of.

My instructor was very pleased with the results. I am very grateful for your time and wisdom.

Sincerely,

J. Hickins

Dear Rabbi,

What wonderful work you do!

I hope we can see you in Sun Valley soon.

Best wishes to you, Esther and your family.

With affection,

Linda & Jay Cooper

Ketchum

Dear Rabbi Lifshitz,

I write to thank you on behalf of myself and my husband for your attention and care to our grandson at Cherry Gulch. We love C. very much and worry about him so the photo of him laying tefillin makes us very happy. We gave tefillin to C. for his Bar Mitzvah.

He looks wonderful. Again, thank you so much!

Betty & Arthur Levy

New Haven, CT

We appreciate your weekly e-mails.

We are so thankful for Chabad,

D. & M. Gregg

Hi Esther,

Thank you again for letting me attend your class. It is truly enjoyable and educational.

Warmly,

Maja

Dear Esther & Rabbi,

Thank you very much for the wonderful Shabbat dinner. Your family is an amazing reservoir of positive energy! We are lucky to have you here in Boise.

I can't believe what you have accomplished in such a short time!

Fondly,

S. K.



Rabbi Lifshitz,

I rushed a check into the mail to you yesterday and didn't have a chance to include a note. We appreciate all you do for the Jewish boys at Cherry Gulch. Our grandson is now a resident of the school. Having you nearby and involved brings us peace of mind. We look forward to meeting you when we come to visit.

Bob Stoll

Charlotte, NC

Esther,

Thank you for an evening filled with wonderful memories! Chanukah on Ice was just perfect! Thanks again for the letting me help out.

Happy Chanukah & Shalom,

Linda Christoph

Rabbi,

Thank you for the note and the photos. I love hearing updates about my son and photos are especially appreciated by my parents. It was good to see him in tefillin with a smile on his face. I think the last time he wore tefillin was this past summer. He made a pair at camp Ramah Darom and wore them at tefilot.

I hope to meet you when I visit Cherry Gulch and hope my son will be able come with me to kabbalat shabbat on a Friday evening.

Sincerely,

Rebecca U.

Dear Rabbi Mendel and Esther,

Thank you for making me feel good, at home with warm and kind people, with you Esther who is such a fantastic cook, a rabbi with wit as strong as mine.

You have been very nice to me and I will always be grateful. G-d bless you for your kindness.

It is an honor to eat, talk, share, laugh, and be with you and friends and family. You help me right now. So a deep big thanks.

With affection in the spiritual/emotional part of my being,

Jeffrey W.

Hello Esther,

We had a great time at Chanukah celebration. Everything was great and we met with wonderful new people. Thank you so much for everything.

Best Regards,

Evelina B.

Esther,

Thank you for the wonderful Chanukah gift exchange. It was very nice to see your ageless mother and to hear all the Hebrew! I thought the multilayered gift unwrap was a clever way to instill Jewish values while entertaining the group. You are a very clever and talented woman. Plus you produce the most adorable children.

Light and love to your whole family!

Shira Kronenberg

Dear Rabbi,

Our good memories and thoughts about you, your family, and our other friends at the synagogue in Boise have not abated. You all inspired us mainly through example, and this was life-changing.

Have a wonderful Chanukah,

Ray Leicht

Rabbi and Esther:

We had a wonderful time at your home last Friday. I felt privileged to be in such wonderful company with delicious eats that remind me of home.

Much love,

Amy B.

Rabbi Lifshitz,

Thank you for your time teaching our chaplains about the Jewish Sabbath. I understand how busy you are.

It was really an excellent job, I just wish we had more time to elaborate in greater detail.

It was very beneficial for all who attended.

Thank you again,

Chaplain Daniel Walters

St. Lukes Regional Medical Center

Dear Esther and Rabbi Mendel,

Thank you for inviting our family to Shabbat dinner last Friday night. It is rare to get a Shabbat invitation living here in Boise, as you also should know. We had a lovely evening and the food was delicious. We enjoyed meeting your mother, Esther, and also meeting the other guests.

Warmly,

Courtney, Andy, Naomi and Asher

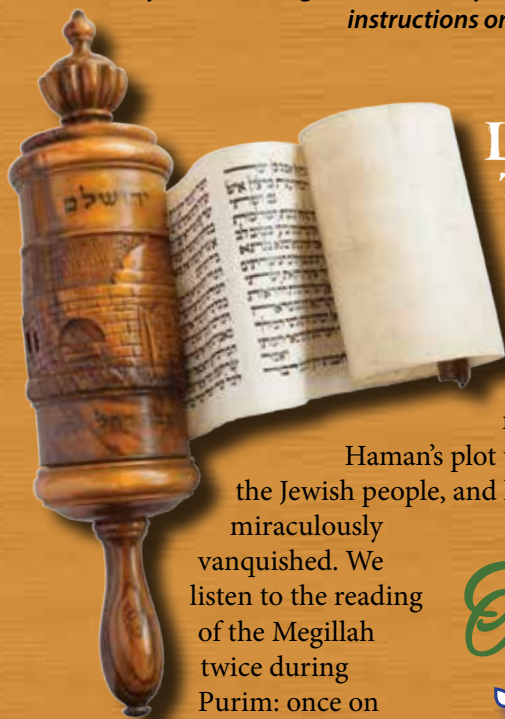
Letters to the Editor & Articles

We'd love to hear from you. Please submit your comments, articles, suggestions and letters to chabad@jewishidaho.com or send them via postal mail. All submissions are subject to editorial review.

PURIM GUIDE

Purim is celebrated every year on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar (February/March). The festival commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia from Haman's plot of annihilation. For more on the story of Purim, see page 6.

This year Purim begins on Saturday evening, March 15, and continues through Sunday night, March 16. For more detailed instructions on the Purim observances visit www.jewishidaho.com/644343.



LISTEN TO THE MEGILLAH

Megillat Esther is Esther's and Mordechai's firsthand narrative of

Haman's plot to destroy the Jewish people, and how he was miraculously vanquished. We listen to the reading of the Megillah twice during Purim: once on Saturday night,

March 15, 2014 and again on Sunday, March 16, 2014. To properly fulfill the mitzvah, it is crucial to hear every single word of the megillah. Try not to miss a word! This is an interactive event: when Haman's name is mentioned, we twirl

graggers (noisemakers) and stamp

our feet to drown out the sound of his

evil name. *Full*

schedule of local megillah readings on back page.

EAT A FESTIVE MEAL

Purim is celebrated with a festive and joyous meal during the daytime of Sunday, March 16, 2014. Traditional foods include soup with kreplach (stuffed dumplings) and fruit—or nut—filled triangular cookies called hamantashen. The hidden fillings in both foods remind us that G-d's everpresent involvement in the

Purim episode was hidden, and not openly revealed. (In fact, the name of G-d is not mentioned even once in Megillat Esther!)



The Mitzvot of PURIM

SEND GIFTS OF FOOD

Purim is a time to celebrate Jewish unity and friendship. We send packages containing at least two different kinds of ready-to-eat foods (e.g. hamantaschen and fruit) to at least one friend (men give to men and women give to women). These gifts, Mishloach Manot, are traditionally sent by a friendly messenger.



GIVE TO THE POOR

Giving tzedakah (charity), a year-round obligation, is a particularly special mitzvah on Purim. Give charity to at least two needy individuals on Purim day, ideally by giving directly to the person. If this is not possible, place at least several coins into two different charity boxes. As with the other mitzvahs of Purim, even small children should be taught to fulfill this mitzvah.



Purim Customs, Prayers, Food & Fun

MASQUERADES AND HAMANTASHEN

A time-honored Purim custom is for children to dress up and disguise themselves—an allusion to the fact that the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural garments. This is also the significance behind



a traditional Purim food, the hamantash—a pastry whose filling is hidden within a three-cornered crust.

SPECIAL PRAYERS

On Purim, the Al HaNissim liturgy is recited in the Amidah for evening, morning, and afternoon prayers, as well as in the Grace after Meals. In addition, during the Morning Prayer service there is a special reading from the Torah in the synagogue.



THE FAST OF ESTHER

For three days, the Jews fasted and prayed and asked G-d for help in the face of Haman's plot. Therefore we fast on the day before Purim from approximately two hours before sunrise until 40 minutes after sunset. This year, Purim is on Sunday. Since we do not fast on Fridays or on Shabbat, we therefore fast a few days earlier, on Thursday, March 13, 2014.

HALF A SHEKEL

To commemorate the half shekel contributed by each Jew during the month of Adar in the time of the Holy Temple, it is a tradition to give three silver half-dollar coins to charity. This is usually performed in the synagogue on the day we observe the Fast of Esther.

ZACHOR

The Shabbat before Purim (March 15, 2014), we read Parshat Zachor in the Torah. It tells of how Haman's ancestors, the nation of Amalek, brazenly attacked the Jewish people after



our spectacular exodus from Egypt, dispelling the aura of invincibility surrounding us. The Torah instructs us to erase all memory of Amalek. Amalek represents a cold rationality which inhibits awe or excitement. We destroy this Amalek within ourselves, and allow ourselves to fall more deeply in love with G-d and his Torah and mitzvahs.

SHUSHAN PURIM

In certain ancient walled cities—Jerusalem is the primary example—Purim is observed

not on the 14th of Adar (the date of its observance everywhere else), but on the 15th of Adar. This is to commemorate that fact that in

the ancient walled city of Shushan, where the battles between the Jews and their enemies extended for an additional day, the original Purim celebration was held on the 15th of Adar.

The 15th of Adar is thus called "Shushan Purim," and is a day of joy and celebration also in those places where it is not observed as the actual Purim.



Before & After Purim

THE PURIM STORY

A Fateful Party

It all began in Ancient Persia in the 4th century BCE. The Holy Temple that had stood in Jerusalem was destroyed more than 50 years earlier, and the Jews were subjects of the mighty Persian empire which extended over 127 lands.

Three years after King Ahasuerus ascended the Persian throne, when he felt secure in his new position, he celebrated by throwing a grand 180-day-long party for all his subjects. Following this extravagant gala, Ahasuerus hosted a smaller week-long party for the residents of the capital city of Shushan. In the palace's women's quarters, Ahasuerus' wife, Queen Vashti, hosted her own party for the Shushanite womenfolk.

On the seventh day of this party, Ahasuerus' heart "was merry with wine," and he commanded his wife Vashti to appear before all the partying men—he wanted to

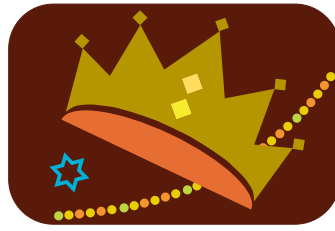


show them all her exquisite beauty. Vashti balked at this request, and at the advice of his advisor Memuchan, Ahasuerus ordered Vashti's execution.

The Beauty Contest

When Ahasuerus' wrath dissipated, he was lonely for a wife. His servants suggested that he orchestrate a beauty pageant. Officers would be appointed in all the king's lands, and all beautiful girls would be brought to Ahasuerus. And the girl who would find

favor in the king's eyes would be the queen.



The leader of the Jews at that time was a Shushanite resident named Mordechai. He had a cousin, Esther, who was orphaned as a young girl. Mordechai raised her and treated her as a daughter. Though she had no desire to be the queen, Esther was forcibly taken to the king's harem, to participate in the contest. While all the other contestant beautified themselves with perfumes and lotions, Esther did nothing. But G-d had his own plans. When Esther appeared before the king, he immediately liked her, and Esther became the new Queen of Persia. But as per Mordechai's directive, Esther refused to divulge her nationality—even to the king.

Mordechai to the Rescue

Shortly after Esther became queen, Mordechai overheard two of the king's chamberlains discussing a plot to assassinate the king. Mordechai had them reported, and the traitors were hanged.

The Anti-Semitic Prime Minister

Meanwhile, Haman, one of Ahasuerus' ministers, was promoted to the position of Prime Minister. Haman was a virulent Jew hater; in fact he was a descendant of the notoriously anti-Semitic nation of Amalek.

Immediately after his promotion, the king issued a decree ordering everyone to bow down whenever Haman appeared. Now Haman would walk around with a large idol hanging from a chain around his neck. When Mordechai, a proud Jew, refused to bow down, Haman was infuriated. He resolved to take revenge against all the Jews and threw lots to determine the "lucky" day when he would implement his plan. The lot fell on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar.

Haman approached Ahasuerus and offered him 10,000 silver talents in exchange for permission to exterminate the Jews. Ahasuerus, who was no friend of the Jews either, told Haman, "The money is yours to keep, and the nation is yours to do with as you please."

Haman immediately sent proclamations to all the king's land. These declarations, sealed with the royal signet ring, ordered the

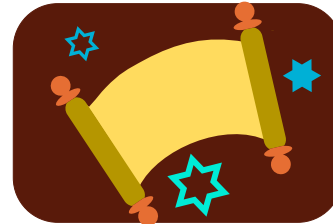
people to rise up against the Jews and kill them all – men, women, and children – on the following 13th of Adar.

Mordechai's Request

Mordechai became aware of the decree. He rent his garments and donned sackcloth. He sent a message to Esther, asking her to approach the king and beg him to spare her people. Esther responded that according to the rules anyone who entered the king's presence un-summoned would be put to death—unless the king extended to that person his golden scepter. "And I," Esther said, "have not been summoned by the king for thirty days already!"

Mordechai sent another message: "Do not think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews by being in the king's palace. For if you will remain silent at this time, relief and salvation will come to the Jews from another source, and you and the house of your father will be lost. And who knows if it is not for just such a time that you reached this royal position."

Esther agreed to approach the king. But she



asked Mordechai to gather all the Jews in Shushan and let them all fast for three days and nights. And then Esther would put her life in her hands and approach the king.

Mordechai complied with Esther's request. He gathered the Jews of Shushan – especially the children, 22,000 of them – and they fasted, repented and prayed to G-d.

The First Feast

After three days of fasting, Esther donned royal garb and entered Ahasuerus' chambers. Immediately, the king extended his scepter. "What is your request?" Ahasuerus asked.

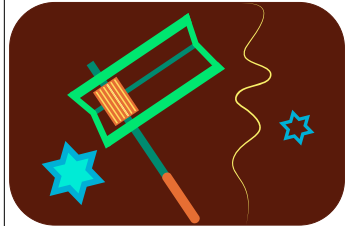
"I would like to invite the king and Haman to a small feast," Esther responded.

So the king and Haman joined Esther for a wine-feast. During the feast, the king again



asked Esther whether she had anything to request. "Yes," Esther responded. "I would appreciate if tomorrow, again, the king and Haman would join me for a feast. And then I will tell the king my request."

Haman left the party a happy and proud man. Oh the honor he was being accorded! But standing at the king's gate was Mordechai – who still refused to bow to Haman – and Haman was enraged. When



he arrived home, his wife and wise advisors counseled him to erect a gallows, and then to go to the king and request permission to hang Mordechai. Haman excitedly went ahead and put up the gallows.

The Beginning of the End

Sleep eluded the king that night, so he asked his servants to read for him from the Royal Chronicles. They complied with the king's orders. They read from the Chronicles how Mordechai saved the king's life when two of his chamberlains hatched a plot to kill him.

"Was he rewarded for this fine act?" Ahasuerus asked. "No he was not," the servants responded.

At that moment Haman entered the king's courtyard. His purpose? To ask the king's permission to hang Mordechai! Before Haman could utter a word, Ahasuerus addressed him: "My Haman, in your estimation, what shall be done to a person whom the king wishes to honor?"

Haman, who was certain that the king wished to honor him, responded: "Bring royal garment and a royal horse. And let one of the king's nobles dress the man and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'So is done for the man whom the king wishes to honor!'"

"Great idea," Ahasuerus responded. "Now go get the garments and the horse and do so for Mordechai the Jew!"

Haman had no choice but to comply. On the next day he went and honored Mordechai as the king had ordered, and then immediately rushed to join the king and Esther for...

The Second Feast

"What is your request?" a curious King

THE PURIM STORY

Ahasuerus asked Esther at the feast.

"If I have found favor in your eyes, O King," Esther pleaded, "and if it pleases the king, let my life be granted me by my plea, and the life of my people by my request. For my people and I have been sold to be annihilated, killed and destroyed!" Esther then identified Haman as the evil person who wished to perpetrate this atrocity.

The king was greatly angered. When he was then informed that Haman had built a gallows for Mordechai, he ordered that Haman be hanged on that very gallows.

The Tables Are Turned

On that day, Haman's estate was given to Esther, and Mordechai was appointed Prime Minister.

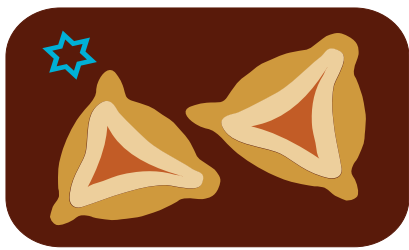
But Esther was far from satisfied. Haman was dead, but his evil decree was still in effect. According to Persian law, once a king issues a decree it can not be rescinded. But the king gave Mordechai and Esther permission, and they promptly wrote up a decree that countermanded Haman's edict. The decree granted the Jews permission to defend themselves against their enemies. And by this time, considering that all knew that the queen and Prime Minister were both Jewish, no one would prevent the Jews from doing just that!

And the Jews in Shushan were oh so happy. Celebrations abounded!

The Battle

On the 13th of Adar that year, the Jews throughout the Persian Empire mobilized and killed the enemies who had wanted to kill them. In Shushan, among the dead were Haman's ten sons.

Esther asked the king's permission for the Jews



in Shushan to have one more day to destroy their enemy—and the king acceded to her wish. On that day, the 14th of Adar, the Jews worldwide celebrated, and the Jews of Shushan killed more of their enemies, and also hung Haman's sons. The Jews of Shushan then rested and celebrated on the 15th of Adar.

In Commemoration

Mordechai and Esther established a holiday to commemorate these amazing events. Jews worldwide celebrate on the 14th of Adar, while residents of walled cities—like Shushan—celebrate on the 15th of Adar. This holiday, called "Purim," is the most joyous holiday on the Jewish calendar.

More about Purim at www.jewishidaho.com/purim

THE GRAGGER AND THE PRINCE *a story*

One Purim many, many years ago, in the little town of Vardik, in far-off Russia, everyone was very sad and worried. Instead of looking forward to the gaiety of the holiday, they were afraid that their entire Jewish community would be destroyed. It almost seemed like the times of the first Purim—that's how great the danger was.

The son of the great powerful Czar had gone hunting in the woods with a group of friends. They had lost their way and by chance arrived in the town of Vardik. All the people were excited to have this distinguished visitor in their midst. They gave him the finest room in the local inn, the finest food, and delicious cakes.

The next day, the prince suddenly became very ill and was unable to return home. Messengers were sent to the Czar to report the bad news. In a very short time, the Czar and several important ministers arrived in Vardik.

They had brought several doctors with them who immediately began to examine the prince. Each one tried to cure him, but none was successful. The prince was moaning in pain. His face was flushed, and he was burning with fever. Most of the time he slept. He refused all food and drink. His very life was in danger.

And then one of the ministers said that it was the fault of the Jews that the prince was sick, because they gave him bad food. This was of course ridiculous and untrue, but everyone was so worried about the sickness of the prince that they believed him. Unfortunately, many times in history, when there was any kind of trouble, evil men placed the blame on innocent Jews.

And so the Jews of Vardik were very frightened, for they knew

that their lives might be in danger.

On the day before Purim, two notices were put on trees. They said that if the prince did not recover by the end of the next day, all the Jews in Vardik would be held responsible. Also, since the prince was very weak, everyone had to be very quiet.

But the Megillah had to be read. The Jews gathered silently in the little shul on the main street, right near the inn where the prince lay gravely ill. Everyone in shul was told to sit absolutely still, for the Rabbi would read in a soft, low voice. The children had been told to leave their



graggers home, for the notice had requested silence. (A gragger is a noisemaker that is used during the reading of the Megillah: whenever the name of the wicked Haman is mentioned, children swing their graggers and make a lot of noise to show their contempt and hate for him.)

The fathers looked very serious and sad. The mothers in the women's section were crying. There was no feeling of Purim in the air, that's for sure.

Suddenly, there was an awful noise. The name of Haman had been read, and little Yaakov was swinging his gragger with all his might. Happily, with a big smile on his face, he was swinging that gragger.

Everyone became very frightened. The Rabbi continued

reading. People were shaking their heads. They made signs to Yaakov that he must be quiet. One man wanted to take the gragger away from him, but Yaakov would not even let him touch it. Everyone was afraid that Yaakov would scream and make a lot of noise if forced to give up his gragger. So he was allowed to keep it. No one could tell him to stop using the gragger, for during the reading of the Megillah it is forbidden to speak. They were hoping that Yaakov would understand and put the gragger away.

The windows to the prince's room were open to let in some fresh air. Gathered around his bed were the ministers, the doctors and the Czar. There was total silence in the room. The prince was pale and weak. He had no strength left. His eyes were closed and he seemed not even to be breathing.

What was that? Who dared to break the rule of silence? All the people in the room ran to the window to see who the guilty one was. The next moment they jumped in fright, for they heard a voice behind them asking for some water.

There was the prince, sitting up in bed, wide awake. "What a jolly noise I hear! What is it? Please bring me some water. I have never been so thirsty in my whole life. Hurry, please. I feel so dry." The noise of the gragger had awakened the prince.

In a few days he was well, and the whole company returned in peace to the palace. The Jews in the town were saved, and they had the happiest Purim day you could ever imagine.

Yaakov was the hero of the day. People hugged him and kissed him. They gave him so much nasherei that he had enough to eat till Passover.

More Purim stories at www.jewishidaho.com/32574

WHAT IS LOVE?

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Why Do We Ask, "What Is Love?"

Whenever we ask, "What is love?" it's usually because a) we're unsure if a certain special someone really loves us, or b) because a certain special someone just accused us of not really loving them.

When we are truly engaged in giving and receiving love, we don't ponder such philosophical questions. It's only when something is lacking that we begin to analyze and contemplate what that thing actually is. For example, nobody sits down to a full meal and asks, "What is a pastrami sandwich?"

So, if we're even asking the question, "What is love?" it probably means that we don't feel completely loved, or that someone doesn't feel completely loved by us.

But since we're asking, let's try to answer the question.

"Am I Loved?" Vs. "Do I Love?"

The two scenarios that usually cause us to contemplate "What is love?" give meaning to the question. Either we wonder, "Am I loved?" or we ask, "Do I love?"

It is easier to first address the "What is love?" question in terms of the love we feel coming toward us. If we understand how to recognize when we are being loved, we can also learn to recognize our love for another.

When we are loved, we tend to feel it intuitively in our guts. But how does it work? Is there an extrasensory perception in the heart that is able to read the feelings in another person's heart?

In fact, it's really not that ethereal or supernatural. On the contrary, it's pretty practical and down-to-earth. Our hearts take cues from our senses. Everything we see, hear, taste, touch or smell teaches us about our universe. We don't need to contemplate or ask questions. Our sensory organs report to our brains, and our brains interpret the data and send the report to our hearts. So, if we see a loving smile, hear loving words, or feel a loving touch, the brain processes this

information and concludes, "Hey, we are being loved right now!"

In short, when we are loved, there is tangible proof. It's not an abstract thought or feeling, it's concrete and evidenced. As King Solomon wrote in his book of Proverbs (27:19), "As water reflects a man's face back to him, so is the heart of one man to another." This means, when you are treated with love, your heart feels that love.

Love is an Action

Now we can address the second part of the "What is love" quandary—how to know if we love someone else?

The answer is straightforward. When we behave lovingly towards someone, it means

similar to "What is freedom?" or "What is good fortune?" But truthfully, love is not a concept. It's an action.

To ask, "What is love?" is like asking, "What is running?" or "What is swimming?" If you've ever seen someone run or swim, you know exactly what running and swimming entail.

The Hebrew word for love, ahavah, reveals this true definition of love, for the word ahavah is built upon the root consonants h-v, which means "to give." In order for love to be real love, it has to be expressed as an action. If you love your beloved, then you must show it. By the same token, if you are loved, that will show, too. You will recognize it by the way you are treated.

G-d Teaches Us How to Love

G-d commands us (Deut. 6:5), "And you shall love the L-rd your G-d." This precept leads us to voice the age-old question, "How can we be commanded to feel a feeling?" Either you feel it or you don't, right?

An answer offered by our tradition explains that we are not being ordered to feel a feeling in the abstract sense. Rather, the command is for us to behave lovingly. In this light, "And you shall love," actually means, "You shall perform acts of love."

This is the true test: action, deeds, performance.

Feelings can be deceptive. Sometimes, what we perceive as love may in fact be another emotion. But actions cannot be mistaken. So, rather than ask, "What is love?" we must ask, "Do I perform acts of love for my beloved?" and "Does my beloved perform acts of love for me?"

WHAT IS LOVE?

by Shais Taub

we love that person.

When we ask a question like "What is love?" we assume that we're trying to define an abstract concept

Shais Taub is a popular scholar and teacher of Jewish mysticism. His contributions to Jewish recovery include authoring the bestselling book, G-d of Our Understanding: Jewish Spirituality and Recovery from Addiction. He and his family make their home in Pittsburgh, PA.

CAN G-D AND FACEBOOK BE FRIENDS?

By Rochel Holzkenner

Here's something to think about: Has technology helped or harmed religious commitment?

Science and religion have long had a tumultuous relationship. In the 16th century the findings of Copernicus and Galileo sent a cold shiver down the clergy's spine, and science threatened to replace G-d with reason.

But religion was not displaced. In fact, scientific findings often point to the brilliant design of G-d's universe.

Fast forward to the 21st century. By now science has unraveled staggering developments that have radically altered our lives, and the progress continues at a speedy pace. Scientists propose that in the years 1990–2000 there were



more scientific advancements than in all of history combined!

Here's the contemporary question: Can technology and religion work in unison?

On one hand, high tech seems at best a distraction for the spiritual seekers. At worst, it opens up a whole new world of temptation. Has a Jew anything meaningful to gain from a Facebook page, the iPad with 4G, or a smartphone? As staggering as instant communication may be, does it really paint the world a better place?

The Zohar, authored close to two thousand years ago, has something surprising to say about the value of technology. According to the Zohar, the development of technology is conducive to spiritual growth and is actually a prelude to the coming of Moshiach.

The Zohar sees this prediction in the Torah's vivid description of Noah's flood: "In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life . . . all the wellsprings of the great depth burst forth, and the windows of the sky opened up."

The water poured from the heavens and gushed from the earth through natural wellsprings. Mirroring this description, the Zohar predicts a future flood—only this flood would be a downpour of wisdom.

(Water is a Kabbalistic symbol for wisdom.) Each part of the future flood is foretold in the Torah:

"In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life . . ."—The six hundred years of Noah's life allude to the sixth millennium of the world's existence, more specifically the six-hundredth year of the sixth millennium. Transposed onto the Gregorian calendar, that's the mid-

19th century, more specifically the year 1840 CE.

"The wellsprings of the great depth burst forth . . ." This, says the Zohar, is an allusion to the scientific developments that will emerge from human ingenuity and flood the earth in the sixth millennium.

"And the windows of the sky opened up." The heavens too will gush forth with esoteric and mystical wisdom, a reference to the deepest understanding of Torah, the Kabbalah.

The Zohar concludes: Both the upper and the lower wisdoms will come to prepare the world for the seventh millennium, the messianic era, when "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as water covers the ocean bed."

As a prelude to this cosmic shift, we'll be privy to some exciting advancements.

Fifteen hundred years after being penned, the Zohar's predictions began to unfold.

The year 1820 marked the onset of the Second Industrial Revolution, also known as the Technological Revolution. Technological advancements began to spiral in a speedy upward motion. Railroads, electricity, the telephone, and eventually the automobile and airplane changed life as we know it.

The early 19th century also marked a massive cultural tide in Jewish society. A century earlier the Baal Shem Tov had catalyzed the Chassidic Revolution, and by the 1800s the deepest teachings of Torah, known as Kabbalah and Chassidism, were being widely studied and disseminated. Jewish rituals that had been understood at face value for millennia were now taught with entirely new depth and breadth, seen through the lens of Jewish mysticism. The secrets of the universe that were once exclusive to the mystics began to saturate Jewish society in Europe and beyond.

Two schools of wisdom had powerfully emerged. Just as the Zohar had predicted, the middle of the sixth millennium brought a torrential flood of knowledge.

The Zohar predicted that both the upper knowledge and the lower knowledge would come as a prelude to the messianic era. In fact, there's an ancient custom to sample the Shabbat food on Friday. In the same fashion, G-d is giving us a taste of the abundant wisdom that will be available in the seventh

millennium,
the time of



Moshiach, a bit early, in the sixth millennium.

But how is the Technological Revolution part of a prelude to the profound knowledge of G-d that will be available in the times of Moshiach? How does technology reinforce a G-d-centered reality? How do the upper and lower "waters" work in perfect unison?

Welcome to www.jewishutah.com, an affiliate of www.chabad.org. Perhaps you don't realize that you have just joined the world's largest Jewish virtual congregation. With multiple millions of visitors per month, and over 100,000 Torah articles, technology has allowed the Torah's sphere of influence to expand by gigantic proportions.

For many years now, live radio and television transmissions and satellite hookups have been used to broadcast the teachings of Torah and Chassidism. They reach people who would otherwise have no access to or interest in Torah study. Technology provides an enormous microphone and an ever-expanding network of influence to saturate the world with Jewish vibrations.

In addition, technology teaches us about G-d in a more palpable way than we could ever experience from a philosophical text.

The books say that G-d has "an eye that sees and an ear that hears." He is omnipresent, observing everyone simultaneously. A hundred years ago we took the books' word for it; but with Google Earth, it's suddenly no longer so far-fetched.

The books say that G-d gives continuous vitality to His creations. A hundred years ago we believed it. Now we understand it. If an electric power plant energizes millions of electrical appliances with a consistent electrical current running through each utility, then G-d's creative process becomes more comprehensible.

Of course, G-d can't blow His cover. So, instead of making it obvious that technology's main function is to spread the knowledge of G-d, He gave it a goddess façade. To maintain the equilibrium of good and bad in the world, G-d also gave the forces of evil the opportunity to stick their black thumb into the pie of technology—hence the Internet addictions, "crackberries" (people addicted to their BlackBerries), and lots of immorality to hide the true nature of our technological flood.

Kabbalah, however, is unequivocal in its assertion that technology is not only good, it's amazing.

How do you think that technology is helping to transform the world for the good?

Rochel is a mother of four children and the co-director of Chabad of Las Olas, FL serving the community of young professionals. She is a high school teacher and a freelance writer—and a frequent contributor to Chabad.org. She lectures extensively on topics of Kabbalah and feminism, and their application to everyday life. Rochel holds an MS in Brain Research from Nova SE University.

SIXTY DAYS a purim insight

by Yanki Tauber

This article will be something of a mixed-media piece. It'll start with a "Purim Torah," move on to more serious "Kabbalah" stuff, and conclude with an inspiring Chassidic teaching.

(A "Purim Torah" is what Torah scholars do for fun on Purim: a short exposition that sounds and feels like a typical piece of Talmud, yet is either patently absurd or just skewered enough to be taken seriously on Purim.)

First, the Purim Torah:

Question: We read in the Book of Esther how Haman desired "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, infants and woman, in a single day -- on the 13th of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar" (Esther 3:13). But why was it so important to Haman that his evil decree be carried out "in a single day"? Would such a thing even have been logistically possible? Indeed, Haman initially cast lots to determine which month should be chosen as the time for the genocide of the Jews. Our sages tell us that when the lot fell on the month of Adar, Haman rejoiced: this was the month in which Moses had died (on Adar 7), surely a month that bodes ill for the Jews. Having hit on an apparently auspicious month for his plans, why did Haman continue with his lot-throwing to pinpoint a particular day?

Answer: Haman was a keen student of Jewish history. He knew that the Jewish calendar is dotted with festivals celebrating the Jewish people's salvation from an enemy who sought to destroy them. What if -- Haman worried -- their G-d saves them again? If I designate the month of Adar for their destruction, they'll celebrate all month long!

Finale: In this, too, Haman's plan was foiled. When Mordechai and Esther institutionalized the celebration of the Purim miracle, they ordained not only the Purim observances of Adar 14 and 15, but also the commemoration of "the month that was transformed for them from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity" (Esther 9:22). Hence the Talmudic ruling, "when the month of Adar enters, increase in joy" (Talmud, Taanit 26b).

Now for the Kabbalah:

There are two ways in which the Jewish Calendar, and the nature of Jewish time, can

be understood:

a) The "Special Days" Approach: The annual cycle consists of hundreds of days, most of which are of the ordinary, run-of-the-mill variety. Thankfully, these are punctuated by a number of special days -- festivals and holy days imbued with special spiritual qualities. We trudge through the ordinary days, inspired and encouraged by the fact that we're never more than a few weeks away from a Passover or Purim, or -- at the very least -- a Lag BaOmer or a "New Year for Trees."

b) The "Quality of the Month" Approach: Jewish time is comprised not of days but of months, each possessing a distinct spiritual essence. The "special" days of the year are simply days on which the particular month's



quality is more pronounced and actualized. Thus, Nissan is the "Month of Liberation," while Passover (observed on Nissan 15 to 22) is a week-long period in Nissan during which the month's freedom-quality is more accessible. Similarly, Sivan is the month of Wisdom, Shevat is the month of Growth and Fruitfulness, Elul is the month of Compassion, and so on. Each month has days in which the month's quality rises to the surface and manifests itself more than on the month's "ordinary" days; but these are differences of expression rather than of essence -- essentially, each day of the month equally possesses the month's unique spiritual properties. This is why many of the festivals and special dates of the Jewish calendar occur on the 15th of the month -- the night of the full moon, representing the point at which the month's essence is in its most revealed and luminous state.

Adar is the month of Transformation. Adar transforms sorrow into joy, doubt into supra-knowledge, oblivion into exuberant being. Adar transforms a "scattered people" into a unified nation, and a moment of national weakness (when the Jewish people participated in Achashverosh's feast in the belief that allegiance to a mortal king will ensure their survival) into the greatest statement of Jewish commitment of all time (when for an entire year every single Jew remained faithful to his/her people and G-d, even as a decree of annihilation hung over the head of every Jew in the world). Adar transforms the most physical of activities -- eating and drinking -- into an affirmation of our bond with G-d.

So while two days in Adar -- the 14th and the 15th of the month -- are observed as "Purim," these represent the apex of an entire month of joyous transformation and transformative joy.

Finally, here's the inspiring chassidic thought we promised:

A month on the Jewish calendar includes either 29 or 30 days (reflecting the 29.5-day lunar cycle). But every two or three years -- seven times in a 19-year cycle, to be exact -- Adar doubles in size: on these "pregnant years," as they're called, there's a 30-day "Adar I" followed by a 29-day "Adar II." In addition, 30th of Shevat is also the first of Adar I's Rosh Chodesh ("head of the month") days. This

makes for a total of 60 "Adar days." This year, 5774 is a Jewish leap year.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the number "60" represents the power of transformation. A rule-of-thumb in Torah law is the "nullified by sixty" principle. For example, if a piece of non-kosher food accidentally falls into a pot of kosher food, the undesirable element is "nullified" if the desirable element is sixty times greater than it.

Thus, the Rebbe concludes, in a year blessed with a double, 60-day Adar, all undesirable elements -- every and any cause for pain, sadness, discouragement or dejection -- are nullified and sublimated by the transformative joy of Adar.

More Purim insights at www.jewishidaho.com/1474

Ask the Rabbi

My mother passed away in the month of Adar of 5756 (1996). When do I observe the yahrtzeit on this year, a leap year that has two Adars?

Most years on the Jewish calendar (almost two thirds of them) have only one Adar. On a leap year, however, there are two Adars. (See www.jewishutah.com/526875 for more information on how the leap year system works.) So which of the leap year's two Adars correspond to the Adar of the regular year?

The Talmud discusses a similar question: If one is drawing up a document during Adar of a leap year, how should it be dated? Rabbi Meir says that in Adar I we write "Adar I" but during Adar II, we write "Adar" – un-appended – because when the word Adar is unqualified, it means Adar II. Rabbi Judah says exactly the opposite: "Adar" on its own means Adar I; when referring to Adar II, one must specifically write "Adar II."

Maimonides rules according to Rabbi Meir's view—that the main Adar is Adar II. Thus, it would make sense to observe the yahrtzeit during Adar II. However, there is also reason to argue that one should observe the yahrtzeit on Adar I, based on the halachic rule that requires a person to always do a mitzvah at the first possible opportunity. According to this principle, the yahrtzeit – and its associated mitzvot – should be observed in the first Adar.

So practically what is one to do? Different communities have different customs. In some communities the yahrtzeit is observed in Adar I and in others, Adar II. Yet others observe the yahrtzeit in both Adars. Speak to your rabbi to find out what your community's custom is.



More Ask the Rabbi at www.jewishidaho.com/asktherabbi

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Kreplach are small squares of rolled pasta dough filled with ground beef or chicken and folded into triangles. They can be boiled and served in soup or fried and served as a side dish. They are traditionally served at the pre-Yom Kippur meal, on Hoshanah Rabbah and on Purim.

DOUGH
1 3/4 C flour
2 eggs
1/2 tsp. Salt
3 Tbsp. Oil

FILLING
1 cup ground cooked beef or chicken
1 small onion, grated
1 tsp. salt

DIRECTIONS

DOUGH: in a large bowl combine dough ingredients together. Knead and roll out thin on floured board. Cut into 3-inch squares or circles.

FILLING: in a small bowl mix filling ingredients well. See Kreplach illustrated for filling and folding. Kreplach can now be either boiled and served in soup or sauted in oil.

TO BOIL: Place in boiling salted water. Cook approximately 20 minutes until kreplach float to top.

TO SAUTE: Heat oil over medium flame in 10-inch skillet. Saute boiled kreplach until golden brown on both sides.

NOTE: Dough will roll out more easily after being wrapped in a damp cloth for one hour.

YIELDS: 18 Kreplach

More Purim recipes at www.jewishutah.com/1365

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MESSAGE FROM THE REBBE

ESTHER AND THE MODERN JEWISH WOMAN: SHINING EXAMPLES FOR ALL

FROM A LETTER OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSOHN OF RIGHTEOUS MEMORY

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter; and may G-d grant the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good, that you may have good news to report in all the matters about which you wrote.

The zechut of your observance of our



sacred traditions--which I was gratified to note in your letter--will surely stand you and yours in good stead in all of the above, including your continued advancement in all matters of Torah and mitzvot. For although this is a "must" for its own sake, in compliance with G-d's will, this is also the "channel and vessel" through which to receive additional divine blessings in all needs, materially and spiritually.

The above is a particularly timely message now that we are about to celebrate Purim, the highlight of which is the reading of the megillah evening and morning. It is noteworthy and significant that although--as the megillah tells us--both Mordechai and Esther were instrumental in bringing about the miracle of Purim and saving our people, the megillah is not named after both of them jointly, nor after Esther and Mordechai in that order, but solely after Esther ("Megillat Esther"). Here is a pointedly emphatic message for every Jewish woman about her

unique role in Jewish life. To be sure, no one can compare to the stature of Queen Esther, but it does emphasize the extraordinary potential of every loyal Jewish daughter to shape the future of her family, with far-reaching consequences for the environment and even for the entire Jewish people.

If this seems farfetched and mystical, the following episode will illustrate what even a comparatively small effort can accomplish.

You may have heard that many of our senior Lubavitch students volunteer their summer vacation to travel to distant places in order to reach out to fellow Jews in need of encouragement to strengthen their identity with and commitment to our people and the Torah way. In the course of this program it so happened that one of the students visited a small, Jewishly-isolated town where he found only a few Jewish families, and, as he later reported, he was disappointed to have accomplished nothing there. But several months later, our own Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch which sponsors this program received a letter from one of the families in that town. The writer, a woman, related that one summer day she happened to stand by her front window when she saw a bearded young man, wearing a dark hat, his tzitzit showing, approaching her door. She confessed that when she admitted the young man and learned of the purpose of his visit, she was not responsive, for she and her family were not prepared at that moment to change their lifestyle. Yet for a long time after that encounter, the appearance of the young man haunted her. He reminded her of her grandfather and had refreshed her memories of the beautiful Jewish life she had seen in her grandparents' home, though the material circumstances were incomparably more modest than she had come to know in her married life. Finally--the letter went on--she decided to make the change. She made her home kosher, and the family began to observe Shabbat and Yom Tov, and she is raising the children in the Torah way. Since then, her home is filled with such contentment and serenity that she decided to write to the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and express her

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profound gratitude.

Now, if all that was the result of a brief encounter with that young man, though unbeknownst to him of its lasting impact, how much more can be achieved by an American Jewish family, whose influence is not limited to a few minutes' conversation, but serves as a shining example of the kind of daily life and conduct that should be the privilege and blessing of every Jewish family?

Needless to say, if, in maintaining the proper Jewish standards, there may be some difficulties to overcome (many of

which may even be more imaginary than real), surely such difficulties should be of no significance in comparison to the infinite benefits. Moreover, the effort required is a personal one, while the benefit is also for the many.

With prayerful wishes for a joyous and inspiring Purim and

With blessing,

[Signed: Menachem Schneerson]

More about the Rebbe at www.jewishidaho.com/rebbe

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Insights from the Chassidic Masters

"G-d will bless you in whatever you do" (Deuteronomy 15:18).

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