



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## February 28, 2018



## Not So Fast!

If you are Jewish you know you are supposed to fast on Yom Kippur. And although I do not have statistics to back it up, I'd be willing to wager that the vast majority of Jews who are capable of fasting, do so.

But how many of you know that on the day before Purim we are also supposed to fast? And how many of us do? Again, I do not have statistics to back it up, but I'd be willing to bet that the vast majority of Jews, outside of those in the Orthodox community, do not.

Why are we supposed to fast on the day before Purim? Below is the explanation from aish.com.



## Modern-Day Hamans

We all know that Purim commemorates one of the worst anti-Semitic plots in history – Haman's attempt to wipe out the entire Jewish population of Persia. Now here we are, centuries later, and deadly anti-Semitic attacks upon Jews are still very much with us.

It has been two weeks now since the horrendous shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and very little has been said about the anti-Semitic aspects of these despicable shootings. Even though Jews were not the only ones who were shot, the fact of the matter is that five Jewish students and two Jewish faculty members were among the seventeen who were killed, and the shooter aimed his gun at the window and shot into a Holocaust history class, killing two Jewish students in that class.

And just yesterday, CBS reported that the gunman had swastikas etched into his AR-15 bullet magazines.

I know that many say that this particular shooter was mentally ill, and I know that mental illness is a disease just as sure as cancer or heart disease is. I know that many say that his personal circumstances were horrible and life had not given him a fair shake. But I also know that this was a cold, calculated killing, and I cannot muster up any sympathy in my heart for this killer, just as I cannot muster up any sympathy for Haman.

Sometimes evil just has to be recognized for what it is.

# Fast of Esther

***The fast of the 13th of Adar is intended to hone the soul and galvanize Jewish strength for the challenges ahead.***

*by Rabbi Shraga Simmons*

*Every year, the Fast of Esther is held on one of the days prior to Purim. Usually it is the day immediately before Purim, though there are exceptions. (see Law #4 below)*

*What is the source of this fast?*

*In the Megillah (4:16), Esther agrees to see the king uninvited, and asks the Jewish People to fast for three days beforehand.*

*Why did she call for a fast? Because a fast helps to lower the volume on our physical pursuits in order to focus more acutely on our spiritual selves. This facilitates the process of "teshuva" -- literally "return." We return to our essential state of purity. Esther called for a fast, knowing that through soul-searching the Jews would forge a spiritual connection necessary to make her mission successful. (And it paid off!)*

*This is not a fast of sadness. Rather, the purpose of the fast is elevation and inspiration.*

## **PRE-WAR FASTING**

*Similarly, there was another fast during the Purim story: The Jews fasted and prayed on the 13th of Adar in preparation for their defense against Haman's decree. The Torah prescribes that whenever a Jewish army goes to war, the soldiers should spend the previous day fasting. This is in stark contrast to a secular army which spends the day preparing weapons and armaments. A Jew's best weapon is the recognition that strength and victory come only through God (see Exodus 17:10). Additionally, the fact that we are physically weakened when the battle begins, assures us that any victory cannot be attributed to our physical prowess.*

*Mortals have limits, but God can achieve the impossible. (Case in point: the Six Day War.) As Mark Twain wrote, "All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"*

*It is actually this one-day pre-battle fast that we commemorate every year before Purim. However, in honor of the Purim heroine, it is called Taanit Esther -- the Fast of Esther.*



## **HALACHAS (LAWS) OF FAST OF ESTHER**

- 1) *The fast begins at dawn ("Alot Hashachar") and ends after nightfall ("Tzait Hakochavim").*
- 2) *No eating or drinking is permitted. Though other aspects -- like wearing shoes and washing -- are permitted.*
- 3) *Since this is not a major fast, pregnant or nursing women are exempt from the fast, as are moderately ill people. If one is otherwise healthy but has a headache and finds it difficult to fast, he may eat, but is obligated to "make up" the fast another time. In all cases, a competent rabbi should be consulted.*
- 4) *If the 13th falls on Shabbat, we don't fast that day, due to the honor of Shabbat. The fast is not even held on Friday, since this would adversely affect Shabbat preparations. Rather, we observe the fast on Thursday, the 11th of Adar.*
- 5) *It is customary to extend the fast until after the Megillah is read. (Except in walled cities, where the Megillah is read on the night of the 15th.)*
- 6) *During the afternoon Mincha prayers, the paragraph of Aneinu is added to the silent Amidah, during the blessing of Shema Koleinu. In both Shacharit and Mincha, the chazan inserts Aneinu as a separate blessing between Geulah and Refuah.*
- 7) *As on other public fasts, the Torah reading of Vayechal Moshe (Exodus 32:11-14, 34:1-10) is read both at Shacharit and Mincha.*
- 8) *If a Brit Milah falls on the Fast of Esther, the Seudat Mitzvah should be postponed until the evening. The father, mother, and Sandek may even eat during the afternoon of the fast day, since it is considered like their "holiday." (Sha'ar HaTziun 686:16)*
- 9) *Avinu Malkeinu is said only in Shacharit, but not in Mincha. (An exception is if Purim falls on Sunday and the fast is observed on Thursday, then Avinu Malkeinu is in fact said in Mincha.)*

## **Get Well Wishes**

Our President and spiritual leader, Dr. Larry Block, has missed several weeks at shul due to a back ailment. We pray for his full recovery and thank those congregants that have taken over his duties in his absence.

## **Yahrzeit Plaques**

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at [mrmike7777@yahoo.com](mailto:mrmike7777@yahoo.com).



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email [mrmike7777@yahoo.com](mailto:mrmike7777@yahoo.com).