



IFR NEWS Adar II 5784

Volume 2 Issue 50



WHEN ADAR ARRIVES WE INCREASE IN JOY

There is a well-known Halacha of "Mi'she'nichnas Adar Marbim Be'simha" – "When Adar arrives, we increase our joy."

Adar is an especially auspicious month for the Jewish people, and thus if a Jew is embroiled in a court case he should try, if possible, to schedule the trial for the month of Adar.

As this month is endowed with special Mazal ("luck" or good fortune), a person stands a better chance of emerging victorious in a legal battle during Adar.

In a leap year, when we have an extra month of Adar, do both months have this special quality, or only the second Adar – Adar Sheni – which is when we celebrate Purim? Essentially, this question relates to the issue of the zodiacal sign to which Adar Rishon corresponds.

The twelve months of the Jewish year correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the month of Adar corresponds to Pisces (fish).

The Sages teach that fish are not subject to the Ayin Ha'ra (evil eye), since they live underwater, and Adar corresponds to Pisces because during this month we are able to avoid the harmful effects of the Ayin Ha'ra.

The question becomes whether in a leap year, Adar Rishon follows the zodiacal sign of Adar Sheni – in which case it shares the special auspicious qualities of Adar Sheni – or if it has the same sign as the preceding month, Shebat.

This issue is subject to a debate. The Lebush (Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe of Prague, 1530-1612) maintained that Adar Rishon corresponds to the zodiacal sign of Aquarius, the sign of Shebat, and thus it does not have the special qualities of Adar Sheni.

A different view, however is taken by the Kedushat Levi (Rabbi Levi Yishak of Berditchev, Poland, 1740-1810), in a famous passage in Parashat Ki-Tisa, and by Rabbi Sadok Hakohen of Lublin (1823-1900). They note that just as the twelve months correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac, similarly, the months correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel.

The month of Adar, which is under the sign of Pisces, corresponds to Yosef Ha'sadik, who is blessed like fish, and who, like fish, was free from the clutches of the Ayin Ha'ra. Yosef was unique among Yaakov's sons in that his two sons – Menashe and Efrayim – each formed a separate tribe ("Efrayim U'Menashe Ki'Re'uben Ve'Shimon Yiheyu Li" – Bereshit 48:5).

Accordingly, in a leap year, the two months of Adar correspond to the two sons of Yosef, Menashe and Efrayim, and, as such, both are represented by the sign of Pisces.

It thus emerges, according to this view, that both Adar Rishon and Adar Sheni share the special properties of the month of Adar, and Adar Rishon is indeed an auspicious time for success in court.

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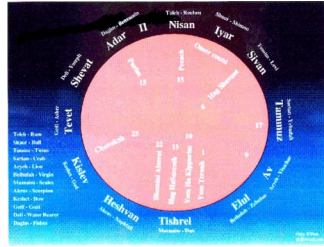
IFR

Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.



ZODIACAL SIGNS OF THE HEBREW MONTHS

Nisan	Aries	March 21 - April 20	Taleh
Iyar	Taurus	April 21 - May 20	Shor
Sivan	Gemini	May 21 - June 20	Teomim
Tammuz	Cancer	June 21 - July 21	Sartan
Av	Leo	July 22 - August 22	Aryeh
Elul	Virgo	August 23 - September 22	Betulah
Tishre	Libra	September 23 - October 22	Moznayim
Cheshvan	Scorpio	October 23 - November 21	AkraV
Kislev	Sagittarius	November 22 - December 20	Keshet
Tevet	Capricorn	December 21 - January 20	G'di
Shvat	Aquarius	January 21 - February 18	D'Ij
Adar	Pisces	February 19 - March 20	Dagim

Practically speaking, then, it is certainly preferable during a leap year to schedule one's court cases for Adar Sheni, which is an auspicious time according to all views, but if this is not possible, there is certainly value in scheduling the case for Adar Rishon.

It should be noted that Rashi (Rabbi Shelomo Yishaki of Troyes, France, 1040-1105), in his commentary to Masechet Ta'anit, indicates that this special quality continues through Nissan, as well. Commenting on the Halacha of "Mi'she'nichnas Adar Marbim Be'simha,"

Rashi explains that Adar is special because it ushers in the season of miracles, the season of Purim and Pesah. Significantly, Rashi mentions Pesah in this context, clearly indicating that Nissan, too, is an especially auspicious period.

It would thus seem that, according to Rashi, Nissan is also a time when one has a greater chance of success in his lawsuits.

Summary: It is advisable for a person facing a legal battle against a gentile to schedule his case for Adar.

In a leap year, it is preferable to schedule the case for Adar Sheni, but there is value in scheduling the case for Adar Rishon. According to some sources, the auspicious quality of Adar continues during the month of Nissan, as well.

The Mazal of Adar

Each Hebrew month is ruled over by a "Malach"/Angel and a "mazal" or a zodiacal sign. As each month is ruled by a zodiacal sign, each sign is ruled by a planet. The planets Jupiter and Neptune are the "co-rulers" of the Sign "Dagim" (Fish/Pisces).

Adar Sheni and Amalek

Yehoshua was charged with leading the army to combat a formidable foe, the Amelekim. The classic commentaries to Tanach with regard to Shaul HaMelech's campaign against Amalek teach us that the Amaleki were proficient in the occult and were especially educated in the ways to harness the astro-

logical forces to their benefit. Rabbeinu Bachye maintains that in the battle discussed in this week's parsha that Amaleki chose soldiers who were destined to live out the year based on their astrological sign.

By utilizing such a "draft", the Amaleki were confident that they could not be defeated since their soldiers were unable to be killed. Rabbeinu Bachye mentions that this is why it was necessary for Yehoshua to choose men to go out to war. The pesukim in our Parsha state that Yehoshua was charged with selecting men to go out to fight. Rabbeinu Bachye is of the opinion that this was not merely a command that Yehoshua assemble an army. Yehoshua was charged with finding people with the correct astrological signs so that the Israelite army would also be comprised of men who were unable to fall in war. This, says Rabbeinu Bachye, is why when Yehoshua's offensive was successful that the pasuk mentions that the enemy was weakened.

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אדר שני

Adar Sheni and Amalek

They were only weakened because they could not be defeated entirely. The enemy soldiers became weak and tired of battle, but there were no actual casualties of war since the soldiers were unable to be killed in battle. Rabbeinu Bachye makes it seem that the individuals mentioned had specific astrological signs and that is what protected them. The Chizkuni takes a slightly different approach. The Chizkuni also is of the opinion that the Amaleki were harnessing the forces of the astrological signs and that Yehoshua was charged with selecting Israelite warriors who had appropriate astrological signs to combat them. Unlike Rabbeinu Bachye's interpretation, the Chizkuni felt that the Amaleki were using the astrological forces directly to fight the Israelites. Therefore, the Chizkuni states that the men chosen to fight Amalek were not those who had specific astrological signs, rather, they were those who had no astrological sign whatsoever. Yehoshua was charged with gathering men who had been born in Adar II.

The Chizkuni maintains that Adar II has no mazal since all twelve have been assigned to the earlier twelve months. Since they were not bound by mazal, the Amaleki would not be able to use astrology to combat them.

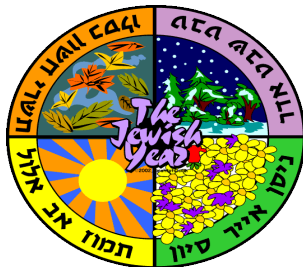
This approach of the Chizkuni is fantastic because based on Rashi (Rosh Hashana 11b) and the Ibn Ezra (Reishis Chachma and Sefer HaTaamim) it would seem that the astrological signs are based on the solar calendar and that which we state that the lunar months align with the signs is only based on the average years. In a solar calendar there are always twelve months and all months are assigned a sign. The Chizkuni would seem to argue with this premise and state that the signs are based on the lunar months. Perhaps the Chizkuni would actually maintain that the nations of the world who only have the solar calendar would have their signs based on the solar calendar, but the Jews would be based on the lunar calendar. If that is true then this technique of Yehoshua was a surprise defense that the Amaleki had probably not counted upon.

The Amaleki, only familiar with the solar calendar, would have no understanding of what it would mean to have a person that has no mazal since they have no such month of Adar II. Yehoshua, on the other hand led an army of signless warriors and routed this archenemy of ours. Something written by Rav Dovid Cohen in his Masos Kappai. Rav Cohen points out that Ephraim and Menashe were compared to fish by their grandfather Yaakov when he blessed them in Parshas VeYechi.

Sometimes we find that Ephraim and Menashe are considered like one Shevet and are referred to as Shevet Yosef, and other times we find that they are two and called by their own names. This is similar to Adar, symbolized by the astrological sign of fish, which is sometimes one month and other times, like this year, two. It is important to note that Yehoshua was a scion of Ephraim and it was he who led this army.



This image portrays an episode from the Book of Exodus in which the Israelites fought the Amalekites in the desert. Moses stood on a mountain overlooking the battlefield. When Moses' arms were raised, the Israelites prevailed and when they were lowered the Amalekites had the advantage. In order to insure an Israelite victory, Aaron and Hur supported Moses arms so that they remained raised.



אדר שני

Jews are from Jewpiter

The Gemara (Shabbos 156) tells us that Avraham Avinu was incapable of having children because of his associated astrological influences.

We are told that Avraham Avinu was considered to be under the astrological influence of Jupiter (צדק) and that its position in the west was inhibiting Avraham Avinu from having children. The Gemara then cites from Sefer Yeshayau (41:2),

מי העיר ממזרח צדק וגו'

"Who awakened righteousness from the east, etc."

The word righteousness, צדק, can also mean Jupiter. The Gemara understands that Hashem placed Jupiter in the east in order for its influence to be a positive one for Avraham Avinu. Seder Olam (1) teaches us that Avraham Avinu was seventy years old at the time that Hashem joined with him in the everlasting covenant that is discussed in this week's parsha, Lech Lecha (15).

Interestingly enough, the Gemara cited earlier tells us that the verse from Sefer Yeshayahu was Hashem's response to Avraham Avinu when he asked Hashem about having children.

This question of Avraham Avinu is found in this same chapter of Bereishis. Perhaps, this is why the chapter of Sefer Yeshayahu that contains its verse is read as the Haftarah for this portion of the Torah.

If one looks at Jupiter's position during that year 1744 B.C.E. (based on the chronology of Seder Olam) he will see that it was visible in the western portion of the sky, relative to the Sun (meaning it would be in the sky already at sunset, obviously it will rise and set throughout the night).

Most celestial objects move from east to west on any given night) early in the year and then was too close to the Sun, so it was not visible for a duration of time. It became visible again, this time to the east of the Sun, just before sunrise, on October 6 (Julian).

What is fascinating about this event is that on this day, it was so close to Venus, that, to the naked eye, they appeared to be touching.

To have these two objects touch is extremely rare (to come so close to touch can be hundreds of years in between instances for any given location), and such an event would be witnessed as a spectacular event. Venus is the brightest star in the sky (sometimes even confused with aircraft) and Jupiter is the second brightest.

The two together would have been seen to be shining brilliantly in the east. Venus is also associated with fertility (see Ibn Ezra's Reishis Chachma) and this was the issue that Avraham Avinu was discussing with Hashem.

Another fascinating point is that this evening would have marked the night of Yom Kippur (based on actual lunar visibility, not calculation).

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אדר שני

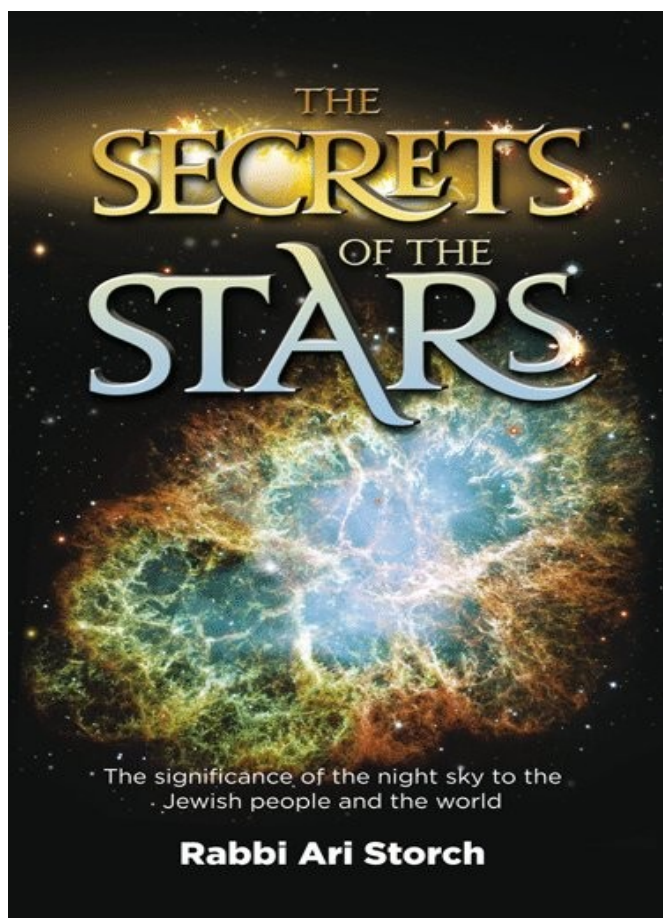
As is noted by Rashi in Bereishis (15) some of the animal offerings of the covenant were symbolic of the Yom Kippur offerings, and many of those that were not, were still symbolic of offerings of repentance.

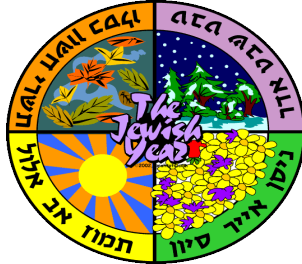
We may not have a reference to this covenant being enacted on Yom Kippur, but the symbolism between the two is remarkable. Couple that with this extremely rare event occurring on that day, and one cannot help but wonder if this is what the Gemara meant when discussing Jupiter shining from the east.



PLANETS, PURIM AND PERSIA

The evening sky in the northern hemisphere has been dominated in recent weeks, even for those of us who live in cities, by 3 planets: Venus and Jupiter appearing in the Western sky after sundown, and Mars rising in the East soon after. I am sure that our early ancestors would have found deep meaning in this arrangement of the skies. The planets meandered across an otherwise predictable firmament – they were the random element that, if interpreted correctly, could tell us the will of the gods.





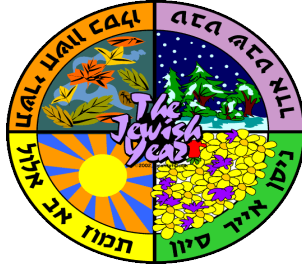
אדר שני

PLANETS, PURIM AND PERSIA

Later, we were able to predict even the motions of the planets, and even understand their movement in terms of predictable laws as Kepler traced out the ellipses of their orbits, and Newton explained their motion through his law of gravitation. Many believed that all of the Universe could be explained deterministically – that with enough information we could predict everything that happened for all time. In the early 20th century this belief was challenged. From the vastness of the Universe, we turned to the sub-microscopic world of the atom and discovered that randomness was at the basis of the laws of nature. Large scale deterministic behaviour is simply the result of the statistics of large numbers – but any phenomenon that can be affected by individual quantum events (like the behaviour of our brains) is fundamentally unpredictable.

Purim is a holiday named for randomness – for the very dice that Haman rolled to determine the date for the extermination of the Jews. The Megilla says that “[Haman] rolled the die, which is the lottery (גורל).” ([Esther 3:7](#), using the word גורל, which in the beautiful irony of the Hebrew language also means “fate.” Is our fate a

lottery? Is history really determined by random events? Perhaps the double meaning is teaching us a lesson. The seemingly random events of the Megilla add up to a fateful decision on Esther’s part to save her people. The unseen divine hand directs coincidence after coincidence, from Esther’s ascent to the throne to the King’s nighttime choice of reading, leading inevitably to Haman’s fate on the gallows. If our fate is not a lottery, perhaps apparent randomness hide an underlying purpose. Mordechai entreats Esther not to be silent and hide in the palace from the fate of the Jews. Salvation will surely come, but that does not excuse her from action. As Rav Baruch Gigi of Yeshivat Har Etzion pointed out in a class I attended this week, our belief in ultimate salvation does not preclude enormous pain and suffering on the way, as anyone who lives in the shadow of the Holocaust knows. Haman’s plot of total extermination was bound to fail, but Mordechai did not take the threat lightly. Even a partial fulfillment of Haman’s plans would have been a disaster.



אדר שני

PLANETS, PURIM AND PERSIA

We are again faced with a threat from Persia. It is a threat based on devastating weapons created from our understanding of the randomness of the quantum atom, and on a Haman-like desire to destroy the Jewish people.

Our leaders must decide how best to meet this threat. It is not a decision I envy them. There are no easy answers. If Esther hesitated before risking her own life in going to the king, how much more so should our leaders be afraid of the consequences of a military strike that could easily spiral out of our control. On the flip side, a rational analysis would say that we have the deterrence to prevent any use of an Iranian nuclear weapon – but are we ready to bet our lives on that analysis?

In his speech in the US this week, our Prime Minister promised to “ensure that Israel remains the master of our fate.” Whatever he decides about Iran, I wish he took a less arrogant tone. Whether one believes in planets determining our destiny, in a universe of random coincidences, or a divine hand shaping our fate, one thing we never are is masters of our own

fate. We plan, we act, perhaps we pray, but we can never really know from which direction our salvation will come. A little humility in the face of this reality should be a key ingredient in our decision making.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shawn Ruby is a recent refugee from Israeli hi-tech, launching a new career in Rabbinics and education. He is a veteran immigrant to Israel from Canada, via the US. He is married with 3 children. Older blog posts at kol-haadam.blogspot.com.

MARCH 2012 - TIMES OF ISRAEL BOLOG.



Tomb of Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai
קבר אסתר ומרדכי Hamadan, Iran



אדר שני

Minhagim for Migilat Ester

Rabbi Rallis Wiesenthal explains that in the tradition of Ashkenaz, “three *tsedakah* boxes are put out. a) (the half shekel) which is given to benefit torah scholars in Jerusalem, b) (gifts for the needy), and c) (the cost of the meals one would have eaten that day). The minhag was to give (gifts of food) after the daytime megillah reading, and not before.”

Shmueli Gonzales writes, “It is a mitzvah on Purim for everyone to read Megillat Esther, or hear it read; once at night, and again during the day. In the evening it is read after the Maariv Amidah and the Full-Kaddish is recited; in the morning the Shaḥarit Amidah and Hatzit-Kaddish is recited, followed by the Torah reading, and then the Megillah is read at that point.

The Megillah is to be unrolled and folded into three parts, as one would a letter. It is the custom of HaBaD to say the ברכה blessing both at night and by day.

R' Wiesenthal adds, “A request for absolute quiet (שתיקה יפה בשעת קריאת המגילה) is made before the blessings for the megillah reading. According to R. Yisroel Strauss of KAJ WH ‘Groggers (sirens, whistles, etc) are fairly new, 30-35 years. In fact most of the noise is still generated with stamping feet and banging of the shtender covers.

The first mention of חמן (Hâman) gets about four seconds and the rest about 1-2 seconds, his wife (זרש Zeresh) gets equal treatment.”

During a public reading, four verses are read aloud by the assembled (2:5, 8:15-16, 10:3). As three of these verses pertain specifically to Mordekhai’s role in the story, a growing custom at megillah readings is to include three verses that underscore Esther’s role in the story, “since it is Esther who risks her life to save the Jewish people,” as Julia Andelman explains.

These are the verses 2:7, 5:1, and 9:32. I’ve highlighted in yellow all of these verses and included their transliteration. –Aharon Varady





אדר שני

**Before reading Megillat Ester
the following blessings are
said; listeners respond אָמֵן**

**Blessed are you,
Hashem
Sovereign of the
Universe who
sanctifies us
through mitzvot,
and commands
us concerning
the reading of
the Megillah**

AMEN

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל
מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה:

**Blessed are you,
Hashem
Sovereign of the
Universe who
made miracles
for our ancestors
in their days
in this season.**

AMEN

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם
בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

**Blessed are you,
Hashem
Sovereign of the
Universe who
has kept us
alive, and has
preserved us,
and enabled us
to reach this
season.**

AMEN

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהִחַיָּנוּ
וְקִיָּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

READING THE MEGILLAH

The Scroll of Esther, which tells the Purim story,
is chanted in synagogue twice on Purim.





אדר שני

LINKS of Migilat Ester via Youtube

Migilah Reading Agudat Achim

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z-qdy5-HzI

Megilah Read Along

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq6Gj-9ti7U>

Megilat Ester - Central Synagogue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa4kRDhXC6E>

Rabbi Ovadia Sephardic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbmYiQNmXYw>

Megilat Ester in Yiddish

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMDuH1sw1f0>

Purim Music/Chants

Purim Haflah Sefardic Synagogue 1990

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsnUuTBAlMY&list=PLYhX1IJc6YdMCHnV_1J8sD4VV4vd0Fa4m&index=5

Purim Synagogue Sefardi Concert Melbourne Australia

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq4uw9HLAkE&list=PLYhX1IJc6YdMCHnV_1J8sD4VV4vd0Fa4m&index=13

Moroccan Megilat Ester

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5iz0mMf49w&list=PLYhX1IJc6YdMCHnV_1J8sD4VV4vd0Fa4m&index=15

Ravenous Ravens



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Adar Sheni Recipes



Sweet and Savory Argentine Empanadas

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb. very lean ground beef
- 1/2 c. chopped onion
- 1/2 c. California raisins
- 1/2 c. chopped pimento-stuffed green olives
- 1/2 c. prepared salsa
- 1-1/2 tsp. Mexican seasoning blend
- 1-1/2 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 16 sheets (14 x 9-inch) filo dough, thawed
- Nonstick cooking spray (olive oil or butter-flavored)
- 1 Egg, beaten

1 Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment paper; set aside.

2 Cook ground beef and onion over medium heat in nonstick skillet for 10 minutes or until onion is very soft, breaking up beef with a wooden spoon.

3 Stir in raisins, olives, salsa and seasonings. Unroll filo sheets and cover

with a damp cloth. Place 1 sheet on a flat surface.

4 Spray with cooking spray and top with another sheet. Repeat to layer 4 sheets.

5 Cut stack into 6 equal pieces and brush edges with beaten egg. Place heaping tablespoon of filling in the center of each piece of filo and fold over to enclose filling and make triangular shapes.

6 Press edges tightly together to seal and cut away points to make semi-circles. Repeat until filo sheets and filling are all used.

7 Arrange on baking sheet and brush with beaten egg.

8 Bake for 15 minutes or until lightly browned.

Serve warm or at room temperature.



Ravenous Ravens



Purim Katan 5695 is the yahrzeit of shosh's maternal great grandmother Augusta Smilovici, who is buried in Metz, Mosselle.

Her version of "Jewish Penicillin" has been passed down through five generations.

Yes, even the male family members have used this recipe. Easy, delicious and most importantly inexpensive.



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Adar II Leap Year Recipe

Jewish Penicillin Chicken Soup

Prep Time: 1/2 hour

Cook Time: 4 hours

Total Time: 4 hour, 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1/2 stock pot water
 - 4-5 chicken Bullion Cubes (crumble into water)
 - Large Yellow Onion (cut up)
 - 1/2 Clove
 - Garlic (cut up)
 - I large LEEK (cut up)
 - 2 Parsnips (cut up)
 - 2 Turnips (cut up)
 - 1 Stalk Celery (cut up)
 - 3 -4 Large Carrots (cut up)
 - 3 lbs Chicken thighs (remove skin)
 - Kosher Salt (to taste)
 - 1-2 Beef Marrow bones
 - 1 Tablespoon peppercorns (or ground pepper)
 - Sprig Fresh Thyme
 - Fresh Parsley and fresh Dill
 - **Preparation:**
1. Fill Stock pot half full with cold water.

2. Boil water, place 4 cubes of chicken bouillon in boiling water, add thyme, parsley and dill. Add salt and peppercorns, add cut up garlic, onion, leek, parsnips, turnips, celery, and carrots, boil for 10 minutes uncovered.
 3. Add chicken thighs, continue to boil for 10 more minutes uncovered.
 4. Add more water (fill to 3/4 of pot) bring to boil again, stir with large wooden spoon.
- Turn heat down to low simmer
COVERED for 3-4 hours.

45 minutes prior to serving soup:

FLUFFY Matzah Balls

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of Matzah meal
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup water
- Parsley cut up (or flakes) ore fresh dill.
- 4 EGGS
-

Preparation

1. Combine and mix well: Eggs, Matzah Meal Oil, Water, and Parsley or Dill.

2. Refrigerate one hour.

Bring Soup to a rolling boil

Hand roll refrigerated matzah mixture into tablespoon size balls.

Slowly put matzah balls directly into soup. Use up mixture-Continue to boil for 5 minutes.

Reduce heat to simmer COVER for another 35 min.

Serve soup and matzah balls directly from stock pot into soup bowls. **B'teyavon!**



אדר שני

Erasing the Name of Haman the Wicked: The Origin of the Grogger

How does one drown out the name of the most hated, evil man in the Megillah? By making good use of a Christian folk tradition of course!

There are few people in Jewish history who are despised as much as the wicked Haman, the villain of the story of Purim and the Book, or Scroll, of Esther. As the saying goes, “*in every generation they stand up against us to destroy us*” – words embodied by the figure of Haman, whose actions fulfill the supposed prophecy/timeless historical truth. Haman the Wicked, Haman the Evil, and various other derogatory epithets have been attached to his name – even in the Scroll of Esther itself. The story even links his name to Israel’s greatest enemy – the Amalekites.

He is described as “Haman the Agagite” in the *Megillah* (scroll) of Esther, thus linking him to Agag, king of Amalek. In the book of Deuteronomy (25:19) Israel is ordered “blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven”.



So how do we erase the name of the man who is mentioned repeatedly in the *Megillah*, which we read during the festival of Purim?

Rabbi Abraham ben Nathan writes of a 13th century custom, in which young boys “would take pebbles from a stream and write ‘Haman’ on them. Then, they would knock the stones together while citing the name of Haman and his crimes, ‘*and the name of the wicked shall rot*’”. This idea quickly gained popularity among European Jewry and was manifested in various ways, such as breaking clay pots or banging on synagogue tables – with one’s hands or with wood sticks prepared in advance.

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About three hundred years later, Rabbi Moshe Isserles ("The Rema") also wrote of a custom popular among children, who would bang pieces of wood or stone with the name of Haman written on them against each other, all with the purpose of erasing the name of the wicked foe.

The common theme is that the very purpose of mentioning Haman's name is to erase it, in both the literal sense – the gradual disappearance of the letters of Haman's name from the river pebbles as they are knocked together as well as in the sense of noisily drowning out the name of Haman with the sound of objects banging against each other. Rabbi Isserles added that this customary noise making evolved into the practice of "beating" Haman by producing similar noises whenever his name was mentioned during the reading of the *Megillah* in the synagogues.

When, therefore, do we meet the Purim noisemaker – the grogger?

It seems as though this unique toy only became popular among Jewish populations during the 19th century. Before the grogger, came the fire-crackers. In 17th-century Germany, from the moment gunpowder became

an affordable commodity, young boys began adding early forms of firecrackers to their noise-making tools. These crude explosives were made of various combustible materials that were relatively available and easy to find, with sulfur or gunpowder sprinkled generously on top. This custom quickly spread to Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and Romania, and from there to other Jewish communities. Occasionally, a hollow key was filled with gunpowder and then lit ablaze; a practice that could still be observed in 1930s Tel Aviv.

Regarding the noisemakers and groggers, in addition to written testimony from different periods, we also have physical examples which survive from the 18th-century onwards. They first appeared in Europe and later spread to Eastern communities. Ethnographer Yom-Tov Lewinski, noted that "groggers originated in Greece" meaning Ancient Greece.

The Romans used them in various magical rituals and ceremonies, and during the Middle Ages, noisemakers became popular among Christian communities.

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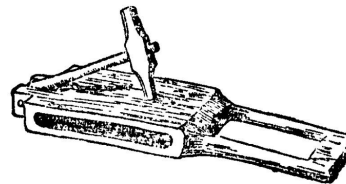
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The custom of using groggers on Purim was likely born out of popular folk traditions (common among Middle Age Christians) that held that such noise-makers contained the power to exorcize evil demons and spirits. Groggers were used during weddings and violent storms, and even to welcome the coming of spring. During the buildup to Easter Sunday, when church bells were ordered silenced, groggers were used to summon Christian worshippers to prayer.

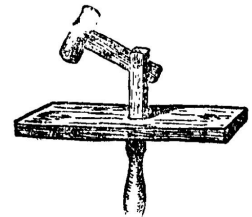
On the eve of Easter, Christian youths used groggers to “beat” or punish Judas Iscariot, and from there, we can assume that the custom extended to Ashkenaz Jewry, who “beat” the figure of Haman the Wicked.

The first direct evidence of the use of Purim groggers dates to 19th-century Europe. We also have examples from the same period in the United States, especially in New York. This being said, in Mimi Reuter’s doctoral thesis, which assisted us greatly in the preparation of this article, she writes that “there appear to be two Purim groggers, which are dated to the 18th century, but it is likely that they are actually from a later period.”

Two early examples



פטישון - נוסח הולנד



פטישון - נוסח איטליה

Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai”, [Scroll of Esther, 18th century, Amsterdam](#), the National Library of Israel





אדר שני

Happy Leap Year Purim 14 ADAR II 5784



IFR members wearing their IFR lapel pins 2000-2024**Rabbi Monte Sugarman z"l****Rabbi Galit Shira Levy - Slater****Rabbi Josh Cantor****Rabbi Barbara Aiello****Rabbi Dr. Steven Hara****Rabbi Jonathan L. Devlin****Rabbi Frank Tamburello**
