



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Wall Power
2. What's My Line?
3. Yiddle Riddle



Eli from London asked:

Dear Rabbi,

Why does Jerusalem have Purim on a different day than we do?

Dear Eli,

Most people celebrate Purim on the 14th of the Hebrew month *Adar*. But in a city which was walled in the time of Joshua's conquest of Israel, Purim is celebrated on the 15th. Here's why:

Haman decreed that all Jews be killed on the 13th of *Adar*. When the day came, the Jews miraculously defended themselves. On the following day, *Adar* 14, the Jews celebrated.

In *Shushan*, the walled capital city of the Persian empire, the Jews had an extra day to fight their enemies. They didn't celebrate until the 15th.

In remembrance of these events, Mordechai and Esther instituted two separate days of Purim, *Adar* 14 and 15. The 14th commemorates the national victory. The 15th — *Shushan Purim* — commemorates the victory of the Jews who lived in the walled city of Shushan.

So if you're like most Jews, you celebrate Purim on the 14th. But, if you happen to live in Shushan, or in any ancient walled city, you celebrate Purim on *Adar* 15th.

The definition of an 'ancient walled city' is any city surrounded by a wall in the days of Joshua. Logically, the definition should be a city that was walled in the time of Mordechai and Esther, but the Sages didn't want to exclude Jerusalem, whose walls were in ruins at the time of the Purim episode.

Some people keep two days of Purim because they are in doubt whether their city is considered 'walled.' One example is Hebron. The Jews in Hebron keep two days of Purim because it's doubtful whether the entire wall around Hebron existed at the time of Joshua.

Another example is Tiberias, a walled city on the shore of Lake Kinneret. Tiberias was walled from the time of Joshua. The doubt arises because Tiberias has no wall along the shore. Is Tiberias considered an 'open' city because it is unwalled along the shore? Or is the lake considered a 'wall' since it protects the city from attack? This question is left unresolved in the Talmud.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 688:1,3,4;
- *Mishna Berurah* 1,9

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@virtual.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Kaenan Hertz, PhD <khertz@emory.edu> wrote:

I recently uncovered a family tree that traces my ancestors back to 1408 in Padua. Through the 1800s they were mostly rabbis (R' Yitchak Aisik Chaver). The eldest is a R' Yehuda Mintz of Padua. I have been working with my rabbis in Atlanta to try to uncover more personal information about these people. Do you have any suggestions for books or online material that I might be able to find. Thank you very much.

Dear Dr. Kaenan Hertz,

I suggest that you check out some of the following on-line resources:

news://soc.genealogy.jewish

A news-group run by JewishGen. Its purpose is to provide all researchers of Jewish lines a means of networking with others on areas of particular interest to Jewish researchers.

<http://www.jewishgen.org/ajgs/>

Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (AJGS), a non-profit organization dedicated to the coordination of the activities of some 60 local Jewish genealogical societies around the world.

<http://www1.jewishgen.org/jgff/>

The JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF) is a database of towns and surnames currently being researched by Jewish genealogists worldwide, and can be searched on the WWW, or via e-mail. By using the JGFF, you can learn whether others are seeking ancestors of the same surname or town of origin.

<http://www.familytreemaker.com/>

Find out about this software package from Broderbund, get tips on tracking your family tree, and access their index of more than 100 million names from various archives.

You can also check out the genealogy forums on CompuServe or America-On-Line.

I hope you're successful in your search!

Yiddle Riddle:

What word in Hebrew is spelled "Vav Vav Vav Vav"?
(Thanks to R. Mordechai Sunray) Answer next week.