

Purim @ E55
SATURDAY NIGHT, FEBRUARY 27th @ 8pm
The East 55th Street Synagogue
308 E55th, New York
Not to be missed! Costumes welcome!

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**March Shabbat Service Schedule**

**March 6<sup>th</sup>** Shabbat Parah  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>** Shabbat HaGadol

Friday February 26, 2010      **Candle Lighting 5:19 pm**

This week's Torah reading: **Tetzevah**

Shabbat Zachor

Exodus 27:20-30:10 (annual)

Exodus 29:19-30:10 (triennial)

Maftir: Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Haftarah: I Samuel

15:1-15:34 Sephardi

15:2 -15:34 Askhenazi

15:1 -15:4 Presbyterian

15:1-15:15 Episcopalian

**WISH I WERE CLEVER ENOUGH TO MAKE THIS STUFF UP**

**'Personal Mehitzas' Marketed for Haredim**

BY ADIR GLICK 19/02/2010 08:45

Portable nylon device serves as shield from in-flight movies, neighbors.  
Talkbacks (24)

Haredi airline passengers are being advised to hang a new type of mehitzas – a halachic barrier to separate the sexes – around the top of their airplane seats, to shield their eyes from immodest neighbors and in-flight movies.

The Rabbinical Council for Public Transportation, which is also representing the haredi community on the issue of gender-segregated “mehadrin” buses, is now placing advertisements in haredi newspapers encouraging the community to purchase the traveler mehitzas.

The new mehitzas, made of white nylon, stick onto the fabric of the airplane chair using Velcro and can be arranged to make a protective “shield.” The mehitzas goes around the head and is mostly in front of the passenger’s face, protruding only a little to the sides. Its designer, who asked that his name not be published, declined to share pictures and his design details, but said the mehitzas were “airy” and did not bother anybody.

“They’re very nice,” said Rabbi Shimon Stern, spokesman for the Rabbinic Council for Public Transportation. “Very cute. It’s very practical.”

The mehitzas are designed to be portable and fit into a small box, which passengers can bring on the plane.

The airplane mehitzas come in the wake of other recent steps by the haredi community to avoid immodesty, such as the mehadrin bus lines and separate-sex sidewalks in Jerusalem's Geula neighborhood.

Stern said the main reason for the latest recommendation was to enable haredi passengers to block out in-flight movies. Television sets are banned in haredi communities, and movies are forbidden. In aircraft with large movie screens, it is difficult to avoid watching the films.

Stern said that before the issue of the new mehitzas was raised, the council had been in talks with El Al Airlines to create seating areas with no movies, but the results had been unsatisfactory. The council is also publishing a list of flights that do not show films.

A favorite airline is United Airlines, which had to drop its in-flight movies for financial reasons.

Separating haredi passengers from their "immodestly dressed" neighbors is another concern. The mehitzas are only partial, but Stern said stewardesses were usually happy to arrange seat-swaps.

Stern said the mehitzas were also there to provide passengers with a private space to pray and study Torah.

"You can daven, you can learn," he said, "It gives you privacy."

The man who designed the mehitzas on order from the council said they had been used thousands of times and that he had received only positive reactions from customers. According to him, the airplane crew on one flight even asked one of his clients for his mehitzas so they could use it for future passengers.

But the mehitzas are still unknown to the larger haredi public. Despite the ad campaign in newspapers, they are only available privately from one source – the designer, who charges only a nominal sum for their use. Passengers can even return the items and get their money back when they return to Israel.

A travel agent in Bnei Brak said she knew of only one client who had mentioned the mehitzas. None of the staff at another travel agency in a haredi neighborhood had even heard of them.

An El Al spokeswoman said that none of the personnel with whom she was in contact were aware of them.

Haredi journalist Mordechai Plaut said he knew that there had been an initiative to help Orthodox passengers avoid in-flight movies, but that he had not heard of the mehitzas.

They are not "in," acknowledged Stern.

But a rabbi in the community, who also requested anonymity, said that it was only a matter of time before they caught on.

"The whole machine will go into it," he said, referring to the council's educational arm, which uses newspaper articles, speeches and posters to reach the community.

The Rabbinical Council for Public Transportation is backed by some of the most senior rabbis – including Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, 99, one of the leading halachic authorities in the haredi world – according to haredi observers who say the council's recommendations are widely respected.

Einat Hurvitz, the legal adviser to the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center who is leading the case against mehadrin buses in the High Court of Justice, said the individual mehitzas were a step in the right direction.

"If it's not something that is bothering other people, then it is freedom of religion," she said.

However, she added that it was another example of the extremist direction that haredim were taking.

<http://www.jpost.com/JewishWorld/JewishNews/Article.aspx?id=169101>

## **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

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\* The blogs, scandals and personalities for which people want coverage (e.g., Failed Messiah is not about Jesus, The Unorthodox Jew is a blog aimed at the ultra orthodox world, Frum Follies is not a burlesque show, the Awareness Center is not about meditation, etc)

\* The major segments in that world (hasid vs litvak, Aaron vs Zalman, Chabad/Lubavitch vs everyone, etc)

\* The lingo and euphemisms (e.g., lashon horah, znus, geirus, pidyon shvuyim, daas torah, beis din, shidduch, etc)

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<http://frumfollies.wordpress.com/2010/01/28/train-to-become-an-internet-goy%E2%84%A2-satire/>



## **New Jewish Classification Causing Quite a Stir**

BORO PARK, BROOKLYN — As if the 21 classifications of Judaism weren't enough to commit to memory, a new grouping has been added to the mix and has contributed to further confusion.

Before the new classification was added, Jews worldwide were comfortable with the following categories: Conservative, Reform, Orthodox, Ultra Orthodox, Chasidish, Yeshivish, Litvish, Morthodox, Conservadox, Modern Orthodox, Black Hatter, Modern Yeshivish, Frum But With It, Young Israeli, Sabra, Yemenite, Srugi, Yeki, Chareidi, Upper West Side and Howard Stern.

Now "SUMO" has been thrown into the mix. "SUMO" stands for Super Ultra Mega Orthodox and its adherents have selected stringencies that boggle the mind of even those in the Ultra Orthodox crowd.

SUMOs have been known to wait six days between meat and milk, burn down their houses before Passover so chametz won't be found and throw themselves into the water during Tashlich.

Surprisingly, it is not these stringencies that are offending Jewish people in the other Classifications - it's memorizing the new list that's the problem.

"Listen," says Tova Bloom, an Orthodox Jew from Midwood, Brooklyn, "Nobody minds if these SUMOs don't use computers on Pesach because the cookies are chametzdik and nobody really cares that they walk around naked because they think everything might be shatnes, it's memorizing the entire Jewish classification list that's beginning to be a problem."

Ruthy Heimilich of Queens, New York sums it up the best: "What's the list again? Is it Conservadorm? Black Reformer? Litvadox? This is impossible to keep track of."

Despite the complaints, the list must be memorized as Michael Bloomberg won't allow third graders who can't memorize the new list to advance to fourth grade.

<http://www.theknish.com/articles/new-jewish-classification-causing-quite-stir/>



## **Hamentaschen**

The etymology of hamentaschen is fairly well known. They did not originally refer to Haman (and therefore the Hebrew **חמנה ירוא** oznei haman - came much later.) These pastries were originally called "mahn-taschen". Mohn means "poppy" in German, and tasch is a pocket. When you add the Hebrew definitive article ha, they become ha-mahn-taschen, which is easy to associate with Haman. Of course there are many "midrashim" (really Purim torah), that expound on the connection: that Haman had three-cornered ears like the pastry, or had a three cornered hat, or a new one for me, that it refers to **שח חמה** - "Haman became weak."

But here at Balashon, we go deeper. What is the origin of tasch and mohn?

From here we see that tasch from comes from Middle High German tasche, and earlier from Old High German tasca. Tasca is related to the English word "task", and both are related to "tax". What's the connection between task, tax and pocket? The Online Etymology Dictionary explains as follows: "amount of work imposed by some authority," to "payment for that work," to "wages," to "pocket into which money is put," to "any pocket." (A connection between Haman and taxes can be seen in the more recent custom to boo at the reading of the word **מס נה** - tax in the Megila, the same way as Haman is booed.)

Mohn in German is related to the Dutch maan, and has a number of related words in Indo-European languages, including the Greek mekon.

**The mitzvah of eating hamantashen** requires that hamantashen be placed on the table. Since, in the story of Purim, the Jews were saved by a women, we use two hamantashen representing the two women who lived in the palace that are mentioned in the book of Esther, Vashti and Esther. The Beis Ha'Kisei requires a third hamantashen, representing Hagai, the eunuch.

The hamantashen should be filled with prune or poppy filling. In Eretz Yisrael, where prune filling is not readily available, chocolate spread may be substituted.

Differing opinions exist as to the required size of the hamantachen. All agree they must be the size of Haman's ear, but halachik sources differ as to what size Haman's ears were. The Shulchan Aruch holds that Haman's ear was the same size as our ears today, and hence, each of the three sides of the triangular hamantashen must be 2 inches long. The Mishnah Berurah holds that Haman had especially large ears, and sets the length of each side of the hamantashen at 3 inches. The Chazon Ish holds that back in the third century B.C.E., peoples' ears actually reached all the way down to the floor, citing as proof the popular kids song "Do Your Ears Hang Low." Thus, he holds that the hamantashen must be 6 feet long per side.

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Yasher Koach to
Mordechai and Esther (not Redlitz) for introducing us to the holiday of Purim. Where would we be without you?

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### **Quotez of the Week**

**MISTAKES:** "It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others."

**BLAME:** "The secret to success is knowing who to blame for your failures."

**TRADITION:** "Just because you've always done it that way doesn't mean it's not incredibly stupid." <http://despair.com>

Shabbat shalom. Chag Purim Sameach!