Darshan Yeshiva Students Celebrate Purim Around the World
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A Special Message From Rabbi Barbara:

From Germany to Argentina, from Spain to Sarasota, Darshan Yeshiva students around the world celebrated the festival of Purim. Some of us are fortunate enough to be near to a Jewish community while others of us are “loners,” studying and celebrating on our own. In our Purim “Giornalino” (little newsletter) you will learn the many ways to celebrate this joyful festival and to internalize the message of courage and hope that characterizes the story of Queen Esther. Chag Purim Sameach!
During my fiancé’s parents were visiting with us in Colombia during Purim, so we got to have the holiday together. I asked them what they remembered of the story of Esther, and how they celebrated as children in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they’re both from. They had great memories of prune & poppy hamentaschen and graggers, and they recalled most of the broad strokes of Esther’s story. We all took turns reading aloud together from Robert Alter’s translation, with lots of interruptions for the banging of pots and pans at the mention Haman’s name in lieu of graggers. After this, we went to dinner together and my fiancé’s parents, now in a nostalgic mood, told us more about Jewish life and their family experiences growing up in Milwaukee in the late 50s. They have known for some time that I have wanted to convert and am now in the process, but this was the first holiday we have spent together since I have made it “official”. Even though Purim is religiously less significant holiday, it was very special to me!
For Purim, my friends and I spent the night eating, dancing, and drinking. My friends recited several Komplas (Ladino Poems) dedicated to Purim and to Queen Esther. This was my first Purim and my friends’ first Purim outside of Turkey— it was an incredible experience that I feel very fortunate to have experienced.

We ate Halva de susam, Turkish Delights, Pitas de susam, cookies covered in sesame/honey, and drank red wines.
A time to remember: “God is here even when he doesn’t seem to be” Beyond food-gifting, opening my heart to those who don’t have enough food or enough nourishment, I celebrated Purim by making a Persian dinner in honor of Esther. I made and served: Roasted Fish with Walnut Paste, Beet Pkhaliunun, Baku Style Tomato Salad Persian Rice - and of course, Hamantaschen and wine! (Credit to Taste of Persia cookbook by Naomi Duguid)
I read the Megillat Esther aloud and Claudia made noise with my original Purim rattle from Israel each time Haman's name was mentioned. For Purim's Shelach Manot I bought our favourite local Swabian bakery product "Butterbrezeln" (pretzels with butter) and offered them together with chocolate in gift bags to two poor men I found in the street. Then I took some more pretzels to my colleagues in the office. My colleagues asked if there was any reason for this. I told them about Purim and consequently about me becoming Jewish. They were very surprised and asked a lot of questions as well about Purim as about Judaism. Following Purim two coincidences occurred that I'd like to share with you:

On 3rd March we visited together with my aunt and uncle the Brezel Museum in Erdmannhausen near Stuttgart and had a guided tour about the long history of that bakery product. Very much to my surprise one of the exhibits was a reproduction of a picture from the Monastery St. Odile in Alsace, France dated around 1170 CE showing a scene with a laid table for a meal (including a pretzel) with Mordechai, Esther, Rex Xerxes and Haman called "The Banquet of Esther"!

On 5th March one of my colleagues brought me a short newspaper article announcing a Purim ball. She said, now that she had learned about the existence of Purim, she recognized it being mentioned in the paper, at the same time she wondered why that party took place on 10th March, so many days after the holiday. A good question that I couldn’t answer myself. (It is not unusual for Purim festivities to be held throughout the Hebrew month of Adar, Rabbi B). I am really proud, however, of having caught her interest to that extent! PS: The word Brezel is derived from the Italian braccio, as it is made from incrociare il braccio
Here is a little bit about what Nir (my husband) and I did to celebrate Purim: We went to a temple up in Denver that we used to go to sometimes when we lived closer to that area; they are a very opened minded community and an eclectic group so it is always fun to go. Nir was really excited to enter the Hamantashen baking contest they have each year, and even though he didn't win, he made some delicious treats. We were able to join in a group dinner which was wonderful. They had a 'Jeopardy' skit for the reading of the Megillah, and people were all dressed up - we didn't have full costumes, but we were able to find some funny hats. It has been a couple of years since we went to that temple so it was nice to see the Rabbi there and catch up with people. We really had a great time!
The evening before Purim, I fasted, as I had not done for a long time. It was not easy, for me. But I could do it. I remember that my grandmother complied with the fast, until she became ill. I heard Megillah Esther, in a theater, where the Orthodox community organized the Purim festival, we all followed the reading, booing and making noise to the name of Haman, while the little ones played their rattles – which were given to them at the entrance – and also there, we gave the donations. Later, the children paraded with their costumes and the little ones with their mothers, then there was a final show in charge of a magician and a stand up act, very funny.

*It really was a happy Purim!*
Spain
Alberto

Purim isn’t one of my favorite Jewish holidays since it does involve wearing costumes which I don’t love. Maybe it’s because trans people don’t always have a good relationship with the idea of wearing “costumes” and I feel like it’s a privilege for those who can afford to look “different”. At the same time I think I’ll use Purim as a chance to reconnect with the idea of dressing up, in my own terms while celebrating diversity. I did love reading about feminist approaches to costumes in Purim, I feel like this year there were a lot of articles around the topic of “the “fun” in dressing as a boy/girl. I am glad the Jewish world is challenging the message of those actions.

I was happy I was allowed to leave a couple hours earlier from work, so I had enough time to go to the Synagogue and read the Megillah with the congregation. A Jewish friend of mine joined me, which felt very special since she never goes to any services. There, the Megillah was read by different people in different languages, I read it in German. Standing at the bimá felt really special, truly an honor, although reading in German most people got lost and didn’t know when to shout and make noise when I said the infamous name.

Later we had some food and chatted with some people and my friend and I went to get a glass of wine and celebrated ourselves. All in all it was a fun evening. The next day was a working day but I did make sure to offer some money to a couple people on the streets, sadly I couldn’t fulfill the mitzvah of bringing food to friends, which honestly I’d love to do next time since cooking for others is something I truly love. I can’t wait to read more on Purim, on the different layers of the complex story, the violence, the misogyny, Vashti, Esther… I do believe it’s such a relevant story and one that we should study more.
"in italiano and English"

Il Quest`anno non ho avuto l`occasione di festeggiare Purim con allegria pero` mi sono concentrata sul argomento per imparare un po di piu` sul significato interiore di Purim e di soddisfare la mitzva di Matanot l`Evyonim.

This year I did not have the opportunity to celebrate Purim with joy but I focused on the topic to learn a little more about the inner meaning of Purim and to satisfy the mitzva of Matanot the Evyonim.(the mitzvah of giving a gift of food or money on Purim).

Nella citta` dove abito non vive gente veramente povera e cosi ho deciso di dare le donazioni alle famiglie piu` bisognose nel Israele. Il pomeriggio ho passato cuocendo i Hamantaschen che ho regalato a parenti ed amici. La sera di Purim ho trascorso leggendo la Meghilla` di Ester.

In the city where I live there are not really poor people living and so I decided to give donations to the most needy families in Israel. In the afternoon I went cooking the Hamantaschen that I gave to relatives and friends. I spent the evening of Purim reading the Meghilla of Esther.

La Meghillà di Ester ci insegna che il popolo ebraico deve imparare a vivere in attesa di miracoli nascosti entro le tortuose e contorte vie della vita e che deve credere che otterranno conforto e soccorso.

The Meghillà of Esther teaches us that the Jewish people must learn to live waiting for miracles hidden within the tortuous and twisted ways of life and that they must believe that they will get comfort and relief.
Adempiendo la mitzva di Matanot l’Evyonim noi aiutiamo i poveri a vivere un momento di miracolo al giorno di Purim. La ragione per la quale ci mettiamo le maschere su Purim è per ricordarci che la nostra anima è la nostra vera essenza e non il nostro esterno. La consuetudine di indossare maschere e vestirsi in costume su Purim è avvenuta perché Haman (il desiderio egoistico) si veste nei vestiti di Mordechai (il desiderio altruistico).

By fulfilling the mitzva of Matanot the Evyonim we help the poor to experience a miraculous moment in the day of Purim. The reason why we put masks on Purim is to remind us that our soul is our true essence and not our exterior. The custom of wearing masks and dressing in costume on Purim happened because Haman (selfish desire) dresses in Mordechai’s clothes (altruistic desire).

Questo è anche il motivo per cui durante Purim è consuetudine di mangiare biscotti a forma di triangolo chiamato "tasche di Haman". Una tasca simboleggia il desiderio di ricevere. Dobbiamo ricevere questi desideri da Haman e poi, con l’aiuto di Mordechai correggerli con l’intenzione per il bene della dazione.

This is also the reason why during Purim it is customary to eat triangle-shaped biscuits called "Haman pockets". A pocket symbolizes the desire to receive. We must receive these wishes from Haman and then, with the help of Mordechai, correct them with the intention for the good of bestowal.
Thank you for sharing your Purim celebration!