

CONGREGATION OHAIV YISROEL OF BLUEBERRY HILL

**PREPARING FOR PURIM**

*From Rabbi A. Cohen,*

*Purim will be coming in about a month, and people are beginning to prepare for it. As you make your plans, please remain vigilant and safe. We know that our country suffered greatly after the Thanksgiving holiday and after the December and New Year celebrations, because people did not take precautions and insisted on social gatherings. Realizing this, we understand that it is important that our shul, too, start making plans for celebrating Purim communally--and safely. For that reason, we need to have multiple minyanim to accommodate everyone for Parshas Zachor and for the Megillah reading at night and in the morning. **Please sign up with the NEW survey that will be sent out shortly, so that we can make appropriate plans.***

*As you are making plans for the celebration of Purim, please keep in mind two things: First of all, that we are still under the siege of covid, and we therefore need to avoid crowds and need to practice social distancing. It is a mitzvah and obligation on everyone to protect their health. The second thing to remember is that among the mitzvot of Purim is mishloach manot and Matanot le'evyonim--sending gifts of food to one another and giving gifts to poor people. Our rabbis rule "it is better to increase presents to the poor rather than make a big festive meal and sending mishloach manot to our friends...for there is **no greater joy than to gladden the hearts of the poor and orphans.**"*

*Thursday, February 25, is Taanis Esther, and the Shulchan Aruch rules that if there is a mitzvah that needs to be performed, one should not eat before doing that mitzvah. Since we cannot accommodate everyone for the first Megillah reading right after the fast is over, it will be permitted for someone who is coming to the later Megillah reading, to eat beforehand.*

**Anyone who has Covid should surely not fast or come shul.**