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GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Special Section: Laws & Customs of Purim

The presentation below offers a concise overview of the halachot and customs of Purim for both Ashkenazim and Sephardim. May our careful observance allow Purim to be a time of joyful celebration for the miracles experienced by our people, both those recorded in the Megilla and those of more recent generations, and a source of meaningful spiritual growth.

PARSHAT ZACHOR

Chazal instituted the reading of four special *parshiyot* before and during the month of Adar.¹ These are read following the regular *Keriat HaTorah* as the “*Maftir*” *aliyah*: *Shekalim*, *Zachor*, *Parah*, and *HaChodesh*. *Parshat Zachor*, read the Shabbat before Purim, contains the mitzvah to remember Amalek’s attempt to attack the Jewish people in the

1. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 685:1-4

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wilderness. Indeed, it is read in order to fulfill this mitzvah, which, according to Chazal, must be performed once each year.² It is read before Purim specifically because Haman was a descendant of Amalek.³

Listening to *Parshat Zachor* with a *minyan* and from a kosher *sefer Torah* is obligatory for men, and the obligation may be biblical in nature.⁴ According to some *poskim*, it is obligatory for women as well,⁵ while others disagree.⁶ It is customary for women to attend shul on this Shabbat in order to fulfill the stringent opinion.⁷ In many communities, an additional reading is held in the presence of a *minyan* after the *tefillah* for those who missed the regular reading of *Parshat Zachor*.⁸

Since the obligation to hear *Parshat Zachor* may be a Torah one, many *poskim* maintain that each tradition should try to hear it with their own pronunciation and cantillation.⁹ However, one still fulfills the mitzvah even if one heard it from an individual reading with a different pronunciation and cantillation

2. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 685:2; Magen Avraham 685

3. Mishna Berura 685:1

4. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 685:7; Mishna Berura 685:14)

5. Minchat Chinuch 603

6. Sefer Hachinuch 603; Halichot Shlomo

7. Responsa Yechaveh Da’at 1:84; R. Yosef Zvi Rimon, “Purim: Halacha Mimekora,” p.62

8. Responsa Minchat Yitzchak 9:68; Responsa Teshuvot V’hanhagot 2:228

9. Halichot Shlomo 18:1; Chazon Ovadia, Purim p.8

than one's own.¹⁰

Those who miss it entirely should read it from a printed Chumash,¹¹ and they should also listen to the same section of the Torah when it is read within the weekly *parsha*, in *Parshat Ki Teitzei*.¹² According to some opinions, listening to the Torah reading on Purim morning, which relates the story of Amalek's attack, also fulfills the mitzvah in cases of need,¹³ though others disagree.¹⁴ When fulfilling the mitzvah by listening to *Ki Teitzei* or the Torah reading on Purim, one should ask the *ba'al korei* to have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of remembering Amalek.¹⁵

TA'ANIT ESTHER

The day before Purim, the 13th of Adar, is described by Chazal as a day on which "all gather together [in prayer],"¹⁶ and it has been customarily accepted as a fast day known as Ta'anit Esther.¹⁷ The reasons given for this fast are either to commemorate the fast of Esther and the Jews mentioned in the *Megilla*, which in fact took place in Nissan,¹⁸ or to commemorate a fast undertaken by the Jews in Persia on this day before going out to the war against their enemies, which was the customary practice.¹⁹ Our fasting serves as a reminder that Hashem listens to the prayers of the Jewish people in times of need.

As with the other minor fasts, healthy men and women should both fast.²⁰ Women who are pregnant or nursing are exempt from the

fast, as are those who are ill.²¹ For these purposes, "ill" is defined as one who is bedridden due to illness or who is unable to function normally.²² Even one suffering from a severe headache, such as a migraine, is exempt.²³ The accepted custom is that one who does not fast is not required to make up the fast at a later date.²⁴ Children are not required to fast until the age of bar/bat mitzvah.²⁵ Some maintain that they should not fast at all,²⁶ while others recommend that they fast for part of the day; however, they should be discouraged from fasting for the entire day.²⁷

ZECHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKEL

There is a widespread custom among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim to give "*zecher l'machatzit hashekel*" (half-shekel) in the afternoon of Ta'anit Esther or Purim night.²⁸ This is given to commemorate the mitzvah to give a half-shekel in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, as delineated in the Torah.²⁹ According to Chazal, announcements were made during the month of Adar to bring the half-shekel by the beginning of Nissan.³⁰ The reason is that the money was used for the *korbanot* in the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the money had to be brought by Nissan for *korbanot* brought after that time.³¹

The *zecher l'machatzit hashekel* today is traditionally given to a *tzedakah* cause or to support a Torah institution.³² The custom to

10. Oholei Halacha, Moadim, vol.1, p.147;

Piskei Teshuvot 685

11. Kaf Hachaim 685:35

12. R. Rimon, "Purim," p.56

13. Magen Avraham 685

14. Mishna Berura 685:16

15. Ibid.

16. Megilla 2a

17. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 686:2

18. Shibolei Haleket 194

19. Mishna Berura 686:2

20. Rema, O.C. 686:2

21. Ibid.

22. Piskei Teshuvot 686:3

23. Rema, O.C. 686:2

24. R. Moshe Harari, Mikraei Kodesh, Purim 3:5

25. Mishna Berura 550:5

26. Chazon Ovadia, Arba Ta'aniyot, p.66

27. Ibid.; Piskei Teshuvot 550:5

28. Rema, O.C. 694:1; Chazon Ovadia, Purim, p.101

29. Shemot 30

30. Shekalim 1:1

31. Megilla 29b; Mishna Berura 685:2

32. Aruch Hashulchan 694:8; R. Rimon, "Purim," p. 91

give is binding on males over bar mitzvah age, though some hold that only men over the age of 20 are required to give it. It is customary in many places for women to give as well, though some maintain that the custom is not binding in the same manner as for men.³³ Parents are also encouraged to give on behalf of children under bar/bat mitzvah age, though this is not a requirement.³⁴

For Ashkenazim, the custom of *zecher l'machatzit hashekel* dictates that one should give three halves of the local currency or its equivalent value on behalf of each individual for whom one is giving. Therefore, in the United States, three half-dollar coins, or their equivalent value, should be given, totaling \$1.50.³⁵

According to Sephardic tradition,³⁶ the value of half an actual silver coin should be given, which is 9.6 grams of pure silver,³⁷ which currently equals approximately \$25 USD.³⁸ If this amount is difficult to give, Sephardim

may follow the Ashkenazic practice.

READING MEGILLAT ESTHER

One of the central mitzvot of Purim is the reading of Megillat Esther, through which we publicize and commemorate the miracle of Purim. To fulfill the mitzvah, one must read – or hear the *Megilla* read – in its proper order, from beginning to end, both at night and again during the daytime.³⁹

TIMING

The nighttime *Megilla* reading may be performed anytime after nightfall (*tzeit hako-chavim*) until dawn (*alot hashachar*).⁴⁰ In cases of great need, many *poskim* maintain that it may be read after *plag hamincha*, which is one and a quarter halachic hours before sunset.⁴¹ The daytime *Megilla* may be read anytime after sunrise (*neitz hachama*) until sunset. In cases of necessity, it may be read after dawn, even before sunrise.⁴²

WHO IS OBLIGATED

The mitzvah of reading the *Megilla* applies to men, women, and children who have reached the age of *chinuch* (education),⁴³ which is approximately age six or seven, depending on the intellect of the child. Although women are generally exempt from time-bound mitzvot, they are obligated in *Megilla* because they, too, were part of the miracle of Purim.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, a woman may not read the *Megilla* on behalf of a man.⁴⁵ Most *poskim* permit a woman to read the *Megilla* for another woman.⁴⁶

33. Kaf Hachaim 694:27

34. Mishna Berura 694:5

35. Rema 694:1; Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 13:72

36. Kaf Hachaim 694:20

37. Many *poskim* calculate the amount as 9.6 grams, based on the calculations given in the halachot of pidyon haben; some calculate it slightly higher and others slightly lower.

38. This is a dramatic increase in value since last year, and the value constantly fluctuates, so one should check again closer to Purim.

39. Megilla 4a; Shulchan Aruch 687:1, 689:2, 690:3,5

40. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 687:1; Mishna Berura 687:1,3

41. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 692:4

42. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 687:1; Mishna Berura 687:4-6

43. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 689:1; Mishna Berura 689:3

44. Megilla 4a

45. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 689:2; Ben Ish Chai, First Year, Tetzaveh

46. Mishna Berura 689:7, though see Magen

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However, *poskim* disagree as to whether a woman should read the *Megilla* for a group of women or whether it is preferable that they hear it read by a man.⁴⁷ With regard to children, those below the age of *chinuch* should not be brought to shul if they are likely to make noise and distract others.⁴⁸

EATING BEFORE THE MEGILLA READING

One may not eat a meal consisting of a *k'beitza* of bread or *mezonot* foods (approximately 56 cc) before listening to the *Megilla*, both at night and in the morning. This restriction applies even if one is hungry at night before breaking the fast.⁴⁹ At night, those who are fasting should ideally refrain from eating anything at all before hearing the *Megilla*, so that the fast is broken only afterward. In cases of need, one may eat foods that are not bread or *mezonot* prior to the *Megilla*.⁵⁰ This is especially relevant for those who attend a later *Megilla* reading (for example, those with young children at home), for whom it may be difficult to extend the fast beyond nightfall or to wait until very late in the morning to eat. Those who live in Jerusalem and read the *Megilla* on the fifteenth of Adar may also not begin a meal within a half-hour before nightfall, even though they are not fasting beforehand.

BERACHOT

Three *berachot* are recited prior to the *Megilla* reading: 1. *Al Mikra Megilla* 2. *She'asa Nisim* 3. *Shehechyanu*.⁵¹ One should listen carefully to all three *berachot* and respond

Avraham 689:6 who disagrees.

47. See Sha'ar Hatzion 689:15, citing Korban Netanel who recommends against; see Aruch Hashulchan 689:5 and Responsa B'mareh Habazak 7:52 who permit.

48. Mishna Berura 689:17-18

49. Rema, O.C. 692:4; Mishna Berura 692:14-15

50. Mishna Berura 692:14-15; Chazon Ovadia, p.95

51. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 692:1

Amen. Ashkenazim recite all three *berachot* both at night and during the day,⁵² while most Sephardim do not recite *Shehechyanu* before the daytime reading.⁵³ One should have in mind that the *Shehechyanu* applies as well to the other mitzvot of the day – the *seudah*, *mishloach manot*, and *matanot l'evyonim* – Sephardim having this in mind at night, and Ashkenazim in the morning.⁵⁴ One who missed hearing the *berachot* may recite them during a break in the reading, such as when the reader stops after reading Haman's name for everyone to make noise.⁵⁵ One who did not recite the *berachah* at all has still fulfilled the mitzvah.⁵⁶

When a woman reads the *Megilla* for herself or other women, Sephardim generally recite the *beracha* in its regular form,⁵⁷ while Ashkenazim generally recite the first *beracha* with the text of "*lishmoa Megilla*" instead of *al mikra Megilla*.⁵⁸ If a man who has already fulfilled the mitzvah himself reads the *Megilla* for one or more women, one of the women generally recites the *berachah* (Ashkenazim and Sephardim each according to their custom), while in some Sephardic communities, no *berachah* is recited at all by either the reader or the women listening.⁵⁹

One should stand while listening to the *berachot*,⁶⁰ though some Sephardim sit during

52. Rema, O.C. 692:1

53. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 692:1; Chazon Ovadia, p.63

54. Mishna Berura 692:1; Kaf Hachaim 692:4

55. See Mishna Berura 692:6.

56. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 692:1

57. Chazon Ovadia, p.53

58. Rema, O.C. 689:2, though see R. Rimon, "Purim," p.133, for other variations of the wording.

59. Kaf Hachaim 689:19; R. Mordechai Eliyahu, "L'moadim V'yamim," p.504

60. Mishna Berura 690:1; Sha'ar Hatzion 690:1; Ben Ish Chai, First Year, Tetzaveh

the *berachot*.⁶¹

Following the *Megilla* reading, the *beracha* of “*Harav et rivenu*” is recited, followed by the paragraphs of “*Asher Heini*” and “*Shoshanat Yaakov*” (Ashkenazim) or “*Arur Haman*” (Sephardim). Most Ashkenazim and some Sephardim recite this *beracha* only in the presence of a *minyán*,⁶² while a minority of Ashkenazim and some Sephardim recite it even when the *Megilla* is read without a *minyán*.⁶³ For this purpose, many *poskim* hold that a group of ten women has the status of a *minyán*,⁶⁴ while some disagree.⁶⁵

DETAILS OF LISTENING TO THE MEGILLA

As mentioned previously, one must read or listen to the entire *Megilla* in order, from beginning to end. It is forbidden to speak during the reading.⁶⁶ One who missed even a single word of the *Megilla* has not fulfilled one’s obligation.⁶⁷ However, it is permitted for up to half of the *Megilla* to be read from a printed text rather than from the kosher parchment scroll used by the *Megilla* reader.⁶⁸ Therefore, if one missed a few words due to noise or

another distraction, one may quickly read those words oneself and then catch up with the *ba’al korei*.⁶⁹ Some are careful to follow the *Megilla* from a kosher scroll and read silently along to ensure that every word is recited in the optimal manner.⁷⁰

One who heard the entire *Megilla* but whose mind wandered during the reading has fulfilled the mitzvah according to most opinions.⁷¹ However, some *poskim* hold that if one was completely focused on unrelated matters, one does not fulfill the mitzvah even if one technically heard the entire *Megilla*.⁷²

It is customary for the congregation to read several significant passages of the *Megilla* aloud before the *ba’al korei* reads them.⁷³ In many places, it is also customary for each individual to read the list of the ten sons of Haman themselves, since they must be read in one breath.⁷⁴

According to most opinions, one should not fulfill the mitzvah by listening to the *Megilla* when it is read using a microphone or other electronic amplification device.⁷⁵ Some permit the use of such a device if one would be able to hear the *Megilla* even without the amplification.⁷⁶ Many *poskim* write that who uses a hearing aid fulfills the mitzvah if they can hear the *Megilla*, at least faintly, without it.⁷⁷

MINYAN FOR MEGILLA

Although one may read or listen to the

61. Chazon Ovadia, p.69

62. Rema 692:1; Chazon Ovadia, p.89

63. Responsa Ohr L’tzion 4:54

64. R. Yaakov Ariel, cited in Oholei Halacha, Moadim, Vol.1, p.179; Chazon Ovadia, p.91

65. Halichot Shlomo, Tefilla, ch.23

66. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 692:2

67. Mishna Berura 690:5

68. Shulchan Aruch 690:3

69. Mishna Berura 690:60

70. Mishna Berura 689:19, citing Pri Megadim

71. R. Elyashiv, cited in Dirshu Mishna Berura 690, #35; see also Responsa Eretz Tzvi 45.

72. Levushei Serad to Magen Avraham 690:15

73. Rema 690:17; Chazon Ovadia, p.84

74. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 690:15; Aruch

Hashulchan 690:23; R. Rimon, “Purim,” p.184

75. Responsa Minchat Shlomo 1:9; R. Harari, Mikraei Kodesh, ch.7

76. Chazon Ovadia, p.56

77. See Ashrei Ha’ish 43:18 and Oholei

Halacha, p.170, n.26, citing R. Yaakov Ariel.

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Megilla alone, it is halachically preferable to do so with a *minyan* in order to increase the *pirsumei nisa*, the publicizing the miracle.⁷⁸ For purposes of *Megilla*, many *poskim* hold that a group of ten women also counts as a *minyan*.⁷⁹ For this reason, it is preferable to attend a *Megilla* reading in shul rather than hear it from an individual at home.⁸⁰

MISHLOACH MANOT

One of the other special mitzvot performed on Purim is *mishloach manot*, giving at least two food items to one person.⁸¹ The primary reason given for this mitzvah is to ensure that everyone has sufficient food for the Purim seudah in a festive manner.⁸² Some suggest that the reason is to increase unity and love among fellow Jews.⁸³

WHO IS OBLIGATED

Like reading the *Megilla*, *mishloach manot* is obligatory for men, women, and children who have reached the age of *chinuch*.⁸⁴ Although one spouse may give *mishloach manot* on behalf of the other, some hold that it is preferable for a husband and wife each to give at least one *mishloach manot* separately,⁸⁵ and the same applies to children. Accordingly, each child should ideally give *mishloach manot* to at least one friend.⁸⁶

According to many *poskim*, one does not

fulfill the mitzvah by giving *mishloach manot* to someone who observes Purim on a different day. Therefore, one who lives in Beit Shemesh should not fulfill the mitzvah solely by giving to someone who lives in Jerusalem.⁸⁷

THE TIMING OF THE MITZVAH

Mishloach manot must be given during the daytime of Purim, between sunrise and sunset. One does not fulfill the mitzvah by giving at night.⁸⁸ According to many *poskim*, the giving itself must take place on Purim day, and one should not give the package before Purim even if it will only be received on Purim,⁸⁹ though some disagree.⁹⁰ Likewise, one does not fulfill the mitzvah if it is given on Purim day but will only be received after sunset. Accordingly, one should ensure that at least one *mishloach manot* is delivered while the recipient (or a household member) is home. Otherwise, if the recipient returns only after Purim has ended, one may not have fulfilled the mitzvah with that delivery.⁹¹ Some maintain that one does not fulfill the mitzvah if the recipient has already concluded his Purim seudah, though others disagree. In any event, since the basic obligation is fulfilled with one *mishloach manot* delivered properly, additional *mishloach manot* may be given in other ways.⁹²

THE FOODS

The mitzvah of *mishloach manot* may be fulfilled with any food or drink that is ready to eat. Therefore, one should not give raw foods that require cooking, although some maintain that even raw food is acceptable.⁹³ Even

78. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 690:18; Mishna Berura 690:61

79. Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 13:73; Chazon Ish, O.C. 155:2; see also Rema 690:18.

80. Mishna Berura 690:62

81. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 695:4

82. Terumat Hadeshen 111

83. R. Shlomo Alkabetz, *Manot Levi*, Esther 9:16

84. Rema, O.C. 695:4; Mishna Berura 695:25;

Ben Ish Chai, First Year, Tetzaveh; Halichot V'hanhagot, p.28; R. Rimon, "Purim," p.211; Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 695:14

85. Chayei Adam 155:3; Chazon Ovadia, p.140

86. Chazon Ovadia, p.142; R. Rimon, "Purim," p.211

87. Piskei Teshuvot 695:21

88. Rema, O.C. 695:4

89. Aruch Hashulchan 695:17

90. Be'er Heitev 695:7, citing Yad Aharon

91. Aruch Hashulchan 695:16; Moadim

Uzmanim 2:186

92. Chazon Ovadia, p.133

93. Mishna Berura 695:20

according to the more stringent view, many *poskim* permit foods that require only minimal preparation, such as instant soups or foods that need only to be heated in a microwave.⁹⁴ Some Sephardic *poskim* recommend that at least one *mishloach manot* – the one through which one fulfills the basic obligation – contains foods suitable for a meal.⁹⁵ However, many *poskim* permit fulfilling the mitzvah entirely with snacks or candies.⁹⁶ Most *poskim* do not allow non-food items, such as clothing or written words of Torah, to count as *mishloach manot*,⁹⁷ though a minority opinion permits non-food items if they bring the recipient joy.⁹⁸

Some maintain that one must give at least a *k'zayit* of food or a *revi'it* of drink to fulfill the mitzvah.⁹⁹ However, many *poskim* hold that the determining factor is the food's significance, and one fulfills the mitzvah with any amount considered significant by the recipient.¹⁰⁰

The two items may share the same *beracha*, but they should not simply be two pieces of the exact same food. Some require that they be two different types of foods.¹⁰¹

MOURNERS

According to many *poskim*, one should not give *mishloach manot* to an *avel* (mourner), whether during *shiva*, *shloshim* (the thirty-day period following burial), or the twelve-month period of mourning for a parent.¹⁰² However,

one may designate the *mishloach manot* for the entire family rather than specifically for the mourner.¹⁰³ Some permit sending *mishloach manot* to a mourner during the twelve-month period,¹⁰⁴ and some permit even during *shiva*.¹⁰⁵ By contrast, a mourner is obligated to give *mishloach manot* to others, even during *shiva*.¹⁰⁶

MATANOT LA'EVYONIM

Another mitzvah of Purim is to give money or food to two poor individuals so that they, too, can experience the joy of the day.¹⁰⁷ One should ideally spend more on *matanot la'evyonim* than on the Purim *seudah* and *mishloach manot*.¹⁰⁸

WHO SHOULD GIVE

Both men and women are obligated in *matanot la'evyonim*.¹⁰⁹ Ideally, spouses should each give independently in order to fulfill the mitzvah separately. However, one spouse may give a double amount and explicitly state that it is on behalf of both.¹¹⁰

Children who have reached bar or bat mitzvah and live at home are also obligated.¹¹¹ Younger children are technically exempt, since they do not own their own money. Nevertheless, some parents give them money to distribute, or give on their behalf, thereby educating them in the mitzvah on the level of *chinuch*.¹¹²

HOW MUCH TO GIVE

According to many authorities, one should

94. R. Elyashiv, cited in the Dirshu Mishna Berura 695, #43

95. R. Mordechai Eliyahu, Lmoadim V'yamim p.506; Kaf Hachaim 695:48

96. Chayei Adam 155:31; Kaf Hachaim 695:48.

97. Mishna Berura 695:20; R. Rimon, "Purim," p.220

98. Beit Shearim 1:380

99. Eishel Avraham 695

100. Aruch Hashulchan 695:15; Mikraei Kodesh, citing R. Shaul Yisraeli

101. Aruch Hashulchan 695:14; Chazon Ovadia, p.125

102. Rema 696:6

103. Pnei Baruch, ch.29; Oholei Halacha, p.190

104. Geshet Hachaim 21:7:10

105. Chazon Ovadia, p.193

106. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 696:6

107. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 694:1; Akeidat Yitzchak, Esther 9:20–21

108. Mishna Berura 694:3

109. Rema 695:4; Mishna Berura 694:1

110. Halichot Bat Yisrael 22:16

111. R. Rimon, "Purim," p. 248

112. Peninei Halacha, Zemanim 16:6

ideally give each recipient enough to purchase a small meal (for example, falafel or pizza and a drink).¹¹³ Strictly speaking, however, even a smaller amount fulfills the basic obligation.¹¹⁴ The minimum required amount may not be given from *ma'aser* funds, though additional sums beyond the basic obligation may be taken from *ma'aser*.¹¹⁵

WHO QUALIFIES AS A RECIPIENT

A poor person for the purposes of this mitzvah is one who lacks a stable source of income sufficient for ordinary living expenses and does not possess unused assets that could reasonably be sold. This category also includes someone burdened with exceptional financial strain, such as overwhelming medical expenses.¹¹⁶

WHEN AND HOW TO GIVE

Many authorities permit giving *matanot la'evyonim* before Purim, provided one is certain that the funds will reach the poor on Purim day itself.¹¹⁷ Additionally, many rule that one fulfills the mitzvah through credit card or other digital payment methods.¹¹⁸ In contemporary practice, many charitable organizations need to know in advance how much funding they will distribute on Purim. In such cases, it may even be preferable to give beforehand, as long as the distribution takes place on Purim day.

According to most opinions, one must give to the poor in a location observing Purim on the same day as themselves, e.g., a resident of Jerusalem should give to poor in Jerusalem.¹¹⁹

113. Sha'arei Teshuva 694; Kaf Hachaim 694:7

114. Mishna Berura 694:2

115. Mishna Berura 694:3

116. Piskei Teshuvot 694:2

117. Eishel Avraham; Piskei Teshuvot 694:8

118. B'oholei Halacha, p. 185, citing R. Yaakov Ariel

119. Bimei HaPurim, p. 85, citing Chazon Ish and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

On Purim, it is customary to give to anyone who extends a hand in request for funds, without carefully investigating their eligibility.¹²⁰

PURIM SEUDAH

Another mitzvah of Purim day is to hold a festive meal in order to express gratitude for the miracle of salvation from Haman's decree and to rejoice properly.¹²¹

TIMING OF THE MEAL

According to most authorities, the *seudah* should take place in the afternoon, after *Mincha* has been recited and the other mitzvot of the day have been fulfilled.¹²² Ideally, the majority of the meal should be eaten before sunset.¹²³ Some authorities recommend holding the meal in the morning.¹²⁴

WHAT SHOULD BE SERVED

Many authorities maintain that one should ideally eat bread at the Purim *seudah*, similar to Shabbat and Yom Tov meals,¹²⁵ though some do not view this as strictly obligatory.¹²⁶ Many also maintain that one should serve meat if that is customary at one's Shabbat or Yom Tov meals,¹²⁷ though others hold that this is not required.¹²⁸ One who does not ordinarily eat meat for any reason is not required to do so, but should prepare foods appropriate for an important festive meal.

120. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 694:3. See also Yalkut Yosef, Purim, p.632 and R. Rimon, "Purim," p. 250, for other interpretations of this halacha.

121. Esther 9:22; Shulchan Aruch and Rema, O.C. 695:1

122. Rema, O.C. 695:2

123. Ibid.

124. Kaf Hachaim 695:23; Chazon Ovadia, p. 180

125. Taz 693:2

126. Responsa Shevet HaLevi 4:54; Chazon Ovadia, p. 173

127. Aruch Hashulchan 695:1; Chazon Ovadia, p. 175

128. Magen Avraham 696:15

DRINKING ON PURIM

There is a mitzvah to drink wine¹²⁹ on Purim to the extent that one does not know the difference between “cursed is Haman” and “blessed is Mordechai.”¹³⁰ Some understand this literally, requiring significant intoxication.¹³¹ Others interpret it more moderately, requiring only that one drink somewhat more than usual, or drink a small amount and then sleep.¹³² Many contemporary authorities recommend adopting the more moderate approach and caution strongly against excessive intoxication.¹³³ However one fulfills this mitzvah, it should be done *l'shem shamayim*.¹³⁴ Furthermore, care must be taken that drinking does not interfere with other mitzvot, such

129. See Rashi, Megilla 7b. Some, including R. Mordechai Willig holds that one should not drink intoxicating drinks other than wine (https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Seudat_Purim), while some hold that other intoxicating drinks are acceptable (see Piskei Teshuvot 695:3), provided they are consumed responsibly.

130. Megilla 7b; Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 695:2

131. Siddur Beit Yaakov, citing Chacham Tzvi

132. Rema 695:2; Mishna Berura 695:5

133. Chazon Ovadia, p. 175; R. Rimon, “Purim,”

p. 287; Oholei Halacha, p. 197; Mikraei Kodesh,

p. 195. See also https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Seudat_Purim, where R. Hershel

Schachter is quoted as saying that one may drink

during the meal and fall asleep after the meal.

134. Peninei Halacha, Zemanim 16:10

as *Birkat HaMazon* or *Ma'ariv*, and certainly not lead to inappropriate conduct.¹³⁵

It is not customary for women to become intoxicated on Purim.¹³⁶ Some suggest that a small amount of drinking is acceptable,¹³⁷ while others maintain that a woman should not drink at all.¹³⁸

AL HANISSIM

One who eats bread on Purim, whether as part of the Purim *seudah* or not, should recite *Al Hanissim* within the *beracha* of “*Nodeh*” in *Birkat Hamazon*. This is true even if *Birkat Hamazon* was recited after nightfall, on the night after Purim.¹³⁹ If it was forgotten, one does not return to that *beracha* or repeat *Birkat Hamazon*.¹⁴⁰

DRESSING UP

Although not mentioned in the Gemara, it is a widespread custom to dress up on Purim.¹⁴¹ Numerous explanations are offered for this practice,¹⁴² including commemorating the hidden nature of the miracle and the theme of *venahafoch hu*—that events were reversed. Others choose instead to wear Shabbat clothing in honor of the festive day.

Regarding cross-dressing, the Rema¹⁴³ records a lenient view permitting it on Purim. However, most authorities prohibit it.¹⁴⁴ Some are lenient for young children or when only a single garment associated with the other gender is worn,¹⁴⁵ while others maintain a

135. Biur Halacha 695:2

136. Responsa Shevet HaLevi 10:18; R. Rimon, “Purim,” p. 287

137. R. Dov Lior at <https://www.yeshiva.org.il/ask/201>; Chazon Ovadia, p. 178

138. Nitei Gavriel 73:4

139. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 188:10, 695:3

140. Mishna Berura 695:15

141. Rema, O.C. 696:8

142. See Yalkut Yosef, 5780 edition, 696

143. 696:8

144. Mishna Berura 696:30; Chazon Ovadia, p. 199

145. See Ashrei Ha'ish 48:5 and Mishna Berura

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stringent position even in these situations.¹⁴⁶

Purim in Jerusalem and Other Walled Cities

Chazal instituted that cities which were not walled at the time of Yehoshua bin Nun celebrate Purim on the 14th of Adar, while cities that were walled at that time celebrate on the 15th.¹⁴⁷ Today, only Jerusalem is definitively known to have been walled at the time of Yehoshua.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, Purim is celebrated in most of Jerusalem on the 15th of Adar (Shushan Purim).

There are several cities regarding which there is uncertainty as to whether they were walled in Yehoshua's time and whether their current location corresponds to the ancient site, such as Tzfat, Hebron, and Jaffa.¹⁴⁹ In such locations, the *Megilla* is read on both the 14th and the 15th, though no *berachot* are recited on the 15th.¹⁵⁰ Some authorities maintain that the other mitzvot of Purim should also be observed on the 15th in those cities,¹⁵¹ while others disagree.¹⁵²

TRAVEL BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND OTHER CITIES

A resident of Jerusalem who departs to another location, such as Beit Shemesh, before dawn on the 14th of Adar celebrates Purim on the 14th according to all opinions, despite his normal residence being in Jerusalem. This is because according to Chazal, even one who visits an unwalled city for Purim alone has the status of a resident of that city with

696:30.

146. Chazon Ovadia, p.199; Mishna Berura 696:30

147. *Megilla* 2a; Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 688

148. *Piskei Teshuvot* 688:9; *Dvar Chevron*, Moadim, p.364

149. *Piskei Teshuvot* 688:9; *Oholei Halacha*, p.206

150. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 688:4

151. *Magen Avraham* 688:5

152. *Pri Chadash* 688

respect to Purim.¹⁵³ If such a person returns to Jerusalem before dawn on the 15th of Adar, according to many *poskim*, he is also obligated to celebrate Purim a second time on the 15th.¹⁵⁴ If one departs Jerusalem after dawn on the 14th of Adar for Beit Shemesh, one does not become obligated to celebrate Purim on the 14th according to all opinions.

According to many *poskim*, a resident of Beit Shemesh who celebrates Purim at home on the 14th and then travels to Jerusalem before dawn on the 15th of Adar is obligated to celebrate Purim again on the 15th of Adar, at least due to uncertainty, despite having celebrated it already in his own location.¹⁵⁵ If such a person travels to Jerusalem after dawn on the 15th of Adar, he is not obligated to celebrate Purim again according to all opinions.

Many other travel scenarios not mentioned here, as well as some that are mentioned, are subject to significant complicating factors as well as halachic dispute. One should consult a competent halachic authority when practical questions arise.¹⁵⁶ ■

153. Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 688:5; Mishna Berura 688:12

154. *Piskei Teshuvot* 688 n.103; *Yalkut Yosef*, 5780 edition, p.340

155. R. Yaakov Ariel, cited in *Oholei Halacha*, p.209; see also *Yalkut Yosef*, p.306; *Hilchot Chag B'chag* 9:13

156. See *Piskei Teshuvot* 688:9–10; *Torat HaMo'adim* 6:9–10

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