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Practical Guide To Purim

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Preface

With Hakadosh Baruch Hu's chesed we succeeded in compiling a wonderful and exciting collection of articles on the halachos of Purim. In an effort to spread Torah and understand the exciting holiday of Purim in a new light, we have chosen to share this packet with you. As we reach this milestone, it is without doubt due to certain individuals who deserve proper recognition. Firstly, we would like to thank Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Willig, who reviewed the Halachas of the packet. We would like to thank the editors who spent a lot of time researching the topics and working on the articles. Our editors include: Dubbin Hanon, Darren May, Jeremy Perlow, and Ike Sultan. Ben Sultan designed the cover. The printing was thanks to SOY and its prestigious board members including: Jacob Bernstein, Natan Bienstock, Tuvia Miller, Ari Marks, and David Weiss.

Introduction

One of chazal's most famous comments about Purim is the Gemara in Shabbat 88a which states that, at the end of the story of Ester, Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah out of love. In fact, the gemara explains that the Torah was only accepted out of fear at Har Sinai and if not for the reacceptance of Torah in the days of Mordechai and Ester, there would be a claim that we only accepted Torah out of duress, thereby undermining the legitimacy of our acceptance of Torah. What in the story of Purim prompted Bnei Yisrael to accept the Torah out of love?

Rav Dessler¹ quotes the Maharal who explains that what made our acceptance of Torah at Har Sinai "under duress" was that Hashem revealed Himself so clearly that it was impossible not to recognize Him and the truth of His Torah. However, Rav Dessler continues, in the days of Mordechai and Ester, Hashem secretly engineered the salvation without revealing any miracles. Due to the apparently natural course of events, it was easy to ignore Hashem's hand in Jewish history, and yet, Bnei Yisrael were inspired to recognize Hashem's hidden providence and reaccept the Torah. Precisely because Bnei Yisrael could have easily ignored Hashem, and yet due to a deep rooted emunah, they understood that the hidden miracles were really manifestations of Hashem is why they reaccepted Torah with pure free will, out of love. Each year Purim is a wonderful opportunity to be inspired and draw ourselves closer to Hashem once again.

Mikra Megilah - Asher Finkelstein

1. One must read or hear every word of the megilah.² Most poskim agree that one who misses even one word has not fulfilled his obligation.³

¹ Michtav M'Eliyahu v. 2, p.123-125

² S.A. O.C. 690:3

2. The entire megilah should be read from a kosher megilah. However, if a minority of the megilah was read by heart, one has fulfilled his obligation.⁴ Therefore, it is advisable for everyone listening to the megilah to follow along with a kosher megilah, or at least a Chumash, so that they can read any words they may miss.⁵
3. When one misses a word, he should try to read the missing word before the baal koreh continues to the next word.⁶
4. When filling in missing words, one should be careful to actually hear himself read those words.⁷

³ M.B. 690:5. However, the Beir Halacha (690:14, s.v. “ein”) quotes the Riaz as saying that leaving out words like “Bnei Haramachim” that aren’t essential to the reading does not invalidate the reading. Nevertheless, continues the Beir Halacha, most Poskim (including Magen Avraham, Pri Chadash, and Mateh Yehuda) accept the view of the Ran and Rashba that all words in the megilah must be read or the reading is invalidated. Therefore, one who left out any word from the reading has invalidated it to the extent that one should read again with a Bracha. The Chayei Adam (155:16) however, out of concern for the opinion of the Riaz and concern that not everyone is familiar with which words are absolutely necessary, rules that one should repeat the reading without a Bracha. He agrees however, that if one missed words which are clearly absolutely necessary, one should read the megilah again with a Bracha.

⁴ S.A. 690:3. With regard to a megilah scroll that was missing words, the same rule applies: that it is kosher provided a majority of the words are in fact written. However, even if a majority of the text was written, if an entire “inyan”, an entire independent part of the story or other portions of the megilah, was missing, the megilah scroll is not kosher. This rule about an entire “inyan” however, only applies to missing sections of the megilah scroll. But with regard to reading the minority of the megilah by heart, even reading an entire “inyan” in such a manner does not invalidate the reading. The Bigdei Yesha was stringent in this regard, but his view is not accepted (Beir Halacha 690:3 s.v. davka). The question has been raised (M.B. 690: 9) with regard to a megilah scroll which was missing exactly half the text. As the Beir Halacha explains (690:3 s.v. aval), this refers to half the words, not half the letters. Using modern techniques, it has been discovered that the megilah in fact contains an odd number of words, seemingly rendering irrelevant all discussion of a half-written megilah. However, Rav Elyashiv (quoted in Chashukei Chemed megilah pg. 246) suggested that this question could still be relevant to a megilah written in a foreign language which may contain an even number of words.

⁵ M.B. 690:19 in the name of the Pri Megadim. As the M.B. explains in s”k 60, this is a particularly common problem which arises when the children continue to make noise for Haman after the Baal Koreh resumes reading.

⁶ Halichos Shlomo Purim chap. 19: Orchos Halacha note 10. The reason is that even if one properly hears both the baal koreh’s next word and the word one is reading, there may be an issue of reading out of order, since the earlier word and the later word are being read simultaneously.

⁷ Shaar Hatzion 690:7. This is out of concern for the opinion of the Beis Yosef that one who is deaf cannot fulfil the reading of the megilah since he cannot hear the words. Others however, (including the Shaarei Tshuva and the Taz), posit the only problem with the deaf person is that he lacks the potential to hear the words. One who has a functional sense of hearing and happened to read some words without hearing however, is not subject to this issue. The Kaf Hachaim (62:7, in the name of the Chesed Laalafim) wonders whether one who read the words loudly but could not hear them due to other noise would have fulfilled his obligation. Is the requirement to hear the words one reads meant in its most basic sense or is it truly just a requirement to vocalize the words in a way that would be audible under normal noise conditions? The Shevet Hakehasi (6:71), Sifsei Chachamim (Bereishis 8:8), and Shraga Hameir (7:139) therefore require one to actually hear the words he reads. See also Rivevos Efraim (6:437:3) for further discussion on this topic. He quotes the above Shaar Hatzion that one should make

5. Therefore, the baal koreh should repeat the psukim that the congregation reads outloud from his kosher megilah.⁸

Seudat Purim - Yaakov Abramovitz

1. On Purim, one is obligated to have a festive meal (*seudah*) celebrating the miracle that saved *bnei yisroel* from annihilation.⁹
2. This meal must take place on Purim day, preferably after davening Mincha. One should try to daven Mincha early enough so that most of the Purim *seudah* will happen before sunset.¹⁰
3. When Purim is on Friday, one should have his *seudah* in the morning, before midday (*chatzos*),¹¹ so that he will be hungry for the Shabbos meal on Friday night. One may choose to have his Purim *seudah* in the morning even when Purim is not on Friday.¹²
4. It is proper to rejoice and have an additional, smaller¹³ meal on Purim night¹⁴, however, one does not fulfill his *seudah* obligation with this meal.¹⁵
5. The Purim *seudah* should preferably include bread and meat, like a Shabbos and Yom Tov meal.¹⁶
6. The mitzvah of drinking wine on Purim day¹⁷ is fulfilled by drinking more than one is accustomed to and falling asleep. In this way, one will satisfy the obligation to reach the point at which one cannot tell the difference between *arur Haman* (cursed is Haman) and *baruch Mordechai* (blessed is Mordechai).¹⁸ One should certainly not overdrink if it will lead one to be lax in one's observance of any mitzvah such as a tefillah or bracha.¹⁹

sure to read it loud enough to hear himself and explains that this applies despite the fact that his reading of these words is already by heart or from a not-kosher megilah.

⁸ Rama (690:4 in the name of Beis Yosef and Shibalei Haleket). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach recommends that one have in mind not to fulfil his obligation with the reading that he does from his Chumash but rather with the reading done by the baal koreh afterward (Halichos Shlomo ibid. 4).

⁹ M.B 670:6 quotes the Levush that on Purim we rejoice physically, with a *seudah*, to celebrate that our bodies were saved from destruction. Alternatively, Pri Megadim (Mishbetzos Zahav 695:1) suggests that our *seudah* commemorates the miracle that happened at Esther's *seudah*.

¹⁰ Rama 695:2

¹¹ Rama 695:2, M.B 695:10

¹² Rama 695:2. M.B 695:9 quotes that the Shelah HaKadosh praised those who always had their *seudah* in the morning.

¹³ M.B 695:3

¹⁴ Rama 695:1 and M.B 695:1

¹⁵ S.A 695:1

¹⁶ Aruch Hashulchan 695:1,7. Rambam (Megillah 2:15) too mentions meat. However, Magen Avraham (696:15) maintains that neither bread nor meat is necessary for the Purim *seudah*. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein (Rivevos Efraim vol. 1, 350), chicken is an acceptable substitute for meat at this meal.

¹⁷ Megillah 7b codified in S.A 695:2. Biur Halacha s.v. *chayav* explains that since all of the miracles of Purim (the killing of Vashti to be replaced by Esther, and the downfall of Haman) happened through wine during a party, Chazal obligated us to commemorate these events with similar actions. There are many different explanations of "*ad d'lo yada bein arur Haman l'Baruch Mordechai*" and how much wine one actually has to drink (e.g. M.B 695:4 and Sha'ar HaTziyun 695:5).

¹⁸ Rama 695:2, M.B 695:4.

¹⁹ M.B 695:4. Biur Halacha s.v. *ad* quotes Meiri (Megillah 7b) who writes that Chazal never intended a "Purim *simchah*" of *hollelus* (vanity) and *shtus* (frivolity), but rather a *simcha* of *ta'anug* (enjoyment) through which we can develop feelings of love for Hashem and appreciation for His miracles. He also

7. The *mitzvah* to drink is only during the *seudah*.²⁰ According to most poskim, one can only fulfill this obligation with wine.²¹

Mishloach Manot – Ike Sultan

1. There is a *mitzvah* to give one Mishloach Manot, containing two foods, to another Jew on Purim.²² Some say that the primary purpose is to increase friendship amongst Klal Yisrael, and some say that it is to ensure that every Jew has food for Seudat Purim.²³
2. Mishloach Manot must be given during the day of Purim and not the night.²⁴ It is preferable to give it before eating the Seudat Purim.²⁵ One should ensure that the recipient notices that he received it before sunset.²⁶
3. Many say that each food should be something that could serve as a course in a meal.²⁷ A drink counts just like a food, but some are strict to give two foods.²⁸

quotes Chayei Adam (155:30) who writes that someone who knows that getting drunk will lead him to be lax in the performance of any *mitzvah*, is better off not drinking at all.

²⁰ Based on the context in which these halachos are discussed.

²¹ Rashi (Megillah 7b s.v. *levasumei*) and Rambam (Megillah 2:15) write that one should specifically drink wine since the Purim miracle transpired through wine. Chayei Adam 155:30 and Biur Halacha s.v. *chayav* specifically mention wine as well. This is codified by Nitei Gavriel p. 83. However, others imply that one may use any alcoholic beverage (e.g. Aruch HaShulchan 695:5). One certainly cannot fulfill his obligation with grape juice because it does not bring one to a state of *simchah* (Shevet HaLevi vol. 10, 107:2 and Halichot Shlomo pg 342, note 76).

²² The obligation of Mishloach Manot is explicit in Megillat Ester 9:22 and S”A 695:4. Chazon Ovadyah (Purim pg 142) writes that it’s obvious that one doesn’t fulfill one’s obligation by sending to a non-Jew as he is not included in Reyeyhu.

²³ The first reason is found in the Manot HaLevi (Ester 9:20) and the second in Trumat HaDeshen 111.

²⁴ Rama 695:4 writes that Mishloach Manot must be given during the day of Purim and not the night. This is accepted by the Mishna Brurah 695:22 and Yalkut Yosef 695:4(2).

²⁵ Rav Shlomo Zalman (Halichot Shlomo 19:9) writes that one shouldn’t eat a meal before fulfilling Mishloach Manot because it is like other mitzvot which one may not eat a meal before fulfilling. Moadim UZmanim 2:186 agrees. However, Chazon Ovadyah (pg 135) writes that the implication of the Rambam and S”A who mention Seudat Purim before Mishloach Manot is that it is permitted to eat before Mishloach Manot. He adds that it is proper to give it before the meal. Tzitz Eliezer 15:32(15), Az Nidbaru 6:65, and Mishneh Halachot 6:122, 7:92 agree. Rav Schachter (oral communication) explains that the Rambam (Megillah 2:15) implies that one should send Mishloach Manot from one’s meal in order to include others in one’s meal; thus, one may certainly start one’s meal before sending Mishloach Manot.

²⁶ Aruch HaShulchan 695:16 writes that if the recipient doesn’t return home during the day and doesn’t know about it, even if his family accepts it for him, the giver doesn’t fulfill his obligation. Yalkut Yosef 695:4(28) agrees. However, Moadei Yeshurun (pg 59) quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein as saying that if a woman accepted Mishloach Manot on her husband’s behalf, the giver fulfills his obligation, even if he didn’t know about it on Purim.

²⁷ Chazon Ovadyah (pg 129-31) learns from Megillah 7b that one should send enough food for a meal. Aruch HaShulchan 695:15 writes each food should be significant. Similarly, Rav Schachter (3/4/09 “Hilchos Purim”, min 56-8) said each food should be something that could serve as a course in a meal or one can invite a guest for a meal.

²⁸ Trumat HaDeshen 111 writes that a drink counts just like a food. Many achronim agree including Magen Avraham 695:11, Mishna Brurah 695:20, and Aruch HaShulchan 695:14. However, Chazon

4. Some say that one should give Mishloach Manot through a shaliach (messenger), while others say that this is unnecessary.²⁹
5. After fulfilling Mishloach Manot according to the halacha, one may give more even if they don't fulfill all the stringencies of Mishloach Manot.³⁰

Matanos Le'evyonim - David Orenbuch

1. Everyone is obligated to give Matanos Le'evyonim - money to the poor.³¹ This includes men and women.³² Even a poor person must give money to other poor people.³³
2. One must give at least two gifts to two different poor people.³⁴

Ovadyah (pg 124) writes that it's preferable to give two foods, not including drinks, because of the opinion of Rabbenu Chananel (Megilla 7b).

²⁹ Sh"t Binyan Tzion 44 writes that based on the simple translation of Mishloach, he had a question if one fulfilled Mishloach Manot by giving it directly. He concludes that one fulfills one's obligation because giving it directly satisfies both reasons (see note 2).

Teshuvot VeHanhagot 2:346 writes that this seems to be a dispute in the Rishonim. Gemara Megilla 7b says that Abaye and Rabbi Chanina would exchange their meals on Purim. Rashi Megilla 7b explains that they switched off eating at each other's Seudot. Bet Yosef 695:4 asks on Rashi how they fulfilled Mishloach Manot. Darkei Moshe 695:7 defends Rashi saying that the word "mishloach" is imprecise and there's no difference in sending food and providing food for a guest. However, Rambam (Megillah 2:15) and Ran 3b explain each person sent his meal to his friend and his friend to him in order to fulfill Mishloach Manot, implying it needs to be sent.

Chazon Ovadyah (pg 143-5) quotes Rav Ezra Attiah, who argues on the Binyan Tzion based on Kiddushin 23b which says that there's no Shelichut if one couldn't do it oneself. Rav Ovadyah answers that this only applies when the sender isn't chayav in that mitzvah; however, all Jews are chayav in Mishloach Manot.

Mishna Brurah 695:18 quotes the question of the Binyan Tzion. Chatom Sofer on Gittin 22b and Yafeh Lelev 695:19 insist on having a messenger. However, Chazon Ovadyah (pg 143), Rabbi Sobolofsky (3/8/09 "Mishloach Manos- Fact and Fiction"), and Maadeni Shlomo (pg 121) quoting the Chazon Ish, hold that one does not need a messenger.

³⁰ Chazon Ovadyah (pg 133) writes that after one gave one Mishloach Manot, one may send more even if they don't fulfill the strict laws of Mishloach Manot (unlike the Torat Avigdor who holds that all of the Mishloach Manot have to be according to the halacha). This seems to be supported by the Mishna Brurah 695:22.

³¹ S.A. 694:1 The source for this is found in the Megillah 9:22

³² M.B. 694:1. The Aruch Hashulchan 694:2 explains that although women are obligated, they can fulfill their obligation with their husbands since a man and his wife are considered one entity. He adds that children under bar mitzvah also must give and cannot rely on their father's giving to exempt themselves.

³³ The Aruch Hashulchan 694:2 quotes the Bach, Taz, and Pri Migadim explaining that this obligation of the poor person to give to other poor people is similar to his obligation to sell his possessions in order to buy Chanukah candles and four cups of wine for the Pesach Seder. M.B. 694:2 quotes the Pri Migadim explaining that the poor person can switch meals with two other poor people in order to fulfill his obligation without having to lose money.

³⁴ S.A. 694:1. Esther 9:22 states, "U' matanos La'evyonim," in the plural form implying that one is obligated to give to more than one person. M.B. 694:2 quotes the Chidushei Ha'ritva saying that the minimum shiur to give is at least two prutah's worth, as anything less is not considered a gift. M.B. 694:3 explains that this obligation to give one matanah to two people is only to fulfill the lowest level of

3. The mitzvah can be fulfilled by giving money to men, women or children. However, if the women and children rely on the father for sustenance, then giving to a father and his child or a husband and his wife would only be viewed as giving to one person.³⁵
4. One can give either money or food as long as these things can be easily used on Purim.³⁶
5. The money has to be given specifically on the day of Purim. It cannot be given before Purim even if one explicitly tells the poor person that he should spend the money on Purim. However, one can appoint another person before Purim to give the money on Purim.³⁷
6. One should not check if the poor person is really in need of money, but one should be willing to give to anyone who asks throughout the entire day of Purim.³⁸
7. In addition to Matanos Le'evyonim, there is a minhag to give Machatzis Hashekel on erev Purim, before Mincha. In order to fulfill this mitzvah, one should give half a coin of the common currency of his country.³⁹
8. There is a custom to give three half coins since it says "Terumah" three times in parshas Shekalim.⁴⁰
9. Machatzis Hashekel is only an obligation for men over the age of 20 because they were the ones who gave the half shekel in the midbar. However, it is customary for everyone to give Machatzis Hashekel.⁴¹

Costumes – Dubbin Hanon

1. There is an ancient custom to wear costumes on Purim.⁴² There are a multitude of explanations given for this custom.⁴³

the obligation. However, one should try to give as much tzedakah as possible on the day of Purim "for there is no greater simcha than being mesameach a poor person."

³⁵ Aruch Hashulchan 694:2

³⁶ M.B. 694:2 explains that it is best to give the poor person specifically for his needs on the day of Purim. Thus, food can often be better than money.

³⁷ Aruch Hashulchan 694:2

³⁸ S.A. 694:3. The Aruch Hashulchan 694:3 actually learns this statement of the Shulchan Aruch to be a leniency within the obligation of Tzedaka that one can fulfill his obligation of giving Matanos Le'evyonim by giving to almost anyone and he does not have to check to see if they really need money. According to this understanding of the S.A one need not give to every person that asks.

³⁹ Rama 694:1. The Rama explains that this custom serves as a zecher to the machatzis hashekel that was collected during the month of Adar.

⁴⁰ Rama 694:1

⁴¹ The Rambam in Hilchos Shekalim 9:7 says that anyone over the age of bar mitzvah should give the half shekel. M.B. 694:5 writes that this is to fulfill the absolute obligation, but the minhag is that everyone should give the half shekel, even a pregnant woman for her fetus.

⁴² Mahari Mintz Teshuva 15, see also Purim Costumes by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz.

⁴³ (1) Siach Yitzchak 380 explains that that we are trying to highlight the fact that Haman hid his hate for the Jewish people when approaching Achashverosh for permission to destroy the Jews. Hashem responded measure for measure by sending Eliyahu disguised as Charvonah to defend the Jewish people.

(2) The Bnei Yissaschar (on Adar 9:1) cites a Maharam Chagiz who quotes Megilla 12a which explains that the Jewish people only did things in a "Lifnim" or hidden manner. So to Hashem only did things "Lifnim" – hidden. To commemorate this we hide ourselves behind our costumes.

(3) Eliya Rabba 696 says that we dress up to commemorate the fact that Haman dressed Mordechai in royal clothing.

2. Most poskim are against crossdressing on Purim,⁴⁴ even if one wears only one garment from the opposite gender,⁴⁵ and even if one is a child.⁴⁶
3. There is a custom to wear Yom Tov clothing on Purim.⁴⁷

(4) Torat Hamoadim pg. 267 quotes Rav Meir Mazuz (Sansan Liyair 12) that this custom almost certainly developed from non-Jewish origins, and therefore he says it should be discouraged. See Orchot Rabbenu 3: pg. 60:note 104 who argues the opposite, namely that the non-Jews took the practice of dressing up from the Jews.

⁴⁴ As a general rule, dressing up in clothing exclusive to the opposite gender is a Torah prohibition. The Torah (Devarim 22:5) expressly forbids such behavior: "A man's attire shall not be on a woman, nor may a man wear a woman's garment." However, Mahari Mintz (teshuva 15) writes that he saw many people dress as members of the opposite gender on Purim in the presence of leading Chachamim who did not object. He presents several arguments to justify this custom. One claim is that since one is only dressing up for the Purim celebration and not to promote promiscuity, it may be permissible. The Mahari Mintz compares this practice to the custom he observed of allowing children to grab candies from each other on Purim. Even though halacha clearly considers taking other people's possessions even in jest as outright theft, in the context of the Purim celebration it is deemed permissible. Thus, the Rama 696:8 writes based on the Mahari Mintz that the minhag is to be lenient about crossdressing. Rama additionally records a custom to allow wearing clothes that contain shaatnez (wool and linen) on a rabbinic level on Purim. These enactments were waived for the purpose of the special joy of Purim.

On the other hand, Taz YD 182:4 writes that his father-in-law, the Bach, disagreed with the Rama and brings a proof from the Yereim 98 that one should not crossdress at a wedding. He concludes that anyone who refrains from crossdressing will merit blessing.

Yechave Daat 5:50 explains that the opinion of the Rambam and other rishonim is that dressing as a member of the opposite gender is forbidden under all circumstances, even for Purim or for the joy of a bride and groom. Aruch Hashulchan 696:12 writes that although the Rama justifies the custom, this custom does not exist anymore. See 10 minute halacha on Crossdressing on Purim by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz.

⁴⁵ Pri Megadim OC Mishbetzot Zahav 696:5 writes that if one is only wearing one women's garment, but still clearly looks like a man, he may be lenient. This is quoted by Mishna Brura 696:30. Nevertheless, Rav Dovid Feinstein (Purim Halacha Tidbits) ruled that wearing a woman's wig would constitute a simlat isha and would be prohibited.

Chacham Ovadia Yosef (Chazon Ovadyah Purim pg 199, Sh"t Yabia Omer YD 5:14 and Yechave Daat 5:50) strictly forbids any costumes that involve cross-dressing on Purim, even for children. Rav Menashe Klein (Sh"t Mishneh Halachot 11:563) agrees.

⁴⁶ Rav Chaim Kanievsky says in the name of the Chazon Ish (quoted in Dirshu M.B 696, note 52) that cross-dressing on Purim is inappropriate even for children. Bayit Hayehudi Volume 4 page 285 agrees. However, the Steipler and Rav Elyashiv (quoted in Dirshu M.B 696, note 52) were lenient for young children under the age of chinuch.

⁴⁷ M.B 695:3, Torat HaMoadim (Purim 8:1), Ben Ish Chai Parashat Titzaveh Halacha 22