

PURIM

I. The Four Readings — ארבע פרשיות

- A. On several *Shabbosos* preceding and following Purim, special sections of the Torah are read as the *maftir*:
1. פרשת שקלים — (*Parshas Shekalim*, Exodus XXX:11-16) is read on the *Shabbos* before *Rosh Chodesh Adar* (Adar II in a leap year)¹ or, if *Rosh Chodesh Adar* occurs on *Shabbos*, on *Rosh Chodesh* itself.²
 2. פרשת זכור (*Parshas Zachor*, Deuteronomy XXV: 17-19) is read on the *Shabbos* before Purim.³ See Section B for more details concerning *Parchas Zachor*.
 3. פרשת החודש (*Parshas Hachodesh*, Exodus XII: 1-20) is read on the *Shabbos* before *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* or, if *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* occurs on *Shabbos*, on *Rosh Chodesh* itself.⁴
 4. פרשת פרה (*Parshas Para*, Numbers XIX) is read on the *Shabbos* before *Parshas Hachodesh*.⁵
- B. *Parshas Zachor*
1. The reading of *Parshas Zachor* is a fulfillment of the biblical commandment, זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק ("Remember what Amalek did to you")⁶ (Deut. XXV:17).
 2. Each listener must have *kavana latzeis* — intent to fulfill) this commandment with the reading of *Parshas Zachor*, and the reader must have *kavana lehotzi* — intent to allow others to fulfill their obligation through his performance) for all those listening to his reading.⁷
 3. According to many authorities, the person who goes up to the Torah for the *aliya* must have *kavana lehotzi* for the blessings he recites, and the congregation must have *kavana latzeis* with the blessings. זכור ברוך הוא וברוך שמו should not be said.⁸

4. There is an obligation upon everyone to hear the reading of *Parshas Zachor* with a *minyan*. Therefore, even people who cannot usually pray with a *minyan* must do so on this *Shabbos*. If it is impossible to come to a *minyan*, one should nevertheless read *Parshas Zachor* from a kosher *sefer Torah*; if it is impossible to read *Parshas Zachor* from a *sefer Torah*, he should read it from a printed text with the proper *trop* (traditional cantillation).¹⁰
5. If one missed hearing *Parshas Zachor* with a *minyan*, he should be careful to hear it on *Shabbos* when *כי תצא* (which includes *Parshas Zachor*) is read. At that time, he must have *kavana latzeis* and the reader must have *kavana lehotzi*.¹¹
6. There is a disagreement among the halachic authorities whether women are obligated to fulfill this commandment. Women should make every effort to hear the reading of *Parshas Zachor*.¹²
7. According to some, the last verse of *Parshas Zachor* should be repeated with two vocalizations of the word זכר. First the word is pronounced זִכֵּר (*zeicher*) and then זְכֵר (*zecher*).¹³

II. The Fast of Esther — תענית אסתר

- A. One should fast on the day before Purim to commemorate the fact that the Jews fasted and prayed on the day before their battles on the fourteenth of Adar. This fast is known as *Ta'anis Esther* (the Fast of Esther).¹⁴ (See Chap. 8).
- B. If Purim occurs on Sunday, *Ta'anis Esther* is observed on the previous Thursday.¹⁵
- C. This fast is not as stringent an obligation as other fast days. Thus, if one is ill or has a severe headache and would suffer greatly from fasting that day, he may refrain from fasting then; he must, however, make the fast up by fasting on another day after he recovers. Every reasonably healthy person should fast on the correct day.¹⁶ (See Chapter 8, Paragraph I.B.2.b.)

III. The Reading of the Megila — מקרא מגילה

- A. The *mitzva* of reading the *Megila* on Purim is incumbent upon every Jew — men, women, and children who have reached an educable age.¹⁷

- B. One is obligated to read the *Megila* twice — once on the night of Purim and once during the day of Purim.¹⁸
- C. The reading at night may take place from צאת הכוכבים (*tzeis hakochavim* — nightfall)¹⁹ until עמוד השחר (*amud hashachar* — the break of dawn).²⁰ The following day, the *Megila* may be read from sunrise (in emergencies, from *amud hashachar*)²¹ until sunset. (If one has not read it before sunset, he should read it until *tzeis hakochavim*, but he should not recite the blessings.²²
- D. One male Jew can serve as the reader for others who listen. Each listener must have *kavana latzeis* and the reader must have *kavana lehotzi* (see Section I, Paragraph B).²³ There is a difference of opinion among the halachic authorities with regard to a situation in which there is less than a *minyan* present and everyone is able to read the *Megila* himself: some maintain that each person should read by himself, while others maintain that it is preferable for one to read on behalf of all.²⁴
- E. Where women alone are reading the *Megila* (or having it read to them), the blessing is לשמוע מקרא מגילה instead of על מקרא מגילה.²⁵ If possible, a woman should hear the reading of the *Megila* from a man.²⁶ A woman should not read for a man.²⁷
- F. It is preferable to read the *Megila* in a synagogue even if one has a *minyan* in his house, to fulfill the verse, כבוד עם הדרת מלך ("The king's glory is in a multitude of people." Proverbs XIV:28).²⁸
- G. If it is impossible to go to a synagogue, one should assemble a *minyan* for the reading. If this is impossible, one may read it privately.²⁹
- H. One may not eat before the reading of the *Megila*.³⁰ If a person does not feel well and finds it difficult to listen to the *Megila* reading, he may eat or drink a quantity less than the size of an egg.³¹ If a person is weak, and fasting until after the *Megila* reading will cause him to become ill, and the above mentioned amount will not suffice, he may eat more than that amount, provided that he designates someone to remind him to read the *Megila* after he eats.³²
- I. Before the reading of the *Megila* on the night of Purim, it is customary for every male Jew over the age of twenty (some assume this obligation at the age of thirteen)³³ to donate three half-dollars in commemoration of the half shekels that were donated this time of year in the days of the Temple.³⁴ If Purim begins on Saturday night and the *Megila* is read before one has access to money, one

- should give the "half shekel" before the reading of the *Megila* the next day.³⁵
- J. Both the reader and the listeners should stand for the recitation of the blessings,³⁶ and may be seated for the *Megila* reading. However, if one reads for a *minyan*, he should read standing, out of respect for the congregation.³⁷
- K. Before the reading of the *Megilah*, three blessings are recited:³⁸
1. על מקרא מגילה
 2. שעשה נסים
 3. שהחיינו — *Shehechianu*
- The blessings are recited both at night and in the daytime.³⁹ When the reader pronounces the blessing *Shehechianu* in the daytime, he and the congregation should have in mind that this blessing refers not only to the reading of the *Megila* but also to the other *mitzvos* of the day, i.e. משלוח מנות, מתנות לאביונים, סעודת פורים (see Section IV.)⁴⁰ The person who recites the blessings must have *kavana lehotzi*; the congregation must have *kavana latzeis*. קורא הוא וברוך שמו should not be said.⁴¹
- L. Before the recitation of the blessings, the reader's *Megila* should be unrolled and folded as a letter.⁴²
- M. The reading must be from a kosher *Megila*⁴³ (i.e. written on parchment, containing line markings, handwritten with special ink etc.⁴⁴). Therefore, listeners should not read aloud from a printed text but should follow along silently and listen to the reader.⁴⁵
- N. There is an obligation to hear *every word* read from a kosher *Megila*. If, however, some words are missing from the *Megila*, they may be added orally.⁴⁶ (If a whole topic is missing or if there is an omission in the very beginning or end, the *Megila* may no longer be used.⁴⁷) Similarly, if one fails to hear certain words because of noise after the reading of Haman's name, he should read them aloud from a printed text.⁴⁸ The reader should wait for silence after each reading of Haman's name before continuing. He should repeat every word which he feels some in the congregation may not have heard.⁴⁹
- O. The custom is that the verses referring to Israel's redemptions:
1. איש יהודי (II:5)
 2. ומרדכי יצא (VIII:15)
 3. ליהודים (VIII:16)
 4. כי מרדכי היהודי (X:3)
- are recited aloud by the congregation and repeated by the reader.

- P. The custom is to bang and make noise when the name of Haman is read.⁵¹
- Q. The names of the ten sons of Haman and the following word עשרת should be read in one breath (but audibly).⁵² If the reader can read the preceding words חמש מאות איש in the same breath as well, he should do so.⁵³ In a synagogue where it is the custom for the congregation to say the names of the ten sons of Haman, the procedure is as follows: the reader stops before the words חמש מאות איש, the members of the congregation say חמש מאות איש and the ten sons of Haman (in one breath), and then the reader repeats מאות איש and the ten sons of Haman.⁵⁴
- R. Immediately after the completion of the reading, before the recitation of the final blessing, the Megila is rolled up like a scroll.⁵⁵
- S. Following the reading of the Megila in the presence of a congregation of ten, the blessing הריב את ריבנו is recited by the reader.⁵⁶
- T. One should never touch a Megila unless he has first washed his hands.⁵⁷

IV. The Other Mitzvos of Purim

- A. The Sending of Gifts – משלוח מנות
1. On the day of Purim, every Jewish man and woman is obligated to send at least one friend at least two varieties of food⁵⁸ requiring no further preparation.⁵⁹
 2. Some authorities maintain that these should be sent through a messenger rather than given directly.⁶⁰
- B. Gifts to the Poor – מתנות לאביונים
1. On the day of Purim,⁶¹ every Jewish man and woman is obligated to give money or food to at least two poor persons.⁶²
 2. If there are no poor people available, one should put aside money on Purim and give it to poor people afterwards.⁶³ Preferably, one should have someone else take possession of the money on behalf of the poor.⁶⁴
- C. The Purim Feast – סעודת פורים
1. There is an obligation to have a feast on the day of Purim.⁶⁵ Our custom is to continue the meal into the night, but most of the meal should be eaten during the day.⁶⁶ If Bircas Hamazon is recited after dark but before Maariv, then על הנסים (see Section V, Paragraph A) is still recited. If Purim occurs on Friday the feast should be eaten before noon on Friday.⁶⁷

2. It is proper to be in a festive mood on Purim night.⁶⁸
3. On the day of Purim, there is an obligation to drink until one cannot distinguish between ברוך מרדכי ("Blessed is Mordechai") and ארור המן ("Cursed is Haman"). If, however, one fears that as a consequence of excessive drinking he will neglect mitzvos or behave improperly, he should drink only a little more than usual and, if possible, allow himself to fall asleep as a result of alcohol.⁶⁹
4. It is forbidden to fast or eulogize on the fourteenth and the fifteenth day of Adar I and II. Neither תחנון nor למנצה are recited on these days.⁷⁰

V. Prayer on Purim

- A. On Purim, על הנסים is added to Shmoneh Esrei and to Bircas Hamazon.⁷¹ See Chapter 5, Section VII.A for more details.
- B. The order of prayers on Purim night after Shmoneh Esrei is:⁷²
1. קדיש שלם עם תתקבל
 2. מקרא מגילה עם הברכות
 3. אשר הניא, שושנת יעקב
 4. ואתה קדוש
 5. קדיש שלם בלי תתקבל
 6. עלינו
 7. קדיש יתום
- C. The order of prayers on Purim morning after Shmoneh Esrei is:⁷²
1. חצי קדיש
 2. קריאת התורה, חצי קדיש
 3. מקרא מגילה עם הברכות
 4. שושנת יעקב
 5. אשרי, ובא לציון גוי'

מקורות – דיני פורים

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| 8. עי ט"ו שם ס"ק ב. | 1. שו"ע או"ח חרפה:ה. |
| 9. מועדים וזמנים ח"ב סי' קסה. | 2. שם: א. |
| 10. שם: ז ובמ"ב ס"ק יד, טז. | 3. שם: ב, ה. |
| 11. שם במ"ב ס"ק טז. | 4. שם: ד. |
| 12. עי ספר החינוך מצוה חרג ובמנחה | 5. שם: ג. |
| חינוך וע"ע באריכות מועדים חזונים סי' קסז. | 6. שם: ז. |
| 13. מ"ב שם ס"ק יח. | 7. שם במשנה ברורה ס"ק יד. |