

Laws of Purim

A Compendium

By: Rabbi David Kadoch



1 - Ta'anit Esther

1. Men and women (including boys and girls that have reached the age of *mitzva*) are obligated to fast on Ta'anit Esther.
 - a. Exemptions
 - i. Pregnant women
 - ii. Nursing women
 - iii. Woman who miscarried within 30 days
 - iv. Sick individuals
 - v. Bride and Groom within their 7 days of celebration
 - vi. Sandak, father of the boy and the mohel on the day of a Berit Mila
2. The fast begins at dawn (72 minutes before sunrise) on the 13th of Adar and ends after the completion of the Megila.
3. One who finds it difficult to stay fasting until the completion of the Megila, may drink prior to the start of the Megila on condition that the drink is not of intoxicating nature. One may also eat light snacks such as fruit or *mezonot* up to the size of a *betza* (56 grams).

2 - Reading of the Megila - Keriat Megilat Esther

1. Men and women (including boys and girls that have reached the age of *mitzva*) must listen to the Megila once at night and once during the day.
 - a. The time for the night reading begins at nightfall (3 stars) and lasts all night until dawn.
 - b. The time for the day reading begins at sunrise and ends at sunset.
2. One who misses the reading at night cannot make it up during the day by reading it twice.
3. One must stop all their work in order to hear the Megila, even the study of Tora.
 - a. Exception: Dealing with one who has just died.
4. The custom for non-walled cities is to read on the 14th of Adar. Walled cities (eg. Jerusalem) read on the 15th.
 - a. A resident of a non-walled city who travels to a walled city (Tel Aviv to Jerusalem) but has in mind to return to his hometown (Tel Aviv) but gets stuck in the walled city (Jerusalem), he should read the Megila like the custom of his home town (Tel Aviv).
 - b. If he didn't have intent to return for the reading in his hometown, then he should read like the custom of the place that he's in currently.
5. A person who will be away and has no access to a Megila on the 14th, may read the Megila from the beginning of Hodesh Adar but without a blessing.
6. Since women were instrumental in the miracle of Purim (Queen Esther) and were also decreed to be wiped out by Haman, they are obligated to hear the Megila even though it's a positive commandment which is time-bound (in which they are normally exempt).
7. One fulfills the mitzva by reading it or by listening to it from a kosher Megila scroll.
8. One may not talk from the start of the blessings until after the final blessings.

9. One does not fulfill the mitzva by listening to it from a deaf, mute or mentally disabled individual.
10. According to the strict letter of the law, a woman can read on behalf of men, but the general custom is not to. However, a woman may read on behalf of other women.
11. One who is reading for women recites the end blessing without the words *Elohenu Melech HaOlam* (*shem u'malchut*).
12. The custom is to bring young children to hear the Megila so the miracle will be publicized (*pirsume nisa*).
13. The Megila may be recited standing or sitting but one representing a congregation should stand.
14. The Megila must be recited from one written on parchment but the listener may follow from any text.
15. The reader must have in mind that he is fulfilling the *mitzva* on behalf of the listeners and the listeners must have in mind that the reader is fulfilling the *mitzva* for them.
16. If the listener misses one word from the reader while listening, he must go back to the word he missed and catch up.
17. If one comes late to the synagogue and the reading has already started, he should recite the berachot and read from a *Humash* until he catches up with the reader. This is only allowed if he will hear most of the Megila from the reader who is reading from a proper Megila.
18. The reader must recite the 10 sons of Haman in one breath.
19. The reader must roll out the scroll prior to the reading. When complete, he should roll it back and then recite the final blessing.
20. One should try to listen to the Megila among a minyan of 10 men. If one can't, one should read it alone to himself.
21. At the first reading (night), the reader recites three blessings:
 - a. *Al Mikra Megila*
 - b. *She'Asa Nisim*
 - c. *She'HeHeyanu*
22. At night, while hearing/blessing *She'HeHeyanu*, one should have in mind the mitzvot of *Mishloah Manot*, *Matanot LaEvyonim* and *Seudat Purim* that he/she will perform the next day.
23. At the second reading (day), the reader omits *She'HeHeyanu*.
24. Following both readings, the blessing of "*HaRav et Rivenu*" is recited.
25. One who recited the Megila without the blessings, still fulfilled his obligation.
26. One may read the Megila multiple times for different people. It's best for the listener to say the blessing if the reader has already fulfilled his obligation, but it's not necessary.
27. According to most authorities, reciting the Megila with a microphone is not permitted since the voice heard from the speaker system isn't the actual voice emitting from the reciter.
 - a. However, if the voice of the reader can reach the corners of the room so that everyone can hear him even without a microphone, then the use of a microphone is permitted.
28. It is best to have a minyan at the house of a mourner so he/she can listen to the Megila. If not, he/she may go to synagogue to listen.

3 - Prayers on Purim - Tefilot Purim

1. The Tefila of “Al HaNisim” is inserted in the Amida on Purim as well in the Birkat HamaZon.
2. One who forgets to recite Al HaNisim and remembers prior to concluding the blessing, should return to the start of the blessing. Once the blessing has been concluded, then one does not go back.
3. *Tahanun* is not recited and *Shir Shel Yom* is replaced with the *mizmor* of Purim (Tehilim 22)
4. *Hallel* isn't recited.

4 - Tzedaka on Purim - Matanot La'Evyonim

1. One must give two gifts (*matanot*) to two poor people on the day of Purim.
 - a. To clarify: Avraham fulfills his obligation by giving a gift to Yitzhak (poor person #1) and another gift to Yaakov (poor person #2).
2. The definition of a “*matana*” is a meal. This is the best form of gifts since it allows the poor person to benefit right away for the seuda of Purim. If this is difficult to do, one can fulfill the *mitzva* by giving money equivalent to the cost of a meal.
 - a. Using our example in #1a, Avraham should give money to Yitzhak totalling that of a standard meal, between 7 and 10 dollars, and as well, give 7 to 10 dollars to Yaakov.
 - b. Hence, to fulfill the *mitzva* using money, each person who has reached the age of mitzva should give approximately \$14 to \$20 to the *Matanot La'Evyonim* basket.
 - c. The custom in our synagogue has been to give \$10 per poor person.
3. Every Jew, male or female who has reached the age of mitzva, is obligated in this *mitzva*.
4. The *mitzva* of *Matanot La'Evyonim* is much greater than the *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot*, therefore the custom is to give much more to the poor than the minimum amount listed in #1. The more one gives the bigger the *mitzva*.
5. This *mitzva* may only be performed on the day of Purim, not at night.
 - a. To clarify: One may still give *tzedaka* at night but it won't count towards his fulfillment of *Matanot La'Evyonim*.
6. One may not give *Matanot La'Evyonim* from his *tzedaka* allocated funds (*Ma'aser*).
 - a. To clarify: *Maaser* funds may not be used when giving the minimum two gifts to two people. Any charity beyond that, may be taken from *tzedaka* allocated funds.
7. One should not withhold *tzedaka* on the day of Purim. Rather, anyone who stretches their hand, we give them.

5 - Half Shekel - Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel

1. *Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel* - The custom is to give an amount to *tzedaka* corresponding to half the value of the local unit of currency. In Canada for example, this would be half a silver Canadian dollar.

2. According to the strict letter of the law, only adults above the age of 20 must give *Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel*. One should be strict and follow that any male or female over the age of 13 or 12 respectively, should give.
 - a. The general custom, however, is to give *Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel* for each member of the household; including one's wife and all his children regardless of the age.
 - b. If one finds it difficult to pay this amount financially, he can rely on the opinion listed above (13 and above).
3. One may not give *Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel* from his *tzedaka* allocated funds (*Ma'aser*).
4. The money collected for *Zecher LeMahatzit HaShekel* should go to institutions that teach Tora (Schools, Yeshivot, Kollelim etc.)

6 - Gifts to a Friend - Mishloah Manot

1. A person is obligated to give two gifts of food to one person to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot*.
 - a. To clarify: Avraham gives his friend Yitzhak two foods and fulfills the *mitzva*.
2. The *mitzva* must consist of two different foods.
 - a. To clarify: Even if the same beracha is recited on both foods, but the foods are different, one fulfills the *mitzva*. Example: If Avraham gives Yitzhak an apple and an orange he fulfills the *mitzva*.
 - b. One should give *Mishloah Manot* according to his means. Example: If Avraham is wealthy, he should not just give an apple and an orange to Yitzhak, but rather make his *Mishloah Manot* more substantial.
 - c. Reminder: When allocating money towards *Mishloah Manot* and *Matanot LaEvyonim*, the ratio should lean more heavily towards *Matanot LaEvyonim*.
3. Every Jew, male or female, who has reached the age of *mitzva* is obligated in the *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot*.
 - a. Men should give gifts to men and women should give gifts to women.
 - b. It is proper to educate the children to give to their friends as well.
4. The more people one gives towards the *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot*, the more praiseworthy one is considered.
5. The *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot* is done during the day of Purim.
 - a. To clarify: One may still give food and gifts to his/her friends at night time, but it won't count towards his fulfillment of *Mishloah Manot*.
6. It is best to put the foods into one basket or plate but it's not a requirement.
7. Raw meat may be used as *Mishloah Manot* but prepared foods are recommended.
8. A mourner is required to send *Mishloah Manot* on Purim; albeit only to one person which is the bare minimum.
9. One may not send *Mishloah Manot* to a mourner as it's forbidden to greet a mourner.
10. Mourners must change their clothing into Shabbat clothing and remain in them until Purim is over.

7 - The Purim Meal - Seudat Purim

1. One only fulfills the *mitzva* of the Purim meal during the day. Nevertheless, one should enjoy food and drink on the night of Purim as well.
 - a. To clarify: As long as one begins the meal before sunset on Purim day, he is fine and may continue the meal well after it gets dark.
2. One should be merry with wine on Purim to the point that he doesn't know the difference between "*Arur Haman* and *Baruch Mordechai*." One should not be intoxicated to the point where he cannot function and becomes sick.
3. While any form of drinking is permitted, the best way to enjoy the meal is by drinking wine. This is because "wine brings happiness to the heart of man." (Tehilim 104)
4. According to most opinions, in order to fulfill the *mitzva* of the Purim meal one should ensure to eat at least 56 grams of bread (*ke'betza*). Nevertheless, one can simply have a meal, even without bread, and fulfill the *mitzva*.
5. One should sing songs and recite *Divre Tora* during the meal.
6. One should recite *Birkat HaMazon* after the meal with *Al HaNisim*, even if the meal finishes after nightfall.
7. One who works on the day of Purim will see no blessing from that work.
 - a. To clarify: One may work if he will see substantial loss or lose his job, but one should ensure this is done after the reading of the Megila and make sure to set a time to have his Purim meal.
8. A mourner may partake in the Purim meal as long as there is no instrumental music.

8 - Moroccan Customs of Purim (Based on Darke Abotenou)

1. Costumes (masks) were limited to children only and Rabbis spoke fiercely against adults who started dressing up. This is because it resembles the original sin of the Jews in Shushan who were demonstrating their willingness to integrate with the local population.
 - a. Even if one comes from a place where adults wore costumes, a male cannot dress up like a woman and vice versa, as that transgresses a biblical commandment.
2. If a *Berit Mila* falls on Purim, it is performed after the reading of the Megila.
3. The tradition on Purim is to give out money to children.
4. It is traditional to prepare loaves of bread in the shapes of ladders and birds signifying that Purim is a time of elevation for Bene Yisrael. Others bake bread with an egg in the middle as a reminder the *Bet HaMikdash* even in times of great joy.
5. Many places in Morocco hold that a drink doesn't constitute one of the items needed to fulfill the *mitzva* of *Mishloah Manot*. Wine, on the other hand, constitutes an item according to most halachic authorities.