

PURIM ISSUES

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: Are women obligated to go to shul to hear the Torah reading of Parashas Zachor?

Discussion: There is a mitzvah min ha-Torah to read Parashas Zachor from a Sefer Torah once a year. Although the Rabbis have instituted that Zachor be read in public on the Shabbos before Purim, the mitzvah can technically be fulfilled by performing it at any time during the year. Several poskim, therefore, consider the reading of Parashas Zachor to be a mitzvah which is not time-bound, thus making it obligatory upon women.¹ Other poskim disagree, however, and consider the reading of Zachor a time-bound mitzvah from which women are exempt.²

In addition, there is an opinion that holds that women are exempt from Zachor for a different reason. Making mention of the evil perpetrated on us by Amalek is a mitzvah that is limited to those who can and will fight against Amalek. Since women do not bear arms and go out to war, they are exempt from the mitzvah of mentioning the treachery of Amalek.³

There are conflicting views among the poskim as to the practical halachah. Some rule that women are obligated to hear Parashas Zachor in shul⁴ while other poskim note that it is commonly accepted that women do not go to shul to hear Parashas Zachor.⁵ Since there is no clear-cut ruling,⁶ it is commendable for women to make the effort to go to shul to hear the public reading of Zachor⁷. Indeed, in many congregations it is the accepted practice for women to do so. It is questionable if a Sefer Torah may be taken out of the Aron ha-Kodesh specifically to read Zachor for women. While the custom in some communities is to permit this practice,⁸ other poskim do not permit taking out a Sefer Torah for women only.⁹ Men or women who are unable to go to shul should read Parashas Zachor aloud for themselves from a Chumash since, according to some poskim, one can fulfill the mitzvah in this fashion.¹⁰

Question: Is a son required to listen to his father's strict orders not to become inebriated on Purim?

Discussion: Generally, a child is not allowed to listen to a parent's command if the parent tells him to do something which is in any way contrary to the halachah. Since the halachah obligates one to drink on Purim until he can no longer distinguish between baruch Mordechai and arur Haman,¹¹ it would seem that a son should disregard his parent's request not to get drunk on Purim. Harav S. Z.

Auerbach,¹² however, ruled otherwise. He explained that the halachah does not require one to become inebriated to the degree of *ad delo yada*. Rather, as the Rambam and Rama¹³ hold, one can drink just a bit of wine (a little more than his customary daily amount), and then go to sleep. This is enough wine to fulfill the mitzvah, since in his sleep one is certainly not able to distinguish between "blessed be Mordechai" and "cursed be Haman." Since the son can fulfill the mitzvah in that manner, he has no right to ignore an explicit command from his father prohibiting him to get drunk.

Question: Who should recite the berachos when a man, who has already read or heard the Megillah in shul, reads the Megillah for a group of women?

Discussion: The preferred method depends on several factors:

- If there are fewer than ten women present, then each woman should recite the berachos herself.

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- If there are ten or more women, there are two options: Either one woman recites the berachos and exempts the rest of the group,

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or each woman recites her own berachos.

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Either way is *l'chatchilah*.

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- If the women do not know how to recite the berachos, then the man reading the Megillah recites the berachos for them.

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Question: If there is no man available to read the Megillah for a woman who was unable to go to shul, may another woman read the Megillah for her?

Discussion: A woman may read the Megillah for another woman but only if she herself has not yet fulfilled her obligation of hearing the Megillah. If she has already fulfilled her own obligation, she may not read it again in order to exempt another woman.¹⁹

Question: Do *mishloach manos* need to be delivered via a messenger or may the sender deliver it

directly to the recipient?

Discussion: The poskim are divided on this issue. There are three opinions:

- Shulchan Aruch and most poskim

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do not state a preference. The basic halachah follows this view.

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- Some poskim

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hold that the word "mishloach" suggests that the manos must be "sent" via a messenger.

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The messenger may be a minor or a non-Jew.

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- A minority opinion holds that mishloach manos should l'chatchilah be delivered directly and not via a messenger.

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In order to satisfy both opinions, is it appropriate to send mishloach manos both ways — once via a messenger and once directly.²⁶

Question: What is the proper amount and type of food that should be sent for mishloach manos?

Discussion: Mishloach manos can be any combination of two kinds of food,²⁷ or one food and one beverage,²⁸ or two kinds of beverages.²⁹ Although two pieces of the same food are considered as one food,³⁰ the top (white meat) and bottom (dark meat) parts of a chicken are considered two kinds of food.³¹ Some poskim³² specify that the foods be ready to eat and require no further cooking, while others³³ allow even uncooked foods to be sent. L'chatchilah, one should send foods which could be eaten at the seudas Purim.³⁴ Moreover, one does not fulfill the mitzvah properly if all he sends is a small piece of food, etc. since manos is defined as a portion which is considered worthy of serving others. Some poskim suggest that the minimum amount of mishloach manos is a meal's worth, about 6-7 fl. oz. of food.³⁵ Other poskim require that one send no less of a meal (in volume) than one would normally serve a guest.³⁶

A wealthy person who sends inexpensive items of food does not fulfill the mitzvah properly, for in order for mishloach manos to be considered as an expression of friendship, its cost must be relative

to the sender's wealth.³⁷ Similarly, one who sends inexpensive food items to a wealthy person does not fulfill the mitzvah properly, since such items are worthless in his eyes and unappreciated by him.

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1. *Minchas Chinuch* 603.
2. See *Avnei Nezer*, O.C. 509 and *Marcheshes* 1:22
3. *Sefer ha-Chinuch* 603.
4. *Binyan Tziyon* 2:8, quoting *Rav Nosson Adler*; *Yeshuos Malko*, O.C. 50; *Maharil Diskin (Kuntres Acharon)* 5:101; *Minchas Elazar* 2:1-5; *Chazon Nachum* 85.
5. *Toras Chesed* 1:37; *Arugos ha-Bosem* 205; *Divrei Chayim* 2:14; *Chazon Ish*, quoted by *Rav C. Kanievsky (Ta'ama d'Kra)*; *Rav M. Feinstein*, quoted in *Kovietz Halachos*, pg. 13.
6. Many major poskim—*Chayei Adam*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Mishnah Berurah* and *Aruch ha-Shulchan*—do not address this issue altogether.
7. See *Yechaveh Da'as* 1:84.
8. See *Minchas Yitzchak* 9:68.
9. *Mikra'ei Kodesh (Purim, 5)*; *Rav M. Feinstein* (oral ruling, quoted in *Mo'adei Yeshurun on Purim*, pg. 47; *Kol ha-Torah*, vol. 54, pg. 24; *Koveitz Halachos*, pg. 15); *Kinyan Torah* 7:53; *Shraga ha-Meir* 6:116. *Rav Y.S. Elyashiv* is quoted (*Halichos Bas Yisrael*, pg. 296) as ruling that a minimum of ten men must be present for such a reading to take place.
10. See *Yismach Yisrael* 3:15.
11. O.C. 695:2.
12. *Halichos Shelomo* 2:19-25.
13. O.C. 695:2 and *Mishnah Berurah* 5.
14. Based on *Mishnah Berurah* 689:15 and *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 692:13. See *Minchas Yitzchak* 3:53-14.
15. Recommended by *Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo* 2:19-3).
16. Recommended by *Minchas Yitzchak* 3:54-38; 8:63.
17. *Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Balaylah Hahuh*, pg. 8)
18. *Mishnah Berurah* 692:10.
19. *Beiur Halachah* 689:1, s.v. *venashim*.
20. *Chayei Adam*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and *Aruch ha-Shulchan* do not mention the concept of a messenger at all.
21. *Chazon Ish (Dinim v'Hanhagos* 22:8). See also *She'arim Metzuyananim b'Halachah* 142:1.
22. *Mishnah Berurah*, quoting *Teshuvos Binyan Tziyon* 44.
23. There are a number of suggestions as to the reason behind this requirement: 1) It is *derech kavod* to deliver gifts via a messenger; 2) It is greater *pirsumei nisa* since an additional person is involved; 3) To free the sender from time-consuming deliveries, thereby giving him more time to celebrate Purim.
24. *Chasam Sofer (Gittin* 22b).
25. *Eishel Avraham*, O.C. 695; *Salmas Chayim* 1:105.

26. See *Kaf ha-Chayim* 695:41 and *Halichos Shelomo* 2:19-14, note 44.
27. O.C. 695:4. The opinion of the Ben Ish Chai (*Tetzaveh* 16) not to place the various kinds of foods on one plate or bowl, since the plate or bowl combines them into one kind of food, has not been accepted by the poskim; *Halichos Shelomo* 2:19, *Orchos Halachah*, note 36; *Teshuvos v'Hanhagos* 2:346.
28. *Mishnah Berurah* 695:20. Water or seltzer are not considered beverages concerning *mishloach manos*; *Koveitz Halachos* 17:9.
29. *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 695:14. Other poskim recommend that at least one of the items be a food.
30. *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 695:14. See *Tzitz Eliezer* 14:65; 15:31.
31. *Halichos Shelomo* 2:19-12. See *Mikroei Kodesh*, Purim 38.
32. *Magen Avraham* 695:11; *Ma'asei Rav* 249; *Chayei Adam* 135:31; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 142:2; *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 695:15.
33. *Peri Chadash*, O.C. 695; *Ha'amek Sh'eilah* 67:9; *Shevet Sofer*, O.C. 23; *Yechaveh Da'as* 6:45. *Mishnah Berurah* 695:20 quotes both views without rendering a decision.
34. This is because the main purpose of *mishloach manos* is so that everyone will have a proper Purim meal; see *Ma'asei Rav* 249.
35. *Zera Yaakov* 11, quoted by *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 694:1.
36. *Rosh Yosef*, *Megillah* 7b; *Eishel Avraham* 695; *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 695:15. See *Tzitz Eliezer* 14:65.
37. See *Sedei Chemed*, Purim 8.
38. *Beiur Halachah* 695:4, s.v. *chayav*, based on *Ritva* and *Chayei Adam*.

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