



Daf HaKashrus

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OU KOSHER HALACHA YOMIS ON PURIM

WHEN IS THE PROPER TIME TO GIVE THE MACHTZIS HASHEKEL?

The Gemara (Megila 13b) teaches us that the miraculous salvation of the Jewish people in the time of Purim was in the merit of the mitzvah of Machtzis Hashekel (the half shekel given each year for the communal sacrifices). Although we can no longer bring the sacrifices, as a remembrance for this mitzvah and the salvation, there is a custom to give a Machtzis Hashekel each year before we read about the evil decree of Haman. Maseches Sofrim (21:4) writes that the coins should be given before reading Parshas Zachor. However, the Rema (OC 694:1) writes that this is no longer the custom. Instead, the Machtzis Hashekel should be given on Taanis Esther before davening Mincha. Some explain that we specifically give the Machtzis Hashekel before Purim and not on Purim so as not to confuse these coins with Matanos L'evyonim. It is customary to give the coins as close to Purim as possible. When Purim is on Sunday, and the Machtzis Hashekel cannot be given right before Purim (because it is Shabbos), one should give the Machtzis Hashekel on Thursday (when Taanis Esther is observed). Sefer Divrei Yatziv (OC 293) writes that in such as case, it is best to give Machtzis Hashekel twice, on Thursday and again on Purim day before reading the Megila.



REGARDING THE CUSTOM OF MACHTZIS HASHEKEL, I HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME FINDING FIFTY CENT COINS. CAN I GIVE TWO QUARTERS, OR IS THERE A DIFFERENT WAY TO PERFORM THIS MITZVAH?

The Rema (OC 694:1) writes that before Purim one should give to charity a coin that is half the value of the standard currency of the time, as a remembrance of the half shekel that was collected every year for the communal sacrifices. It is proper to give three such coins, since in Parshas Shekalim the word *teruma* (donation) is repeated three times. This alludes to three separate collections that were made (see Rashi, Ki Sisa 30:15).

The Maharsham (Daas Torah 694:1) writes that if one cannot find such coins, i.e. half dollars, then one should find a friend to pair up with and together to give three one dollar coins (based on the Mishna, Shekalim 1:6). However, Rabbi Yosef Greenwald zt"l (Va'yaan Yosef OC 407) writes that strictly speaking, one can give 3 nickels for Machtzis Hashekel, since a nickel is half of a dime. He maintains that a better solution is to give two quarters instead. Although, altogether, one is giving six coins and not three, he writes that this too is acceptable, since it is merely a *zecher* (commemoration) of the original mitzvah.

WOMEN ARE CERTAINLY OBLIGATED IN THE MITZVAH OF MEGILA READING. IS IT PREFERABLE FOR WOMEN TO GO TO SHUL TO HEAR THE MEGILA READING, OR IS IT EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE FOR THEM TO HEAR THE MEGILA AT HOME IF THAT IS EASIER?

Regarding the performance of mitzvos there is a general concept of "*b'rov am hadras*

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Melech" (when a crowd performs a mitzvah, it is more beautiful). This is especially true for the reading of Megilas Esther which incorporates an element of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle). The larger the crowd, the greater the publicity. The question is whether the concept of "b'rov am" applies to women as well.

This seems to be a matter of dispute among poskim. The Chelkas Yaakov (OC 232) writes that there is no obligation of "b'rov am" for women. The Mishnah Berurah (689:1) writes as well that only in some communities do the women go to shul to hear the Megila reading. However, the Chayei Adam (155:7) writes that indeed men, women, and children should

all make an effort to hear the Megila in shul in order to fulfill the mitzvah in the optimal manner, "b'rov am." In practice, there are different customs, and one should consult the local rabbi.

GIVEN THAT IT IS PREFERABLE TO HEAR MEGILAS ESTHER TOGETHER WITH A LARGE CROWD (B'ROV AM HADRAS MELECH), IS IT BETTER TO DAVEN WITH A SMALL CROWD AT THE VASIKIN MINYAN (AT SUNRISE), OR TO DAVEN WITH A LARGER CROWD LATER AT THE MAIN MINYAN?

In this case, there are two competing factors. On the one hand, it is preferable to perform a mitzvah at the earliest opportunity (*zerizim makdimim l'mitzvos*). On the other hand, it is preferable to hear the Megila together with a large crowd (*b'rov am*). The question here is which one of these considerations takes precedence. Rav Zylberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Megila 27b) rules that in this case, it is proper to delay the mitzvah, so it can be performed *b'rov am*. This is because joining together with a large crowd offers a greater publicization of the miracle, which is a fundamental component of the mitzvah of reading the Megila. However, if one is accustomed to davening with the Vasikin Minyan all week long, they should daven there on Purim as well. This is because the Mishnah Berurah (687:7) writes that one who has a *makom kavua* (set place to daven) need not change their location to daven *b'rov am*.

IF I MISS ONE WORD OF THE MEGILLAH READING, HAVE I FULFILLED MY OBLIGATION OF HEARING THE MEGILLAH?

The Mishnah Berurah (O.C. 690:48) writes that if one misses a single word, the obligation of reading the Megillah was not fulfilled. There may be a difference between men and women in this regard. The Rama (O.C. 689:2), based on Tosfos (Megillah 4a), writes that a woman's obligation of Megillah is to "hear" the Megillah, not to read it. Mo'adim U'zmanim (2:170, quoting the Leket Yosher) extrapolates from this that a woman's requirement is one of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle). Therefore, even should she miss a word during the reading of the Megillah, she has still fulfilled her obligation. However, the Mishnah Berurah (O.C. 689:1) indicates that women do need to hear every single word. Therefore, it is advisable that everyone follow along quietly with a Chumash, so if one misses a word or two, they can quickly read the missing words and then continue hearing from the Bal Koreah.

THE GEMARA SAYS (TAANIS 29A) THAT WHEN THE MONTH OF ADAR COMMENCES, ONE'S HAPPINESS SHOULD INCREASE. DOES THIS APPLY FOR THE ENTIRE MONTH OR ONLY UNTIL PURIM? AND WHAT FORM SHOULD THAT INCREASE IN HAPPINESS TAKE?

Eishel Avraham (OC 686:2) and Chasam Sofer (glosses to SA OC 551) hold that one is obligated to be happy the entire

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month of Adar, until the month of Nissan. He posits that if in the month of Av one's happiness should be diminished for the entire month (see Mishnah Berurah 551:2), then certainly in the month of Adar one should have increased happiness the entire month. [The Talmud states that a *mida tova*, a measure of Hashem's graciousness, is many times greater than a *midas puraniyos*, a measure of Hashem's punishment.] This is also hinted to in Megilas Esther (9:22): *And the month which was transformed from sadness into a Yom Tov.*

With regard to one's obligation to increase his happiness, R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (Halichos Shlomo, Purim 18, n. 36) rules that one does not actually have to engage in actions which bring happiness. Instead, he must make a conscious effort not to become worried or sad during that time. However, the Rogatchover Gaon (Teshuvos Tzofnas Paneach 2:33) maintains that one must eat and drink more during Adar, for one's happiness is directly impacted by his food and drink. Indeed, R. Chaim Kanievsky (Toras HaMoadim 2) says that his father, the Steipler Gaon zt"l, was accustomed to drink wine during the month of Adar.

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THE MITZVAH OF GIVING MISHLOACH MANOS ON PURIM?

This is the subject of a well-known dispute. Manos Halevi (Megillas Esther 9:16-17) explains that the Purim story took place because Haman maligned the Jews, saying that they engage in personal feuds and do not get along with one another. This is alluded to in the verse: *yeshno am echad mefuzar umeforad bein ha'amim*, there is one nation which is dispersed and scattered among the nations, i.e., lacking unity. To demonstrate the falsehood of this libelous charge, Mordechai and Esther instituted that Mishloach Manos should be given to one's friends and acquaintances, to foster camaraderie and good will among the Jews. This demonstrates that we do not engage in personal feuds; on the contrary, we engage in acts of friendship, by gifting our food to others. Terumas HaDeshen (1:111), however, explains that the purpose of giving one's acquaintances Mishloach Manos is to ensure that poor people enjoy a festive and lavish Seudas Purim. Although



most people are not poor and therefore do not need food given to them for their Seudah, Chazal instituted that Mishloach Manos be given to wealthy people as well, so as not to embarrass the poor (Teshuvos Chasam Sofer OC 196).

I ORDERED A FOOD PACKAGE ON AMAZON TWO DAYS BEFORE PURIM WITH GUARANTEED DELIVERY TO MY FRIEND ON PURIM DAY. DO I FULFILL THE MITZVAH OF MISHLOACH MANOS WITH SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT?

This is a matter of dispute among the poskim. Some hold that by doing so he does fulfill his obligation of Mishloach Manos (Be'er Heitev to OC 695:7, citing Yad Aharon; Da'as Torah in the name of Mahari Assad, and R. Elyashiv, cited in Yevakshu Mipihu, Purim 1:31). However, Aruch HaShulchan (695:17) held that one does not fulfill Mishloach Manos with this arrangement. The Ben Ish Chai (Teshuvos Torah Lishmah 188) explains the reasoning behind this dispute as follows: In the previous Halacha Yomis we learned that there is a dispute as to why Mishloach Manos are given. Is it to engender good will and camaraderie between people (Manos HaLevi), or is it to ensure that poor people have sufficient food for their Purim Seudah (Terumas HaDeshen)? If Mishloach Manos are to foster good will – one must send the food on Purim itself because sending the food is part of the mitzvah. Those who hold that one is yotzei take the position that the purpose of Mishloach Manos is for the recipient to have sufficient food for the seudah. Hence, as long as the food is received on Purim – even if it was sent prior to Purim – the sender has fulfilled his obligation of Mishloach Manos, as the recipient will now have sufficient food for his seudah.

RAV BELSKY ZT"l'S PESAKIM

THOUGH THREE YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE HIS PASSING, RABBI BELSKY'S LEGACY OF WRITTEN AND ORAL PISKEI HALACHA CONTINUES TO GUIDE THE OU KASHRUTH DEPARTMENT, AND THE MEMORY OF HIS EXALTED SPIRITUAL PRESENCE PROVIDES RELIGIOUS INSPIRATION TO OUR DEVOTED STAFF. MAY HIS NESHAMA HAVE AN ALIYAS NESHAMA, VIHI ZICHRO BORUCH.

THE GEMARA (BRACHOS 55A) WRITES THAT THERE IS SAKANA (DANGER) ASSOCIATED WITH EATING THE SPINE OF A FISH. DOES THIS APPLY TO SARDINES? MUST ONE PICK OUT ALL THE SMALL BONES OF THE SPINE, EVEN THE ONES THAT ARE COMMONLY EATEN WITH THE FISH?

Rav Belsky zt"l (Shulchan HaLevi 23:7) relates that there are individuals who are careful to remove all the spinal bones before eating sardines or other similar fish, but the more common custom is not to be concerned. There is a concept that regarding matters of sakana we follow the prevailing custom even if it appears to be uninformed – "v'shomer pesa'yim Hashem" (Hashem protects people who are uninformed). Furthermore, in this case, there is perhaps an additional reason to be lenient. Because the fish are well cooked and the bones are very soft, they lose their identity as bones and are viewed as just part of the flesh of the fish. Rav Belsky concludes that one has the right to follow the common custom and need not separate these bones.

A FACTORY PRODUCES NON-MEVUSHAL GRAPE JUICE. ORDINARILY, THEY ADD A MINISCULE AMOUNT OF POTASSIUM METABISULFITE TO THE GRAPE JUICE TO PREVENT IT FROM FERMENTING INTO WINE. TO AVOID THE PROBLEM OF A NACHRI HANDLING NON-MEVUSHAL GRAPE JUICE, CAN THE COMPANY ADD ENOUGH OF THIS CHEMICAL TO MAKE THE JUICE COMPLETELY UNFIT FOR DRINKING? (THE CHEMICAL WILL LATER BE REMOVED.)

Rav Belsky zt"l (Shulchan HaLevi 25:9) was asked this question and ruled that grape juice that is made undrinkable through the addition of a high concentration of chemicals may be handled by a nachri, even though it is possible to remove the chemicals at a later point. Once the chemicals are removed, the juice reverts back to its earlier non-mevushal status and may no longer be handled by a nachri. Adding chemicals to wine is different than cooking wine. Once wine is cooked, it is permanently changed, and there is no way to uncook wine. However, chemicals can be added and removed from juice. This is similar to the halacha of "irev bo davar mar" (mixing a bitter ingredient into a non-kosher food) which makes the food inedible. The halacha is that so long as the bitter ingredient is present in the food, the Torah prohibition of eating the food is suspended. (Note, there may still be a rabbinic prohibition to eat the food.) Once the bitter ingredient is removed, the original prohibition returns. The same logic applies in our situation as well.

IS THERE ANY CONCERN THAT STYROFOAM OR PLASTIC CUPS MIGHT BE MADE WITH NON-KOSHER INGREDIENTS? IS IT PREFERABLE TO REFRAIN FROM USING THESE CUPS WITH HOT LIQUIDS?

This is a valid question because Styrofoam cups are produced using lubricants which may be derived from non-kosher sources. However, Rav Belsky, zt"l (Shulchan HaLevi 20:14) writes that he investigated this matter and found that there is no concern for two reasons:

The lubricants are foul tasting. Furthermore, even if the lubricant was initially edible, the lubricants become non-edible once they are part of the Styrofoam cup. Non-edible foods (*nifsal mei'achilas adam*) lose their non-kosher status.

The lubricants are not on the surface of the cup, but are part of the body of the Styrofoam. Rav Belsky often shared that he heard from Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l that a non-kosher ingredient is *batel birov* (nullified in a majority) if it is mixed into inedible ingredients (such as Styrofoam).

