

Six 'mitzvot' of Purim... and more

[1] **Megila reading** - once at night and once during the day. Daytime reading is considered to be DIVREI KABALA, a higher level obligation than the Rabbinic rule of reading it also at night. Obviously, everyone - man, woman, child - should hear Megila both night and day.

[2] **AL HANISIM** is inserted in each Amida and Birkat HaMazon of Purim. Omitting AL HANISIM does not require repeating either the davening or benching, but in each case there is a second place to insert AL HANISIM if you forgot to say it in its "official" place.

For the Amida, one would say AL HANISIM right before YIH-YU L'RATZON IMREI FI... Going back is not an option once you finish the bracha within which AL HANISIM is said.

Similarly for benching. Once you conclude AL HAARETZ V'AL HAMAZON, don't go back, but say AL HANISIM as a HARACHAMAN, towards the end of the benching. In this case, a modified intro is used. It goes something like this (texts vary):

הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ נִסִּים וְנִפְלְאוֹת כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Continue with ... בְּיָמֵי מְרֹדְכַי וְאַסְתֵּר...

[3] **Torah reading**. After the Amida of Shacharit, before Megila reading, a 9-pasuk portion (Sh'mot 17:8-16) from the end of B'shalach is read (3 Aliyot), beginning with...

וַיָּבֹא עַמְלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְדִּים:

Note that with a minimum requirement of 3 Aliyot and a minimum of 3 p'sukim per Aliya, this 9-pasuk reading is the shortest possible. However, no other reading suffices with the minimum (10 p'sukim is the shortest). The plain reason is that the portion of the Amalek battle is only 9 p'sukim long. The "extra touch" reason is that Amalek and Haman receive no more Torah reading than is absolutely necessary. (S'faradim double the last pasuk to read a total of 10 p'sukim.)

Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel

Before Megila reading, it is customary to give three half-shekel coins (or half of whatever currency is used in your country) in commemoration of the Silver Half-Shekel collected annually in the time of the Beit HaMikdash. Some suggest giving a total of the value of the original Half-Shekel, about 27

(based on 3.65\$ and 81¢ per gram of silver)

[4] Matanot LaEvyonim - gifts to the poor. Giving money to a Tzedaka fund that will not be distributing money to poor people on Purim day itself, is NOT an ideal way to fulfill this mitzva, and should be a last resort, when one has no access to poor people on Purim day. The requirement is to give to a minimum of two poor people. If one gives gifts to poor people on Purim eve, or even a couple of days before Purim, and the poor people will use the money on Purim day, there are opinions that this fulfills the mitzva of Matanot LaEvyonim. Ideally, the gifts to the poor should be given early in the morning of Purim day, so that the recipients can use the money for their Purim Seuda needs. This mitzva can be fulfilled with money or food. Ideally, one should give an amount equal to the cost of a meal, even though a much smaller amount technically fulfills the mitzva. Some say that the gifts should be significant enough - or special enough - to bring joy to the recipients. One should not use "Maaser money" for Matanot LaEvyonim. Since women are also obligated on this mitzva, they should do it, or if they are relying on their husbands, the husband should have in mind that he is doing his mitzva, and for his wife. Children should do

this mitzva on their own and not rely on their father's giving. When one spends a significant amount of money for his Purim Seuda and Mishlo'ach Manot, he should not just do Matanot LaEvyonim in a token fashion, but should do it generously.

[5] Mishlo'ach Manot. Main reason given for this mitzva is to show that Haman's statement about the Jewish people is a terrible lie. He said that we are a scattered people who don't care about each other. That we lack unity. This mitzva of giving gifts of food to fellow Jews, providing them with Purim delights, sharing with them, all point out Haman's lie. Some say that the mitzva of Mishlo'ach Manot should be done specifically through a SHALI'ACH, an agent. In other words, you give gifts of food to someone who will give them on your behalf to the intended recipient. Others do not consider a Shali'ach to be necessary. Sender and receiver should be aware of who will receive and who sent, respectively. Sounds obvious, but there are situations that this rule addresses. For example, you bring Mishlo'ach Manot to someone who isn't home. You leave it on the door handle. If you don't identify the package as coming from you, or if the person does not get the package until after Purim,

there is something lacking in this particular giving. Usually, people give to more than the minimum one recipient, so if there is something technically lacking in some of the Mishlo'ach Manot, it is most likely that the mitzva is fulfilled in some of the other Mishlochos. Some opinions hold that the sender and recipient need both be observing Purim on the day in question. This is particularly an issue for Yerushalayim sending to open-city folk and vice versa, when one is observing Purim on the 14th and the other on the 15th of Adar. Make sure that at least one person you send Mishlo'ach Manot to is observing Purim on the same day that you are, and on the same day you send the gifts. Manot is plural, and the practice is to send at least two different food items as Mishlo'ach Manot (they need not be of different brachot). The food should be ready to eat, rather than require cooking or baking, etc. Another reason for two gifts, besides the pluralness of the word MANOT, is to commemorate the two gifts that Achashveirosh gave to Esther - Beit Haman and his royal ring. Most opinions say that drink can be counted as one (or both) of the gifts; others say that drinks - even wine - do not count for the two gifts. In "normal" situations, it is

considered a proper practice to send Mishlo'ach Manot back to those who sent them to you. It is considered preferable to send back something different from what one received. This way, one's joy is increased in the receiving and sending. Some hold that one should fulfill the mitzva of Mishlo'ach Manot before he eats breakfast. Right after davening in the morning is ideal, because Shehecheyanu before Megila goes for the other mitzvot of the day, as well.

[6] Seudat Purim. This is a Purim Day mitzva, and a seuda at night is not considered a fulfillment of the mitzva. Nonetheless, one should also eat something special on Purim night. Although one can fulfill the mitzva of Seudat Purim in the morning, it is the widespread practice (except when Purim is on Erev Shabbat) to have the seuda after davening Mincha. The main fulfillment of Seudat Purim is during the day, but the common practice is to extend the seuda into the night. For 14th of Adar people, this has the advantage of also including the 15th as part of the Purim period. For 15th of Adar people, it is less clear that it is praiseworthy to extend their seuda into the night. In either case, there are differing opinions as to

where in Birkat HaMazon to say AL HANISIM when one is benching at night when it is officially not Purim anymore. Some posit to say it in its normal bracha, NODEH; others hold that it should be said as a HARACHAMAN (see earlier, #2). One should have something special to eat on the other day of Purim (Sunday for Monday people and vice versa). Seudat Purim should definitely have HaMotzi (even though some sources state that it is not a requirement). Ideally, one should have wine at his seuda (more than he usually has on other occasions). Wine is such a significant feature of the Megila, from the wine mentioned at the early parties of the king to the parties that Esther used to plead before the king. Some say that the "mitzva" of

There are only two cities mentioned in the Megila: Shushan, where the action took place, and Yerushalayim, mentioned as the place from which Mordechai was exiled to Shushan. Jerusalem at the time of the Purim events was in ruin. We can even say that we were vulnerable to Haman's threats and plot BECAUSE it was in ruin and devoid of its inhabitants. Almost as a prayer for the future Complete Geula, Jerusalem was given a special prominence in the celebration of Purim. It is today the prime celebrant of Shushan Purim. To give Jerusalem that status and honor, the focus was shifted to the time of Yehoshua, the first one to do battle against Amalek. As joyous as Purim is, it is sorely lacking rebuilt Jerusalem - may we see it soon.

drinking applies only to wine. Others give a slightly different reason for drinking, and that can be fulfilled by other intoxicating beverages as well. According to some opinions, meat should be on the menu, because of its being part of the traditional definition of Simcha.

Part of the mitzva of drinking is to reach a point of not being able to distinguish between "Blessed is Mordechai" and "Cursed is Haman". Some say that this is achieved by becoming inebriated. Others hold that drowsiness or sleep from the wine, accomplishes AD D'LO YADA. Many poskim of our time say that one should just drink a little more wine than he usually does; one should definitely not get drunk.

IMPORTANT: If there is any fear that one's drunkenness will cause improper frivolity or a disrespect or disregard for any mitzva or cause the person to be insulting or disrespectful to others - it would be forbidden to get drunk. Far better to go with the drowsy-sleep opinion to stay within the boundaries of SIMCHAT MITZVA. Special foods, enjoyable guests, and Divrei Torah all add to the SIMCHA that is be part of the Seuda.

People who do not enjoy eating meat, should eat foods that they do

enjoy. Those who don't enjoy wine should at least have a little.

One should wear Shabbat & Yom Tov clothes on Purim, in honor of the day. (It seems reasonable to say that a costume is also in honor of the day, but not regular weekday clothing.)

According to Minhag Yerushalayim, there is a special chapter of T'hilim to say on Purim day, instead of the "regular" Song of the Day. Others will say both the regular one and the special one. Some add to the special one another one or two chapters (124 and/or 69). We include here just **AYELET HASHACHAR**, T'hilim 22, which is the Shir Shel HaYom for Purim. This Psalm is said on the day you observe as Purim. Some say this at night too.

Mathematical AD D'LO YADA

Here's an off-the-record way of measuring if a person reached AD D'LO YADA. Find the gimatriya of ARUR HAMAN: $1+200+6+200$ (407) + $5+40+50$ (95). $407+95=502$. BARUCH MORDECHAI: $2+200+6+20$ (228) + $40+200+4+20+10$ (274). $228+274=502$. Gimatriya-wise, there is no difference between ARUR HAMAN and BARUCH MORDECHAI. Let's look at AT-BASH gimatriya. ARUR HAMAN: $400+3+80+3$ (486) + $90+10+9$ (109). $486+109=595$. BARUCH MORDECHAI: $300+3+80+30$ (413) + $10+3+100+30+40$ (183). $413+183=596$. Just 1 more! If you have even a little bit of wine and can't add up these numbers without a calculator, then you have reached AD D'LO YADA.

שיר של יום לפורים תהלים כב

לְמַנְצַח עַל-אַיִלַת הַשַּׁחַר מְזֻמּוֹר לְדוֹד: אֵלֵי אֵלֵי
לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רְחוֹק מִיִּשְׁוּעָתִי דְבָרֵי שְׂאֲגָתִי:
אֵלֵהִי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא-דוֹמִיָּה
לִי: וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: בָּךְ
בְּטַחוֹ אֲבַתִּינוּ בְּטַחוֹ וְתַפְלִטְמוֹ: אֵלֶיךָ זָעֲקוּ
וְנִמְלְטוּ בָּךְ בְּטַחוֹ וְלֹא-בֹשׁוּ: וְאַנְכִי תוֹלַעַת
וְלֹא-אִישׁ חֲרַפַת אָדָם וּבְזוּי עָם: כָּל-רְאִי יִלְעָגוּ
לִי יִפְטִירוּ בְשִׁפָּה יִנְיֵעוּ רֹאשׁ: גַּל אֶל-יֵי יִפְלִטְהוּ
יִצִילְהוּ כִּי חָפֵץ בּוֹ: כִּי-אַתָּה גַחִי מִבְּטָן מִבְּטִיחִי
עַל-שִׂדֵי אֲמִי: עֲלֶיךָ הִשְׁלַכְתִּי מֵרַחֵם מִבְּטָן אֲמִי
אֵלֵי אַתָּה: אֶל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי כִּי-צָרָה קְרוּבָה
כִּי-אֵין עוֹזֵר: סָבְבוּנִי פָּרִים רַבִּים אֲבִירֵי בָשָׂן
כְּתֻרוּנִי: פָּצוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם אֲרִיָּה טָרֵף וְשֹׁאֵג: כַּפַּיִם
נִשְׁפַּכְתִּי וְהִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל-עֲצָמוֹתַי הִיָּה לִבִּי כַּדוֹנָג
נִמַּס בְּתוֹךְ מַעֵי: יָבֵשׁ כַּחֲרֵשׁ | כַּחֲרֵשׁ וְלִשְׁוֹנֵי מִדְבָּק
מִלְקוּחֵי וְלַעֲפַר-מּוֹת תִּשְׁפָּתֵנִי: כִּי-סָבְבוּנִי כָּל-בָּיִם
עַדֵת מֵרַעִים הַקִּיפּוּנִי כָּאֲרִי יָדֵי וְרִגְלָי: אֶסְפֹּר
כָּל-עֲצָמוֹתַי הֵמָּה יִבִּיטוּ יִרְאוּ-בֵי: יַחֲלִקוּ בְּגִדֵי
לָהֶם וְעַל-לְבוּשֵׁי יִפְּלוּ גוֹרָל: וְאַתָּה יי אֶל-תִּרְחַק
אֵילוֹתַי לַעֲזֹרְתִי חוֹשֶׁה: הַצִּילָה מִחֶרֶב נַפְשִׁי
מִיַּד-כָּלֵב יַחֲדִתֵּנִי: הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אֲרִיָּה וּמִקִּרְנֵי
רַמִּים עֲנִיתֵנִי: אֶסְפֹּרָה שְׂמֶךְ לְאַחֵי בְּתוֹךְ קִהָל
אֶהְלֶלְךָ: יִרְאִי יי | הִלְלוּהוּ כָּל-יֹרֵעַ יַעֲקֹב כַּבְּדוּהוּ
וְגוּרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כָּל-יֹרֵעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי לֹא-בִזָּה וְלֹא
שֶׁקֶץ עֲנֹת עָנִי וְלֹא-הִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִמֶּנּוּ וּבִשְׁוֵעוֹ
אֵלָיו שָׁמַע: מֵאַתָּךְ תְּהִלָּתִי בְּקִהָל רַב נְדָרֵי
אֲשֶׁלֶם נִגַּד יִרְאִיו: יֵאָכְלוּ עֲנָוִים | וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ יִהְלָלוּ
יי דְרָשׁוּ יַחֲי לְבַבְכֶם לְעַד: יִזְכְּרוּ | וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֶל-יֵי
כָּל-אֶפְסֵי-אָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ כָּל-מִשְׁפָּחוֹת
גוֹיִם: כִּי לֵי הַמְּלוּכָה וּמִשְׁלַל בְּגוֹיִם: אֶכְלוּ
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ | כָּל-דְּשׁוּנֵי-אָרֶץ לְפָנָיו יִכְרְעוּ כָּל-יִוְרָדֵי
עַפְרָ וְנִפְשׁוּ לֹא חִיָּה: זָרַע יַעֲבֹדְנוּ יִסְפֹּר לֹא-דִנְי
לְדוֹר: יִבְאוּ וַיִּגִּידוּ צְדָקְתוֹ לְעַם נוֹלָד כִּי עֲשָׂה:

If one is only saying this Shir, he/she should also say (choose your day of Purim):

הַיּוֹם יוֹם רֹאשׁוֹן/שְׁנֵי בְשַׁבָּת.