PURIM

INTRODUCTION TO PURIM

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Purim commemorates the saving of the Jews in the Persian Empire from *Haman*'s plan to wipe them out completely. The story is a classic example of how God intervenes in human history in a hidden manner. The essential element was that the Jews were saved from physical destruction/death (contrast with *Chanuka*, where the Jews were not being threatened with physical death but with the destruction of their religious beliefs and practices).

Halachot

- Giving charity to poor people.
- Giving gifts of ready-to-eat food to friends.

  REASON To promote friendship and a feeling of community.

- Reading the *megila* of Esther at night and the next day.
- Eating a festive meal.
- Giving three half-dollars (or whatever the local unit of coin currency is where you live) to charity in commemoration of the half-*shekel*, which was given by all Jews to the *Temple* when it stood in Jerusalem.

  NOTE This is not actually an observance of *Purim*, but it has become traditional to give the 3 half-dollars on *Purim*.

Widespread Customs

- Dressing up in costumes.
- Making noise during the reading of *Haman*'s (and his wife's) name in the *megila*, in order to wipe out their names.
- Drinking more wine than normal.

  NOTE Jewish women are required to fulfill all of the commandments of the holiday, just as men are, since the women were also saved.

PURIM: AD DLO YADA

Getting Drunk Ad Dlo Yada

The idea of getting drunk *ad dlo yada* is that, even when optimal mental functions are impaired by alcohol, a person's essence is on such a high spiritual level that he or she can see God's hand in the actions of the evil *Haman* just as in the actions of the good *Mordechai*.

NOTE Jews should never get drunk, even on *Purim*, but they should drink a little more than they normally would.

PURIM: COMMANDMENTS

Purim: Commandments

There are four *mitzvot* for *Purim*:

1. Shalach Manot (Gifts of food to promote friendship)

Send to one person at least two readily edible foods that will be appreciated by the recipient. Sending gifts of food (*mishlo'ach manot*) must be done on *Purim* day. The earliest time to send *mishlo'ach manot* is after hearing the morning *megila* reading (so that the commandment of giving gifts to friends is also covered by the blessing of *she'hecheyanu* over the *megila*).

2. Gifts to Poor People

Give some money to at least two poor people or to a fund designated to give to poor Jews on *Purim*. The earliest time in the day to give gifts to the poor on *Purim* is daybreak.

3. Hearing the *Megila* Twice (evening and morning)

- If you miss hearing a word or even syllable of the *megila* on *Purim*, say it to yourself and then catch up to the reader.
- If you are not near a *minyan* and do not have a *megila* scroll, you should read the *megila* from a book. But you will not have fulfilled the commandment of reading the *megila* and so you do not say any of the blessings.

4. **Eating at a *Purim se'uda*.**

- The minimum amount to eat and drink for a *Purim* meal is at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread, any amount of meat (if you enjoy meat), and some wine (any amount more than you normally drink).
- The earliest time you may eat the *Purim* meal is from daybreak; the latest time you must begin is before sunset. You must eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread and some wine (and meat if you enjoy it) before sunset. You may continue your meal after sunset as long as you ate the bread before sunset.

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