

# SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO THE HALACHOS OF PURIM

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

*Reviewed by Rabbi Yosef Eisen Shlit"א*



The *של"ה הקדוש* writes that learning and properly observing the Halachos of a חג infuse the Yom Tov with tremendous Bracha. Please note that the Halachos and Minhagim contained in this article follow the custom of בני אשכנז.

## מחצית השקל

In the times of the *בהמ"ק*, a מחצית השקל was collected in the month of אדר from each man. The מחצית השקל was used towards the קרבנות ציבור and for the repair of the *בהמ"ק*. Today, as a זכר for the מצוה of מחצית השקל, men and boys over בר מנחה give three half-dollar coins, or the equivalent, to *צדקה* on אסתר at *תענית אסתר*.

All shuls have half dollars available for all to exchange their money and give מחצית השקל. Someone who does not have half dollars and wants to give מחצית השקל can just give the value (\$1.50) to *צדקה*.

Women are not obligated to give a מחצית השקל, but some have the custom to do. An adult may also give on behalf of children.

## מצות היום

Four מצוות were מתקן on Purim: משלוח מנות, מקרא מגילה, סעודת פורים, and מתנות לאביונים. The מצוות must all be done during the day, besides for מגילה, which is read both by night and by day. Women are obligated in all the מצוות of פורים since women, too, were saved by the נס.

## מקרא מגילה

There is a מצוה to read מגילת אסתר by night and by day. Prior to the קריאה, three ברכות are recited: "שעשה", "על מקרא מגילה", and "שהחיינו". During the daytime קריאה, you should have in mind that the ברכה of שהחיינו is also on the מצוות of פורים, משלוח מנות, and מתנות לאביונים. It is אסור to speak during the leining, and you should take care to hear all the words of the קריאה. If someone is unsure regarding having heard a word, they should say those words quietly. After the קריאה, the Bracha "הרב את ריבינו" is said.

## מתנות לאביונים

There is a חיוב to give מתנות לאביונים on פורים. It is permissible to give the מתנות לאביונים to a גבאי *צדקה* in advance, as long as the funds will be distributed on פורים. The basic obligation is to give מתנה (monetary gift) to 2 individual עניים. The amount preferably to be given is the dollar amount that would make a poor person happy with that donation. It can be between ten and fifteen dollars, or when difficult, less. It is praiseworthy to increase one's giving beyond the minimum amount, and to as many עניים as possible. For the minimum obligation (1 donation to 2 עניים), money from מעשר should not be used. Any מתנות לאביונים beyond the required amount may come from מעשר money.

On פורים, there is an ענין of "כל הפושט יד נותנים לו" - we give to any עני collecting for himself without investigating his cause. Likewise, פורים is a time when the שערי שמים are open to anyone who reaches out in תפילה.

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## משלוח מנות

The **חיוב** of **משלוח מנות** is to give 2 **מינים** to one person. The **מינים** must be food or drink items that are edible in their given state, with no further cooking needed. The **מינים** may have the same **ברכה**, but must be two different types of food. For example, a green and yellow apple would not suffice, as they are of the same **מין**. However, an apple and an orange, while both fruits, are considered two separate **מינים**, and therefore may be given together.

An important reason given for the **מצוה** of **משלוח מנות** is increasing **אחדות** among **כלל ישראל**. It is therefore praiseworthy to give more than the required amount. Likewise, when leaving **משלוח מנות** at someone's doorstep, be sure to leave a name on it so the recipient can know from whom it was sent.

We do not send **משלוח מנות** directly to an **אבל**, but rather address it to the family instead.

A woman should not send **משלוח מנות** specifically for a man; instead, she should address it to his family.

## על הניסים

"על הניסים" and "בימי מרדכי ואסתר" are added on Purim to **שמונה עשרה** and **bentching**. **הלל** is not recited on **פורים**.

## מוצש"ק on פורים Begins

When Purim begins on **מוצאי שבת**, the fast of **תענית אסתר** is observed on Thursday. Friday is a regular day.

Anything that will be needed for the megillah reading on **מוצאי שבת** (megillahs, graggers, etc.) should be brought to shul before Shabbos, as bringing these items to shul on Shabbos before **מעריב** would constitute preparing for after Shabbos while it is still Shabbos. (This obviously only pertains in areas that have an eiruv.)