

In Hilchos YOM TOV

You have heard the shaylos . . .
Now learn the issues & the opinions

The Purim Seuda

A summary of the weekly Wednesday night shiur by Rabbi Shmuel Stein at the Miami Beach Community Kollel / To receive a copy send an email to InHilchosShabbos@gmail.com

One of the mitzvos of Purim is to eat a *seuda* (meal). This obligation is stated in the Megillah¹ “The Jews should celebrate the day of Purim as a day of happiness and feasting.”² In the following paragraphs we will discuss some of the *halachos* and *minhagim* of the Purim *seuda*.

Why We Have a Purim Seuda

We have the Purim *seuda* in order to commemorate of the miracle of Purim. The miracle of Purim came about through the *seuda* that Esther made for Achashveirosh and Haman. Therefore, the Purim *seuda* serves as a reminder of the miracle of Purim which occurred through a *seuda*.³ The intention of the Purim *seuda* is to foster feelings of praise and thanksgiving to *Hakadosh baruch Hu* for the salvation of the miracle of Purim.⁴ The *Pri Megadim*⁵ writes that it is important for one to have these intentions in mind when eating the Purim *seuda*.

Who Is Obligated To Partake In the Seuda

Both men and women are obligated to partake in the *seudas* Purim.⁶ Although women are generally exempt from *mitzvos aseh sh'hazman grama* (positive time-bound *mitzvos*), they are nevertheless obligated in all the *mitzvos* of Purim, since they too were saved through the miracle of Purim.⁷

The Correct Time to Eat the Seuda

The Shulchan Aruch⁸ writes that one cannot fulfill this mitzvah by eating a meal at night. The Megillah⁹ states, “*בְּיָמֵינוּ נִשְׁמְחָה וְשִׂמְחָה*” - *days of feasting* and happiness, from which Chazal¹⁰ derive that the Purim *seuda* must take place by day. The *Rema*¹¹ adds that, “One should still be joyous and have a small *seuda* on the night of Purim.”

Although one may eat the Purim *seuda* any time during the day, the *Rema*¹² writes that the custom is to eat the *seuda* in the afternoon after one *davens* Mincha. The *Mishna Berura*¹³ explains that this is because people are generally busy all morning with the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* and only begin eating the Purim *seuda* after Mincha. The *Rema*¹⁴ adds that it is important to begin the meal before it gets dark because “one must ensure that the majority of the meal takes place during the daytime; not like those who are accustomed to begin the Purim *seuda* immediately before nightfall, and the majority of their meal is eaten after Purim.”

What Should Be Eaten At the Purim Seuda

Bread. There is a dispute amongst the *poskim* whether one must eat bread during the Purim *seudah*.¹⁵ Some *poskim*¹⁶ rule there is no obligation to eat bread during the Purim *seuda*. While others¹⁷ argue that one can only fulfill the mitzvah of the Purim *seudah* by eating bread. The Aruch Ha'Shulchan¹⁸ writes that “It would seem to me that one must eat bread at the Purim *seuda*, just as one must on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Furthermore, the verse states that “Purim is a day of feasting and happiness,” and a feast can only be with bread.”¹⁹ Accordingly, one should be careful to eat bread by the Purim *seudah* in order to conform to the stringent opinion.²⁰

Meat. The Rambam²¹ writes, “In order to properly fulfill the mitzvah of the Purim *seuda* one must eat meat.” The requirement to eat meat can be derived from the verse in the Megillah²² which states “the day of Purim is celebrated as a day of feasting

and happiness.” ‘Happiness’ refers to eating meat, as it brings a person to happiness.²³ Someone who finds it difficult to eat meat can fulfill his obligation by eating chicken instead.²⁴

A Lavish and Joyful Meal. The Rambam²⁵ writes “that one should prepare a lavish meal” for the Purim *seuda*. The Meiri²⁶ writes that “on the day of Purim one is obligated to have a lot of food and drink, to the point where nothing is lacking.” The Mishna Berura²⁷ writes that one should eat the Purim *seuda* with family and friends, since one cannot be truly joyous when he eats alone.

Eating seeds. The Rema²⁸ writes that “it is customary to eat seeds on Purim to commemorate that miracle that occurred to Daniel.” Nevuchadnetzar, the king of Bavel, ordered Daniel to serve in his palace. Daniel resolved in his heart not to eat from the king's food, and requested that he be given only seeds and water. The officers were concerned that if Daniel only ate seeds his health would deteriorate. Yet, a miracle occurred and after ten days Daniel's appearance was healthier than the other officers.²⁹ We remember Daniel as he is mentioned in the Megillah as the messenger of Esther, under the name Hasach.³⁰ Furthermore, the Mishna Berura³¹ points out that Esther followed the example of Daniel and ate only seeds while in the palace of Achashveirosh. In order to commemorate the commitment of Daniel and Esther not to eat non-Jewish foods, and the miracle that they merited, we eat seeds on Purim as well. Many people follow this custom by filling their hamantachin with poppy seeds. Some *poskim*³² write that all vegetables are included in this custom, not only seeds.

Learning Torah before the Seuda

The Rema³³ writes, “Before beginning one's Purim *seuda*, one should involve himself in Torah learning. This is hinted in the Megillah³⁴ where it states, that after the miracle of Purim: “*לְיִהוּדִים הָיְתָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן וְיִקָּר*” - there was **light** and **happiness** to the Jewish people. The word “light” refers to the Torah,³⁵ (and “happiness” refers to the Purim *seuda*.)” Therefore, one should involve himself in Torah learning immediately before the *seuda*. One does fulfill this *halacha* with learning done earlier in the morning.³⁶ Learning before the meal helps ensure that the Purim *seuda* will be filled with *divrei* Torah, and not frivolousness.³⁷ The Mishna Berura³⁸ writes that “although it is important to eat the Purim *seudah* with family and friends, one must ensure that the joy during the meal is a joy of *divrei* Torah.” The Kaf Ha'Chaim³⁹ writes that, “Inviting guests is only recommended if they will discuss *divrei* Torah and praises of *Hakadosh baruch Hu*. However, if inviting guests will lead to idle talk, or certainly if it will cause inappropriate speech, it is better that one eat the Purim *seuda* alone.”

Reciting Al Ha'Nissim

On Purim we recite the prayer of *al ha'nissim* during *Birchas Ha'Mazon*.⁴⁰ The Mishna Berura⁴¹ writes that there is a dispute amongst the *poskim* whether someone who omitted *al ha'nissim* must repeat *Birchas Ha'Mazon*. This dispute hinges on whether or not one is obligated to eat bread at the Purim *seudah*.⁴² The Mishnah Berura⁴³ rules, that based on the principle of *safek berachos l'hakel* (we are lenient regarding reciting questionable *berachos*) one should not repeat *Birchas Ha'Mazon* if *al ha'nissim* was omitted.

1 Esther 9:19 2 Aruch ha'Shulchan 695:1 3 Pri Megadim 695:1 [in Mishpitvos Zahav] 4 Shi'it'is (Vayakhel) 67, as explained by the Nitziv there in sefer Heimik Sheaylah 5 695:1 [in Mishpitvos Zahav] 6 See Aruch ha'Shulchan 595:18 [Kovetz Halachos (Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky) pg. 125 note 5] 7 See Mishna Berura 689:1 8 Shulchan Aruch 695:1 9 Esther 9:22 10 Gemarah Megillah 7b 11 695 (in the introduction to *siman*); See Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 285 12 Rema 695:2 13 295:8 14 695:2. See Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 298-299 regarding whether there is a mitzva to continue eating and drinking once it turns night (of the fifteenth of Adar 15 See Sharei Teshuvah beginning of *siman* 695 16 Magen Avraham 695:9 17 Maharshal *siman* 48 brought in Taz 693:2 18 Aruch ha'Shulchan 695:7 19 The Aruch Ha'Shulchan proves that a “feast” must include bread from the verse in Bereishis (3:19) that states that Lot made a feast for the angels, and that meal included bread. 20 Kovetz Halachos pg. 123; see also Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 290 21 Megillah 2:15 22 Esther 9:19 23 sefer Emek Beracha p.126 24 Kovetz Halachos pg. 124; see also Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 291-293, he writes that women are also obligated to eat meat at the *seuda*. 25 Rambam, Megillah 2:16 26 brought in Biur Halacha 695:2 d'h Ad 27 695:9. See Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 286, where he writes that, “This is one of the main parts of the mitzva, to have the *seuda* with family and friends... Therefore, it is not appropriate for someone to go out to collect money, while he leaves his family alone for the *seuda*, as by doing so one loses the mitzva of having the Purim *seuda*. 28 Rema 695:2 29 Daniel 1:1 30 Levush 695:2 (based on the Gemarah in Megillah 15a) 31 695:12 (based on Gemarah Megillah 13a) 32 Divrei Yatziv 2:287:6 33 695:2 34 Esther 8:16 35 Gemarah Megillah 16b 36 Kovetz Halachos pg. 122. Regarding the importance of learning Torah on Purim: The Chasam Sofer (Derash on Erev Rosh Chodesh Adar 558) brings from the Shev Yaakov that “Anyone that toils in Torah between the Megillah reading by night and the Megilla reading by day can be sure that he is a *ben alam haba*.” The sefer *Yisroel v'Oraisa* (4) writes that the father of the Avnei Nezer had the merit to have a son as great as the Avnei Neizer because he would learn on Purim when others were not learning.” Nevertheless, although one should try to find time to learn on Purim, the sefer Mikadesh Yisroel (Purim 297) writes that if one has a long *seuda* on Purim that extends into the night there is no concern of *bitul Torah*, as this has been the *minhag* of *Gedolei Torah*. See also Mikadesh Yisroel, Purim 300. 37 See Mishna Berura 695:9 [where he writes that one must be careful to have a meal filled with *divrei* Torah “as is later discussed” (i.e. in the Rema that one should learn Torah before the meal).] 38 Mishna Berura 695:9 39 695:24 40 Shulchan Aruch 695:3 41 Mishna Berura 695:15. This dispute is only regarding the first *seuda* one eats on Purim. Once he eats one meal and fulfills his obligation to eat a *seuda*, all opinions agree that *birchas hamazon* is not repeated. 42 See Taz 693:2 and Magen Avraham 695:9 43 Mishna Berura 695:15

Ad D'lo Yu'dah: Is There A Mitzvah To Get Drunk on Purim?

The Gemara⁴⁴ writes: "A person is obligated to get drunk on Purim *ad d'lo yu'dah* *bein arur Haman l'baruch Mordechai* - until he is in a state that he cannot differentiate between the words "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai." The Mishna Berura⁴⁵ explains why there is a special mitzvah to drink wine on Purim:

"Chazal instituted a mitzvah to drink on Purim, since all of the miracles occurred through wine. First, Vashti was expelled from her position as queen at the party of Achashveirosh through wine, and was replaced by Esther. As the verse states "when the king's heart was happy with wine, he commanded to bring Vashti". The downfall of Haman also came through the party that Esther made, as the verse states "The king and Haman came to drink with Esther". Therefore, Chazal instituted that one drink wine on Purim, in order to commemorate and remember the miracle of Purim."

There is much controversy amongst the *poskim* whether one should get drunk on Purim, and to what extent. In the following paragraphs we will discuss the different opinions amongst the *poskim* regarding this issue.

The opinion of the Shulchan Aruch – Ad d'lo Yudah. The Shulchan Aruch⁴⁶ rules that "One must get drunk on Purim to the extent that he cannot differentiate between the words "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai." Indeed there were great *tzadikim* who got very drunk on Purim.⁴⁷

Many of the earlier *poskim*⁴⁸ question the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch. How can there be a mitzvah to get so drunk on Purim when the Torah in so many places considers getting drunk disgraceful and harmful? As the Orchos Chaim⁴⁹ writes "There is no greater sin than getting drunk, as it leads to many terrible sins." How then can Chazal require one to get very drunk? Accordingly, other *poskim* disagree with the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, and give different explanations regarding the mitzvah of drinking wine on Purim:

1) Magen Avraham – The gematria (the numerical value). The Magen Avraham⁵⁰ explains that when the Gemara states that one must drink until he can no longer differentiate between the words "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai" it is not meant to be taken literally. The Gemara does not mean that one should get as drunk as the drunkenness of Lot, rather one must drink enough that he can no longer perform the mathematical operation necessary to calculate the gematria of "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai" (they both equal 502). When one drinks to this point he has drunk enough to fulfill his obligation.

2) Rema – take a nap. The Rema⁵¹ rules that, "One need not actually get drunk on Purim, rather, one should drink a little more wine than he is used to (*yoser m'limudo*),⁵² and then take a nap. Since someone who is sleeping he cannot differentiate between "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai" he fulfills this obligation. The Mishnah Berura⁵³ and Aruch ha'Shulchan⁵⁴ write that one should follow the ruling of the Rema.

3) Rabbeinu Ephraim- we do not rule in accordance with this Gemara. Rabbeinu Ephraim⁵⁵ writes that although the Gemara states that one must get drunk to the point of *ad d'lo yu'dah*, we do not rule in accordance with this Gemara. He explains his position as follows. After the Gemara states the halacha of *ad d'lo yu'dah* it recounts the following story:

One year, two great Torah scholars, Rabba and Rav Zeira, ate the Purim seuda together. During the seuda, Rabba got drunk and killed Rav Zeira. Rabba prayed that Rav Zeira be brought back to life, and a miracle occurred and his prayers were answered. The following year Rabba again invited Rav Zeira for the Purim seuda, but Rav Zeira declined the invitation explaining that one cannot assume that a miracle will occur every year.

Rabbeinu Ephraim concludes that the Gemara recounts this story to indicate that we do not follow the halacha of first Gemara of *ad d'lo yu'dah*. Nevertheless, even Rabbeinu Ephraim agrees that although the halacha of *ad d'lo yu'dah* was rescinded,

the halacha of drinking wine on Purim still applies, and one should drink more than he is used to, and reach a state of happiness at his Purim *seuda*.⁵⁶

To summarize: There are different opinions as to how much one should drink on Purim. The Shulchan Aruch seems to rule that one must get very drunk on Purim to the point of *ad d'lo yu'dah*. Indeed there were great *tzadikim* who got drunk on Purim like the drunkenness of Lot. However, many *poskim* rule that it is inappropriate to get this drunk. Rather one should drink more than he is accustomed to, and reach a state of happiness at his Purim *seuda*. Other *poskim* rule that one should drink more wine than he usually does, and take a nap. The Rema⁵⁷ concludes: "Both someone who drinks a lot, and someone who drinks a little (are acceptable), as long as one's intentions are *l'shem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven)."

Drinking in a way that leads to Ahavas Hashem. The purpose of the mitzvah of drinking on Purim is to bring one to higher levels of Ahavas Hashem (love of G-d). As the Chayei Adam⁵⁸ writes:

"Since the miracles of Purim occurred through wine, Chazal established that one get drunk, or at least to drink more wine than usual. However, if drinking too much will lead to degrading certain mitzvos – such as *netilas yadaim*, *birchas ha'mazon*, *tefillah*, *kalos rosh* (levity), [or embarrassing a fellow Jew⁵⁹] – it is better not to get drunk. All of one's actions should be done *l'shem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven)." Certainly if getting drunk would, G-d forbid, lead to putting one's life in danger it is forbidden to get drunk.

The Meiri⁶⁰ writes:

"There is no mitzvah on Purim to get drunk in a way which leads to levity and foolishness. Rather, one should drink in a manner that leads joyfulness, through which a person can attain love of Hashem, and praise Him for the miracles He performed for us."

What to drink?

Some *poskim*⁶¹ rule that one must specifically use wine to fulfill the mitzvah of *ad d'lo yu'dah*, in order to commemorate the miracles of Purim which occurred through wine.⁶² Additionally, since the Jewish people sinned by drinking wine of a non-Jew at the party of Achashveirosh, we (in some measure) fix that sin by drinking wine at the *seudas* Purim.⁶³ However other *poskim*⁶⁴ rule that although it is preferable to drink wine, one can fulfill his obligation to drink on Purim with any alcoholic drink.

When to drink

One should drink wine during the Purim *seuda*⁶⁵ as the Rambam⁶⁶ writes, "One should eat meat, set a lavish meal, and drink wine (during the *seuda*)". However, some *poskim*⁶⁷ rule that one may fulfill this mitzvah even before the *seuda* begins.

Switching Locations during One's Meal

It is common for someone to interrupt his own Purim *seuda* in order to join or visit a friend's *seuda*. Yet, leaving the location where one recited a *beracha* can create halachic issues regarding *hilchos berachos*. Still, the Rema⁶⁸ writes that one who ate *bread* at his own *seuda* may continue eating at his friend's home. However, the Mishna Berura⁶⁹ adds that *l'chatchila* one should have in mind when he begins his *seudah* that he may ultimately continue his meal in another location.

Davening Maariv When Drunk

The Shulchan Aruch⁷⁰ rules that one who drank wine (or other alcoholic beverages), and is in a state that he can no longer "speak in front of the king" (i.e. his speech is slurred or repeats words⁷¹), may not *daven Maariv*.⁷² The Shulchan Aruch⁷³ writes that if one does *daven* in such a state, his prayers are considered an abomination. However, someone who is in a state that he is able to "speak in front of the king" may *daven Maariv* and recite *Birchas ha'Mazon*.⁷⁴

44 Megillah 7b 45 Biur Halacha 695:2 d'h Chayav from Elya Rabba. The Avudraham (on hichos Purim) explains this way as well. 46 695:2 (The Aruch Ha'Shulchan (695:5) writes that by the fact that the Shulchan Aruch cites the Gemara, it seems to indicate that he ruled like the literal reading of the Gemara.) See also Avudraham (on hichos Purim) who seems to also learn the Gemara literally. 47 Rav Yisroel Salanter [brought in sefer Alei Shur 2 pg. 468]; Chazon Ish (brought in Orchos Rabainu 3 pg. 57); see sefer Emek Beracha p.126 48 See Bais Yosef 695:2 and Bach 695:2 49 cited in Bais Yosef 695:2 50 brought in Shaar ha'tzion 695:5 51 695:2 52 The simple explanation of this ruling is that one must drink more than he is accustomed to drink during the year. However, Rav Shmuel Vosner [Shevet ha'Levi 10:107:2] writes that one should drink until the wine has an effect on him, putting him into a joyous mood. Mikadesh Yisroel (Purim 326) writes that even according to the Rema, one must drink enough that it makes him tired and wants to fall asleep. The Bach (695:2) writes that "one should not exceedingly drunk to extreme levels. But, a person should still drink a lot more than he usually does, and reach a state of happiness at his Purim seuda. He may even reach a state where he cannot speak properly in front of a king. However, he should make sure that he maintains his intellect and understanding the entire time. 53 695:5 54 695:5 55 brought in Ran and Baal ha'moer Megillah 3b, Bais Yosef and Bach 695:2 56 As explained by the Bach 695:2 57 695:2 58 Brought in Biur Halacha 695:2 d'h Ad 59 sefer Toras ha'moadim (brought in Shiurei Halacha [Rabbi Shmuel Felder] pg. 44) 60 Megillah 7b (brought in Biur Halacha 695:2 d'h Ad) 61 See Rashi Megilla 7b d'h l'avasumi) who writes that "wine" should be used. See gilyonei ha'shas Megillah 7b 62 See Biur Halacha 695:2 d'h Chayav 63 Su'tt hisorerus l'teshuvah 3:491 64 Kovetz Halachos pg. 128, Mikadesh Yisroel (Purim 328). Regarding drinking grape juice: sefer Halichos Shlomo (pg. 342 note 76), and sefer Mikadesh Yisroel (Purim 328-2) write that one may not fulfill his obligation of drinking on Purim by drinking grape juice. However, sefer Kovetz Halachos [Rav Shmuel Kamenatzky pg. 126] rules that one may fulfill his obligation to drink on Purim with grape juice. 65 Kovetz Halachos pg. 125 66 Megillah 2:15 67 Orchos Rabbeinu Purim 94 68 99:1 69 Shiurei Halacha [Rav Shmuel Felder] pg. 50 70 The Mishnah Berura 185:6 writes that l'chatchila one should be careful to recite birchas ha'mazon before reaching this point, but b'dieved on may still recite birchas ha'mazon. 71 Shulchan Aruch 99:1 72 See Shiurei Halacha [Rav Shmuel Felder] pg. 52; Kovetz Halachos pg. 132. Although the Shulchan Aruch 99:1 rules that even someone who drinks a reveis of wine should l'chatchila not daven, there are a number of reasons one may nevertheless daven: 1) Our wines are not that strong [Mishna Berura 99:17] 2) During a meal where one eats a lot of food the wine does not cause as much of an influence [Mishna Berura 99,2] 73 Rema 178:2 [Kovetz Halachos pg. 133] 74 Mishna Berura 178:33 [Kovetz Halachos pg. 133]