

פורים תשפ"א Issues For

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✧ ✧ *These are guidelines for rabbis to consider as they craft appropriate policy for their particular shuls* ✧ ✧
All government laws and recommendations should be followed

1. May our congregants rely upon the reading of the Megillah and Parshas Zachur on Zoom if they are old or infirm and have no other option?

As Rav Hershel Schachter shlit"א has ruled (see Piskei Corona #58), ideally everyone should hear the Megillah in a shul minyan, or have it read in their homes from a kosher Megillah, either by reading it themselves (it is sufficient to read the words properly, even if one does not know the proper cantillation) or to read it along with a Zoom connection of somebody else reading the Megillah.

If someone is reading from his or her own Megillah, they can even listen to a recording, since the fulfillment of the Mitzvah is not coming from the recording but from their own reading. However, for some listeners, such a recording may need to be sufficiently slow to enable them to hear a few words and then repeat them accurately in the megillah in front of them (reportedly, the Eretz Chemda institute is supplying such a recording). Accordingly, it is appropriate to make the Megillah reading available on simultaneous Zoom, but at the same time to urge anyone who can attend a Megillah reading safely to do so, or to try to read from a kosher Megillah at the same time if they have one available to them and are able to read along. Otherwise, given the current situation, it is legitimate when there is no other option to rely on Rav Moshe's heter (see Igros Moshe OC 4:91(4) and Igros Moshe OC 2:108) with respect to hearing the Megillah via microphone or telephone, and to apply that Heter to a live Zoom simulcast as well (this is, however, only b'dieved, because many other poskim, such as Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, did not agree with this heter).

Parshas Zachur should be read from a Sefer Torah (see Mishna Berurah 685:14). If somebody cannot attend synagogue on Shabbos Zachur or otherwise read Parshas Zachur from a Sefer Torah, it is permissible in such a case to rely upon the opinion of the Magen Avrohom (OC 685) to fulfill the mitzvah of Parshas Zachur by listening to the Keriya HaTorah of "VaYavo Amalek" on Purim morning (see also Kobetz Halachos, Hilchos Purim 1:3, expressing comfort with reliance upon the Magen Avrohom's position, despite the Mishna Berurah's reservations in 685:16), even if that listening needs to be via Zoom simulcast.

Hopefully we will all be able to be in shul this summer to listen to Parshas Zachur again at the conclusion of Parshas Ki Teitzei, at which point someone who did not previously hear it live should have in mind to fulfill the obligation again at that time. See Teshuva of Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Inyanei Purim, 6 Shevat 5781, and Rav Hershel Schachter, Piskei Corona #58.

2. How should we fulfill Mishloach Manos this year given the restrictions against social contact?

It is perfectly fine to fulfill the mitzvah of Mishloach Manos by leaving a Mishloach Manos package on a person's porch if it is a safe and secure area and the recipient will receive it on Purim (Aruch Hashulchan 695:16) provided that the recipient is made aware of the identity of the giver (see Kesav Sofer OC 141:2, based on Manos Levi, Esther 9:19 that the purpose of the mitzvah is to increase friendship and harmony between the giver and the recipient). For this purpose, it would be ideal for people to leave their doors open, so that the Mishloach Manos can be placed inside the house in a foyer area even if nobody is in physical proximity because of safety concerns.

Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the mitzvah of Mishloach Manos only requires the delivery of two separate food or drink items to one person (Orach Chaim 695:4, Mishna Berurah 19). Therefore, although in most years it is considered praiseworthy to give Mishloach Manos to many people (Orach Chaim, id.), during this year one may rely upon fulfillment of the essential mitzvah to give Mishloach Manos to one individual. It is better in any event to be more generous when it comes to the amount of Matanos L'Evyonim (see Mishna Berurah 694:2). It should be noted that Matanos L'Evyonim can be given in advance to those who will be distributing gifts to the poor on Purim from Matanos L'Evyonim funds (see, e.g., Nitei Gavriel, Hilchos Purim 68:6).

Since each family member should fulfill the mitzvah of Mishloach Manos (see Mishna Berurah 695:25 with respect to there being a separate obligation incumbent upon each spouse, and Piskei Halachos 695:15 with respect to children), this can be achieved by each family member each delivering one package of Mishloach Manos, or having enough portions in the Mishloach Manos package so that each family member contributes at least two portions of food and drink. Similarly, with respect to shul deliveries of Mishloach Manos, it is sufficient for multiple individuals to combine with respect to one Mishloach Manos delivery, provided that each individual contributes at least two items (see Piskei Corona #58), and that their names are identified in the Mishloach Manos package. However, the Mishloach Manos must also be delivered on Purim itself (Rema 695:4).

3. How should the Minhag of Machatzis Hashekel be performed this year?

It is customary, at least for men, to give three half-coins (corresponding to the three appearance of the word “Terumah” in Parshas Shekalim) of the currency of the country in which one lives as a Zecher (reminder) of the Machatzis Hashekel which was given during the time of the Beis Hamikdash (see Rema 694:1). The customary time for fulfilling this custom is during Mincha on Ta’anis Esther. However, it can also be given in the evening prior to Megillas Esther, or on Purim morning (see Nitei Gavriel, Hilchos Purim 26:1). In the event that someone is unable to give actual half-coins, one can fulfill the mitzvah by giving \$1.50 with any form of coins or currency. It is considered an embellishment of the mitzvah to give the actual monetary equivalent of a silver half-shekel according to the Torah (see Kaf Hachaim 694:20), which as of January 31, 2021, would come out to around \$8.50 (one shekel is approximately 19.2 grams of silver, which is now valued at close to \$17.00).

Our local epidemiologist has recommended that for those who will be observing the standard custom of lifting up three half-dollar coins set aside by a shul (after placing the appropriate amount of money into the Machatzis Hashekel basket), there is no need to discontinue the practice this year, but each person should put on special gloves for this purpose. The gloves should then be discarded quickly thereafter. However, for those who are uncomfortable or nervous about picking up coins which will be handled by others, it is sufficient to make a donation of coins and currency totalling \$1.50 (or \$8.50) as set forth above. Ideally, this commemoration of Machatzis Hashekel should not be fulfilled with a check, since the original Machatzis Hashekel needed to be performed with actual Kesef (currency). This is especially true since the entire practice is not the actual giving of the Machatzis Hashekel, but only a “zecher” (commemoration). See Piskei Corona, ibid (not embracing the practice of lifting up three half-dollar coins altogether since it may look like one is consecrating the coins for the Beis Hamikdash). For this reason, some poskim recommend that those who give the actual coins state that the giving is only “zecher l’machatzis hashekel” as opposed to saying “l’machatzis hashekel.” See, e.g., Adar u’Purim, p. 72, citing Rav Yechiel Michel Tuchshinsky (but see Kobetz Halachos 3:3 and n. 4 *ad locum*,, stating that this is not a problem so long as the giver does not indicate that the coins are for the purpose of atonement).

4. How should one fulfill the Mitzvah of the Purim Seudah this year when Purim falls out on Friday?

The Purim Seudah can be fulfilled in the morning (according to the Shelah, it is always preferable to have a Seudas Purim in the morning, see Pri Megadim, Eshel Avrohom 695:5), but in any event should be completed 30 minutes prior to

Mincha Ketana (approximately 2:48 p.m. in Chicago). See Piskei Corona, *ibid.* As with any other year, it is appropriate for the Purim Seudah to include meat (based on the Rambam, Megillah 2:15). Although meat is unconventional for a morning meal, one can eat salami and eggs or some other breakfast-style dish that happens to include meat in order to satisfy the obligation. There is also a minhag to eat kreplach on Purim (see, e.g., Piskei Teshuvos 695:7), which can be fulfilled with an egg-roll type dish (with a meat filling) or a meat boreka. Since the appropriate time for drinking wine is at the Purim meal (see Rambam, *id.*), one should be especially cautious this year, when there will likely still be much more time in the day, not to drive after consuming any amount of wine (see Chulin 10a).