

HALOCHOSCOPE

Clarification of last week's issue:

Last issue we discussed whether a meat-pie (or any pie), or sandwich, or *kreplach*, (or a corn dog) count as two *manos* for the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* on *Purim*.

Some people raised the question that the item seems to be one food item.

To clarify: the question is based on the *halachic* definition of two *manos*. The Talmud derives from the language of the *passuk* that one must send two portions. One could ask why this is so. In the times of Ezra, when discussing sending food on *Rosh Hashanah*, the term does not imply two *manos*. Rather, it seems to be saying send portions, however many are needed, to those who did not prepare. Why does the Talmud determine that in the Megilah it refers to two *manos* specifically? A *manah* is a share. That is, a portion of a larger piece of food. For example, one might have a cake that is cut into pieces for each person. Each piece is a *manah*. In the Torah, it literally means a share. One posek explains that this corresponds to the two gifts that Achashverosh gave to Ester, the house of Haman and the ring. The other poskim, while not addressing this specifically, suggest reasons for the *mitzvah*. These explain why two *manos* are sent. One explanation is that those who do not have food for their *seuda* should be given some. Since people should have plenty, one should send at least two *manos*. The other main explanation is that people should increase friendship and brotherly love. Some add, the miracle came about through the unique unity of the Jewish people. Accordingly, one wishes to highlight this by sending food. To show that this is more than on another *Yomtov*, two *manos* are sent. A third view maintains that every *Yomtov*, two *manos* were sent. This is so that the person can celebrate *Simchas* and Oneg *Yomtov* appropriately. *Purim* is based on *Yomtov*. [Based on Megillah 7a, Poskim. Sh Ar OC 695:4, Bach, Levush. Or Chadash (Maharal) Megilah 9:22. Heichlei Shain Telisai, 13.]

Having said this, the question turns to the nature of these two *manos*, which we discussed at length. One of the questions is whether to compare these two *manos* to similar instances throughout the Talmud. The Talmud discusses the definition of two foods in four instances: *eruv tavshilin*, where food is prepared before *Yomtov* to permit further preparation on *Yomtov Erev Shabbos*; the *seder* plate, where two cooked foods are placed (at the top); *seuda hamafsekess*, the last meal before the fast of *Tisha b'Av*; and *mishloach manos*. For *eruv tavshilin*, two foods must be set aside. On the *seder* plate, one places two cooked foods to represent the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah*. At the *seuda hamafsekess*, one may not eat two cooked foods. *Mishloach manos*, as mentioned, requires two foods. [In reality, we mentioned that many poskim maintain that one need not send two different foods. Two portions would be sufficient, even of the same food. We also mentioned that the poskim debate whether the food need be cooked.] The Talmud says that a piece of fish with a layer of egg on it counts as two separate foods for *eruv tavshilin*.

One opinion in the Talmud says that this also counts on the *sefer* plate. The poskim debate whether the same would apply to *seuda hamafsekess* and *mishloach manos*. [For *seuda hamafsekess*, a prominent commentator (Rashi Taanis 26) cites fish with an egg coating as an example of two foods, based on the *sefer* plate. Others say that the two cooked foods of *seuda hamafsekess* are derived from *eruv tavshilin* (see Ran Taanis ibid.).] It seems that the question with regard to *seuda hamafsekess* is that the restriction against more than one cooked food is to forbid indulgence. If it is really one food with two components, would this be considered indulgent? With regard to *mishloach manos*, the question is whether the requirement of two *manos* is to show indulgence. If so, does this combination food qualify? After all, it might be a large portion, but it is only one food! This is also the logical challenge raised by some readers. [See Pesachim 114a-b Beitza 15b 17b Taanis 26b, Poskim. Edus Leyaakov, Likutim 92. Heichlei Shain Telisai 13.]

Our conclusion was based on the lenient views regarding the fish and egg. There, too, it is one item. Yet it is counted as two items. The dissenting views maintain that for *eruv tavshilin* a reminder is all that is needed. Therefore, anything minimally resembling two cooked foods is sufficient. For *mishloach manos* two respectable portions are required.

This week's question:

If one has to choose between going to hear Megillah reading where the *baal kora*i reads it in the traditional way or where he reads it with voices and drama, is there a preference?

The issues:

A) *Mikra Megillah*

B) *Trop*, the traditional cantillation notes

C) *Igeress*, reading it like a letter; the dramatic traditions

A) *Mikra megillah* [Excerpted and adapted from HalochoSCOPE XIX:22]

The *megillah* must be read from a kosher *megillah*. It may not be read by heart. If some words are missing or invalid, the *megillah* may still be used to read from. As long as most of the words were there, it is as though the entire *megillah* was read 'inside'. The *megillah* must be complete. There are opinions that the *megillah* is not read from the beginning, but from a later point. Yet, all agree that one must use a *megillah* that has the beginning. The poskim explain, as long as one is not missing major parts, the beginning or end, it is considered readable. One could consider the few words read by heart as valid.

In *shul*, often the reader is the only one with a kosher *megillah*. Others follow along in a printed version, invalid for the *mitzvah*. Those who follow along fulfill their obligation by listening to the reader, known as *shomria ke'oneh*. There is a debate on how this works. Some say that the listener combines his hearing with the reader's reading. This way, it is as though the listener reads it from the text. The other view maintains that the reader is like an agent for the listener, so that the listener is counted as a reader. Since listening causes this agency, and one can only listen if the reader reads it, and he reads it from the text, this is not called by heart. For *megillah* particularly, there is a debate whether the main point is to read it, to hear it while reading it, or to hear it. For Torah reading, the consensus seems to be that there is no requirement to read personally, but for the congregation to hear it. A person called to the Torah may read. In practice, some say he simply recites the *brocha*, while others say that he 'reads' it by having the reader do it

for him. There is debate on whether a blind man can be given an *aliyah*. Can the reader's voice count as though he 'reads' it, though he obviously can only say it by heart. Presumably, a blind man could not act as a human loudspeaker for a soft-spoken reader.

If a listener misses a word of the *megillah*, he says it himself and catches up with the reader. If he has a non-kosher *megillah*, this word will be read by heart. He should not read along all the time. His own voice will drown out the reader. With a kosher *megillah*, one reads along, some say audibly. This is the background of our question.

Any regular Torah reading must be from a kosher *sefer Torah*. Even one word may not be read by heart. We derive from the Torah that the Written Torah may not be read by heart. Many poskim maintain that one fulfills his obligation if some was read by heart. They debate whether one may rely on this ideally, for a word or two, especially if the *sefer Torah* itself is invalid. [A *sefer Torah* is invalid with one letter missing or spoiled.] *Megillah* seems to be different. The source for reading it from a text is specific: the word '*sefer*'. The reason that some may be read by heart is because it is also called an *igeress*, a letter, and has both qualities; it is to be considered part Written Torah, part letter. Perhaps, since *megillah* is partly like *hallel*, it may be recited partly by heart. Nonetheless, the poskim debate whether one may read a verse from the text and read it 'outside' immediately from memory. Furthermore, since the reason to invalidate reciting it by heart is the word '*sefer*', it would seem that it is absolutely necessary to read it straight from the book. [See Yuma 70a Megillah 18a 24a-b Yerushalmi 4:5 Sukah 38b Gitin 60b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 137:3 139:3 141:2 143:4 144:1 670:2-3, commentaries. ShT RAE I:30. Kehilas Yaakov Psachim 5. Mikraei Kodesh 13. Moadim Uzmanim VI:101 VIII:25.]

B) *Trop, taamim*

Like the Torah reading, Megillah must be read correctly. There are no *nekudos*, vowels, in the Torah or the Megillah. [The symbols for vowels might have existed earlier, as indicated by the Zohar. However, the authorized version of texts with *nekudos* was compiled in Gaonic times.] Ideally, one may not add anything to the parchment of the Scriptures. The correct *nekudos* were passed down as *Torah Sheb'al Peh*, oral tradition. Small changes make a big difference. *Zachar Amalek* means the males, while *Zecher* means the memory. In addition, there are *taamim*, cantillation notes, that punctuate. For some readings, including the Megillah, they also add drama. These are also *Torah Sheb'al Peh*. These can also make a big difference in meaning. There are also some words that are *kri ukesiv*, written differently than the way they are pronounced.

If the *kora*i, reader, makes a mistake, he should correct himself. If he does not do so, others should correct him before he moves on. If he has already moved on, he does not always need to go back and repeat. If the meaning is not changed by the mistake in *taamim* or *nekudos*, he should not be made to repeat. However, the listeners should shout out to him. If there is a difference in meaning, he must repeat it correctly.

If no-one is available who can read without *nekudos* or *taamim*, common practice is to have a prompter reading from a printed copy that has them. The reader then reads slowly, while being prompted. If this is also not available, one may still read from the Torah with a *brocha*, but should know the *nekudos*. While he is reading, he may look at

nekudos in a printed version, but must look back into the scroll before reading. For Megillah, the poskim say that adding *taamim* and *nekudos* do not invalidate it.

The Torah is not read by two people at the same time. Two voices cannot be heard. However, something that people find precious can be listened to even when read by two voices. Accordingly, Megillah may be read in unison. If one needs to listen to a prompter, he might not hear his own voice at the same time. He should slow the recording, or pause it, so that he can hear his own voice. A recording can serve as a prompter. [See Megillah 21a-b Baba Basra 21b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 142 690 691:9 MA 10, commentaries.]

C) *Igeress*, traditional changes

We mentioned (section A) the quality of *igeress*, a letter. Megilas Ester is a narrative to be read like a letter. This is why part of it read by heart is still acceptable, unlike *krias hatorah*. One should open up the entire scroll and flatten it or fold it, rather than read it as a scroll like the Torah. Another difference is the manner in which it is read. The *trop* is in a slightly more musical mode than regular *krias hatorah*. It has an upbeat and positive tone. One should not break or pause in the middle. Unlike the Torah, which is comprised of many smaller parts, this is meant to be read as one continuous story-line. Indeed, we follow a view that the breaks in the story are all *setumos*, closed breaks. One should break for a breath between these sections. However, between one *passuk* and the next, one should not stop at all. This poses some problems for those who wish to dramatize the story. A similar problem arises when the children bang for Haman, another old tradition – that never happens when reading the Torah. However, *halachically*, if the *korai* did pause, he still fulfilled the *mitzvah*. He only lost the additional *igeress* quality.

Four *pesukim* are read aloud together by the congregation, at critical junctures in the story. The *korai* repeats them, especially since it is possible that someone did not do it right for a number of reasons. In addition, there is a widespread *minhag*, albeit debated, to read aloud the verse about the ten sons of Haman. The *pesukim* should be read in one breath. At these junctures, the *korai* has no choice but to pause. In addition, there is a tradition to read certain verses in a mournful mode, similar to Eicha that is read on *Tisha b'Av*. Another tradition is to raise one's voice at certain junctures, and even to insert a certain sing-song or interpretive voice. Other small changes have been added over time.

These seem to have inspired *kor'im* to dramatize according to their own feelings. Assuming that they do not affect the meaning, the issue is that the listeners might not have the same feelings. They need to fulfill it with the reading of the *korai*. Therefore, it would seem to be dependent on the feelings of the listeners. [See refs to sections A and B, Sh Ar OC 690:5 13-15, commentaries. Nitei Gavriel Purim 46.]

In conclusion, if the listener feels confident that the dramatic *korai* will not misinterpret the *megillah*, and he agrees with the interpretation, he may fulfill it this way.

On the Parsha ... חזק חזק ונתחזק

Sponsored by Adam and Jackie Katz in memory of Grandma Betty, Bella bas Yehuda a"h, whose *yahrzeit*

was the 20th of Adar Alef. א

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