

HAL CH SCOPE

This week's question:

If Purim falls on Motzo'ei Shabbos, may children put on their Purim costumes before the end of Shabbos, to go to shul wearing them for the Megillah reading?

The issues:

- A) Wearing costumes on Purim.
- B) Costumes in shul
- C) Hachanah, preparing on Shabbos for after Shabbos; other possible violations.
- D) Vechibadeto, honoring Shabbos in dress, possible dishonor.

A) Costumes on Purim

There is a widespread custom to wear costumes on Purim. This is practiced in all Jewish communities, Sephardi and Askenazi, as indicated by the sources. The earliest sources give little indication of its origins. It predates the many kabalistic minhagim. One can only guess that it has been around since Purim itself began, and that it is an ideal example of the Oral Torah in action. No-one needed to write about something so obvious and prevalent! References to the minhag discuss issues that have arisen as a result. There is evidence of a practice to make a pantomime about the Purim story. This was meant in particular to ridicule Haman and Achashverosh. This seems to have led to other types of play-acting. Traditionally, plays were associated with the influence of Greek culture. This raised concern for moshav laitzim, activities related to aimless frivolity sharply condemned under normal circumstances. Apparently, there is no concern that the idea of dressing up and having a carnival on a festival is pagan. While the practice would not be considered idolatry, it could have come under the category of chukas hagoy, something done by pagans for silly reasons.

The plays seem to have been a way of acting out the story. This would have been an alternative to the targum, or the metargem, where a narrator would translate and act out the story as it was read. Due to the laws of modesty, only men could act the parts. The characters representing the women in the story would wear women's costumes. This raised the issue of cross-dressing, which is Scripturally forbidden, under normal circumstances. It is possible that the practice spread to wearing costumes for the fun of it.

Another issue raised deals with kilayim-sha'atnez, the prohibitions against certain cloths or fibers of mixed wool and linen content. Would a Rabbinical form of sha'atnez be relaxed for a Purim costume or play? Another issue arises regarding masks or costumes with images of humans or animals. They could touch on the prohibition of graven images. While the practices are discussed in the context of merrymaking, they are reverently described as a minhag. This implies a deeper significance.

Merrymaking on Purim is a mitzvah. Along with eating and drinking, dressing up is a way to let oneself go. The poskim refer to a similar practice at weddings, where people

dressed up to liven the gathering, in fulfillment of the *mitzvah* to gladden the bride and groom. In both instances, the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is invoked to justify the behavior.

The deeper meanings offered include the original cause for the crisis that faced the Jewish people at the time. The Talmud says that their initial sin was bowing to the idol of Nebuchadnezzar, compounded by their benefiting from the feast of Achashverosh. Bowing to an idol is forbidden and punishable under any circumstances. Yet the Jews did not sin sincerely. They made a 'show', pretending to do it. Hashem, in turn, made a 'show' of threatening us with annihilation. Dressing up in pretense celebrates this. In a twist on this, some cite a practice of dressing as gentiles particularly. The Jews behaved like gentiles for show. Some add an allusion to the Talmudic dictum requiring one to be drunk enough 'to confuse cursing Haman with blessing Mordechai'. Exchanging clothing represents this mix-up. In addition, some commentaries explain the word *misyahadim* in the *Megillah* to mean that many Gentiles pretended to be Jewish! Some trace the *minhag* to the cause of the animosity of Eisav to Yaakov, played out by Haman. Yaakov had dressed up in Eisav's clothes, tricking Yitzchok into blessing him. On the opposite side, Amalek used the ruse of disguise twice. The first time occurred when Amalek attacked Israel after the death of Aharon, dressed as Canaanites. The second occurred when Shaul went to war with them. Many Amalekites disguised themselves as sheep, fooling the Jews into allowing them to live.

On a separate track, many offer an explanation based on concealment. The miracle was possible because Esther followed Mordechai's instructions to conceal her Jewish identity until the right time. Therefore, we wear disguises. Furthermore, the story of Purim is one of *hester panim*, Hashem hiding His Hand. The entire episode has no open miracles, but all appears to be coincidence and court intrigue. Only when viewed in its entirety is the hidden Hand of Hashem manifest.

There is ample reference to clothing in the Purim story. It begins with Achashverosh donning the priestly vestments of the Temple. The turning point is when Mordechai is led through Shushan clothed in the royal garments. Therefore, we commemorate the clothing with our costumes. One source maintains that the practice was instituted to save the poor, who ask for alms on Purim, from embarrassment. This has a precedent going back to Biblical times, in regard to the Fifteenth of Av. Perhaps whimsically, or perhaps with more than a grain of truth, some relate switching costumes to *vanahapoch hu*, it was turned about, the theme of the miracle of Purim. [See *Megillah* 12a, *Chulin* 139b, *Darkei Moshe & Sh. Ar. OC 696:4 (Rema)*, 301: M.A. 2, commentaries, *Minhag Yisroel Torah*. *Bnai Yisasachar*, *Adar: 9. Taamei Haminhagim* 892. *Sefer Hatoda'ah, Purim.*]

B) Costumes in Shul

For all sacred utterances one must be appropriately clothed, including a separation between the heart and organs beneath the waist. This is based on a *passuk* that indicates that one's nakedness should not be seen even by the heart. For *shemone esrai* one must be even more formally dressed, as though presenting oneself to dignitaries; Hashem's awesome majesty demands this. In a shul a third issue arises. Being a place reserved for davening, it is a 'minor *bais hamikdash*'. There is a *mitzvah* to revere it, in conduct and dress. A *shliach tzibur* must be even more formally attired, in respect for the *tzibur*, and to avoid serving as a distraction to the crowd.

Thus, a costume that does not meet the standards of reverence may not be worn even for *shemone esrai*. A plain exchange of clothing would be perfectly fine, even for a *shatz*. A decent, but overly elaborate costume could cause distraction. If it is worn to convey a frivolous message, it could also raise the issue of *kalus rosh*, irreverent levity in a shul. In addition, a shul dress code must be followed by all congregants, unless they suspend it for Purim. As for make-up, if it is not 'dirty' it may be worn for sacred utterances. If one would feel uncomfortable presenting himself to a dignitary in any disguise, he should not say *shemone esrai* while wearing it. [See *Brochos* 23a 30a-31a, etc., *Megillah* 24a 28a, *Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. OC 53:esp. 25, 74, 91:3-5, 92, 151:1, commentaries.*]

C) Hachanah and other possible violations

It is forbidden to prepare on Shabbos for after Shabbos even if no *melacha* is violated. The Talmud debates whether this is a Scriptural or Rabbinical prohibition, but the consensus of most poskim is to forbid it Scripturally. Thus, one may not prepare the wine for *havdalah* before Shabbos is over. Nor may one clear the table, make a bed, wash dishes after *seuda shlishis*, or the like. It is forbidden to bring a *megillah* to shul on Shabbos, when Purim falls on Sunday. One may not even ask a child to bring it. One could bring it to shul early in the day, inconspicuously, and then use it to learn from, to avoid *hachanah*. [This assumes we do not consider the *megillah muktzeh*. See MB 688:18.]

This means that if something is definitely done for Shabbos as well as after Shabbos, it is not considered *hachanah*. Accordingly, one could not wear a costume before Shabbos is out, if Purim is on Sunday, even if one is not going to shul wearing it. However, if the costume being worn could also be considered a Shabbos costume, it could be permitted. Nonetheless, if there is no definite Shabbos use, it is questionable whether a possibility is enough to avoid *hachanah*. Furthermore, the item would need to be used early enough in the day to avoid the appearance of *hachanah*. Since walking to shul for *maariv* is clearly permitted, and one needs to dress for shul, it might be permitted to wear a decent 'exchange of clothing'. One could even add that the joy of Purim spills over into the preceding day enough to be combined with Shabbos. However, [see next section,] one may not lower the respect due Shabbos. In addition, one must avoid any true *melachos*, such as *tzovai'ah*, dyeing when putting on make-up, untying or tying knots, pinning, sticking, detaching and tearing. If there is no *eruv*, one may not wear items that are not considered proper clothing. For example, a mask is not considered worn, and would be considered carrying. [See *Beitza* 2b 17a, *Pesachim* 46b, *Shabbos* 66b, *Poskim. Tur, Sh. Ar. OC 254: MA 23, MB 43, 301:20, 302:3, 323:6, 503, 667, 693:1, commentaries.*]

D) Vechibadto

The *mitzvah* to dress specially for Shabbos is based on the *pasuk* in *Yeshaya*, *vechibadto mai'asos derachecha*, that is part of the general instructions to honor Shabbos. Thus, it is considered by many poskim to be on a level higher than ordinary Rabbinical obligations. The Talmud says that the minimum requirement for this *kibud* is to wear a clean item of clothing. Ezra instituted that laundering should be done on Thursdays to ensure that clothing would be cleaned in honor of Shabbos. One should keep his Shabbos clothing on until after *havdalah*. Even in the privacy of one's home, or in the company of gentiles, one must wear Shabbos clothing. They are for the honor of Shabbos, rather than to impress onlookers. Removing Shabbos clothing before Shabbos is out accomplishes

the exact opposite of *kavod Shabbos*. Putting on special clothing for after Shabbos goes further. It shows that one is according honor to the next day more than to Shabbos. Accordingly, it would appear that in addition to *hachanah*, if the costume is being worn specifically for Purim, it raises this issue. If it is worn for Erev Purim, which happens to be Shabbos, and it also could be honoring Shabbos somewhat, it would appear to be permissible. The poskim do not forbid wearing a mask indoors on Shabbos. Presumably, it would not be considered a slight to shabbos, if it is worn as part of the merrymaking at a wedding or the like. Thus, as long as the item is being worn for Shabbos as well, this issue would not arise. However, if the costume is not appropriate for Shabbos clothing at all, one should wait until after *havdalah* to change. Generally, *havdalah* is said after the megillah is read. It should be noted that it is proper to dress in Shabbos clothing for Purim, especially for the reading of the *megillah* and for the *seudah*. [See Shabbos 113a, Poskim. Tur, BY, Sh. Ar. OC 262:2-3, 302:3, 695:1, commentaries.]



On the Parsha ... The object of the *mitzva* of *bigdei kehunah*, according to the *Sefer Hachinuch*, is to remind the *Kohain* whenever he looks at any part of his body, before Whom he stands and serves. The special clothes were there to show honor and glory to Hashem, yet this was done by clothing the flesh and blood *Kohanim*. This is compared to the *tefilin* worn by every man, ideally all day. The clothing one wears specially for davening, and especially in a shul, and especially for a *shliach tzibur*, who serves like a *kohain*, are also meant to represent this value. Wearing them without this realization defeats the entire purpose. Thus, when Achashverosh wore the *bigdei kehuna* it was not only a disgrace, but it had absolutely no meaning at all, and was ridiculous. This might also be a source for some of the ridiculous costumes worn on Purim.

On Megillah ... *Held with ropes of linen and purple wool .. (1:6)* According to some commentaries, this was part of a ploy by Achashverosh, Vashti and Haman. They organized these feasts to lure the Jews into violating *mitzvos*. Their protection by Hashem would be removed, and they would be vulnerable. These ropes might have been used to hold down the 'upholstery'. If so, the prohibition of *sha'atnez* is Rabbinical. When Mordechai warned them of the prohibition, the Jews responded "Its only Rabbinical!" However, Rabbinical ordinances are fences. Once these defensive walls are removed, we are even more vulnerable to serious violations. [See commentary of *GRO*] Later in the *Megillah*: *Mordechai left the presence of the king in royal clothes ... and a wrap of linen, and purple wool ...* Does this not appear to be *sha'atnez*? Most commentaries follow the cantillation notes, putting a break between the words for linen and purple wool. They were worn as separate clothes. Some consider them one item [e.g., see *Targum*]. Perhaps, Mordechai was not really interested in dressing royally. He just wanted to overawe the hostile gentiles; he wore them like a salesperson. In this situation it is permitted to wear *sha'atnez*, but it is recommended to refrain anyhow. Maybe this serves as a source for the custom and debate on whether one may wear Rabbinically forbidden *sha'atnez* costumes. [It is more likely that such costumes were worn as a joke, similar to a dish made of chicken with almond milk.]



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