



MEGILLAH MINHAGIM

מנהג כל ישראל שהקורא קורא ופושטה כאיגרת, להראות הנס. וכשיגמור, חוזר וכורכה כולה ומברך.

It is a custom of all Jews that the reader reads and spreads out [the Megillah] like a letter to display the miracle. When one finishes, it is rolled up and a blessing is recited.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 690:17

On Purim there is a requirement to read the Megillah once at night and to repeat it during the day. However, there are some interesting *minhagim* that accompany these readings. For instance, we spread out the Megillah like a letter while it is read. Additionally, the Rama, *Orach*



Chayim 690:17, adds that it is our practice that the entire congregation reads four verses aloud. These four verses are referred to as the redemptive verses.

What is strange about this practice is that the Megillah is best read in a public audience. The reading of the Megillah publicizes the miracle that occurred to the Jews, who were saved by the hand of Hashem. A minyan enhances the reading and increases the publicizing of this miracle. In fact, all things being equal, we should go

to the largest minyan possible to hear the Megillah. This is why the *Mishnah Berurah* points out that the Megillah reader should repeat those four verses, despite each person having read them on their own, because it is best for people to hear it from the reader, from a kosher Megillah.

Another *minhag* is the practice to bang at the sound of the name of Haman. The *Mishnah Berurah* directs the Chazan to not read the name of Haman during the noise, so the entire congregation can hear the word being read.

What is the point of these *minhagim*? Wouldn't it be better to avoid *minhagim* that inhibit our ability to hear each word from someone reading

from a kosher Megillah scroll? The *Mishnah Berurah* says that we read the verses individually because of *simchah*, happiness. How does *simchah* translate to this practice, and does it allow for other things? Would it be appropriate to say other verses out loud, or even shout out extraneous matters? Apparently not, as the *Mishnah Berurah* quotes the *Pri Megadim* on the same halachah and says that those who make too much noise lose their reward.

So it seems that some things are allowed for *simchah* while others are not. In addition to that, it seems that if not for the *simchah* aspect, it would be best to not even read the four verses on our own, since it is best to hear them from the reader.

א"ר חלבו אמר רב חמא בר גוריא אמר רב
מגילה נקראת ספר ונקראת אגרת.

Rabbi Chelbo said further that Rav Chama bar Gurya said that Rav said: The Megillah is referred to as a "book" (Esther 9:32), and it is also referred to as a "letter." (Esther 9:29)

Megillah 19a



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The Gemara explains that the Megillah is referred to as both a book and a letter. The Gemara shares that there are practical applications concerning the stitching of them. A book needs a quality of binding that is significant, however, a letter needs much less substance to hold it together. We must ask, why should the stitching matter? What feature does a stronger binding reflect upon a *sefer* (book) and what is indicated in an *igeret* (letter) that is held together in a weaker fashion?

Rav Yisroel Chait explains that the word *sefer* reflects permanence and the word *igeret* reflects timeliness. These are two different ideas. A *sefer* is kept but an *igeret* is thrown in the trash the next day. A *sefer* has permanent ideas and an *igeret* shows immediacy. The Megillah has both of these aspects. As such, we can answer all our questions concerning these *minhagim*.

From the perspective of hearing the Megillah, hearing from the reader with a written scroll is best. However, reading these four redemptive verses draws the reader's attention to the story. It allows us to share in the immediacy of the message. It draws us in to feel a part of the story, and helps publicize Hashem's ongoing intervention. As such, it enhances the event of the Megillah. So it is very appropriate.

So, too, by the stomping at the name of Haman, we share in the anger toward the enemy and sincerely feel connected. Stories have been shared throughout Jewish history, when at times after war the people felt a sense of catharsis at the banging of Haman. They often viewed their recent enemy as a current-day Haman, and tangibly felt Hashem's ongoing providence. These practices only add connection

when they are rooted in an authentic experience. If we were to just make noises or read verses on our own, it would detract from the connection to the miracle.

Hopefully, we can be drawn into the reading of the Megillah, especially during such a scary time for many, and turn to Hashem. If we can feel the ongoing relationship Hashem has with us, we may then want to enhance that relationship.

As educators, we face a constant struggle with how to share Torah with students who may sometimes not want to embrace the words of the Almighty. However, just like the rabbis sought to enhance the event of the reading of the Megillah with forms of engagement, so too we should strive to make the experience of learning Torah as sweet as it should be. We may sometimes feel that we are sacrificing some of the breadth of material during the limited time allotted to us to enhance the learning experience. Perhaps we may need to change our approach or specific outlook if the Torah shared is not as lively as we know it to be.

We see from the example given by our rabbis that this apparent sacrifice isn't a disadvantage at all. Rather, it promotes Torah learning, engagement, and prompts greater service in avodat Hashem. May we merit success in guiding our cherished talmidim in their pursuit of Torah, in service of Hashem, and helping them enhance their whole selves. Purim Sameach.