



EXCERPTS FROM BATEI YOSEF

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A Deaf Person Reading the Megillah

The *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 689:2, states regarding the reading of the Megillah:

אחד הקורא ואחד השומע מן הקורא, יצא ידי חובתו. והוא שישמע ממי שהוא חייב בקריאתה. לפיכך, אם היה הקורא חרש או קטן או שוטה, השומע ממנו לא יצא.

Whether one reads or hears from the reader, one fulfills the obligation, as long as he hears from someone who is obligated to read it. Therefore, if the reader is deaf, a minor or deranged, the listener doesn't fulfill the obligation.

The source for the idea that one can fulfill the mitzvah of Megillah by listening to its reading is the Yerushalmi (*Megillah* 4:1). Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah* 1:2) codifies this idea in stating that one can fulfill by listening, as long as the reader himself is obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of Megillah.

Rabbi Soloveitchik noted that while our version of Rambam does not mention a *cheresh* (deaf person) as one of the people who is not obligated to read, there are older versions that do. Furthermore, *Shulchan Aruch* clearly does state that one cannot fulfill the mitzvah by listening to the reading of a *cheresh*. However, one must ask: if the *cheresh* is reading the Megillah, he is clearly not a deaf-mute (the deaf-mute is exempt from the mitzvah of Megillah). As such, why can't such a *cheresh* read on behalf of others? He too is, ostensibly, obligated to perform the mitzvah of Megillah.

Rabbi Soloveitchik explained that we see from here that part of the mitzvah of Megillah is to actually hear the Megillah. Indeed, there are two aspects to this mitzvah: to read the Megillah and to hear the Megillah. Reading the Megillah can be accomplished either by actually

reading the words of the Megillah oneself or by listening to someone else read the Megillah and thereby fulfilling the mitzvah through the mechanism of *shomei'a k'oneh* (through which the listener is like the reader). Yet there is an additional aspect, hearing the Megillah, which is a function of the obligation of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle, see *Beis Yosef* 689 who connects hearing the Megillah with *pirsumei nisa*). The *cheresh*, who cannot hear his own reading, is exempt from that aspect of the mitzvah. He cannot read on behalf of others because he does not share the same obligation as others since he is exempt from the requirement to hear the Megillah.

Megillah Reading as a Form of Tefillah

The *Shulchan Aruch* 689:5, states:

מקום שאין מנין, אם אחד יודע והאחרים אינם יודעים, אחד פוטר את כולם, ואם כולם יודעים, כל אחד קורא לעצמו.

In a place without a minyan where one person knows how to read and the others don't, that person can read on behalf of others. If they all know how to read, each one should read for himself.

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that when there is no minyan, one person should not read on behalf of others unless the others don't know how to read themselves. Why should this be so? Don't we generally allow one person to recite something on behalf of others who will fulfill the mitzvah by listening (such as is typically done with kiddush)? *Magen Avraham*, 689:10, suggests that the reading of the Megillah has the status of tefillah (prayer), and when it comes to prayer, one cannot pray on behalf of another other than in the context of a minyan or if the listener does not know how to pray himself.

Why should the reading of the Megillah have the status of tefillah? Rabbi Soloveitchik offered two suggestions. First, the Gemara,

Megillah 14a, quotes one opinion that the reason we don't recite Hallel on Purim is that the reading of the Megillah is actually a form of Hallel. When it comes to Hallel, *Magen Avraham* himself (422:5) writes that one person cannot recite it on behalf of another (if the second person knows how to recite Hallel). As such, it makes sense that Megillah reading, which is a substitute for Hallel, would follow the same rules.

Along the same lines, the Vilna Gaon, in his commentary to *Shulchan Aruch* 690:17, explains that the practice during Megillah reading that the entire congregation reads four verses of redemption aloud is based on the Gemara, *Sotah* 30b. The Gemara gives a few examples which illustrate that whenever there is an expression of *shira* (song), it is recited responsively. Rabbi Soloveitchik explained that according to the Vilna Gaon, we read certain verses aloud because the reading of the Megillah is a form of Hallel, and therefore there should be portions, specifically those that relate to redemption, that are read responsively.

Second, perhaps *Magen Avraham's* comparison of Megillah to tefillah isn't specifically focused on Megillah as a form of Hallel, but rather the reading

of the Megillah as an actual tefillah. The Gemara, *Megillah* 4b, states:

אריב"ל חייב אדם לקרות את המגילה בלילה ולשנותה ביום שנאמר (תהלים כב, ג) אלקי אקרא יומם ולא תענה ולילה ולא דומיה לי ... אמר רבי חלבב אמר עולא ביראה חייב אדם לקרות את המגילה בלילה ולשנותה ביום שנאמר (תהלים ל, יג) למען יזמרך כבוד ולא ידום ה' אלקי לעולם אודך.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A person is obligated to read the Megillah at night and repeat it during the day, as it is says, "My God, I call by day, but You do not answer; and at night, and there is no quiet for me" (Psalms 22:3). R. Chelbo said in the name of Ulah Bira'ah, A person is obligated to read the Megillah at night and repeat it during the day, as it is says, "So that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent. Hashem, my God, I will give thanks to You forever." (Psalms 30:13)

There are two verses that serve as the basis for reading the Megillah at night in addition to during the day. The second verse (Psalms 30:13) discusses giving thanks to Hashem forever. This is an expression of Hallel. The first verse, however, discusses calling out to Hashem even in difficult times. This is an expression of tefillah, and as such, by invoking the first verse as a source for reading the Megillah (at night), the Gemara is indicating that Megillah reading is a form of tefillah.



How is it a form of prayer? Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that the Megillah is, in its most basic form, a story of the Jewish people who were in trouble and cried out to Hashem with the result that He ultimately saved them. When we read the Megillah, we are similarly asking Hashem to save us from our oppressors at all times.

If the Megillah reading is indeed an actual form of tefillah, we can understand why when there is no minyan, one who knows how to read the Megillah should not listen to someone else read it but should read it himself.

Eating the Purim Seudah at Night

The *Shulchan Aruch* 695:1, states:

סעודת פורים שעשאה בלילה לא יצא ידי חובתו.

One does not fulfill the obligation of eating the Purim meal if it is eaten at night.

Shulchan Aruch's ruling is based on the Gemara, *Megillah* 7b, and refers to someone who eats the meal at the very beginning of Purim at night. Rabbi Soloveitchik asked, how could we possibly think that one could fulfill the obligation by eating the night before? Even if the obligation of *simcha* (which serves as the basis for the requirement to have a meal) would indeed be applicable at night, which itself is not so clear, eating a meal at night would not discharge the obligation to eat another meal during the day, as we find regarding Yom Tov. If someone ate a Yom Tov meal at night, he is still obligated to eat another one during the day. If so, why did the Gemara find it necessary to tell us explicitly that one does not fulfill the obligation to have a meal during the day by eating at night?

Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that the obligation of *simcha* on Purim is fundamentally different from the obligation of *simcha* on Yom Tov.

On Yom Tov, *simcha* is part of the essence of the day. As such, there is an obligation to eat one meal at night and another one during the day. However, *simcha* on Purim is not part of the essence of the day, but rather one of the mitzvos of the day. At some point during the day of Purim, there is a mitzvah to rejoice with a festive meal. As such, if the timeframe of the mitzvah would have included the night before, one could theoretically eat a meal at night and discharge the obligation without having to eat another meal during the day. The Gemara therefore tells us that in fact there is no obligation at all at night, and any meal that one does eat at night does not in any way impact the obligation to eat a meal during the day of Purim.



The Batei Yosef series is a RIETS Press publication dedicated in memory of Rabbi Joseph and Pepa Karasick, z”l. This series highlights the Torah and practices of the Rav, zt”l, Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, as well as halachic rulings of the RIETS Roshei Yeshiva and poskim—in particular, Rabbi Hershel Schachter and Rabbi Mordechai Willig.

The presentation that appears above is an English summary of three of the essays that appear in the recently released volume on Chanukah and Purim. These essays are available here. This volume as well as the volume on Elul-Tishrei are available for purchase online.

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