



Guidelines for the Ill on Purim

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*Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance
in a Hospital*
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F. Purim

Purim is a one-day annual minor holiday commemorating the miracle recounted in the Biblical book of Esther. On this holiday, traditionally observant Jews are allowed to do the types of “work” that are prohibited on Shabbat and most other holidays, but there are a number of special *Purim* obligations that many Jewish patients will want to fulfill.

1. A patient who is unable to attend synagogue to hear “*Parshat Zachor*” should read it from a Torah scroll without a blessing or, if this is not possible, read it from a printed *Chumash*.⁴²⁹
- 2a. One who is healthy may not eat a meal before hearing the reading of the *Megillah* on *Purim* eve, even if the fast has been difficult.⁴³⁰ However, a light snack may be eaten if necessary.⁴³¹
- 2b. If waiting until someone comes to read the *Megillah* in one’s room on *Purim* night will be too difficult, one may arrange to hear the *Megillah* during the afternoon before *Purim* if possible, as long as it is after “*Plag Haminchah*” (an hour and a quarter before sunset).⁴³² They may then break their fast upon *Halakhic* nightfall (“*Tzeit Hakochavim*”).
- 2c. If one needs to eat before hearing the *Megillah*, and a light snack will not be sufficient, the patient may eat as needed but should ask to be reminded to hear the reading of the *Megillah* after their meal.⁴³³

Megillah

3. A patient who is unable to attend synagogue to hear the *Megillah* should try to hear it with a *Minyan*.⁴³⁴ If this is not possible they should have someone read the *Megillah* for them, or they should read it themselves, from a kosher *Megillah* scroll and recite all the blessings before the reading,⁴³⁵ but not the blessing after.⁴³⁶
- 4a. One who has already fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of reading the *Megillah*, and reads it again for the sake of someone who was unable to attend synagogue, may recite the blessing over reading the *Megillah* again.⁴³⁷
- 4b. However, if the *Megillah* is being read for women only, the blessing should be changed to “*Lishmoa Megillah*” (to hear) instead of “*Al Mikra Megillah*” (over

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 24:1.

⁴³⁰ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 692:4 Rema.

⁴³¹ *Mishnah Berurah* 692:14.

⁴³² Ibid., 692:14; *Beur Halachah* s.v. “*Miplag*.”

⁴³³ Ibid., 692:16.

⁴³⁴ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 690:18.

⁴³⁵ *Mishnah Berurah* 692:8.

⁴³⁶ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 692:1 Rema; See also *Nishmat Avraham OH* 690:1.

⁴³⁷ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 692:3.

the reading of), because women are obligated only to hear the *Megillah* read, but not to read it themselves. It is ideal for one of the women in attendance to recite the blessings instead of the man who is reading if he has already fulfilled his obligation.⁴³⁸

5. One who is in the hospital and is unable to find anyone who can read the *Megillah* for them and is too weak to read it on their own, may hear the *Megillah* over the phone and respond “Amen” to the blessings, even though in normal circumstances this is not permitted.⁴³⁹ If even this is not an option, one should read the *Megillah* from a printed text without reciting any blessings, though this would not fulfill the *Mitzvah* to hear the *Megillah*.⁴⁴⁰

Mitzvot of Mishlo'ach Manot and Matanot Laevyonim

- 6a. One who is a patient in the hospital is still obligated to fulfill the other *Mitzvot* of *Purim* if possible. The patient should arrange for them to be performed on their behalf by another person.⁴⁴¹
- 6b. If possible, one would be allowed to trade a portion of their meal with another patient (assuming they both receive kosher meals and do not have any unique dietary restrictions)⁴⁴² to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Mishlo'ach Manot*.⁴⁴³

- At Cedars-Sinai there is a public *Megillah* reading every year in the chapel for both *Purim* night and morning, which is also broadcast live on the patient televisions.
- For those unable to attend the *Megillah* reading in our chapel, we arrange private *Megillah* readings in patient rooms upon request to the Spiritual Care office, 310 423 5550.

⁴³⁸ *Mishnah Berurah* 692:11; *Chasdei Avraham* Vol. 3, 24:4; See *Nishmat Avraham OH* 689:3 who notes that in some *Sephardic* communities the *Megillah* is read for women without a blessing while in others the *Megillah* is read for women with the same blessing of “*Al Mikra Megillah*,” that is recited when the *Megillah* is read for men.

⁴³⁹ *Chasdei Avraham* vol. 3, 24:6; *Guide for the Jewish Hospital Patient*, 33. This should also apply to watching the live *Megillah* reading on the patient’s television set.

⁴⁴⁰ *Shulchan Aruch OH* 691:10.

⁴⁴¹ *Lev Avraham* 24:6.

⁴⁴² See *Nishmat Avraham OH* 695:1 that one would not fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Mishlo'ach Manot* by sending food that the recipient is not permitted to eat due to their illness.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*.