

PURIM MITZVOT AND TRADITIONS



The most prominent ritual feature in the observance of the holiday is to attend the synagogue on Purim eve to listen to the **reading of the Scroll of Esther**, more popularly called **the Megillah**. The Megillah is also read at the shacharit service the following morning—Purim day.

A second requirement of Purim observance is to **“eat, drink and be merry.”** A festive family dinner should be held on Purim day. Called a seudah, it fulfills the directive in the book of Esther that these be days of feasting (y'mai mishteh).



A third observance is the requirement that each person **“send portions”** to a friend. The portions referred to consist of gifts of food or drink. The minimum should be two items of baked or cooked food or fruit or candy or drink. Although the minimum obligation is fulfilled by sending such a gift to only one person, it is customary to “send out portions” to several friends. This “sending out of portions” is called in Hebrew **shalach manos** or **manot**. It is customary for the children to serve as the messengers in delivering the portions.

The fourth Purim mitzvah is **matanot l'evyonim**. Each person gives **gifts (charity)** to at least two poor people or worthy needy causes. Even a poor person who is himself a recipient of charity must give to others. If one is in a place where there are no poor people or is otherwise unable to distribute it that day, the money should be set aside for later distribution.



The custom has spread in many Jewish communities to hold parades, carnival-type celebrations and parties on Purim. The **wearing of costumes and similar merry-making**, especially by the children, is a particularly popular form of Purim festivity.

From **To Be A Jew** by Rabbi H. Donin