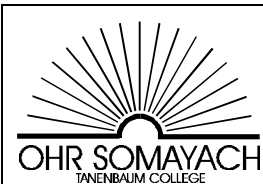




# Ask The Rabbi...

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February 25, 1995  
Issue #57

**This issue is dedicated in memory of HaGaon HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Zt"l**

This edition contains:

1. Hamentaschen
2. Follow-up on the Tennessee Torah-less Torah Service
3. A Tricky Riddle

Jill from Long Island, New York wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

Why do we eat hamantaschen on Purim?

Dear Jill,

I've heard that the word is Yiddish and comes from the two words "*mon*" (poppyseed) and "*tash*" (pocket). Thus it would mean "a pocket of dough filled with poppyseed." Perhaps the letter "*heh*" at the beginning is to make the food sound like the evil, Amalekite, Haman, who we are wiping out and "consuming."

The connection between Hamantaschen and Purim may be as follows:

Compared to the spectacular miracles we recount on the night of Passover, the events of Purim appear unspectacular. Esther wins the beauty contest -- well, *somebody* had to win. Mordechai overhears a plot to kill the king -- was *that* a miracle? Only when you read the "whole Megilla" do you discover that each event was a hidden miracle. The very name "*Megillat Esther*" can mean "Revealing the Hidden." Hamantaschen hint to this hidden aspect of Purim, since the poppyseeds are hidden inside the dough.

Why poppyseeds? The Talmud states that Esther ate seeds while in the palace of Achashverosh. This enabled her to avoid non-kosher food, yet maintain a healthy appearance. Perhaps the Yiddish word "*mon*" alludes to this, since the Hebrew word for manna, the miraculous food which sustained the Jewish people for 40 years in the desert, is "*mon*."

Sources:

- Tractate Megilla 13a.
- *Ta'amei HaMinhagim* 895.
- Mishneh Brura 695:12.

Bernie Tucker from Tennessee State wrote:

Dear Rabbi, thank you very much for your answer to my question in Ask the Rabbi #49. In the absence of a Sefer Torah, we are now skipping the entire Torah service of the morning Shabbat davening, except for the reading of the weekly Parsha from the Chumash. Afterwards we continue our chanting of the Haftarah. From there we jump directly to the half-Kaddish, followed by Mussaf. We have two follow up questions:

#1. This new practice results in our entirely skipping the prayer for the congregation, the prayer for the welfare of the government, and the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel. Prior to your response, it was our practice to read all three of these prayers, in English, together. Is there any way in which we can continue reading these prayers, either in their regular place in the service or in some other location? Perhaps at the end of Mussaf and before singing Adon Olam?

#2. You mentioned that we should read the Torah portion aloud from a Chumash -- can this be in English or does it have to be in Hebrew?

Dear Bernie Tucker,

In answer to your first question, the 3 prayers you have omitted can be re-instated after the Haftarah.

Now to your second question: Must the Torah be read in Hebrew? The Talmud states that in some communities one person would read the Hebrew from the Sefer Torah and another person would translate into the local language, Aramaic. From this it seems that even in those places where they found it necessary to translate, they always read the Hebrew first. Although your situation is different, since you aren't reading from a Sefer Torah, I would nevertheless recommend that you read the Parsha in Hebrew from a Chumash. Then, a member of the congregation could summarize the Parsha in English, perhaps reading from "Torah Weekly"!

Of course, it is preferable that you read from a Chumash rather than drive to a synagogue where they have a Sefer Torah. This is true even if it means that you will miss the Torah reading week after week. We are still hoping to hear from a person or organization who can help your congregation acquire or borrow a Sefer Torah....

Sources:

- Maimonides -- *Hilchot Tefilla* 12:11.
- Tractate Megilla 21b.

## This Week's Tricky Riddle

Which *Mitzvah* only applies to someone who is sitting, reclining or lying down?

Answer next week...

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@virtual.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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Issue #57 - February 25, 1995

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