The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Shabbos, Mar 8 2025 ■ ח' אדר, תשפ"ה
סימן תרצ"ד סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 694 Seif 1:

Every person is obligated to give at least two gifts to two poor people. Some maintain that before Purim one should give half of the current currency of that place and time to commemorate that the half-*shekel* that was given during the month of Adar. Since the word תרומה appears three times one should give three half coins. It should be given on the night of Purim before *davening mincha* and this is the custom in all of these countries. One should give three large halves in these countries since that is the only coin described as half. In אוסטרייך one should give three ייונ"ר which is also called half and these guidelines should be followed in every country. It is only given for those who are twenty or older. Some maintain that we give a half coin to the poor in addition to the three coins but that is not our custom.

- This includes men and women and according to many authorities even a poor person must give from the money he receives. (M.B. 1)
- One may give food or money but it is not clear how much should be given. Ritva writes that even two *perutos* is sufficient but not less. It is also important to give the poor something from which they can benefit on Purim itself. (M.B. 2)
- It is preferred to give more money to the poor than to spend more on the meal or *mishloach manos*. The two gifts may not come from *ma'aser* but one may use *ma'aser* if he gives more than the minimum. (M.B. 3)
- Nowadays the *machatzis hashekel* is given before *mincha* on Taanis Esther and in the morning *megilla*-money is given. (M.B. 4)
- Tosafos Yom Tov writes that authorities maintain that from the age of 13 one should give *machatzis hashekel*. Elya Rabba notes that the dispute revolves around the technical obligation but the custom is to give even on behalf of one's children and pregnant women give on behalf of their fetuses. The Mishnah teaches that once a father begins to give for his son he may not cease to give for him. (M.B. 5)

Halacha Highlight

Matanos l'evyonim

Shulchan Aruch Siman 694 Seif 1
שתי מתנות לשני עניים
Two gifts to two poor people

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' א') rules that every person is obligated to give at least two gifts to two different poor people. Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) explains that Shulchan Aruch's emphasis that every person is obligated to give *matanos l'evyonim* includes women and even poor people who are receiving money from others should give some of that money to another poor person in order to fulfill this obligation. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ב) writes that *l'chatchila* one should give to the poor person something from which he can benefit on Purim itself, whether food or money that he could use to purchase food for Purim. Biur Halacha (ד"ה לשני עניים) adds that the money should not be given in advance of Purim out of concern that the poor person will use the money or eat the food in advance of Purim. He acknowledges that common custom is to give the money before Purim even though the *mitzvah* is to give the money on Purim itself and suggests that people rely on the fact that they will probably give money to poor people on Purim itself since there are many poor people who collect money on Purim.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (אשרי האיש ח"ג פמ"ו אות ז') noted that nowadays we do not have that many people who are actually poor in the classic sense of the term, i.e., lacking the means to put food on their table, and thus for the purpose of this *mitzvah* anyone who does not have the means to support his family for a year qualifies to receive *matanos l'evyonim*. In the event that someone has the means to provide his family with the basic necessities for a year, food and clothing, but accrued debt as a result of marrying off a child or due to illness, Rav Elyashiv (ישמח ישראל עמ' קל"ט וקנ"ב) ruled that one fulfills the *mitzvah* of *matanos l'evyonim* when giving such a person money. However, if a person carries debt as a result of mishandling his finances or purchasing expensive items, he does not qualify as a poor person for the *mitzvah* of *matanos l'evyonim*.