

Purim Rulings: Mythical, Magical, and Mitzvot

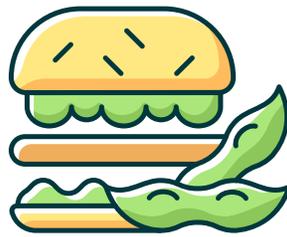
Exploring Judaism is dedicated to source-based responses to questions of all kinds. When we put out a call for “the silliest halakhah questions,” we got some that were kind of silly, some that were partly silly, and some that were legitimately worth exploring. We’ve answered all types here and hope you have follow-ups. As always please consult with your halakhic advisor for community standards. — *The EJ Silliness Team*

Question: How do we scale Jewish opinions?

If 2 Jews have 3 opinions, how do we calculate the number of opinions for a larger sampling of Jews? Does it scale linearly? Exponentially? Something else?

Answer: We are instructed to take a census of the Jewish people, “take up a headcount of the entire community...” (Numbers 1:2), and this provides the basis for gathering the opinions of the people of Israel. It is known that the Jewish people have many opinions, as reflected in the Talmud, “Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years did Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree.” (Eruvin 13b) See more there. Maimonides states that one should evaluate, or calculate, one’s thoughts and traits and strive for the middle

path (Mishneh Torah, Deot 1:4). In addition, he writes that “Thus, if its circumference is three handbreadths, it is a handbreadth in diameter” as a broad estimation of pi (Mishneh Torah, Shabbat 17:26). As a result, when we scale the opinions of the Jewish people, we should calculate using pi. However, the *mehadrin* are strict with themselves and scale by three, for this is the middle path. 🧐



Question: What is the status of Beyond Burgers in soy milk?

I am confused. If a Beyond Beef Hamburger morsel falls into a pot of soy milk, do I have to throw out (or bury) the pot?

Answer: Thank you for asking this very important question. With advances in plant-based foods, we must also advance halakhic reasoning. In the opinion of this posek (halakhic decisor), since these two products, separately, are borderline edible

and together are certainly highly problematic due to their taste, many would qualify this mixture as *pagum*, repugnant. Thus when combined, they are no longer considered food as such, one may do as one wishes. 🧐

Question: Can you use UBER to mishloach manot?

Answer: Thank you for asking this very important halakhic question. Halakha evolves, and we must continually review and interpret it.

There is an opinion that all Mishloach Manot should be sent via messenger. (See Mishnah Berurah 695:18) When one uses a messenger, one increases the number of people involved in mitzvah performance, and this is a good thing.

Later authorities doubted this position regarding Mishloach Manot. This is a classic case of some doing it like this and others doing it like that. The use of an UBER opens manifold possibilities—is it Uber Eats? If one sends an entire meal via Uber Eats, one certainly fulfills the mitzvah in the best way possible. 🧐

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Question: Can you leave peeled onions or garlic overnight? Across a date line?

We are instructed not to leave peeled onions or garlic uncovered overnight. What is considered overnight? What if the onion is cut in a ship's galley, and then the ship crosses the International Date Line?

Answer: While time is short in these heady and invigorating days as we prepare for Purim, I have taken a moment to respond to this vital question from a community member preparing for a global circumnavigation by pedalboat.

The Talmud (Niddah 17a) has a fascinating statement from the very authoritative rabbi, Shimon bar Yohai:

“There are five actions with regard to which one who performs them is held liable for his own life, and his blood is upon his own head: One who eats peeled garlic or a peeled onion or a peeled egg, and one who drinks diluted drinks; all these are referring to items only when they were left overnight. And one who sleeps at night in a cemetery, and one who removes his nails and throws them into a public area...”

Quite a list. While some of these prohibitions are recorded as binding, the issue of overnight onions and garlic is absent from legal commentators from the 3rd to 18th centuries. Yet there are those who resuscitated this prohibition and brought it back into a world teeming with kabbalistic and mystical concerns.



The International Date Line and its relationship to halakhah is a question with many answers. The issue of the International Date Line, halakhah, and onions is new territory. I am of the opinion that the Date Line has no particular bearing on this issue as it marks calendrical and not astronomical time.

The simple answer is that nobody should bring onions on a pedalboat. If one finds oneself on a pedalboat with sliced onions as dusk approaches, I suggest eating the onions or relying on the prevalent opinion that overnight onions are not a concern in our times. 🌟

Question: How do Jewish Vampires eat?

If consuming blood is forbidden by halakhah, what can Jewish vampires eat? How would they survive?

Answer: The Torah says, “You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it.” (Genesis 9:4) it is understood that Jews may not eat blood, and this instruction is

repeated three times in the Torah. However, Vampires, who require blood to survive, are exempted from this rule, as the Talmud states, “[Shmuel says] ...my proof is preferable to theirs, as it states: ‘...live by them’ (Leviticus 18:5), and not die by them.” (Yoma 85b). Since vampires require blood to live, an exception is made for them. Thus, the question is, how can a Jewish vampire eat according to halakhah?

Vampires should drink the blood of creatures as close to their death as possible to reduce suffering according to the requirement to avoid causing suffering to living creatures, *tzaar baalei chayim*. Wherever possible, the vampire should purchase blood from kosher slaughter and well-established certification. These slaughterers can collect blood from creatures slaughtered, according to halakhah. Finally, Jewish vampires who cannot consume ‘human food’ as their primary source may consume blood as prescribed by their doctors due to *pikuach nefesh*.

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Question: The placement of mezuzot on magical entrances.

Where does the mezuzah go if a Jew comes into possession of magical entrances, like the wardrobe in “The Chronicles of Narnia?”

Answer: The Torah teaches us: “And you shall inscribe them on the doorposts (mezuzot) of our house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 11:20). She’arim, the word used here, can refer to gates of a transdimensional nature, and this question is timely in our age. As we learn, “houses with no doors still require mezuzah. Some are lenient.” (Shulkhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 286:15) This statement of Shulkhan Arukh reminds us that entrances do not require literal doors. The portal’s usage and the doorframe’s nature are two important factors in answering this question.

1. As established, mezuzot are placed on the right-hand side as you enter the doorway (Shulkhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 289:2). One must then evaluate which side of the portal is used as an entrance based on the public’s primary residence and usage. If one primarily lives on this plane but enters Narnia temporarily, one must place the mezuzah on the more permanent side. There are those who say that mezuzot are required on both sides of a transdimensional gateway due to the fact that both sides are entrances. Each person should respect local custom on this issue.

2. If one has a doorframe or location where it is reasonable to place a mezuzah, one should do so one-third of the doorframe from the top, as established (Menachot 33a). However, in the situation where no doorframe exists, as portals can be placed without a physical boundary, one should build a doorframe or pillar on the right to place a mezuzah. There are those who are lenient and say that without a doorframe, there is no need for a mezuzah. 🧭

Question: What is the status of vampires and werewolves when counting a minyan?

Answer:

Thank you for asking this very important question.

It is clear and obvious that Jewish vampires and werewolves can be counted in minyan. But, of course, there are a few provisos.

1. Both can only be counted for Maariv due to their nocturnal natures.
2. Werewolves are most likely to appear at minyanim during the full moon. Thus, Purim, Pesach, Sukkot, and Tu B’Svat are likely times to call them for extra support.
3. Accounting for their sensitivities, neither Vampires nor Werewolves should be invited to circumcisions.



Question: Did God create Kermit The Frog?

Answer: “God created... all the crawling things upon the earth” (Genesis 1:25). Just as frogs were created, so too Kermit the Frog, as a frog, was created. 🧭

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Question: Booing, Children, and Groggers

We received a number of important questions about blotting out Haman's name: If I can't find my grogger, will a young child suffice? If you hear a Megillah reading and later realize that you accidentally forgot to shout BOOO at Haman's name, do you have to go back to where you heard the Megillah to shout it, or can you just shout it wherever you are?

Answer: Thank you for this very important question. The mitzvah to blot out the name and memory of Amalek (Devarim 25:19) is the source of the custom to use a grogger or other noisemaker during the reading of the Megillah. Haman is identified as a descendent of Agag (Esther 3:1), an Amalekite king.

Your question implies that shaking a child would make enough noise to blot out the reader's voice. I cannot emphasize enough how shaking a child is forbidden. One may, *with the child's consent*, tickle them outrageously until they scream.

The oldest recorded custom was to write Haman's name on blocks of wood and bang them until the name was erased, literally blotting it out. If you have a child on hand, in the spirit of Purim, I would suggest writing Haman's name in icing or Nutella on the child's arms and having them lick it off.

For one who completely missed booing Haman's name, I suggest that as soon as you remember, you follow my custom of writing Haman's name on the bottom of your foot or shoe (don't use Sharpie!) and walk on it all day until it erases. 🧐

Learn More about Purim, scan this qr code!



The Four Mitzvot of Puim

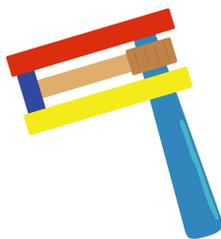
1. Hearing the Megillah

The first mitzvah of Purim is hearing the reading of the megillah, the scroll of Esther. This mitzvah opportunity occurs two times during the holiday, once at night the evening that Purim starts and once during the day.

2. Mishloach Manot – Giving food to friends

The most basic requirement is two different types of foods to one person. If you love to bake or cook you can also get into this mitzvah and make a whole bunch of foods to give away to different people. If

you're looking for something simple: Grab an orange and a chocolate bar and give it to your neighbor.



3. Matanot LaEvyonim – Giving gifts to the poor

This mitzvah is about remembering those who are less fortunate, even while we are celebrating. The ideal for this mitzvah is giving money or food to at least two separate people on Purim day. Other options are donating to funds that will go towards feeding those in need. Some of our sources even say that this is the most important mitzvah of the four

4. Purim Seudah – A special Purim feast

The last of the four Purim mitzvot is the Seudah (Hebrew for meal). This is a special meal eaten on Purim day. The whole idea of this meal is for it to be extra festive.