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Purim – Costumes | Parshas Tetzaveh – Zachor 5780

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Minhag of Costumes on Purim

Minhag to Dress up on Purim

- Some have the minhag to dress up on Purim with masks, disguises, and different clothes. This is an ancient minhag with several reasons, some of which we will cite. Usually it is the children who dress up, but there are also adults who keep to this minhag. All poskim agree that it is not one of the mitzvos of the day.. Thus, it is worthwhile over the course of Purim to at least have in mind the reasons for this minhag.
- "אנכי הסתר". As support for the minhag, some quote Chazal (גמ' חולין): "Where is there a hint to Esther in the Torah? As the posuk says, 'I will conceal ["הסתר אסתיר"] My face on that day' (דף קל"ט ע"ב דברים). In this Chazal, we see a hint to costumes – hiding the face with a mask on "the day of Esther."
- Only outwardly.** Chazal say (גמ' מגילה דף י"ב) that when the Jews bowed to Nevuchadnetzar, they only did so outwardly. Therefore, Hashem also only acted outwardly toward them by making it seem as if there was a decree to destroy them. Hence, people dress up on Purim to outwardly appear like non-Jews (אדר מאמר ט' אות א').
- Between "arur Haman" and "baruch Mordechai."** We dress up so that people are unable to tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai in fulfillment of Chazal's mitzvah of "עד דלא ידע." Since people are dressed up, onlookers cannot identify who is before them (ספר התודעה).
- To remember Mordechai.** Some say dressing up commemorates Mordechai emerging in royal clothes (א"ר סי' תרצ"ו). According to this reason, one should only dress up in royal or distinguished clothes.
- A concealed miracle.** Some say dressing up commemorates the Purim salvation, which came about through a miracle dressed up and concealed by natural causes (מנהג ישראל תורה א"ח סי' תרצ"ו).
- Not to embarrass the poor.** To protect the poor from embarrassment, people dress up so that no one will recognize the recipients of matanos la'evyonim or the recipients' children who they send to get the matanos (ש"ת משנה הלכות ח"ג סי' ט').
- To remember Eliyahu.** Some say dressing up commemorates Eliyahu, who, Chazal tell us, dressed up as Charvonah.
- Haman's face was covered.** Some point to the fact that when Achashveirosh got angry at Haman, his servants covered Haman's face in keeping with Persian royal protocol so that the king wouldn't see his face (אבן עזרא, דגל מחנה אפרים פ' כי תבוא ד"ה קומי). To recall this, we cover our faces on Purim (מרכבות ארגמן).
- Just as their faces are different.** Chazal say that just as people's faces are different, so too their beliefs are different. Haman told Achashveirosh that the Jews' religion is different from all the other nations; to recall this, there is a minhag to wear masks.

Shehecheyanu

- There is no need to say the brochoh of Shehecheyanu on a new costume even if wearing it causes joy. The reason is that a costume is usually not an inherently distinguished garment. However, if one is very happy with it and it has the form of a distinguished garment, he can say the brochoh (הגר"ח קנייבסקי, ספר שהחיינו עמ' תצ"ח).

Potential Issurim Involving Costumes

Dressing up as a Man or Woman

- In the countries of olden-day Europe, men used to dress in women's clothes and vice versa. Although there is an issur deoraisa of "לא יהיה" (דברים כ"ב, ה') "כלי גבר על אשה ולא אשה גבר שמלת אשה" (ש"ת מהר"י מינץ הובא בדרכ"מ וברמ"א סי' תרצ"ו) Purim joy, it is mutar (מגילה דף י"ז, מ"ב סי' תרצ"ו סק"ל).
- Mingling.** It is obvious that even these poskim only allow this for a man who is only around men. If he will be around women while dressed in women's clothes, it is clear that all poskim agree it is an issur deoraisa and there is no basis for heter whatsoever (חוט שני ח"ד עמ' רע"ט).
- However, most poskim argue on the entire heter and hold this minhag is not good and should be stopped. It is not enough of a reason to permit an issur deoraisa (ש"ת י"ד סי' קפ"ב, של"ה).
- One women's garment.** If a man is wearing just one women's garment, e.g., a hat, or a wig, or a necklace etc., and it is clear he is a man, one should not object (פמ"ג משב"ז סק"ד, מ"ב שם).
- Children.** Once children reach chinuch age, a boy should not wear girls' clothes and vice versa (הגר"ש, א"א, אש"ר). For these purposes, the age of chinuch is from four and up.

Women Dressing Up

- It is not in keeping with the rules of tznius for a woman to go out on the street dressed up. Even if she is just wearing a hat or one unusual thing, if it will cause people to look at her, it is assur.
- Drawing a beard.** If a girl is in the house and wants to draw a beard on her face with face paint or another black coloring, there is no issue of לא ילבש since drawing a beard isn't something men do, and it also looks nothing like a real beard (לא ילבש פ"ז אות ד').

Dyeing Hair

- A man may not dye his hair for beauty due to the issur of לא ילבש. Nevertheless, a man may dye his hair on Purim since it is not for beauty; it looks strange and not dignified, and women never dye their hair in such a manner. Thus, this is not included in the issur.



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Shaatnez in a Costume

20. **Derabanan shaatnez.** Some poskim allow one to wear a costume with derabanan shaatnez for the purpose of joy, just like one may wear shaatnez derabanan to avoid a sales tax since his focus is not on wearing it as clothing. The same applies to Purim, when one's intent is not for the costume to be his clothing (דרכי משה ורמ"א תרצ"ו).
21. However, others forbid it (מהר"י ברי"ן הובא בדרכי"ם שם). Some say it is not something a righteous person does, and one who wants to guard his ruchniyus should stay away from it (מ"ב). (ערוה"ש ס"ב). Today, people are not meikel to do it (שם סק"א).
22. **Deoraisa shaatnez.** All poskim agree one may not wear deoraisa shaatnez even if his intent is not to wear it as clothing and even on Purim.
23. **Clothes which often contain shaatnez.** There is often shaatnez in authentic military or police hats and uniforms from Chutz La'aretz, Russian fur hats, and various suits made from wool or linen. Thus, one should not wear them without first checking for shaatnez.

Dressing up during Aveilus

24. Someone who dresses up every year may dress up in his house during aveilus since he is allowed to be somewhat joyous, and it would be public aveilus if he would not dress up (היכל הוראה ח"ב הוראה ק"ג).

Sewing a Costume on Purim

25. The universal minhag is not to do melachah on Purim (ר"ע ס"י תרצ"ו). Therefore, one should not sew clothes on Purim. However, if it is needed for the day, it is mutar. Thus, one may mend a costume on Purim if necessary (תרומת הדשן ס"י ק"ב).

Fez with a Star

26. Many men in Yerushalayim wear a fez [a red Persian hat with a black tassel coming out of the middle of the hat's top]. Many fezzes have a raised gold star on the front, which is potentially an issur of having the form of a star (שו"ע יו"ד ס"י קמ"א ס"ד). Therefore, the poskim say to take the star off (מו"ר כ"ק מרן גאב"ד ירושלים, וע"ע חוט שני פסח עמ"ר ר"ה).

Davening in a Costume

Shabbos/Yom Tov Clothes on Purim

27. **Gedolim.** The minhag is to wear Shabbos and Yom Tov clothes on Purim (רמ"א ס"י תרצ"ה ס"ב). Therefore, one should come to shul on Purim night in Shabbos or Yom Tov clothes, not dressed in a costume, as many people are. This is distracting to the other people in shul as people stare at them the whole time and lose focus on their davening, even if it is just a funny hat, tie, suspenders, or the like.
28. **Children.** It is proper to also teach children to come to krias haMegillah in Shabbos clothes. However, one should not stop them from coming with costumes or unusual clothes since that is their simchah. Adults should be very careful to daven from a siddur or with their eyes closed so that they are not distracted by children in various getups.

As If Standing before Important People

29. When davening to Hashem, one must stand before Him respectfully, the way one would stand before important people in that place (שו"ע (ס"י צ"א ס"ה). Nowadays, therefore, one must wear a hat when he davens, as he would when walking in the street; just a yarmulke is not enough (מ"ב שם סק"ב). Based on this, several poskim discuss whether one may daven on Purim, e.g., Minchah or Maariv, dressed in different types of costumes.
30. **Face paint.** It is certainly assur to daven with face paint since one would not stand that way before an important person.
31. **Mask.** One may not daven with any sort of mask on his face since he would not stand before a king with it, even if it is a mask of a famous person's face, e.g., Trump..
32. **Litvak as a chassid.** A Litvak dressed as a chassid, e.g., wearing a bekesh and shtrimmel, or vice versa, i.e., a chassid wearing a frock, may daven that way since he is properly covered; it is just different from what he normally wears (שו"ת שבט הלי"י ס"י ח"י).

33. **Unusual costume.** It is not proper for an adult to daven wearing unusual or colorful clothes; he should take them off or cover them. However, as long as the clothes are reasonable, there is not an issur to daven in them. Children can lechatchilah daven Minchah and Maariv in such clothes since on Purim, they would even stand before an important person in a costume (המועדים כהלכתם פורים עמ"ר תע"ה).
34. **Shliach tzibbur.** Although in some circumstances, one may daven with his costume in a tzibbur, the shliach tzibbur should not wear costume clothes since there is a concept of kavod hatzibbur (אודך ח"א ס"י ס"ז).

Halachos Regarding Tzitzis and Tefillin

Is a Costume Garment Obligated in Tzitzis?

35. If one has a costume garment with four corners, but he is wearing other clothes and the costume is just for the appearance, it does not need tzitzis. However, if it takes the place of one of his garments, even though it is made as a costume, it is chayav in tzitzis (תשובות (והנהגות ליקוטים פורים עמ"ר ר"א).
36. **Kohen Gadol's me'il.** According to the Rambam (פ"ט כלי המקדש ה"ג), the Kohen Gadol's me'il was like a tallis gadol open on both sides. If a boy dresses up as a Kohen Gadol and wears this me'il, it does not need tzitzis since it is a garment worn for honor, not to provide warmth, and it is also borrowed from his father (מור"ר בעל שבט הקהתי, ק"י הישר והטוב ג', עמ"ר רנ"ט).
37. **Tallis as a costume.** If a father dresses his son in a tallis gadol as a costume, the boy should not say a brochoh on the tallis since he is only wearing it as a costume, as mentioned above (תש"ע פ' שלח).

Wearing Tefillin

38. If a person colors his hair with a dye, whitens it with powder, or uses gel to stiffen it, before putting on tefillin on Purim day and the next day, he must make sure that there is no leftover substance in his hair where his tefillin goes so that there is no chatzitzah (שו"ע או"ח ס"י כ"ז (ס"ד, כ"ה החיים סק"ח).

Types of Costumes

Tzaddikim, Tzidkaniyos

39. It is proper to teach children to dress up as tzaddikim and tzidkaniyos, not wicked people, Shabbos desecrators, sinners, and the like, since everything affects a child's aspirations (מ"ם חיים עמ"ר 78). Nevertheless, if a child insists on dressing up as something mundane, one should not stop him since it is not an issur, and that is how he gets his simchah.

Idol Worshipper, Non-Jew

40. **Non-Jew.** A Jew may not dress in non-Jewish clothes so that people won't realize he is Jewish if it is not a dangerous time (רמ"א יו"ד ס"י קנ"ז (ס"ב). Nevertheless, one may dress in non-Jewish clothes as a costume since it is clear he is only wearing them for Purim joy, and it is not a chillul Hashem.
41. **Priest.** Some poskim say one may not dress up as a priest due to the issur of (הגרי"ש, גליון מ"ם חיים אדר תשס"ד) "שם אלוהים אחרים לא ישמע על פיך". Others, however, say it is mutar as a way of ridiculing avodah zarah since it is obvious the wearer's intent is in jest and not for a false god.
42. **Santa Claus.** There is no issur to dress up as Santa Claus [red clothes with white hems and cuffs and a red hat with white edging and a white pompom] since there was never such a person. He is a made-up figure associated with their holiday who is said to bring presents to the children. Thus, there is nothing inherent about him that is avodah zarah, but there are better things to dress up as.. [Incidentally, a Yerushalmi family was seen in Meah Shearim dressed up in this style due to lack of awareness of what it represents. If only they knew..]

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