And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: A walled city that was destroyed and then later settled is considered a city. The Gemara asks: What is meant by the term destroyed? If we say that the city’s walls were destroyed, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi comes to teach us that if it was settled, yes it is treated as a walled city, but if it was not settled, it is not treated that way, there is a difficulty. Isn’t it taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer bar Yosei says: The verse states: “Which has [lo] a wall” (Leviticus 25:30),” and the word lo is written with an alif, which means no, but in context the word lo is used as thought it was written with a vav, meaning that it has a wall. This indicates that even though the city does not have a wall now, as the wall was destroyed, if it had a wall before, it retains its status as a walled city.

The cities Lod, and Ono, and Gei HeHarashim are cities that have been surrounded by walls since the days of Joshua, son of Nun.

The Gemara asks: Did Joshua, son of Nun, really build these cities? Didn’t Elpaal build them at a later date, as it is written: “And the sons of Elpaal: Eber, and Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod, with its hamlets” (1 Chronicles 8:13)? The Gemara counters: According to your reasoning, that this verse proves that these cities were built later, you can also say that Asa, king of Judah, built them, as it is written: “And he, Asa, built fortified cities in Judah” (see 1 Chronicles 14:5). Therefore, it is apparent that these cities were built more than once.

Rabbi Elazar said: These cities were surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, and they were destroyed in the days of the concubine in Gibea, as they stood in the tribal territory of Benjamin, and in that war all of the cities of Benjamin were destroyed (see Judges, chapters 19–21). Elpaal then came and built them again. They then fell in the wars between Judah and Israel, and Asa came and restored them.

The Gemara comments: The language of the verse is also precise according to this explanation, as it is written with regard to Asa: “And he said to Judah: Let us build these cities” (11 Chronicles 14:6), which proves by inference that they had already been cities at the outset, and that he did not build new cities. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from this that it is so.

Background: Lod — Lod, or Lydda, was one of the oldest towns in Judea. It grew in significance toward the end of the Second Temple period and served as an important cultural center for many generations after the destruction of the Temple. Some of the greatest tannaim lived there; among them Rabbi Eliezer ben Hircanus, who was known as Rabbi Eliezer the Great; Rabbi Tarfon; and others. Several important ordinances were instituted in the upper chamber of the house of Nitza in Lod. After the bar Kokheva revolt the town remained an important place of Torah, becoming the center for scholars in the south of Erets Yisrael. Among the great amoraim who lived there were Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi; Rabbi Simla; Rabbi Yitzhak bar Nahmani; Rabbi Aha; Rabbi Shimon ben Paz; and his son, Rabbi Yehuda.
Women are obligated in the reading of the Megilla –HALAKHA

All are obligated to read or hear the Megilla: Men, women, converts, and freed slaves. Some say that even Canaanite slaves are obligated in this mitzvah (Magen Avraham, citing Beit Yosef). There is also an obligation to educate the children to read it. A minor who reaches the age of education can discharge a woman’s obligation to hear the Megilla. In cases where one who has already read the Megilla reads it again for a woman to hear, there are some who instruct the woman to make the blessing herself, but it is not fitting to do this; rather, the reader should bless (Shu’aré Teshuva; Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 591:9).

A discourse on Purim – מדרש חכמי

When Purim occurs on Shabbat, one inquires about and expounds the halakhot of Purim on that Shabbat, as a remembrance that it is Purim. Nowadays Purim falls on Shabbat only in walled cities (Rambam, Sefer Zemanim, Halakhot Megilla 1:13).

A discourse on a Festival – מדרש חכמי

Moses established that one study the laws of the day on every Festival (Rambam, Sefer Ahava; Hilkhot Tefillah 13:8).

To read the Megilla… and to repeat it – א(GL)חי

One is obligated to read the Megilla at night, from the time of the emergence of the stars (Pen Hadosh; Vina Gaon), and to read it again during the day (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 587:1).

Women are obligated – metropolitan

Reading the Megilla is a positive, time-bound mitzvah, and the general principle is that women are exempt from such mitzvot. Nevertheless, there are some commandments that are exceptions to this principle. In (Havot Yar 10–11) there is an extensive discussion as to whether this principle applies to rabbinic commandments (see Shelaot Yoreh 1320).

As they too were partners in that miracle – בתרפואת

Rashi and most of the commentators (geonim; Rabbeinu Yehonanit; Rashba; Ran) explain that women were included in Haman’s decree to destroy all the Jews, and therefore it is fitting for them to take part in giving thanks. This explanation is found in the Jerusalem Talmud as well. Alternatively, Rav Hai Gaon, Rash (on Pesahim 108b), and the Rashbam explain that a woman, Esther, was the main catalyst of the miracle. Tosafot object to this interpretation of the Gemara’s intent, due to the phrase: As they too, which indicates that even women are obligated, but not that they are the main focus of the celebration. The Rashad responds that this phrase is used commonly in the Gemara with regard to items that are of a central role, and not just to refer to items that play a secondary role.

Why specify Purim – פירוש

The Gemara initially thought that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s statement is due to the fact that when Purim occurs on Shabbat, the Megilla is not read and there is no practical observance of the holiday; consequently, one should ask questions about and expound upon the subject of the day. The Gemara therefore asks why it is necessary to say this, as there is a general principle that one is supposed to ask questions about and expound the subjects of every holiday on that holiday (Rashba). The Rashba adds that the formulation: Ask questions about and expound, refers to two different things. Within thirty days of a holiday, a student asks his teacher questions about the holiday and the teacher answers, as the questions are not considered to be of immediate practical relevance. Additionally, on the holiday itself, the Sage delivers a discourse related to the holiday.

Ask and expound upon – פירוש

Rashi and the Ritva explain that the intention is that they preach in public and recount the miracle of Purim. However, other commentators maintain that they teach the holikhot of Purim (Rashba).

To read the Megilla at night and to repeat it during the day – א(GL)חי

Rabbeinu Tam goes to great lengths to prove that the essence of the mitzva to read the Megilla is specifically during the day, and that the purpose of this teaching is mainly to add the obligation to read at night. Based on this assertion, he determines that there is an obligation to recite the blessing: Who has given us life (sheheheyanu), during the day. However, the Rambam rules that one recites this blessing prior to the reading of the Megilla only at night.

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: Women are obligated in the reading of the Megilla, as they too were significant partners in that miracle. And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: When Purim occurs on Shabbat, one asks questions and expounds upon the subject of the day.

The Gemara raises a question with regard to the last halakha: Why was it necessary to specify Purim? The same principle applies also to the Festivals, as it is taught in a baraita: Moses enacted for the Jewish people that they should ask questions about and expound upon the subject of the day: They should occupy themselves with the halakhah of Passover on Passover, with the halakhah of Shavuot on Shavuot, and with the halakhah of the festival of Sukkot on the festival of Sukkot.

The Gemara answers: It was necessary for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to mention Purim, lest you say that when Purim falls on Shabbat we should decree that it is prohibited to expound upon the halakhah of the day due to the concern of Rabba, who said that the reason the Megilla is not read on a Purim that falls on Shabbat is due to a concern that one carry the Megilla in the public domain. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi therefore teaches us that expounding the halakhah of the day is not prohibited as a preventive measure lest one read the Megilla on Shabbat.

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further said with regard to Purim:

A person is obligated to read the Megilla at night and then to repeat it [lishnota] during the day, as it is stated: “O my God, I call by day” but You do not answer; and at night, and there is no surcease for me” (Psalms 22:3), which alludes to reading the Megilla both by day and by night.

Some of the students who heard this statement understood from it that one is obligated to read the Megilla at night and to study its relevant tractate of Mishna by day, as the term lishnota can be understood to mean studying Mishna. Rabbi Yirmeya said to them: It was explained to me personally by Rabbi Hyya bar Abba himself that the term lishnota here has a different connotation, for example, as people say: I will conclude this section and repeat it, i.e., I will review my studies. Similarly, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s statement means that one must repeat the reading of the Megilla by day after reading it at night.
The Gemara asks: Is that to say that this ordinance is for the benefit of the cities? Didn’t we learn in the mishna that if the fourteenth occurred on a Monday, the residents of villages and large towns read it on that very day? If it is so, that the ordinance allowing the villagers to sometimes advance their reading of the Megilla is for the benefit of the cities, let the villagers advance their reading to the previous day of assembly even when the fourteenth occurs on a Monday. The Gemara responds: That would mean that Megilla reading for them would take place on the tenth of Adar, and the Sages did not establish the tenth of Adar as a day that is fit to read the Megilla.

The Gemara continues: Come and hear a proof from a different statement of the mishna: If the fourteenth occurs on a Thursday, the villages and large towns read it on that day, the fourteenth, and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth. If it is so, that the ordinance is for the benefit of the cities, let the villagers advance their reading of the Megilla to the previous day of assembly, i.e., the previous Monday, as it is the eleventh of Adar. The Gemara responds: We do not defer the reading of the Megilla from one day of assembly to another day of assembly.

The Gemara continues: Come and hear that which was taught in the following mishna (5a): Rabbi Yehuda said: When is the Megilla read from the eleventh of Adar and onward? In a place where the villagers generally enter town on Monday and Thursday. However, in a place where they do not generally enter town on Monday and Thursday, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time, the fourteenth of Adar. The Gemara infers: If it enters your mind to say that the ordinance is for the benefit of the cities, would it be reasonable to suggest that because the villagers do not enter town on Monday and Thursday the residents of the cities should lose out and not be provided with food and water?

The Gemara accepts this argument: Do not say that the Sages allowed the villages to advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly so that they can be free to provide water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. Rather, say that the Sages were lenient with them because the villages supply water and food to their brethren in the cities. This ordinance was established for the benefit of the villagers so that they should not have to make an extra trip to the cities to hear the reading of the Megilla. However, in a place where the villages do not go to the cities, advancing their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly will not benefit them, and therefore they must read on the fourteenth.

The Gemara notes that this ruling was also stated by another amora, as Rabbi Ḥelbo said that Ulla Bira’a said: A person is obligated to read the Megilla at night and then repeat it during the day, as it is stated: “So that my glory may sing praise to You’ and not be silent; O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to You forever” (Psalms 30:13). The dual formulation of singing praise and not being silent alludes to reading the Megilla both by night and by day.

We learned in the mishna that residents of unwalled towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth of Adar; however, residents of villages may advance their reading to the day of assembly, the Monday or Thursday preceding Purim. Rabbi Hanina said: The Sages were lenient with the villages and allowed them to advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, so that they could be free to provide water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. If everyone would be busy reading the Megilla on the fourteenth, the residents of the cities would not have enough to eat.

Because the villages supply... The early authorities wrote that one could have disproven this statement in a different way by citing the case of cities that do not have ten idlers. Even though these are large towns and do not supply food to the cities, nevertheless they have a halakhic status equivalent to the villages. Therefore, it is apparent that this ruling is not for the benefit of the cities. However, it was preferable to disprove the statement from the case of the villages themselves (Rashi; Riva).

The early authorities... The Maharsha adds that the closing words of the verse: “I will give thanks to You forever” (Psalms 30:13), allude to the holiday of Purim, fitting with the words of the Jerusalem Talmud that state that the days of Purim will always exist and will not be annulled even in the World-to-Come.
§ We learned in the mishna: How so? If the fourteenth of Adar occurs on Monday, the villages and large towns read it on that day. The mishna continues to explain the days on which the Megilla is read. The Gemara asks: What is different about the first clause of the mishna, which employs the order of the dates of the month, i.e., the eleventh of Adar, and the latter clause, which employs the order of the days of the week, i.e., Monday?

The Gemara answers: Since the days of the week would be reversed if the latter clause was organized according to the dates of the month, as the mishna would first have to mention a case where the fourteenth occurs on a Sunday, then a case where it occurs on a Wednesday or Shabbat, and then a case where it occurs on a Friday or Tuesday, the mishna employed the order of the days of the week in order to avoid confusion.

§ We learned in the mishna: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, Friday, the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, and the large towns and walled cities read it on Friday of the fourteenth of Adar. The Gemara asks: Whose opinion is expressed in the mishna? It can be either Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi or Rabbi Yosei.

The Gemara explains: What is the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi? As it is taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, villages and large towns advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, and walled cities read it on the day of Purim, Friday. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi disagrees and says: I say that the readings in the large towns should not be deferred from their usual date, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar. Rather, both these, the large towns and those, the walled cities, read the Megilla on the day of Purim.

The Gemara asks: What is the reason of the first tanna? The Gemara explains that it is as it is written: “To keep these two days, according to their writing and according to their time, in every year” (Esther 9:27), which indicates that Purim must be celebrated every year in similar fashion. Just as in every other year the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, so too here the large towns precede the walled cities by one day. Consequently, since the walled cities cannot read the Megilla on Shabbat and they are required to advance the reading to Friday, the large towns must also advance their reading a day to Thursday.

The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as in every other year the Megilla readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date and they read the Megilla on the fourteenth, so too here the Megilla readings in the large towns should not be deferred from their usual date and they too should read on the fourteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible for the large towns to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., to read on the fourteenth and to read a day before the walled cities.

The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, what is his reason? The Gemara explains that it is also based upon the words “in every year”: just as in every other year the readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date and they read on the fourteenth, so too here, the readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date, but rather they read on the fourteenth.

The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as every year the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, and read on the fourteenth, so too here the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, and read on the fourteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., to read on the fourteenth and to read a day before the walled cities.
The Gemara asks: What is the opinion of Rabbi Yosei? As it is taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, the walled cities and villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, and the large towns read it on the day of Purim itself. Rabbi Yosei says: The walled cities never precede the large towns; rather, both these, the large towns, and those, the walled cities, read on that day, i.e., Friday, the fourteenth of Adar.

The Gemara asks: What is the reason of the first tanna? As it is written: "In every year"; just as in every other year the large towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth, and the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla, as the large towns and walled cities never read the Megilla on the same day, so too here, the large towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth, and the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla. Therefore, the walled cities must advance their reading of the Megilla by two days to the day of assembly, Thursday.

The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words "in every year" indicate that just as in every other year the walled cities do not precede the large towns, so too here, the walled cities do not precede the large towns. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., that the large towns should read on the fourteenth, the large towns and the walled cities should read on different days, and the walled cities should not precede the large towns.

What is the reason of Rabbi Yosei? It is based upon the words "in every year"; just as in every other year the walled cities do not precede the large towns, so too here, the walled cities do not precede the large towns.

The Gemara raises a difficulty: Say that the words "in every year" indicate that just as in every other year, the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla, so too here, the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla. Therefore, since the large towns read on the fourteenth, the walled cities read on the thirteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all the conditions. It is clear from these baraitot that the tanna of the mishna can either be Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi or Rabbi Yosei, but not either of two anonymous tanna'im.

The Gemara asks: Does Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi really hold that one does not defer the reading of the Megilla in large towns to the day of assembly? Isn’t it taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat, the villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, the large towns read it on Shabbat eve, and the walled cities read it the next day, i.e., on Sunday. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: I say that since the readings in the large towns were already deferred from their usual date, i.e., the fourteenth, they are deferred to the day of assembly, i.e., to Thursday. Consequently, even Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi agrees that the reading in the large towns can be shifted to the day of assembly. Why doesn’t he also hold that large towns read the Megilla on the day of assembly when the fourteenth occurs on a Friday?

The Gemara responds: How can these cases be compared? There, in the second baraita, the designated time for them to read the Megilla is Shabbat, but the Megilla is not read on Shabbat, and therefore they must read it on a different day. Therefore, since the readings in the large towns have been deferred, they are deferred an additional day, and take place on Thursday, the day of assembly, at the same time as the readings in the villages. Here, their designated time is Shabbat eve, and there is no reason to move the reading from that day.

The Gemara asks: What is the opinion of Rabbi Yosei? As it is taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, the walled cities and villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, and the large towns read it on the day of Purim itself. Rabbi Yosei says: The walled cities never precede the large towns; rather, both these, the large towns, and those, the walled cities, read on that day, i.e., Friday, the fourteenth of Adar.
Megilla on Shabbat – אָמַר יִדָּחֶה מְגִילָּה b: אָמַר רַב מַקְדִּימִין. The Scroll of Esther is never read on Shabbat, due to the decree of Rabba. Some say that it is forbidden to move a Megilla on Shabbat, as it is considered set aside (muktzeh) because it is not allowed to be read (Pei Hadashim), while some permit it (Eliyahu Rabba; Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayim 688:6).

Gifts for the poor – אָמַר יִדָּחֶה בְּשַׁבָּת. On the same day that the Megilla is read, even when the reading is advanced to a different day, gifts for the poor are collected and distributed (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayim 688:6).

HALAKHA

Everyone is obligated to participate in reading the Megilla – אָמַר רַב מַקְדִּימִין. Some commentators note that the language: Everyone is obligated, serves to emphasize the reason that the Sages implemented this decree: If the obligation applied only to certain individuals, others would remind them not to carry. However, since the obligation applies to everyone, there is a concern that everyone will be so preoccupied with the mitzva that they will forget they cannot carry, or at least they will not be able to remind others not to carry (Relah Duddim; Zikkaron BaSefer).

And he will carry it four cubits – אָמַר יִדָּחֶה. The early authorities ask: Why didn’t Rabba say that perhaps he will carry it from a private domain to a public domain? Some explain that it is not common for people to mistakenly carry from a private domain to the public domain, since there are noticeable divides between them. However, there may be a Megilla already located in the public domain, and one may then carry within the public domain (Tosafot; Meiri). Others suggest the opposite logic: It is clear that the concern for carrying a Megilla from a private domain to a public domain, which is a more likely scenario, would warrant a decree. Rabba adds that even the concern that one might carry within the public domain itself is sufficient grounds for this decree (Ran; Ritva).

Rav Yosef’s reason – אָמַר יִדָּחֶה. Tosafot explain that Rav Yosef also accepts the reasoning of Rabba, as there is no other reason to prohibit fulfilling the mitzvot of shofar and lulav on Shabbat. However, he adds this reason, which applies even in the Temple, whereas Rabba’s reasoning does not. This is because rabbinic decrees instituted in order to prevent violation of Torah law were not extended to the Temple. Others suggest that Rav Yosef accepts Rabba’s reasoning only in the case of shofar and lulav but not with regard to reading the Megilla. Since the former are required by Torah law, one might think that one is permitted to carry them on Shabbat, whereas in the case of Megilla, no one will err in this regard. The author of Sefat Emet adds that according to Rav Yosef, if for whatever reason one did not read the Megilla on the day before Shabbat, he would be required to read it on Shabbat, whereas according to Rabba, there is a prohibition against reading the Megilla on Shabbat.

The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is that which Rabbi Ḥelbo said that Rav Huna said: When Purim occurs on Shabbat, the reading of the Megilla in all places is deferred to the day of assembly? The Gemara corrects the wording of Rav Huna’s statement: Can it enter your mind to say that the reading of the Megilla in all places is deferred to the day of assembly? Aren’t there walled cities that perform this ceremony the next day, i.e., on Sunday? Rather, Rav Huna’s statement should say as follows: All readings that are deferred are deferred to the day of assembly. In accordance with whose opinion was this stated? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

In any case, it is apparent from the mishna and the baraitot that everyone agrees that one does not read the Megilla on Shabbat. What is the reason for this? Rabba said: Everyone is obligated to participate in reading the Megilla on Purim and blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShana, and not everyone is proficient in reading the Megilla. Therefore, the Sages issued a rabbinic decree that the Megilla is not read on Shabbat, lest one take the Megilla in his hand and go to an expert to learn how to read it or to hear the expert read it, and, due to his preoccupation, he will carry it four cubits in the public domain, and thereby desecrate Shabbat.

The Gemara comments: And this same concern for the sanctity of Shabbat is the reason that the Sages decreed that the shofar is not blown when Rosh HaShana occurs on Shabbat. And this same concern is the reason that the Sages decreed that one may not take the lulav on Shabbat.

Rav Yosef said that there is another reason the Megilla is not read on Shabbat: Because the eyes of the poor are raised to the reading of the Megilla. The poor await the day on which the Megilla is read, because on that day gifts are distributed to the poor. If the Megilla is read on Shabbat, it will not be possible to distribute gifts to the poor, who will be deeply disappointed. The Gemara notes that this is also taught in a baraita: Even though the Sages said that the villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, they also collect the gifts for the poor on that day, and they distribute them to the poor on that day.