

PURIM MITZVOT: HOW TO DO MISHLOACH MANOT AND MATANOT LA'EVYONIM

Where do these Mitzvot come from?

In the book of Esther, we are told how to celebrate Purim itself. In a variety of places at the end of the Ninth Chapter, we are told to “send gifts to one another and presents to the poor.” This is the source for the two mitzvot of Mishloach Manot, sending gifts, and Matanot La’Evyonim presents to the poor.

All together, the mitzvot of Purim are more about giving than getting, and more about being concerned for the less fortunate than about spending money on oneself.

MISHLOACH MANOT

What is it? What do we do?

Simply put, the minimum way to fulfill this requirement is to send at least two separate foods to at least one person. Anything qualifies as food as long as it is ready to eat—so fruit, packaged candy, cakes, and cookies are all appropriate

It is common to put these into a single, decorated container or bag as part of the delivery. In many communities, they are delivered by hand. In other communities, the congregation itself coordinates, purchases, and delivers the gifts to everyone.

MATANOT LA'EVYONIM

What is it? What do we do?

The verse, Esther 9:22, uses the plural word to describe the poor, so the rabbis of ancient times decreed that the minimum requirement is to send gifts to at least two people. Some sources suggest this is the most important mitzvah of the four we’re obligated to on Purim.

Many synagogues aid in the fulfillment of this mitzvah by creating opportunities on Purim for congregants to make donations to the poor and to various organizations that aid the poor.



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