



Why Do We Give on Purim?

Topic

Purim and Tzedakah

Grade Level(s)

4th - 6th

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will

- Review the Purim narrative.
- Involve themselves in the *mitzvot* (commandments) of *matanot l'evyonim* (giving gifts to the poor) and *mishloach manot* (giving food to friends, family, etc.)
- Compare the *mitzvot* of *matanot l'evyonim* and *mishloach manot*.

Materials needed

- Text handouts
- Timeline
- Choose materials for *matanot l'evyonim* and *mishloach manot* based on the stations that you choose from [Station Activities for Exploring the Four Mitzvot of Purim](#).

Technology needed

- Choose technology support based on the activities that you select from [Station Activities for Exploring the Four Mitzvot of Purim](#).

Background for Teachers

There are four *mitzvot* that are traditionally associated with Purim. They include: *mikra megillah* (reading *Megillat Esther*), *mishloach manot*, *seudat purim* (partaking in a festive meal), and *matanot l'evyonim*. All of the *mitzvot* have origins in the *Megillah* (*Megillat Esther* 9:22). In this lesson, we will focus on the *mitzvot* of *matanot l'evyonim* and *mishloach manot*.

Although Jews are supposed to give charity throughout the year (*Devarim* 15:7-8, *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* 247:1, 248:1), there is a specific *mitzvah* to give gifts to the poor on Purim. During the rest of the year, we are able [and possibly encouraged] to research the immediacy of the need and the validity of the person or organization who



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asks for help (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 5:2). On Purim, however, we are obligated to give to anyone who asks (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 694:3).

To fulfill the mitzvah of *matanot l'evyonim*, a person must make two charitable donations to two different poor people. This giving may be done by giving money, but it can also be done by giving food, etc.

In order to fulfill the mitzvah of *mishloach manot*, one must give a gift of two different foods to one person in order (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 695:4). *Mishloach manot* may be given to a friend, a relative, or someone else. Traditionally, a person should spend more on *matanot l'evyonim* than they spend on *mishloach manot*.

Prepare in Advance

- Print out the accompanying summary of the Purim narrative and the *pasuk* (verse) at the end of this document.
- Cut up the summary for distribution to students. To shorten the activity, you might cut up the narrative in groups of sentences so that there are fewer pieces to put together.
- Set up tables for preparing *matanot l'evyonim* and *mishloach manot* based on the selected station activities.

Description of Activities

1. Divide the class into groups of 2-4 students each.
2. Give each group the cut-up summary and ask them to put them in order.
 - a. As an alternative give each student one of the events from the narrative and ask students to arrange themselves in the correct order of events.
3. Show students the *pasuk* from *Megillat Esther* 9:22 and use the following questions to promote discussion:
 - a. Knowing what we do about the Purim story, why do you think these are the ways that we celebrate Purim?
 - b. How would you want to mark such an exciting day?
 - c. Why do you think we give food to family and friends? Why do you think we give gifts to the poor on Purim?
4. Explain to students that they will be preparing *mishloach manot* and *matanot l'evyonim*.
 - a. Emphasize that each package of *mishloach manot* should include at least two foods.



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- b. Highlight that students should prepare at least two packages of *matanot l'evyonim*.
- c. Ask: The *mishloach manot* requirement is fulfilled by sending two kinds of food to one person, while *matanot la'evyonim* requires giving to at least two people. Why do you think we need to give to two poor people and only one friend? What do you think about the difference in what we're required to give?

5. Station Time!

Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Read a book to students in order to familiarize them with the Purim narrative. Check out the JTeach [Purim Bibliography](#) for suggestions.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Students research local organizations to which the class can donate the *matanot l'evyonim*. Students can explain why the various organizations would be appropriate recipients, and the class can vote on which one(s) should receive the donations.



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כְּיָמֵי אֶשְׁרֵי-נָחוּ בָהֶם הִיְהוּדִים מֵאוּבֵי־קָהָם
וְהִחֲדָשׁ אֶשְׁרֵי נְהַפְּךָ לָהֶם מִגּוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֲבֵל
לְיוֹם טוֹב לְעִשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מְשִׁפָּה וְשִׂמְחָה
וּמְשָׁלוֹת מְנוֹת אֵישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְּנוֹת לְאֲבִינָיִם

מגילת אסתר ט:כב

...They are to make days of feasting
and joy, and for sending portions to
one another, and gifts to the poor.

Megillat Esther 9:22