



Carnegie Shul Chatter

February 21, 2018



Our President and spiritual leader, Dr. Larry Block, will be forced to miss services for the next few weeks because of a back condition. Services will, however, be held with several congregants filling in for Dr. Block. Best wishes to Dr. Block and our prayers that he may soon return to our bimah to lead us in our prayers.

We Had it First!

I have often felt that many Christian traditions are actually an outgrowth of something Jewish, and although I cannot be certain, the traditional Christian Easter basket may be just such a tradition copied from an ancient tradition of Judaism.

You may or may not know of the Jewish tradition of Mishloach Manot (I personally did not until Ellen exposed me to it eleven years ago).

It is a Purim tradition calling for Jews to send gifts of food to each other, often in baskets, as part of the observance of Purim.

The following, from myjewishlearning.com, is an explanation of this wonderful mitzvah.



A Novel Story

I recently finished a novel by Sam Bourne titled *The Righteous Men*.

It is actually a mystery, but it deals with the concept of the *Lamad Vav Tzadikim*, a concept found in Jewish mysticism which says that, in every single generation, there are thirty-six truly righteous men on whose true righteousness and piety the fate of the world depends.

Most versions of this legend declare that the hidden thirty-six are unknown to the world and cannot be known, to others or to themselves. They are humble servants of their fellows, tirelessly working to dry tears, show compassion, and shoulder the burdens of those who suffer. Like the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness, they have felt the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence. They have recognized the power of God in their lives — the pillars of cloud and of fire — which guides them and protects them.

It is an intriguing concept, and yet another example of the depth of Judaism and the many facets of our religion which are rarely a part of the Jewish education we receive before our Bar/Bas Mitzvah.

If you are looking for a great murder mystery that also incorporates a great deal of Jewish learning, *The Righteous Men* is well worth the read.

Why Do Jews Send Mishloach Manot on Purim?

It is customary to send Purim gifts to friends and strangers.

The ninth chapter of the Book of Esther states (verse 19): “Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the 14th day of the month of Adar, a day of gladness and feasting, a holiday, and of sending portions to one another (mishloach manot).”

From this historical event our rabbis teach that the Jewish people must send gifts of food to each other on the holiday of Purim. However, the question arises: What is the ultimate purpose of these gifts?

Countering the Accusations of Haman

One approach sees the mitzvah (commandment) of mishloach manot as counteracting the accusations of Haman. Haman accused the Jews of being “a scattered, and divided nation.” Thus, the Jewish people send gifts to each other in order to show that they are not divided, but rather are united. (Following this mitzvah can be understood as a positive reinterpretation of midah ke-neged midah — measure for measure.) The mishloach manot bring peace and harmony to an at times divisive and fractured Jewish community.

This explains why some maintain that one may fulfill the mitzvah of mishloach manot by sending not food, but words of Torah. Since the purpose of this mitzvah is to unite the Jewish people, one can fulfill the mitzvah with anything that achieves this goal. And what better method is there of achieving harmony amongst fellow Jews than by sharing words of Torah?

Ensuring Everyone Has a Festive Meal

A second explanation for the mitzvah appears in the Terumat Ha-Deshen of Rabbi Israel Isserlein (15th century, Vienna), who writes: “It appears that the reason for this mitzvah is so that everyone can fulfill the mitzvah of eating a proper, festive meal on Purim.” In other words, the mitzvah intends to guarantee that rich and poor alike are provided for at the Purim meal. (It may also be taken as a symbol that both Jewish rich and poor should recognize the universal aspect of redemption from the physical extinction of the entire nation).

This second approach raises another question. Indeed, there is already another mitzvah that assures that the poor are provided for on Purim, i.e. the mitzvah of mattanot le-eyonim (sending gifts to the poor). Why, then, is there a need for a second mitzvah of mishloach manot? So some suggest that the mitzvah of mishloach manot actually derives from the mitzvah of giving gifts to the poor on Purim. However, due to concern that the poor would feel ashamed that only they did not have sufficient means to provide for the Purim meal, the rabbis decreed that not only the poor, but all people should send and receive gifts on the holiday of Purim.

Thus, we see that the mitzvah of mishloach manot has two main functions — to instill harmony and love in the Jewish people, and to remind ourselves that as we celebrate the holiday of Purim we cannot forget about the needs of the less fortunate in our community.

9. May one use ma'aser (10% tzedakah) money to buy the food?

At least one package must be bought without ma'aser money. If a person wishes to send additional packages to poor people, he may use ma'aser money.

10. Are women obligated to perform this mitzvah?

Yes, since they were also included in the Purim miracle.

11. May a husband and wife send jointly?

Yes. A note should be attached indicating that the package is being sent on behalf of both of them.



12. Should children below bar/bat mitzvah perform this mitzvah?

Children aged six should be trained to perform the mitzvah.

13. Can children who live at home fulfill the mitzvah with the parents' package?

According to some opinions, a package may be sent on behalf of the entire family. According to another opinion, only a husband and wife may send together, but children should send separately. If children prepare their own packages from food in their parents' home, they should be allowed to acquire the food before sending it.

14. May two or more people send jointly?

Yes, but the package should contain the correct quantity for each of the senders.

15. May one send to a mourner?

No. If another member of the family is not in mourning, the package may be addressed to the family.

16. Is a mourner obligated to send?

Yes, but the package should not be too elaborate. According to some opinions, the mourner should preferably send to one person only. Other members of the family may send many packages.

17. If a person receives a package, must he reciprocate and send one in return?

It is praiseworthy to do so, but not an obligation.

18. May one give the package personally?

According to the prevalent custom, one may give the package personally. According to some opinions, it is preferable to send the package via a third person since the verse (Esther 9: 22) describes the mitzvah as sending food packages to one another.

19. May one use a child as a messenger?

Yes, but one should confirm that the package was delivered, since one may not automatically assume that the child carried out the task. One need not be concerned about this if another package was delivered personally or via an adult.

20. May one use a delivery service?

A reliable delivery service may be used.

21. May one send an anonymous package?

Since one of the purposes of the mitzvah is to increase love and friendship between people, it is important for the recipient to know who sent the package. Therefore, the messenger should tell the recipient who the sender is, or an identifying note should be attached to the package.

22. What if the intended recipient is not home?

- If the sender intended to give the package to a specific person, it would not be sufficient to deliver it to another member of the family (unless he is sure that the package will be given on Purim).
- If the sender did not intend to give the package to a specific member of the family, the package may be given to anyone in the family.
- If no one is home, it is advisable not to leave the package there, since the sender would not fulfill his obligation if the food were not received on Purim. He may leave the package there if he does not rely on this to fulfill his obligation, but sends another package to someone else.

23. May one send the package before Purim or on the evening of Purim?

- Ideally, the package should be both sent and delivered on Purim during the day.
- If the package is sent before Purim but delivered on the day of Purim, it is questionable whether he has fulfilled his obligation.
- If the package is sent and delivered before Purim or on the evening of Purim, he has not fulfilled his obligation.



Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at mrmike7777@yahoo.com.



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike7777@yahoo.com.

SOUTH HILLS JEWISH COMMUNITY

PURIM CARNIVAL

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 • 12:15-2:30 PM
SOUTH HILLS JCC
345 KANE BLVD., 15243

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 - DJ & Music
- Inflatable Obstacle Course
 - Moon Bounce
 - Airbrush Tattoos
- Balloon artist
- Face Painting
- Pizza, Hamantaschen, Veggies, Snacks, & Drinks

Food and Admission are FREE. Games and activities at additional cost.

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