

# Mishloach Manot\*: Gift Giving as a Form of Advocacy

## Source Sheet

How can the mitzvah of Mishloach Manot on Purim, be used as a tool for action and advocacy for the hostages?

### 1. Book of Esther 9:19

עַל-כֵּן הִיהוּדִים הַפְּרָזִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרָזוֹת עֹשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר  
שְׂמֵחָה וּמְשֻׁתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב וּמְשָׁלַח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ:

*That is why village Jews, who live in unwalled towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday and an occasion for sending gifts to one another.*

### 2. Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg (1884–1966), Sridei Esh Responsa, 1:61

(translated by Rabbi Avi Schwartz)

*...it also seems to me that the purpose of mishloach manot is to increase peace, love, and brotherhood, just like Hatam Sofer writes (OH 196). Now, even though the general rule regarding mitzvot is that it is greater to be commanded and do the mitzvah, than to do it without being commanded, and hence we bless before doing a mitzvah, "and God commanded us," when it comes to the mitzvah of mishloach manot this is not the case. Here, it is better to give of one's free will, from a feeling of love for one's Jewish fellow. If one gives only because of the commandment, then he reduces the value of that love. So too with regard to tzedakkah. If one gives out of compassion or love of one's fellow Jew, it is better than one who gives because of the commandment and obligation... Another novel idea I have is that mishloach manot is fundamentally a mitzvah that applies throughout the entire year, and on Purim we are commanded to fulfill it actively in order to remember it throughout the year...*



\* **Mishloach Manot (משלוח מנות)** literally means "sending of portions" (also spelled and pronounced mishloach manos, or shalech mones, and also called a Purim basket), are gifts of food or drink that are sent to family, friends and others on Purim day. The mitzvah of giving Mishloach Manot derives from the Book of Esther. It is meant to ensure that everyone has enough food for the Purim feast held later in the day, and to increase love and friendship among Jews and their neighbors.



### 3. Ilana Kurshan

---

*All the mitzvot of Purim involve other people; they must be performed in a communal context. To give gifts to the poor you must put yourself in a situation where you have contact with poor people; to send mishloach manot you must have friends to whom you can send them; to enjoy a the festive Seudah meal there must be others with whom to share it; and even the megillah reading is supposed to be read publicly, and in synagogue. The Jewish conception of happiness, as we learn from the mitzvot of Purim, is about surrounding yourself with other people, and involving yourself in their lives.*

[click for the full article](#)

#### Discussion Question:

- Why do you think there is a commandment specifically on Purim to give and receive gifts?
- How is the idea of giving and receiving gifts connected to celebration?
- How does the act of Mishloach Manot build community?
- What is the connection between giving and receiving gifts and Jewish identity?

### 4. Book of Esther 4:13-14

---

וַיֹּאמֶר מָרְדֳּכָי לְהִשָּׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־תְּדַמֵּי בְּנַפְשֶׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיְהוּדִים: כִּי אִם־הִחַרְשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רְנוּחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאַתָּה וּבֵית־אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־יִלְעַת כְּזֹאת הַגָּעַף לַמְּלָכוֹת:

*Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: “Do not think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews by living in the king’s palace. For if you will remain silent at this time, relief and salvation will come to the Jews from another source, and you and the house of your father will be lost. And who knows if it is not for just such a time that you reached this royal position.*

#### Discussion Question:

- Have you ever been in a position where you felt a sense of obligation or responsibility to advocate for others?
- What can we learn from Mordechai’s message to Esther about the Jewish values of obligation, responsibility, and advocacy?