



‘Giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor’

Abstract: The plan deals with two of Purim’s main precepts: *Mishloach manot* (Purim baskets, i.e., gifts of food) and gifts to the poor, and the value that underlies them – the value of giving. Activity in the plan shall familiarize students with the precepts of Purim baskets and gifts to the poor, their importance and the difference between them. The plan emphasizes the connection between the precepts and the holiday, as well as its joy. Discussion of the precepts shall be a means of examining the value of charity and giving, and how it is expressed in our lives.

Giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor

- What are the holiday’s four precepts, and what is their origin in the Book of Esther.
- Explanation of the precepts, the difference between them and their prioritization according to the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Giving one’s heart and soul

- On the importance of giving, and its contribution to recipient and giver
- On different kinds of giving and the difference between them, through the Rambam’s (Maimonides) eight levels of charity.

Partnership – the greatest level of giving

- What is the highest level of giving, how it exists in everyday life, and why is it difficult to achieve?
- Learning the song Partners from seed of gum.

Class Purim baskets

- Creative activity for preparing symbolic *Mishloach Manot* in class.





Giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor

Course of the lesson:

Explanation of the precepts' origins:

(20) Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Achashverosh, near and far, (21) to establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, each and every year: (22) As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. (23) So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them.

(Book of Esther, Chapter 9)

Questions:

1. What precepts appear in this section?
2. What is the explanation of the precepts? What is the purpose of the banquet, the Purim baskets and the gifts to the poor?
3. What is the difference between Purim baskets and gifts to the poor? Who is the giver and who is the recipient?





The Rambam – Mishne Torah – The Book of Times – Laws of Megillah and Chanukah,

Chapter 2

17 And one must send two servings of meat or various cooked dishes or two kinds of food to his friend: ... two servings to one person. And the more one sends to one's friends, the better.

18 [16] and one must distribute to the poor on Purim, no less than two poor people; one gift each, or small change or different kinds of prepared food dishes. ... two gifts to two poor people. And one should not be meticulous about Purim charity; rather, whoever extends his hand to take should be given; and Purim charity shall not be converted to other forms of charity.

19 [17] it is better that a person be more generous giving gifts to the poor than feeding himself at his feast and giving gifts to his friends, since there is no great, grand joy there; rather, just gladdening the hearts of the poor and orphans and widows and foreigners, for he who gladdens the hearts of these unfortunate people becomes like the divine spirit.

Questions:

1. What are the foods that should be sent? To whom do we send them?
2. How many portions should be sent? Why is a minimum number (the least) defined, but no maximum number (the most)?
3. What are gifts to the poor? What may be given?
4. How many gifts should be given? To how many poor people?
5. Why should we not be meticulous about Purim gifts? What does this mean with regard to the usual, and what does it say about the holiday?
6. Why is it better to give more gifts to the poor rather than send Purim baskets to friends and feast yourself? What is the importance of the gift to the poor?
7. What ranking or grading can be seen between the precepts of banquet, sending gifts [of food] to friends, and gifts to the poor? (From the individual to society)





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Every Jew, even a poor person receiving charity, is obligated to give at least two gifts to two poor people, i.e., one gift each . People who live where there are no poor people shall keep the charity until he encounters poor people or sends it to them.

Abridged Shulchan Aruch, Chapter 5142, Section 3

Questions:

1. Why is a poor person on charity also obligated to give? What is the logic in obligating those who have little to give too?
2. How does it feel to give?
3. Do you know any other examples of the principle of giving, even you yourself only have a little?





To give the soul and the heart – the importance of giving, and different types of giving

Course of the lesson:

We shall explain: In the previous activity we saw how important giving is in Purim, and how much it adds to the joy of the holiday. We learned that there is a difference between giving to friends, which is usually easier, and giving to the anonymous poor, which is harder. We shall try and see what other types of giving there are.

In the following are pairs of types of giving. Mark which of them you think is better and explain why.

Mark: Better > less good, less good < better, good = good

Type of giving	Mark	Type of giving	Explanation
I know who I'm giving to		I don't know who I'm giving to	
I give to who really needs		I give to whoever is close to him	
Open giving – everyone knows the giver		Secret giving – no one knows who gave	
Gives without enthusiasm		Gives happily	
Makes a one-time donation at an event or holiday		Gives on an ongoing basis	
Gives as much as is needed		Gives a little to do just the minimum	





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Discussion:

- Each type presents what the choices were, what type of giving is better? Did you have any deliberation? What were the explanations?
 1. Is it better to give to whom we know or to strangers? Which is easier for us? Why?
 2. Is the need of the recipient important, or is the main thing the giving?
 3. What is the difference between giving openly and giving secretly? How does the giver benefit from giving openly (honor, gratitude)?
 4. Does it matter how I give and what feeling I gave the recipient, or what matters is he got what he needed?
 5. What is the difference between one-time giving and ongoing giving? Which is more difficult? Which do we do more of?
- You may give examples of each type of giving.

We shall explain: The Rambam too distinguished between eight (8) types of giving, and ranked them according to quality.

- Divide the class into groups. Each group shall receive cards with parts of the section, and be asked to rank which is better or less so.





Eight Levels of Charity

He who supports a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him.

He who gives to the poor without knowing whom he gave to, and without the recipient knowing from who he received, for this is performing a mitzvah for its own sake.

(Neither the giver nor the recipient know of each other)

When one knows to whom one gives, but the recipient does not know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to walk about in secret and put coins in the doors of the poor.

When one does not know to whom one gives, but the poor person does know his benefactor... so that they would not be ashamed.





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When one gives to the poor person directly into his hand, but gives before being asked.

When one gives to the poor person after being asked.

When one gives inadequately, but gives gladly and with a smile.

When one gives unwillingly.





Eight Levels of Charity – (2) Rambam Strong Hand – Laws of Gifts to the Poor, Chapter

10

(7) There are eight levels of charity, each greater than the next.

The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to support a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand until he needs no longer [beg from] people. For it is said, "You shall strengthen the stranger and the dweller in your midst and live with him," that is to say, strengthen him until he needs no longer fall or be in need.

(8) A lesser level of charity than this is to give to the poor without knowing to whom one gives, and without the recipient knowing from who he received. For this is performing a *mitzvah* for its own sake. This is like the "anonymous fund" that was in the Holy Temple. There the righteous gave in secret, and the good poor profited in secret. Giving to a charity fund is similar to this mode of charity, though one should not contribute to a charity fund unless one knows that the person appointed over the fund is trustworthy and wise and a proper administrator...:

(9) A lesser level of charity than this is when one knows to whom one gives, but the recipient does not know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to walk about in secret and put coins in the doors of the poor. It is worthy and truly good to do this, if those who are responsible for distributing charity are not trustworthy.

(10) A lesser level of charity than this is when one does not know to whom one gives, but the poor person does know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to tie coins into their robes and throw them behind their backs, and the poor would come up and pick the coins out of their robes, so that they would not be ashamed.

(11) A lesser level than this is when one gives to the poor person directly into his hand, but gives before being asked.





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- (12) A lesser level than this is when one gives to the poor person after being asked.
- (13) A lesser level than this is when one gives inadequately, but gives gladly and with a smile.
- (14) A lesser level than this is when one gives unwillingly.

- We shall compare the levels of the groups. We shall ask:
 1. Which is the highest level? What is the lowest level?
 2. What was easy to rank and what was difficult?
 3. Which levels are similar to each other and which are very different? (The first is different because it removes the person from the state of being in need; in 2-4 there is no contact between giver and recipient).
 4. Why is it better that there not be any meeting of giver and recipient? What would happen if they met? (Shame, dependency)
 5. What is more important in your opinion, to give as much as is needed, or to give graciously? Why does it matter how I give?
 6. What giving is there in Purim baskets, and gifts to the poor on Purim?
 7. Do you agree with the Rambam that giving employment or partnership is the highest level of giving? And why?





Types of giving – student’s page

In the following are pairs of types of giving. Mark which of them you think is better = < > and explain why.

Mark: Better > less good, less good < better, or good = good

Type of giving	Mark	Type of giving	Explanation
I know who I’m giving to		I don’t know who I’m giving to	
I give to who really needs		I give to whoever is close to him	
Open giving – everyone knows the giver		Secret giving – no one knows who gave	
Gives without enthusiasm		Gives happily	
Makes a one-time donation at an event or holiday		Gives on an ongoing basis	
Gives as much as is needed		Gives a little to do just the minimum	





Partnership – the highest level of giving

Course of the lesson:

We shall explain: We have seen that there are different types of giving, and that some types are better than others. We shall now talk about partnership. We will start by reading / playing the song Partners, by Leah Naor.

Partners

Lyrics: Leah Naor, Music: Nachum Heiman

If I find a little cat	If I have a good dog	If I get a chick
Then I'll give it to Dan	Then I'll give it to Dov	I'll trade it with Michal
Danny will give me a puppy	Dovik will give me a chick	Michal will give me a dove
With a white patch on his tail	So little that hasn't grown at all	A pure white dove
	Then we will become partners	Then we will become partners
Then we will become partners	In all the lovely things	In all the lovely things
In all the lovely things	And we will have a cat	And we will have a cat
And we will have a cat	And we will have a dog	And we will have a dog
And we will have a dog	And we will have a chick	And we will have a smart white dove
And the puppy will have a patch on his tail	With no feathers that hasn't grown at all	And we will have a chick
		And we will have Michal
		And we will have all kinds of things





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Questions:

1. Who are the characters in the poem? (Children: Me, Danny, Dovik, Michal. Animals: cat, dog, chick, dove)
2. What would each child have if they were not partners?
3. Why, according to the song, is giving worthwhile?
4. What is the advantage of partnership?
5. Do you agree that partnership increases what you have?
6. What is the connection between this song and Rambam's levels of charity?
7. What difficulty is there in partnership? (Decisions need to be made together; I don't always feel that it's mine).
8. What is there more of in your world and in that of adults, giving and taking or partnership? Why, in your opinion?

Class Purim baskets

Creative activity for Purim baskets: Each child chooses another child in the class by lottery. Each child must prepare his choice a symbolic Purim basket (pastries or sweets, preferably something the child made himself). We shall prepare together a 'spiritual' Purim basket. First, we collect the materials: Panda chalk, markers, newspapers and magazines, scissors and glue.

Each child must think of his chosen child; what is special about him? What is he interested in? What is he good at? What is he in need of, or what would make him happy? He chooses one or some of these things and tries to draw and find pictures suitable to that child – what he needs or wants to give him to strengthen him. Each child shall give his work together with the Purim basket he or she prepared.



Teacher's annex

Hazal count four precepts that apply on Purim:

1. Reading the Book of Esther on the holiday eve and on its morning, as part of publicizing the miracle, and giving thanks for the rescue. Women too are obligated to read the Book (despite the fact that it is counted among the time-dependent positive precepts, since they too were saved in the Purim miracle; or, since the main miracle was performed by a woman).
2. Purim feast – banquet and celebration As written in the Book, the days of Purim were designated as “days of feasting and joy”. In the Talmud (*Megillah* tractate) it says that a person must feast on the holiday, including wine; it also says that a person must get drunk to the point where he cannot distinguish between damned Haman and blessed Mordechai. There are differing opinions on the question of the extent to which inebriation is obligated, and there are adjudicators who determined that this precept has been removed from Jewish law. Some claim that the precept is valid but there is no need to become completely drunk rather just enough to induce sleep and while sleeping a person cannot distinguish between damned Haman and blessed Mordechai (Hameiri).
3. Mishloach manot (gifts of food and drink) sent to one another – from the text of the Book of Esther “gifts of food and drink sent to one another”, where the word “gifts” (*manot*) is plural and “one another” is singular. *Hazal* deduced from this that it is incumbent on each person to send at least two gifts, to at least one person.
4. Gifts to the poor – according to Jewish law, one should give at least two gifts to two poor people, or a sum of money to enable purchase of available foods. The Rambam notes that it is better that a person be more generous giving gifts to the poor than feeding himself at his feast.



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To Give (Latet)

Lyrics: Hamutal Ben Ze'ev, Music: Boaz Sharabi

To give the soul and the heart

To give, to give when you love

And however one finds the difference

Between taking and receiving

You will yet learn to give, to give...

To discover secrets [in secret]

To release the tangle of connection

When your heart is pinched

By every smile, every look.

You are careful, you know,

And aside from you, no one hears

Walking a fine line, trying not to offend

And filling the free time.

To give the soul...

You learn with the years

To build buildings together

To live with all the changes.

To weave, with her, a life's story

And get through difficult days

In distress and troubled times

To always know how to give in

and to keep the love alive

To give the soul...

To see in the midst of the fall

That there is room for forgiveness

It's always possible to start again

Like a new day, as usual – to give

To give.





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