



Gracious Giving

When we look at three of the four mitzvot particular to Purim, reading the Megillah, having a feast, and creating feelings of brotherly love with *mishloach manot*, they clearly reflect the themes of the day. What about *matanot leevyonim*? How does this mitzvah connect to the *nes* of Purim? Don't we have a mitzvah to give *tzedakah* every day? Indeed, when giving *matanot leevyonim*, the *Yesod Veshoresh Haavodah*, notes one should have in mind that he is fulfilling the mitzvah of "*pato-ach tiftach*", the mitzvah *deorayta* to give to those less fortunate, as well as the mitzvah *derabannan* to give on Purim. How does this mitzvah specifically enhance our celebration of this *chag*?

Rav Naiman in *Darchei Mussar* explains

that one of the lessons of the Megillah is to see the impact a person with bad *middot* can have. Haman was not satisfied that Mordechai did not bow down to him and was thus ready to destroy an entire nation. Therefore, we are enjoined to work on our *middot*, to be conscious of our interactions with others. Giving gifts to friends as well as gifts to the poor enable us to develop inner sensitivities and become more refined. Rav Weintraub in *Einei Yisrael* adds that *shalom* is the all-inclusive core *middah*. Purim is a time to generate this aspect of harmony and peace among everyone; anyone who asks for a donation is answered on this day, since this fosters a sense of community and peace.

Rav Biderman in *Be'er Hachayim* adds that this dimension of friendship is not only relegated to giving physical money for *matanot leevyonim*. One can extend a kind word, a smile, or anything that lifts the spirits of others. People are not just

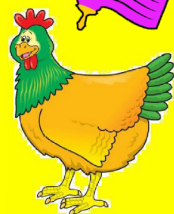
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financially poor (although clearly the mitzvah of the day is to extend monetary support), people are also struggling emotionally and psychologically. Purim is a time to reach out with love, care, and concern, to show kindness and generosity in any way we can.

Part of our *avodah* on Purim is to reenact the unity we felt at the time of *kabalah HaTorah*. Purim is a time of “*kiyemu vekiblu*”, we reaccepted the Torah and once again achieved a sense of togetherness. Rav Friedlander in *Siftey Chayim* notes that the *mitzvot* of the day are about creating closeness among people. It is also a day when we must take responsibility for those in need, to ensure their needs are met.

It is a time to step outside of self, to be concerned with others. The *Ashlag* in *Magalot Hashanah* reflects that the goal of the day is love, this is the crucial prerequisite to creating unity. Hence, as Rav Wachtfogel in *Leket Reshimot* points out, we call this mitzvah ‘*matanot*’ not *tzedakah*. Our attitude is one of taking care of Hashem’s children, and we give it with love, not to discharge with an obligation. ■

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