



MAROM מרומ

# Doing Purim at home - DIY

By Rabbi Josh Weiner

Purim this  
year is on

Thursday,  
16-18 March

י"ד-ט"ו באדר ב' התשפ"ב



**Level:**  
For everyone



**Read time:**  
15 - 20 min



**Amount of people:**  
1-99 recommended



**Languages:**  
English, French,  
German

## Get inspired

Covid hit our lives on Purim two years ago. Everyone's experience since then has been different, but with so many plans canceled, lack of certainty, and twists of fate, these past few years have been a lot like the Purim story.

Now, two years later, in some places, there is a sense of growing stability and in others, desperation. We don't know how the future will unfold, but we never really have. That's the message of Purim. *Nahafoch Hu* - everything is turned upside-down. Sometimes good things become bad, sometimes bad events turn out well. Everything is as random as a lottery - that's the meaning of the word Purim. And usually, we try and find some stability and sort out our problems - but on Purim, we celebrate the uncertainty in our lives! And we celebrate big.

## Setting the mood

Some people might be alone this year, others are with their partners, roommates, or friends, but nobody is going to be celebrating as usual. This guide is a collection of suggestions to empower you to have a meaningful Purim (maybe even more than before!), without a rabbi or local expert making decisions for you. You're welcome to use these ideas, add your own, do whatever you think your Purim requires!



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## Celebrate

In the **month of Adar**, there is a commandment to ‘increase joy’. What does that mean? Since it is hard to force an emotion, we have to understand that it means increasing external happiness, doing joyful things: particularly those that you wouldn’t necessarily do at this time. Faking happiness until it becomes real may be buying nice clothes or better food or a book. Joy is usually lighthearted, so don’t take it too seriously. Try, every day of the two weeks leading up to Purim, to do an intentionally lighthearted, happy thing.

Some more ideas:

- [Laughter Yoga](#) - this is particularly silly when done alone, breaks inhibitions, reminds your face and belly how laughter feels.
- Movies - be honest here, try and choose something that will leave you feeling full, not empty
- Reconnect to good people who dropped out of your life in the last year. Have a good, useless conversation!



## Shabbat Zachor

Shabbat Zachor is on the weekend before Purim. There's a commandment to remember what the evil Amalek did to the Israelites, and a second commandment not to forget it. You can keep two out of the 613 mitzvot in less than a minute! With synagogues closed, you can read the story [at home](#). Why is this important? It gets us thinking about the randomness of the world and how fragile our survival is, and worth celebrating. We think about external haters especially now with the rise of antisemitism, and also internal enemies (depression, anxiety, addictions, anger) that threaten us. The concept of Amalek always stays relevant.

My thoughts on [Amalek](#) (very short), and the [original](#) story in the Torah (very short)



## The Fast of Esther

The Fast of Esther is on the day before Purim (16 March), remembering Esther acknowledging her helplessness before taking political action to save the people. Esther created her own miracles, but at no point was she absolutely sure of what she was doing. This life of doubt and recognition of uncertainty is always relevant, especially this year. Fasting is the traditional Jewish mode of empathy, selflessness, and listening.

- If you can, try fasting from the morning until the evening, when the megillah reading begins. (This also makes the taste of the evening feast and the drinking much more intense!)
- If you can only do part of the day, or only abstain from important meals, that's also significant.
- Take some time for reflection and calm meditation on this day. On Purim itself, you shouldn't be thinking about anything!

## Purim

On Thursday evening, **Purim** begins. Finally! The four mitzvot of Purim, all beginning with M, are: *megillah*, *mishteh*, *matanot la'evyonim* and *mishloach manot*. Let's see how to do those.



## Megillah reading

The book of Esther should be read out of a kosher handwritten scroll twice, once in the evening and once in the day. If you know a local rabbi or someone with a megillah, chances are they will be happy to read it to you on Purim, somehow: serenading you outside your balcony, meeting in the local park. Many synagogues will also do an online reading - this year, at least, this is halachically acceptable<sup>1</sup>.

- Following online creates the amazing opportunity to hang out with a community in another part of the world.
- In Berlin - be in touch with [Base Berlin](#) as soon as possible to organise a visit from their Purim ice-cream truck!



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1. For more on online megillah readings and relevant sources, see the Teshuva of the Hadar Institute ([English](#)) and R. Re'em Hachohen ([Hebrew](#)). All authorities stress the need to be listening live and follow along in your own text.

## Mishteh (Purim feast)

Eat an amazing meal, and drink more than normal, until you touch the limits of your consciousness.

- The food is important, especially during the day. Do your best to have a really special lunch, in whatever environment you happen to be in.
- If you're working on Friday, and can't get time off, there are still some creative options: take a long lunch break, work half a day and celebrate the rest, or go to work drunk (and explore the possibility that your work is ridiculous, anyway.)
- Drunkenness is powerful and dangerous. The idea of Purim is to see through the illusions of our everyday life, to see how silly and random and fragile our world is, to blur the categories that we usually find important. If you are home alone, you might want to have some Purim-appropriate music, podcasts, or reading for your feasting.
- If you have any health issues with drinking alcohol, then you don't have to drink on Purim. Instead, have a great meal and take a nap (this can count as relaxed consciousness!)





## Matanot La'evyonim

### Gifts to the poor:

Every festival has an aspect of sharing and caring for others, but on Purim, it's an integral part of the day. If you have money, it's not only because you deserve it, it also gives you the opportunity to with someone less fortunate at the moment. This year, with economic uncertainty in the world, this Purim message is particularly crucial and relevant.

- This mitzvah is equal or greater than the others (according to [Rambam](#)), even though it's sometimes forgotten.
- The basic mitzvah is giving two portions of food to two hungry people. In modern cities, one could also give an amount of money equal to four portions of food at a restaurant. But don't calculate too precisely, just give what you can.
- If you have a collection of coins you've been saving at home for no reason, you could just go out on the street and give it to someone.
- Corona, lockdown, recession, and winter have been really tough. If you're giving money to a charity, it should be as practical and food-based as possible. In most places, there is no distinction between giving to Jewish and non-Jewish charities for this mitzvah.
- Before giving, take a moment to think and dedicate the act of giving as a sacred act, and as part of your attempt to celebrate Purim.

## Mishloach Manot

### food gifts to friends:

another part of the Purim celebration is sharing food with friends. This is not charity, but an example of an overflow of goodness that we want to experience in the world. Even a poor person who receives charity is required to give to the poor and to friends. In a world where isolation has been so difficult, sending food is an act of connection.

- The requirement is to send to at least one person a package that includes at least two distinct kinds of food. If you can send more to more people - that's great!
- If possible, it's good to make the package and bring it to the person. But this year, with hygiene and movement restrictions, it might be best to order something online, or somehow send a package by post. Either way, it should definitely arrive on Purim day.



## Other ideas:

- Maybe dress up in a costume? Even if you won't be showing it to others, there's a powerful psychological process in deciding which parts of our repressed self we want to reveal through our costumes. At the very least, seriously consider what you *would* have dressed up as, or what costume you'll wear next year.

