

Where What When February 4, 2022 Adar I 5782

MONEY MINDSET: CAN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT MONEY? AN INTERVIEW WITH RABBI NAFTALI HOROWITZ

Do money and mussar mix? Frum finances is a perennial topic, perhaps more pertinent now than ever. While some of our community's financial woes are due to factors beyond our control, some of them are of our own making. The interviewee, who handles billions of dollars for clients, starts out talking about money and ends up in classical Jewish mussar.



TO THEME OR NOT TO THEME: WHAT IS THE QUESTION? BY TZILAH RACZKOWSKI

The Costume Lady strikes again! The founder of Baltimore's costume gemach, who knows a thing or two about costumes, assures us that theming is a Thing, and takes us on a grand tour of themes and schemes of Purims past.

NISSIM ON 95: A SNOW SAGA BY TOVA SAPIRMAN

When we heard the news about the people stranded overnight in their cars on I-95 in Virginia a few weeks ago, we probably thought, "how awful" and turned to other matters. The Sapirmans of Miami didn't have that luxury; they were caught in the middle of it. Their description of their ordeal brings home both the misery and the bitachon, the struggle and the siyata d'Shamaya.



Special Health Section

Check out the special Health Section in this issue. Whatever your health needs or concerns, you're likely to find what you're looking for: nursing care agencies, dentists, fitness programs, nutritional counseling, jobs in the health care field, and more.

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TO THEME
OR NOT TO
THEME...

What Is the Question?



by Tzilah Raczkowski

Rumor has it that, when it comes to Purim, things were simpler in the '70s and '80s. Queen Esther, Mordechai, the King, and the Clown accounted for the most of children's dress-ups, and *mishloach manos* were known to be sent on cellophane-covered paper plates. But as we know, our beautiful customs keep evolving, and Purim is no exception. "Themes" soon made their debut.

What is a theme? I would define it (*not* as per Merriam-Webster!) as the coordination of *mishloach manos* with the costumes of all the children and even the parents to make one grand, unified splash! And it takes some creativity and planning.

How do people come up with their themes? Often, they are based on current events. In an election year, for example, you will find many themes around the president and the U.S.A. If the Ravens win the Superbowl, you will see football/Ravens themes. In 2020, after the appearance of Where's Waldo at the *Siyum Hashas*, Waldo became a very popular theme.

As founder and caretaker of the Keren Reva Costume Gemach – children have dubbed me the Costume Lady – I make it my business to keep up with the changes in the world of costumes, and people often turn to me for advice. My first piece of advice is that you need to take into account your family dynamics. Some ideas are great for couples, and

others are good for a family with kids; it depends on the kids' ages as well. Children do have opinions, and it sometimes gets hard when the parents have a different idea. When my kids were younger, they knew that they could dress up as anything they wanted for the school event, but Purim was a family day. We spoke at length about our theme and how to incorporate it into the costumes and *mishloach manos*.

What's Popular

Some of the most popular costumes/themes for boys are fireman and policeman – because what little boy doesn't want to be one of those macho figures? Sports-related themes are very popular, too. Girls still love to be a *kallah* or a princess.

Some easy, car seat-safe and sensory-friendly themes are scrubs for doctors and dentists as well as Dr. Seuss's Thing One and Thing Two. Countries are popular. I've seen Egyptians, Chinese, Mexicans, Pilgrims, Uncle Sam, Statue of Liberty, and Betsy Ross. Occupations, such as pilot or flight crew and construction workers, are also popular.

Creativity Plus

Here are some exceptionally creative themes I have come across: One family dressed up as the Six Days of Creation: white and black for Day One (light and dark); blue for Day Two (sky and sea); flowers for Day Three; sun, moon, and stars for Day Four; birds or fish for Day Five; an animal for Day Six; Shabbos Queen for Day Seven.

One family did the characters

from the Marvelous Middos Machine: Shnooky and Shlumpy, Shapiro, Dr. Middos, and Dizzy.

One mom came in to the costume *gemach* wanting her kids to be Disney characters, but her adorable five-year-old decided he wanted to be a *chasid* with the *shtreimel* and *bekesha*. I wanted to make both the little boy and the rest of family happy. They choose Disney's Minion characters, and he became the rabbi with his *minyana*!

A family did an insurance theme. One of the children was the green Geico gecko; one member of the family was the doctor, and the others represented car, home, and money.

Down Memory Lane

I'll take you on a tour of the various themes we did for the first years of our family, including how they came about and how we incorporated our *mishloach manos*.

In 1997, we were newlyweds and decided to do *Mishenichnas Adar Marbim B'simcha*. This theme actually came about at the very last minute. My husband and I were talking about Purim and costumes a few days before Purim. My response was something like, "I am not dressing up." He said to me, "You are not dressing up; *we* are dressing up." (It is years later now, and I think maybe he regrets that comment.) We decided to wear our matching boy and girl smiley-face T-shirts and matching baseball caps. We bought some smiley-face accessories at Party City to add to our *mishloach manos* to tie them in to our costumes.

In 1998, we did *Pooh and Friends*. My husband was a big Winnie the Pooh admirer. During one of our Target runs we found denim baseball caps with Winnie the Pooh and Tigger on them. We then found two different Winnie the Pooh and friends ties. Our costumes were simple denim shirts, black bottoms, and the Winnie the Pooh tie and baseball cap. Our *mishloach manos* were simple: Still holding onto the 1980s paper plates custom, we found Winnie the Pooh birthday plates, which we filled with honey cake and other honey treats.

In 1999, we did *Clowning Around*. By this time, we were blessed to be parents, and I had the idea that for our baby's first Purim, he should be a clown. I went to Perns and found the perfect baby clown costume. I found great jester hats and big bow ties for us. When I brought them home, my husband put on his jester hat and went over to our son. There was an immediate smile, and my husband loved the idea. For *mishloach manos*, I found the perfect clown tins at Amazing Savings on Reisterstown Road

and tied it together with *Mishenichmas Adar marbim b'simcha*.

In 2000, we did *Mickey and Company*. I don't remember how the theme came about, but I had this idea about Mickey Mouse. I found an adorable Mickey Mouse costume for my toddler. My husband had a tuxedo that we had gotten on sale for a black tie wedding, so we got Mickey ears and a red bow tie for him. I went to Joann Fabrics and got some red-and-white polka dot fabric, which a neighbor helped me make into an apron and matching bow for the ears. I found Minnie and Mickey Mouse glasses at Amazing Savings and filled them with red and white food. I also found a Mickey cookie cutter and made simple cookies.

In 2001, we were *Dalmatian Dogs and Firefighters*. The Disney store had a sale after Halloween; I got adorable Dalmatian costumes for the kids. We wore blue sweatshirts and fire hats. I packed the *mishloach manos* in a fire hat, with hot potato chips, a bottle of water (to put out the fire), and a few other things:

simple but cute.

In 2002, we were *Sailors* for the *mazal* of Adar, *dagim* (fish). This was a year when we felt we couldn't splurge on costumes. I had bought the kids matching sailor outfits for Yom Tov, so I added sailor and captain hats, and voila! For *mishloach manos* I bought small fish bowls and put in jelly, fish tuna, water, and some other treats.

In 2003, it was *Donald Duck* time. Again, I found Donald Duck costumes on



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sale after Halloween, so we did Donald Duck and "Quack'ers." My husband and I got Disney hats and wore denim shirts with the logo from the Donald Duck Orange juice. For *mishloach manos*, we did juice and Quack'ers.

In 2004, we were *Animals and Zookeepers*. I bought a giraffe costume for my daughter (again, after Halloween), and I found someone online (the



web wasn't as popular then) to make a custom zebra costume for my son. My husband and I were the zookeepers, dressed in khaki with straw safari hats and animal-patterned bandanas. For *mishloach manos*, I found zoo-themed shopping bags on Oriental Trading Company and did all zoo-related items: banana Laffy Taffy, animal crackers, and water, etc.

In 2005, we impersonated the UPS: *United Purim Service*. This was years before the costume companies produced a UPS costume. I looked for used UPS uniforms on eBay and found out that you can't buy the uniform due to potential fraud, but I was able to contact the sellers and made a few private transactions for four sets of UPS uniforms. Since my children were only four and six at the time, I had the tailor shorten the two smaller uniforms. I hadn't realized that Purim that year fell out on a Friday. It worked out very well, because we delivered our *mishloach manos* Thursday night, UPS style, in a little brown box with packaging labels and a sticker stating, "Don't open till Purim morning."

The *mishloach manos* had all-brown items, such as a brownie, Coke, and brown Laffy Taffies. We tossed the boxes on people's porches without knocking. It made our Friday Purim day less rushed and more enjoyable.

Do Your Own Thing

I hope you readers enjoyed the tour of our Purim theme adventures. You are welcome to copy the ideas. For more ideas and handy resources, there is a Facebook Group about Purim themes and ideas for *mishloach manos*! You can also try www.kosheronabudget.com/101-mishloach-manot-ideas/. Pinterest is good source as well.

Wishing everyone a *freilichen Purim!* ♦

Keren Reva Costume Gemach is stocked with over 1,500 costumes for all your Purim needs. Hours are every Sunday, Tuesday night, and Motzei Shabbos until Purim. All information is on www.kerenreva.com or email kerenreva@gmail.com.



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