

MATANOT ANIYIM TODAY

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Question:

How and in what way do we perform the mitzvot of giving the poor leket, shichecha, and pe'ah today?

Answer:

1. In our day and age, we do not have the obligation to leave the matanot aniyim, the presents for the poor (leket, shichecha, pe'ah, olelot, and peret), since poor people do not come to take them, and they give up on these gifts (ye'ush). The Torah states that these gifts are "for the poor"; our Sages learn from here that they are for the poor and not for the crows. That is, if there aren't poor people who will take the produce, there is no need to leave it out. It is for this reason that we do not leave these gifts today.
2. If someone wants to perform the mitzva in its entirety, they can invite poor people to come to their field during the harvest. The field owner calls a corner of the field pe'ah, leaves the leket and shichecha, and the poor people can take these gifts. This produce will be exempt from teruma and ma'aser. It also seems that if, prior to the harvest, the field owner notifies poor people that he will leave produce for them in the field, and they haven't given up on taking these gifts, when they come to gather the produce it will be exempt from teruma and ma'aser.
3. If someone calls the fruit left in the field and vineyard leket, shichecha, and pe'ah but does not notify a poor person, there is a doubt whether the produce is exempt from teruma and ma'aser; if poor people eventually do come and gather the fruit, they should take teruma and ma'aser without a blessing.