

**Between Purim and Pesach:**  
**The Singular Theme of Two Holidays**  
***By: Rabbi Daniel Fridman***

As we all transition from Purim to Pesach, for many of us, there is a certain feeling of anxiety which is triggered. With holiday preparations looming, it becomes difficult to take a step back and reflect on the beautiful integration of these two holidays.

For starters, the critical events of the Megillah transpired on Pesach itself. Haman had his missive regarding the destruction of the Jewish people sent out on the thirteenth day of the month of Nissan, leading Esther, upon Mordechai's prodding, to call a fast that would include the first day of Pesach. As is so colorfully described in the Midrash, while fasting is certainly prohibited on any holiday, let alone Pesach, a holiday with a specific mitzvah to eat matzah and drink four cups of wine, the future of the Jewish people itself was at stake. And so, they fasted. Esther goes to Achashverosh on Pesach, and Haman is hanged on the next day, still, on Pesach.

Second, when the Talmud famously records its statement, "when Adar arrives, we increase our joy", Rashi notes that this continues throughout the period of Purim and into Pesach, "for these were days of miracles for the Jewish people". In Rashi's opinion, Purim and Pesach are seamlessly integrated into one another, and with very good reason. In both instances, the Jewish people faced a dire situation- on Purim, physical annihilation, and on Pesach, bondage that would have surely led to eventual spiritual destruction. In both instances, we were saved, as Rashi notes, miraculously, even if, surely, the degree to which the miracles were overt or hidden varied greatly.

Third, the Talmud records a discussion as to whether, in a year with two months of Adar, one should mark Purim in the the first or second Adar. Normally, one would answer this question without hesitation, as we never delay the performance of a mitzvah. And yet, in this one instance, we delay our celebration of Purim to the second Adar, so that it should be closer to our celebration of the holiday of Pesach.

Fourth, both on Purim and on Pesach, the turning point of the story hinges on prayer. As noted by the Rav in his essay "Prayer, Redemption, and Talmud Torah." Hashem first calls on Moshe to return from Midian to lead the Exodus only after the Jewish people literally screamed out to him in heartfelt prayer. So too, Esther did not approach Achashverosh until the Jewish people fasted and cried out in prayer, for seventy two consecutive hours, as is referenced in the ninth chapter of the megillah, "the matters of their fasting and crying out."

And so, it stands to reason that the basic theme of our Purim celebration, unity, when we come together to defy Haman's charge that we "are a fractured and discordant people", by reading the Megillah together, having a festive meal together, giving gifts to one another, and

especially, by ensuring that not a single person slips through the cracks, Matanot L'Evyonim, extends to Pesach as well. It is not a mere nicety that we begin the Seder by announcing that anyone who is hungry should come and eat, nor is it happenstance that the defining mitzvah of the holiday, the Korban Pesach, was meant to be eaten in a chaburah, in a group.

As such, we find the theme of Matanot L'Evyonim of Purim translating into the theme of Ma'ot Chittin for Pesach, of collecting to ensure that everyone will have the funds to celebrate the holiday. Surely, if Pesach reminds us that we were all slaves in Egypt, that we were all in the same boat, it would be intolerable to forget those now who would otherwise do without this coming holiday. No one needs the message of redemption and Divine salvation, at the core of both Purim and Pesach, more than those in our community with the greatest need, so let's open our hearts and give generously to our Ma'ot Chittin campaign.

Last year, we distributed \$1950 dollars for Pesach preparations. This year, with the help of the Almighty, we will be able to help even more. One can contribute online at <https://www.jcot.org/payment.php> (Please select Rabbi Discretionary fund with a note in the memo for Ma'ot Chittin) or by sending a check to the office made out to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, with a note in the memo for Ma'ot Chittin.

It is certainly not an accident that the very first mishnah in Arvei Pesachim, the tenth and final chapter of that masekhta, which deals with the laws of Pesach, reminds us of our communal responsibility to ensure that even the poorest of Jews can not only have four cups of fine, but celebrate Pesach with a sense of liberation, אפילו עני שבישראל לא יאכל עד שיסב ולא יפחתו, לו מארבע כוסות של יין. Many things must be done in advance of Pesach. Remembering those in our community who need us the most is surely the one which comes first.