

Am Mefuzar or Ish Echad?

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Publicizing the miracles wrought by *Hashem* for *Am Yisrael* is a privilege given to us on a limited number of occasions. On *Pesach*, the four cups of wine are a *mitzvah* meant to communicate and commemorate the *nissim* that occurred in *Mitzrayim*. On *Chanukah*, the candles express to the world our recognition of the remarkable recovery of the oil used in our temple and the incredible military victory over the Greeks.² On *Shabbos*, the creation of the world and the exodus from Egypt are marked with *kiddush*, festive meals, and *Shabbos* candles.³ On *Purim*, the miracle of our salvation is celebrated through the reading of *Megillas Esther* (*Megillah* 4a). The *Meiri* (*ibid.* 7b) adds that the *Purim* meal itself highlights our gratitude for the miracles that brought about the preservation of the Jewish community.⁴ This is possibly supported by the *Hagahos Maimonios* (1:3), who indicates that the *pirsumei nisa* of the *krias hamegillah* is connected to the *seudah* by ruling that both must be done during the daytime.

With regard to the above mentioned holidays, other than *Purim*, and their *mitzvos* of *pirsumei nisa*, it is incumbent on all Jews – rich and poor – to involve themselves in these aforementioned *mitzvos* to such an extent that they should even ask for handouts in order to fulfill them. It is clear that *halacha* does not reckon the taking of charity lightly. The *Rambam* refers to one who takes charity without needing it as a cursed individual.⁵ Lest one think that taking charity is permissible when it is being taken for *mitzvos*, the *Rambam* says that it is a *chillul Hashem* to take money from *tzedakah* in order to support oneself while studying *Torah* all day.⁶ Given the fact that the *Torah* discourages taking *tzedakah* for *mitzvos*, what is so great about the *mitzvos* of

² *Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12 (see *Magid Mishneh*)

³ The *Radvaz* (*shut* 5:160) suggests that the theme of *Shabbos* is *pirsumei nisa*. Perhaps this idea can be extended to *ner shabbos* and to the *seudos Shabbos* as well. Rav Avishai David, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivat Torat Shraga, subsequently mentioned to me that Rav Soloveitchik posits this suggestion as well.

⁴ There is a difference of opinion relayed by the *Bach* (*Orach Chayim* 688) concerning whether the *seudah*, *mishloach manos*, and *matanos l'evyonim* need to be on the same day as the *krias ha-Megillah*. The *Yerushalmi* (4:4) states that they do not need to be on the same day, while the *Maharalbach* (*shut* 32) feels that they should be performed on the same day. In the same *teshuva* he assumes that the *mishloach manos* are for the purpose of the *seudah*. If everything needs to be on the same day, then that would be an indication that all the *mitzvos* of *Purim* are part of one great *pirsumei nisa*.

⁵ *Rambam, Hilchos Matnos Aniim* 10:18-19.

⁶ *Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:10. Although this is a minority opinion, it accentuates this principle.

pirsumei nisa that we are required to go through the embarrassment of asking for donations in order to fulfill them? Furthermore, if the *mitzvah* of *pirsumei nisa* is so crucial, why is there no explicit *halachic* authorization to ask for assistance in providing food and drink for the *mitzvah* meal on *Purim* just as there is for the comparable *mitzvos* of the other holidays?

Rav Yeruchem Fischel Perlow mentions that *kiddush Hashem* is the motivation behind our giving thanks when we sing *Hashem's* praises upon recognizing the miracles done on our behalf.⁷ Seemingly, the celebration of the power shown by God for our sake is a testament to His greatness. Delineating, in fine detail, the extraordinary measures exacted by *Hashem* promotes and sanctifies His greatness. This idea is also found in the *Baal HaMaor*,⁸ who says based on the *Yerushalmi* that the optimal way of fulfilling *pirsumei nisa* is with a *minyan*. Similarly, we see in the *Rambam*⁹ that the ideal fulfillment of *kiddush Hashem* is with at least a *minyan*. If one is meant to give up his life for *kiddush Hashem*, then certainly one can be expected to go to great lengths financially.¹⁰ The last *mishna* in *Avos* says that everything was created for God's honor. If that is the purpose of the creation, then taking charity to fulfill *mitzvos* of *kiddush Hashem* is worth the humiliation and the aggravation. In fact, it is not shameful or burdensome at all, but rather the preferred course of action. Considering that showcasing the miracles is related to the *mitzvah* of sanctifying God's name, it makes a lot more sense that we would be required to ask for assistance to purchase oil for Chanukah lights and wine for the four cups on Pesach.

How does this all relate to *Purim*? A closer look at the particulars vis-à-vis the *mitzvos* of *Purim* will give us insight into their connection to *pirsumei nisa*.

Two Themes of Purim

In Esther 3:8, *Haman* says to *Achashverosh* that the Jews are a disparate, disunited, and particularly rebellious people.¹¹ The *Manos Haleivi*¹² says that the institution of *mishloach manos* was meant to rectify issues of discord within the community. If one only has enough for oneself, then one should find another person in a similar predicament and exchange provisions with that person in order to fulfill this *mitzvah* (*Megillah* 7b¹³). The *gemara* mentions a story of two impoverished rabbis who utilized this stipulation by exchanging meals and eating them for their *Purim seudah* to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos*, thereby demonstrating the association of these two *mitzvos*.¹⁴ *Rabbeinu Chananel* (*Megillah* 6b) links *matanos le'evyonim* to *krias ha-*

⁷ In the name of Rav Daniyel HaBavli, *Mitzvah* 59-60, page 515.

⁸ *Rif*, *Megillah* 3a.

⁹ *Rambam*, *Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah* 5:4.

¹⁰ Rav Dovid Miller *shlita*, in *Sefer Zeved Tov*, page 417.

¹¹ See *Ibn Ezra* there.

¹² *Megillas Esther* 9:19, *Vinitziah* edition page 300b.

¹³ *Rashi's* approach there.

¹⁴ The *Ramban* (*Baba Metzia* 78b) also writes that the distributions are to provide food for *seudas Purim*. In fact, *Rambam*, *Hilchos Megillah* 2:15 writes that one of the requirements for *mishloach manos* is to provide food that is ready to eat right away. It should be noted that many *Rishonim* explain that the *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos le'evyonim* are intended to galvanize *simcha* through the act of giving. We can suggest that since *simcha* - the desired outcome of these *mitzvos* - is also attained by having meat and wine (*Pesachim* 109a), it is logical to conclude that all of these *mitzvos* of *Purim* are connected to each other.

Megillah by stating that at the moment of *krias ha-Megillah* there ought to be an allocation of charity.

Utilizing the approach in the *Rishonim* that says that the *seudah* acts as a celebration of the miracles of Purim, we come across an amazing idea. There is no special dispensation to borrow resources to purchase a *seudah*, because it is already built into the day. As we said earlier, the *seudah* and the *mitzvos* surrounding it are part of the *pirsumei nisah*. One is not required to accept charity to fulfill his or her obligation of *seudah* because it is assumed that the community will provide for one another and achieve a unity that endeavors to perpetuate the *nissim* of *Purim*. During *Purim*, more so than during any other holiday, we take the initiative to provide for others before they even have to think of asking for assistance. As a community, we accept the responsibility to promote *Hashem's* kindness and wondrous acts. Nobody has to solicit like they would other holidays because this is the holiday of national *pirsumei nisa*. The importance of *pirsumei nisa* critically obligates each Jew's contribution to this vital cause. We come together in our *shuls* for the primary *pirsumei nisa* of *krias ha-Megilla*. This theme of togetherness extends beyond the confines of the *shul* and permeates the other *mitzvos* of the day, ultimately forming a mass pronouncement of God's miracles.

Another theme within *Purim* is *kimu v'kiblu ma shkiblu kvar*, that *Bnei Yisrael* reaccepted the *Torah* during the reign of *Achashverosh*¹⁵. The vast implications of this statement are beyond the scope of this discussion. However, a parallel is drawn to the experience at *Har Sinai* and to our unique unity at that pivotal moment. Recalling the significance of that occasion, centuries later we collectively decided to reaffirm our commitment to the *Torah* and to the Almighty¹⁶. Precisely during *Purim*, there are regulations built into the order of the day that bring us together. Unlike other holidays, where the individual is expected to seek out assistance to fulfill the *mitzvos* of *pirsumei nisa*, we preclude that allowance of relying on charity by instituting that the community must provide the necessities that enable all the families of Israel to broadcast the miracles of *Purim*. The technical laws concerning the *mitzvos*, their timing, and their interconnectedness provide a fundamental model of focused nationhood. As the people come together as one, so too the *mitzvos* of *krias hamegillah*, *mishloach manos*, *matanos l'evyonim*, and *seudas Purim* come together¹⁷ to amplify the message of *Purim*.

May the aura of unity permeate our understanding and our observance of this special day, and may the luster of our collective beauty extend beyond *Purim* towards an eternal harmony.

¹⁵ *Shabbos* 88a.

¹⁶ Rav Hershel Schachter *shlita*, *Sefer B'Ikvei Tzon*, page 373. This opinion is cited concerning the *seudas Purim* serving as a celebration for *kabolos HaTorah*.

¹⁷ See *Minchas Yitzchak* 7:50.