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. On Shabbos, the creation of the world and the exodus from Egypt are marked with kiddush, festive meals, and Shabbos candles. 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.

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. 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. Given the fact that the Torah discourages taking tzedakah for mitzvos, what is so great about the mitzvos of

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2 Rambam, Hilchos Chanukkah 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.
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 nisah 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 Rambam9 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 Halevi12 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 7b).13 The gemara mentions a story of two impoverished rabbis who utilized this stipulation by exchanging meals and eating them for their Purim suedah to fulfill the mitzvah of mishloach manos, thereby demonstrating the association of these two mitzvos.14 Rabbeinu Chananel (Megillah 6b) links matanos l’evyonim to krias ha-

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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.
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 l’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.
by stating that at the moment of krias ha-Megilla 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 Achashverosh15. 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 shita, 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.