



## RECOGNIZING HASHEM'S HAND IN OUR LIVES

**W**e find ourselves in a calendar year in which our anticipation to celebrate Purim has been building up for quite some time. To ensure that Pesach is aligned with the spring season, an extra month is sometimes inserted into the calendar year. This extra month gives us an additional month of Adar and so the question arises: In which month should we celebrate Purim? The Gemara, *Megillah* 6b, quotes a dispute between R. Eliezer b. R. Yosi, who holds that we should celebrate Purim in the first Adar, and R. Shimon ben Gamliel, who holds that it should be celebrated in the second Adar. The Gemara explains the two positions as follows:

בשלמא רבי אליעזר ברבי יוסי מסתבר טעמא דאין מעבירין על המצות אלא רשב"ג מ"ט אמר רבי טבי טעמא דרבי שמעון בן גמליאל מסמך גאולה לגאולה עדיף.

*We understand R. Eliezer b. R. Yosi's opinion because it is based on the concept that one should not pass over an opportunity to perform a mitzvah. What is R. Shimon ben Gamliel's reasoning? R. Tavi said R. Shimon ben Gamliel's reason is that it is better to connect one redemption (Purim) to another redemption (Pesach).*

We follow the opinion of R. Shimon ben Gamliel and observe Purim in the second Adar. Why should the concept of *mismach geulah l'geulah* (connecting one redemption to another

redemption), which seems to be a homiletical idea, take precedence over the universal halachic principle of *ain ma'avirin al hamitzvos* (one should not pass over an opportunity to perform a mitzvah)? Why don't we follow this principle and observe Purim at our very first opportunity, in the first month of Adar? What is it about the desire to create this thematic parallel between Purim and Pesach that supersedes *ain ma'avirin al hamitzvos*, a principle that applies in so many aspects of halachic observance?

*Megillas Esther* tells the story of Haman's genocidal plan to wipe out the Jewish people and its ultimate salvation through the heroic acts of

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Mordechai and Esther. We can easily read this story as one of two proactive, smart Jewish leaders who successfully advocate for the Jewish people and their cause. The salvation came about because of their creativity and political advocacy. We can look at it this way because the name of Hashem does not appear once throughout the Megillah. The message of Megillas Esther is that we can choose to live our lives thinking that the events that take place in our lives are products of the decisions that we make, the opportunities we encounter and the circumstances that evolve. We can choose not to recognize the hand of Hashem in our daily lives. Yet we know that if we read the Megillah without recognizing Hashem's hand every step along the way, we would be missing the main point of the Megillah. Do we “read” our own

lives the same way? Are we able to recognize the hand of Hashem in those small “coincidences” that shape our lives?

The message of *mismach geulah l'geulah* is that the events where Hashem works behind the scenes are just as grandiose as the miracles that took place when Hashem took us out of Egypt. The Purim story is just as much a story of Hashem's great miracles as the Pesach story where Hashem's hand is so overt and clear. We have to recognize that we live in Purim-like times. It is rare for us to see Hashem's hand in an overt way. There have been instances — such as the birth of the State of Israel and the Six-Day War — where His hand is more easily recognizable, but it is harder to see His overt hand in our daily lives. The story of Purim teaches us that Hashem is actively involved in shaping Jewish history and our lives.

At the end of the Megillah (9:31), we read:

לְקַיֵּם אֶת יְמֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר  
קִיַּם עֲלֵיהֶם מְרַדְּכֵי הַיְּהוּדִי וְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה  
וְכְאֲשֶׁר קִיְּמוּ עַל נַפְשָׁם וְעַל זְרַעַם דְּבָרֵי הַצְּמוּת  
וְזִקְנָתָם.

*These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordechai the Jew — and now Queen Esther — has obligated them to do, and just as they have assumed for themselves and their descendants the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations.*

What does the Megillah mean by “the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations”? What does fasting, which took place before the

Purim miracle, have to do with the celebration of Purim? R. Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, *Kisvei HaRav Weinberg* (Vol. II pg. 195), suggests that recognizing Hashem's role in the Purim story is an integral part of the Purim story, and that the fasts and prayers, which took place at the turning point in the story, were the impetus for Hashem's intervention. To properly celebrate Purim, we must remember the role of these actions.

This issue of *Torah To-Go* is a partnership between several yeshiva high schools and Yeshiva University. The leaders and educators of our adolescents face an enormous challenge in trying to help our youth see the hand of Hashem in a world where His presence is not always so obvious. They are competing with a society where everything is about personal needs, personal autonomy and technology and where little attention is paid to Hashem's role in our destiny or in our daily lives. These heroic leaders and educators dedicate themselves to helping our teens connect to Hashem and realize that He is always there. This is a daunting challenge and we should recognize their efforts.

We too, as community members, parents, grandparents and friends, can play an important role in this endeavor. We can make spirituality and connectedness a common part of our world. We can create environments, homes and spaces where finding Hashem is something that resonates as a profound part of our lives.



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