



## Parshat Tzav: Daniel Perez – the living bridge between Purim and Pesach

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander  
*President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone*  
5784 / 2024

We find ourselves between the two holidays, Purim and Pesach, which differ greatly in their storylines. The opening story of the Jewish people puts God front and center. Nature defying miracles, from the river turning to blood to the splitting of the sea, reflect the wondrous character of that moment in history. God is front and center, the prime mover of the story. It is no surprise that the name of Moshe does not appear in the Haggadah (except for once in a later addition to the Haggadah text). In our annual recounting of the story of the Exodus, it is God who took the people of Israel out of Egypt and any intermediaries are not recognized.

Yet the opposite is true of the Purim story, among the final events recorded in Tanach, described by the Gemara ([Yoma 29a](#)) as '*sof kol hanisim*,' 'the last of all the miracles.' In Megillat Esther, it is God who is absent; not a single explicit mention of the Divine can be found in the entire text of the megilla, with the focus and even the megilla's name fully featuring human actors. At face value, the story is merely one of political machinations, in which the human actors successfully orchestrate a plan to save the Jewish people.

These two models of redemption, that of Pesach and that of Purim, are described in kabbalistic writing as *it'aruta de-l'eila*, 'awakening from above' and *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, 'awakening from below.' On Pesach, it is God in the heavens who dramatically acts on our behalf, to bring redemption. But there are moments in our history, like Purim, which are marked by the awakening from below -what we might call bottom up, grassroots redemption. These are moments when it is we the Jewish people who, inspired by the Divine, take matters into our own hands to bring redemption for our people.

These two holiday episodes in our history share common elements of observance which join the experiences together. Both are celebrated through the shared quality of giving. For Purim, which we just celebrated, it was Matanot L'evyonim, giving gifts to the needy, not to mention Mishloach Manot, spreading goodwill within the community through the exchange of food baskets.



Likewise, even before Pesach arrives, we have the mandate of *Kimcha d'Pischa*, the supplemental collection of charitable funds to assist those facing financial difficulties preparing for Pesach. What's more, the Seder opens with an invitation addressed to all those who are hungry, and the Korban Pesach itself, the Paschal sacrifice, was meant to be eaten only in a *chabura*, a gathering of people who partake together in the sacrifice and its accompanying festivities.

It would seem that both forms of redemption, *it'aruta de-l'eila* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, take as a prerequisite our own willingness to look out for those around us. Only solidarity can direct us towards achieving our own redemption, and only unity can win over God's favor and divine intervention. Whenever we celebrate our redemption, our first and primary step must be to join together in community, creating a culture of unity and cooperation within Klal Yisrael.

A guiding *halakhic* principle emphasizes “*zirizim makdimim*,” we hurry to perform *mitzvot* ([Pesachim 4a](#)). This should dictate that during a leap year in which there are two months of Adar, Purim should be celebrated in the first one. Yet we purposely delay the celebration of Purim until Adar II, juxtaposing the celebration of Purim to Pesach. This is done to highlight that the holidays of Purim and Pesach have a common spiritual core: the redemption of our people, celebrated through a *halakhic* mandate of concern for the other.

At the shiva for Daniel Perez z”l, the son of Rabbi Doron and Shelley Perez whose murder on October 7th, while defending the communities under attack, was recently confirmed and who was laid to rest last week, I remarked that the prayers on behalf of Daniel's sacrifice reflect the solidarity and sense of responsibility for Klal Yisrael which is the prerequisite for our redemption. We can feel in these times the *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, redemption driven by the stirrings of our own hearts and our resolve as a people to act, which has led to unbelievable demonstrations of heroism by men and women, on the frontlines in Gaza and in the North. It has also led to tremendous generosity of purpose and spirit in Jewish communities throughout Israel and the diaspora.

Daniel z”l embodied these ideals of *gevurah* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta* in his commitment to serve his country and protect the people of Israel by proudly donning the priestly vestments of the IDF as he saved hundreds.



In our commitment to help bring all the hostages home and the remains of loved ones, a goal which has not yet been actualized, we have all been engaged in acts of prayer and *chesed* in their names, and we must continue to do so. As we recited Shema Yisroel together with Jews across the world this past Thursday, it remains our fervent hope that as we make our way to Pesach, the Jewish people's spirit of solidarity and the bravery of soldiers like Daniel z"l should inspire the will of God, *it'aruta de-I'eila*, to swiftly bestow upon us the return of those who have been kidnapped and for the final blow of destruction to be delivered upon our enemies.

May Daniel ben haRav Doron and Shelley, and all those who have given their lives in acts of ultimate courage and sacrifice, be a blessing for all of us and serve as the living bridge that helps to bring the final redemption.