



MIDEI CHODESH B'CHODSHO

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What's the Connection?

I am going to raise an issue that has no practical application this year. I believe, however, that a message emerging from this issue speaks to us “loud and clear.”

First some background: A leap year on the Jewish Calendar features an extra month of *Adar*, *Adar Sheni*. This phenomenon gives rise to a fundamental question with numerous practical applications.

How do we deal with non-leap year events during a leap year?

When does an adolescent, for example, born during *Adar* of a non-leap year, mark a Bar/Bat Mitzva that falls during a leap year? Is the milestone reached on the first or second month of *Adar*, on *Adar Rishon* or *Adar Sheni*?

L'havdil, at the opposite end of the spectrum, if an individual passes away during *Adar* of a non-leap year, when is that individual's Yartzheit observed during a leap year? Is the individual memorialized on *Adar Rishon* or *Adar Sheni*-or, perhaps, on both months?

These and other practical questions regularly arise with the onset of a leap year. They should certainly be addressed through consultation with your personal rabbi.

One specific leap year question, however, is already addressed in the Talmud.

During a non-leap year, the dating of Purim is clear. Based on testimony from Megillat Esther, Purim is celebrated on the 14th or 15th of *Adar*, depending on location.

When, however, is Purim celebrated in a leap year? Given that there are two months of Adar during a leap year, is Purim celebrated in the first or second of those months, Adar Rishon or Adar Sheni?

It probably will come as no surprise that two opinions on the subject emerge in the Talmud, each with its own rationale. (Obviously, only two options are possible. If more options were available, I am quite certain that more opinions would emerge, as well).

The Talmud relates that two scholars, Rabbi Eliezer ben Yossi and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, agree on the initial interpretation of a phrase found in Megillat Esther. The Megilla states that Purim must be observed, across time, “in each and every year.” Both Rabbi Eliezer and Rabban Shimon maintain that this phrase indicates, not only that Purim must be celebrated each year, but that Purim must be

**May the learning
in this week's Torah Tidbits
be in the loving memory of**

Miriam Reiss a"h
מרים מלכה בת ר' יהושע ע"ה
**our beloved mother, grandmother
and great- grandmother
on her 13th yahrzeit - כ"ז אדר**

**She volunteered for the
Torah Tidbits for many years**

**Sohn, Lewis, Kop
and Horowitz families**

celebrated in the same way each year.

Here, however, is where the opinions of the two Sages diverge.

Rabbi Eliezer observes that on each non-leap year the month of Adar, when Purim falls, directly *follows* the month of Shevat. Therefore, *Rabbi Eliezer maintains, during a leap year Purim must be observed in Adar Rishon, the First Adar, the Adar that immediately follows Shevat.*

Rabban Gamliel, on the other hand, notes that the month of Adar on each non-leap year immediately *precedes* the month of Nissan. Therefore, *Rabban Shimon maintains, in a leap year Purim must be celebrated in Adar Sheni, the second Adar, the Adar immediately preceding Nissan.*

But what are these two scholars really arguing about? Their positions seem arbitrary. Why does Rabbi Eliezer insist on a reckoning based on the month that precedes Adar each year, while Rabban Gamliel argues for a reckoning based on the month that follows?

The Talmud provides their respective rationales.

Rabbi Eliezer insists on celebrating Purim in Adar Rishon because of the Halachic principle: *Ein ma'avirin al ha'mitzvot*. One must not delay the performance of mitzvot.

This principle mandates that each mitzva should be performed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Therefore, Rabbi Eliezer argues, Purim must be celebrated as soon as it becomes possible, during the first month of Adar.

Rabban Gamliel, on the other hand, argues: *M'samech geula l'geula adiph*. The juxtaposing of one redemption [Purim] to another redemption [Pesach] takes precedence.

Calendric proximity must be maintained, Rabban Gamliel contends, between the

festivals of Purim and Pesach. This can only be accomplished if Purim is observed during Adar Sheni, the second month of Adar, the Adar closest to Pesach.

If we take a step back, it seems obvious that Rabbi Eliezer should win this argument. *Ein ma'avirin al ha'mitzvot*, one should not delay the performance of a mitzva, is a fundamental principle that courses throughout halachic literature.

In contrast, Rabban Gamliel's rationale is hard to understand. Why must proximity be maintained between Purim and Pesach? These two festivals could hardly be more different.

Purim is a rabbinically created festival, Pesach is Torah-mandated. Purim is paradigmatic in character. Celebrating one discreet event, at one specific moment in History, this festival creates a paradigm for many other discrete events that follow.¹ Pesach, in contrast, marks the flow of Jewish history writ large. This is a festival that celebrates the entire story of our people, from the patriarchal age to the coming of Mashiach.

And yet, as you know, the halacha is decided in favor of Rabban Gamliel's position.

1. Proof of this understanding of Purim can be seen in the many "Purims" born across the face of our history. Communities and individuals who, upon experiencing salvation from a frightening threat, often established a festival of thanks that they called their "Purim."

May the Torah learning
be in loving memory of
Harry Silverberg ז"י
ה'רשל בן אברהם ז"ל
Father, Grandfather,
Great-Grandfather
on his 46th yarzheit
Malka & Avraham Shrybman

Purim on a leap year is celebrated in Adar Sheni, the second month of Adar.

And we find ourselves asking: Why do the rabbis set aside a known halachic principle in favor of connecting two festivals that hardly seem to be connected?

Upon consideration, an answer becomes clear. *It is specifically the differences between Purim and Pesach that mandate their connection.*

Purim became a festival only because its protagonists saw their personal experiences against the backdrop of the “whole”- only because they interpreted their story as part of the ongoing story of our people.

Similarly, we are challenged in each era to do the same. As history changes before our eyes, we should never forget that we carry with us the dreams and unrequited hopes of countless generations whose tenacity and courage enabled us to stand where we stand today. And we carry with us, as well, the hopes and dreams of those yet to come, who are relying on us to better the world that we will bequeath to them.

The tumultuous events that mark our days do not exist in isolation. They are part of a greater whole, a whole specifically underscored at this time of the year, during the days between Purim and Pesach.

Purim must always be celebrated in the shadow of Pesach. We should always see the events of our time as components in a much larger narrative; a narrative that stretches back to our people’s beginnings and that will continue to be written until the end of days. ■

Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU Press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."

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