

Message from the Parsha

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Daniel Perez HY"D - the Living Bridge between Purim and Pesach

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 Haggada (except for once in a later addition to the Haggada text, in a quote from the Torah). 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 Megilat Esther, it is God who is absent; not a single explicit mention of the Divine can be found in the

entire text of the megila, with the focus and even the megila'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 DIL'EILA*, 'awakening from above' and *IT'ARUTA DIL'TATA*, '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 La'evyonim*, giving gifts to the needy, not to mention *Mishlo'ach 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 was meant to be eaten only in a chavura, a gathering of people who partake together in the sacrifice and its accompanying festivities.

It would seem that both forms of redemption, IT'ARUTA DIL'EILA and IT'ARUTA DIL'TATA, 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.