Hallel and Preparing for Modern-Day Redemption

Although Purim and Pesach don't seem to have much in common, we can find many sources throughout Chazal that weave together an obvious correlation between the two.

In Masechet Megillah (6b), Rav Yocheanan discusses the opinions regarding when to celebrate Purim in a leap year. The question is asked, in which Adar do we celebrate Purim? Rav Eliezer and Rav Yossi are of the opinion that we celebrate in the first Adar, adjacent to Shvat. However, lehalacha we follow Rashbag's opinion that the second month of Adar — the month adjacent to Nissan — is the “chosen one.”

The Gemara later explains the logic of Rashbag, in that juxtaposing the celebration of one redemption, Purim, to the celebration of another redemption, Pesach, is preferable.

It's interesting to note that Pesach is our first holiday that is d’oraita and Purim is our first holiday that is deRabanan. As we know, Rabbinic mitzvot were put into place as a means to enhance the mitzvot d’oraita. Our Rabbis enhanced our calendar with Purim, perhaps, to bring us closer to the full redemption.

On Rav's famous comment (Ta'anit 29), משלנשל ריכר מרגים שממלת. Rashi similarly makes a connection between the holidays. Just as when Av begins one decreases rejoicing, so too when Adar begins, one increases rejoicing. Rashi explains why: משלנשל ראר ופיו מפיו ופיו: קלאינגר. “Whoever enters Adar – These were days of miracles for the Jews: Purim and Pesach.”

This Rashi seems odd, because Pesach is in Nissan!

There are many ways in which we can understand the correlation between the two holidays. Hallel denotes rejoicing. On Purim, we read the Megillah. According to one opinion in the Gemara, the Megillah is the Hallel for Purim. On Pesach, we have the Haggadah, which includes Hallel.

Another similarity exists in a key omission. Many struggle with the question of why G-d isn't mentioned in the Megillah. Some explain that actually G-d’s name is mentioned, but in a hidden way. The word רַעַיָּהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ - definitive the – is referring to G-d, as it says in the Megillah: השם המלך, “That night, sleep deserted the King.”

The King, Chazal explain, is G-d, looking after Am Yisrael.

When it comes to Pesach, many struggle with a similar question: why isn't Moshe mentioned in the Haggadah?

Perhaps we can view each holiday as having a unique challenge for us to overcome, and by doing so, we come closer to the full redemption. On Purim, one may assume from the story that G-d isn't part of the equation. It can appear as a completely secular holiday, when our salvation happened naturally or by chance. G-d is hidden in the recounting of the story, and our work on Purim is to connect the outcome to G-d. Pesach, on the other hand, is a holiday of supernatural powers. Miracles occurred that we may think have nothing to do with human work. In the same vein, Moshe is perhaps removed from the Haggadah, for us to work on connecting the miracles to our human actions.

We find an interesting argument in the Shulchan Aruch regarding saying Hallel in shul on the first night of Pesach, the opening of the holiday. There is a disagreement between Rav Yosef Karo in Eretz Yisrael, who says we say Hallel with a bracha, versus the Rema, who points out that in Chutz LaAretz we don't say Hallel in shul as it’s said at the Seder. Minhand Eretz Yisrael even for Ashkenazi Jews is to follow Rav Yosef Karo and we recite Hallel on Pesach night in shul.

Hallel in shul, a holy place, is further connecting the miracles to G-d, in turn setting up a deeper challenge in connecting it to human actions. We find this exact challenge in our modern redemption: Medinat Yisrael. A large group in Am Yisrael hold that it’s completely disconnected from G-d, because they only believe in human power or, and at the other extreme, another group believe in G-d’s power alone, and the State is too man-made.

Coming out from Adar and Nissan with the understanding that both human action – hishtadlut – and G-d’s Providence go hand in hand in bringing the ultimate redemption, allows us to enter Iyar, the month of Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, in the right frame of mind.