

Dear Rabbi Fried,

This year is a Jewish leap year, adding an additional month of “Adar”. I was curious why we don’t celebrate Purim in the first Adar, and push it off to the second, added month. Don’t we try to do mitzvot as soon as they come our way?

Keith F.

Dear Keith,

There are two opinions in the Talmud about your question. (It couldn’t be any other way!) The first opinion, Rabbi Eliezer bar R’ Yossi, holds like you! He maintains that on a leap year, we must read the Megillah and observe Purim on the first month of Adar. His reasoning is, like you said, that we don’t pass by the opportunity to do a mitzvah, so we must seize the opportunity as soon as it comes our way.

The second opinion, Raban Shimon ben Gamliel, holds that we should observe it in the second month of Adar. His reasoning is that we need to ensure that Purim falls out close in proximity to Pesach. The edge of close proximity is 30 days, and the day of Purim is within 30 days of Pesach. The Mishna decides in favor of the second opinion, (Tractate Megillah 6b). (Oh well, you can’t win ‘em all!).

The question is, why is it so important for Purim to fall out near Pesach? They are two totally separate holidays; Pesach is a Torah-mandated holiday, and Purim is a rabbinically enacted holiday which transpired during our exile to Persia. What is so crucial about their proximity that overrides the general principle to not pass by the opportunity to perform a mitzvah?

I feel the answer is as follows: Passover is a time when we celebrate *open* miracles. 10 plagues, G-d talking to people, splitting the sea. These miracles are a big part of the foundation of our belief in G-d.

The classical commentary Ramban (Nachmanides) writes that the main purpose of the open miracles is not just to remember they happened. The real message for our lives is a paradigm shift in the way we view the world and all that transpires within it. If G-d performs open miracles, then He can also perform hidden miracles. All that goes on in our lives, day in-day out, is the hidden Hand of G-d. Our relationship to Him is 24/7, because every moment He is involved in our lives, showering His love, life and blessings upon us through the very gift of life itself. The only difference between open and hidden miracles is *our* perception; some things we are used to and some we’re not. Our hearts beating and lungs breathing, babies born and rainfall, are every bit as great a miracle as splitting the sea, if not greater!

Purim is a holiday we celebrate *hidden* miracles. The name of G-d is absent in the Megillah, because He did *not* reveal Himself openly, rather the Jews saw the Hand of G-d after looking back at all which had transpired. Purim is the purpose for Pesach. With the lessons of the Haggadah and Pesach, the Jews were able to recognize and fathom the miracles of Purim.

For this reason it is so important that these two holidays fall within close proximity to each other, as they form two sides of the same coin.

Although we actually celebrate the Purim holiday on the second Adar, the first Adar is also a time for introspection and joy, during which we feel a little of the Purim spirit and celebrate our constant connection and relationship, albeit hidden, to the Almighty.