

The Month of Adar: Ponderings Pertaining to Purim *Katan* Practices and Celebrations

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Introduction

We are arriving at the zenith of *Adar Alef* with Purim *Katan* and *Shushan Purim Katan* this Friday and Shabbat. Usually, these days pass us by without having any significance in most of our lives other than seeing them written in the calendar. I was wondering since Purim *Katan* does have a name, it's not just like any other day, perhaps it is supposed to be celebrated in some way? We are all trying somehow to live with the times, becoming conscious of the special energies available to tap into, to make the best of each and every day. So is there any difference between the energy of *Purim Katan* and the rest of the month of *Adar Alef*? Are we supposed to take a break from peeling potatoes and scrubbing the floors this Friday in order to celebrate something? We have been comparing *Adar Alef* and *Adar Beit*, noticing that everything in *Adar Alef* is small and quiet compared to the fanfare of *Adar Beit*. Just as the moon is smaller than the dominating sun, the month of *Adar Alef* is hidden like a fetus in the womb. It is actually this month which is called the "month of pregnancy," as if the pregnant year is carrying an additional month in its belly.

Perhaps we may even say that although Purim is born in *Adar Beit* it is conceived in *Adar Alef*. Therefore, during Purim *Katan* we have the ability to connect with the root and origin of what Purim is all about. Our Sages teach: *There is no difference between the fourteenth the first Adar and the fourteenth of the second Adar except in the matter of reading the Megillah and gifts to the poor.*¹ From here we learn that everything that applies to Purim also applies to Purim *Katan*, except that we don't have an obligation to hear the *Megillah* or to give special charity to the poor. Interestingly, the Talmud doesn't mention anything about being exempt from giving *Mishloach Manot* – Purim gifts on Purim *Katan*. From this we may infer that indeed it is very appropriate to give *Mishloach Manot* also on Purim *Katan*. So when you are busy with your Shabbat cooking this Friday, you may want to make a little extra and set aside into pretty baskets. You can have these Purim *Katan* gifts delivered to anyone whom you want to reach out to, someone you wish to forgive, someone lonely or friendless, or perhaps you want to surprise your best friend with a "Small Purim" gift.

Just as the moon is connected with our subconscious and inner emotions, Purim *Katan* is about tuning into the inner internal/eternal essence of Purim. When I think about what is the deepest root of the main theme of Purim, *Achdut* – unity among Jews and *Simcha* – joy come to mind. Doesn't sharing Purim gift, especially when delivered by a third party bring about love and unity among us? Unity and joy are interrelated. The joy of *Adar* is what makes the month of *Adar* the "pregnant" month of the year. It is so full of joy that it is as if *Adar* were pregnant with happiness. On Purim *Katan* there are no halachic requirements for celebration. We have the opportunity to

¹ *Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 6b.*

exult in our natural love for Hashem without being limited to specific required mitzvot. There are no restraints to our joy. Whatever we do to increase our joy on Purim *Katan*, we do because we want to, not because we have to. Rather than keeping the physical mitzvot on Purim proper, Purim *Katan* gives us an occasion of joy and preparation for the transformation possible during every day of the two months of *Adar*. It is the heart-felt joy that comes from showing our love for Hashem, without a requirement, that can carry us, through multiple years, until the next Purim *Katan*.²

Purim *Katan* – A Microcosm of the Larger Purim

Purim *Katan* belongs to the group of days where we refrain from *tachanun*,³ fasting and eulogies, but no festivities are required.⁴ However, it's not every year that we merit to celebrate Purim *Katan*, only seven times every 19 years! Thus we better welcome this holiday as a precious guest because it only visits us at rare occasions. Purim *Katan* is the only time we have a minor festival preceding the actual festival. We have thirty extra days to put ourselves into Purim spirit. Yet Purim *Katan* is more than an official reminder that it is time to begin preparing ourselves for the upcoming holiday. In all matters, save for the obligation to hear the *Megillah* and giving gifts to the poor, both *Purims* are equalized. Therefore, also on Purim *Katan* it is appropriate to remember the miracle of being saved from the enemy. This year as we go about our Shabbat preparations, let us try to recall miracles in your life, recognize Hashem's hidden providence and express thankfulness for being saved from something horrible like an accident, an illness or a personal breakdown. It is also good to remember that in spite of the recent horrible holocaust threatening to wipe out the entire Jewish people, we are still here today celebrating!

Another important aspect of Purim which we can take on equally on Purim *Katan* is the commitment to the binding nature of the Oral Torah and faith in the Rabbinic authority (*Emunat Chachamim*). There is a famous Talmudic statement teaching that the Jewish people didn't accept the Torah willingly at Sinai, but rather G-d suspended the mountain above their head saying: "If you accept the Torah, good, otherwise this will be your burial place."⁵ However, if the Jewish people were coerced into accepting the Torah, how can they be responsible to keep it? Nonetheless, they reaffirmed their acceptance in the days of Achashverosh, as it states: "*The Jews established and accepted.*"⁶ They established what they had already accepted.⁷ On Purim, the Jewish people took upon themselves not just to observe Purim as a holiday, but to re-accept the Torah, specifically the Oral Torah. This is learned out from the order of the words, since we would expect the *Megillah* to read "they accepted" before "established." Thus, also on Purim *Katan* we can reaffirm the Torah's relevance to all times, to all places, under all conditions.

² Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian, Purim Katan - פורים קטן The remainder of this article is based on this insightful article on <http://www.betemunah.org/katan.html>.

³ *Tachanun* is a prayer of supplication when falling on the incongruous with the festive nature of *Purim Katan*. Women are exempt from *Tachanun*.

⁴ *Shulchan Aruch*, 697:1.

⁵ *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 88a.

⁶ *Megillat Esther* 9:27.

⁷ *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 88a.

Purim and Pesach

There is a discussion in the Talmud of when to celebrate Purim during a leap year. The conclusion is that we keep Purim in the *Adar Beit* in order to link the redemption of Purim to the redemption of Pesach.⁸ Thus we see that the secret of *Adar* and Purim is “the end is wedged in the beginning.”⁹

We draw an association between these two festivals because of their shared theme of redemption; both Purim and Pesach recount a fateful deliverance of Israel. The connection between Purim and Pesach is hinted at thousands of years before the Purim story took place. When Lot hosts the two angels to a meal at the eve of the destruction of Sodom, he serves them matzah.¹⁰ We have a deep tradition that that fateful evening of Lot’s deliverance was Pesach.¹¹ Yet, the Torah calls this meal that Lot provides for the angels a “*mishteh*” (drinking party). This term alludes to the celebration of Purim mentioned in the *Megillah* with the identical term: “*mishteh*.”¹² Pesach is the festival of revealed redemption accompanied by miracles in the sprouting light of spring, whereas Purim is the festival of redemption in darkness, without revealed miracles, in the last month of the year, in the depth of winter. Together they enact complete redemption. As an ancestor to Ruth the Moabites, Lot bore within him a spark of the Mashiach who will enact the complete redemption. Therefore, he has the ability to integrate these two redemptions. The hidden seed within Lot, from which Mashiach will sprout, enables him to conduct a unified Pesach Seder and Purim feast as one!

Celebrating with *Simcha* – Joy!

While every holiday is celebrated with joy, the particular mitzvot attached constrain our joy into specific requirements. Since there are no required mitzvot on Purim *Katan*, our joy can then be unbridled without restraint. Even the mitzvah to rejoice by add a festive meal to celebrate Purim *Katan* is not explicitly written in the Code of the Jewish Law,¹³ perhaps because it is on such an elevated level that it can only be alluded to. The *Shulchan Aruch* writes: There is an opinion that to increase in festivity and joy on the 14th of the first Adar, but this is not the custom.¹⁴ Nevertheless, a person should increase somewhat in festivity... for “One who is of good heart is always celebrating.”¹⁵ Our *Simcha* is supposed to grow every day and carry us all the way to Pesach, which in turn carries us through the year and back to Purim again!

⁸ *Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 6b.*

⁹ *Sefer Yetzira 1:7.*

¹⁰ *Bereishit 19:3.*

¹¹ Rashi, *Bereishit 19:3.*

¹² *Megillat Esther 9:22.*

¹³ It is only mentioned in the *Abudraham* known for his commentary on the Synagogue liturgy.

¹⁴ *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 697:1*(The very last entry in Orach Chaim).

¹⁵ *Mishlei 15:15*;The Rema, Rav Moshe Isserles in his inline commentary and conclusion to the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 697:1.*

Purim *Katan* and Mashiach

“All the holidays will cease except Purim, as it states: “And its memory will not cease from their descendants.”¹⁶ Even after all the other holidays are abolished Purim will remain.¹⁷ There is a connection between Purim *Katan* and the Mashiach.¹⁸ They are both called small. Hashem appeases the moon after having reduced her light by reminding her that the righteous shall be named after her, “Ya’acov the Small, Shemuel the Small, David the Small. Yet On seeing that she was not appeased, the Blessed Holy one said, ‘Bring atonement for Me, for I caused the moon to grow small.’”¹⁹ In the future to Come the gap between the sun and the moon will be healed. At that time the moon will gain the renewed ability to share the crown with its co-ruler: the sun. Improvement can only happen via the motion of descent for the sake of progressing to an even higher place in the end. Although we use the term ‘small’ (*katan*) with regard to Purim *Katan*, therein lies its greatness, “this small one will be great,” with the true and complete Redemption when “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days, on the day that Hashem binds up the breach of His people, and heals the stroke of their wound.”²⁰

¹⁶ *Megillat Esther* 9:28; *Midrash, Yalkut Shimoni, Mishlei* 9.

¹⁷ *Midrash Mishlei* 9:2.

¹⁸ *I Shemuel* 17:14.

¹⁹ *Babylonian Talmud, Chulin* 60b.

²⁰ *Yeshaya’hu* 30:26.



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