

IT'S ALL IN THE DELIVERY

by Torah.org

Today is the beginning of the Jewish month of Adar. In Jewish tradition this is a period of joy and celebration — it heralds the holidays of Purim in Adar, followed by Passover during the following month of Nissan. These holidays celebrate the deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation by the evil adviser Haman and King Achashveirosh on Purim, and from bondage in Egypt on Passover.

This joyous period contrasts to the more somber month of Av, which occurs in the summer — the month the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people were exiled. The Sages of the Talmud (Taanis 29a) say "Just as we decrease joy when Av begins, so too we increase joy when Adar begins."

A careful reading of this passage shows an intimate correlation between the two. The expressions used are "Just as" in Av we decrease joy, "so too" in Adar we increase joy. There appears to be a connection between the mourning of Av and the celebration of Adar, as if we look to Av's decrease in happiness to understand Adar's increase.

To understand the mechanics, consider the expression of laughter upon hearing a good joke. What evokes a reaction of laughter? Every joke starts with a certain premise. It can be a mundane context, or even a depressing one. The joke then takes a shocking reversal toward a ridiculous or impossible resolution. This shock evokes laughter. The greater the surprise, the more intense the laughter. So the level of joy, expressed as laughter, directly relates to the incongruity between the premise and its reversal.

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro zt"l (*Sefer Shuvi V'Nechzeh, Purim*) goes a step further with this thought: There is too much sadness and tragedy in the world, and everyone's hope is to one day be freed from this suffering, on both a personal and a global level. Who doesn't dream about world peace? The laughter that results from a humorous reversal is a reminder of the joy we wish for, when all suffering is reversed at the time of the ultimate redemption. This is the correlation between Av and Adar. In the month of Av we experience increased mourning — but the more that mourning is increased, the greater joy there will be in the deliverance. The month of Adar begins this period commemorating our deliverance, and of pining for the final redemption. Thus the degree of mourning in Av increases the degree of joy in Adar.

May this Adar and Nissan be a time of redemption for all of us, from both our personal and communal hardships, and may we soon welcome the coming of the Messiah.

