

‘Mishenichnas Adar, marbim b’simcha’ - ‘when Adar enters [the calendar], we increase in joy.’ This catchphrase from the Talmud (Bavli, Ta’anit 29) is popular in traditional communities to signal our excitement for the holiday of Purim. It seems strange that a relatively minor holiday like Purim would carry such significance and I must say, I have not always been convinced. There are far loftier Jewish holidays to enjoy—Pesach comes to mind; a festival so rich in both meaning and practice, it’s positively bursting at the seams. But Purim? I’ve been reflecting what could be particularly joyous about yet another holiday that commemorates an averted genocide. Schnapps at the Megillah reading or fancy dress notwithstanding, there’s a bleakness to Purim that belies its penchant for merriment.

This year, I decided to reflect on that curious phrase ‘mishenichnas Adar, marbim b’simcha’ - ‘when Adar enters, we increase joy.’ This year is an intercalated year, meaning there are two months of Adar so that

This redemption doesn’t come easy: it is born through conflict, bloodshed and trauma.

After two years of COVID, and two weeks post-Colleyville, many of us may feel raw. Like Queen Esther, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker realized that salvation would come from no quarter except his own and through acts of perceptive bravery, set himself and his congregants free. Like the Purim story, this story too has a happy ending, and also, like the Book of Esther, it comes with inevitable scars. We sit with the defiant joy of having survived yet another day. We show up to synagogue (on Zoom), resolve to hold our loved ones tighter; wear our masks and go about our day in this world that is ‘hafuch’, ‘topsy turvy’. We are weary, our patience wears thin, we feel a little more fractious. Yet, we do what we always do, which is put one foot in front of another and remember the treasure of our Jewishness; our humor, our zest for life, our ability to argue, our capacity for love, our resilience and