If Agatha Christie started off each of her mystery stories by revealing who perpetrated the crime, she would probably still be typing letters in the typing pool.

‘Life is like a cosmic ‘Whodunnit.’ Man is invited to enter the theater of life. He’s given a ring-side seat, and his role — his ‘audience participation’ — is to figure out ‘Whodunnit?’ Who created this beautiful world? Who ordered it with such exquisite precision? Who put the stars in the sky? Who makes the sun rise every morning? Who keeps us standing on this planet, with air to breathe and water to drink and food to eat? Why don’t we whirl off into space? Life is a Whodunnit."

The famous English physicist, Sir Isaac Newton, had a colleague who was a staunch atheist. Newton, who believed in G-d, would frequently cross swords with his colleague on this subject.

One day, the atheist came to visit Newton in his library, and his eyes fell upon a most beautiful sight. Sitting on Newton’s desk, reflecting the rays of the afternoon sun, was an exquisite astrolabe, a brass engine which depicted the solar system in three dimensions.

“How beautiful!” remarked the atheist.

“You haven’t seen anything yet,” said Newton. “Do you see the small lever on the base? Move it towards you.”

As the atheist moved the lever, the entire engine slowly came to life. At its center, the orb of the sun started to revolve. Further out, turning on brass cogs, the earth and the planets began their revolutions around the sun; each planet accompanied by its own moons, all moving in breathless precision.

“This is amazing!” remarked the atheist. “Who made it?”

“No-one” replied Newton, deadpan.

“What do you mean ‘No-one’?”

“No-one. It just sort of... fell together, you know.”

“No I don’t know! I insist you tell me who is the maker of this priceless object. I refuse to believe that this object merely ‘fell together’.”

“This...” said Newton, pointing to the astrolabe. “This you insist has to have a maker. But this...” Newton said, spreading his arms wide, indicating the Creation “How infinitely more beautiful and complex! This, you insist, has no Maker!”

You don’t have to be able to invent the First Law of Motion to read the world like a book.

Just like the book testifies to the existence of its writer, so the world testifies to the existence of the Divine Author.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

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A Divine ‘Whodunnit’

Whodunnit of Life, the Divine Author gave us the solution to the puzzle some 3,000 years ago. Every Passover we faithfully pass the solution to that puzzle over.

The festival of Passover is to passover to our children and grandchildren the real-life experience of Hashem taking the Jewish People out of Egypt in a way which defied the ‘laws’ of nature.

The Jewish year begins in Nissan with Passover. It’s also the beginning of our relationship with G-d. The open miracles of Egypt were the beginning. They are the foundation. Passover is open revelation. But it’s only the beginning, only the foundation.

The Jewish Year is a continuum. It’s a rite of passage. A progress. That which happens at the beginning of the year has to happen at the beginning because it represents foundation, commencement. That’s why it’s at the beginning.

Similarly, events which happen at the end of the year must be associated with the fulfillment of purpose and completion; with achieving a target, because they happen at the end.

What’s the end of the year? Purim and Adar. Purim is the ‘end’ of the year — it’s purpose.

Let’s take a closer look at Purim. On Purim we read the Megillat Esther. In the entire Megillah, Hashem’s name is not written even once. Isn’t that strange? A book about the miraculous delivery of the Jewish People from genocide, and the Name of the ‘Hero’ doesn’t appear even once?

The title of the book itself, Megillat Esther, contains the answer to this riddle: Megillat Esther is from the words ‘Legalot et ha-nastir’ — ‘To reveal the hidden.’ That’s the purpose of Purim: To reveal the hidden Hand of the Divine Author in our cosmic whodunit.

Megillah means a scroll. The scroll ‘reveals’ as you read it. But you have to unravel it yourself. Like all good mysteries!

The Jewish Year is like a Megillah, like a scroll unraveling the secrets of Creation.

More Than a Pregnant Pause

We’ve all heard of a ‘pregnant pause’ but how about a ‘pregnant year’?

Seven times in nineteen years an extra month is added to the Jewish calendar to equalize the solar and the lunar calendars. (See the article titled ‘Real Time’ in Seasons Of The Moon, Tammuz and Av 5756). Such a year is called in Hebrew ‘a pregnant year’.

This year is one of those nineteen. In fact, it is the last in the series of this particular nineteen year cycle.

The ‘pregnant’ year’s extra month is called Adar Bet, or the second Adar. As we said, the Jewish year starts with Nissan and ends with Adar, but why is the extra month added at the end of the year? Why not have two Nissans? Or why not add an extra month in the middle of the year?

On one level, the answer is that the purpose of the leap year is to ensure that Passover always falls in the Spring, as the Torah commands.

When Beit Din (the Rabbinical Court) fixed the lengths of the months and the years by observation of the New Moons, it was only when Adar arrived that it became clear whether the Pesach of that year would fall in the Spring, or whether there was a need to add another month.

Although our calendar is fixed, we nonetheless adhere to the principles which guided the Sanhedrin when they regulated the calendar by observation.

But maybe there’s a deeper reason why we make two Adars and not two Nissans.

The festival of Pesach was given to us by Hashem Himself. It is D’Oraita (a Torah mitzvah).

Purim is D’Rabbanan (a Rabbinic mitzvah). It’s man-made. It was instituted by the Sanhedrin after the deliverance of the Jews who were under the rule of the Persian Empire. The whole existence of the festival of Purim is based on Man unraveling the ‘megillah’ of existence, and recognizing the writing of the Divine Author.

Purim is Man playing detective in G-d’s world. Finding the solution to the cosmic Whodunnit by himself, without the sea splitting in front of him, without open miracles.

It’s the end of the year, and its ‘end,’ its purpose.

For the whole purpose of the Creation is that Man should open his eyes and see Who pulls the strings of history.

Maybe that’s why the leap year has two Adars, and not two Nissans. When we emphasize a part of the year, we emphasize its end, its purpose, the recognition of the Creator via our own efforts.

If there’s a pregnant pause in the year, a pause to consider what we are doing here, then the time to do it is Adar.

The time for us all to become sleuths and crack the Divine Whodunnit.