

(Dvar Torah continued from front page...)

Second, for Shabbat it says, "Do not perform any *melakha* (labor)," but for each Yom Tov (expect Yom Kippur), it says instead, "Do not perform any *meleket avoda* (occupational labor)." On Shabbat all creative work is prohibited, but on Yom Tov, work like cooking, lighting a fire, or carrying are permitted if needed for the holiday!

All of this helps illuminate the difference between the holiness of Shabbat vs. that of Yom Tov. Shabbat holiness is entirely divine. Nothing in the natural world signals that it is Shabbat. If you were lost in the wilderness and didn't know what day was Shabbat, the Talmud (Shabbat 69b) teaches that you just start a new seven-day cycle. Shabbat commemorates no mythical-historical event in human history. It originates with creation and is special because it is the day that God rested; we had nothing to do with it. Its presence in the 10 commandments further signals that Shabbat is a fundamental truth and our job is just to remember it and keep it.

Yom Tov holiness, however, is a human-divine partnership. Responding to the natural world's signals - the end of the rainy season, the ripening of grain, the appearance of the new moon - we fix the times and declare each Yom Tov. These days commemorate mythical-historical events, meetings of God and human beings that took place at a specific place and time: Passover - redemption from Egypt, Shavuot - revelation at Sinai, Sukkot - protection in the wilderness, Yom Kippur - forgiveness of Israel after the golden calf. For that reason, the Torah commands specific human commemorative actions: the paschal sacrifice and matzah eating, the first fruits, shofar blowing, and booth-building and 4-species waving.

The Torah portion for Shabbat Chol-HaMoed takes our understanding of the human-divine partnership of Yom Tov even deeper, through its juxtaposition of a well-known story and some additional laws of Yom Tov.

The first half of the Torah portion is about MOSHE'S DESIRE TO SEE GOD. Moshe requests to see God's glory and God responds that one cannot see GOD'S FACE and live. So Moshe hides in the cleft of a rock as God passes by and sees God's back as the 13 attributes of divine mercy are revealed.

The second half of the Torah portion is about GOD'S DESIRE TO SEE US. Three times per year the Torah instructs us to appear before God in holy convocation - literally to appear before GOD'S FACE (34:23-24). So even though WE cannot see GOD'S FACE, through our collective holy activity on Yom Tov WE CAN BE SEEN BY A GOD WHO, ON THAT DAY, FACES US.

Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom!

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TORAH SPARKS

Sukkot & Shabbat Hol Hamo'ed

October 5-7, 2017 • 15-17 Tishrei 5778

Sukkot | Leviticus 22:26-23:44 (Etz Hayim p. 723-730; Hertz p. 518-525)

Maftir | Numbers 29:12-16 (Etz Hayim p. 934; Hertz p. 697)

Haftarah Day 1 | Ezekiel 14:1-21 (Etz Hayim p. 1252-1255; Hertz p. 972-976)

Haftarah Day 2 | 1 Kings 8:2-21 (Etz Hayim p. 1256-1258; Hertz p. 977-978)

Shabbat Hol Hamo'ed | Exodus 33:12-34:26

(Etz Hayim p. 538-544; Hertz p. 362-367)

Maftir | Numbers 29:17-22 (Etz Hayim p. 935; Hertz p. 697)

Haftarah | Ezekiel 38:18-39:16 (Etz Hayim p. 1259-1262; Hertz p. 979-982)

Dvar Torah

*Rabbi Andy Shapiro Katz, Director of North American Engagement,
Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem*

The Torah portion for Sukkot, Leviticus 23, enumerates all of the holy days, from Shabbat through the seven Yamim Tovim (plural of Yom Tov), calling all of them *mo'adim* (6 times) and *mikra'e kodesh* (11 times). But in truth, Shabbat shouldn't be in this list.

In the whole Torah, this is the only place where Shabbat is called a *mo'ed* or *mikra kodesh*, which makes sense because, as scholars have shown, *mo'ed* means a yearly "fixed time" related to the lunar calendar, and *mikra kodesh* means a sacred proclamation/ convocation. In ancient times, a Yom Tov was only set when the Sanhedrin declared the start of the new month, but Shabbat happens automatically every seven days independent of the lunar cycle. It is isn't declared, and involves no large-scale gatherings!

If we look closely we can see how the text itself sets Shabbat apart. First, the line that introduces the holy days repeats, once before discussing Shabbat (23:2) and once again right after (22:4).

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Dvar Haftarah

Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty

Next to *Shma Yisrael*, the words *Yitgadal v'yitkadash* – “Glorious and exalted” of the Kaddish prayer probably can be counted as the most well-known phrase in the Jewish liturgy. People, however, are less familiar with its origin and significance.

These words make their debut in an eschatological vision (a vision of the end of times) found in this week’s haftarah reading in which Ezekiel prophesies the demise of a demonic nation named Magog, led by a man called Gog, who will gather nations together to attack the nation of Israel. God will defeat Magog auspiciously, bringing about universal recognition of God’s greatness: “Thus will I (God) manifest My greatness and My holiness (*v’hitgadalti v’hitkadashti*) and make Myself known among in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the Lord.” (38:23)

A clue to the significance of these words for the Jewish religious mindset may be found in a midrash which links these words with a very famous verse from the Torah:

You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2)...It was taught (in a baraita): Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai said: When is the name of the Holy One Blessed be He, glorified in the world? When He exacts justice upon the wicked. And there are many verses [to support this position]: [Among them] ‘Thus will I (God) manifest My greatness and My holiness (*v’hitgadalti v’hitkadashti*) and make Myself known among in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the Lord.’ (adapted from *Vayikra Rabbah* 24:1, Margoliot ed. pp. 549-50)

Is it hard to see the connection between Israel’s holiness and God’s meting out Divine justice in the world? Rabbi Hanoch Wolf Einhorn (Maharzu, 18th century Lithuania) has a very interesting take on this question:

Can there be any comparison between the holiness of flesh and blood and God’s holiness? Rather, since God is holy, we are made of holy material. Therefore, God is sanctified, as it were, in the acts of righteousness that Israel performs.

In some sense, by avoiding the context of the verse from our haftarah, Einhorn has confronted it full force. There may be a time and place where a show of God’s power against one’s enemies exalts His name. On a normative basis, though, we are the arbiters of sanctifying God’s name in the way we act. In how we live our lives, we are agents of God’s will and in

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every single act we perform, the potential is there for “*Yitgadal v’yitkadash*.”

Table Talk

Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty

First Days and Shabbat of Sukkot

On the chag (holiday), as well as on Shabbat that falls during the chag we read Torah sections that are related to the chagim. If you think that you have seen these readings before, you are right.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 22:26-23:44 (Reading for First Days)

1) In 22:26-33 we are given basic sacrificial rules regarding all animals. Why do you think that this was placed as part of the reading for the chag?

2) 32-36 discusses the chag of Sukkot. When should it be observed? How many of its days are holy? What may you not do on those days? What happens on the 8th day?

3) What mitzvah of Sukkot (other than sitting in the sukkah) has its source in 23:40? What do we understand this to mean today? For how many days was it done, initially? (It was changed to the full week by the rabbis after the destruction of the Second Temple.)

Shemot (Exodus) 33:12-34:26 (Reading for Shabbat Sukkot)

4) This section is part of the ‘recovery process’ after the Golden Calf. What does Moshe ask God for in 33:13? Why do you think that Moshe feels that he needs this to continue doing his job?

5) The section ends with the listing of 3 chagim (34:18-23). What should the people do during all of these 3 chagim? What kind of atmosphere do you think that this added to the chag?

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We welcome your comments: torahsparks@uscj.org

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