



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת אמור תשס"ח • Parshas Emor 5768

YOUR SPIRITUAL ENGINE

Wouldn't it be nice if you could just drive and drive your car without giving a second thought as to its maintenance? Unfortunately, that scenario seems to be pretty far removed from reality. Every so often you have to fill your car with gas; otherwise, it would eventually *plotz* (expire). For similar reasons, periodic oil changes are also recommended. Whether tune-ups or windshield-wiper fluid refills, there seem to be no shortage of recurring tasks for a car owner if he desires to keep his vehicle in good working order.

What is a *Yom Tov* exactly? The U.S. Government, *Lehavdil*, has established certain legal holidays for commemorative purposes: Independence Day on July 4th recalls the birth of the nation; Columbus Day in October marks the discovery of the American continent; October 23rd is National Boss Day (did you know that?); and so on. By and large, these dates are designated merely to mark certain events that occurred in the past, or to show appreciation to someone (or ask for a raise). However, there is nothing inherently different about these days than any others. Are our *Yomim Tovim* the same type of days? Is the 15th of *Nissan* merely a day to say, "On this day many years ago such and such happened," or is there more to it than that?

REFUELING

The *Pele Yoetz* explains that in fact, a *Yom Tov* comprises much more than a mere recognition of the significance of a particular date. Based on his words, it seems that a Jew can be compared to an automobile. Just as a car requires service stops and adjustments to facilitate its consistent performance, a person needs periodic 'servicing' to assist in his continued ascent in *avodas Hashem*.

This, then, is the function of the *Yomim Tovim*. There are many necessary components to a complete service of *Hashem*: fear of *Hashem*, love of *Hashem*, joy in performing *mitzvos*, etc. *Hashem*, in His infinite kindness, seeks to help His children to serve Him properly. Through the course of a year, therefore, He periodically sends a *hisorerus* (spirit of awakening) down to the people on earth, to imbue them with the necessary spiritual strength and ability to carry out His Will. These 'spiritual injections,' if you will, take place during the *Yomim Tovim*.

From the *Pele Yoetz's* explanation, it appears that each 'dosage' is unique to that particular *Yom Tov*. For example, consider the remarkable phenomenon which takes place around the *Yomim Noraim*. Synagogue attendance throughout the world increases by dramatic proportions. Shuls that were near empty during the year are suddenly bursting at the seams. Why is that? On Rosh Hashanah, *Hashem* sends a generous measure of fear of Heaven and awe of judgment to the world, as evidenced by the sudden influx of Jews from all walks of life in the synagogues.

With proper preparation, a Jew can capitalize on this annual shower of *hisorerus*. Should he ready himself beforehand to receive it, this burst of *yiras Shamayim* will not just wither away as soon as shul is over; rather, it will sustain him throughout the year. The amount of *yirah* he will feel and act upon through the course of the year stems from the reservoir that was filled within him during the *Yom Tov* of Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, each *Yom Tov* arrives with its unique *shefa ruchni* (spiritual emanations channeled to us from on High).

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

How do we identify the *shefos* (spiritual wellsprings) of each *Yom Tov*? A relatively simple method can be

לד"ר אברהם יצחק ב"ר מרדכי ע"ה

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gleaned by examining the final *sugya* of Masechta Megillah. The Mishnah lists the special Torah readings of each *Yom Tov*, and concludes with a verse from this week's *parshah*, which deals extensively with the topic of the *moadim* (festivals):

בַּפֶּסַח קוֹרֵין בְּפָרְשַׁת מוֹעֲדוֹת שֶׁל תּוֹרַת כְּהֲנִים... בַּיּוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים, אַחֲרֵי מוֹת... בְּחִנְכָה, בְּנִשְׂאִים... שְׁנֵאֲמָר, (וַיִּקְרָא כג) וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מַעֲדֵי ה' אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִצְוֹתָו שֶׁיְהוּ קוֹרֵין כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד בְּזִמְנוֹ.

“On *Pesach*, we read the section of the *moadim* found in Parshas Emor...on *Yom Kippur*, we read the beginning of Parshas Acharei Mos...on Chanukah, the portion of the tribal leaders (in Parshas Naso) is read...The requirement to select thematic readings is derived from the verse (*Vayikra* 23:44): ‘And Moshe related the topic of the *moadim* to B’nei Yisrael.’ We learn from here that there is a *mitzvah* to read—on every *Yom Tov*—a section dealing with that particular *Yom Tov*.”

The Gemara (*Megillah 32a*) quotes the above verse and subsequent *halachah* concerning the festival Torah readings. Additionally, it juxtaposes another, similar teaching derived from the *possuk*. The Gemara states:

מֹשֶׁה תִּיקַן לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיְהוּ שׂוֹאֲלִין וְדוֹרְשִׁין בְּעִנְיָנוּ שֶׁל יוֹם, הַלְכוֹת פֶּסַח בְּפֶסַח, הַלְכוֹת עֶצְרַת בְּעֶצְרַת, הַלְכוֹת חָג בְּחָג.

“Moshe promulgated the study—during each *Yom Tov*—of the topics particular to that festival: the *halachos* of *Pesach* on *Pesach*; the *halachos* of *Shavuos* on *Shavuos*; and the *halachos* of *Succos* on *Succos*.”

Interestingly enough, although the Gemara uses the term ‘*halachos*’ which means ‘laws’, the Bais Yosef (*Orach Chaim 429, s.v. Tanya*) contends that in this case, the word does not refer to the actual *halachos*. Rather, it refers to the *hashkafah* of the *Yom Tov*: the underlying themes and ideas which form the basis of the *Yom Tov* and its accompanying *mitzvos*.

It is worthwhile to take out a moment around *Yom Tov* time to focus on the essence of the day. Numerous *Rishonim*, *Acharonim*, and contemporary *sefarim* elucidate the *hashkafos* of each *Yom Tov*. Familiarizing ourselves with the heart of each *Yom Tov* should give us an idea as to the specific *kochos* (spiritual forces) associated with it. Being attuned to the attributes of each *Yom Tov* can enable us to better absorb these spiritual *kochos*.

This spiritual preparation can prove to be quite beneficial. The *Yom Tov* experience is greatly enhanced when one is cognizant of its essential underpinnings, and is transformed from being a mere ‘day of remembrance’ to a living experience. Furthermore, one can take advantage of the annual shower of *shefa* and store up on spiritual *kochos* for the weeks and months to come.

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