

The *Kedusha* of the Holidays

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On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a Shabbos of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a Shabbos of the Lord throughout your settlements. (Sefer Vayikra 23:3)

1. Desecrating the holidays

Parshat Emor discuss the different holidays, the *moadot*, throughout the year. In the beginning of this discussion, however, the Torah starts speaking about Shabbos. The obvious question is, why should Shabbos be included? Shabbos is not a holiday! There are many answers given to this question, and many *halachot* that are learned out from here. However, I would merely like to understand the idea expressed by our sages, as quoted by Rashi:

What relation is there between Shabbos and the festive seasons? By putting both into juxtaposition it teaches you that he who desecrates the festivals is regarded as though he had desecrated the Shabbos, and that he who keeps the festivals is regarded as though he had kept the Shabbos (Sifra, Emor, Section 9:7).
(Commentary of Rashi on Sefer Vayikra 23:2)

The Sifra explains that Shabbos was included in the list of holidays to teach us that if someone has violated a holiday, it is as if they have violated Shabbos, and someone who has observed the holiday, it is as if they have kept Shabbos. But why should that be the case? And is the inverse true? If one keeps Shabbos, is it as if they kept the holidays, and vice versa? It doesn't seem that there is a two-way relationship that exists between the two. So what idea is being taught and why should it be that way? Additionally, the midrash explains that it is *as if* you violated or kept Shabbos. Of what value is that?

2. Equal *kedusha*

The Midrash Lekach Tov incorporates this midrash as well, but then it continues to say that all the *moadot* are called *Shabbaton* – a cessation of rest.¹ Apparently the midrash explains that

¹ Midrash Lekach Tov, Vayikra 23:3

these two different categories have some sort of relationship as expressed by the language of *Shabbaton* as found in the Torah. The Malbim explains this issue with the following:

Shabbos should not have been included in the category of the festivals since Shabbos is sanctified and fixed and not sanctified through the court. Rather it just comes to teach you that a person shouldn't be lenient in the sanctity of the holidays even though they are announced through the court, because their sanctity is equal to the sanctity of Shabbos and their matter is one according to their secret and reasoning. And one who desecrates the holidays it is as if they desecrated Shabbos. (Commentary of Malbim on Sefer Vayikra 23:3)

The Malbim provides a few points. He explains that the Torah connected Shabbos and the holidays to embolden the esteem of the sanctity of the holiday in the eyes of the people and they are really equal in holiness. He points out that they are different in sanctity, but equal. Then he tells us that one who violates the holiday has so to speak violated Shabbos. However, he doesn't point out the other way, that violating Shabbos would be like violating the holidays. If their holiness is equal, why shouldn't that be the case?

3. Creation of the world

What do we know about Shabbos? We know that one who desecrates Shabbos is like an idol worshipper.² Why should that be the case? The Rabbis explain that one who desecrates Shabbos denies God being the Creator of the world, and one who upholds Shabbos attests to God creating the world.³ Does this same principle apply to one who violates the holidays? The Gemara explains that one who *disparages* the holidays is like an idol worshipper.⁴ Is there any difference between these two things, violating or disparaging?

4. God's involvement in the world

The Rambam explains that "Everyone who treats the holidays with disrespect is considered as if he became associated with idol worship."⁵ Shabbos, as we said, expresses the creation of the world by Hashem. But what do the holidays do? Observing the holidays attests to the fact that

² Commentary of Rashi on Bamidbar 15:41.

³ Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael 20:14

⁴ Mesechet Pesachim 118a

⁵ Mishneh Torah Laws of Rest on a Holiday 6:16.

God is involved in the world. Pesach testifies to God being involved in the affairs of mankind and creating a nation for the purpose of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, on Shavuot. So God gives man a class of knowledge to learn how to approach Him. Sukkot attests to God protecting the nation of Israel in the desert for forty years. Rosh Hashanah attests to the fact that God judges mankind and Yom Kippur demonstrates that God forgives the sin of man. So these are two different dimensions: Creator and God.

When a person keeps the holidays, they are attesting to God's involvement in the world. Now, who can be the One to manipulate the laws of nature to provide miracles for the people of Israel? Only the Power Who created those very laws. By keeping the holidays, one attests to the reality that God is involved in the world. As such, if one keeps the holidays, it is like they kept Shabbos because the God of the world must of necessity be the Creator of the world. However, by keeping Shabbos, one is really only attesting to the Creator of the world. One does not speak about anything beyond that. Now, I believe we can understand the Malbim.

5. The Malbim

The Malbim is saying that holidays share the same sanctity of Shabbos. By not acknowledging God, Who is involved in the affairs of man, one automatically denies the Creator of the world because the only Being Who could manipulate the laws of nature would be the One Who created them. Additionally, one who disparages the holidays is like an idolator. The Malbim explained that since holidays are established by the court, not God, people look down on it. Since it is established by man, people might disparage them. But something established by God? That, no one who is involved with Torah would have an inkling to disparage.

6. Egypt and Mount Sinai

And I believe this adds an element to an understanding found in the *Aseret Hadibros*, which we of course read on Shavuot.

I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Sefer Shemot 20:2)

It has been asked by many why God identifies Himself as the One Who took out the Jews from Egypt. Why didn't He identify Himself as the Creator of the World? So the Kuzari famously

explains that no one was there at the time of the creation, so it could not be incumbent upon us to follow the Creator. Rather, His realness is proven through the Jews receiving the signs and wonders of God, and being present as an entire nation to receive the Torah from God.⁶ Hopefully this Shavuot we can recognize the event that proves that God relates to man and realize how fortunate we are to part of that relationship.

⁶ Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve, Kuzari, part I, sections 11-25.