

Making a Date with God - Emor 2023

Source Sheet by Judith Spicehandler

Leviticus 1:1

(1) יהוה **called** to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of **Meeting**, saying:

ויקרא א'א'

(א) ויקרא אל־מֹשֶׁה וידבר יהוה אליו
מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר:

Leviticus 23:1-8

(1) יהוה spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My fixed times, the **fixed times of יהוה**, which **you shall proclaim/call as sacred occasions**. (3) On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, **a sacred occasion**. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of יהוה throughout your settlements. (4) These are **the set times of יהוה, the sacred occasions**, which you shall **proclaim/call each at its appointed time**: (5) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to (6) יהוה, and on the fifteenth day of that month יהוה's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. (7) On the first day you shall **proclaim/call a sacred occasion**: you shall not work at your occupations. (8) Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to יהוה. The seventh day shall be a **sacred occasion**: you shall not work at your occupations.

ויקרא כ"ג א'-ח'

(א) וידבר יהוה אל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ב) דַּבֵּר
אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי
יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֲתֶם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי: (ג) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה
מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן
מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת
הוּא לַיהוָה בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם: {פ}
(ד) אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֲתֶם בְּמוֹעֲדָם: (ה) בַּחֹדֶשׁ
הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין
הָעֶרְבִים פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: (ו) וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר
יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג הַמִּצּוֹת לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת
יָמִים מִצּוֹת תֹּאכְלוּ: (ז) בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן
מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלָאכָת
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: (ח) וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה
לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה לֹא
תַעֲשׂוּ: {פ}

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in Leviticus: The Book of Holiness (Covenant & Conversation (pp. 283-287).

...What Leviticus 23 is telling us is that what the Sanctuary was in relation to place, the calendar is in relation to time: it is the holy time we create to mirror the holy time God

creates. The holy time God creates is Shabbat. This is the first thing God declares holy (Gen. 2:3), the only time the word “holy” appears in the book of Genesis. That is why the list of festivals in Leviticus begins with Shabbat, just as the construction of the Tabernacle begins with Shabbat (Ex. 35:2–3). It is to remind us that our creation must mirror and serve as a permanent reminder of God’s creation.

How do the festivals mirror Shabbat? The answer lies in the single most distinctive feature of the list in Leviticus: the number seven. There are seven holy days enumerated in Leviticus 23: Pesah (14 Nisan), Hag HaMatzot, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. There are seven days on which “regular work” (melekhet avoda) is forbidden. The two extended festivals, Hag HaMatzot and Sukkot, are both seven days long. Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks of seven days after the offering of the Omer. The largest cluster of festivals is in the seventh month. The passage as a whole contains seven paragraphs. There are seven instances of words that appear only in this chapter and not elsewhere in the Torah (tikre’u, three times and mo’adei or mo’adai, four times). ...

So Leviticus 23 is revolutionary in two ways. First, it takes the number [7] associated with non-natural time and transposes it into natural time: the calendar of lunar months and solar years. Second, it emphasizes the human contribution to the sanctification of time by insisting three times that these are sacred days “which you are to proclaim.” It takes the principle of Leviticus 19:2 – “You shall be holy because I the Lord your God am holy” – and applies it to time. You shall make time holy because I make time holy, says God. Thus the calendar does for time what the Sanctuary did for place. It allowed the Israelites to create a mirror of what God had created when He made the universe.

There is a word that connects the festivals and the Sanctuary: **mo’ed**. It describes the festivals and it is also used – in the very first verse of Leviticus – of the Ohel Mo’ed, the “Tent of Meeting” within the Sanctuary. Thus mo’ed in Leviticus means not just “an appointed time” but also any time or place designated as a meeting point between man and God. Only in this sense is Shabbat, like the festivals, a mo’ed. Holy times are times when, setting aside our daily devices and desires, we have a tryst, a lover’s meeting, with God, whether at His initiative or ours. No sooner have we made the connection between the word mo’ed in our chapter and in the opening line of the book than we sense another stroke of intertextuality: the word Vayikra itself. This, the opening word of the book, is echoed in our chapter fifteen times in the phrases mikra kodesh, “a sacred assembly,” and asher tikre’u otam, “which you shall proclaim.” Leviticus opens by God calling to man. It reaches its culmination here by man calling to God.

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:8-9

(8) Rabban Gamliel had, on a tablet, and on the walls of his loft, various drawings of the moon, which he showed to simple witnesses, and said, "Was it like this [drawing] that you saw, or like [the other one]?"

It happened once, that two witnesses came and said, "We saw [the moon] in the East in the morning, and in the evening in the West." [In that case,] Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said, "They are false witnesses." [But] when they came to Yavneh, Rabban Gamliel accepted [their testimony].

It] also [happened once that] two witnesses came and said, "We saw the moon at its time [meaning, on the first of the two possible days], but it was not [to be] seen [afterwards] on the evening of its intercalation," and Rabban Gamliel accepted [their testimony].

Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinus said, "They are false witnesses; how can they testify that a [certain] woman gave birth [on a certain day], and, on the next day that her 'womb was between her teeth' [and the fetus still inside]?" [Then] Rabbi Yehoshua said to him, "I perceive [the truth of] your words."

(9) [Upon hearing this,] Rabban Gamliel sent [Rabbi Yehoshua] word, saving, "I decree upon you to come to me with your staff and your money on the day that comes out to be Yom Kippur, according to your calculation." Rabbi Akiva went to [Rabbi Yehoshua], and found him grieving; he said to him, "I have with what to teach, that all that Rabban Gamliel has done is [bindingly] done, as it is stated (Leviticus 23:4), 'These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim; whether at their [proper] time, or whether not at their [proper] time, I have no holy convocations

משנה ראש השנה ב'ח'-ט'

(ח) דמות צורות לבנות היו לו לרבן גמליאל בטבלא ובכתל בעליתו, שבהן מראה את ההדיוטות ואומר: הכזה ראית או כזה. מעשה שבאו שנים ואמרו: ראינוהו שחרית במזרח וערבית במערב. אמר רבי יוחנן בן נורי: עדי שקר הם. כשבאו ליבנה קבלן רבן גמליאל. ועוד באו שנים ואמרו: ראינוהו בזמנו, ובליל עברו לא נראה, וקבלן רבן גמליאל. אמר רבי דוסא בן הרכינס: עדי שקר הן, היאך מעידין על האשה שילדה, ולמחר כרסה בין שניה? אמר לו רבי יהושע: רואה אני את דברך.

(ט) שלח לו רבן גמליאל: גוזרני עליך שתבוא אצלי במקלך ובמעוטיך ביום הכפורים שחל להיות בחשבונך. הלך ומצאו רבי עקיבא מצר, אמר לו: יש לי ללמוד, שכל מה שעשה רבן גמליאל עשוי, שנאמר (ויקרא כג) אלה מועדי יי מקראי קדש אשר תקראו אתם, בין בזמנן בין שלא בזמנן, אין לי מועדות אלא אלו. בא לו אצל רבי דוסא בן הרכינס, אמר לו: אם באין אנו לדון אחר בית דינו של רבן גמליאל, צריכין אנו לדון אחר כל בית דין ובית דין שעמד מימות משה ועד עכשיו, שנאמר (שמות כד) ויעל משה ואהרן נדב ואביהוא ושבעים מזקני ישראל. ולמה לא נתפרשו שמותן של זקנים, אלא ללמד, שכל שלשה ושלשה שעמדו בית דין על ישראל הרי הוא כבית דינו של משה. נטל מקלו ומעותיו בידו, והלך ליבנה אצל רבן גמליאל ביום שחל יום הכפורים להיות בחשבוננו. עמד רבן גמליאל ונשקו על ראשו, אמר לו, בא

except [for the ones proclaimed by the court]."

בשלום, רבי ותלמידי, רבי בחכמה,
ותלמידי שקבלת את דברי.

When Rabbi Yehoshua] came to Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinus, [the latter] said to him, "If we are to [question the decisions] of the court of Rabban Gamliel, we must [also question the decisions] of all the courts which have stood, from the days of Moshe until [today]; as it is stated, (Exodus 24:2), 'Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up.' Why were the names of the elders not specified? Rather [it was] to teach, that every three men that form a court [to be responsible] over Israel, behold [that court] is to be [considered] like the court of Moshe."

[After this], Rabbi Yehoshua took his staff and his money in his hand, and went to Yavneh to Rabban Gamliel on the day that came out to be Yom Kippur, according to his calculation. [At that point], Rabban Gamliel stood up, and kissed him on his head, [and] he said to him, "Come in peace, my teacher and my disciple! My teacher — in wisdom; and my disciple — in that you accepted my words."

Mishneh Torah, Sanctification of the New Month 2:10

(10) A court which sanctifies the month, whether by accident, whether they were mistaken, whether they were forced, it is sanctified and everyone is obligated to fix the festivals on the day they sanctified. Even though one knows that they made a mistake, he is obligated to rely on them for the matter is only given over to them and the one who commanded to keep the festivals is the one who commanded to rely on them as it is said (Leviticus 23:2) "that you call them...".

משנה תורה, הלכות קידוש החודש ב'י'

(י) בית דין שקדשו את החדש בין שוגגין בין מוטעין בין אנוסים הרי זה מקודש וחייבין הכל לתקן המועדות על היום שקדשו בו. אע"פ שזה יודע שטעו חייב לסמוך עליהם שאין הדבר מסור אלא להם ומי שצוה לשמור המועדות הוא צוה לסמוך עליהם שנאמר אשר תקראו אתם וגו'

God Yearns (Alden Solovy in These Words)

God yearns
For an invitation
To dwell among us.

So we create space
For God's arrival
Opening our souls,
Opening our lives,
Building sanctuaries
for Torah and *t'filah*
So *Shechinah* can appear
In the tabernacle of our hearts
With her gifts of tenderness
And love.

We meet God
Somewhere between
A vision of heaven
And the reality of earth,
Yearning for God to stay present,
Yearning for God to dwell among us,
While God yearns
For an invitation,
To dwell among us.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Holy time itself comes in two forms, as Emor makes clear. There is Shabbat and there are the festivals, and the two are announced separately. Shabbat was sanctified by G-d at the beginning of time for all time. The festivals are sanctified by the Jewish people to whom was given the authority and responsibility for fixing the calendar.

Hence the difference in the blessings we say. On Shabbat we praise G-d who “sanctifies Shabbat”. On the festivals we praise G-d who sanctifies “Israel and the holy times” – meaning, it is G-d who sanctifies Israel but Israel who sanctify the holy times, determining on which days the festivals fall.

Even within the festivals there is a dual cycle. One is formed by the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. These are days that represent the key historic moments at the dawn of Jewish time – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, and the forty years of desert wandering. They are festivals of history.

The other is formed by the number seven and the concept of holiness: the seventh day, Shabbat; the seventh month, Tishri, with its three festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot; the seventh year, Shemita; and the Jubilee marking the completion of seven seven-year cycles.

These times (with the exception of Sukkot that belongs to both cycles) have less to do with history than with what, for want of a better word, we might call metaphysics and jurisprudence, ultimate truths about the universe, the human condition, and the laws, both natural and moral, under which we live.

Leviticus 24:1-8

יהוה spoke to Moses, saying: Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly. Aaron shall set them up in the Tent of Meeting outside the curtain of the Pact [to burn] from evening to morning before יהוה regularly; it is a law for all time throughout the ages. He shall set up the lamps on the pure lampstand before יהוה [to burn] regularly. You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves, two-tenths of a measure for each loaf. Place them on the pure table before יהוה in two rows, six to a row. With each row you shall place pure frankincense, which is to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to יהוה. He shall arrange them before יהוה regularly every sabbath day—it is a commitment for all time on the part of the Israelites.

ויקרא כ"ד:א'-ח'

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: צֹו אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לַמָּאֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד: מִחוּץ לַפָּרֹכֶת הָעֵדוּת בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יַעֲרֹף אֹתוֹ אֲהָרֹן מֵעֶרֶב עַד־בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: עַל הַמְנִרָה הַטְּהֻרָה יַעֲרֹף אֶת־הַנְּגֹוֹת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד: (פ) וְלִקְחֹת סֹלֶת וְאָפִיתָ אֹתָהּ שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר חֻלוֹת שְׁנֵי עָשָׂר־נֵים יְהִיָּה הַחֲלָה הָאֻחָת: וְשָׂמֹת אוֹתָם שְׁתֵּים מֵעֲרֻכּוֹת שֶׁשׁ הַמְעֲרֻכָּת עַל הַשְּׁלֶחַן הַטְּהֹר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: וְנָתַתְּ עַל־הַמְעֲרֻכָּת לְבִנָּה זָכָה וְהִיתָה לְלֶחֶם לְאֻזְכָּרָה אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה: בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת יַעֲרֻכְנוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם:

Encyclopedia Judaica on Shewbread

The Pentateuchal passages in which reference is made to the showbread belong, without exception, to the Priestly Code. It would be unwarranted, however, on this score to hold the offering to have been a late innovation, due to Babylonian influences. The episode in David's visit to the old sanctuary at Nob proves the antiquity of the practise (I Sam. xxi.

1 *et seq.*). Ahimelek's scruples lest the men had not kept aloof from women and the assurance of David that they were in a state of sexual purity suggest the original meaning of the rite as a sacrificial meal, partaken of by the deity in common with his devotees, who, in order to make tryst with their god, must be in such a state of purity (comp. Ex. xix. 10-11, 15). Hence the bread is not burned, but the incense is, which also is an indication that the rite has descended from remote antiquity (Stade, "Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments," 1905, i. 168). Stade connects it with the ancient cult of the Ark (*ib.*), the food of the deity being placed before him, ready for consumption whenever he chose to make his appearance.

The Hebrew custom has developed probably independently of a similar custom in Babylon, both starting, however, from the same root idea, which is found among other races and in other religions (comp. Isa. lxv. 11; Jer. vii. 18, xlv. 17 *et seq.*; Baruch vi. 26; comp. the instance of the Roman lectisternium). The Babylonians offered to the gods various kinds of cakes or bread ("akalu"), which they laid before them on tables, generally in sets of twelve or multiples of twelve. These cakes were required, to be sweet (*i.e.*, unleavened), and were baked from wheaten flour. Even the Hebrew name "leḥem ha-panim" has its exact counterpart in the Assyrian "akal pānu" (Zimmern, in Schrader's "K. A. T." ii. 600). The number "twelve," which is so prominent in the showbread rite, has always borne mysterious religious significance (see Zimmern, *l.c.* p. 629).

