

Parashat Emor 5782, 2022:

The Moadim and the Torah

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechezkel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Chapter 23 of our *parasha* is known as “*parashat hamoadim*,” since it contains the Torah-based *chagim* we encounter throughout the Jewish year. It begins with, “And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, ‘Speak to *b’nai Yisrael* and say to them: Hashem’s appointed [holy days] that you shall designate as holy occasions. These are My appointed [holy days].” The chapter concludes with, “And Moshe told *b’nai Yisrael* [these laws] of Hashem’s appointed [holy days].” (*Sefer Vayikra* 23:44, this and all Tanach translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) At first glance, this final verse seems strangely out of place. After all, except for 23:3 (Shabbat), the Torah has presented 42 *pasukim* that are laser-focused on the *moadim*, if so, what, if anything, does it contribute to our understanding?

Rashi *zatzal* (1040-1105) was also challenged by this verse’s placement:

Why was it necessary to write here, “And Moshe told,” for is it not the case that Moshe proclaimed all the *mitzvot* to the Jewish people? As such, what is the purpose of “and Moshe told *b’nai Yisrael* [these laws] of Hashem’s appointed [holy days]?” This comes to teach us that Moshe explained to them the laws of each *moad* in its proper time to make known to them the laws of Elokim and His Torah. They subsequently accepted and upheld (*kiblu v’kiymu*) the reward of the *mitzvot* upon themselves, and their children, in this matter and in the future. (*Commentary on Talmud Bavli, Megillah* 32a, translation my own)

In some ways, Rashi’s comment was foreshadowed by Onkelos’ (first century) Aramaic translation/explanation of our *pasuk*: “*U’malil Moshe yat s’dar mo’adayah d’Hashem v’alaphinun l’b’nai Yisrael* —And Moshe stated the order of the *Moadim* of Hashem and explained them [that

is, their details] to the Jewish people.” In sum, this verse is very significant, as it informs us that Moshe reviewed the calendrical order and meaning of the *moadim*, and taught the correct way to observe each one.

Closer to our own time, Rabbi Yeshayahu ben Avraham Ha-Levi Horowitz *zatzal* (the *Shelah HaKadosh*, c. 1555-1630) presented a cogent explanation of this verse that gives voice to the unique import of learning Torah on the *Moadim*:

It is necessary to learn Torah on *yom tov*...since *yom tov* is particularly chosen (*mesugal*) for this more so than any other day. As we learn in the *baraita* at the conclusion of tractate *Megillah* in *Talmud Bavli* (32a): “and Moshe told *b’nai Yisrael* [these laws] of Hashem’s appointed [holy days]. Moshe established the practice for the Jewish people to ask questions and analyze the various matters associated with each day [that is *moad*]—the laws of *Pesach* on *Pesach* and so forth...” and this is the *din* (law) on each of the *moadot*. (*Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Commentary on Talmud Bavli, Succah, Perek Ner Mitzvah*, 51, this and the following passage, translation brackets and underlining my own)

The *Shelah HaKadosh* emphasized that the *moadim* are *mesugal* for learning Torah, a notion that he derived from our verse and the *baraita* he cited. He provided powerful support for this interpretation based upon a *drasha* for the first day of *Pesach* from Rabbi Yehoshua ibn Shu’eib *zatzal* (1280-1340) that speaks of the outstanding nature of learning Torah on Shabbat and Yom Tov:

When they gather in the synagogues and houses of study to pray and hear words of Torah on the *Shabbatot* and *Yamim Tovim*, this is more accepted and desired by the Holy One blessed be He [than any other days], since they have left their physical desires [for sumptuous meals] behind] and have come [instead] to hear words of Torah...this love is more beautiful than all other varieties of love [the Jewish people show to Hashem]...

In his *drasha*, Rav Shu’eib points to a *pasuk* from *Shir HaShirim* that further illustrates the great significance of Torah study: “How fair and how pleasant you are, a love with delights;” (7:7) wherein “delights” are a metaphoric reference for the Torah. May we be *zocheh* (merit) to experience this intimate attachment to Hashem’s holy Torah, and may we ever find joy in its study on Shabbat and the *Moadim*. *V’chane yihi ratzon*

Shabbat Shalom

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>.

Please contact me at rdbe718@gmail.com to be added to my weekly email list.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah*, *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)