

## **DARSHANUT**

*Darshanut, derived from the Hebrew root darash [explicate, expound], presents the expository, homiletic interpretation of the Bible. Its origins are as old as the most ancient aggadic and midrashic teachings and as new as the sermon or D'var Torah delivered on the most recent Shabbat. The intent is a challenge to relate the Bible to the problems, issues and goals of daily living.*

*We encourage our readers to contribute to Darshanut. The submission should be based on the Bible, no more than 750 words in length, and as relevant and current as you would like to make it. For more information on submissions, see the inside back cover.*

## **HOLIDAYS: SOME PECULIARITIES**

### **SHIMON BAKON**

The major holidays in the Jewish calendar, Pessah, Shavuot, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, whether by design or by coincidence, precede or follow Rosh HaShanah, which is placed in the center. What has not been noted sufficiently is that each of these festivals contains value-systems most precious to modern man: Freedom (Pessah), law (Shavuot), introspection and search for spirituality (Yom Kippur), and joy (Sukkot).

More significant, these festivals are paired to balance each other and to eliminate possible excesses and abuse. Freedom by itself, raised to an absolute value and without restraints, can deteriorate into anarchy and total disregard for authority. Over-emphasis on law can stymie creativity and self-expression. Thus the festivals of freedom and the giving of the Torah (law) follow and complement each other. Yom Kippur is designed to stress through profound introspection and self-affliction, at least for that day, the spiritual aspect of our lives. To balance ascetic denial of the "worldly," it is followed by Sukkot, the Festival of Joy: . . . *and ye shall rejoice before the Lord. . . . seven days* (Lev.

23:40). This balance prevents both the ascetic and the joyful from becoming exclusive.

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The central position of Rosh HaShanah, which proclaims God as King of the universe, offers an additional dimension to the value-systems we noted in the festivals, by investing them with Divine sanction.

It is well known that a Hebrew bond servant may serve only six years and in the seventh year goes free (Ex. 21:2). If the bond servant insists on continuing his servitude, then his master shall bring him to the doorpost and *shall bore his ear through with an awl* (Ex.21:6). As Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai explained, the ear that heard *for unto Me the children of Israel are servants* (Lev. 25:55), yet preferred a human master, deserves such a penalty. By being servants of the Lord, we must not be servants of servants, and this quality of our status as servants of the Lord guarantees our freedom and basic equality.

Do we, then, have festivals to celebrate other cherished values such as justice and love? If we translate תורה [Torah] as Divine Teaching, and go beyond the limitations of the narrow concept of "Law," then all the missing values are contained there: Justice and compassion for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and love for God, man and even the stranger (Deut. 10:19).

A congregation or Bible study group may wish to honor one of its members by sponsoring a special issue of the ***Jewish Bible Quarterly***.

We shall be happy to dedicate such an issue to the honoree. Please write to the Editor, ***Jewish Bible Quarterly***, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel, for further details.

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