DEBORAH TORA: WHAT CAN SHABBAT TEACH US ABOUT FESTIVALS?
— JONATHAN WEINSTEIN —

In the middle of this week’s parasha, we find all the festivals being discussed. Starting from Chapter 23, the first few sentences give the introduction to all of the festivals, and then another introduction is given right away at 23:4. The first introduction is peculiar, as it mentions Shabbat. Why does Shabbat need to be mentioned now, and why the double introduction to the festivals? Another apparent issue with our introduction is the double language of Shabbat being a day of complete rest—a phrase normally reserved for Kippur.

The Vilna Gaon explains that this first introduction is not talking about Shabbat. Shabbat is a day which God made holy; we, the Jewish people, do not proclaim Shabbat as a day of holiness the way it says in our first introduction. Rather the first introduction is indeed an introduction to the festivals, which we are responsible for consecrating, and nothing to do with Shabbat.

One way of reading this introduction is as follows: If we are to look through the parasha and count how many days of festivals we have, we find we have 6 days. We have the first day of Passover and the last day of Passover (2), one day of Shabuot (3), Rosh HaShana (4), and then we have the first day of Succot (5) plus Shemini Hag Atsereth for a total of 6 days of festivals. These are in fact the 6 days mentioned in the introduction as days for work—because work that pertains to food is permitted on these days. Then on the seventh day of festivals it has to be a day of complete rest, Kippur.

Why does the Torah do this? To give us a Shabbat-like introduction when it’s not really talking about Shabbat?

When it comes to Shabbat and the Festivals, they are very similar days and we tend to approach them in the same way. My Rebbe explained that we should indeed approach Shabbat and the Festivals in a similar way. However, Shabbat has inherited holiness from Ha-shem, whereas when it comes to the Festivals, we need to declare them holy. The Torah is teaching us that we should take some of that declaration from the Festivals and apply it to Shabbat as well. That we shouldn’t just sit back and do nothing, but rather, we should actively endow the day with holiness. And when it comes to the Festivals, how should we make them holy? By modeling the day on Shabbat. We learn from Shabbat how to create holiness for the Festivals.

Jonathan Weinstein is a student at Yeshiva University and a member of our ongoing Habruta (Paired Learning) Program with Rabbi Yanez.
Israel At 70
A 3-Part Lecture Series
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

PART TWO: This Shabbat Morning, May 5
“The Extraordinary, Unappreciated Origins of the Israeli Flag”

The final installment of this series will be Rabbi Soloveichik’s
Shabuot Public Lecture
Saturday Night, May 19 | 11:00 pm
After the talk, guests are encouraged to enjoy some cheescake!
Visit shearithisrael.org/shabuot-public-lecture to sponsor this culminating lecture:
Sponsor: $180 • Contributor: $36

RESCHEDULED:
Laura Arnold Leibman Lecture
Monday, May 14 | 7:00 pm
The midweek lecture from our Visiting Scholar, Dr. Laura Arnold Leibman, has been rescheduled for Monday, May 14.

The topic is Sephardic Country Houses. Professor Leibman will introduce people to the entrancing world of Jewish country houses with elegant examples of the beautiful Jewish country houses built along the Vecht River in Holland.

2018 Graduation Kiddush
Shabbat, June 23 | Following Morning Services
Let’s spread the good news and celebrate the success and accomplishments of all our graduates from pre-school to PhDs! Visit shearithisrael.org/graduation to ensure that we can properly list and congratulate your graduate(s). Even if you cannot attend, consider cosponsoring our graduation kiddush for $180 or just $36.

SUBWAY STATION CLOSURE
May-October 2018
Starting May 7, the 72nd Street station on the B/C line (including our 70th Street entrance) will be closed in both directions for renovations. The stations will reopen in October.

During these station closures, please consider the following alternatives:
• Use the nearby B/C stations at 81st and 59th Streets.
• Use the M7 and M11 buses on Columbus Avenue.
• Use the nearby 1/2/3 station on Broadway and 72nd

To learn more, please visit mta.info or call 511.

Book Talk: Aryeh Green, author of the newly released My Israel Trail: Finding Peace in the Promised Land
Wednesday, May 23 | 7:00 PM
After his devastating divorce, which shook his world and confounded his deeply-held optimism, Aryeh Green’s goal was to get his life back on track. His hike along The Israel National Trail (Shevil Yisrael) enabled the discovery of a number of universal truths for living based on Jewish tradition. Accompanied by photos and videos.

Consecration Shabbat
This Shabbat is the anniversary of the consecration of our present synagogue building here on 70th Street. The building was consecrated on Lag L’Omer - May 19, 1897. We commemorate the consecration of our synagogues with a semi-festive service. The Ark is open during much of the service and the Torah scrolls are dressed in festive colors. The beautiful poem Todot El (p. 342) is sung before Nishmat, and special blessings and memorial prayers are recited before the reading of the Torah.

SAVE THE DATE
Young Couples and Families Picnic on the Portico
Shabbat, June 9 | Following Morning Services
Who wants to worry about the weather getting in the way of their picnic lunch? Not us! This year’s end-of-year picnic will be held at the synagogue, where we can enjoy our protected, park-facing Portico as well as the Elias Room. Fun for the kids and a rabbi’s lecture for the adults will keep everyone happy while we all enjoy a picnic-inspired menu.

Registration coming soon.

Shearith Israel is a Proud Co-Sponsor of Happier Together:
A CommUnity Conversation with Tal Ben-Shahar
at The Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center, 10 East 66th St
Tuesday, June 12 | 7:00 PM
Tal Ben-Shahar will share his unique insights into the importance of happiness and positivity within our communities as well as his experiences living in both America and Israel. Tal Ben-Shahar teaches positive psychology at Harvard, and has also authored several books, including New York Times Bestseller Happier.

To register, visit shearithisrael.org/happier.