

THE HOLY CONVOCATIONS

Ramban on Parashat Emor

The Sixteenth Street Synagogue – May 5, 2007

Gavriel Z. Bellino

Leviticus 23

1 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying:
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: The appointed seasons of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons. **3** Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of work; it is a sabbath unto the LORD in all your dwellings.
4 These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season.

ספר ויקרא פרק כ"ג

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי:
(ג) שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָה ל' א תַּעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לִיד יְהוָה בְּכָל ל' מוֹשָׁב תִּיכֶם:
(ד) אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם:

Ramban on Leviticus 23:2

רמב"ן ויקרא פרק כ"ג פסוק ב'

SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. The priests have no greater duties with regard to the festivals than the Israelites, therefore He did not admonish Aaron and his sons in this section, but *the children of Israel*, a term which includes all of them together, since He did not explain the Additional Offerings [for the festivals] in this section.

(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אֵין לַכֹּהֲנִים עֵסֶק בְּעִנְיַן הַמוֹעֲדוֹת יוֹתֵר מֵאֲשֶׁר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בָּהֶם, עַל כֵּן לֹא הִזְכִּיר בַּפְּרָשָׁה הַזֹּאת אֶהֱרֹן וּבָנָיו רַק בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂיִכְלַל אֶת כָּלָם כְּאַחַד, כִּי לֹא פָּרַשׁ קַרְבָּנוֹת הַמוֹסָפִים בַּפְּרָשָׁה הַזֹּאת.

However, He mentioned the festivals here in Torath Kohanim (i.e Leviticus) because they are days of offerings, and He alludes to them, just as He said, *And ye shall bring an offering made by fire unto the Eternal*, and at the end of this section He states, *These are the appointed seasons of the Eternal, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to bring an offering made by fire unto the Eternal, a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, a peace-offering, and drink-offerings*. He did not, however, prolong the subject by explaining the Additional Offerings, since He did not want them to be binding upon the children of Israel when in the desert.

אֲבָל הַזְכִּיר הַמוֹעֲדִים כְּאֵן בְּתוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים בְּעֵבֹר שֶׁהֵם יְמֵי הַקְּרָבָנוֹת, וַיִּרְמַז אֲלֵיהֶם כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר: וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֲשֶׁה לָהּ, וְאָמַר בְּסוּף הַפְּרָשָׁה (פְּסוּק לז): אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהִקְרִיב אֲשֶׁה לָהּ עֲלֵה וּמִנְחָה זֶבַח וּנְסֻכִּים, אֲבָל לֹא הֶאָרִיף לְבָאֵר הַמוֹסָפִים, שְׁלֹא רָצָה שְׂיִנְהֲגוּ לָהֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר.

And after He had counted [at the end of the desert period] those who were to come into the Land, as narrated in the Book of Numbers, and He commanded, *Unto these the Land shall be divided*, He then explained all the Additional Offerings in the section of *Pinchas*, which they were to offer in the Land immediately and throughout the generations. Therefore He said [here in this Book of Leviticus] with reference to [the Service on] the Day of Atonement, *And he* [i.e., Aaron] *did as the Eternal commanded Moses*, meaning that he did so in the desert [but the Additional Offerings for the other festivals were not binding in the desert].

Now He mentioned in this section the “he-lamb of the sheaf” and the two lambs of the Festival of Shevuoth, because it is well-known that they were binding only in the Land, since they are brought on account of *the bread* [of the first-fruits] concerning which He said, *When ye are come into the Land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof*, but the observance of the days themselves [as festivals] was binding immediately.

He mentioned the Sabbath among *the appointed seasons which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations*, because it is also an appointed day and we may thus refer to it as “a holy convocation.” Afterwards, He separated the rest of the festivals from the Sabbath, saying of them *which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season*, meaning on whatever day of the week they happen to fall, but the Sabbath is fixed and occurs [always] on the same day, hence it is not necessary that we proclaim it in its season. And in the opinion of our Rabbis, *which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season* alludes to the intercalations [of an extra month in a leap year] so that you proclaim them as festivals.

וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁמֹנֶה בָּאֵי הָאָרֶץ בְּחֹמֶשׁ
הַפְּקוּדִים וְצִוָּה: לְאֵלֶּה תִּחְלַק
הָאָרֶץ (בְּמִדְבָּר כו נג), בְּאֵר הַמוֹסָפִים כָּלֵם
בְּפִרְשֵׁת פְּנִיחָס שִׁיעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם בְּאָרֶץ מִיָּד
וּלְדוֹרוֹת. וְעַל כֵּן אָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים
(לְעִיל טו לֵד): וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת
מֹשֶׁה, שֶׁעָשָׂה כֵּן בְּמִדְבָּר.

וְהַזְכִּיר בְּפִרְשָׁהּ הַזֹּאת כֶּבֶשׂ הָעֹמֵר (פְּסוּקִים
יב-יג) וְכֹבֵשׁ עֲצָרֹת (פְּסוּק יח), כִּי
בְּיָדוֹעַ שֶׁלֹּא יִנְהַגוּ אֶלָּא בְּאָרֶץ, שֶׁהֵן בָּאִים
בְּגִלְל הַלְחָם שֶׁאָמַר בּוֹ (פְּסוּק י): כִּי תִבְאוּ
אֶל הָאָרֶץ וּקְצַרְתֶּם אֶת קְצִירָהּ וְגו', אֲבָל
הַיָּמִים עֲצָמָם נוֹהֲגִים מִיָּד.

וְהַזְכִּיר הַשַּׁבָּת בְּמוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ
אֹתָם מִקְרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ, שְׁגָם הוּא יוֹם
מוֹעֵד נִקְרָא אוֹתוֹ מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ. וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן
הַבְּדִיל שָׂאֵר הַמוֹעֲדוֹת מִמֶּנּוּ וְאָמַר: אֲשֶׁר
תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם, כְּלוּמַר בָּאֵי זֶה יוֹם
מִן הַשְּׁבוּעַ שִׁיִּגִּיעוּ בּוֹ, כִּי הַשַּׁבָּת קְבוּעַ
הוּא, בְּיוֹמוֹ יָבֵא לֹא נִצְטָרֵךְ לִקְרָא אוֹתוֹ
בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ. וְעַל דַּעַת רַבּוֹתֵינוּ (ת"כ פֶּאֶן) אֲשֶׁר
תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם, רָמַז לְעִבּוּרִים,
שֶׁתִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם לָהֶם מוֹעֲדִים.

The correct interpretation appears to me to be that the meaning of the verse *The appointed seasons of the Eternal, which ye shall Proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons*, is that it refers [only] to the festivals mentioned further on in the sections: *In the first month* etc. [but it does not refer to the Sabbath]. It is for this reason that He states there once again, *These are the appointed seasons of the Eternal*, Its because He had interrupted with the subject of the Sabbath. Thus He states, *The appointed seasons of the Eternal, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons*, "I meaning that no manner of servile work [be done on them], but the Sabbath you are to keep, making it a Sabbath of solemn rest from all manner of work whatsoever, for He admonishes concerning the Sabbath many times. He further alludes here [to the law that even] when the Sabbath falls on one of [the days of] the festivals, we must not suspend [the law of the Sabbath] so that the preparation of food be permitted on it [as it is on a festival day when it falls on a weekday, but instead it is prohibited].

Onkelos, however, [in rendering the Hebrew *mikraei kodesh* as *marei kadish* "holy events"), understood [the word *mikraei*] as similar to the expression *that which yikkra (shall befall) you in the end of days*, an expression of "event," meaning that whenever the festivals occur, you should make them holy. And our Rabbis of blessed memory have said: ... "Proclaim them with (special) food and drink and clean garments; " that is to say, the nature of these [festival] days should not be to you like that of other days, but instead you should make them occasions of holiness, changing them by food and dress from the common to the holy. This is also the opinion of Onkelos [who translated *mikraei kodesh* as "holy events"].

וְהִנְכוּן בְּעֵינַי כִּי פָרוּשׁ מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר
תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֱלֹהִים
הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי, עַל הַנִּזְכָּרִים לְמַטָּה בַּפָּרָשִׁיּוֹת,
בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן וְגו' (פְּסוּק ה'), וְלִכְן חִזַּר
שָׁם פַּעַם אַחֲרַת: אֱלֹהִים מוֹעֲדֵי ה' (פְּסוּק ד'),
בְּעִבּוּר שֶׁהִפְסִיק בְּעֵנִין הַשַּׁבָּת. וְהִנֵּה אָמַר:
מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֱלֹהִים הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי בְּמִלְאֶכֶת עֲבוּדָה, אֲכַל
הַשַּׁבָּת תִּשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָהּ שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן
מִכָּל מְלָאכָה שְׁבַע עוֹלָם, כִּי יִזְהַר בַּשַּׁבָּת
פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת. וַיִּרְמַז עוֹד בְּכָאֵן כִּי גַם
בָּבֹאוּ בְּאֶחָד מִן הַמוֹעֲדִים לֹא תִדְחַק
לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּהּ אֲכַל נֶפֶשׁ.

וְאֵינְקָרוּם עֲשָׂאוּ מִלְּשׁוֹן. אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא
אֹתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים (בְּרֵאשִׁית
מט א) לְשׁוֹן מֵאַרְע, בְּכָל יוֹם שִׁיאָרְעוּ
תַעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם קֹדֶשׁ. וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל אָמְרוּ
(סְפָרִי בַמִּדְבָר כח יח): אֲרַעִם בְּמִאֲכָל
וּבְמִשְׁתֵּה וּבְכִסּוֹת נִקְיָה, כְּלוֹמַר שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה
חֶקֶם אֲצִלְךָ כְּחֶק שְׂאֵר הַיָּמִים, אֲכַל תַּעֲשֶׂה
לָהֶם מִקְרָא שֶׁל קֹדֶשׁ לְשִׁנוֹתָם בְּמִאֲכָל
וּבְמִלְבוּשׁ מִחֵל לְקֹדֶשׁ, וְגַם זֶה דַעַת
אֲנִקְלוֹס.