

RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



I make lists. Various kinds in fact. All the things that must get accomplished on one page, chores that ought to be done on another, and separately, items that eventually will have to be addressed. Over the years it has been impossible not to notice that when I place a date and time next to a task it has a greater chance of being completed. This feature of human nature is underscored in this week's Torah portion, *Emor*.

In the course of the narrative God directs Moses to outline all of the dates and times of every holiday. (Lev. 23:1-22, et seq) It is quite instructive to see the progression of the pronouncements. Starting with weekly and monthly demarcations, the verses continue with yearly convocations.

From honoring Shabbat every weekend, the litany moves on to note the annual observances of Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. Our faith system then specifies a seven year cycle called *shemita*, when the fields are left fallow allowing the poor and the immigrant to sustain themselves. Moreover, a Jubilee (*yovel* in Hebrew) is called for every fifty years-all debts are cancelled by operation of law, and communal celebrations abound. There is one common theme and theological lesson underlying our liturgical calendar.

Adonai is trying to teach us that holiness occurs *when time is shared*. When we come together with the intent of perpetuating collective memory, or encouraging group gratitude, or asking one another for forgiveness, or joining in the acknowledgment of milestones such as life cycle events, and most especially helping each other help those in need, we feel the divine presence. Because the moment we are in a real relationship with people is the time we find the spirituality that the Almighty wishes us to seek.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Jack