

## **Celebrations, Rememberance and Symbolic Events of Ancient Israel and Modern Judaism**

Dr. Tahira Basharat ☆

### **Abstract**

The tradition of Saqi (bar tender) is a famous one in the classical as well as modern Arabic poetry. It came in the classical Arabic poetry from outside of Arabia. In ancient times, the poet who mentioned the wine in his poetry usually drank it in isolation. Then he started drinking with his wife and his slave girl or beloved. After sometimes, the poet began mentioning the slave girls or female musicians in his poetry. In the 2nd century of Hijrah, the Arabic society as well as the Arabic poetry was greatly influenced by the Iranian. In Abbasids' era, the concept of Saqi in the Arabic poetry was changed totally. Strangely, the mystical poetry also brims with the mentioning of Saqi but that is absolutely a different concept of bar tendering.

Almost the whole of Jewish history and teaching is embodied on its festivals, in which traditions are passed on from one generation to the next by means of stories, actions, symbolic food and singing. Most festival celebrations are based on the home and family, with the events of the past being re-enacted in a way that make them

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☆ Associate Professor, Deptt. of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

meaningful to present-day life. So, for example at Hanukah Jews remember the religious persecution of the past, but also that in the modern world.

In the Jewish calendar festivals are officially divided into "major" and "minor" categories. The five major festivals are those laid down in the Torah: the two Days of Awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and three joyful festivals, Pesach (Passover), Shavuot and Sukkot (Feast of tabernacles). Many of the minor festivals have also become popular and, some such as Hanukah, are celebrated more widely than some of the major festivals.

Jewish festivals are based on different and respective Jewish months. To expound on this, I have attached a Jewish calendar indicating the festivals celebrated in their respective months. Secondly most of the references have been taken from the holy Bible (Hebrew Bible and New Testament).

Hashanah: "head of the year" trumpets and usually considered the Jewish New Year. It is observed on the 1st day Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar as ordained in the Torah, in Leviticus; Numbers.(1) Hashanah commemorate the creation of man. A ram's horn the Shofar is blown every day in Elul, the sixth month of the Jewish calendar to call the people to repent and to start the new year afresh.(2)

On this day the burnt offerings were reestablished by the priest Ezra in the period after the Babylonian Exile. (3)

On Rosh Hashanah itself, religious poems called Piyyuttim are added to the regular services. Rosh Hashanah meals often include apples and honey, to symbolize a sweet new year. Various other foods

with a symbolic meaning may be served depending on local custom.

Yom Kippur also known in English as the "Day of Atonement"(4) is the most solemn and important of the Jewish holidays. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. (5) Jews traditionally observe this holiday with the 25 hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in the synagogue service .(6)

Yom Kippur has five prayer services. The services also include a public confession of sins. It is considered as the holiest day of the Jewish year. (7)

There are usually five additional prohibitions on the day of Yom Kippur. It is described as a solemn fast, on which no food or drink could be consumed, and on which all work is forbidden .(8)

Sukkot: The word Sukkot means "Booths" and refers to the temporary dwellings that they commanded to live in during this holiday in memory of the period of wandering .(9)

The festival of Sukkot begins on Tishri, the fifth day after Yom Kippur. It is quite a drastic transition from one of the most solemn holidays in our year to one of the most joyous. It is also called the (Fest of Tabernacles) .(10)

Sukkot commemorates the Israelites' forty years wandering in the Sinai desert. (11). this festival lasts for seven days. Families build shelter in the open air and fill them with greenery. Sukkot also celebrates the end of harvest. It is celebrated with special prayer service and holiday meals. Prayers during Sukkot include the reading of Torah every day, saying the Mussel service after Morning Prayer, reading the Hallel and adding special supplication into the Amidah and grace after meals.

Simchat Torah: "Rejoicing with / of the Torah" is a celebration marking the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings, and the beginning of a new cycle .(12) Simchat Torah is a component of the Biblical Jewish holiday of Shemini Atzeret, which follows immediately after the festival of Sukkot in a month of Tishri.(13)

The main celebration of Simchat Torah takes place in the synagogue during evening and morning services .(14) In many Orthodox and conservative congregations, this is the only time of year on which the Torah scrolls are taken out of the ark and read at night. In the morning the last Para Shah of Deuteronomy and the first Para Shah of Genesis is read in the synagogue.

Along with reading and singing, dancing also takes place.(15) As soon as the annual cycle of reading ends, immediately it begins again.

Hanukah: festival of lights is an eight day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem. It is also called the "Feast of Dedication" .(16)

In the second century BC, the Israelite Judah Maccabee defeated the Greek tyrant who had forced the Jews to abandon their religion. (17) The Temple was rededicated, but there was only enough oil for the Temple lamp to last one day, and it would take eight days to prepare a fresh supply.(18) The lamp was lit nonetheless, and miraculously it kept burning for eight days.

An eight-branched candlestick is lit for the festival, one candle burning on the first day, two on the second, and so on for eight days, celebrating the survival of the Jewish faith in adversity.(19)

Hanukah is especially popular with Jews in Europe and the United States, because it falls at winter holiday times and is celebrated as a children's festival.

TuB'Shevat is usually called the New Year for trees. (20) It is celebrated as an environmental festival. Families around the world may plant trees in their locality, or they may prefer to give money for reforestation projects in Israel.

Customs include eating dried fruits and nuts especially figs, dates, raisins, carob and almonds. In Israel the flowering of almond tree, which grows wild around the country coincides with Tu B'Shevat. (21) In the Synagogue, the penitential prayer of Tachanun is emitted on Tu B'Shevat. There are no special recitations or blessings in the synagogue.

Legally the New Year for trees relates to the various tithes that must be separated from produce grown in the holy Land.(22) These tithes differ from year to year in the seven -year Shemittah cycle; the point at which a budding fruit is considered to belong to the next year of the cycle 15th of Shevat.

**Purim:** It is also called the feast of Lots . (23) This celebrates the story of Esther, the Jewish queen of the Persian king Xerxes, who saved her people from destruction at the hands of the king's Minister Haman. People dress up in odd clothes for the synagogue service .(24) The scroll of Esther is read aloud, and every time the villain's name "Haman" is spoken, people attempt to drown out the sound by making loud noises.

Purim is also a time for other unusual goings on. (25) For example some prayer leaders will sing prayer in a way that would be

considered sacrilegious. In the synagogue regular collection of charity is made on the festival and the money is distributed among the needy.(26)

**Pesach:** Pesach which is sometimes calls Passover and "unleavened bread" is an eight day barley harvest festival; recalls Israelites Exodus out of Egypt.(27) Seder meal is eaten at home for eight days and families join together.

On the morning before Passover, the fast of the first born takes place. This fast commemorates the salvation of the Israelites first borns during the plague of the first born. In practice however, most first born only fast until the end of the morning prayer service in the synagogue.

The Israelites had to depart so quickly from Egypt that they had no time to bake ordinary bread, but made unleavened bread for the journey.(28) Only unleavened bread (matzo) is eaten during the eight days of the festival.

**Shavuot:** Shavuot also known as 'Pentecost' or the 'Feast of Weeks'; Shavuot combines a festival for the wheat harvest in Israel with thanksgiving for the gift of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. Children may begin their study of the Torah at this time of year, and the Book of Ruth is read aloud. Ruth is celebrated because she was a foreigner who was willing to take on a commitment to the Torah. (29)

Some Jews think or rather believe that this festival always falls on Sunday according to Jewish tradition, Shavuot is celebrated in the land of Israel for one day and in the Diaspora (outside of Israel) for two days.

Shavuot is also connected to the season of green harvest in Israel.(30) During the existence of the temples in Jerusalem, an

offering of two loaves of bread from the wheat harvest was made on Shavuot and the custom of all night Torah study still remains.

**Tisha B'Av** : Is an annual fast day in Judaism, named for the ninth day (Tisha) of the month of Av in the Hebrew calendar. The fast commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem, which occurred about 656 years apart, but on the same date. Accordingly, the day has been called the "Saddest day in Jewish history".(31)

The Tisha B'Av fast lasts about 25 hours, beginning at sunset on the eve of Tisha B'Av and ending at nightfall the next day. In addition to the prohibitions against eating or drinking, observant Jews also observe prohibitions against washing or bathing, applying creams or oils, wearing leather shoes, or having sexual relations. (32) In addition, mourning customs similar to those applicable to the Shiva period immediately following the death of a close relative are traditionally followed for at least part of the day, including sitting on low stools, refraining from work, and not greeting others.

The fast commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temples. In connection with the fall of Jerusalem, three other fast-days were established at the same time as the 9th Day of Av: these were the Tenth of Tevet, when the siege began; the 17th of Tammuz, when the first breach was made in the wall; and the third of Tishri, known as the Fast of Gedaliah, the day when Gedaliah was assassinated (II Kings 25:25; Jeremiah 41:2). (33)

From Zechariah 7:5, 8:19 it appears that after the building of the second Temple the custom of keeping these fast-days was temporarily discontinued. Since the destruction of Jerusalem and of

the second Temple by the Romans, the four fast-days have again been observed.

Torah study is forbidden on Tisha B'Av (as it is considered an enjoyable activity), except for sad texts such as the Book of Lamentations, the Book of Job, portions of Jeremiah and chapters of the Talmud that discuss the laws of mourning.

If possible, work is avoided during this period. Electric lighting may be turned off or dimmed, and kinot recited by candle-light. (34) Some sleep on the floor or modify their normal sleeping routine, by sleeping without a pillow, for instance. People refrain from greeting each other or sending gifts on this day. Old prayer books and Torahs are often buried on this day

## **Conclusion**

The ten main festivals of Judaism can be summarized in the following:

Rosh Hashanah is actually the anniversary of the completion of creation. It is celebrated Shofar blowing. Yom Kippur comes next as it is celebrated on the 9th day of Rosh Hashanah. Yom Kippur the day of fasting and praying and is considered the holiest day of Jewish year. It is also called the Day of Atonement. Four days after the season of rejoice usually called Sukkot in Hebrew arrives. It is the eight day fruit-harvest festival; commemorates the Israelites 40 years wandering in the Sinai desert. Book of Qoheleth is read. Simchat Torah is celebrated after Sukkot. It is basically the end of the annual cycle of Torah readings in the synagogue, and immediately begins again. Almost two days later Feast of Lights, Hanukkah is celebrated.



It recalls the rededication of the Temple. An eight branched candle is lit of this festival. TuB'Shevat is the next festival which almost comes after two months. It is the New Year for trees.

Feast of Lots is usually called Purim. It commemorates Queen Esther's defeat of a plan to slaughter all Persian Jews. Books of Esther's are read. Next comes Pesach, it recalls Israelites Exodus out of Egypt. Seder meal is held at home. Songs of songs is read. Shavu'ot is celebrated next. It is wheat - harvest festival; commemorates God's revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai. On this day book of Ruth is read. And the last festival Tisha B'Av is the major fast day. It is celebrated in remembrance of destruction of the two Jerusalem temples. Mostly book of Lamentations is read.

The Jewish is calendar and festivals have tremendous significance. It recalls the great actions of God in their history and reminds them of all He has done for them. He is the Lord of history. The holidays possess tremendous Messianic significance as well and highlight all that Yeshua has and will accomplish for them. They serve as excellent reminders for both Jews and Gentiles. But God has also used the holidays to preserve them as people, a preservation in which they should actively participate by continuing to observe the Jewish calendar.



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