

Sparks

by Rabbi David Aaron
*Founder and Dean, Isralight
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Dating the Divine Celebrating love

"These are the appointed holidays of G-d, holy convocations, which you are to proclaim in their appointed times." — Lev. 23.4

Henny Youngman, the comedian, once said, "I tried being an atheist, but I gave it up. There were no holidays."

What is a holiday really about? Is it the same as a vacation?

A vacation is a time to vacate, but a holiday is a time to celebrate.

To vacate means to take off, get away from the everyday and clear yourself out from the tensions and challenges of the daily grind. Perhaps you'll suntan on a beach, play golf or catch a good concert.

A holiday, however, is a holy day. It is not an escape from everyday life to paradise. Rather, it is a time to infuse paradise into the everyday. This is the power of celebration. My guess is that the word *celebrate* connects to the word celestial. And from a Jewish perspective that would make sense, because a Jewish holiday is a time to see the celestial within the terrestrial. It is a time to acknowledge how the Divine enters our world and meets us in time.

A Jewish holiday is referred to in Hebrew as a *Moed*. This actually means a date or a meeting. In other words, a holiday is a date with G-d. Why would you need to date G-d?

Even though my wife and I have been married for over twenty years now, we regularly go out on dates. Although we see each other daily, our profound connection often gets overshadowed by the hustle and bustle of life. Life sometimes gets in the way of love. And you forget how deep is your love.

When was the last time you noticed your breath or your heartbeat? Unless you lose your breath or miss a beat, these miracles of life often go unnoticed and unappreciated. It is precisely because they are constant and consistent that we forget them and lose the wonder they should inspire.

G-d is with us every moment of our life. Therefore, it is easy for us to forget that His presence fills the present. The holidays, however, mark special times in Jewish history where G-d's loving presence becomes dramatically obvious.

In fact, all the Jewish holidays plug us back into the drama of Jewish life. The sharp turns and striking contrasts in Jewish history inspire powerful clarity. Remembering what was in the past awakens us to see what is in the present and what *can be* in the future. The holidays empower us to recognize how G-d's love is with us all the time.

Each holiday celebrates a critical ingredient in the recipe for a loving relationship with G-d and our fellow man — freedom, responsibility, fallibility, accountability, forgiveness, spontaneity, integrity, wholeness, intimacy, anticipation, hope and trust.

Each holiday in the Jewish calendar is a date with G- d. They are opportunities to relive the dramatic events that occurred on those days and revitalize our love today.

Each holiday is a time to remember and celebrate G- d's timeless love for us.

Rabbi David Aaron

Author of Endless Light, Seeing G-d, The Secret Life of G-d, Inviting G-d In, Love is My Religion, Soul Powered Prayer, Living A Joyous Life, and The G-d-Powered Life