

The Jewish View of Time and Holidays – JewishClarity.com

Before discussing the specific aspects of any particular holiday, it is important to understand the uniquely Jewish perspective of time as well as holidays in general. The world at large views time essentially as a straight line. The present moment is a unique point along this line that never existed before and will never exist again. The past is completely finished and the future is yet to occur.

The Jewish model of time is a spiral. While time is certainly moving forward, it progresses ahead specifically through a seasonal cycle. Each year we pass through the same seasonal coordinates that are imbued with whatever spiritual potentials were initially established within them.

This is the significance of the Jewish holidays. They serve as signposts on the spiral of time to teach us which specific quality has been embedded into that particular season. When the Jewish people left Egypt at Passover time, for example, it showed us that both physical and spiritual freedom are incorporated within the fabric of every springtime. Whenever our cyclical journey through time encounters a holiday, therefore, we directly re-experience the quality of that time. In addition, whatever it is that originally occurred at that time actually occurs again every single year. Thus, every holiday is a metaphysical window of opportunity.

So, the key question regarding every holiday is — What is the particular opportunity that it presents us with? There are **three clues** which help us to uncover the meaning of each holiday.

First, what was the actual historical event that occurred the first time that this day was significant? And what was its **metaphysical impact** upon the Jewish people and the world? This is the most obvious question to ask. As we explained, it is specifically this metaphysical impact that recurs every subsequent year at the same time. This is what the holiday actually consists of.

Second, what are the various *mitzvo*t, Rabbinical guidelines, and customs of the holiday?

If the Torah or the Rabbis tell us to do certain activities or to refrain from others during the holiday, clearly these do's and don'ts are designed to help us access its opportunity. Even the customs, developed from the subconscious of the Jewish people over the centuries, are rooted in an awareness of the unique potential of these days. The more one understands the particular tools that are appropriate for each holiday, the more one will understand the opportunities themselves that these tools are designed to access.

And, finally, what is the name of the holiday?

Judaism views Hebrew names as having tremendous significance. Far from merely serving as convenient labels, Hebrew names both identify and express the underlying essence of whatever it is that they are describing.

{This happens to be true also with people's Hebrew names. In fact, Judaism says that in order for the parents of a newborn baby to choose the name which properly expresses their child's essence, they are given "*ruach haKodesh*" (a type of Divine inspiration) to help them.]

Concerned as we are with accessing the opportunities contained within each of the holidays, the names of the holidays are a valuable tool for helping us to understand the opportunities inherent in each one.

With these three clues to guide us, we can now begin to unravel the various layers of meaning and significance within each of the Jewish holidays.