

Abstract

The thesis deals with important and festive days in the Jewish calendar. It studies their origin both in historical context and in the context of celebrations and customs observed during the festivals. It deals with the festivals both from the religious point of view, i.e. religious commands and orders, and from the societal point of view where it aims at mapping the customs and traditions which are followed but which are not based on religious texts or rabbi tradition.

The scope of the text dedicated in the thesis to specific festivals does not strictly copy the religious importance or the popularity of a particular festival with Jewish population; rather, it is guided by the scope of historical background and customs followed in connection with the festival. As a result, some less popular festivals in the society are more prominent than it would have been expected judging by their importance.

The thesis presents individual festivals in the chronological order of the religious year, with the exception of Shabbat which is observed every week and Rosh Chodesh celebrated monthly. These festivals were included before other festivals and make up a separate chapter.

The broad scope of the thesis encompassing all festive days, including modern festivals, mostly established by the State of Israel, enables us to observe the efforts to include these festivals into religious rites and draw an analogy between the celebration of these modern festivals and traditional festivals based on religious texts. As an example may serve the Israel's Independence Day with its official liturgy or the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day with its reverent liturgy comprising gradual kindling of the candles of the seven-branch menorah and reading a chapter from a dedicated scroll after lighting each candle.

Key words

Judaism, Jewish festivals, Shabbat, Pesach, Sukkot, Shavuot, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Chanuka, Purim