

Tábor Béla:
About Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur and Chanukka: the two holidays symbolizing the two poles of Jewish faith. The first one is universal, not tied to anything specifically Jewish; the second one is specifically Jewish, although at the same time it is the holiday of the miracle: the holiday of the *growth of light*.

Yom Kippur is, albeit in an unspoken way (as the Name itself is unspoken!), also the holiday of resurrection. The holiday of death and of resurrection (of defeating death). That is what the Kol Nidre suggests too. It dissolves all vows, all obligations for the future: the same way as death dissolves and nullifies these. At the same time, it liberates the space of existence for new vows and new obligations: as does resurrection. As the day of repentance and return to faith, it is the dissolution of individuation and along with this, that of time; as the day closing the ten day cycle of the new year (עֲשֶׂרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה), it is the beginning of new individuation and of new time. This is the new year celebration of the *individual*, while Passover is that of the (Jewish) community: and that is the secret connection between the autumnal and vernal beginnings of the year starting with the months Tishri and Nissan respectively. The third beginning of the year would be Chanukka but that is an astronomical (hence physical-natural) new year, not considered a New Year in the Jewish religion.

Yom Kippur could – in compliance with the essence of the Jewish religion: in an unmythified way – correspond to the Christian holiday of Easter, but only if we mean the whole Easter holiday cycle starting with Good Friday all the way to Easter Sunday, i.e. “the third day”. In the Christian religion Good Friday–Easter is the holiday of death and resurrection, but – in compliance with the essence of Christianity – that of a mythified, individual death and resurrection. The springtime’s new year of nature, upon which as on all natural holidays Judaism bestows a historical content, is endowed with a mythological content in Christianity. Of course Judaism only bestows historicity on this new year of nature, just like on the other (the astronomical) natural new year at wintertime; for who ever could tell on what day the “exodus from Egypt” really “happened”, in other words the birth of Jewry as a people (not to even mention the historical event of Chanukka which is expressed via a mythical symbol from the get-go!). Chanukka goes as far as to emphasize the significance of this mythical expression when it inaugurates the holiday into the liturgy as that of “miracles”. But Yom Kippur is free of all such mythical symbols: it is not celebrated in memory of a mythical event – it is the day of the most acutely current present, the holiday of “repentance” of “atonement”. As such, it is the holiday of spiritual, pneumatological freedom: it reminds each individual of the possibility of freedom (of “existential” freedom). It points at the present and the future, not the past, but the field of present: a sphere of near-remembrance and near-anticipation. The “Sabbath of Sabbaths”: “Remember the Sabbath!” (= “remember the spirit”, the way The Two Paths of Jewry interpreted it) and תְּשׁוּבָה (= repentance, remorse) – וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי (he came to rest on the seventh day).

Translated by István Cziegler