

בסיעתא דשמיא
VOLUME 23
ENGLISH EDITION
תשפ"ז

פרדס חזק

A WELLSPRING OF CHIZUK

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שמחת תורה

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שמחת תורה - תשפ"ז

Entering Olam Haba in this World

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHMINI ATZERES AND SIMCHAS TORAH

The current season is of great joy for *Klal Yisroel*. Every child eagerly anticipates the extraordinary celebration that takes place during Simchas Torah.

Interestingly, Simchas Torah is not mentioned throughout the entire *Shas*, it does not appear in either *Talmud Bavli* nor *Talmud Yerushalmi*. It is only briefly referenced in one line of the *Zohar Hakadosh* in *Parshas Emor*. On the other hand, we recognize it as one of the most incredible days of the year, in which profound joy is etched into everyone of our hearts from early childhood.

Every *Yid* goes to shul; men dance alongside the *bachurim* and children, and even the women bring their little ones to witness the remarkable happiness of Simchas Torah.

SETTING ASIDE STRINGENCIES TO ALLOW FOR MORE SIMCHAH

In pre-war Europe, in the town of Stutchin, lived the renowned *Stutchiner Rebbe*, ZT"l. As one of the greatest *Galicianer Rebbes*, he led thousands of *chassidim*, including many distinguished *rebbeis* and *dayanim*.

When Simchas Torah arrived, a question arose regarding the *mechitzah*. While it met all *halachic* standards, the women in the gallery wanted a better view of the *hakafos*. This presented a dilemma given the strict stringencies practiced in pre-war Europe, particularly by these holy *tzaddikim*.

However, on Simchas Torah, the situation was reconsidered. They approached the *Stutchiner Rebbe*, who explained that Simchas Torah is unique. He advised setting aside these stringencies - provided everything

remains within the bounds of *halachah* - because witnessing the intense fire and joy of the *Yom Tov* provides women with strength for the entire year.

Even the women, who are not *halachically* obligated to attend *hakafos* on Simchas Torah, derive *chiyus* for the year ahead. For generations, Simchas Torah has profoundly remained a joyful time deeply engraved in our hearts.

SIMCHAS TORAH: A TASTE OF OLAM HABA

What is the major significance of Simchas Torah that makes this day so exceptional? For it is on this day, as the *Tur* notes, that we complete the cycle of the *Chamishei Chumshei Torah* by reading the final *parshah*, *Vezos Habrachah*. Just as we celebrate finishing a *masechte* in *Gemara*, we rejoice upon the completion of the Torah.

However, the Torah was originally given on the *Yom Tov* of Shavuos. While we certainly rejoice on Shavuos by staying up all night to learn and enjoy both dairy and meat meals, there is a distinction between the joy of Simchas Torah and the joy of Shavuos. While Shavuos is a joyous occasion, Simchas Torah feels uniquely superb.

The *Sfas Emes* cites his grandfather, the *Chiddushei HaRim*, who quoted his *rebbe*, *Reb Bunim* of Pshischa, stating that Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah serve to commemorate *Olam Haba*. This means that the specific, special atmosphere felt on these days reflects the feeling of *Olam Haba*. This is the incredible sensation everyone

feels during this time - an uplifting, indescribable emotion that is not felt the rest of the year and during other *Yomim Tovim*. Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah offer a feeling that transcends this world, which *Reb Bunim* identifies as *Olam Haba*.

Why is it that out of all the *Yomim Tovim*, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah provide the specific light that connects us to *Olam Haba*?

First, we must understand that Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are technically not part of Sukkos. They constitute an independent *Yom Tov*, as noted by the *Gemara's* acronym פ"ר ט"ז ב"ש"ק, representing six ways this time is distinct. It has its own unique *karban*, requires a new *Shehecheyanu*, and follows specific *halachos* that differentiate it from Sukkos. Therefore, while on the calendar it is connected to Sukkos, it stands as its own entity.

Conversely, it seems as a direct continuation. Immediately following the seven days of Sukkos, comes the *Yom Tov* of Shemini Atzeres. This suggests that Sukkos serves as an introduction to the extraordinary experience of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

SUKKOS: RECTIFYING THE SEVENTY YEARS OF LIFE

The *Chasam Sofer* explains that the seven days of Sukkos represent *Olam Hazei*, this world. Our physical world is structured in cycles of seven, with seven days in a week. After the seventh day, Shabbos, a new week begins, and the cycle repeats.

The *Chasam Sofer* adds that in the realm of holiness, every single day of Sukkos is equivalent to ten days. He explains that the seven days of Sukkos multiplied by ten, represent the lifespan of a person. The first day of Sukkos represents the first ten years of life, and so on. By multiplying the seven days by ten, we reach seventy years. Seventy years is considered the average lifespan of a human being, even if one lives longer.

The *Chasam Sofer* concludes that our *avodah* during Sukkos - through the *succah*, the *arba minim*, the *tefillos*, *Hallel*, and the celebrations - is meant to elevate us. Through these actions, we rectify all seventy years of our lives and draw down an abundance of blessings to sustain us throughout our entire life.

ON THE EIGHTH DAY WE ENTER GAN EDEN

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah is the point where we transition into the significance of the number eight. The *Sfas Emes* provides us with an incredible insight regarding this. The number eight represents the stage when a person departs from this physical world and enters Gan Eden. In other words, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah serve to inform us that having completed the work of the seven days of Sukkos - which symbolizes the seventy years of a human lifespan - we now enter Gan Eden. This implies that after concluding the seven days of the Sukkos *Yom Tov*, a person reaches such an elevated spiritual state that Hashem says, "*This is equivalent to your seventy years of labor, and I now want you to enter Gan Eden.*"

However, typically one enters Gan Eden after 120 years by ascending to the heavens. In this instance, we get to experience Gan Eden within this physical realm. It is a *neshamah* clothed in a physical body, existing in a material world. Now we can understand why Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are considered *Olam Haba*.

אך שמי: THE ONLY MITZVAH IS PURE JOY

The *Chasam Sofer* explains that there is something unique about Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: they have no specific *mitzvah* assigned to them. The *Yom Tov* of Pesach has numerous specific *mitzvos*: we eat the *matzah*, the four cups of wine, the *Haggadah*, and the entire *Seder*.

The *mitzvah* of Shavuot is to count *sefirah* beforehand. On *Yom Tov* we're commanded to bring unique *karbanos* specifically for the *Yom Tov* of Shavuot, such as the *shte'i halechem*. Additionally, Shavuot is the significant ceremony for bringing *Bikkurim* - the first fruits.

On Sukkos, we have the *mitzvah* of the *succah*, the *arba minim*, we say the entire *Hallel*, and the momentous *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeiva*. Yet, when Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah arrive, there is no specific physical *mitzvah* to perform.

The *Chasam Sofer* notes that the *Gemara* says, והיית אך שמח - and you shall only be happy. The word "ach," meaning "only," serves to exclude or minimize something. Asks the *Chasam Sofer*, what is the exclusion that is being minimized within this *posuk*? He

explains that it minimizes the need for a specific *mitzvah*; your sole task is simply to be happy.

On Simchas Torah - a day that reflects *Olam Haba* - we're in a position and setting similar to the greatest *tzaddikim*'s resting place in *Gan Eden*. In *Gan Eden*, there are no physical *arba minim*, no physical *succah*, or any physicality for that matter. In *Gan Eden*, the Torah and *mitzvos* exist on a spiritual level that is beyond our comprehension.

The *Chasam Sofer* says that correspondingly, on Simchas Torah, in our *Olam Haba*, there are no physical *mitzvos* either. The *Chiddushei HaRim* adds it is just like *Gan Eden* where everything exists on a much higher level.

The goal is, however, for us to realize the spiritual level we have reached. That is why regarding Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, the Torah says "Ach Sameach" - just be happy - eliminating the need for other *mitzvos*. Unlike other *Yomim Tovim*, now you are simply meant to be joyful and bask in the radiance of the *Shechinah*.

Such are the incredible days we are approaching; a time when the *Ribbono shel Olam* opens the gates of Heaven. Instead of us ascending to *Gan Eden*, Hashem says, "I am bringing *Gan Eden* down to you; to the physical world."

THE WEAPON OF JOY AGAINST THE YETZER HARA

Given the greatness of these remarkable days, we must ensure to take full advantage of these moments.

Throughout the year, a person faces many trials and numerous obstacles; there is a constant struggle with the *yetzer hara*.

He constantly tries to manipulate us. He attempts to convince us that our learning, *davening*, and *Shabbos* are not enjoyable. He tries to ensnare us by promoting *aveiros* and negativity as enticing and pleasurable.

So, how do we respond? The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* says that the way to wage war against the *yetzer hara* - to completely crush his influence - is to demonstrate how sweet, enjoyable, and full of light and happiness Torah and *mitzvos* truly are. The most effective weapon against him is to condemn him, saying, "What do you have to offer? *Aveiros* and bad *middos* are repulsive, while Torah and *mitzvos* are magnificent." As it says, פקודי ה' ישרים, משמחי לב - *the mandates of Hashem are upright, gladdening the heart*. The only source of true and eternal happiness is Torah and *mitzvos*.

INTERNALIZING AND SAVING THE LIGHT OF SIMCHAS TORAH FOR THE FUTURE

When do we demonstrate this to him? Certainly every *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. But specifically on Simchas Torah - a time we are filled with incredible joy as we dance enthusiastically - we must stop for a moment and reflect on how elevated we feel. Internalize the high spiritual levels and capture these moments. Let them sink in and compare if there is ever another time throughout the year when we experience such profound happiness.

No vacation or materialistic possession brings as much happiness as the joy felt on Simchas Torah.

Why are we so happy? Because we are experiencing a taste of *Olam Haba*.

In that case, how do we build and construct our *Olam Haba*? How do we increase and add to its size?

By broadening this *geshmak* feeling of Simchas Torah, the incredible joy, the remarkable positive emotions we feel on Simchas Torah. By devoting more effort to our learning, *davening* and elevating our *Shabbos*. By doing so, while we are immersed in the joy of Simchas Torah, we are essentially containing the light within a vessel.

The *Ramban* explains that it says in *Shir HaShirim*, *אם תעירו ואם תעוררו* - if you awaken or stir. If a person rouses within themselves, *את האהבה* - the magnificent light of affection and joy toward Hashem, *עד שתחפץ* - until it pleases. The term "Tachpotz" shares a root with "Chefetz," which signifies a *Kli* - a vessel. If you wish to seize a moment of joy and love to Hashem, place it immediately in a vessel to contain it.

What the *Ramban* is conveying is that as you are living through these extraordinary moments similar to *Gan Eden*, if we engrave these experiences into our hearts, Simchas Torah will last all year. When you will face the next *nisayon* - you will be equipped with weapons to battle the *yetzer hara* since you readied yourself on Simchas Torah.



Why is Everyone Dancing? Do They Learn So Much Torah All Year?

PART ONE

SIMCHAS TORAH VS. SHAVUOS: EVERYONE VS. ONLY THE TZADDIKIM

The *Yom Tov* of Simchas Torah differs significantly from the *Yom Tov* of

Shavuos, which marks the day the Torah was received. On Shavuos, despite everyone staying awake all night to learn, when it comes to reading the Torah and the *Aseres Hadibros*, the honor of the *aliyah* is

reserved for a distinguished individual. So too, when reading the *haftorah*, which discusses *Ma'aseh Merkava* and other profound concepts, the *poskim* state that the *aliyah* should only be given to someone truly worthy of it.

On the other hand, the *Rema* mentions our custom on Simchas Torah to grant an *aliyah* to every single *Yid*. To carry this out, we repeat the *parshah* of *V'zos Habracha* numerous times, a practice not done during the rest of the year. Nevertheless, on Simchas Torah, this is done to express our immense happiness and devotion to the Torah.

Furthermore, while children typically do not receive *aliyos* throughout the year, the *Rema* notes that on this day they each get an *aliyah*. Even infants and toddlers are brought under the tallis by *Kol Hane'arim*. Essentially, the joy of Simchas Torah includes everyone in the celebration.

ALL OF KLAL YISROEL IS INCLUDED IN THE JOYFUL DANCE

Additionally, on Simchas Torah we dance enthusiastically - an action not typically associated with Shavuot. Moreover, everyone joins the dance, including those who may not have learned with great diligence throughout the year. Even those who are not recognized as great *talmidei chachamim* participate in the celebration.

What defines this celebration? If you are not a *rebbe*, a teacher or you do not learn in a *kollel*, why are you dancing and rejoicing with the Torah in the same circle as the greatest *talmidei chachamim*?

What makes this question even more pressing is that during the celebration of *Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeva*, the *Gemara* notes that only the biggest *tzaddikim* would dance. As the *Rambam* clarifies in *Hilchos Lulav*, only the *gedolim*, the *Sanhedrin*, and the great *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* were permitted to dance. He notes that everyone else would simply stand by and observe.

Yet, on Simchas Torah, we observe a different reality. Everyone dances together; every last *Yid* is included in the circle. Why is this so, and how did we attain such a level of inclusion?

RECEIVING THE SECOND LUCHOS ANEW EVERY YEAR

The *Chasam Sofer* and the *Sfas Emes* discuss at length that every Shavuot, we re-experience *Matan Torah*. Though our physical eyes cannot see it, our *neshamos* perceive it.

Likewise, every year anew, we experience the receiving of the second *luchos*, which took place on Yom Kippur.

The first *luchos* were broken on the 17th of Tammuz when Moshe Rabbeinu descended and saw the actions of the *Yidden* in the *midbar*. (The *Rishonim*, such as the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, specify that it was primarily the *eirev rav* that sinned.)

When the *luchos* were broken, the physical fragments were placed in the *aron*, yet the letters ascended back to Heaven. Alternatively, as the *Rema Mi'Pano* suggests, the letters remain hovering, waiting for *Klal Yisroel* to

reclaim the broken pieces and reunite them through learning and *davening* so the letters may return.

Until that time, we lacked the first *luchos*. But on Yom Kippur, after Moshe spent three consecutive forty-day periods in Heaven, Hashem granted him the second *luchos* and declared: סלחתי כדברך. Furthermore, Hashem established Yom Kippur for all generations as a day of atonement for the *aveiros* of *Klal Yisroel*, as the *posuk* states, כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לַטָּהָר, *for on this day, He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you from all your aveiros.*

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND LUCHOS

The *meforshim* offer various insights as to what the difference is between the two sets of *luchos*. One key point is that the first *luchos* were intended for the *tzaddikim* who had never sinned. The second *luchos* were given to the *Yidden* after they had sinned. Despite their failings, Hashem said, "Because of your *teshuvah*, I am giving you the second *luchos*."

Although we are elated with the new set of Torah we received on Yom Kippur, the celebration must wait, since we fast on Yom Kippur. When Sukkos arrives, we follow the rule that one joy should not be mixed with another. Therefore, we must wait until Sukkos concludes. Once the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos ends, we are finally able to rejoice and hold a festive meal in honor of the second *luchos* and the Torah we received on Yom Kippur.

As we dance and celebrate Simchas Torah, we are hosting a feast for the

luchos given to those who did *teshuvah* - those who were broken or had a difficult past. We are celebrating the fact that we can rectify ourselves and that Hashem views us as His children, granting us another set of *luchos* once more.

A CELEBRATION FOR THE BA'AL TESHUVAH

Now it is understood why the joy of Simchas Torah affects all *Yidden*, as this day is specifically designated for us. It is for those who, despite learning throughout the year, may not have done so with the perfect diligence. It is for those who may have been distracted during their studies or perhaps failed to observe certain *mitzvos* during the year.

The reason we dance and celebrate on Simchas Torah, is because the *Ribbono Shel Olam* is informing us that despite our *aveiros*, if we do the right *teshuvah*, He will grant us the Torah once again.

The *Ribbono Shel Olam* is providing us with a second set of *luchos* simply because He loves us. Indeed, it is specifically designated for *Ba'alei Teshuvah*. This is the reason the entire *Beis Midrash* rejoices and dances excitedly.

This celebration surpasses Shavuos, as Shavuos marked the giving of the first *luchos*, which were intended for *tzaddikim* who had never sinned. Now, however, we are celebrating the second *luchos* that were given on Yom Kippur, which is intended for all of us, despite our *aveiros*.

May Hashem help us merit to dance and be joyful with the Torah, and in turn merit good children, life, and *parmassah*.



Why is Everyone Dancing? Do They Learn So Much Torah All Year?

PART TWO

THE SHOEMAKER'S PASSION ON SIMCHAS TORAH

On Simchas Torah, every Yid participates in the enthusiastic dancing. The Rav, the Rosh Yeshivah, the kollel yungerman, and even the businessmen - who might only learn at set times throughout the year - all dance together in one circle.

Whereas, by the *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*, only the great *talmidei chachamim* would dance, and as the *Rambam* notes, others were not permitted to join. They were required to stand to the side and observe. Yet on Simchas Torah, everyone joins in the rejoicing and the dancing.

There is a remarkable story told of the *Brisker Rav* that reveals the profound meaning of this remarkable *Yom Tov*. One Simchas Torah, in the city of Brisk before World War II, the local

shoemaker danced with an unusual, extraordinary passion.

Following the *hakafah*, the *Brisker Rav* questioned him as to the reason for his fervent dancing. He remarked that his dancing resembled that of a great *talmid chacham* who has completed many *masechtos*, and he wondered if perhaps the shoemaker was indeed on such a great level.

The shoemaker replied and explained that while reciting *Viduy* and the *Al Chets* on Yom Kippur he encountered one specific *Al Chet* and wondered why it was included in the list of confessions. We say, על חטא שחטאנו לפניך בכפת שחד - *for the sin we committed before You through bribery* - we ask the *Ribbono shel Olam* to please forgive us for accepting bribery while issuing a *psak* in Torah.

The shoemaker continued, "I could not understand why this was included in the *tefillah*. I am not a *rebbe* or a *dayan*,

in that case how does bribery apply to me? Then I realized that כל ישראל - ערבים זה לזה - *all of Klal Yisroel are responsible for one another; all Yidden are interconnected.* Therefore, if the *rebbe* was issuing a *psak* and perhaps accepted bribery, we must all recite and confess on his behalf because all *Yidden* are linked one to another.”

This was the shoemaker’s perspective on Yom Kippur. He then asked the *Brisker Rav*, “*Rebbe*, when it came to confessing *aveiros*, I was considered connected to the *rebbe*. My confession was valid for you.

However, when it comes to positive actions the reward is much greater. The *rebbe* learns all day, for many hours a day. If I am indeed connected to the *rebbe*, don’t I have a share in what you learn? If you are rejoicing with the Torah, I am not a part of that joy as well?” The *Brisker Rav* took great pleasure in the shoemaker’s words.

REPEATING KIDDUSH FOR ANOTHER YID

There is a *halachah* that when someone has already performed a *mitzvah* - for example, *kiddush* - and there is another *Yid* who has not yet recited it but finds it difficult to do so, you may recite *kiddush* again for him, and he thereby fulfills his obligation.

How does this work? If you are already finished with the *mitzvah*, you are exempt. How can you repeat *kiddush* again and the other person will fulfill his obligation through you?

The answer is that all of *Klal Yisroel* are responsible for one another; we are all

linked. Meaning, if that person hasn’t done the *mitzvah*, I am still involved. I am not an outsider; I am a piece of him. *Yidden* are tied together; we are not two separate entities. Since we are one, it follows that I can fulfill the obligation for him, just as a person can recite *kiddush* for himself. This all applies even if the other *Yid* is a great *tzaddik*.

THE GREATNESS IN OTHERS IS A REFLECTION OF SELF

The same principle applies when you enter a *Beis Midrash* and see a great *Rosh Yeshiva* or a prominent *talmid chacham* learning diligently. You might look at him with admiration and envy, thinking: he learns so diligently, he is such a *tzaddik*, he *davens* with such *kavanah*, and his *middos* are so perfect that the *Shechinah* seems to shine from his face. You might say to yourself, “Where do I fit in? I wasn’t made for this; I am not built for it.” Then the *yetzer hara* comes with its tricks and distractions to make you believe that this picture of a perfect, diligent *talmid chacham* has got nothing to do with you.

But such reasoning is not correct. Just as when you have already recited *kiddush*, you can recite it again to fulfill the obligation even for the most prominent *talmid chacham*. Why? Because you are not two separate people. כל ישראל ערבים - *you are connected.* It is exactly as if you are reciting *kiddush* for yourself. You aren’t doing it for a stranger; you are one.

The same link is applied when you encounter a *tzaddik* with excellent

middos, someone guarding his eyes, or guarding his speech and refraining from *lashon hara*, or maintaining his cool despite heavy circumstances. He is not a different person or a separate entity. What you are witnessing is actually a reflection of yourself within the form of another person. When observing something extraordinary in another *Yid*, it is because we are attached. Which means that any positive trait I notice in that person is something I also own; it resides within me.

We obviously must remain mindful; no one is required to become and turn into another *Yid*, which is why we all exist in separate physical bodies. As the *Gemara* notes, there are 600,000 unique ways of thinking and feeling, just as there are 600,000 distinct faces, teaching us that every person inhabits their own personal world.

Conversely, when it comes to success, to good *middos*, the strength to remain happy, fervent *davening*, learning diligently – all of *Klal Yisroel* possess the same universal energy. We are one.

DANCING IN ONE CIRCLE

This is the message the shoemaker conveyed. Just as on Yom Kippur we confess for each other's *aveiros*, on Simchas Torah we join in the same happiness. *Klal Yisroel* is one. It is not my duty to learn exactly the way another *Yid* learns or precisely how he *davens*. However, the inherent energy another *Yid* has when learning and *davening*, on his good *middos*, is something we all have for we are united. That's why we join in one circle and dance together.

May we merit to dancing joyfully in Simchas Torah and merit as Reb Hershele Lisker and the *Baal Shem Tov* say ימושו מפך ומפי זרעך ומפי זרע זרעך!

א חג כשר ושמח!

