

SHEMINI ATZERES
SIMCHAS TORAH

THE WEISS EDITION

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON
THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

HOLIDAYS: TISHREI

ספר זה נדפס ביוזמת וע"י
הרה"ת ר' **משה אהרן צבי בן מרים**
וזוגתו מרת **העניא רבקה רות בת צפורה**
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ווייס
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ימלא השי"ת כל משלותיהם לטובה ולברכה,
מתוך בריאות הנכונה והשלימה,
אריכות ימים ושנים טובות, והצלחה רבה ומופלגה
בכל אשר יפנו בגשמיות וברוחניות
ומתוך הרחבה אמיתית



ולזכות ילדיהם
שלום אליעזר, מנחם מענדל,
יונה מרדכי וזוגתו **בילא,**
חנה פערל ובעלה **שמואל יעקב** שיחיו

שיגדלו להיות חסידים יראי שמים ולמדנים
מקושרים לכ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
והולכים בדרכיו אשר הורגו נס"ו
מתוך בריאות הנכונה והשלימה,
ואריכות ימים ושנים טובות

תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מִוְּרָשָׁה קְהֵלֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Moshe commanded us the Torah; it is the inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov.

דברים לג, ד | Devarim 33:4

The Inheritance

“From the moment your son knows how to speak, teach him [the verse], ‘Torah tziva lanu Moshe...’” (Rashi on Devarim 11:19; cf. Talmud, Sukkah 42a).

Inheritance is spontaneous; to inherit requires no act or effort on the part of the heir. It is also indiscriminate—the age, maturity or mental capacity of the legal heir is of no significance; even if the heir is a newborn baby, they immediately and fully replace their ancestors as owners of the inherited property.¹ By beginning a Jewish child’s education with the message that the Torah is “the inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,” we are telling them that they, like every Jewish man, woman and child, without distinction, are natural and complete heirs to the entire Torah.

The first segment of this verse also conveys to the child the magnitude of his or her inheritance. “Moshe commanded us the Torah”—even the innovations and extrapolations of the Torah made by sages in future generations, and the secrets of the Torah that Moshiach will teach—are part of the very Torah that Moshe conveyed to us.² We thus hint to a child at the youngest age, “as he begins to speak,” that the Torah is

1. Mishnah, Niddah 5:3.

2. See Talmud, Megillah 19b; Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah 2:4, and elsewhere.

larger and more profound than any portion of it he will ever read or understand.

We thereby begin the child's life-long study of the Torah with the understanding that, at its core, the Torah utterly transcends our grasp and comprehension, because G-d has vested His very essence into it.³ The Torah thus contains something far greater than any words we can read and any wisdom we can explore: through our reading and study of the Torah we can connect with G-d Himself. And, as rightful heirs, this opportunity is the inheritance of every Jew, whether a young child just learning to repeat the Torah's words, or a scholar exploring its most profound ideas.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 4, pp. 1165-1167

3. See Shemos Rabbah 33:1.

וְלִכְל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל

...and all the great awe which Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel.

Devarim 34:12 | דברים לד, יב

The Climax

Based on the Sifri, Rashi interprets the final words of the Torah, “before the eyes of all Israel,” as a reference to one of the darkest moments in the Jewish people’s history: when Moshe reacted to the sin of the Golden Calf by smashing the Luchos “before their eyes” (as described in Devarim 9:17).

On its surface, the episode of Moshe breaking the Luchos hardly seems an appropriate conclusion for the Torah. Why end with an episode so uncomplimentary of the Jewish people, so uncomfortable for Moshe, and so irreverent of the Torah (embodied in the Luchos)?

The opposite, however, is true.

What was Moshe’s thought process when he broke the Luchos? The Midrash explains (see Rashi, Shemos 34:1):

“This can be compared to a king who went abroad, and left his bride with the maidservants. Because of the immoral behavior of the maidservants, she acquired a bad reputation. Her bridesman arose and tore up her marriage contract. He said, ‘If the king decides to kill her, I will say to him, “She is not yet your wife.”’ ...Likewise, the king represents G-d. The maidservants represent the eirev rav, (the “mixed multitude” who joined the Jewish people when they left Egypt and were

responsible for the making of the Golden Calf), the bridesman is Moshe, and G-d's bride is the Jewish people.”

If there ever was anyone who appreciated and cherished the Luchos and the Torah, it was Moshe, who merited receiving the tablets from G-d Himself. Yet, when Moshe realized that the existence of the Luchos—the “marriage-contract”—posed a threat to the Jewish nation, he immediately destroyed the Luchos to save the people.

The breaking of the Luchos thus demonstrates Moshe's true legacy—his extraordinary devotion to the Jewish people. Moreover, it reveals how cherished and important the Jewish people are—saving even a sinful Jew takes precedence over protecting the holy Luchos!

How fitting it is, then, to complete the Torah with a reference to this episode, which highlights the value of the Jewish people for whom G-d wrote the Torah, and whose greatness exceeds even that of the Torah itself.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 34, pp. 217-223

וְקִוִּינָה יוֹם טוֹב הָאֶחָדָה שְׂמִינִי תוֹרָה לְפִי שְׂשִׁמְחִין
וְעוֹשִׂין בּוֹ סְעוּדַת מִשְׁתֵּה לְגִמְרָה שֶׁל תוֹרָה

*We call the last day of the festival Simchas Torah,
because we rejoice and eat a festive meal to honor the
completion of the Torah.*

רמ"א, אורח חיים תרס"ט, א | Rema, Orach Chaim 669:1

Simchas Torah: The Festival of Ingathering the Torah

Why was the holiday of Shemini Atzeres designated as the time to celebrate Simchas Torah, our completion of the yearly reading of the Torah? Why was the completion of the yearly cycle not set for Shavuos, the festival of the giving of the Torah?

One explanation is that we celebrate Simchas Torah at this time of year in order to commemorate the “second Giving of the Torah,” the second Luchos that G-d gave Moshe on Yom Kippur. Since we “earned” the second Luchos through our repentance, the joy upon receiving the second Luchos on Yom Kippur is even greater than the joy of Shavuos, when G-d gave us the Torah the first time.

In addition to being a sequel to Yom Kippur, the celebration of Simchas Torah is also connected specifically to Shemini Atzeres, which, as its name—shemini, the eighth—indicates, is a continuation of the seven days of Sukkos.

One of the names of the holiday of Sukkos is חג האסיף, the Festival of Ingathering. Rashi explains: “For all summer the grain dries in the fields, and on Sukkos they gather it into the house” (Rashi, Shemos 23:16). According to the Midrash

(Yalkut Shimoni, Emor 654), that is why the commandment to rejoice on the holidays is repeated three times in the context of Sukkos, only once in the context of Shavuos, and not at all with regard to Pesach. The joy on each of these holidays reflects its timing in the agricultural cycle: a person's joy when his crops bud (in the springtime, Pesach) and when they are harvested (Shavuos) pales in comparison to his happiness when he gathers the produce into his home (Sukkos)—when it is ready and available for him to enjoy.

This cycle also reflects the spiritual significance of the holidays. On Pesach, our relationship with G-d began to bud, starting with the faith in G-d that the great miracles of the Exodus instilled in us. On Shavuos, we received the Torah and committed to observe it, but we had yet to incorporate the Torah into our lives fully—like harvested crops that are still in the field, waiting to be gathered. Our teshuvah on Yom Kippur, however, when we determinedly returned to G-d after having tasted sin and distance from Him, demonstrated that our attachment to G-d and the Torah is truly “gathered” and ingrained in us.

That is why Sukkos, the Festival of Ingathering, concludes with Simchas Torah, when we celebrate earning the second Luchos through teshuvah. After Yom Kippur and Sukkos, having fully “gathered” the harvest—the Torah and mitzvos—into our lives, now we truly have what to celebrate.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 29, pp. 231-235

שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תַּחַג לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ ... וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ שְׂמֵחַ

*Seven days you shall celebrate the Festival to G-d, your
G-d... and you will be only happy.*

דברים טז, טו | Devarim 16:15

The Holiday That Was Left Out

The Torah commands us to be exceedingly joyous during the seven-day festival of Sukkos. The obligation to rejoice on Shemini Atzeres—the eighth day of the holiday, however, is not stated explicitly. Rather, the Talmud (Sukkah 48a) derives this obligation from the extra words stated at the conclusion of the commandment to rejoice on Sukkos, “וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ שְׂמֵחַ—and you will be only happy.” As Rashi explains, “From here was learned that the evenings of the last day of the Festival are included in the obligation of rejoicing.” (Devarim 16:15)

The methodology of this Talmudic teaching is unusual. Generally, the Torah’s use of the word אֶךְ—only, in the context of any particular mitzvah, denotes an exception to the obligation stated there (see Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachos 9:7). Yet here the Talmud interprets the words “וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ שְׂמֵחַ—you will be only happy,” as extending the obligation to rejoice on Sukkos to include an additional day—Shemini Atzeres!

In doing so, the Talmud hints that not only should our joy and celebration on Shemini Atzeres be equal to our joy on the other holidays, it should truly exceed it.

How so?

The obligation to rejoice on the festivals has limits. In fact, the religious authorities are obligated to appoint patrolmen

on the holidays to see that the drinking and festivities do not get out of control, (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 529:4.)

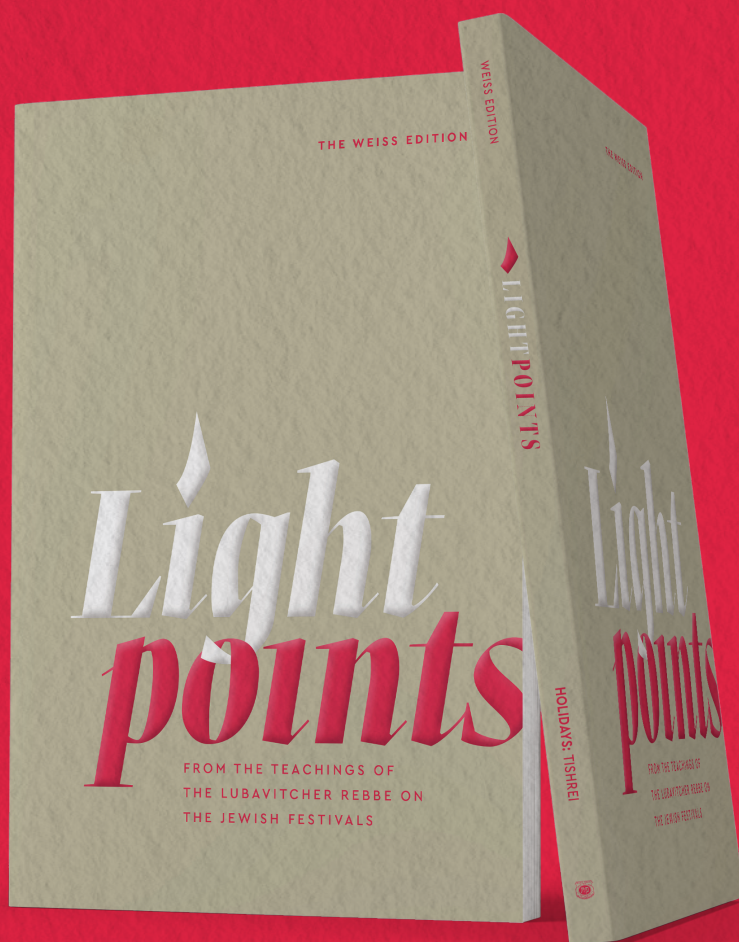
Accordingly, the phrase, “You will be only happy,” which indicates an exception to the rule, teaches us that there is a holiday when our joy must be excluded from the typical limited joy of the holidays; i.e., our celebration of this holiday must exceed our constrained celebration of the other holidays. Which one? Says the Talmud: Shemini Atzeres.

As such, the custom of Hakafof—dancing with the Torah scrolls, which has no parallel in any other holiday, is observed specifically on Shemini Atzeres (and Simchas Torah, in the Diaspora). For the holiday of Shemini Atzeres is to be celebrated not only in a manner equivalent to the other holidays, but with a joy that is truly boundless.

—*Sefer Hasichos 5749 vol. 2, pp. 661-662*

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