

Simchas Torah 2016

1.

Tiferes Shimshon (Vayikra page 249) “on the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation.” (23, 36)

What is so unique about Shemini Ateres? There is a big difference between Shemini Ateres and all other holidays. **On all other holidays we use mitzvah objects in order to reach a higher state of holiness.** Once Succos ends Hashem says it’s hard for me to separate from you. Hashem requests for us that we stay with Him for one more day. This is analogous to a train carrying passengers. There are other cars connected to the first car. The train’s power comes from the engine which is on the first car. If the second car gets detached from the first car, then it will not be able to travel anymore. This is also similar to a sick person who is hooked up to a machine to survive. That’s the potential danger of leaving this time period. We need to remain connected. That’s the Yom tov of Shemini Ateres. We decrease the mitzvah objects, in order that we will be involved solely with simcha. Shemini Ateres is a Yom tov that is filled only with simcha. The avoda is to come close to Hashem without any physical objects. We should fill ourselves with holiness that will last for the rest of the year. We must continue to go with the engine. We must live without being connected to any machines. This is the climax of the connection between us and Hashem. **This is the true test, coming close to Hashem without any assistance. This is preparation for the rest of the year.** This Yom tov is the end of the buildup of Yamim tovim. We need to prepare for the rest of the year. This is precisely what Shemini Ateres does. We need to realize we’re in danger and we need to prepare for regular weekday life.

2.

Beis Aharon (page 278) questions the text of the tefilah. We say in Shemoneh Esrei, השמיני חג, העצרת הזה. Really, Shemini Ateres is an independent holiday as stated in mesechas Suka (47b). This being so, wouldn’t it be more logical to say חג שמיני עצרת like we say חג המצות and חג הסוכות? Furthermore, since Shemini Ateres is an independent holiday, why is it called Shemini Ateres, which implies it’s the eighth day of Sukkos? **The Answer is Shemini Ateres is a double holiday. On the one hand Shemini Ateres attempts to stop (the root of the word עצרת, in עצרת שמיני עצרת is עצירה, which means to stop.). Shemini Ateres tries to stop and hold onto all of the positive momentum from the Suka and the daled minim. On the other hand Shemini Ateres is an independent holiday. It is called Shemini Ateres because it is a continuation of Succos. We don’t want the positive influence from these mitzvos to leave us. After wards we say חג הזה which alludes to Shemini Ateres being an independent holiday as well. Since this Yom tov has a dual purpose, therefore the wording in davening is different.**

3.

Beis Aharon (page 278) asks a question regarding the universal minhag (custom) to dance with Torah. **Why don’t we dance with the Torah on Shavuos which is the time we received the Torah?** (See Simchas Torah divrei Torah 2014 answer of the Dubno Maggid.) Our souls can

only truly rejoice after our sins were forgiven on Yom Kippur. This could be the reason why the sins of a groom and bride are forgiven. Their sins are forgiven in order that there will be a complete simcha. This is the explanation of the beracha שמחה רעים אהובים. Why is the word simcha used twice? We are requesting that we should have a double simcha, a physical and spiritual simcha. That's why we only dance on Simchas Torah and not on Shavuos. **We dance and rejoice since our sins are forgiven.**

4.

Darchei mussar (page 290, Rav Yaakov Nyman). **We see people who don't follow on the straight and correct path. They think the Torah is not real life. They think they are giving up their freedom by keeping the Torah. They are making a big mistake. The Torah does not deny a person from true life in this world. On the contrary, Torah gives life to those who learn it. The Torah knows what is best for us and accounts for everything, even for our yeitzer hara.** There is a right time for everything.

Parshas Ki Seitzei discusses marriage. When one first gets married he is not allowed to go out to war and he needs to gladden his wife. We see that the Torah recognizes relationships and the yeitzer hara. Someone who thinks about this will see how beautiful these pesukim are. When he sees how much the Torah cares about him and how the Torah cares about two people who want to rejoice together, he will come to love the Torah.

We find other examples about holy Rabbis who were so removed from physicality and they were like angels. In fact, the Gemara in Kesubos (17a) says they would dance in front of the bride in order to make the bride dear to the groom. This is an unbelievable concept, how much Chazal cares about the feelings of each individual.

Furthermore, the Gemara in Nidah (31b) says that mila is done on the eighth day in order to be sensitive to the parents. It would not be nice that while everyone is rejoicing the parents will be sad because they can't be together. (They are prohibited to have relations with each other for the first seven days after a child is born.) We see from all of the aforementioned sources how sensitive the Torah is. Even though the parents are so happy because of the birth of a baby boy, nevertheless, the joy is incomplete because they can't be together. The Torah wants there to be complete joy for the parents and nothing should detract from it. That's why the Torah says to do mila on the eighth day. We see how much the Torah cares about people and about their desires. Furthermore, the Gemara in Bava Metzia (32b) relates a case of someone who sees his friend who needs help unloading his baggage from his horse. He simultaneously sees his enemy who needs help loading his baggage onto his animal. Usually the Halacha is; if you have the option between unloading and loading you would unload first in order to remove the animal's pain. This case is an exception. The Halacha is that he must load the baggage of the animal of his enemy first. The reason for this halachic exception is as follows; it is in order to cause his yeitzer hara to like him more. Here we cancel and nullify the mitzvah deoraisa (Torah mitzvah) of צער בעלי חיים, causing pain to animals. This is done in order to uproot any hatred that we have towards that individual. Anyone who learns this will only have a love for the Torah in their soul and will learn how to have proper middos. This is a true Simchas Torah. **The Torah doesn't take away our freedom and life; rather it defines and gives us true freedom and life.**

5.

Rabbi Yerucham Olshin Shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beis Medrash Gevoah in Lakewood. Yerech Lamoadim Succos, maamar 90 pages 624-632.

The Pele Yoetz (Rabbi Eliezer Papo, erech chason) says **it's customary for pious men to increase their level of simcha and dance in front of the Torah. It is a segulah (omen) for them and their children to inherit the kesser (crown of) Torah.** Rav Baruch Beer as well says that in accordance to **the amount a person dances on Simchas Torah, will he merit the Torah.** The question arises; what is it about dancing with Torah that one will merit the Torah? Why will we merit the kesser Torah because of this? Furthermore, why is it that by dancing in front of the Torah, will his children merit the kesser Torah? Furthermore, the Yesod Vshoresch Havoda (shar 11 perik 16) says **someone who has proper simcha is guaranteed that the Torah will not depart from his children.** (The Minhag Yisroel Torah (siman 669 os 4) quotes the Shalmey Chagiga who also says that one who is careful to dance is guaranteed that the Torah won't leave his children. There was a Rav who had a lot of simcha when he danced and he had three generations of children who were big talmedai chachamim. Furthermore,) **the Chofetz Chaim would have a lot of simcha when he danced on Simchas Torah. He was involved in every Hakafa.** (Sichos Chafetz Chaim (chelek aleph amud 33 Os 28))

What is so important about dancing on Simchas Torah?

The Mishna Berurah writes (siman 669 seif katan 11) that one should sing and dance to give respect to the Torah as it says in safer Shmuel (beis perek 6 pasuk 16) Dovid danced before Hashem. We see that **when one dances it is in order to give respect to the Torah.** The Aruch Hashulchan (siman 669 seif katan 3) also writes that we dance in order to give respect to the Torah. Similarly, the reason that it is permissible to dance on Yom tov in this case is because we are demonstrating respect to the Torah. Even though (mesechas Beitzah 30, Shulchan Aruch siman 339 seif 3) there is a general prohibition to dance on Yom tov lest one make an instrument, in this case the Rama writes (Darchei Moshe, siman 669 seif 3 quoting the Maharik quoting the Teshuvos of the Geonim) that on Simchas Torah it is permitted to dance, and even older people dance, because it's in order to respect the Torah. Similarly, the Magen Avraham writes that **even though it's prohibited to dance on Yom Tov, it's permissible to dance on Simchas Torah in order to demonstrate respect towards the Torah.**

Rav Aharon Kutler Zt'l says for a person to merit Chachmas HaTorah (Torah wisdom) he needs to properly respect the Torah. With this we can understand the Gemara in Berachos (62a). The pusuk (safer Shmuel (alef perek 24 pasuk 5)) says "So Dovid arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe." The Gemara says that anyone who disgraces clothing will not receive pleasure from them as it says in safer Melachim (aleph 1, 1) "King Dovid was old, advanced in years. They covered him with garments, but he did not become warm." Even though Dovid went beyond the letter of the law by not killing Shaul, when Shaul was trying to kill him (Shaul incorrectly believed that Dovid was מוריד במלכות (rebelling against the king)), still, Dovid acted incorrectly by cutting Shaul's garment. (Some explain that Dovid cut the corner of the garment. Shaul was therefore wearing a four cornered garment without Tzitzis or he cut the corner of his garment so his garment was no longer obligated in Tzitzis.) Dovid got judged כחוט השערה (like a string of hair). **Someone who disgraces something even indirectly cannot get pleasure from it. The opposite is also true, one who honors something properly, even indirectly, can get pleasure from it.** If this is true by something mundane, surely it is so regarding something spiritual, such as Torah. **This is why we need to give respect to the Torah**

and only then will it give us life, wisdom, and siyata dishmaya (heavenly assistance). One who joyously dances will merit Torah because when one dances, he is respecting the Torah. The more respect one gives, the more he will get.

We will not only merit Torah knowledge by respectfully dancing. Another way we will merit Torah knowledge is by loving the Torah. The Gemara in Berachos (55a) quotes Rabbi Yochanan who says Hashem only gives chachma to someone who has chachma as it says in sefer Daniel (2, 21) “He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know how to reason.” Rav Chaim of Volozhin asks (Ruach Chaim Avos 4, 1), how did the first person get that chachma? It must of came from Hashem, so what does the Gemara and the pasuk mean when it says that you need to have chachma in order to receive it? We can answer based on a Rabbeinu Yona in Avos (4, 1). The Mishna says that a chacham is someone who learns from every person. (איזהו חכם? (הלומד מכל אדם. The Rabbeinu Yona explains that someone who knows a lot, but doesn't love learning, is not a chacham. Conversely, one who loves learning is a chacham, even if he doesn't know anything. One, who truly desires to become a talmid chacham, is called a talmid chacham. One who sincerely desires the Torah will become a talmid chacham because he will ask and learn from everyone. With this we can explain how Hashem originally gave the first person chachma, even though he didn't possess it yet. It must be that this person truly loved and desired the Torah and he was considered a talmid chacham. Since Hashem only gives chachma to someone who is a chacham, this person must have been considered a chacham and Hashem was able to give him chachma. **Someone who loves and truly desires Torah is called a chacham. It is retroactively considered as if he already has the Torah knowledge which he will acquire in the future.**

This is why through dancing we'll merit the Torah. **When we dance, we are expressing our deeper internal feelings and love for the Torah. Dancing reveals our true love and desire; we will therefore merit the Torah because someone who loves and desires Torah is considered a talmid chacham. He will always strive to grow and will be given more chachma! This is why it is so important to dance on Simchas Torah.**

The Avos D'Rebbi Nossan (perek 41) quotes Rebbi Shimon who says there are three crowns: crown of malchus (kingly hood) crown of kehuna and crown of Torah. The crown of a shem tov (good name) outweighs them all. However, unlike the crown of malchus and the crown of kehuna that only comes through inheritance, the crown of Torah is open for anyone who wants it. Whoever wants it can come take it as it says in Yeshaya (55, 1) “everyone who is thirsty, go to the water.” The question arises; why does the Avos D'Rebbi Nossan quote this pasuk? In order to teach us the main condition that is needed to acquire Torah; to be thirsty for it! According to this we can explain why through dancing we will merit the crown of Torah. **Our dancing will awaken within us a fire and thirst for the Torah!** This is how we will merit acquiring the crown of Torah.

We can now explain the aforementioned Pele Yoetz and Yesod Vshoresh Havoda who guaranteed that through dancing we will merit children who will become talmedai chachamim. The Gemara in Nedarim (81a) explains why sometimes the children of talmedai chachamim don't become talmedai chachamim. Ravina says it's because their parents don't say Birchah HaTorah. The Ran quotes the Rabbeinu Yona who explains that they certainly said Birchah HaTorah; rather, the Torah was not important enough in their eyes. They therefore didn't think it

was fitting to make a beracha. Since they didn't properly respect the Torah, therefore they didn't merit children who would become talmedai chachamim. In order for us to merit children who will be chachamim we need to respect the Torah. Our dancing on Simchas Torah demonstrates that we are honoring the Torah. The Levush (siman 47) writes that we must be very careful before saying Birchas HaTorah in order to show that the Torah is important. If we don't demonstrate the importance of the Torah and we treat the Torah like any other subject and don't get pleasure from the Torah, then we will not merit a chain of descendants who will learn Torah lishma (for its own sake) as the pasuk states in Yeshaya (59, 21) states "My words that I have placed in your mouth will not be withdrawn from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring." We say in the beracha of V'haarev Nah, once the Torah is sweet for us then our children will also know sweetness of the Torah as stated in the continuation of that bracha.

On Simchas Torah the radiance and passion emanating from Rav Yisroel Salanter was easily apparent. His simcha reached an extremely high level. However, at one point the Rav Yisroel sat on the side and started crying. None dared to ask why. Then a talmid muvhak, Rabbi Eliyahu Kratingar asked his Rebbi why he was crying. Rav Yisroel responded that the root of his grief is his simcha. At the time he realized how happy he really needed to be, he became very sad that he didn't keep the Torah property all year. After Rav Yisroel said this everyone started crying. Then Rav Yisroel Salanter got up and said now we can truly rejoice because we truly recognize and feel the pain of not fulfilling our obligations. Only someone who truly desires the Torah can feel the pain of not fulfilling his obligations.

Many people desire to learn, but fewer people have a true yearning. Rabbi Yaakov Weisberg and Rabbi Shlomo Heinemann both ask the same question on the statement "**Nothing stands in the way of desire.**" (אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון) **If so why doesn't everyone become great talmedai chachamim? Everyone has a desire to learn? They answer that only those who have a true desire will merit becoming a great talmid chacham.**

There was once a simple Jew who came in front of Rabbi Zalman Sander and he said he wanted to become a talmid chacham. Rabbi Sander asked him to tell him how much he really wanted to become a big talmid chacham. The Jew then yelled very loud I really want it. Only then did Rabbi Sander give him a beracha. In a short duration of time he became a big talmid chacham. What is the explanation, meaning why didn't Rabbi Sander just give him a bracha immediately? Rabbi Sander was trying to test if he really had the desire. Only once his desire was apparent, did he give him a beracha. (footnote 272)

Let's conclude with a true story. There was once a bochur who lived in Lakewood who was from family that didn't understand the concept of learning in Yeshiva. One day this bachur went into Beis Medrash Gevoah (the main Yeshiva in Lakewood where approximately 5,000 people learn.) in order to learn. To his regret and sadness, he was not accepted because he didn't know anything. Out of curiosity the Rosh Yeshiva asked him why he decided to learn at Beis Medrash Gevoah. He said the following; recently, on Simchas Torah I came to the yeshiva and I saw the boys and men dancing with a glow and with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. I said to myself, I want to be a part of this and learn in this Yeshiva. In the end he got accepted and became a big talmid chacham. He ended up marrying the daughter of the Rosh Yeshiva! He also

became a maggid shiur and became a huge talmid chacham! All this happened because he saw the dancing on Simchas Torah! This Yom Tov could affect us and others forever.

In brief summery if we have simcha and dance properly out of love and respect for the Torah, we and our children will merit Torah knowledge. The reason for this is as follows; the more respect we give the Torah, the more Torah knowledge we will receive. The Gemara in Sota (9b) says מידה כנגד מידה (measure for measure). The more love we show towards the Torah, the more Torah we will receive. It is considered retroactively as if we already have Torah knowledge which we will acquire in the future.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.