

## Simchas Torah 2015

1.

Otzros HaTorah (Succos pages 301-302) asks; why do we conclude and start reading the Torah on Simchas Torah which is on Succos? Why don't we celebrate Simchas Torah on Rosh Hashana which is the beginning of the year?

The Kaf HaChaim quotes the Levush who says that this is done in order to trick the saton. The saton won't know when Rosh Hashana is and therefore won't know when to accuse us since we push off finishing the Torah.

The Shalmei Tzibur says we lain Vezos Haberachah, which concludes with the blessings of Moshe. Shlomo Hamelech also blessed Yisroel on the eighth day of Yom tov. We want the brachos to be together, so we lain Vezos Haberachah on the eighth day of Succos as well.

2.

Mayin Hamoed (Succos pages 418-419): on Simchas Torah everyone, no matter who they are, gets together and dance together with the Torah. Why specifically now?

At this time we finish all Chumash. We all do shnayim mikrah. Therefore when we have completion, everyone is very happy. We dance to celebrate our completion.

It makes sense to do this for someone who finished the Torah. **But, why is someone who didn't finish anything celebrating? He is celebrating a new start! He is creating new goals and he is getting excited to learn!**

**(This is analogues to someone who is entering a pool. If he has a strategic plan of how many laps to do and what strokes he will do, then he will be successful. Before jumping in to the pool of Torah, we need to create realistic goals and we will be successful.**

The Gemara in Yevamos (121a) relates a story of a ship that Rabbi Akiva was on that was sinking. Subsequently, they saw Rabbi Akiva alive on the shore. They asked Rabbi Akiva how he survived. He responded that **he grabbed on to the 'דף' board, and floated ashore.**

**Rav Meir Shapiro explains the 'דף', is the 'דף' of Gemara. He held on to the Torah and he survived! Learning Torah is the way to stay shtark in the waves of this long galus (exile) and everything inappropriate around us!**

**Rav Chaim of Volozhin explains “עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה.”, “the tree of life to those who grab hold of it.” He says imagine you fall into a river full of rapids and at the end of the rapids there is a huge waterfall. And suddenly you see a branch sticking out. You're going to grab on to that branch as if your life depends on it! So too, we need to grab on to the Torah with the same conviction! Our lives depend on it! True, the Mechilta (parshas Yisro) tells us that כל התחלות קשות (all beginnings are the hardest), but the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (end of the fifth perek) tells us לפום צערא אגרא, (according to the pain is the reward.)**

**Every word of Torah by itself is a mitzvah as the Gra (Shenos Eliyahu quoted by the Chofetz chaim in his Toras Habayis and introduction to Mishna Berurah.) says.**

A maggid, asked the Dubno Maggid ‘why does everyone love you, but me, I try to do the same thing but no one cares?’ He said let me relate a parable. Two thieves stole shoes. One of them worried and sold them as soon as he could. The other was more patient. He fixed them up and got much more money for them. The Dubno Maggid said you just say it over without proper preparation. I, on the other hand prepare for hours picking the right parables!

At this new start, we have tremendous potential for growth and greatness.

What's hoshana raba? The Bnei Yissochor says that it is the sending of the decree. This is when the decree is being sent out, so we can still change the decree!!

3. Kuntros benyonai Simchas Torah and hoshana raba pages 77-78 by Rabbi Karelenstein:

Discusses the yesod (foundation/ main point) of hakafos. The Maharik says not to cancel any minhag (custom), because they all have a source. Even elderly people dance.

The Gra used to go in front of the Torah and joyfully dance. His face would glow like a burning flame.

It's printed in siddurim that before hakafos, we say with the strength of dancing, the iron wall between us and God should fall down and we should be surrounded by Torah and mitzvos. The Pri Tzaddik and the Shem Mishmuel say that the seven hakafos that we do with the Torah are similar to the hakafos of Yehoshua. Just as the walls of Yerico fell down and got absorbed in the ground, so too, our hakafos destroy the walls between us and Hashem. The Yalkut Shemoni also says that the purpose of the hakafos on Hashana raba are to commemorate when they circled around the wall of Yerico.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler explains the circling over there was to break the impure forces. Once the spiritual negative forces were broken, the wall was able to fall down.

We do this as well, when we do our hakafos. Since this day we need to reach completeness, we have an obligation to destroy these negative forces. Once this is accomplished, we can dwell in close proximity to Hashem.

On Succos we take the lulav and circle around the Torah by the Bima. Conversely, on Simchas Torah we take the Torah and circle the Bima. **The primary purpose of the circling we do on Simchas Torah is to unite with the Torah and with Hashem. An emes (true/real) talmid chacham makes the Torah a part of his bones, blood and soul. A talmid chacham is a walking sefer Torah. This is why we take the sefer Torah; in order to allude to the concept that we must work on ourselves to become a walking sefer Torah.**

This is the explanation of the Gemara in Makkos (21b) how foolish are people who stand up when a Torah enters, but who don't stand up when a talmid chacham enters. The explanation of this Gemara is that the talmid chacham and the sefer Torah are really the same! This is the main avoda (service) of hakafos.

4.

Beis Aharon pages 277-278: Rabbi Shlomo Horowitz.

The pasuk in Devarim (16, 15) says "והיית אך שמח." "and you will be completely joyous." The Gemara in Suka (48a) says this pasuk comes to include the last day of Succos, that there will be joy.

The question arises; how is chazal including from the word "אך". אך always excludes something, not includes as stated in mesechas Pesachim (5a)? The Gra says that "אך" is really coming to exclude. On Succos we have the mitzvos of Daled minim and Suka in addition to rejoicing.

Dissimilarly, on Shemini Ateres we only have rejoicing, not Suka and Daled minim.

The question on the Gra is; the simple explanation is that the Gemara is coming to include something that didn't exist? The Gemara in Pesachim (102b) says we don't do mitzvos in bundles. (אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק לפי שאין עושין מצות חבילות חבילות.)

Why not? The Rashbam explains that when we perform two mitzvos at once it looks like a burden. Tosefos (Moed katan 8b) says at the time of mitzvos you need to focus on that mitzvah and nothing else matters (אין עושין מצות חבילות דבעינן שיהא לכו פנוי למצוה אחת ולא יפנה עצמו הימנה). Since we can only think about one thing at a time, therefore we don't do mitzvos in bundles.

The pasuk in Tehelim (109, 4) says "but I was prayer" "ואני תפלה." Dovid Hamelech was so focused on davening that he actually became tefila. When we say berachos or daven we must be careful not to even think about Torah. On Succos, when we have all three mitzvos, we don't have the real ability to focus all of our energy on just being happy. We can't have complete happiness.

**Conversely, on the last days of Yom Tov, when we don't have Suka and Daled minim, it is possible to rejoice wholeheartedly while we solely focus on simcha. This is the explanation of "והיית אך שמח." "and you will be completely joyous." The word "אך" is excluding the two mitzvos as the Gra explained. By excluding those mitzvos, we have the ability to reach a higher level of joy on the last day of Yom tov.**

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.