

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON SHMINI ATZERES  
SIMCHAS TORAH

V'ZOS HBRACHA - 5765

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From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [[feedback@kby.org](mailto:feedback@kby.org)] Sent: October 04, 2004 To: KBY Eparsha Subject: Simchat Torah  
SIMCHAT TORAH CHATAN TORAH AND CHATAN BEREISHIT  
RAV BENZION ELGAZI SHLITA

On Simchat Torah, Jews customarily call up to the Torah a Chatan Torah and a Chatan Bereishit. The Chatan Torah is the person who finishes the reading of the Torah, and he is the last person to receive an aliya in Sefer Devarim. After him comes the Chatan Bereishit, who receive the opening aliya in Sefer Bereishit. This marks the beginning of the Torah, and he reads the seven days of Creation.

The source for this custom is found in the Gemara: "The last eight verses in the Torah are read by an individual". (Menachot 30a) Rashi writes there: "They are read by one person without any break between them." The Rambam writes: "It is permissible to read them in the synagogue with less than ten [Jews]." The Mordechai writes: "An 'individual' refers to a Torah scholar, for a Torah scholar is called a 'unique individual.'" The Mordechai's explanation is brought in the Darchei Moshe on the Tur. However, the Darchei Moshe adds that today, since the Chazan reads everything, there is no reason to hesitate over whom should receive the aliya because only the Chazan reads [The Torah]. The Knesset Hagdola writes that the custom of selling the Chatan Torah was cancelled. Instead, the Chatan Torah is chosen from the leaders of the congregation, because it is only fitting that someone who is great in Torah should be chosen as Chatan Torah. At the very least, he should be a leader of the congregation. Eliyahu Rabbah quotes his explanation and adds that it is difficult for him to cancel the custom of selling the Chatanim because if he were to do so it would only cause arguments, because every person would argue that he is great in Torah and that he is a leader. The Shaar Efrayim also writes that it is not fitting to appoint a Chatan Torah who is a minor. Yet, many places take pride in honor of finishing the Torah and make a special point of appointing a decent Torah scholar. At any rate, he should be respected and a leader in his community because of his importance and wealth, and it is fitting to do so.

Regarding the Chatan Bereishit, Yesod Veshoreh Ha'avodah writes: A person should try and acquire for himself the honor of a 'Chatan Torah,' and if he is unable to receive 'Chatan Torah' then he should try and acquire the honor of 'Chatan Bereishit'. He supports his ruling, that Chatan Torah is preferable, from the Mordechai's explanation on the Gemara in Menachot 30a, which was mentioned previously: "The last eight verses in the Torah are read by an individual", whereas this saying does not apply to the beginning of the Torah. The Shaarei Chaim (on the Shulchan Aruch, Shaar 8) also supports this. He writes that he heard

from his rabbi and teacher, Rav Hillel from Kalamai who said that even those who are meticulous are only careful to appoint a Torah Scholar for Chatan Torah, but not for Chatan Bereishit. (This is according to the Rama in Yoreh Deah 246.)

Yet, the Likutei Mahariach writes that there are many leading rabbis who insist specifically on being Chatan Bereishit. This was the custom of the great and holy Rabbis, the Admorim of Zanz and Meziditshov. Kenaf Renana, in his responsa, also writes that it was customary to give the leader of the congregation and head of the beit din Chatan Bereishit and not Chatan Torah.

The Mishmeret Shalom writes: Regarding chatanim, there are those who prefer Chatan Torah and there are those who prefer Chatan Bereishit.

Various Jewish Customs on Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereishit  
There are communities that customarily honor grooms to be Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereishit, because a groom is compared to a king. However, the groom must know how to lain. This applies only to a groom in the week before his wedding because then he is also called a groom. (Eliyahu Rabbah, Bikkurei Yaakov)

- There are places that customarily honor young scholars that are in their first year of marriage. (Moed L'kol Chai 25)

- There are those who say that the Chatan Torah brings Torah and the Chatan Bereishit brings wealth. For this reason the Rav of Karitz was careful not to honor a miser with Chatan Bereishit, because it is written "A generous person – he will be blessed."

- There are those who spread out a Tallit when the Chatan Torah goes up to the Bimah and dance and sing before him. There are places in which prominent members of the congregation accompany the Chatanim. There are those who customarily place on their heads the crowns of the Torah scrolls, and none protest them.

- It is customary for the person who finishes and the person who begins to pledge money to the synagogue and to sponsor a Kiddush in honor of the finishing and beginning of the Torah (Tur, Rama). This is because it is likened to a Siyum of a Tractate in which it is customary to make a Seudat Mitzvah. The Taz explains (Yoreh Deah 245) that we learn this from King Shlomo who did the same in honor of the Torah, as it says: "[Solomon] came to Yerushalayim and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the L-rd and brought up elevation-offerings and offered peace-offerings; and he made a feast for all of his servants." (Melachim I 3:15). R. Elazar says: From here we learn that a banquet is made for finishing the Torah." (Midrash Rabbah, Shir Hashirim, Parsha 1)

- Sefer Harokeach (371) writes that although on account of the renewed joy of finishing the Torah and beginning it over again the Shehechyanu blessing should be said, it is not our custom.

- Even though two brothers or a father and son should not receive an aliya one after the other, they can still be Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereishit because they read in two separate books.

- The idea of marriage is communicating and joining with the heart and soul. Chatanei Torah are messengers of the congregation to demonstrate to the people continuous dedication to the Torah, an aspect of "I betrothed you forever." (Hoshea 2:21)

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From: Rafael Salasnik [[rafi@brijnet.org](mailto:rafi@brijnet.org)] Sent: October 05, 2004 To: [daf-hashavua@shamash.org](mailto:daf-hashavua@shamash.org) Subject: daf-hashavua Shemini Atzeret 5765/2004 Shmini-Atzeret-5765 U N I T E D S Y N A G O G U E - L O N D O N (O) Shemini Atzeret Vol 17 No 4& October 2004 22 Tishri 5765 THE ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED BY: BRIJNET - British Jewish Network - UK branch of Shamash

## MASHIV HARUACH

BY RABBI DANIEL ROSELAAR, Belmont United Synagogue

Water plays an important role in the festival of Sukkot. In Temple times special waterofferings were poured on the altar and festive celebrations would accompany the water-drawing rituals each night, and according to the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:2) G-d decides on Sukkot how much rain will fall during the course of the year.

Accordingly it would make sense to begin praying for rain on Sukkot, though this is delayed until Shemini Atzeret when the mitzvah of sukkah is no longer applicable, since rain would preclude the fulfilment of that mitzvah.

The phrase Mashiv Haruach U'morid Hagashem - which is really a seasonal reference to G-d's role as provider of rain, rather than an actual prayer for rain - is inserted into the second brachah of the Amidah from the Musaf service on Shemini Atzeret until Musaf on the first day of Pesach. In most congregations the Chazzan's formal introduction of this phrase into the prayers is recited as part of the repetition of the Amidah on Shemini Atzeret (and thus, unless an announcement is made reminding congregants to say Mashiv Haruach, individuals should not add this phrase until the Mincha service). However, in some communities (particularly in Israel) these prayers precede the congregation's silent Amidah.

The recitation of Mashiv Haruach is regarded as a critical part of the Amidah during the autumn and winter months and thus if it is omitted the Amidah must be repeated. If a person is in doubt whether or not he said this phrase, during the first thirty days he must assume that he erred and omitted it, whilst subsequently he may assume that he has become accustomed to saying it and that he did insert it.

## THE PRAYER FOR RAIN

The Importance of Unity

RABBI GIDEON SYLVESTER, Radlett Synagogue.

When I was a little boy, twice a week my school took us to play football in the freezing cold and rain. It was an unbearable experience. I remember at the end of each afternoon the horror of struggling to do up my shirt buttons with half frozen hands as the teacher threatened we would miss the coach home and be left stranded on the icy terraces of the school playing fields. It was a childhood nightmare, until one day I discovered the prayer for rain. Every Monday and Wednesday, I would fervently pray for enough rain in a small corner of Edgware to waterlog the pitch and save me from that humiliating experience.

Looking back, I realise that my prayers were not only a little naive; they were also rather selfish. Jewish prayer is not meant to be egotistical. The Talmud rules that when we pray, we should never pray in the singular, but always use the plural; when speaking to G-d, it is inappropriate to think only of ourselves, we should think of others too.

Prayer should sensitise us to the people around us and to our G-d and this theme is found in the prayer for rain. Rashi explains that one reason that G-d chose the land of Israel for our people is that it is a place where water is scarce. Our people will constantly have to pray for this precious resource and so we will always be reminded of the G-d who sustains the world. This in turn should affect our behaviour turning us into more caring, spiritual people.

The prayer for rain which we say on the eighth day of Sukkot is perhaps the most democratic of our prayers. Even when we reach the end of Succot, we do not request rain immediately, we merely mention it in our prayers. Only fifteen days later does the request kick in and later still in the Diaspora. The reason is that in Temple times, Succot was a pilgrim festival when the entire Jewish people headed for Jerusalem to offer prayer and sacrifices to G-d. For some people, there was a long journey home. It would be insensitive for the community to pray for rain whilst these people were still trekking across the land of Israel and so the entire

community waited until the last travellers had reached their destination beyond the river Euphrates before requesting rain.

On Shemini Atzeret, therefore, we do not pray for rain, we simply mention the rain in our prayers as an introduction to the ultimate request. But if Jewish days start at night, why do we only start reciting the prayer at Musaf? Wouldn't it make more sense to say it when the day starts on the preceding evening? The answer given by Rabbenu Asher is that in the evenings only a few people come to Shul. Were we to begin our prayer for rain at night, confusion and division would split the community with some people including the rain in their prayers with others ignoring it. Even if we were to delay saying the prayer until Shacharit this would still not alleviate the problem since some people would imagine that they should have recited it the night before and this would create confusion. Therefore, for the sake of unity, we all delay reciting the prayer for the first time until Musaf. Even then, we do not mention the rain until the Chazan has announced it. The whole community must pray together in unison.

I find this an extraordinary and beautiful Halachah. It states that it is of paramount importance that the whole community pray together. We must sacrifice the recital of the prayer on the preceding evening to ensure that everyone can say the prayer simultaneously. Even when everyone has arrived in Shul for Musaf, we still do not mention the rain in our prayers until we have received our instructions from the person leading the service to ensure that it is truly a communal prayer.

It seems to me that the laws governing the prayer for rain teach us a powerful lesson. Many of our communities are undergoing a religious revival with more people learning about Judaism than ever before. It is easy for small cliques to dominate our shuls, ignoring the needs of the rest of the congregation. The prayer for rain reminds us that we have a constant responsibility to the whole community, those who live near and far, those who are religious and those who are not. Our shuls must be welcoming to them all and everyone must feel at home in our synagogues.

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From: Jeffrey Gross [[jgross@torah.org](mailto:jgross@torah.org)] Sent:., September 29, 2004 To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Chol Hamoed Succos - Eiruv Tavshilin

WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5765

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav

EIRUV TAVSHILIN: WHY and HOW?

When Shabbos falls immediately after Yom Tov, or when the second day of Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, a Rabbinic ordinance prohibits cooking or baking on Yom Tov for Shabbos unless an eiruv tavshilin was prepared on erev Yom Tov.(1)The Talmud offers two explanations for this ordinance(2):

1. To guard the honor of Shabbos. The rabbis feared that when Yom Tov falls on Friday, one may become so preoccupied [on erev Yom Tov] with his Yom Tov needs that he will neglect his Shabbos preparations.

Thus they required that a token Shabbos food be prepared before the onset of Yom Tov. (3)

2. To guard the sanctity of Yom Tov. The rabbis feared that were it permitted to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos without making a manifest sign that the cooking is being done for Shabbos, some people might assume that it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov even for the weekday, which is strictly forbidden. The purpose of the eiruv, then, is to serve as a reminder that on Yom Tov it is permitted to cook only for Shabbos and not for weekday.

#### THE BASIC REQUIREMENT - L'CHATCHILAH

\* Two types of food, one cooked and one baked,(4) are set aside. They are held in the right hand<sup>5</sup> and, while standing,(6) the blessing - followed by the appropriate text - is recited.

\* Since the meaning of the text must be understood in order for the eiruv to be valid, the text should be recited in a language that one understands. (7)

\* The eiruv should be held the entire time while one is reciting the blessing and the text.(8)

\* The cooked food should be at least a k'zayis. The baked food should be at least a k'beitzah.

\* The cooked food should be the type of food which is served as a main dish, e.g., meat, fish or eggs. Desserts may not be used.(9)

\* The cooked food should be refrigerated so that it does not spoil. If it rots, then it is considered as if no eiruv was made.(10)

\* Traditionally, the eiruv is prepared and the blessing and text recited on the day of erev Yom Tov. Some poskim permit the eiruv to be made on the night before erev Yom Tov,(11) while others allow this only under extenuating circumstances.(12)

#### THE BASIC REQUIREMENT - B'DIAVAD

\* B'diavad if the eiruv is made using a cooked item only, or if only a cooked food is available, the eiruv is valid - even for baking.(13) The reverse, however, does not hold true.

\* If the proper blessing is omitted but the text is recited, the eiruv is valid.(14)

\* If the proper text is omitted it is questionable whether the eiruv is valid. If one remembered before Yom Tov that he omitted the proper text, he should repeat the process, reciting the text without repeating the blessing.<sup>15</sup> If he remembered only after the onset of Yom Tov, he should consult a rabbi.

#### HIDDUR MITZVAH

There are several ways one can perform the mitzvah of eiruv tavshilin in a more enhanced way. The following are considered hiddurim:

\* The cooked food should be specifically cooked on erev Yom Tov for Shabbos and for eiruv tavshilin.(16)

\* The cooked food should be a sizable portion.(17) Others suggest that it should be a k'beitzah.(18)

\* The cooked food should be either meat or fish.(19)

\* The baked food should be whole, e.g., a whole challah or matzah.(20)

\* The challah or matzah should be used for lechem mishneh on Friday night and Shabbos morning, and broken and eaten at seudah shelishis.(21)

\* The cooked food should be eaten at one of the Shabbos meals.(22)

#### GENERAL NOTES

L'hatchilah, all the food that is prepared on Yom Tov for Shabbos should be edible on Yom Tov.<sup>23</sup> This includes hot water which is boiled for Shabbos. B'diavad, or under extenuating circumstances, it is permitted to cook on Friday for Shabbos even if the food will not be edible by the time Shabbos arrives.<sup>24</sup>

When the first day of Yom Tov falls on Thursday, the cooking for Shabbos may not take place on Thursday.(25) It may, however, begin on Thursday night, which is already the second day of Yom Tov.(26)

Only one eiruv tavshilin per household is required. It includes all of the people who reside in the house, including married children and guests who are spending the Yom Tov as part of that household.(27)

Eiruv tavshilin is required not just for cooking and baking but also for any food-related activities that are needed for Shabbos, e.g., grinding, choosing, insulating, carrying, washing dishes and lighting candles. One who failed to make an eiruv tavshilin cannot do any of these activities on Yom Tov for Shabbos. A person [or a household] who is not planning to cook or prepare anything on Yom Tov for Shabbos is not required to make an eiruv tavshilin.(28)

#### IF NO EIRUV WAS MADE

One who forgot to prepare an eiruv tavshilin on erev Yom Tov before sunset may not cook on Friday for Shabbos. There are several strategies that can rectify this oversight, but they are too complex to fully describe here and should only be implemented with rabbinic guidance. Under certain circumstances one may(29):

\* Make an eiruv tavshilin after sunset during bein ha-shemashos.(30) Once Ma'ariv was recited, however, an eiruv tavshilin cannot be made.

\* Make an eiruv tavshilin while in shul even though he does not have immediate access to cooked food.(31)

\* Make an eiruv on the first day of Yom Tov [except Rosh Hashanah] which falls on a Thursday.(32)

\* Rely on the rabbi's eiruv which is intended to include all those who inadvertently forgot or were unable at the last minute to make an eiruv. (33) This cannot be relied upon for one who did not make an eiruv due to negligence.(34)

\* Cook extra food for Yom Tov so that he will have food left over for Shabbos.(35)

\* Give his raw ingredients to another person [who made an eiruv] to cook, and that person will cook for him. The cooking may take place in the house of the one who did not make an eiruv.(36)

FOOTNOTES: 1 Min ha-Torah there is no restriction on cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos for either one of the following two reasons: 1) Shabbos and Yom Tov are considered as one day [as Yom Tov is also called Shabbos in the Torah]; just as it is permitted to cook for Yom Tov it is permitted to cook for Shabbos. 2) Even though one is really cooking for Shabbos, were unexpected company to show up, the food could be used for the guests. In essence, therefore, one is really cooking "for a Yom Tov need"; see Pesachim 46b for a thorough treatment of this complex issue. 2 Beitzah 16b. In practical halachah, however, the second reason is the dominant one; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 527:67. 3 Our explanation follows the Meiri. See Rashi and Ran who give different explanations. 4 The cooked item is to permit cooking on Yom Tov and the baked item is to permit baking. One who is not planning to bake for Shabbos does not need to prepare a baked food for eiruv tavshilin (Mishnah Berurah 527:6). It is customary, however, to use a baked food for eiruv tavshilin regardless. 5 Mishnah Berurah 206:18. 6 Mishnah Berurah 8:2. 7 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 527:55. 8 Based on Teshuvos Maharsham 2:36. 9 Based on Beir Halachah 527:5. 10 Aruch ha-Shulchan 527:13. See note 110 for possible options. 11 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, Koveitz Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov, vol.1, pg. 216). 12 Harav S. Wosner (quoted in Eiruv Tavshilin ha-Aruch 2 16:3). 13 Mishnah Berurah 527:7. 14 Mishnah Berurah 527:64. 15 Ibid. 63. 16 Beir Halachah 527:6 and 14 (s.v. l'hatchilah). The baked item, however, does not need to be especially baked for Shabbos. 17 Mishnah Berurah 527:8. 18 Eishel Avraham 527:7. 19 Harav S. Wosner (Koveitz mi-Beis Levi 1, pg. 52). 20 Ibid. 21 Mishnah Berurah 527:11;48. 22 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Tikunim u'Miluim 2, note 35). 23 In order to satisfy the second reason quoted above in note 82. 24 Mishnah Berurah 527:3 and Beir Halachah. Other poskim are more lenient and allow this even l'hatchilah; see Aruch ha-Shulchan 527:3. 25 O.C. 527:13. 26 Harav Y. Kamenetsky (oral ruling, quoted in Emes l'Ya'akov O.C. 527:13). 27 Eishel Avraham 527; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Koveitz Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov, vol. 1, pg. 218). Two or more individual families who are sharing one house and one kitchen, should make only one eiruv tavshilin. 28 See Kaf ha-Chayim 527:113; Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-26. 29 These options apply also to one who made an eiruv tavshilin, but it either got lost, was eaten, or got spoiled before one started cooking for Shabbos. 30 O.C. 527:1. The blessing is recited. 31 Minchas Yitzchak 7:36 based on Tiferes Yisrael, Beitzah 2:1; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 493 and vol. 2, pg. 633). No blessing is

recited. Other poskim do not agree with this option. 32 O.C. 527:22. A special text is recited. 33 O.C. 527:7. Some poskim hold that one may rely on the rabbi's eiruv only one time (Mishnah Berurah 527:22), while others hold that it can be relied upon even more than once (Aruch ha-Shulchan 527:18). 34 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 527:32. 35 O.C. 527:21. Thus it is permitted to cook many different foods, so long as one will partake of each of them on Yom Tov; Mishnah Berurah 71. 36 O.C. 527:20. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zhus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/ProjectGenesis,Inc.> learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: October 04, 2004 To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject: SICHOT64 -39: Sicha for Simchat Torah

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)  
Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva  
SIMCHAT TORAH SICHOT OF  
HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A

Dedicated in loving memory of Esther Okon, on the occasion of her yearzeit.

Rejoice Through the Festival and the Torah  
Adapted by Dov Karoll

One of the ways in which the Torah sets aside the holiday of Sukkot from the other festivals is by emphasizing the aspect of simcha, celebration or joy. If we look at the presentation of the three main festivals in Parashat Re'ei (Devarim 16), we can see this very clearly. The Torah there makes no mention of simcha in its description of the holiday of Pesach, it mentions simcha once in the context of the holiday of Shavu'ot ("You shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d," 16:11), whereas in describing the holiday of Sukkot, the Torah mentions simcha twice. Verse 14 opens with "You shall rejoice in your festival," and verse 15 concludes with, "And you shall be utterly joyous."

But there is more than this quantitative difference between the respective holidays. There is an additional element in the description of simcha on the holiday of Sukkot. Regarding Shavu'ot, the Torah states, "You shall rejoice before G-d," whereas regarding Sukkot, the formulation is, "You shall rejoice in your FESTIVAL." On Sukkot, the element of simcha is integrated into the festival itself.

But what does "rejoicing IN your festival" mean? The Torah uses the letter "bet" ("be-chagekha"), a prefix which can be understood in two ways. One possible understanding would be rejoicing on or DURING the festival. According to this approach, the Torah is emphasizing that the simcha is to be centered around this time period, and correspondingly related to the holiday. Alternatively, it could be taken to mean rejoicing THROUGH the festival, using the holiday itself as an impetus for simcha.

In our celebration of Sukkot, both of these elements must be present. The holiday should be a time period in which we celebrate, but the festival itself should also serve as an impetus for our further celebration, with the celebration focused on the themes inherent in the holiday.

To fully appreciate this last aspect, we will examine the central themes of Sukkot itself. The holiday of Sukkot has universal aspects, as well as elements that are particular to Jewish people. On the one hand, it is a time during which the Jewish people celebrate before G-d and are able to come close to Him. At the same time, the total number of bulls offered in the musaf offerings of the seven days of Sukkot is seventy, and the Gemara explains that these correspond to the seventy nations of the world. Furthermore, the haftara we read on the first day of Sukkot speaks of a universal aspect to Sukkot, with all the nations of the world being

asked to celebrate the holiday at the end of days. The Jewish people have marked Shemini Atzeret as the day of rejoicing in the Torah, Simchat Torah. (In the Diaspora, the two are separated into separate days, but here in Israel they come together.) In people's minds, the aspect of Simchat Torah is dominant over the elements of Shemini Atzeret. On this occasion, we rejoice in the Torah and with He Who has given us Torah. The simcha of the Torah also has both universal and particular aspects to it.

In one sense, the Torah served as a blueprint for the world. Numerous sources in the Gemara and elsewhere speak of the fact that the Torah preceded creation (Shabbat 88b, Pesachim 54a). In this sense, the rejoicing over the Torah is a rejoicing over the role Torah plays in the world, in the cosmos. There is, of course, also a particularistic element to the simcha of the Torah, in which the Jewish people celebrates its special relationship with the Torah and with He Who gave us the Torah. In the blessings recited before the study of Torah and the public reading of the Torah, we speak of the fact that G-d gave us His Torah, and He "placed eternal Life in our midst." In these blessings, we emphasize the unique relationship the Jewish people has with the Torah, as well as the special relationship with G-d that comes with that. Especially in these difficult times, we need to try to use the holiday as an impetus to move us to a mode of simcha, celebrating the joy of the season as well as the joy of Torah.

[This sicha was given on leil Shemini Atzeret-Simcha Torah, 5763 (2002).]

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemaisrael.com] Sent: September 28, 2004 8:37 PM To: Peninim Parsha

PENINIM ON THE TORAH  
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM  
- Parshas V'zos Habracha

So Moshe, servant of Hashem, died there...by the mouth of Hashem. (34:5)

The Torah ends with Moshe Rabbeinu's passing from his earthly abode. Others died, but none with such ceremony, with Hashem Yisborach serving as the Chevra Kadisha, Jewish Sacred Burial Society. There are some things in life that are inevitable. Everyone must take leave of this world. When this occurs is up to Hashem. How it occurs is more or less up to us, as we decide the amount of preparation we are willing to do. We are instructed to "repent one day before you die." Since no one knows his end of time, he should prepare his entire life with teshuvah, repentance, and maasim tovim, good deeds, so that when the final moment arrives - unannounced - he is prepared. Our gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders, faced death with equanimity, living their lives in such a manner that they maximized their spiritual potential. They were prepared to meet their Creator because the lives they led in this world were focused toward this moment. They were intellectually aware that everything in this world is finite, and, with this in mind, they lived their lives meaningfully, accepting Hashem's challenges as they arose and triumphing over them.

I will take the liberty of citing from the lives of recent gedolim as they faced this moment of truth. Recently a book entitled, "Forever His Students," by Rabbi Boruch Leff - a collection of essays based upon the teachings of the venerable Rosh HaYeshiva of Ner Israel, Horav Yaakov Weinberg zl, was published. In an essay, the author relates Rav Yaakov's attitude and outlook toward his imminent death after he was given the dread diagnosis that the disease from which he suffered had invaded his entire body and that he only had a few months to live.

The Rosh HaYeshivah firmly believed that everything which Hashem did was inherently good, and he accepted His will with trust and love. He neither responded to the grim news with shock or fear, nor proceeded through the usual stages of grief. His sense of reality was so resolute that there was no room for denial or negotiation. When asked if he was afraid, his reply was straightforward, "Afraid. No, I am not afraid. I know whatever Hashem does is for the best." He maintained his usual concern and kindness toward others until the very end. He smiled until he lost consciousness and was careful never to neglect expressing thanks to anyone.

During his last Shabbos on earth, when the pain was excruciating and it sapped all of his energy and strength, he made it a point to join the family for the Shabbos meal. He could not spoil their Shabbos. He offered his novellae on the parsha in his usual brilliant manner. As difficult as it was for him to receive guests, he understood that people wanted to visit him and say goodbye. He hid his agony and smiled to everyone. His concern for others was his hallmark, and he lived up to it until the final moment of his life.

His message to his students was simple and clear. Hashem loves each and every one of us. We do not always understand His actions. Yet, we must trust and believe that everything He does to us is really for us. It is an act of love, even if we have a difficult time understanding and accepting it.

Horav Beinush Finkel, zl, the Mirrer Rosh HaYeshivah was another gadol who exemplified incredible control over his emotions during the illness that eventually claimed his life. Although his disease inflicted him with terrible pain, he never allowed it to show. He refused painkillers, claiming that they made him drowsy. As a person who was raised with the notion that the gift of dei'ah, intellectual discretion, the ability to think, was the crowning point of man, he was not going to relinquish this ability even for a moment. It was only when he began to lose consciousness that his face began to contort with pain. One could see that he had spent his energy controlling his pain and facial expression. Anyone visiting him was treated to the same level of wit and laughter that was his hallmark. People who visited him did not see in his countenance the desperate situation in which he was existing. He refused any form of physical assistance. He would not enter a door that was opened for him.

The Skolye Rebbe, zl, was a brilliant gaon whose encyclopedic knowledge of all areas of Torah was only matched by his passion for Yiddishkeit and his love for all Jews. A year and a half before his passing, he was stricken with a serious internal condition. He underwent two surgical procedures to alleviate the condition. His strength ebbed, and his family did everything to help him recover. One day, as he sat in his room filled with some relatives, he suddenly burst out in tears and cried out, "If only someone could assure me that I am an erliche Yid, upright Jew." This is the type of person he was.

He too was bothered by the manner in which his ill health affected those who visited him. Shortly before he passed away, a certain chasid came to visit him. He was from the Midwest, and his clothes and manner of speech reflected his origins. He was a sincere and giving person whom the Rebbe delighted in having in his company. The man naturally began the visit by inquiring about the Rebbe's health. The Rebbe's response was a lesson in gadlus, greatness.

"In my younger days, back in Europe, I visited a town which was home to many of my chasidim. I sustained an eye infection which caused pus to ooze from my eye incessantly. It looked terrible. Before my next session with my chasidim, I entreated Hashem, 'Ribbono Shel Olam; whatever suffering You decree on me, I accept with love, but, please, make me suffer in a way that will not cause hardship for others.' Shortly thereafter, the infection cleared up, and I suddenly began experiencing searing pain in my leg of which no one else was aware.

"You asked me about my health. I have only the greatest appreciation for the Almighty. I recently underwent two surgeries. I never thought that I would be able to lead the congregation in tefillah, prayer, during the Yamim Noraim, High Holy Days. Thank G-d, I did. For what more could I ask? I am only concerned with the pain that my ill appearance causes others."

The passing of every gadol leaves the generation bereft of his leadership, guidance and instruction. Indeed, we are orphaned by his passing. We must see to it that his shining example continues to inspire us long after he is gone, so that the lessons he imparted during his lifetime live on.

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