

B'S'D'

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON V'ZOS HABRACHA -
SHMINI ATZERES - SIMCHAS TORAH - 5757

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Subject: Torah Weekly - V'zos Habracha

Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshas V'zos Habracha For Simchas Torah

5 October 1996/22 Tishrei 5757 in Israel

6 October 1996/23 Tishrei 5757 Outside Israel

Overview- The Torah draws to its close with V'zos Habracha, which is the only Parsha in the Torah not read specifically on a Shabbos. Rather, V'zos Habracha is read on Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, when everyone in the synagogue gets called up to the Torah for an aliyah -- even boys who are not yet Bar

Mitzvah. The Parsha is repeated until everyone has received an aliyah. Moshe continues the tradition of Yaakov by blessing the Tribes of Yisrael before his death. Similar to the blessings bestowed by Yaakov, these blessings are also a combination of the description of each Tribe's essence, together with a definition of its role within the nation of Israel. The only Tribe that does not receive a blessing is Shimon, because they were central to the mass immorality of worshipping the idol ba'al pe'or. Another explanation is that this Tribe's population was small and scattered throughout the south of the Land of Israel, and would therefore receive blessings together with the host Tribe amongst whom they would live; i.e., Yehuda. Moshe's last words to his beloved people are of reassurance that Hashem will more than recompense His people for all of the suffering they will endure. Moshe ascends the mountain and Hashem shows him prophetically all that will happen to Eretz Yisrael in the future, both

in tranquility and in times of oppression. Hashem also shows him all that will happen to the Jewish People until the time of the Resurrection. Moshe dies there by means of the "Divine Kiss." To this day, no one knows the place of his burial, in order that his grave should not become a shrine for those who wish to make a prophet into a god. Of all the prophets, Moshe was unique in his being able to speak to Hashem whenever he wanted. His centrality and stature are not a product of the Jewish People's "blind faith," but are based on events that were witnessed by an entire nation -- at the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai and constantly during 40 years of journeying through the desert.

Insights

What Goes Around "And this is the blessing that Moshe, the man of G-d, blessed the children of Yisrael." (33:1)

The perfect circle. Complete. The circle unites the beginning and the end. There is no beginning to a circle nor no end. If you take one point and call it its beginning, when you get to the end you will find yourself back where you started. On the Simchas Torah, we finish reading the Torah and immediately start again from the beginning. In our joy at having completed the Torah, we dance with it in a circle. Specifically in a circle. The Torah is endless. When we reach its end, we are already back at its beginning. The final words of the Torah are: "In the eyes of all Yisrael." And its first words: "In the beginning". The circle dance of Simchas Torah joins the end to the beginning, that "the eyes of all Yisrael" should be fixed on the "beginning." Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

Spending and Saving "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov." (33:4) There is a great difference between an inheritance and a heritage. An inheritance is the sole possession of the one who inherits it -- it is his to do with as he pleases -- to consume, to invest or to squander. However, a heritage must be cherished and preserved and passed on to the next generation intact. The Torah is our heritage, not our inheritance. We must pass it on to the next generation as we found it, and not abridged, altered or adulterated. Heard from Rabbi Nachman Bulman Seeing and Believing "...before the eyes of all Yisrael." (34:12) These are the final words of the Torah. The entire Jewish People were witnesses to all the miracles that were wrought through Moshe Rabbeinu. With their own eyes they saw, and "seeing is believing." In other words, their believing came from seeing; their faith in Moshe came from daily contact with miracles. These miracles were witnessed not by a small group who then convinced others through charisma or coercion. Rather, the entire nation -- the eyes of all Yisrael -- were witnesses to the miracles. They all saw the dividing of the Red Sea, The Voice at Sinai, and the manna (manna). Manna was the miraculous food that the Jewish People ate every day for 40 years. Forty years, day-in and day-out; they saw it with enough regularity for it to have become mundane... This was the seeing that founded the rock-like faithfulness of the Jewish People throughout the long night of exile. With their own eyes they saw that Moshe, the prophet of Hashem, was authentic -- and his Torah, the Torah of the Living G-d was Truth. Based on the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

Haftorah for Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah Yehoshua 1:1 As soon as we finish reading the Torah, we start again "In the beginning of Hashem creating the heavens and the earth..." In this way we remind ourselves that immersing ourselves in the Truths of the Torah is an eternal task, with neither beginning nor end. The Haftorah says "And Hashem spoke to Yehoshua bin Nun, Moshe's lieutenant saying "Moshe my servant is dead. You arise and cross over the Jordan..." to remind us that the work of the Torah is not that of a human being, not even the highest, but it is Hashem's work that began with the revelation on Sinai, and its accomplishment is not dependent on the personality and life of any man, however great and sublime he may be. Adapted from Dr. Mendel Hirsch, based on the words of his father, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

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The Weekly Internet
P A R A S H A - P A G E
by Mordecai Kornfeld
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Much thanks to Mr. Bernard Schubach of Columbus Ohio for sponsoring the Simchat Torah issue. May you go "from strength to strength!" (Berachot 64a) Thank you for the generous response I've received to the yearly appeal! In order to receive the fax version of the parasha-page, send me your fax number via email or leave a message at my Jerusalem #: 972 2 6522-633.

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Simchat Torah 5756
HOW I LOVE YOUR TORAH, IT IS MY CONVERSATION ALL DAY
LONG! (TEHILLIM 119:97)
THE GREATEST OF MITZVOT

A person reaps the fruit of these Mitzvot in this world, while the principal remains for him to enjoy in the World to Come... and Torah study is the equal of all the others [Mitzvot] combined.
(Mishnah, Pe'ah 1:1)

Our Sages tell us that studying the Torah is a greater Mitzvah than any other Mitzvah of the Torah. What makes learning Torah unique among the Mitzvot of the Torah? The Rambam [Maimonides], based on Kiddushin 40b, offers the following explanation: There is no Mitzvah which is the equal of Torah study... because study leads to performance.

(Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah, 3:3)

According to the Rambam, Torah study is more important than the other Mitzvot of the Torah, because in the final analysis observance of all the Mitzvot depends on Torah study. Even after one has learned the basic laws of a Mitzvah, it is only through Torah study that he will gain a better understanding of the nuances of the Mitzvah.

The Vilna Gaon in his commentary to the above-quoted Mishnah highlights another dimension of Torah study. Every single word of Torah that is learned is a new Mitzvah. If a person studies a page with one-hundred words on it, he has performed one-hundred Mitzvot; if he spends the same amount of time performing another Mitzvah, he has but a single Mitzvah to his credit for his efforts. This alone would make the study of Torah greater than the performance of any other Mitzvah.

Basis for the Gaon's reasoning can be found in the teachings of the Ran (Yoma 83b s.v. VeGarsinnan), who explains that the repeated performance

of a lesser transgression is more severe than the single performance of a much greater transgression. Inversely, we may conclude that the repeated performance of one Mitzvah is more meritorious than the single performance of even the greatest Mitzvah. This alone would make the study of Torah many times greater than any other Mitzvah; when it is combined with the inherent importance of Torah study ("study leads to performance"), the Mitzvah of Torah study is seen to be truly outstanding.

II

NON-STOP TORAH

The Mitzvah of Torah study differs from the other Mitzvot in the manner in which it is executed as well.

Rebbi Yehoshua was asked, "May a man teach his son Greek wisdom (a wit-sharpening form of recreation invented by the Greeks)?"

He responded, "He may do so, but only during a time which is neither day nor night, for during the entire day and the entire night one is obligated to study the Torah and there is no free time in which to engage in the teaching or practice of Greek

wisdom. As the prophet says (Yehoshua 1:8): You shall ponder the Torah day and night!"

(Tosefta Avodah Zarah 1:3; cf. Menachot 99b)

Any time of the day or night that a person is not involved in the performance of another Mitzvah, he is obligated to involve himself in the study of Torah.

Similarly, the Gemara tells us (Yoma 19b) that the verse which states (Devarim 6:7), "You shall speak *those words* [of Torah]," is forbidding us to speak *anything* other than words of Torah. (As Rashi explains, the Gemara is forbidding idle pratter. Proper speech that is spoken to one's family or in the course of doing business is permitted, since earning a livelihood is a Mitzvah in and of itself, as the Gaon points out in his commentary to Pe'ah 1:1.)

Tosafot (Berachot 11b, s.v. "Shek'var") uses the Tosefta's all-day-all-night ruling to resolve an apparent contradiction in the laws of blessings. Before eating in a Sukkah, one recites a blessing. If he leaves the Sukkah to go about his daily business, he must recite the blessing once again before he next eats in the Sukkah. In regards to the blessing recited before Torah study, however, the law is different. After reciting the blessing in the morning, one need not repeat the blessing throughout the entire day -- even if he engages in business or other pursuits during the course of the day. Why is that?

Tosafot explains that the Mitzvah to study the Torah applies during every spare moment of the day. Therefore, being involved in other tasks does not cause an interruption in one's Torah study. The Mitzvah of Sukkah, on the other hand, only applies to us while eating. At times other than meal-times, a person is distracted from the Mitzvah of Sukkah. Because of this, he must recite a new blessing before performing the Mitzvah a second time.

III

LONGING FOR THE STUDY OF TORAH

The Rosh resolves the contradiction between the two blessings in a slightly different manner, revealing to us yet another aspect of the obligation to study Torah. According to the Rosh (Berachot 1:13), only people who are fully immersed in the study of Torah are justified in not reciting a new blessing after a pause in their Torah study. Even when such people tend to their everyday affairs, they are eager to finish their chores and return to the study of Torah. Because their minds are never distracted from the study of Torah, their earlier blessing is still valid upon their return to the study of Torah.

The Rosh discloses to us that a true student of the Torah finds all worldly pursuits to be no more than annoying distractions that temporarily interrupt his Torah study. The Rosh's source is undoubtedly the Gemara's teaching that (Berachot 35b) "The earlier generations considered Torah study to be their *fixed pursuit* and earning a livelihood to be a *temporary diversion*, they therefore succeeded in both." (See also Yoma 19b, "Make the study of Torah a fixed pursuit, not a temporary diversion.")

Although the Rosh recognizes that a person must take his mind off his Torah studies temporarily in order to tend to his worldly needs, some later commentaries take a more extreme position. Mishnat Avot (a commentary

on Avot written by Rav Yosef ben Yehudah Ibn Eknin, disciple of the Rambam,

to Avot 4:10) asserts that even *while* a person finds himself involved in non-Torah matters he should be thinking Torah thoughts in the back of his mind. The Sefer Hafla'ah, in his introduction (par. 35; see also his introduction to Sefer HaMikneh, par. 32), elaborates further. How will a person ever succeed in business, asks the Hafla'ah, if his mind is always preoccupied with Torah? The answer: "Know Hashem while you go about your

ways, and He will make your paths straight" (Mishlei 3:6). If you think thoughts of Torah while you work, Hashem will see to it that your business prospers. Similarly, "Happy is the person... who desires Hashem's Torah and ponders His Torah day and night... he will succeed in all that he does"

(Tehillim 1:1-3). A person need not be concerned that his concentration on Torah thoughts will cause him to fail in worldly endeavors.

In a similar fashion, Rav Chaim of Volozhin (in his commentary to Avot 2:2) contends that the Mishnah's famous statement, "Torah is proper when accompanied with worldly activity," means that even while one is involved in worldly activity, it is good to think about Torah. (See also Nefesh HaChaim, 1:8.)

A contemporary Gadol, HaGaon Rav Shlomo Fisher of Jerusalem, pointed out to me that the spiritual height to which the Hafla'ah and Rav Chaim Volozhin are referring is discussed by the early commentators. When the Torah tells us (Devarim 11:22) to "love Hashem, walk in his ways and *cleave to him*," the Ramban explains that one who is on a truly high spiritual level should dwell on the love of Hashem even as he goes about his business. While he is conversing with his fellow man, his heart should be thinking about Hashem and His ways. Similarly, the Ra'avad (end of Hilchot Teshuvah) refers to righteous individuals who perform all of their mundane activities in a distracted manner because their mind is absorbed by the love of Hashem.

However, most people will find this approach very hard to follow, if not absolutely impossible. As the Ramban mentioned, cleaving to Hashem is a great accomplishment which is practiced by no more than a few elite individuals per generation, Rav Fisher noted. The everyday working person is certainly not expected to act in such a manner. What the average Jew can and should strive for is the diligence described by the Rosh. Any free moments during the day -- such as those that pass while waiting for a customer to arrive or for some process to be completed -- should be used for Torah study and not wasted.

IV

YEHOShUA AND THE ANGEL

In an enigmatic incident in the book of Yehoshua (5:13-14), a heavenly angel threatens Yehoshua with a sword. According to the Gemara (Megillah 3a), the angel was admonishing Yehoshua for keeping his warring soldiers on active alert throughout the night. "Night is not a time during which nations battle," says the angel, "you should have used the nighttime for the study of Torah!"

Why indeed did Yehoshua stop his soldiers from studying Torah that evening? Hadn't Hashem warned Yehoshua to "ponder the Torah day and night?"

Apparently, Yehoshua believed that one should direct his full attention to the Mitzvah at hand. Since the Jews were currently engaged in the conquest of Israel, he felt that their full concentration should be devoted to the war effort. The angel informed Yehoshua that he was mistaken. As we quoted from the Rosh, no matter what kind of work a person is engaged in, he should devote any spare moments towards the study of Torah and the love of Hashem. (See Rashi Berachot 32b, who compares the effort that a working man

puts into his trade to the effort that a soldier puts into fighting a war.)

Since night is not a time for active battle, Yehoshua's soldiers belonged in the Beit Midrash, studying Torah!

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YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

SUCCOT AND SHMINI ATZERET

by Menachem Leibtag

Even though the SHALOSH REGALIM are primarily holidays of an agricultural nature (see last week's shiur), each holiday includes a historical aspect as well.

However, unlike PESACH which commemorates the Exodus - an event

which took place on a SPECIFIC day in the beginning of the spring, SUCCOT commemorates our dwelling in 'booths' for forty years in the desert - an ENTIRE TIME-PERIOD of our national history:

"You shall sit in SUCCOT for seven days... in order that future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael live in SUCCOT when I brought them out of Egypt..." (Vayikra 23:43)

Why does the Torah insist that we commemorate this time-period specifically in the AUTUMN, at the end of the harvest season?

BACKGROUND / REVIEW

In last week's shiur we suggested a connection between the historical and agricultural aspects of CHAG HA'MATZOT and SHAVUOT:

Chag HA'MATZOT = "chag ha'aviv", celebrated in the beginning of the spring, commemorates the Exodus - the BEGINNING of the redemption process .

Chag SHAVUOT = "chag ha'katzir", celebrated during the wheat harvest, commemorates Matan Torah, the PURPOSE of that redemption process.

Recall, however, that Yetziat Mitzraim (the Exodus) had a double purpose:

- 1) Matan Torah - that Bnei Yisrael should receive the Torah;
- 2) Eretz Yisrael - that Bnei Yisrael should inherit the Promised Land.

One could suggest that just as SHAVUOT marks the realization of the first goal - Matan Torah, SUCCOT marks the achievement of the second goal - inheriting the Land of Israel.

The following shiur develops this concept.

SUCCOT IN THE DESERT - A TRANSITION STAGE

We begin with the lone pasuk in Chumash which explains the REASON for chag ha'SUCCOT:

"You shall sit in SUCCOT for seven days... - IN ORDER that your future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael LIVE in SUCCOT when I brought them out of Egypt..." (Vayikra 23:43)

Note that the purpose of sitting in the succah is NOT to remember the Exodus itself, RATHER to remember our existence in the desert - AFTER we left Egypt and BEFORE we entered Eretz Canaan.

Recall from our shiurim on Sefer Shmot that this TRANSITION stage was characterized by a life of total dependance on God in the desert, in preparation for entering Eretz Yisrael, and thus a very vital stage in our spiritual growth as a Nation.

It is this specific point, the spiritual purpose of Bnei Yisrael's supernatural existence in the desert in preparation for entering the Land, which Moshe Rabeinu explains to Bnei Yisrael in Parshat Ekev:

"All these MITZVOT which I command you... keep in order that you live... and inherit the Land...

REMEMBER the way which God has led you during your wanderings of FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT - that HE MAY TEST YOU by hardships to KNOW WHAT IS IN YOUR HEARTS; whether you would keep His commandments...

* He gave you the MANNA to eat... in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, RATHER man lives on the words of God...

* Your CLOTHING did not wear out, nor did your feet become infected during these forty years...

* You should know, that just as a father trains his son, so your God has been training you.

(Dvarim 8:1-6)

Immediately after this introduction, Moshe explains why this 'testing period' was necessary:

FOR God is bringing you into a GOOD LAND ... and land of wheat and barely, vines, figs and pomegranates, of olive trees and honey...a land where you will lack nothing...

BE CAREFUL, lest you forget God and fail to keep His commandments. Should you eat and become satiated, and build

fine HOUSES and live in them... and everything you own has prospered, BEWARE lest you grow HAUGHTY and FORGET your God who took you out of Egypt...

Lest you say: My OWN power and my OWN might have won this wealth for me. Remember, it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth..." (Dvarim 8:7-19)

These basic points in Moshe Rabeinu's speech are the basis for understanding SUCCOT, for they explain WHY the transition period of the desert was necessary - to prepare Bnei Yisrael for the spiritual dangers which face them in the agrarian society that they are to establish in the Land of Israel. Therefore, SPECIFICALLY at the climax of the agricultural year - when we gather the last fruits of the field and anticipate the forthcoming rainy season - the Torah commands us to sit in "succot" for seven days IN ORDER that we remember WHY that transition period was necessary!

The very same spiritual dangers which faced Bnei Yisrael when they first entered the land resurface every year, especially during years of plenty when society tends to become affluent. Therefore, at the height of the harvest season, we 'conceptually' leave our houses and live in succot for seven days to re-live the desert experience - a model life of total dependence upon God.

Just as dwelling in the desert prepared Bnei Yisrael for their entry into Eretz Yisrael, so too, sitting in the Succah prepares us for the new agricultural year which begins in the fall.

SEVEN AND NATURE

The requirement to sit in the succah for SEVEN days contains additional spiritual significance. Note that all the agricultural holidays revolve around the number seven.

- * 7 days of chag ha'Matzot in the spring;
- * 7 weeks until chag Ha'Shavuot;
- * 7 days of chag ha'Succot

As we explained in our shiur on Parshat Breishit [perek aleph], the Torah's description of the story of Creation in SEVEN days emphasizes that what we call NATURE is a willful act of God. Therefore, each time that SEVEN is found in Chumash (e.g. Shabbat etc.), it is to remind us that God is the creator of, and master over, all nature. Thus, it is only 'natural' that we find the number seven prominent in the agricultural holidays.

SHMINI ATZERET

The above interpretation can help us understand the importance of Shmini Atzeret. As the "shalosh regalim" come to their conclusion, we add one extra day of celebration, void of any specific mitzvah, other than rejoicing with God. Even though it is the 'eighth day' of SUCCOT, we do not sit in the "succah", nor do we take the lulav and etrog.

Because of the preparatory nature of SUCCOT, one could suggest that this final day represents the proper entry in to Eretz Yisrael, i.e. the proper return to our homes. We do not LEAVE the succah, rather we bring the succah into our homes. We take our 'desert-like experience' of closeness to God, and make it the basis of our daily natural existence. The custom to bring the "keilim" (vessels) which we used in the succah back into the house in preparation for Shmini Atzeret may be more than practical advice. It highlights the primary purpose of this yom-tov; to move the spiritual message of the succah into our homes for the remainder of the year.

mo'adim l'simcha
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Compare the 7 days of succot followed by shmini atzeret to the 7 day miluim dedication of the Mishkan (preparation) followed by the special Yom ha'Shmini dedication ceremony (when the Mishkan became functional. (See Vayikra 8:1-10:1.)

1. Relate this to the connection between Yom Ha'Shmini and Yom

Kippur (last week's shiur), AND the connection between Yom Kippur and Succot.

B. There is an additional historical aspect to Yom Kippur, the day on which Bnei Yisrael received the second luchot and heard the commandment to build the Mishkan.

1. Relate this to the above shiur.

2. How does this help us understand the connection between the Mishkan and the laws of the succah?

C. There is a custom to read Sefer Kohelet on Succot.

1. Relate this minhag (and the theme of that sefer) to the above shiur. In your answer relate to Dvarim 31:7-13 (Mitzvat Hakhel), and our shiurim on Sefer Dvarim.

2. Do you think that there is a connection between Sefer KOHELET and Mitzvat HAKHEL.

Relate to the final psukim of Kohelet and Dvarim 31:12-13!

D. SCHACH & SHCHINA

Based on the above shiur, we can better understand the significance of certain laws regarding the "schach" - the special roof which characterizes the "succah". For "schach" we must use material which grows from the ground ("gidulo min ha'aretz"), and can't become 'unclean' ("ayno m'kabel tumah").

Chazal tell us that "schach" is "kneged ananey ha'kavod" - the cloud of God's glory which protected them in the desert. Now in Eretz Yisrael, this cloud of "shchina" is replaced by vines and branches which grow from the ground. In other words, we look up at the roof of the succah and find that our agriculture - our 'natural existence' in Eretz Yisrael - has replaced the shchina in the desert. Living in the succah teaches us that it is possible to find God even in our daily life working the land. Nonetheless, the schach can not be a "kli", a piece of natural material transformed into a utensil by the act of man.

E. Note from Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar chapter 29), that Rosh Ha'Shana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret share a common and unique korban musaf! (1 par -1 ayil -7 kvasim /1 seir chatat).

On Succot, however, we offer numerous parim, 2 ayilim and 14 kvasim.

1. What is the Musaf on Rosh Chodesh, chag Ha'Matzot and Shavuot? Why do these holidays form a group?

2. Why is Shmini Atzeret connected to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

3. Why do you think Succot is different. Is there a 'double' aspect to these korbanot?

F. Succot, we explained, stands at the agricultural crossroads of last year's harvest and next year's rainy season.

1. Relate this to why we say in Succot davening both:

"Hallel" - in thanksgiving for the crops of the previous year; & "Hoshanot" - in anticipation of the rainy season of the forthcoming year.

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Simchas Torah - V'zos Habracha, 5757 -- The Limited

Last week, a friend pointed out to me a very interesting insight. He noted that both the first direct command in the Torah to an individual and the last have a striking similarity. Hashem's last charge in the Torah is the directive to His beloved servant Moshe. Hashem tells him to stand on a mountain and view the Land of Israel. He shows him its beautiful hills, valleys, and fertile plains. Then He says, "you shall not go there." Similarly, the Torah begins with a very similar scenario. Adam, in the Garden of Eden, is shown the entire Garden of Eden. After he is shown the fruit of all its trees and invited to partake in all its delicious beauty, he is warned. One tree, The Tree of Knowledge, is forbidden. Can there be a connection between the restrictions

placed upon Adam in the Garden and those placed upon Moshe in the final stages of his life? Why does the Torah begin and end with bountiful visions that are bordered by restrictions?

As Rav of the tiny village of Tzitzivyan, my grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, and his family lived in dire poverty. On his meager wages, the children went hungry and had hardly any clothes to wear. It was no wonder that jubilation filled Reb Yaakov's home upon hearing that he was the preferred candidate for the Rabbinate of Wilkomir, the third-largest Jewish city in Lithuania. He was assured of the position and was told that the K'sav Rabbanus, the Rabbinical contract, would be forthcoming. After a few weeks of waiting, however, Reb Yaakov was informed that his hopes had been dashed. The position was given to a colleague whose influential family had affected the revised decision. Though the Kamenetzky family was almost in mourning, Reb Yaakov assured them that sometimes no is the best answer. "We may not always understand it at the time, but, there is a clear future even when your hopes and dreams seem to have been destroyed." The continued dire poverty solidified my grandfather's decision to come to America, where he eventually created a life of Torah leadership. The town of Wilkomir was decimated by the Nazis, who killed almost all of its inhabitants along with their Rav. Perhaps the Torah is sending an underlying message through its greatest mortals. Not everything you would like to have is yours for the asking. And not everything that your eyes behold is yours for the taking. This world is confined. You can't have it all. And what you don't take may be a true blessing.

On this earth there will always be wants that we will not, can not, and should not obtain. The Torah is replete with restrictions. They present themselves in what we put in our mouths, what we put in our minds, and what we wear on our bodies. Life must embrace self-control. Torah Jews are lucky, however. Their sense of "no" is already in the know. By following the clear guidelines of the 365 negative commandments, they are safeguarded and conditioned for many of the difficult responses they face in a very tempting society. The Torah surrounds its entirety with that message. Moshe on his exit had to hear it, just as Adam did upon his entry. As we just ended a year and begin a new one, it is important for us to hear it as well.

Best wishes for a Chag Sameach.

Dedicated by Dr. and Mrs. Blair Skolnick in memory of their grandfather, Rabbi Morris Blair of blessed memory.
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<http://194.90.124.37/parsha/peninim/index.htm>

Peninim on the Torah
Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Zose Haberachah

"And this is the blessing that Moshe the man of G-d bestowed upon the Bnei Yisrael." (33:1) The Midrash teaches us that prior to his death, Moshe Rabbeinu continued in the tradition which the Patriarchs had initiated. As Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov before him had blessed their sons before they took leave of this world, Moshe, likewise, blessed Bnei Yisrael, his spiritual children, before his death. The Midrash adds that the members of each ensuing generation began their blessing with the words with which the previous generation had closed. Hence, Avraham ended his blessing to Yitzchak with "nesinah," "giving," as is stated in Bereishis 25:6, "And Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak." Yitzchak followed suit by commencing his blessing to Yaakov with the words, "And may Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens and the fatness of the earth" (Bereishis 27:28). Yitzchak concluded his blessing with "Vayikra," "And Yitzchak calling to Yaakov and blessed him" (Bereishis 28:1). When Yaakov prepared to bless

his sons, he introduced his blessing with the word, "Vayikra," "And Yaakov called for his sons" (Bereishis 49:1). He terminated his blessing with the words, "V'zos," "And this" is what their father spoke to them and blessed them" (Bereishis 49:28). Moshe continued the tradition by beginning his blessing with the identical phrase, "V'zos ha'bracha," "And this is the blessing." Chazal derive an interesting halachah from this Midrash. They rule that if one goes before the Amud to lead the congregation in tefillah and makes a mistake, the one who takes over/follows after him should begin in the exact place at which his predecessor finished. Since our ancestors commenced their blessings with the concluding words of their predecessors, we should similarly begin the tefillah where the previous baal-tefillah has concluded. Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, infers a remarkable insight from here. He comments that success or "blessing" in education -- be it in a rebbe/talmit or parent/child relationship -- is determined by a child following in the path forged before him by his parents. When a child continues to carry on and maintain the tradition for which his parents and ancestors sacrificed their lives, then -- and only then -- is the educational process considered to be successful. If, however, the new generation breaks ranks with the old, if they view their tradition and customs as old-fashioned, then we experience the converse of blessing. Parents and teachers must strive to imbue their children/students with an education that will survive the future, because it is grounded in the tradition of the past.

"And this is the blessing that Moshe... bestowed upon the Bnei Yisrael before his death." (33:1) Moshe was acutely aware that the end was near; these would be his final words. In his last mandate to the people, he blessed them. All of the tribes to whom he had devoted so much of his life passed before him to receive their final blessing from the individual who had been more than leader and prophet - he was a compassionate father who had sacrificed himself for his children. He was a father who wished to leave this world with words of consolation, encouragement, and hope with which his children could face the future. The Sifri states a number of reasons why a father should keep his rebuke for the final moments. By waiting until the end, the father will not find it necessary to repeat himself; he will not encourage ill feeling towards himself if his son does not take the criticism in the proper manner. Furthermore, the son will not be so hurt that he will leave his father. This writer once witnessed a particularly poignant "final moments" between a father and his errant son. It happened a number of years ago when an elderly Jew was about to breathe his last breath. He was surrounded by his family, among whom was a son who had tragically gone off the "derech," left the ranks of the observant. Although he was a wonderful young man and a fine son, the non-observant lifestyle that he had chosen was a point of serious anguish for his father. Now, in his final moments, the father turned to his son and asked, "If I ask you to do something for me, will you do it?" "What is the question, Father? Whatever you ask of me, I will do," responded the son. "I want you to promise me that you will adhere to whatever I demand of you," was the father's response. "I promise, I promise," declared the son. The father was still not secure in his son's commitment. "Will you abide by your word regardless of the difficulty it may present for you?" asked the father. "Yes, yes! I promise to do whatever you ask of me," exclaimed the son. "My son, you are apparently aware that your non-observance of Torah and mitzvos has caused me great distress. I understand that you love me and, obviously, as your father, I love you dearly. I cannot tolerate the fact that your lifestyle is antithetical to Torah dictate. I, therefore, demand that you do not recite Kaddish for me!" When the son heard his father's demand he cried out, "How can you do this to me? How can I not say Kaddish for my father?" "No!" retorted the father. "You gave your word. You promised that you will abide by my wish. This is my final wish. Do not say Kaddish for me!" A short time later, the father passed on from this world. We can imagine the terrible frustration the son experienced. At the funeral, he stood near his brothers and listened tearfully as his brothers recited Kaddish for their father. He remained silent, broken, depressed and dejected - but he kept his word - he did not say Kaddish. The days became weeks and shloshim was over and still no Kaddish. Finally,

about six weeks after his father passed away, the son came home from work, and, in a fit of rage, he began breaking dishes in his kitchen. His wife looked at him in shock, "What are you doing? Have you lost your mind?" she screamed at him. "I cannot take it anymore. I cannot continue with such a lifestyle. I must say Kaddish for my father!" As long as I am non-observant, I am bound by my promise. This is my last link with his soul. I have decided to repent my ways and return to the tradition in which I was raised," declared the broken-hearted son to his wife. It was not easy, and it did not happen overnight, but the family eventually became observant. The son attended minyan daily and recited Kaddish for his father. His whole life and that of his family were entirely changed because of the father's deathbed request of his son.

"To Zevulun he said, 'Rejoice, O' Zevulun in your excursions and Yissachar in your tents.'" (33:8) Zevulun and Yissachar maintained a unique partnership. While Zevulun engaged in the world of business, Yissachar devoted his entire time to Torah study. Zevulun supported his older brother in his life's endeavor, thereby creating a relationship that has been adopted by many Jews throughout the ages. The Yissachar-Zevulun partnership has been emulated by those whose time is devoted to the world of finance, while they sustain those whose life's work is the study and dissemination of Torah. Horav Moshe Yechiel Epstein, zl, the Admor M'ozrov, takes note of the fact that Zevulun is mentioned prior to Yissachar. He suggests that although Yissachar distinguishes himself in the more noble endeavor, it is Zevulun who enables Yissachar to carry on his work. Therefore, Zevulun precedes Yissachar chronologically, since his sustaining power must be established in order to permit Yissachar's "important" endeavor to take place. His name is mentioned first. The Ozrover cites the Midrash in the beginning of Sefer Badmidbar that says that the flag of the tribe of Yissachar was black, while Zevulun's was white. What is the significance of these colors and what is their relationship to these specific tribes? He explains that the color black alludes to the letters of the Torah which are written in black ink. On the other hand, the color white signifies the white parchment upon which the letters are written. Zevulun, who provides the opportunity and sustenance for his brother to study Torah, is like the parchment of the Torah. He "holds" the letters, for if there is no parchment, there is no Torah. Although the Torah is comprised of the letters, the parchment comes first in time. It is, therefore, mentioned first.

"So Moshe, servant of Hashem, died there... He buried him in the depression in the land of Moav.... Opposite Baal P'eor and no one knows his burial place to this day." (34:5,6) Rashi comments on the seeming paradox that Moshe reported his own death - during his lifetime. One explanation suggests that the last eight pesukim of the Torah were actually written by Yehoshua, Moshe's faithful student, who succeeded Moshe as Klal Yisrael's leader. In the Talmud Bava Basra 15a, however, Rabbi Meier states that Moshe, indeed, wrote the last eight pesukim himself. He wrote them with tears. This may be interpreted in one of two ways: His eyes may have been filled with tears as his emotions regarding his imminent demise poured over. Alternatively, his writing fluid might have consisted of his own tears rather than of ordinary ink. The Maharsha explains that writing with tears has an advantage over writing with ink, in that writing with tears is not considered ordinary writing. Thus, it would not be considered paradoxical for Moshe to write about his own death. Let us examine Chazal's words. Moshe wrote the entire Torah with ink. For the last eight pesukim he filled his "pen" with another -- very unique -- solution -- tears. Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, understands this Chazal homiletically. In truth, Moshe Rabbeinu did not really die. No one knows Moshe's burial place, because there is no burial place. He is still alive! The Torah asserts that every Jew who studies Torah represents Moshe's living legacy. Where did Moshe die? He died "there" in the land of Moav, opposite the idol Pe'or. Moshe dies in any place in which decadence reigns, where Jewish people sin in the most reprehensible manner. His legacy, the Torah, does not "live" in such a place. The Torah requires a specific prescription for living. When we do not follow the prescription, then

we have no life. If, however, we study Torah and observe mitzvos, Moshe lives on. Thus, metaphorically, no one is aware of his burial place. Shvilei Shmuel supplements the expression of this idea. He cites the Shaar Bas Rabim who relates an anecdote which underscores this concept. A small community in Europe sought to attract a prominent scholar to serve as Rav for their community. In an effort to persuade the distinguished Rav to join their community, the president of the shul erected memorial stones in the local cemetery with the names of great tzaddikim of the past. He hoped that when the Rav noticed the great personages buried in the community, he would be inclined to respond in the affirmative. The Rav was very impressed to see that the Taz and Magen Avraham were buried in the local cemetery. He, therefore, accepted the position. Some time later, the new Rav found out to his consternation that the Taz was actually buried in Lemberg, while the Magen Avraham was interred in Kalish. He became extremely upset upon hearing that he was duped into accepting the position. He called the president and angrily asked him why he had fooled him. The president responded, "In Lemberg, they study the Taz. In Kalish, they pour over the halachic decisions of the Magen Avraham. Consequently, these Torah giants speak beyond the grave. Their words, their thoughts, are interpreted into a living Torah. No, they are much very much alive - in Lemberg and Kalish. Since no one studies Torah in our city, the decisions of the Taz and Magen Avraham may as well never have been rendered. In our city nobody really cares. In our community, the Taz and Magen Avraham are really buried. Similarly, when Klal Yisrael studies Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu's grave remains unknown, since he is very much alive. Moshe Rabbeinu is synonymous with the Torah. His devotion to it earned him the title of "Mechokek," lawgiver. Until this day, whenever Torah is studied, Moshe's grave remains unknown - for he is alive in the hearts, minds and actions of those who study Torah. We may suggest that this is the underlying reason we celebrate Simchas Torah with dancing and great joy, despite the fact that we read of Moshe Rabbeinu's death in the culmination of the Torah. It would seem that the retelling of the demise of our quintessential spiritual leader should not coincide with celebration and festivities. The answer lies in the concept stated above. The greater joy we express in the Torah, the more heightened our simchah that we once again have completed a cycle of Torah reading, the further Moshe is distanced from death. We celebrate his life, for his life was "virtual" Torah - something for which we should all aspire.

Dear Readers: It is with a profound sense of gratitude to Hashem Yisborach that we complete the sixth cycle of Peninim Al Ha'Torah. What began as a community weekly parsha sheet has grown into a vehicle for spreading Torah-true perspective on a national and international level. We are humbled by the remarkable Siyata Dishmaya Peninim has been blessed with. We hope that the recently published third volume of Peninim Al Ha'Torah will receive the same response as its predecessors. We pray to Hashem that all of our efforts on behalf of harbotzas Torah will equally be blessed. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to those who assume the weekly task of ensuring Peninim's success. Ahuva Scheinbaum is responsible for the production and preparation of the weekly copy. Her expertise and devotion to the project are a large part of its success. Mrs. Marilyn Berger, who edits the original manuscript, has once again shown her expertise for enhancing the written word. She has an uncanny ability for making the author look good. Rabbi Doniel Neustadt masterfully puts it all together, producing a copy which is both spiritually and esthetically pleasing. My daughter, Bracha, sees to it that the many copies that are distributed throughout the country are done so in a dignified and timely manner. We owe a debt of gratitude to Baruch Berger and to the many others throughout the country who have taken it upon themselves to distribute Peninim in their respective communities. This past year we were fortunate to have Rabbi Menachem Hommel who, together with his brother, distributes Peninim throughout Great Britain and South Africa. We are indebted to Eli Goldberg of London and Adam Tanenbaum of the Shema Yisrael Network who prepare the Internet version of Peninim for world-wide distribution. May the mitzvah of harbotzas Torah be a zchus for them all to be blessed. Last, but not least, I acknowledge my wife, Neny,

who painstakingly reviews the weekly copy before it goes to print. Her propensity for detail ensures an error-free copy. Her devotion, encouragement, patience and constant support are the factors which allow this project to continue and succeed. May we both merit to see much Torah nachas from our children. Peninim on the Torah is in its 6th year of publication. The first three years have been published in book form. The third volume is available at your local book seller or directly from Rabbi Scheinbaum. He can be contacted at 216-321-5838 ext. 165 or by fax at 216-321-0588. Discounts are available for bulk orders or Chinuch/Kiruv organizations

This article is provided as part of Shema Yisrael Torah Network
<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il>
Jerusalem, Israel
972-2-532-4191

Shabbat-B'Shabbato -- Simchat Torah

No 616: 22 Tishrei 5757 (5 October 1996)

SHABBAT-ZOMET is an extract from SHABBAT-B'SHABBATO

STARTING AT THE BEGINNING

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

The Torah ends with praise of Moshe: "And no other prophet arose in Yisrael like Moshe" [Devarim 34:10], continuing with a description of some of the deeds that he accomplished, "for all the signs and miracles that G-d sent him to perform in Egypt" [34:11]. The high point of the praise is the last passage: "and for the mighty hand and the great awe that he achieved in the eyes of all of Yisrael" [34:12]. What fearsome act did Moshe perform in front of the nation? According to Ibn Ezra, this refers to the gathering at Mount Sinai, a momentous occasion worthy of being remembered at the end of the Torah.

On the other hand, Rashi quotes the Sifri, saying: "Moshe was inspired to break the Tablets in front of them, as is written, 'And I shattered them in front of your eyes,' and G-d agreed with his action, as is written, 'that which you shattered,' meaning that it was right to break them." But this is problematic: even if G-d accepted his initiative, is this the act that should be remembered as the highest point of Moshe's distinguished career? Should we be left at the end of the Torah with a memory of broken pieces of the Tablets?

It may be that what is unique about the shattering of the Tablets is the fact that Moshe initiated the action on his own, and not in order to fulfil a commandment of the Almighty. All other actions by Moshe were in response

to a command of G-d, but this is different in that it can be attributed to Moshe himself.

Moshe's action was fateful indeed, since it might have led to the destruction of the great vision of establishing a holy nation of priests. On the other hand, it also carried with it a great opportunity for rejuvenation and repentance. In any case, it was an unprecedented example of taking the initiative and shouldering responsibility. Moshe's decision to shatter the Tablets and rebuild the nation is the highlight of his varied and active life, which was emphasized by the Torah as his end approached.

Remembering this event at the end of the Torah carries with it another important message. What should one do after he has studied the Torah to the end? The fact that Moshe broke the Tablets might present a hint of the path to take. Once the Tablets were shattered, it was necessary to return to the beginning and start over again. When someone finishes the entire Torah, perhaps he is meant to consider himself as if he were standing in front of shattered Tablets, so that he must go back and start his studies again from the beginning.

COMMENTS ON THE "SEFAT EMET": Shemini Atzeret and Succot
by Rabbi Eliezer Gur-Arieh

Shemini Atzeret is a separate holiday, but at the same time it is also connected to Succot in that it is the eighth day after seven days of Succot. The Sefat Emet discusses this link, based on the passage, "On the eighth day, make for you an additional holiday [atzeret]" [Bamidbar 29:35]. He emphasizes the words "for you," based on the Midrash, which quotes the passage, "They repaid my love with hate, and I prayed for their good" [Tehillim 109:4]. "During the holiday of Succot, Yisrael offers sacrifices of 70 bulls, corresponding to the 70 nations of the world. Yisrael complains: Master of the Universe, we offer 70 sacrifices for them, but instead of loving us for this they hate us. Therefore, the Almighty commands, now offer a sacrifice for your own benefit, 'On the eighth day.'" [Bamidbar Rabbah 21:22]. Thus, Succot is universal, but Shemini Atzeret is a holiday dedicated to Yisrael alone.

The Sefat Emet continues: "On Succot, the Almighty's hand is open to receive penitents. This dwelling has been given to those who repent ...

That is why our sages say that two walls must be complete but the third only requires the length of a tefach. This is a hint of the letter 'heh,' which also implies 'yud' and 'dalet,' which together make up the word 'yad,' referring to the hand that is willing to accept teshuvah." [1886]. That is, the minimum requirement for building a succah, two full walls and a short section that is not necessarily connected to them, is in the shape of the letter "heh." As the Sefat Emet writes, "this refers to the spiritual 'heh,' which is represented by a succah. There is also a more earthly 'heh' representing prayer. The Midrash compares the passage, 'Who is such a great nation' [as Yisrael] [Devarim 4:7] to what is written, 'Respond to us with wonders ... even as far as the seas' [Tehillim 65:6]. The sea, which is always open, hints at repentance. A mikveh, on the other hand, may be closed sometimes. For Bnei Yisrael, the way to teshuvah is always open. Prayers are specially linked to Bnei Yisrael, which is what is meant by 'a holiday FOR YOU,' while other nations can join in the act of teshuvah."

Thus, Succot is a continuation of the earlier holidays of repentance; those who want to repent are welcome to enter the succah, and that includes the Gentiles. The eighth day is related to prayer, which is dedicated specifically to Bnei Yisrael, as is written, "an additional holiday FOR YOU."

http://www.jpost.co.il/col/col_main_0.html October 3, 1996

SHABBAT SHALOM: We Promised our Children

By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN (October 3)

ONE of the most popular Festivals is Simhat Torah, which marks the conclusion of our yearly reading of the Five Books of Moses. Strangely enough, our Sages linked this celebration with Shmini Atzeret, the eighth day from the beginning of Succot. Let's reveal the hidden origins of Simhat Torah by posing a question: What is the 612th commandment? A hint - it concerns Succot. Although most people are familiar with the basic commandments of Succot, not everyone knows that the festival of booths also plays host to the commandment of Hak'hel, the gathering of the nation once every seven years to attend a reading of Deuteronomy. A month ago, in Parashat Vayelech, we read: "At the end of every seven years, in the time of the year of release, in the feast of booths, when all of Israel appears before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this Torah before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and your stranger that is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this Torah." (Deut. 31:10-12) The obvious reason why the commandment fell into disuse is because it's linked to the Holy Temple and especially to the king of Israel. Nonetheless, hak'hel could be re-introduced if we rely on the opinion of Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook that the leader of the State of Israel (prime minister or president) can function on such an occasion as the

equivalent of king (Mishpat Kohen, responsa 248). I believe a case can be made showing how Simhat Torah is connected to hak'hel, especially since both hak'hel and atzeret mean "public gathering." First, several observations about the nature of the hak'hel commandment. The text does not specify the day of hak'hel. Second, although women are free from positive commandments determined by time, here we have a positive commandment linked to a specific time period, and yet women are explicitly commanded to participate. Third, children have an important role in hak'hel. Although too young to understand, they are included with the men, women, and strangers living among the Israelites. Of the four categories listed, only the children are given their own verse: "And the children, who do not know, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God..." (Deut. 31:13) Most startling of all is the Maimonidean explanation of the commandment: "And the converts who are not conversant must prepare their hearts to understand and their ears to comprehend - with fear and awe and joy within their trembling - as on the day in which the Torah was given at Sinai... This [commandment] was established by the Torah in order to strengthen the true religion and to enable us to see ourselves as if we were not merely being commanded [concerning] it, but as if we were actually hearing it from the mouth of the Great One." (Maimonides, Laws of Hagiga 3:6) Now let's examine Simhat Torah for a moment. What purpose does it serve? Don't we already have a day which recalls the giving of the Torah on Sinai - Shavuot! Why another day to recall this Sinaitic Revelation? But perhaps this is the point: the Torah was given on Shavuot, and at that time the Jews declared "we shall do and we shall obey." But that is not sufficient. In every generation, in every single year, there must be a re-acceptance, an activity which reiterates the fact that we likewise accept for ourselves the Divine gift. What better way to demonstrate our worthiness for the Divine bounty of rain and crops than by renewing our dedication to Torah?! And precisely in the midst of our fear and trembling in the wake of the unknown character of the year to come we rejoice before the Torah scrolls, dance with them, and bring them out into the streets, clapping them to our bosoms even as we lift them towards the heavens. There is a famous Midrash which maintains that the Almighty refused to give His Torah to Israel until the Jews provided a guarantee that they would remain faithful to it. First they suggested the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, and then moved on to the Prophets - both groups being rejected by God because they were too few and far between. "Our children, then, will be our guarantors," the nation declared. This was accepted by God. The genius of any religion is to be found in its ability to exist over a long period. If we turn to the last mitzva, the commandment that every Jew write a Torah scroll for himself, at least the preservation of the text is guaranteed. To make certain, however, that the Torah not be treated as an archeological curiosity, it is necessary that succeeding generations continue to venerate it, rejoice in it, and conduct their lives by its words. This was the "guarantee" made by the Jews gathered at Sinai more than 4,000 years ago. It is no accident that the major custom of Simhat Torah is for every adult to carry a Torah Scroll in a dancing circuit around the bima, and for adults as well as children to be called up to the Torah. The blessing which is made confirms our thanksgiving to the Almighty, who "has chosen us from all other nations and has given us His Torah." In effect, every Jew reconfirms his dedication to Torah and his commitment to its teachings. In order to secure our future, that commitment must be made by men, women and children in joy.

Shabbat Shalom & Hag Sameah Rabbi Riskin, dean of the Ohr Torah institutions, is chief rabbi of Efrat.

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UNITED SYNAGOGUE - LONDON (O)
Shemini Atzeret Vol 9 No 4 5 October 1996 22 Tishri 5757
Shabbat ends in London at 19:16
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This edition is dedicated to the memory of The Rev M.H. Taylor, Chazan of Dollis Hill Synagogue 1951-1995

SHEMINI ATZERET by Rabbi E Jackson -Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue, London

There are two festivals which do not have their date actually mentioned in the Torah. Their dates are dependent rather on their proximity to another festival. We refer, of course, to Shavuot and Shemini Atzeret. Shavuot falls on the fiftieth day after Pesach and we count in between each day of the Omer. We philosophise and we quote our commentators who say that Shavuot and Pesach are inextricably bound up. On Pesach we celebrate the physical redemption from Egypt but that cannot be complete until we accept upon ourselves the spiritual discipline of the Torah. What about Shemini Atzeret? There is indeed a theory that it (on a parallel with Pesach and Shavuot) should be celebrated fifty days after Succot, but since the pilgrims from the Diaspora would not have reached home before the winter rains came, it was placed immediately after Succot. The Torah tells us: "On the eighth day (of Succot) there shall be for you a solemn assembly". The two are clearly inextricably bound up together. Nevertheless, we know that Shemini Atzeret is designated as "Regel Bifnei Atzmo" - a festival in its own right. In fact, we recite the Shehechyanu blessing in order to underline that fact. Shemini Atzeret is indeed an anomaly because although it is recognised as a festival in its own right, it could not exist without Succot! The link between the two festivals is underlined by a comment of Rashi on the Gemara (Succah 48) reference to "Regel Bifnei Armo" He infers that it is a festival in its own right because "we do not sit any more in the Succah". Rav Zevin in "Hamoaddim Behalachah" points out that Rashi must have had in mind the words of Targum Jonathan on the verse "Bayom Hashemini Atzeret Tihyeh Lachem". It means, he says, "On the eight day assemble yourselves in joy from your exile - back to your houses." In other words it is a mitzvah and a special simchah to retire from the Succah to one's home. This explanation certainly underlines the connection between Succot and Shemini Atzeret, but on consideration it is a remarkable statement. We know that the mitzvah of Succot is seven days and after that the Jew will return to his home, but should the returning be a special simchah? Should it be regarded as a mitzvah? The powerful message in the mind of Rav Benzion Firrer is timely and basic. When we leave the house in order to go into the Succah, our temporary dwelling, we are mindful of the fact that we are not our own masters; that we cannot rely on "My strength and the power of My hand" and that we need the help and protection of the Almighty in all of our endeavours. We are likewise reminded that this world is merely a corridor to the world to come. But our exit from home into a temporary structure could implant into the Jewish heart a dangerous misconception. We could imagine that we are obliged to escape into this spiritual haven for all time. We could imagine that the Succah is the final target of all our aspirations. Shemini Atzeret followed by Simchat Torah comes to teach us that there is no escape from the real world. Of course our aspirations must always be godly, but having, as it were, recharged our batteries, we are now obliged to return to our home and to accept that obligation with joy as real "Simcha Shel Mitzvah." !

B"H Torah Studies Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by
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Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion
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Kehot Publication Society

Vezot Haberachah
On Simchat Torah, the day of Rejoicing with the Torah, we complete our yearly reading of the Torah and begin the cycle again.
What is the connection between the day itself and the Sidra we read on it,

Vezot Haberachah? And why do we celebrate the Torah on this day instead of on Shavuot when it was first given? In the Sicha that follows, one point must be made clear to avoid confusion. Shemini Atzeret - the eighth day of Succot and a festival in its own right - and Simchat Torah, the day following, were originally a single festival. Outside the land of Israel, however, where we celebrate two festive days instead of one, they are separated. But they are in essence a single religious event, and they are treated as such in the Sicha.

SHEMINI ATZERET - THE DAY AND THE READING

Basing himself on the Talmud, Rambam writes that on every festival we read a passage from the Torah relating to that day, for "Moses instituted for Israel that they read on every festival its appropriate section."

He continues by specifying the readings for the individual festivals, and says, "On the last day (of Succot) we read the section beginning Kol Habechor, 'All the firstling males ...,' and on the next day we read the Sidra Vezot Haberachah, 'And this is the blessing....'"

Thus the reason that we read Vezot Haberachah on the second day of Shemini Atzeret is not merely, as has been suggested, to end the cycle of the year's festivals with Moses' concluding blessing to Israel. Nor is it to couple the celebration of the festival with that of completing the annual reading of the Torah. Nor again is it to join Moses' blessing with the blessing that Solomon pronounced over the people on Shemini Atzeret. These are all reasons, but they are incidental. The main one is, as Rambam implies, that the Sidra of Vezot Haberachah directly concerns the festival itself. But what is the connection between them?

The Unique Nation

In the Talmud we find an explanation of the symbolism of the sacrifices made on Succot and Shemini Atzeret. "To what do the seventy bullocks (that were offered during Succot) correspond? To the seventy nations.

To what does the single bullock (of Shemini Atzeret) correspond? To the single (i.e., unique) nation (Israel)."

Shemini Atzeret is therefore the day when Israel's uniqueness is revealed. This is its connection with Vezot Haberachah. For Moses begins his blessing with the words, "The L-rd came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mt. Paran." Rashi explains the reference to Seir and Paran in this way: "He first addresses Himself to the sons of Esau (the inhabitants of Seir) that they should accept the Torah, but they refused. Then He went and addressed Himself to the sons of Ishmael (who lived in Paran) that they should accept it, and they too refused." The descendants of Esau and Ishmael here stand for the whole non-Jewish world, and the meaning of Moses' words is therefore that the whole world had the opportunity of accepting G-d's law at the time of Sinai, but only Israel, "the unique nation" took it upon themselves.

Yet, although this emphasis of Israel's uniqueness links Vezot Haberachah with Shemini Atzeret, it surely connects it more strongly with another festival, Shavuot, the "season of the Giving of our Torah." For Moses was referring to the events which surrounded Mt. Sinai, and these took place on Shavuot.

The Breaking of the Tablets

The explanation lies in the last words of the Sidra, with which the Five Books of Moses close: "There has not since risen a prophet in Israel like Moses... in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel."

Rashi is prompted by the question, what precisely was the act referring to in the phrase "which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel?" He says it was the moment when "his heart inspired him to shatter the tablets (of the Ten Commandments) before their eyes."

But why should this act have been counted amongst Moses' virtues? It was, on the face of it, connected with an episode of Divine displeasure. Indeed Rashi writes elsewhere that "the death of the righteous is as grievous before the Holy One blessed be He as the day on which the tablets were broken." Rashi himself answers this question, by saying that when Moses broke the tablets, "the Holy One blessed be He agreed with Moses' opinion" and congratulated him.

But this does not solve our difficulty. The Talmud tells us what was Moses'

reasoning. He argued, a fortiori, "If, about the Passover sacrifice, which is only one of the 613 precepts, the Torah says, 'no alien shall eat thereof,' here is the whole Torah, and the Israelites are apostates - how much more so." In other words, Moses was defending the honor of the Torah in not wanting to transmit it to "apostates," but he was, at the same time, stressing the unworthiness of Israel. How then can Vezot Haberachah - Moses' blessing to Israel - end with their dispraise? Indeed, the Sidra's ending would contradict its beginning, for it opens by stating Israel's uniqueness in accepting the Torah, and ends by suggesting their unworthiness to do so. It is stranger still that the final words of the Torah, whose whole purpose was to be addressed to and accepted by Israel, should concern the shattering of the tablets on which its laws were inscribed.

THE SECOND TABLETS AND THE PATH OF RETURN

We are forced instead to say that G-d congratulated Moses for the breaking of the tablets, because his act was in honor not only of the Torah but also of Israel.

Here we must remember that G-d did not congratulate Moses immediately. He waited until forty days had passed, until He gave the command, "Hew thee two tablets of stone like the first which you broke." And Rashi does not give his interpretation that G-d's words were a congratulation until Vezot Haberachah, on Moses' death, forty years later. This in itself suggests that the full virtue of Moses' act was not apparent until the end of his life.

The explanation is this.

The Talmud tells us that "the Israelites only made the golden calf to place a good argument in the mouth of those who return and repent."

G-d allowed the Israelites to be tempted into making the calf only for the sake of their ultimate repentance, which was an unprecedented type of repentance: One which would bring them to an even higher level of spirituality than they had achieved before the sin.

Thus the breaking of the first tablets because of the sin of the golden calf prepared the way for the second tablets which were greater than the first - the perennial reminder of the power of repentance not merely to efface the sins of the past, but to bring man to new spiritual heights. This, too, was Moses' ultimate intention in refusing to give the Torah to "apostates." He did not wish simply to defend the Torah's honor, but rather to awaken in Israel a desire to return to G-d. He was like a father who drives his errant son from his house, not to cast him off, but to create a longing to return.

This is why Moses broke the tablets "in the sight of all Israel." He was making a public gesture, directed towards the Israelites; something they would witness and by it be changed for good.

This is why the fast of the 17th of Tammuz, the day when the tablets were broken, will be transformed in the Time to Come into a day of gladness and rejoicing. At the present we see only the immediate consequences of the golden calf, the sufferings of exile, several of whose major tragedies also occurred on the 17th of Tammuz. Therefore we fast. But when Israel's return to G-d is complete, it will be seen to have begun on the day when the tablets were shattered, and it will be a day of rejoicing.

But only when the second tablets had been commanded - the sign of the power of repentance - did G-d congratulate Moses. And this congratulation was not made explicit until the end of Moses' life, when he was granted a vision of the "final day" and saw "all that would happen to Israel in the future until the resurrection of the dead." For it was then that he saw the final triumph of repentance, the Messianic fulfillment of what he had begun at Sinai.

THE REJOICING WITH THE TORAH

This, then, is the connection between Vezot Haberachah and Shemini Atzeret.

On the face of it, we should celebrate Simchat Torah Rejoicing with the Torah, on Shavuot when the Ten Commandments were first given. But our greatest rejoicing belongs to the second tablets, which were given on Yom Kippur. And Shemini Atzeret is the end of the festive cycle which begins with Yom Kippur.

However, we must also remember that the opening words of Moses' blessing, "The L-rd came from Sinai..." refer to the first occasion of the Giving of the

Torah, so that this too must have relevance to Simchat Torah.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE REPENTANT

The difference between the first tablets and the second is like that between the righteous and the repentant. When the first were given, Israel was still righteous; by the time of the second, they had sinned and repented.

The righteous are men whose virtue consists of the fact that they live according to the Torah. But repentance reaches even higher than Torah.

It rests on the bond between G-d and man which survives even when man transgresses G-d's law. Thus at the time of the first tablets, Israel received a revelation from the Torah. But at the time of the second, they themselves gave revelation to the Torah. They had reached beyond it, to the essential union between G-d and Israel.

This is the relation of Vezot Haberachah to Simchat Torah: The Sidra begins with the first tablets, when Israel rejoiced in the Torah. And it ends with the second tablets, when the Torah itself rejoiced in Israel.

Similarly, Simchat Torah means "rejoicing with the Torah," and also means "rejoicing of the Torah."

The Day and the Year

The Festivals were not instituted as self-contained events, days of light and joy. Our task is to bring what we feel on these days to the whole of the year. They form a sanctuary in time, whose light is to spread to every corner of the calendar.

But when confronted with this mission, the Jew may feel intimidated by its enormity. How can the secular world, from which G-d is so heavily hidden, be made receptive to its opposite, the light of holiness?

Here the Sidra gives us the precedent and the strength. For even that seeming calamity, the breaking of the tablets, was potentially the beginning of the path of return to G-d, the opening of a new and higher access to the heights of the spirit. This is why, as soon as we have read the phrase about the tablets, "in the sight of all Israel," we begin again with the Torah's opening words, "In the beginning, G-d created...." For by the G-dly powers within him, the powers he discovers by returning to G-d, the Jew can stand in the darkest confines of a secular order and create a new world. He can be architect and builder of a world in which "every creature knows its Creator, and where every dominion recognizes the sovereignty of G-d."

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IX, pp. 237-243.)

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Shmini Azeret. Rabbi Zalman Kossowsky

Morei Verabotei.

We have come to the end of our Mitzwa of sitting seven days in the Sukka. It is

a Jewish axiom that the symbolism of the Sukka can be extended to every facet of our lives. I would like therefore this morning to explore some of the lessons

that we can take with us from this Chag that is just ending as we prepare for the Alltag of the rest of the year.

In its simplest form the Sukka can be seen to represent that frail existence which has no appearance of permanence or durability. It is buffeted by both heat and cold. Its inhabitants can become wet and miserable. If this is life as the Jew sees it, some may ask, then what is the value in maintaining Jewishness in such a Sukka-like existence.

Yet is this the correct picture? Or is there another way of looking at life.

Alphonso Carl once said: - "Some people always find fault with Nature for putting thorns on roses, but I always thank her for putting roses on thorns."

It is normal for human beings to wish to have a life of health, happiness and prosperity. Some people, however, when they discover that life is not always attainable in that form, feel as if G-d has somehow short-changed them. In part, the function of the Sukka is to help us overcome such feelings.

How? Let us look again at the Festival.

One of the most impressive ceremonies connected with the Festival was the ritual of nisuch hamajim the pouring of water before the Altar in the

Temple in Jerushalajim during chol hamoed. Though the actual ceremony itself consisted of the simple fact of pouring water over the alter - the genius of our forebears invested this seemingly commonplace observance with splendour and glory. The Rabbis in the Talmud speak of the ceremonies in graphically descriptive terms. They talk of the cheering multitude, the chanting Levites, the ecstatically dancing worshippers, the illuminated torches carried by the participants and the impressive spectacle of the Kohanim dressed in their sacred vestments. This ceremony was repeated each night of the intermediate days of Chol Hamoed. Every dawn the Jews of ancient Israel who had come to Jerusalem for the Festival, were lifted up to the heights of ecstasy through religious inspiration.

The Talmud says mi she'lo ra'ah simchat bet ha'soeva, lo ra'ah simcha be'ja'mav one who did not see the festivities of the pouring of the water, never saw joy in his life.

I would paraphrase it somewhat differently: Only the person who is able to detect the sparks of sanctity in the simple ceremony of the pouring of the water

- is able to know real joy.

I would like to suggest to you, my friends, that this is the first lesson we need to take with us into the Alltag. We must try to find cause for exultation even in matters of everyday significance. What the ancient Israelites did, and what we need to do - is to learn to see happy omens in very small manifestations of our daily lives.

We train ourselves to develop these feelings during Sukkot. The Jew, hounded

and harassed as he has been throughout the ages, finds joy and happiness in his

frail and battered Sukka. Rain and hail, thunder and lightning cannot dampen

the Festival.

When we take the Sukka as the symbol of refuge in the Galut we find another message. The Sukka may be blown about to where it loses some or even all of its decorations; they may even be ruined and destroyed - but whenever the Jew sits down in the Sukka - he is commanded to rejoice. G-d has been with his

forefathers and G-d is with him too.

That is also what we have to learn. ≡ The rain this past week is not

necessarily a sign of G-D's anger or displeasure with us. Rather it is a challenge - we have to learn to find joy in the Sukka even when it is wet.

Rather than be depressed because our decorations have been ruined, let us accept that with equanimity, even perhaps with resignation. But when we do sit in the Sukka - let us make ourselves sing,

And my friends - Sukkot is only a symbol for our life in general.

Life is not granted in full measures. There are always problems and shortcomings. Sometimes even pain and misfortune. That we cannot change. The question is how do we respond. I firmly believe that I may not be able to be happy, because of some very difficult situation in my life. But I can make my unhappiness worse. I do that when I brood, when I pick at my wounds, when I dwell on my hurts.

What we need to do - is what Jews have done with the Sukka in the past.

When it rained and the ornaments were ruined, they regretted the ruined decorations and the wasted work and waited patiently for the rain to stop.

When finally the

rain stopped and the sun peeked out of the angry clouds, even if only for a few

moments - they were ready. They had learnt the lesson that if they brooded, then they would miss even those few moments of sunshine.

That is what Sukkot teaches us. This is the lesson for our life in general.

It is for this reason as well that Sukkot is called - called - zeman simchateinu the time of our rejoicing. It is the training ground where we learn how to iv'du et hashem besimcha to serve G-d by living each day so as to find the joys that are hidden there.

Chag Sameach.

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VeZos HaBrocho

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

"And the Children of Yisroel wept for Moshe on the Plains of Moav for thirty days; and the days of the weeping of the mourning of Moshe ended." (34,8) The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 100,4) contrasts the language of the Torah: "Regarding Ya'akov it says 'And the days of weeping for him passed' while regarding Moshe it says 'and the days of the weeping of the mourning of Moshe ended.' The reason is that Moshe did not have anyone weeping for him,

so it is written 'ended,' but Ya'akov had people weeping for him, so it is written 'And the days of weeping for him passed.'"

The Maggid of Dubnow explains that this is because after the death of Moshe,

Yisroel were going into Eretz Yisroel, to a good and vast land, and they did not dedicate themselves to weeping and eulogy, for they anticipated the (impending) good, the inheritance and the endowment.

But at the death of Ya'akov Avinu, they wept because they were destined to enter a cruel bondage.

This (the mourning of Moshe Rabeinu) is reflected by the possuk: "The righteous man is lost, and nobody pays attention." (Yeshayahu 57,1)

By way of a parable, when a person of greed dies, there are those who weep. For if he loved food and drink, the dealers in food and drink will feel his absence, and they will say that they have lost this customer. And if he desired fine clothing, ornaments and furnishings, the vendors of these articles will be extremely upset.

Not so with the death of a righteous man, who eschewed all the indulgences of this world; nobody sold to him, and nobody bought from him. Nobody pays

attention to his passing, for it causes no lack and no loss to anybody.

(Thus Ya'akov Avinu, whose death marked the onset of the affliction, his mourning was therefore tinged with a personal significance. But with Moshe Rabeinu there was no personal facet in his mourning DR).

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"...Which Moshe did before the eyes of all of Yisroel" (34,12)

The Chofets Chaim quotes the Zohar HaKadosh "The souls of the righteous were created before the world was created." That is, just as the Torah was created two thousand years before the creation of the world, so too the souls of the righteous were created before the creation of the world.

In the light of this, it is possible to connect the end of the Torah with its beginning. For it is (well) known that the righteous and the (spiritual) leaders are called "the eyes of the congregation" (BaMidbar 15,24) "the eyes of Yisroel" (Yehoshua 10,12).

The Torah attests that "before the eyes of all of Yisroel" - "In the beginning, HaShem created . . ." That is to say that the creation of the world took place before the eyes of the righteous, who were created before the creation of the world.

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Sh'mini Atzeret-Simchat Torah

22-23 Tishrei 5757 Saturday-Sunday, October 5-6, 1996

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A Day of Only Minhag

One Yom Tov among Jews entirely originated as a matter of minhag, a total creation by the people wherever they were dispersed and to which generation after generation added its particular nuance. It started in Babylonia in the period of the amoraim and from there spread to every Jewish community in the world.

Simchat Torah, therefore, is a creation of common folk in which over 40 generations participated and added its own flavor to the celebrations.

So begins the introduction to Avraham Yaari's 500 plus page anthology Toldot Chag Simchat Torah in which virtually every minhag relating to Simchat Torah is discussed. Yaari's book, in my estimation, is worthy of translation, and, also, deserves to be on the home book shelf - in the original- of every aficionado of Torah literature.

In these shared lines I should like to focus upon the highly unusual form of the Torah reading throughout Simchat Torah - evening and morning - in comparison to Torah readings at other times of the year.

Parashat haShavuah

Unlike every other weekly portion, V'zot haB'rachah is the only sidrah not assigned to a regular Shabbat, but is saved to be read on Simchat Torah. And unlike every other second day of Yom Tov (Yom Tov Sheni Shel Galuyot), we do not read on this day from Parshat Re'eh.

While this custom began in Bavel in Talmudic times, it is not until the middle of the 12th century that we find the minhag recorded in Spain and France to immediately begin with the reading of B'rayshit from a second Sefer Torah. Why begin B'rayshit immediately upon completing V'zot haB'rachah? Why not wait until the first Shabbat following Yom Tov? Explains one of Rabbenu Tam's most illustrious students, "We find in the aggadah that during the ten days between Rosh haShanah and Yom Kippur Satan claims that the Jews are coming to the end of the reading of the Torah and they have no intention of returning to it yet again. For this reason, the custom arose to read the beginning of B'rayshit at minchah of Yom Kippur. And G-d would then respond to Satan: See how motivated the Jews are, for they haven't yet finished the Torah and they already have started once again from the beginning." (Haittur).

Rabbi Saadya Gaon objected to this practice on Yom Kippur since the Torah was not yet completed by then. In time the minhag of reading B'rayshit was shifted from Yom Kippur to immediately following the reading of V'zot haB'rachah on Simchat Torah to express what today is commonly offered as the explanation: There is no end to the study of Torah. It is an eternal commitment which the Jews have. Torah is not a book to be read and returned to the shelves; rather it is a comprehensive way of life to be examined daily.

Numbers of Aliyot

The specific numbers of individuals called to the Torah at any occasion for public reading, reveals a hierarchy of the sanctity ascribed to that day (k'dushat hayom).

[1] On weekdays, and even Chanukah, Purim and fast days three people are called.

[2] On weekdays when a musaf is recited because of an additionally mandated sacrifice in Beit haMikdash times, then a fourth person is called (Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamoed.)

[3] When Yom Tov occurs on a weekday the sanctity of the festive day (Kedushat Moed) is celebrated by calling five people to the Torah.

[4] Yom Kippur, where the sanctity of the day is higher than all other days of YomTov, six individuals are called to the Torah.

[5] Shabbat, possessed of the highest sanctity of all days, is marked by calling to the Torah seven people, also a symbolic number in relation to the day. (Obviously, when Yom Kippur and other days of Yom Tov occur on Shabbat, seven people are called to the Torah in deference to the day also being Shabbat.)

Can Aliyot be added (hosafot) to these numbers? And if we do, what then happens to the hierarchy?

The most widespread minhag concerning additional aliyot (hosafot) on Yom Tov is not to do so in order that Yom Tov can be distinguished from Yom Kippur or Shabbat. The truth be told, the Shulchan Aruch records a dissenting practice whereby hosafot are permitted even on Yom Tov, but that is not the prevailing practice (Orach Chayim 282: 1). Obviously, then, Simchat Torah as we know it breaks all bounds of any accepted protocol for Yom Tov. Why, then, do we call everyone to the Torah on this day?

In Bavel, with the advent of the period of Gaonim it seems that ten people were called to the Torah, double the number of any other day of Yom Tov. This notwithstanding, a later Sephardic minhag was to stick to five aliyot as on every other Yom Tov. In western Europe (Amsterdam and Germany) during the 1800's there was strong resistance to a free-for-all Torah reading because of the burden it placed upon the congregation (tircha d'tzibura), but this feeling eventually prevailed only in those congregations seeking liturgical reforms.

Fact is that our universal minhag of calling everyone to the Torah stems from the days of RaSHi, in France. How, then, can so radical a departure from protocol be explained? Simply: to intensify the joy associated with the completion of the reading of the Torah everyone is included in the honor of reciting the birchot haTorah. (Kol Bo)

Yaari interestingly notes that certain communities called the entire shul for an aliyah on Yom Kippur, as well on as Parshat Yitro when the Aseret haDibrot were read. Clearly, the desire at these two times to demonstrate the inclusionary nature of Torah with respect to all Jews can readily be understood.

Several Called at One Time

An accepted halachic guideline states that two voices cannot be properly heard at the same time (tray kolo lo mistam'ay). Therefore, for example, one person recites a b'rachah with all others listening and responding with amen at the appropriate moment. Nonetheless, Yaari records the minhag where all Kohanim would be called at once and all together each would recite the b'rachah. So, too, with all the Leviim. Only then did each of the Yisraelim get their aliyah. And what about the halachic ruling that two voices cannot be properly heard simultaneously? Accordingly, Yaari notes a variation of this minhag where one Kohen and one Levi would be designated to recite the birchot haTorah on behalf of all the rest.

Can Minors Receive an Aliyah?

Calling minors to the Torah on Simchat Torah was an ancient practice already known in the days of RaSHi. In Spain (sepharad) this practice was not known. Why call the children? To educate them to the importance of Torah study and the joy of Simchat Torah.

As time progressed and the prevailing custom became not at any time to honor any minor with an aliyah (except for maftir) the minhag emerged whereby a distinguished individual of the community would be given the next to last aliyah in V'zot haBrachah known as "im kol han'arim" (together with all the youngsters). So meaningful was this particular minhag to become, Yaari notes, that during the last century in the Old City of Jerusalem all four of the major sephardic synagogues would assemble for this one aliyah in which all the children joined. Here we have an instance where minhag crossed cultures from the Ashkenazic practice to the Sephardic sectors as a result of the two communities co-existing in Old Jerusalem.

Torah Reading at Night?

Of course, the reading of the Torah at night after the evening's

hakafot is entirely a matter of minhag having no precedent in halachah other than to serve as a way to intensify the joy of the completion of the Torah. Once the Torah were taken out of the Aron HaKodesh for the evening's hakafot it would only be proper to do so with a purpose. And so, some communities called five individuals to the Torah at this time (the common number of aliyot associated with Yom Tov) while "our minhag", as Mishnah Berurah indicates, would be to call only three to the Torah. Still other minhagim developed: some called four while another had everyone present called to the Torah just like during the daytime.

Seemingly, all of these variations in practice were born in Ashkenazic communities of western Europe not earlier than the end of the 14th century. As to what was read, this, too, varied according to minhag; not everyone chose to read the beginning of V'zot haBerachah as we do today.

Dancing with Gemorrot

While we celebrate completing the cycle of reading of the Torah Shebichtav, the five books dictated to Moshe Rabbenu, there can be no integrity to the festivities without some acknowledgment of the Torah Sheba'al peh, the Talmud. Rabbi Meir Shapiro, founding Rosh Yeshiva of the magnificent Yeshiva in Lublin, Poland would encourage those studying at the Yeshiva to dance at hakafot with the volume of Talmud which they were going to study that year. (What a delightful scene this would be if once again this suggestion were to catch on these days.)

Drunkenness and Shtick

In the minds of the common folk Simchat Torah has all too often been mixed up with Purim. The inner joy of having completed the annual cycle of Torah reading was for centuries expressed with the zany "shtick" more appropriately expected on Purim. Generation after generation of Rabbanim would protest such a mistaken blurring of boundaries when people would drink and party. For this reason the minhag arose to have the Kohanim recite their Birchot Kohanim early on in shacharit because by musaf inebriation would already be a problem for many. I am reminded, having arrived at this point, of an incident which occurred one Simchat Torah when I served as president of Young Israel of Rugby, in Brooklyn's East Flatbush (prior to my becoming a Young Israel Rabbi). A young guest of mine, then a lean and lanky lad of about 16 or 17 years old, got a hold of a few shots of scotch and came staggering over to the distinguished Rav Avigdor Miller, Shlita, insisting that the rav listen to some "Torah" he had to say. The bochur sat down next to the rav and with his head most of the time resting on Rabbi Miller's shoulder he proceeded to spout "Torah" for about fifteen uninterrupted minutes.

When davening was concluded Rav Miller called me over to say: "Reb Chaim! Giving schnapps to a common person ("stam a baalebos") who does not learn Torah is an issur d'oray'so of bal tashchit (a cardinal sin of wanton destruction). But give schnapps to a ben Torah and look what happens. All his inhibitions are lost and he spouts nothing but pure Torah!" (That young man is today a very well known rav and rosh yeshiva.)

Those who will confuse Purim with Simchat Torah, I have observed for three decades now, may well be mostly those who for years haven't progressed one iota in their study and knowledge of Torah. To drown their unconscious pain of failed achievement, I believe, they may take to mistaken drunkenness and to a panoply of attendant shtick, regrettably all too well known in many of our communities, as the only manner left to them of expressing their "joy".

But Simchat Torah is not Purim.
