

IT HAPPENED ONCE

The Hakafot were in full swing. Round and round went the circle of dancing worshippers in the little shul. I had come to watch, that's all. Somebody from the circle pulled me into the whirling mass of dancers. I turned my head to glance at the man who had "roped me in." He seemed elderly and I wondered where he got so much strength to dance and dance without end. I was astonished to see that tears were streaming down his cheeks. An inner happiness and ecstasy were written over his noble face.

"It's a long time since I had such inspiring hakafot," said my dancing partner. "It was exactly thirty years ago today, during the terrible days after the First World War. I lived in Riga then, the capital of the newly born independent Republic of Latvia.

"That night we were sheltering in a cellar. Things were not going well for the nationalists. They were losing ground and they suspected treachery. Anybody suspicious was shot, without even any investigation. Suddenly sentries saw a light in a top floor apartment. 'The spy nest has been discovered!' the sentries decided, and they rushed to the house to lay their hands on the spy.

"Whom did they rush to seize? Zalman. And who was he? I will tell you. He didn't know what it meant to be sad. Heaven knows, he had plenty of worries. But G-d had blessed him with a cheerful disposition, and seemingly nothing, absolutely nothing could break his spirit. Zalman was with us in the cellar that night. That night of all nights, when Jews rejoice and dance with the Torah we sat downcast, shivering with every explosion.

"Zalman couldn't stand it any longer. 'Brothers!' he exclaimed. 'It's Simchat Torah tonight! We must rejoice!' But his words fell flat. He looked hurt, then he suddenly remembered something. 'I see, my friends, that without a little shnapps there will be nothing doing. I have a pint of shnapps at home, which I've been saving for tonight. I'll be right back.'

"Before we could stop him Zalman climbed to the sixth floor where he lived. He picked up a candle and found the bottle. He was so happy that he danced about with the candle burning in one hand, and the bottle in the other, forgetting all about the war, the bombardment, and the regulations.

"Now, my young friend, you understand what the sentries saw in the darkness of the night. It was just as we were preparing to celebrate hakafot that the sentries burst in, crying, 'Where is the dirty spy? Turn the spy over to us, or we will have you all shot!'

"At this moment Zalman stepped forward, bottle in hand, and calmly said: 'Officers, it was I that you saw with the light upstairs, but I was not signaling to the enemy. I...'" "Never mind, come along!" the soldiers said briskly, and marched poor Zalman off under heavy guard.

"If we had been depressed before, now we were truly grief-stricken. He would be put to the wall and shot immediately. Time dragged slowly. Suddenly we heard steps, and presently in walked--who do you think? --Zalman! We couldn't believe our eyes, but the bottle in his hand looked real enough. There were tears in all eyes.

"Stop it! Stop it!" cried Zalman. 'Let's just celebrate!' But we would not start until he told us what had happened.

"Didn't I tell you, we have a great and mighty G-d?" Zalman began. "When I was brought to headquarters the duty officer hardly looked at me. 'To be shot!' he called out. I looked at the officer for a moment, and I called out: "Styopka! What on earth are you saying!"

"The officer gazed at me for a moment, then burst out laughing. "What a joke! You, Zalman, a spy! Well, well, sit down and let's talk about old times. Do you remember when I used to come to your house to remove the candlesticks on Saturday mornings, and light a fire in the winter? I was a kid then, but you treated me as though I was a grown-up. I loved you, Zalman. Those were happy days in our little town, but these are grim days. You are lucky that I was on duty tonight. It was not even my turn, but I was substituting for a friend. You would have been a dead duck by now. But, what's the idea of the bottle? Is it Purim tonight?" "You ought to know better, Stepan Ivanovitch,"

says I to him. 'No, it's Simchat Torah.'

"Sure, I remember. You go round and round in a circle dancing. Well, go back to your dancing, and say a prayer for us, Zalman. You Jews are marvellous, risking your neck for your religion, dancing in the shadow of death..."

"That was Zalman's simple story. He got a pass to come back to us. And then we began hakafot. Oh, those hakafot! I'll never forget them. Every Simchat Torah, I remember them; for the last thirty years!"

From *The Complete Story of Tishrei*

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Sukka
Although a sukkah is only a temporary dwelling, in certain respects we treat it as if it were our regular home--eating, drinking, and studying in it. This is how we should treat the world world at large. We should not regard the world as an end unto itself, but rather as a means of furthering our spiritual development and refinement; by properly utilizing the physical world, we bring G-dliness into our surroundings, transforming the temporary into something lasting and eternal.

(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

In sukkot shall you dwell seven days
The sukkah surrounds the entire person and one is enjoined to conduct all worldly affairs within it for seven days. The fact that all of a person's being is encompassed, including his very shoes, teaches us that not only through prayer and study do we worship G-d. The sukkah teaches that it is also through the physical world that we approach G-d and draw holiness into our surroundings, as it states, "in all your ways shall you know Him." The mitzva of sukkah strengthens our realization of this and gives us the power to carry out our G-dly mission throughout the year.

(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Simchat Torah
One year, during the dancing on Simchat Torah, the Baal Shem Tov cried out: "Yisrael, you holy people. What is the cause of your great joy? It is our holy Torah! Do the other nations ever rejoice while holding their sacred books? Where do they go in the time of their rejoicing--into their inns and drinking houses! And we, the Jewish people, where do you find us in the season of our rejoicing? Inside the synagogues. And why are we dancing and singing? In honor of the holy Torah. When are we united, as one man with one heart? On Simchat Torah! Therefore, I say to you, Yisrael, my holy people! This day is a triple joy--the joy of the Torah, the joy of the Jewish people, and the joy of the Holy One Blessed Be He."

- Candle Lighting Time - NY Metro Area
Eruv Tavshilin
14 Tishrei/Oct 16/Sukkot - Light for Sukkot at 5:55 p.m.
15 Tishrei/Oct 17/Sukkot - Light for Sukkot after 6:53 p.m.
- from a pre-existing flame
16 Tishrei // Oct 18 - light for Shabbat at 5:52 p.m.
- from a pre-existing flame
Shabbat ends 6:50 p.m.
21 Tishrei // Oct 23 - light for Shemini Atzeret at 5:45 p.m.
22 Tishrei // Oct 24 - light for Simchat Torah after 6:43 p.m.
- from a pre-existing flame
23 Tishrei // Oct 25 - light for Shabbat Bereishit at 5:42 p.m.
- from a pre-existing flame
Blessing of the new month Cheshvan//Shabbat ends 6:41 p.m.

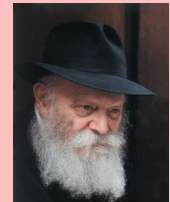


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L'Chaim

1845
16 Tishrei, 5785
October 18, 2024
The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person
יוסף תורה השלושים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The festival of Sukkot, which follows Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, marks the beginning of the true days of rejoicing of the month of Tishrei, coming as it does after the solemnity of the High Holidays. Although Sukkot has many similarities and characteristics in common with Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, it is actually the culmination and fulfillment of the first two holidays. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the holiness that was in a more concealed and hidden state on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is revealed for all to see on "the day of our rejoicing (Sukkot)."

One of the fundamental themes of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is that of the unity of the Jewish People. But it is on Sukkot that this motif finds its highest expression.

The Jew's worship on the High Holidays lies in his uncovering of the pintele Yid within him, that Jewish spark that can never be extinguished, that he shares in common with every other Jew. All of us stand as equals before G-d in prayer on Rosh Hashana, accepting His sovereignty and crowning Him King over us all; on Yom Kippur we are equally aroused to do teshuva (repent) and return to G-d. When a Jew does teshuva, he is merely uncovering and revealing his innate belief in G-d and love of Him.

The unity of the Jewish People during the High Holidays is a unity based on the common denominator inherent in every Jew. It does not take into consideration the many differences of temperament, intelligence, or any other marks which distinguish one person from another.

On Sukkot, however, we reach an even higher level of unity than before, developing the theme of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur even further.

One of the most important mitzvot of Sukkot is the taking of the Four Kinds. These four species symbolize the four different types of people which exist within the Jewish nation. The etrog symbolizes one who possesses Torah learning and also does good deeds; the lulav stands for one who possesses only Torah learning. The hadas (myrtle) symbolizes one who performs commandments and does good deeds, but does not have Torah learning, and the arava (willow) symbolizes the Jew who possesses neither Torah nor learning.

On Sukkot we take these four disparate species and bring them together to perform a mitzva. Our unity does not lie in our ignoring the external differences which divide us; rather, we go out of our way to include all types of Jews, even those in the category of arava, who would seem to have no positive contribution to make. Despite all our differences we are all bound together.

This is the highest degree of unity we can achieve. It is far easier to concentrate only on that which we have in common than to acknowledge that we differ as individuals and still remain together.

On Sukkot we verify and confirm the unity which was achieved during the High Holidays. This realization sustains us throughout the year and gives us the strength to live in harmony and solidarity with one another.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Dance Away

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

As Jews prepare to dance ecstatically on Simchat Torah, completely oblivious of the world around them, let's explore the nature of this dance. Is it a form of escapism or a taste of reality?

October 3, 1995 was Erev Yom Kippur. It was also the day when a jury found OJ Simpson "not guilty" for murdering his wife. It was the talk of the town. That same day I had a pre-scheduled radio interview in connection with my book, *Toward A Meaningful Life*. The host called me: "I read and liked your book. But frankly, today everyone is interested in only the OJ Simpson verdict. They just won't care to hear a discussion on your book. Let's reschedule your interview."

I am not sure what got into me, but spontaneously I told the host that my book can shed light on the controversy. The radio host was surprised. "So you're ready to discuss the OJ Simpson trial?" She asked. "Absolutely," I answered.

So the interview commenced as scheduled on Erev Yom Kippur. After introducing me and my book as a distillation of the Rebbe's teachings on life, her first question was what I think about the Simpson verdict?

My reply: "Today is the day preceding Yom Kippur. Jews around the world are preparing for the holiest day of the year. Many are completely oblivious of the OJ Simpson verdict.

Now you may think that this is an unacceptable form of detachment from society. The fact is quite the contrary.

"Let me tell you a short story. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev once led the High Holiday prayer service. Before he began Kaddish, he declared: 'The Russians say that their Czar is the greatest. The French say that their Emperor is the greatest. And I, Levi Yitzchak ben Sarah Sosha say... Yisgadal v'Yiskadash Shemei Rabba (Exalted and hallowed be His Great Name).'

"On the day before Yom Kippur, while the public is consumed with the OJ Simpson verdict and other 'vital' events, Jews declare: 'Today we enter the holiest moment of our lives; we connect to G-d and to the purpose of our existence.'

"Yes, it's all about defining what is real and what is not. Many people are trapped in a 'matrix' dictating the rules of 'reality,' shaped by social, media and peer pressures.

"We all need a moment of reality check, where we embrace the eternal - that which is not man-made."

That's the story.

Now we are up to Simchat Torah. We dance with unbridled joy because we have a connection that allows us to transcend all our man-made institutions with their inherent distortions.

Simply a day when we rise above it all so that we can re-immense with a fighting chance...

