

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 60

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The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson

60

The Three Festivals: Succos, Pesach and Shavuos¹

Shemini Atzeres - A Yom Tov to Itself

After the *Yom Tov* of *Succos* we celebrate another *Yom Tov* called *Shemini Atzeres*. The *Torah* writes:

Bayome HaShemini Atzeres Tihyeh Lachem² (On the eighth day, shall be a time of retreat for you).

This *Yom Tov* is a totally separate *Yom Tov* from the *Yom Tov* of *Succos* and as such, we must mention it in our prayers. We insert the mention of this *Yom Tov* in the places where we mentioned the *Yom Tov* of *Succos* for the past seven days.

1. What is a little confusing about the status of this *Yom Tov* is that outside the Land of Israel, it is still considered as possibly the last day of *Succos* because of the issue of *Sfeika De'Yoma³*.
2. Since it is possible that today is still *Succos* and not yet *Shemini Atzeres* there will be certain *Halachic* ramifications about this regarding mistakes one makes in prayer (*davening*).

¹ Listed in order of occurrence starting with the first of the three festivals after *Rosh Hashanah*

² *Bamidbar* 29:35

³ A *Sfeika De'Yoma* is a day which is possibly *Yom Tov* and possibly weekday. Since the festival days are established by the day of the lunar month, those communities who lived a distance from the *Beis Din* (a Jewish Court) that establishes each new calendar month through testimony of the sighting of the new moon, it was common for those communities to be unsure when *Rosh Chodesh* was established and thereby were also unsure which day marked the beginning of *Yom Tov*.

This questionable status also affects the *Mitzvah* of eating and sleeping in a *Succah* on *Shemini Atzeres*. This issue is beyond the scope of these lessons and we will focus only on the aspect that pertains to *Tefilla* (prayer).

Mentioning the Yom Tov in Tefilla

1. We insert the mention of *Shemini Atzeres* in our prayers instead of the mention of *Succos* both outside the Land of Israel and in the Land of Israel. E.g. in *Ya'aleh Veyavoh, Atta Bechartanu* of the *Amidah/ Shemoneh Esrei* prayer.
2. If someone said *Succos* instead of *Shemini Atzeres* in Israel, then he must go back and correct the mistake, even if it means repeating the *Shemoneh Esrei*.
3. If outside the Land of Israel one mistakenly said *Succos* instead of *Shemini Atzeres* in his *Tefilla* (prayer), and then finished his *Tefilla* (prayer), it is still valid.

There are various customs how to mention *Shemini Atzeres* in prayer:

1. *Yom Shemini Chag Ha'Atzeres Hazeh*
2. *Yom Shemini Atzeres Hachag Hazeh*
3. *Yom Chag Shemini Atzeres Hazeh*

The *Poskim* (deciders of *Halacha*) give reasons for each version. *Nusach Ashkenaz* follows the first version. *Nusach Sefard* follows the second version and Sephardim follow the third version.

Shemini Atzeres - Simchas Torah

Although *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* are celebrated outside the Land of Israel on separate days, nevertheless,

1. The basic text of the prayers are exactly the same for both days since in the *Torah* there is only a single *Yom Tov* called *Shemini Atzeres*.
2. If outside the Land of Israel one mistakenly said *Succos* instead of *Shemini Atzeres* in the *Simchas Torah Tefilla* (prayer), it must be corrected, or else the *Tefilla* (prayer) is invalid and it must be repeated,

The name *Simchas Torah* is an outgrowth of the custom to complete the reading of the entire *Torah* once each year in *Shul* (synagogue). For this reason, we spend the day of

⁴ See *Ishei Yisrael Perek 42 footnote 10, Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 3:97, Yabia Omer 4:51*

Simchas Torah in special joyous *Hakafas* (circuit-dancing) celebrating the completion of the entire five sections of the *Chumash* (the Five Books of Moses).

Nonetheless,

The standard text of the *Tefilla* (prayer) is the same for *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*. In fact, in Israel, where there is only one day *Yom Tov* celebrated at the end of *Succos*; *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* are combined.

Since according to Torah law,

Shemini Atzeres is a separate *Yom Tov* from the *Yom Tov* of *Succos* one must recite the *Shehecheyanu* blessing for the new *Yom Tov*. Therefore women who light candles recite the blessing at that time while everyone else recites the blessing at *Kiddush* on the night of *Shemini Atzeres*.

Tefillas Maariv of *Shemini Atzeres*,

Is the same as *Maariv* for any of the *Shalosh Regalim* (The Three Festivals; *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Succos*). *Shacharis* and *Mussaf* also follow the standard order of prayer of all *Yomim Tovim*.

The only notable difference in the *Nusach* (textual version) of the *tefillas* (prayers) is the seasonal change,

This is where we insert *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* - (literally, He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall) - into the second *brocha* of the *Amidah* prayer. This change occurs on *Shemini Atzeres* by *Tefillas Mussaf*. (*Second Prayer of Shemoneh Esrei at the end of Morning Prayer*)

Tefillas Geshem - The Prayer for Rain

On *Succos* we pray to *Hashem* many *Hoshanah* prayers that *Hashem* should bless us with plentiful rain during the course of the year so that we have bountiful crops and abundant *parnassah* (income).

However,

Since on *Succos* we are obligated to dwell in a *Succah*, it wouldn't be fitting to actually insert a prayer for rain in our standard *Amidah*/ *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer since rain would ultimately interfere with our ability to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of sitting in a *Succah*.

Therefore,

During the course of *Succos* itself we refrain from inserting any mention of *Hashem's* greatness in producing rain. However, since on *Succos* we are indeed judged by *Hashem* to see if we are meritorious enough to deserve rain during the coming year, we add *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* into our *Tefillos* (prayers) immediately after the conclusion of the *Succos* festival.

Although it is possible to begin saying,

Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem by *Maariv* at the very beginning of *Shemini Atzeres*, we do not start saying it then since it is common for many people not to be present at the evening prayer.

Therefore,

In order to avoid having a situation where some people are saying it already while others are not, we wait until *Mussaf* of the next day. We also do not begin reciting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* at *Shacharis* of the next day since the *Shamash* (sexton) cannot make the necessary announcement before the start of the *Shacharis Amidah* prayer since we do not allow any interruptions at that point⁵.

When to Begin Inserting Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem into the Amidah / Shemoneh Esrei prayer

As mentioned above, we recite *Tefillas Geshem* (the Prayer for Rain) at *Mussaf* of *Shemini Atzeres*. The *Tefilla* (prayer) of *Geshem* is an arrangement of prayers in a *Piyut* (prayer in poetry) format that the *Chazzan* chants during *Chazoras Hashatz* (the repeating of the *Amidah*) of *Mussaf*.

As for the congregation,

There are different customs as to when they should begin inserting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* into the *Amidah*. According to *Nusach Ashkenaz*, the *Shamash* (sexton) announces to everyone to begin inserting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* before starting the *Amidah* of *Mussaf* even before the *Chazzan* recites the *Tefillas Geshem*.

⁵ See *Mishna Berura* 114:2

In other communities,

Such as for *Nusach Sefard*, the congregation only begins reciting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* after *Tefillas Geshem*, by *Mincha*. In this case the *Shamash* (sexton) will obviously not announce *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* before *Tefillas Mussaf*.

In those communities that begin reciting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* already by *Mussaf*, if the *Shamash* (sexton) doesn't make the announcement first, then the congregation should not insert it on their own until *Tefillas Mincha*.

Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem but not Vesein Tal U'matar Livrachah

Although we begin reciting,

Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem already on *Shemini Atzeres*, we do not add *Vesein Tal U'matar Livrachah* in the weekday *Shemoneh Esrei* until later. This distinction is already noted by the *Mishna* and the *Gemara* in *Ta'anis*⁶.

The basic difference between the two is,

Mentioning *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* is not asking *Hashem* outright for rain; it's only praising *Hashem*'s mighty power in making rain.

Conversely,

Saying *Vesein Tal U'matar Livrachah* in the ninth *Brocha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* - in *Baruch Aleinu* is actually a direct request for rain. Since in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* those who came on *Yom Tov* from afar needed to travel home for another couple of weeks, we didn't start to actually ask for rain yet so that it wouldn't make their trip home difficult⁷.

⁶ *Daf* 10a

⁷ See *Ran* to *Ta'anis Daf* 10a that the custom to recite *Vesein Tal U'matar Livrachah* starting on the 7th of *Cheshvan* continues today too since even now after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it's customary for people to travel to *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem) for *Yom Tov*

The Prayer of Mussaf and the Torah Reading

On *Shemini Atzeres*,

We read the portion of *Shemini Atzeres* that describes the single offering (*Korban*) that was brought on *Shemini Atzeres* as opposed to the seventy offerings – animal sacrifices (*Korbanos*) that were brought in total on *Succos* itself.

Corresponding to this portion of the Torah Reading,

Which is read in the final *Maftir Reading* both on *Shemini Atzeres* as well as on *Simchas Torah*, we insert the same for the *Mussaf Amidah* of both these days. Other than that, the *Mussaf* of *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* share the same basic format as all other *Mussaf* prayers recited on any of the festivals.

As with any of the festival days of the Shalosh Regalim (The Three Festivals; Pesach, Shavuos and Succos)

The *Kohanim* also perform the *Mitzvah* of *Birchos Kohanim (Duchening)* - raising their hands and reciting the special priestly blessing of

- I. *Yevarechecha*, (May he Bless You)
- II. *Ya'eir* (May he Illuminate You) and
- III. *Yissa* (May he Turn)

at *Mussaf* on *Shemini Atzeres*.

However,

On *Simchas Torah* we ask the *Kohanim* to *duchen* by *Tefillas Shacharis*⁸ rather than by *Tefillas Mussaf* since it is common to drink alcoholic beverages by the festive dancing on *Simchas Torah*. If a *Kohen* becomes slightly intoxicated, he would not be fit to *Duchen* at that time.

In such a case,

When the *Kohanim duchen* by *Shacharis*, the congregation doesn't recite the additional prayers that are printed in the *Machzor* (festival prayer book). E.g. *Vesei'arev* before *Modim* and the *Ribbono shel Olam* and *Yehi ratzone* during the *Birchos Kohanim*.

⁸ *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*

Yizkor – Remembrance of the departed⁹

It is customary amongst *Ashkenazi* communities to perform the *Yizkor* service on *Shemini Atzeres* by day; after the *Torah Reading*. In Israel, *Yizkor* is recited after the *Torah Reading* which is after the *Hakafos*.

Those who have lost one or more of their parents participate in this remembrance service. This service recalls the souls of the departed by contributing charity in their memory. Those who have both parents living leave the Synagogue during this portion of the service.

Amongst Sephardic communities, *Yizkor* is not performed on *Yom Tov* at all.

Hakafos - Circuits

The custom amongst all Jewish communities on *Simchas Torah* is to finish off the reading of the entire *Torah* (Five Books of Moses) and rejoice in celebration of its completion.

The Medrash¹⁰ states,

After the festival of *Succos*, *Hashem* is very pleased with us for we have gone through a period of repentance and then celebrated *Hashem's* commandment to dwell outside our homes in temporary *Succah* huts.

However,

The prosecuting angel still tries to slander us by saying that its true that we celebrate the festival and ask *Hashem* to help up through the coming year, but who says that the nation will continue to study the *Torah* as G-d commands us.

Then on *Simchas Torah*,

Hashem shows him that we are still busy with *Torah* study and that we even complete the entire *Torah* on this last day of *Yom Tov*.

However, the prosecuting angel argues,

That perhaps we are done with our *Torah* study, never to return to it again.

⁹ See Roadmap to Prayer Lesson 54

¹⁰ *Shir Hashirim Rabba* 1

Hashem then shows him,

That not only do we complete the *Torah* on *Simchas Torah* but we even begin reading it all over again from *Bereishis*.

Now the prosecuting angel is silenced. With this, we have added reason to celebrate.

The Medrash brings a source,

For celebrating the completion of an entire section of *Torah*, with a festive meal from *Shlomo Hamelech* (King Solomon). When *Hashem* promised him that he will have unsurpassed wisdom, he celebrated it with a feast for all his beloved friends¹¹.

Hence,

We begin our celebration in *Shul* (synagogue) with joyous dancing and celebration with the *Torah* scrolls. We dance around the *Bimah* seven times which we call circuits - *Hakafos*. In truth, most congregations dance many more times than that, except that all the dancing is done in seven sets.

Each set begins,

With someone that is chosen to lead a group of men, each one holding a *Sefer Torah* in their arms, in chanting the selected stanzas that are found in the special Holiday Prayer Book (*Machzor*).

The celebrations actually begin on the night of *Simchas Torah* in anticipation of tomorrow's *Torah Reading* of *Parshas Ve'zose Ha'brocha* which completes the entire *Chumash*.

Even the daytime *Hakafos* – Circuits celebration,

Is done before the actual *Torah Reading* and completion of the *Chumash*. Many congregations even do *Hakafos* on *Shemini Atzeres* outside the Land of Israel based on the *Kabalistic* writings of the *Zohar*. These *Hakafos* are only done at nighttime; not on *Shemini Atzeres* day.

¹¹ I *Melachim* 3:15

Placing candles inside the Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark); Not in the Land of Israel

There is a custom to place a burning candle inside the empty *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) after all the *Sifrei Torah* are removed for the *Hakafos*. This is done for a number of reasons:

- a. To symbolize that the *Torah* is likened to a burning candle as stated in the *Pasuk* (verse) *Ki Ner Mitzvah VeTorah Ore*¹² (For the commandments are a candle and the *Torah* is the light)
- b. To show that the physical *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) is not intrinsically holy; it's holiness is only because of the *Sifrei Torah* that it houses
- c. After the *Sifrei Torah* which are likened to light are removed, we put candles in the *Aron* in order to keep a light there constantly.

However, in *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) the custom is never to place candles into the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark). The reason for this difference is because in *Eretz Yisrael* it is possible for *Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah* to fall on a *Shabbos* day. In order to avoid the possible confusion of placing lit candles in the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) on *Shabbos*, the custom is to refrain from doing so even when it comes out on a weekday.

Hakafos - Atta Har'eisa

On *Simchas Torah*, it is customary to dance around the *Bimah* with all the *Torah Scrolls* with great joy and celebration, as mentioned before.

It is customary for the congregation to chant a selection of verses in honor of the *Torah Scrolls* before they are removed from the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) for the joyous dancing and celebration. This selection begins with the verse of *Atta Har'eisa Lo'daas Ki Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim Ein Ode Milvado* (You have been shown to know, that *Hashem*, He is the G-d, there is none beside Him¹³).

There is also a specific order of text associated with each of the seven circuits (*Hakafos*) that is chanted at the beginning of each circuit (*Hakafah*); composed according to the letters of the *Aleph Beis*.

¹² *Mishley* 6:23

¹³ *Devarim* 4:35

It is customary for the *Torah Scrolls* to be given to distinguished members of the community as an honor, to carry them around the *Bimah*. Then, each circuit - *Hakafah* is celebrated for an indeterminate amount of time with singing and dancing. In addition to this, there are certain selections of song that are sung during the circuits - *Hakafos*; each community according to its custom.

Simchas Torah Dispensations

On *Simchas Torah* one is allowed to do certain things in honor of the *Torah* that otherwise are forbidden on regular *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* days. They include:

- Ü Dancing
- Ü Clapping
- Ü Adding gunpowder/fireworks to candles from before the Holiday (*Yom Tov*) so that they will explode later when the candle burns down after it is lit on *Yom Tov*. This is even if the candles may be extinguished by the exploding gunpowder

However, one must not:

- Ü Burn incense to give off aromatic scent
- Ü Add gunpowder/fireworks on *Yom Tov* to a burning candle to make noise

The Nighttime Torah Reading

In many communities, it is customary to read from the *Torah* after the nighttime circuits - *Hakafos*. Although normally the *Torah* is not read in public at night, on this night we read it in honor of the celebration to encourage pledges to purchase the honor of being called for an *Aliyah* to the *Torah* with the money going for the upkeep of the synagogue, or for the scholars that study the *Torah*. This is another example where we allow the practice of making pledges for the honor of *Torah* even though pledges are generally prohibited on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* days.

Others explain that we read from the *Torah* so not to take it out without using it.

For the nighttime *Torah Reading*, we read from the final *Parsha* (*Torah*- Portion) - *Ve'zose Ha'Brocha*. Some congregations have the custom to call three individuals for *Aliyas*, while others have the custom of calling five people; reading all the way up to the portion given for the *Aliyah of Kol Hane'arim* on *Simchas Torah* by day.

According to these customs, the *Baal Koreh* (The Torah Reader) recites *Chatzi Kaddish* (Half-Kaddish) after the *Aliyas* just like after all other *Torah Readings* in *Shul* (the synagogue). After that, we recite *Aleinu* as usual and return home with our families to enjoy a festive *Yom Tov* meal.

Some *Paskim* write that where there is a custom to recite *Borchu* after *Aleinu* of *Maariv*, they should say *Borchu* tonight before the *Hakafas* for the benefit of those individuals who may go home before the completion of all the *Hakafas* and *Krias HaTorah*.

The Daytime Torah Readings

On *Shemini Atzeres* outside the Land of Israel, we read the *Torah* portion that begins with *Asser Te'Asser*. We begin from this point on *Shemini Atzeres* whether it is on a weekday or on a *Shabbos*. This is in contrast with *Pesach* and *Shavuot* when we begin reading from this point only when it occurs on a *Shabbos*, on *TeAsser*¹⁴.

- I. When *Yom Tov* is on a weekday the reading is portioned out to five individuals.
- II. When *Yom Tov* is on a *Sabbath* then the same portion is read to seven people.

In addition to this,

We read another *Aliyah* for *Maftir* from the portion beginning with *Bayome HaShemini Atzeres Tihyeh Lachem*¹⁵.

- I. In Israel where *Shemini Atzeres* is celebrated as one day with *Simchas Torah*, the *Torah Readings* follow the same order of *Simchas Torah* readings outside the Land of Israel.

One of the reasons that we read the Torah Portion of *Ve'zose Ha'Brocha* on *Simchas Torah* is because it contains the blessing of *Moshe Rabbeinu* (Moses our Teacher) to the Jewish Nation (*Bnei Yisrael*) right before his death.

Likewise,

We read this Torah Portion on the last holiday (*Yom Tov*) of the year.

¹⁴ *Devarim* 14:22

¹⁵ *Bamidbar* 29:35

Additionally,

We read the blessings of *Ve'zose Ha'Brocha* since King Solomon (*Shlomo Hamelech*) also blessed *Bnei Yisrael* during this time of the year when he celebrated the inauguration of the first *Beis Hamikdash*.

The Added Aliyas

- a. It is permissible to give the *Aliyah* of *Chosson Torah* or *Chosson Bereishis* to a *Kohen* or a *Levi*.
- b. It is also perfectly alright to give these *Aliyas* to individuals who already received *Aliyas* earlier in the day.
- c. Likewise, it is alright to give these *Aliyas* back to back to two *Kohanim* or to two *Levi'im*.

However,

One may not give both these *Aliyas* to the same individuals in the same synagogue when they are read from two separate *Sefer Torah Scrolls*.

The reason for this is,

Because it causes people to think that the first *Sefer Torah* was flawed and the second *Sefer Torah* was taken out to makeup for the first *Aliyah*.

Kol Hane'arim - Aliyah for All the Children

It has become the longstanding custom to portion out *Aliyas* to every male person that's present in *Shul* (the synagogue) on *Simchas Torah*.

The Rama writes,

That we do this because of the joyous occasion of completing the reading of the entire *Torah*; so that everyone one takes part in the joy of completing the *Torah* and that no one quarrels over the *Aliyas*.

Before the closing Aliyah

Of *Sefer Devarim* (the Book of Numbers), there is another special *Aliyah* that we refer to as the *Aliyah* of *Kol Hane'arim* (Literally, *All the Children*).

This Aliyah is meant

For all those children who didn't receive an *Aliyah* because of their young age.

Therefore,

An adult receives the *Aliyah* and he brings the children along to receive the *Aliyah* with him. It's customary to spread a *Tallis* like a canopy over his head and the heads of the children.

After the Torah portion is read,

Before the closing blessing (*Brocha*), we recite the verses of *Hamalach Hago'eil ossi mikol rah yevareich es hahe'arim etc.* (May the angel who redeems me from all evil, bless the young lads) in honor of the children¹⁶. The one who receives this *Aliyah* may recite *Hamalach Hago'eil* as well as it doesn't constitute a *Hefsek* (interruption) since they are verses as well.

Chosson Torah – The Groom of the Torah

The individual who gets the honor of receiving the final *Aliyah* is called the *Chosson Torah* (the Groom of the *Torah*). This honor is usually reserved for a scholarly member of the congregation in recognition of his dedication to the study of *Torah*.

Prior to receiving this Aliyah,

The *Gabbai* reads a long list of blessings and praises about the recipient of this coveted *Aliyah*. At the close of this *Aliyah* and before the closing *Brocha*, the congregation proclaims *Chazak, Chazak, Venis'Chazeik* as they always do at the close of any of the five *Chumashim* (Five books of Moses). The person receiving the *Aliyah* doesn't chant this with the congregation.

Here too it is customary that everyone surrounds the *Bimah* for this *Aliyah* and drape their *Talleisim* over the area of the *Sefer Torah* like a *Chupah* (wedding) canopy.

Chosson Bereishis

After the closing *Aliyah* in the last of the five books of Moses - *Sefer Devarim*, we begin anew by reading a portion from the beginning of the *Torah* from Genesis - *Bereishis*. The custom is that we read from *Bereishis* through all the days of creation until the end

¹⁶ These verses are also said along with the reading of the *Shema* before going to bed at night. It is said as a prayer for protection of our souls to be returned to us after it makes its nightly journey to Heaven to record one's daily actions

of *Veyechulu* which is the final day of creation which is *Shabbos*. Everyone chants the verse of *Va'yehi Erev Va'yehi Boker Yom ...* at the end of the reading of each day of Creation.

- a. Then the *Baal Koreh* reads the verse out loud and continues with the reading for the next day of creation.
- b. At the end of the sixth day of creation, the congregation says *Va'yehi Erev Va'yehi Boker Yom HaShishi* out loud and continues to recite the entire reading of *Vayechulu* which is the *Shabbos* day creation.
- c. Then the Torah Reader (*Baal Koreh*) reads all these verses from the *Sefer Torah*.

Why Everyone Joins In the Reading of Chosson Bereishis

As mentioned above, it is customary for the congregation to join in the reading of the *Aliyah* of *Chosson Bereishis*.

Why do we do this and why particularly in this *Aliyah*?

There is an answer given by the *Sefer Bikores HaTalmud*, which is recorded by the *Sefer Ta'amei Haminhagim*. He writes that really,

The obligation to read from the *Torah* on *Yom Tov* is fulfilled by the reading of *Parshas Ve'zose Ha'brocha. Genesis - Bereishis* (the first portion of the *Torah Reading* for the year) will be read on the following *Shabbos*. The only reason that we read from *Bereishis* is to proclaim our firm belief in *Hashem* the Creator at this festive time.

Therefore,

In order to emphasize this aspect of the reading, we have everyone personally participate in the affirmation of the reading by reciting the closing verse of each day of creation. Then we recite the entire reading for the creation of *Shabbos* since it attests to our firm belief in G-d and His creating of the world and His resting from such creative work on *Shabbos*.

The Final Aliyah

The very last *Aliyah* of the day is the reading of the *Maftir Aliyah* which is the same reading as on the previous day outside the Land of Israel.

Hagbah – Lifting the Torah for all to See

*Hafoch Bah VaHafoch Bah DeKulah Bah*¹⁷ (Turn it and turn it for everything's in it, i.e. the *Torah* contains all wisdom). On *Simchas Torah* the custom is to perform *Hagbah* by lifting the *Torah* scroll and showing its writing to the congregation. This is done by crossing one's hands over one another and grabbing the opposite post, to lift it with the writing facing outwards.

Another reason is because the final words of the *Torah* are *Le'inei Kol Yisrael* (to the eyes of the *Bnei Yisrael*). Therefore we show the writing of the *Torah* to everyone's eyes.

The Haftorah of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah

The *Haftorah* reading on *Shemini Atzeres* outside the Land of Israel is from *Sefer Melachim*¹⁸ (the Book of Kings) which contains the verse *Bayome HaShemini Shilach es Ha'Am* (On the eighth day he sent the nation home).

In the Land of Israel on *Shemini Atzeres*, and outside the Land of Israel on *Simchas Torah*,

The *Haftorah* reading is from the beginning of *Sefer Yehoshua* (the Book of Joshua) which begins with *Va'yehi Acharei Mos Moshe* (And it was after *Moshe Rabbeinu's* death), an appropriate sequel to the *Torah Portion* at the end of the *Torah* which describes the passing of *Moshe* our Great Teacher.

Sisu VeSimchu BeSimchas Torah - Celebrate and Rejoice with the Rejoicing of the Torah

After all the *Aliyas* are completed,

There is a custom in some congregations to read a song which begins with the words *Sisu VeSimchu BeSimchas Torah* (Rejoice and happy with *Simchas Torah*). This is a beautiful composition that enumerates the many praises of the *Torah* and those who study it.

¹⁷ *Avos* 5:22

After this song is completed,

We recite *Ashrei* and continue with *Tefillas Mussaf*. As mentioned before, the *Kohanim* do not *Duchen* at this time because we are concerned that they may be slightly intoxicated from drinking at the festivities. Therefore, *Duchening* was performed earlier at *Tefillas Shacharis*.

Sasson VeSimcha

The *Vilna Gaon* explains that there is a difference between the two expressions of happiness expressed by the words *Sasson VeSimcha*.

- 1) The word *Sasson* denotes the joy that one experiences at the end of a process, while the term *Simcha* denotes the joy one experiences at the beginning of something good.
- 2) This distinction is expressed in the *Pasuk* (verse) *Semeichim betzeisam ve'sassim bevo'am* (they are happy when they go out and they rejoice upon their return).
- 3) Accordingly, it is difficult to understand why the order is reversed in this song. It should read *Simchu VeSisu BeSimchas Torah*, since first one experiences *Simcha* and only then, upon completion one experiences the satisfying happiness of *Sasson*.

The answer to this question is that the way we recite this song fits perfectly according to the above interpretation of the *Vilna Gaon*.

Since on Simchas Torah,

We first complete the entire *Torah* before we begin anew, we first express the language of *Sissu* that denotes our satisfaction and happiness upon successfully completing an entire cycle of *Torah Readings*. Then we say *Simchu* since we begin anew from *Parshas Bereishis* that we are happy for this new opportunity as well.

Upholding the Festive Customs of Simchas Torah

It is important not to diminish any existing custom that people do to honor the *Torah*, since this would lessen the importance given to *Torah* study. As long as these customs do not infringe on *Halacha* they should be firmly upheld¹⁹.

Dovid HaMelech (King David) prided himself,

That when he danced in front of the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) upon its return from the Philistines, he didn't feel it to be demeaning dancing the way he did; rather he felt it to be a privilege to dance like that to honor *Hashem*²⁰.

Many great Torah scholars,

Who spent their lives deeply immersed in *Torah* study, danced with great enthusiasm and fervor on *Simchas Torah*. The famed *Ari HaKadosh* said that he attained great levels in *Kabbalistic* knowledge by rejoicing on *Simchas Torah* with all his strength.

The Vilna Gaon was also noted,

For his great enthusiasm in dancing on *Simchas Torah* in front of the *Sefer Torah*.

Another Torah Sage of more recent times,

Was *Rav Elchonon Bunim Wasserman* הי"ד (May G-d Avenge his blood), who would dance with tremendous enthusiasm with his great Rebbe the *Chafetz Chaim zt"l*. Their inner sense of joy, was so overwhelming that they danced for hours on end without getting fatigued.

We too should take lesson from these great individuals to do the same even if our rejoicing is only an outward display of happiness. In the merit of doing this for the sake of honoring the *Torah* we will surely merit one day to feel an inner sense of joy and connection with *Hashem* and His sacred and holy *Torah*.

¹⁹ *Mishna Berura* 669:6

²⁰ See *Mishna Berura* 669:11 and *Shaar Hatziyun* 10

The Joy of Simchas Torah: An Appreciation

The custom of rejoicing with the Torah Scrolls on Simchas Torah had very special meaning to our fathers and grandfathers of bygone eras. One can say that it took more courage and Mesirus Nefesh (selfless sacrifice) to sing, dance and be happy on Simchas Torah, than to fast on Yom Kippur.

In the old communities of Central and Eastern Europe life was not easy; especially for the Jews. Many burdensome restrictions and sanctions were placed upon the Jews of those communities, which made the thought of starting the long harsh winter months quite unbearable. Therefore, when Simchas Torah arrived, the last festival before this especially difficult season of the year, rejoicing on Simchas Torah was quite a challenge.

The famed Maggid of Koznitz used to reassure his followers that:

The G-d of Atta Bechartanu (from the text of the Amidah recited on Yom Tov) is the same G-d of Atta Chonantanu (from the text of the Amidah recited on weekdays).

With these words, he inspired his followers to strengthen their faith in G-d, Who will surely help them endure these difficult months, to forget their worries and carry the joy of being Jewish and connected to Hashem through His Torah, throughout the year.

With pure faith and devotion, each Jewish community rejoiced with G-d and His Torah and celebrated the Simchas Torah day with unparalleled joy and excitement.

The various customs of Simchas Torah that are mentioned by the Poskim are an outgrowth of the tremendous joy and celebration that was genuinely celebrated in those days when it took great courage and strength of character to rejoice with the Torah with such purity and holiness²¹.

Shemini Atzeres on Shabbos

Koheles²²

It is customary to read the *Megillah* (scroll) of *Koheles* on *Shabbos* of *Succos*. Usually the *Shabbos* occurs during *Chol Hamo'ed*. However, when the first day of *Succos* is on *Shabbos* then we read *Koheles* on the next *Shabbos* which is *Shemini Atzeres*.

²¹ *Festivals in Halacha*, by Rabbi S.Y. Zevin zt"l

²² From Roadmap to Prayer Lesson 56

Koheles is a *sefer* of *Tanach* (Scriptures) written by *Shlomo HaMelech* (King Solomon).

This work is about the many facets of life in this world vs. those of the spiritual world. In the first couple of verses, *Koheles*, a name used for *Shlomo Hamelech*²³, an individual who possessed tremendous wealth, wisdom and all possible opportunities to enjoy this world, remarks seven times:

That all physical pleasures of this world are *Hevel - futile!* It is because of this observation which sets the tone for the theme of the entire *sefer* that our Sages deemed it an appropriate reading for the festival of *Succos*.

Each year during the festival of *Succos*,

We live the reality of King Solomon's message that all endeavors *under the sun*²⁴ are futile. Only those deeds that are *above the sun* – the spiritual ones are worthy and valuable. By sitting outside our permanent homes in temporary dwellings with thatched roofs, we place ourselves under the watchful eye of our Creator instead of in a false sense of security of the home; mans place of refuge.

Simchas Torah in Israel on Shabbos

When *Shemini Atzeres/ Simchas Torah* coincides with *Shabbos* in Israel, there will be a *Torah Reading* at *Mincha* just like any other *Shabbos* of the year. The *Torah Portion* that is read then is the beginning of *Bereishis*.

Outside the Land of Israel, *Shemini Atzeres* doesn't coincide with *Shabbos*.

May Hashem grant us the merit to continually celebrate life with Hashem and His Torah, Amen!

²³ In the Book of *Koheles*, King Solomon refers to himself as "*Koheles*." Why? Because he gathered (*Kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on *Succos* after the Sabbatical year. (1:1)

²⁴ *Koheles* 1:3

Questions:

- 1) In what way do we clearly see that *Shemini Atzeres* is a separate *Yom Tov* from the rest of *Succos* even outside the Land of Israel?
- 2) Is there any difference between *Simchas Torah* and *Shemini Atzeres* outside the Land of Israel regarding the version of the text of a prayer, with regard to the laws of repeating the *Amidah* when a specific mistake was made?
- 3) What change occurs in the *Nusach* (text) of the *Amidah/ Shemoneh Esrei* prayer on *Shemini Atzeres*?
- 4) When does the above change occur? (2 customs)
- 5) Why do we not institute the above change at *Maariv* of *Shemini Atzeres*?
- 6) Outside the Land of Israel, what is the difference between the time for *Duchening* (The *Kohanim* raising their hand and recite the special priestly blessing of *Yevarechecha, Ya'eir* and *Yissa*) on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*?
- 7) What is the primary reason for the *Hakafah* celebrations of *Simchas Torah*?
- 8) What do we place inside the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) in many congregations and why is this custom not performed in Israel?
- 9) What specific prohibited activities of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* days are allowed to be done due to the joy of the *Hakafah* celebrations?
- 10) What general rules are relaxed regarding the *Aliyas* of *Chosson Torah* and *Chosson Bereishis*?
- 11) At what point during the *Aliyah* of *Kol Hane'arim* is *Hamalach Hago'eil* read and by whom?
- 12) Why do we begin reading the portion of the *Bereishis* on *Simchas Torah*? (2)
- 13) Why is it customary to turn the writing of the *Sefer Torah* towards the outside?
- 14) Explain the appropriateness of terms *Sisu VeSimchu* used in the song after the *Hakafos*.

Answers:

- 1) *Shemini Atzeres* is a separate *Yom Tov* in that the *Mitzvah* of the *Arba Minim* is suspended on this day.
- 2) Yes. If on *Shemini Atzeres* one said *Bayome HaSuccos* instead of *Shemini Atzeres*, one doesn't repeat the *Tefilla*. However, on *Simchas Torah* if one made the same mistake, the *Amidah* needs to be repeated.
- 3) We begin to insert *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* by the second *Brocha*.
- 4) According to one custom, first the *Shamash* of the *Shul* announces the change before the quiet *Amidah* of *Mussaf*. At that point, everyone is required to insert it into their *Amidah/ Shemoneh Esrei Tefillos* (prayers). Then during the *Chazzan's* repetition of *Mussaf* the *Chazzan* recites the special prayer for *Geshem* (rain). Another custom is to wait until *Mincha* to begin inserting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem*; after the *Chazzan* recites the *Geshem* prayer at *Mussaf*.
- 5) We do not begin inserting *Mashiv Haru'ach U'morid Hageshem* by *Maariv* since it is usual that many people do not attend *Shul* at night. Therefore, to avoid confusion, we begin at *Mussaf* when everyone is present.
- 6) On *Shemini Atzeres* the *Kohanim duchen* at *Mussaf*, while on *Simchas Torah* they *duchen* at *Shacharis*.
- 7) It is a celebration on the occasion of completing the full cycle of reading through the *Torah* in the synagogue.
- 8) There are a number of reasons for placing a candle inside of the empty *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark). 1) Because *Torah* is symbolized by the light of the candle. 2) To show that the holiness of an *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) is only because it houses *Sifrei Torah*. 3) In order to keep a light there constantly.
- 9) Dancing, clapping and adding gunpowder/fireworks to the candles before *Yom Tov* and lighting them on *Yom Tov*.
- 10) That they may be given to individuals who had *Aliyas* earlier in the day. They may be given to any individual; *Kohen, Levi* or *Yisrael*. They may also be given back to back to any of these individuals.

- 11) Everyone recites *Hamalach Hago'eil* together before the closing *Brocha* on the *Torah Reading*. Even the person who received the *Aliyah* reads this with everyone.
- 12) In order to show our intent to continue our *Torah* studies even after completing reading through the entire *Torah*. Another reason we do this is in order to show our firm belief in *Hashem* and Creation at this joyous time of celebrating the completion of reading through the entire *Torah* which is G-d's gift to us.
- 13) This is done because the final words of the *Torah* are "*That Moses did before the eyes of all of Israel.*" Another reason is because it states in *Pirkei Avo*s (Chapters of the Fathers) *Hafoch Bah VaHafoch Bah DeKulah Bah* (Turn it and turn it for everything's in it, i.e. the *Torah* contains all wisdom).
- 14) The word *Sasson* denotes the joy that one experiences at the end of a process, while the term *Simcha* denotes the joy one experiences at the beginning of something good. After completing the *Torah* and then starting it all over again anew, both these aspects are represented.