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Presents:

Shabbos INSPIRE.

P A R S H A S H E E T

Days of Celebration

By Rabbi Mordechai Becher

Over the years, Jewish custom attached a special significance to Shemini Atzeres, the last day of Succos. After the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the Jews in Eretz Yisroel would complete the weekly Torah portion over a three-year cycle, while the Jews in Babylon would complete it over a one-year cycle. Eventually, the Babylonian custom became universally accepted¹, and to this day, Jews throughout the world publicly read the complete Torah scroll over the course of the Jewish calendar year.² On Shemini Atzeres, the previous year's final parshah is completed, and the first parshah of the next year's cycle is begun anew (in Eretz Yisroel this is done on the eighth day, and in the Diaspora on the ninth day). This occasion became known as Simchas Torah, the "Joy of the Torah."³ The Midrash⁴ traces the concept of rejoicing upon finishing the Torah back to the celebration made by Shlomo Hamelech when Hashem granted his request for wisdom.⁵

The incredible joy that is felt on Simchas Torah is a testimony to the love that the Jewish people have for the Torah. Chassidisha sefarim explain that greater joy is expressed on Simchas Torah than on Shavuot, even though Shavuot is the festival that marks the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. He explained that on Shavuot we were passive recipients of Hashem's gift of the Torah, but on Simchas Torah, we celebrate the fact that we are active partners with Hashem in the Torah. We read and study the Torah, and through the wisdom of our Sages, and the customs of our communities, implement it in our daily lives.⁶ Simchas Torah reflects the Jewish peoples' love for the Torah, their involvement in the Torah and their devotion to Hashem, the Giver of the Torah.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch links Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah to the yearly pattern of all the festivals. He notes that Pesach, celebrating the physical creation of the Jewish people, is followed by and linked to Shavuot, when the Torah was given – i.e. the spiritual creation of the Jewish people. Succos celebrates the physical preservation of the Jewish people through Divine

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Call Forward

As told to Bella Tsibushkin

The countdown was on: three days till Shabbos Sheva Brochos, six days till Pesach. I was drowning in a sea of chores, plans, and to-do lists. With myriads of tasks competing for my attention, I was stretched to my utmost – or so I thought before that memorable Wednesday afternoon call. The phone started ringing just as I finished beating the egg whites for my specialty Pesachdig Torte. The number was not familiar to me, but the voice on the other side of the line definitely was:

"Mommy, it's me, Breindy*. Could you please talk to Sara? We just met and I think she could use your help."

A hesitant, slightly accented voice came on the line. It did not take me long to agree with my daughter: Sara definitely needed help, and it was up to me to offer it.



A giyores of all of ten days, Sara suddenly found her entire kitchen made treif by a careless roommate. Distressed as she was, Sara could not help noticing that, at least, the timing was right: Hagolas Keilim stations had sprouted all over Boro Park. Perhaps she could use one of them to

kasher her kitchen back. Despite her usual shyness, Sara decided to approach a random stranger to double check the idea. Luckily for her, the stranger was none other than my married daughter.

"You just can't take on another responsibility," my oh-so-rational inner voice said. "And who will, then?" countered a less rational, but no less insistent thought. "Come on, you've handled more than that!"

Gathering courage I didn't know I had, I offered Sara to come over the next day to find the best way to deal with the situation. She sounded relieved. As for me - well, relieved was definitely not the word to describe my emotional state...

Meeting Sara face-to-face confirmed my initial impression: the girl was definitely sincere and definitely in need of help. I briefly weighed my options: kashering the entire kitchen was out of the question, and a trip to the local bargain store would take time and energy I could not afford to spare. "Come, let's go buy you some stuff," I smiled, guiding my visitor to a conveniently located (and rather expensive) store.

"H-shem, You know how much money I have and how much strength I have. It is up to You to help me find what I need wherever I go. Please help me here, just as You would have helped me in a cheaper store," I pleaded silently, while filling our cart with pots, pans and dishes.

Suddenly I felt a tap on my shoulder. "Excuse me, could I talk to you in private?" asked a heimishe-dressed middle-aged woman.

"I was watching you for the last few minutes, and it seems to me that you are

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ARIZONA

Scottsdale
Phoenix

CALIFORNIA

Calabasas
Hollywood
Los Angeles
North Hollywood
Northridge
Oakland
Sacramento
San Jose
San Francisco
San Diego

COLORADO

Boulder

CONNECTICUT

West Hartford
New London
Stamford

CANADA

Thornhill
Toronto

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington

FLORIDA

Aventura
Boca Raton
Fort Lauderdale
Hollywood
Miami
North Miami Beach
Sunny Isles Beach
Surfside
Tampa

OHIO

Cincinnati

MARYLAND

Baltimore
Silver Spring

MASSACHUSETTS

Brookline

NEW JERSEY

Cherry Hill
Fairlawn
Highland Park/Edison
Lakewood
Linden
Long Branch
Passaic

NEVADA

Las Vegas

NEW YORK

Airmont
Bayswater
Boro Park
East Northport
Far Rockaway
Flatbush
Flushing
Forest Hills
Fresh Meadows
Harrison
Hewlett
Kew Gardens Hills
Lawrence
Marine Park
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Staten Island
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Providence. Succos in turn is followed by and linked to Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, the festivals celebrating the spiritual preservation of the Jewish people, through their attachment to the Torah.⁷

It is significant that immediately after completing one cycle by reading the end of Devarim we begin the new cycle by reading from Bereishis. There is no interruption in our communal study of Torah; we start again as soon as we have finished because the Torah has infinite depth -- one can never really finish studying Torah. When we complete one cycle, we understand one more level of Torah and are now more capable of understanding the next level, and the next, and the next.... What we celebrate on completing the Torah, is the renewed and improved opportunity that we now have to learn Torah even better.⁸

At such a monumental period in the Jewish calendar, let us not forget about our fellow Jews who are not connected to Torah and yiddishkeit. Now that we are reaffirming our connection to Hashem and the Torah, let us take a few moments to share what we have with our unaffiliated brothers and sisters who are unable to experience the profound joy that we experience because they are unable to relate to the root of our celebration, the celebration of the spiritual preservation of Torah. Take a few moments to invite a fellow Jew to your succah or let them observe the excitement and enthusiasm of a hakafah on Simchas Hatorah so that joy may ultimately translate into a true joy for Torah and a connection to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. **PI**

- 1.Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer 13:1.
- 2.See chapter on Prayer: Getting Up on the Right Side of Bed.
- 3.Tosafos on Beitzah 30b and Taanis 28b; Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 669:1, Ramah.
- 4.Midrash Rabba, Song of Songs, 1:9; Midrash Rabba Ecclesiastes 1:1.
- 5.I Kings 3:15.
- 6.For a complete discussion of the Torah reading and calling up to the Torah see chapter on Prayer, under the subheading Back to the Mountain.
- 7.Hirsch, Horeb, II Edoth, chap. 23, para. 169-170.
- 8.Heard from my teacher, Rabbi Avraham Gurevitz of Jerusalem.

Excerpted and adapted from Gateway to Judaism, Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Shaar Press

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buying things for a perfect stranger," she continued after we moved to a quieter corner. "Would you mind telling me more? I think I might be of help."

The woman's hunch proved to be correct. "My mother passed away two weeks ago," she explained quietly. "She left a full set of barely used kitchen utensils -- all that your friend could possibly need and more. I would be honored to pass on my mother's things to her."

I was too stunned to talk. Could it be that my tefillah was answered in such an amazing way?!

Soon, Sara's kitchen was stocked with the gifts from the kind stranger, plus several specialty items I had purchased for her at the store. After exchanging phone numbers and promising to keep in touch, I returned to my own busy household. It was not until Chol Hamoed that I finally found the time to share the story with my family.

"Mommy, can I please take a look at Sara's phone number?" asked Shaindy, my youngest daughter-in-law. Surprised by the unusual request, I held out my cell. I was even more surprised to see two identical entries: one in my own phone, the other in my daughter-in-law's.

"Shaindy, how in the world did you meet her?" I finally managed to ask. "Actually I didn't," answered Shaindy. "My sister asked me to take the number and pass it on to you. I didn't feel you could take on another commitment, so I never did."

"Two weeks ago Ruchy called me with the most unusual story," continued Shaindy. "She told me that she and her husband were driving past the bus stop in Boro Park, when they noticed a frum girl, crying hysterically. My sister got out of the car and offered to help. It was hard to understand the girl through all that sobbing, but finally she managed to figure out that the girl's name was Sara and she had just missed the Monsey bus. The girl insisted she absolutely had to be in Monsey."

"You know how Heshy, my brother-in-law, is always ready for action. He told my sister and Sara to get into the car fast, and drove down 49th street to catch up with the bus. Strange as it seems, they didn't make it, even with Heshy's speed. So, they decided to continue to Williamsburg to overcome the bus there."

"To make a long story short, they never caught up with the bus. On the other hand, they had plenty of time to talk to the girl. It turned out that Sara was going to Monsey for her geirus appointment. So, Heshy somehow managed to find the Bais Din's number and persuaded them to postpone the appointment till the next Monsey bus arrived."

"Before saying good-bye, Ruchy got Sara's number. She asked me to pass it on to you, because you are involved in kiruv. I told her I will do no such thing -- first of all, because you're too busy as it is, and also because I saw no reason Ruchy could not do it herself. You yourself say that anyone can do kiruv."

Shaindy was definitely right -- I am no more qualified to do kiruv than any other lady on my block or in our shtiebel. Still, it seems that it was bashert for me to meet Sara -- and meet her I did.

We never know how Hashem will send us the opportunity to make a difference in another Jew's life. We need to recognize the Hashgacha and more importantly, act on it. **PI**

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