

“To Understand the Concept of Simchat Torah...”
 a Chassidic-Kabbalistic Discourse
 by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 1977

The idea of dancing with the Torah on Simchat Torah (Shmini Atzeret); dancing rather than studying.

Why is Simchat Torah at this time of year, rather than at Shavuot?

The Midrash compares Pesach and Shavuot, and Yom Kippur and Shmini Atzeret, using an image of a King with daughters who come to visit him. The focus is on Yom Kippur: that is the day when they visit. Simchat Torah is the conclusion of that visit.

Yom Kippur expresses Oneness, and so too, everything to do with Succot expresses Oneness. This goes back to Rosh Hashana, which has the singular Mitzvah of the Shofar. Yom Kippur is One in terms of Place, Time and Person. The High Priest – Person - enters the Holy of Holies – Place - once a year - Time.

The Succah represents oneness: it would be fitting for the whole Jewish people to dwell in one Succah¹; the Etrog represents oneness. It is called the fruit ‘hadar’. This word means beautiful and also ‘which stays’, and the Talmud says it is the fruit ‘which stays on the tree from year to year’.² Also the other Kinds of Plant represent One-ness, and they are all held together, expressing unity.

How does one attain true Oneness for the whole Jewish people? Through Teshuvah, Repentance. The Second Tablets were given (on Yom Kippur) through Teshuvah, in

¹ Talmud Succah 27b

² Succah 35a.

one moment, unlike the First Tablets, which needed long preparation and forty days on the mountain.

The Oneness of Teshuvah is expressed on Yom Kippur, joining the Jewish people and the Divine and including all the downchaining of worlds.

This Oneness then has to be drawn down through all the different details of existence and the different details of the Jewish people. Right down into the physical world.

This is expressed through the shaking of the 4 Kinds, and also through the dancing on Simchat Torah, which brings the One-ness down to one's feet.

Before Rosh Hashana we read in Sedra Nitzavim: You are standing today, all of you, before G-d, your leaders, heads of your tribes, elders, officers, each man of Israel, your children, your wives, the proselyte in your camp, hewers of wood and drawers of water”³

This expresses the differentiation in the Jewish people: the goal is to draw the One-ness through all these levels, through the process of Succot and the dancing of Simchat Torah.

The Joy of Simchat Torah will break all barriers, including those of the inner exile, and of general exile, leading to the ultimate Redemption with Moshiach, who will build the Temple and bring unity to the world.

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³ Deut. 29:9-10.