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### DIVINE WEDDING

**A RECURRING THEME IN JEWISH TEACHING IS THE IDEA OF A DIVINE ‘wedding’ bonding the Jewish people with Gd. When did this take place? It was intended to be at the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. However, due to the making of the Golden Calf, the Tablets of the Law, seen as the Divine ‘Marriage Document’, were broken.**

Eventually the second set of Tablets were brought by Moses to the Jewish people - on the day which would later be Yom Kippur. This therefore became the true Wedding Day<sup>1</sup>.

Yom Kippur expresses G-d’s forgiveness of the Jewish people, with an intense intimacy, expressed by the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies. Yet it is solemn and serious. The open joy of the ‘Wedding’ is seen during the Succot festival, and particularly during the final days of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah.

The joy of the earlier days of Succot, which bring blessing to the whole world, can be seen as expressing the public aspects of the joyful Wedding, the feasting and the dancing. The final days represent the private joy of the Jewish people alone together with G-d, rejoicing with G-d and with His Torah. There is an intimate atmosphere

**Celebrating the Barmitzvh of Dov Ber 'ש' Danow (Leeds)  
8 Tishrei 5774 - Dedicated by his Grandparents 'ש'**

expressing the most profound bond with G-d. Now, truly, as the Zohar says, “the Jewish people, the Torah and G-d are one”<sup>2</sup>.

### **THE SUBCONSCIOUS TORAH**

Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Law, begins on Thursday night. The joyful dancing with the Torah Scrolls expresses the bond that every Jew has with the Torah: a bond which goes beyond the extent to which a person has knowledge of the Torah, and even beyond the question of whether he or she actually observes its laws.

The Torah is an inheritance, which every Jew owns by virtue of being Jewish. This idea is expressed in the verse “The Torah which was taught to us by Moses is the inheritance of the community of Jacob”<sup>3</sup>. This is part of the Torah reading on this day, from the very end of the Torah Scroll. As soon as a Jewish child is born he or she immediately inherits the entire Torah including all its most profound teachings. A widespread custom is to teach this verse to the young child as the commencement of Torah study, emphasising his or her ownership of the Torah.

This relationship with the Torah has effect on a deep, inner level of our being, beyond conscious knowledge. However, this by itself is not enough. We also need to draw the Torah into our consciousness and express it in our daily lives. We therefore have to make the deliberate effort to study Torah and acquire Torah knowledge, and to keep its laws. Indeed, this year the very next day after Simchat Torah is Shabbat, when we begin reading the Torah again from its opening words: “In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth”, and the first Divine command: “Increase and multiply”. For both men and women, study and observance of Torah is a life-long task.

In this continuous effort one is always helped by the fact that inwardly each of us already possesses the entire Torah as an inheritance. Our inner, sub-conscious ownership of the Torah gives us the ability to progress step by step in our conscious study and knowledge. The joy of these final days of the Festivals will be a source of inspiration, helping us to fulfil ourselves as Jews in the days and months ahead.

1. See Rashi to Taanit 26b. 2. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Sefer HaSichot 5750*, vol. 1 p.44. 3. Deut.33:4.

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*SEDRA BEREISHIT*

**A BOOST TO THE YEAR**

“Whoa, I can’t believe we’re doing this again Rafi threw his heavy school bag over his shoulder . The two boys were walking home from school together. It had been the first day of school for them since Sukkot.

Misha looked at him in surprise. “Really? I actually enjoyed school today. And this science project seems pretty interesting. And we have some good teachers this year.” He laughed. “I just hope we don’t blow up the school with all these wild experiments!”

A drop of rain landed on Rafi’s nose and he looked up at the ominous looking grey sky nervously. “I think we’re about to get drenched!” Rafi said as the rain started to come down. The boys pulled their jackets over their heads and dashed towards Rafi’s house.

Fifteen minutes later the boys were seated comfortably on the soft rug in Rafi’s lounge, their books liberally spread out over the floor, with various diagrams and notes on their science project taking up most of the coffee table. The boys munched on crisps and sipped cups of hot cocoa as they brainstormed for their project.

“By the way”, said Rafi, “I didn’t mean that I didn’t enjoy school today.” Misha looked up, his eyebrows raised questioningly. “You know, before, when we were walking home”. Misha nodded.

Rafi went on. “Whatever, it’s just we had these really good Festivals, Rosh Hashana and the Shofar, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and so on. It’s all so much fun. And then Simchat Torah, which was just incredible, singing and dancing with the Torah. Then straight off we had the first Shabbat, and we heard how Hashem created the world and Adam and Eve and so on. But then, now, we’re back to school. The same old school, even if it’s different teachers from last year. The bubble pops. You know what I mean?”

Misha nodded thoughtfully. “It’s not that school is bad, you’ve just been living a more exciting pace of life than this”. Rafi nodded. “Exactly!”

Misha squinted and rubbed his nose. “My sister Michal was talking about this on Friday night. I’m trying to remember what she said. Oh yeah, basically, she said we have this whole build-up and then Simchat Torah is the climax, really exciting, not less important than Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, just expressing our commitment and love for G-d through joy, rather than through being serious. She said then, this year, we go straight into Shabbat Bereishit, reading the first Sedra of the Torah. The reason it ends like this, is so that it really gives us a push for the rest of the year. She also said the way we spend Shabbat Bereshit, the first regular Shabbat, will influence our whole year.”

“What does that mean?” asked Rafi. “The way we spend...” Misha laughed. “It means this was the first Shabbat, and the way you begin affects everything...”

Rafi looked at him impressed. “That makes sense. Actually, I had a really good Shabbat because Grandad was visiting, and he has these great stories. But come to think of it, maybe it’s the same with school. Here we are in the first normal week... Let’s make it really good, because what we do can affect the whole year...”

“Yes, everything affects everything. So let’s not feel down that we’re back in school, but use the high power energy from the Festivals to give good a good boost to this science project!”

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