

CHABAD  
  
RESEARCH UNIT

58

שבת..... *for Friday nights* .....קדש

21 October 2005 - 18 Tishrei 5766  
Succot - Conclusion of Festival

### PRAISE AND JOY

**WHY WERE WE CREATED? IN ORDER TO RECOGNISE G-D AND TO PRAISE Him. How do we praise Him? One way is through song, and a prime example of this is the Hallel song of praise which is sung in the synagogue on every day of Succot, including this Shabbat.**

Hallel consists of a series of Psalms (113-118) which in Temple times would be sung by the Levites in the Temple with musical accompaniment. The main theme is exultant praise of G-d for His deliverance of the Jewish people.

On days other than Shabbat during the Succot festival, the Lulav (palm) branches together with the Etrog (citron), the myrtle and the willow, are held during Hallel, and waved at certain points. This gives a beautiful look to the synagogue. On the Shabbat in Succot the Lulav and Etrog are not used. Hallel is sung without them.

After Hallel, on days of Succot other than Shabbat, there is a procession round the Bima, carrying the Lulav and Etrog, chanting a moving prayer called 'Hoshana'. This reflects something similar which took place in the Temple, walking round the Altar. Then on Monday 24 October will be Hoshana Rabba (the 'Great Hoshana'), when the procession with Lulav branches goes round the Bima seven times.

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There is a sense of climax, concluding the sense of supplicating G-d for blessings for the New Year. We now feel that the blessings have been granted.

### **REJOICING WITH THE TORAH**

Tuesday night and Wednesday (26 October) will be Simchat Torah. The annual cycle of Torah readings reaches the end of the Torah and we begin again from the beginning. There is a joyful atmosphere and we dance with the Torah Scrolls. The Torah Scroll contains the word of G-d, dictated to Moses. Every letter is significant, and teaches something. The primeval Torah is written in letters of black fire on a background of white fire. From this comes the Torah Scroll, with letters of ink on parchment.

The Torah provides guidance to us throughout the generations, in many varied conditions. The Oral Law called the Mishnah and Talmud teaches us how to understand the Torah teachings needed in any particular situation.

G-d gave Himself to us when He gave us the Torah. The Torah is the most precious possession of the Jewish people throughout time. The traditional way to express our joy at having the Torah is by dancing with the Torah Scrolls in the Synagogue.

### **TO DANCE OR NOT TO DANCE?**

Is dancing really the way to serve G-d? Doesn't it detract from our sense of decorum? We find in the Book of Samuel that this is an ancient question. King David, at the head of a large crowd, was bringing the Holy Ark to Jerusalem. Trumpets and Shofars were blowing, and he was dancing joyfully "with all his strength". His wife Michal, the daughter of King Saul, saw his unrestrained dancing and later told him off. "Very fine indeed for the King of Israel to behave like that!", she said sarcastically<sup>1</sup>.

King David, of course, was right. An ancient and ever new feature of Judaism is to rejoice openly before G-d. The Rambam cites King David as an example for us all, inspiring us to feel and express true joy in the festivals and in all our service of G-d<sup>2</sup>.

1. 2 Samuel 6:20-22. 2. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, end of Laws of the Lulav.

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### SUCCOT FESTIVAL

#### **SUCCAH**

It was a beautifully clear night, the stars were shining through the cracks in the leafy roof as the Cohen family sat huddled up together in their Succah.

There were Mr and Mrs Cohen sitting at the head of the table. On their right were some friends they had invited. On their left were the Cohen children: David, Rachel, Benny, Sara and Sam.

The Cohen Succah always had a special atmosphere and the food always seemed to taste much better out of doors for some reason. "I wonder what it is that makes the Mitzvah of sitting in the Succah so special that the whole festival is called by that name," thought Mr Cohen as the chicken soup was being served. "It might have been called the Festival of the Lulav, or..., or...."

These are thoughts which might occur to a person while the chicken soup is being served, while sitting in a Succah hut with a roof of evergreen branches with leaves. Mr Cohen decided to ask the children.

"This evening I have a question. Why is this festival called Succot? There are several other Mitzvot that we do during this festival, what makes the Mitzvah of sitting in the Succah so special that it gives the whole festival its name?"

"I know" said Sam. "Because the Mitzvah of sitting in the Succah starts the very first second of the festival, unlike the Lulav and the Etrog for which we must wait till the morning in order to do the Mitzvah".

"Very good" said Mr. Cohen. "Anything else?"

"Oh, my teacher said something about that in school last week" said Sara.

"She said that the mitzvah of Succot is something that we can do the whole time but the Mitzvah of Lulav and Etrog can only be done one time during each day. And we do not wave the Lulav on Shabbat, but we do sit in the Succah."

"That is very interesting Sara" Mr Cohen answered. "Let's hear what you think Benny."

"Well" said Ben, "I can't really remember any thing from school about it."

"Maybe you can say some thing from yourself" said Mr. Cohen. "You know, not every thing you say has to be from school. What do *you* think?"

"Okay," Ben said, slowly, trying to think of something. "Umm.. when you shake the Lulav and Etrog you are doing something specific, but on the other hand when you sit in the Succah there is no specific action you are just sitting inside a Mitzvah surrounded by it from all sides."

One of the guests, a lady, noticed a beetle crawling along the tablecloth. It must have dropped down from the leaves. The guest shuddered. Mr Cohen leaned over and blew it off the table with a single puff.

"Wow, Benny, that is very impressive" Mr. Cohen said. "We are surrounded by the Mitzvah of the Succah. This shows us how we can bring holiness to our everyday life. Everything we do in the Succah becomes holy."

"Even avoiding having a beetle in our plate of soup!" added Mrs Cohen, who had noticed the beetle saga. The lady guest smiled, and for a moment stopped worrying whether another beetle was about to drop from the dark green leaves. In the Succah, it was all holy.

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