

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Simchat Torah, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** תחיל'
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

V'zos Haberachah

CROWNING G-D THROUGH UNITY, JOY AND TORAH

The last Torah portion is always read on the holiday of Simchas Torah. Since all holiday readings concern that particular holiday, V'zos Haberachah should be about Simchas Torah. Simchas Torah culminates a month of holidays, completing the spiritual theme begun by Rosh Hashanah. That theme is the coronation of G-d as King. The reading for Simchas Torah emphasizes the same idea. Crowning G-d as King depends on the unity and oneness of the Jewish people. Unity of the Jewish people and the subsequent coronation of G-d as King over all the earth is the accomplishment of Moshiach. Simchas Torah emphasizes simchah – joy. An inner connection exists between joy and crowning G-d as King. There is a special joy on Simchas Torah.

Unity, joy and Torah bring Moshiach and crown G-d as King.

The last Torah portion, *V'zos Haberachah*, is always – and only – read on Simchas Torah. On holidays, we temporarily set aside the chronological order of Torah readings; instead we read a section that talks about that particular holiday. On Passover, for example, we read about the laws, customs and sacrifices of Passover. On Simchas Torah, then, the Torah reading should concern the basic themes and activities of Simchas Torah. In this sense, *V'zos Haberachah* is actually about Simchas Torah.

Simchas Torah is not a holiday unto itself, but the conclusion and culmination of a month of holidays. Since Rosh Hashanah is the first holiday and Simchas Torah the last, Simchas Torah must conclude what Rosh Hashanah began. That is, Simchas Torah exemplifies the theme of Rosh Hashanah, revealing its most mystical aspects and significance.

The basic theme of Rosh Hashanah is the coronation of G-d

as King over the Jewish people, and hence all creation. *V'zos Haberachah*, as the Torah reading of Simchas Torah, must also be about the acceptance of G-d's Kingship. Indeed, in *V'zos Haberachah* we find the verse that declares G-d's Kingship and describes how it will occur: "He was King in Yeshurun when the people's leaders gathered themselves together, and the tribes of Israel were united."

This verse contains two critical, interdependent concepts: the coronation of G-d, making G-d King, and the unity and oneness of the Jewish people. Its very phrasing emphasizes the mutual dependence of G-d's coronation and the unity of the Jewish people: "He was King . . . when . . . the tribes of Israel were united."

The connection of this verse, and thus both Simchas Torah and *V'zos Haberachah*, with Moshiach, is obvious. Moshiach will actualize the coronation of G-d. Indeed, that will be the central accomplishment of Redemption: universal recognition of G-d's Kingship, which will lead automatically to an elevation of spiritual perception. Thus we pray in the last paragraph of Aleinu: ". . . they will all take upon themselves the yoke of Your Kingdom. May You soon reign over them forever and ever, for kingship is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory, as it is written in Your Torah: The L-rd will reign forever and ever. And it is said: The L-rd shall be King over the entire earth . . ."

But G-d's coronation cannot be complete until there is unity – *achdus* – among the Jewish people. Unity requires a nullification of the ego and acceptance of the "yoke of heaven." First, we must negate the sense of self-importance, the conceit and arrogance that arise when we focus on or stress differences. We cannot truly unite until the distinctions of wealth, power, intellect, experience, etc., become irrelevant. The distinctions, although they still exist, become irrelevant when everyone submits to the same authority. Surrendering autonomy creates equality.

When a king is crowned, all the people are equally subservient. The greatest minister and the simplest peasant stand in the same relationship with the king. Both shout “long live the king” in a total subordination of will. The differences arise only after the coronation, in the enactment and enforcement of decrees. But at the moment when they shout, “long live the king,” there is unity and equality among the king’s subjects.

Crowning G-d as King is the theme of Rosh Hashanah. The theme of Simchas Torah is joy, which is what the word “simchah” means. Yet the verse about G-d’s coronation, “He was King in Yeshurun when the people’s leaders gathered themselves together, and the tribes of Israel were united,” occurs in the reading for Simchas Torah. We must conclude that “the beginning is lodged in the end,” that establishing G-d’s Kingship and being joyful have an inner connection.

Furthermore, the coming of Moshiach will completely and permanently establish G-d’s Kingship. Therefore, our joy on Simchas Torah also helps bring Moshiach.

We’ve said that the prerequisite for making G-d King, so to speak, is the oneness and accord, the gathering together, of the Jewish people. That unity and oneness becomes most manifest on Simchas Torah. The joyful unity of Simchas Torah contrasts with – and is higher than – the solemn unity of Rosh Hashanah.

On Rosh Hashanah, the unity derives from the negative: negation of ego, of will. The Jewish people are united by their subservience. Since no one can see how much we subjugate our minds and hearts, this remains a concealed unity. On Simchas Torah, however, the unity results from joy – and true joy reveals itself openly.

Of course one might ask, aren’t all the holidays supposed to be joyful? Aren’t they called “times appointed for joy”? The answer is

yes, all the holidays **are** supposed to be joyful. However, the joy of every other holiday depends on a particular mitzvah or concept: Passover is the time of our liberation, Shavuot, the giving of the Torah, etc. Therefore, the joy of the holiday is limited to and by the mitzvah or event being celebrated.

Simchas Torah, however, is different. Its sole concern is joy. Obviously, if Simchas Torah is the time of our joyfulness, we are to rejoice not over matzoh or a sukkah, but over joyfulness itself. To properly observe the time of our joyfulness, our joy must be potentially limitless. The joy of every other holiday is measured within the framework of its mitzvah. The joy of Simchas Torah is encompassing and unconditional, without differentiation or hierarchy. Everyone – men, women and children – rejoice together, equally, without distinctions. The collective rejoicing dissipates pride and self-regard. The “head” does not distinguish itself from the “foot.” Rather, all are on an equal footing, so to speak, which is why we dance on Simchas Torah. In fact, the two points of the verse, “He was King in Yeshurun” and “the people’s leaders gathered themselves together, and the tribes of Israel were united,” are most openly revealed and expressed by the dancing on Simchas Torah.

Given all this, why is the holiday called Simchas **Torah**? Since the Torah itself contains laws, standards and measurements, which is a type of limitation, how can it be the catalyst for limitless joy? These questions indicate the paradoxical nature of our approach to the holiday. Since Torah is G-d’s Wisdom, it would seem to make more sense to celebrate Simchas Torah by studying, deepening our comprehension and intellectual understanding of its teachings and precepts. Perhaps we should stay up all night learning, as we do on Shavuot.

Instead, we dance and celebrate at great length. We don’t even open the Torah. Rather, we make seven circles – *hakkafos*

– with the scrolls covered, hidden in their mantles. Why does the culmination of G-d's coronation occur specifically when we rejoice – in togetherness – over the Torah? The answer lies in the spiritual nature of Torah, of the souls of the Jewish people and the relationship of each with G-d.

The source of the Jewish soul precedes everything, even Torah. However, in order to be clothed in a body, the soul becomes a separate existence, much as a son, although drawn from (and part of) the very being of the father, exists independently, detached from the father. The Torah, on the other hand, even when in the physical world, remains united and one with the very Essence of G-dliness. Therefore, only through Torah can the souls of the Jewish people reunite with G-d. Torah is the intermediary, the channel and connecting link between G-d and the Jewish people.

Joy – simchah– breaks all barriers, including that of exile. But true oneness – with each other and with G-d – comes only through Torah. When the Jewish people unite, rejoicing together with the Torah, this in itself is G-d's coronation. Through unity, joy and Torah we bring Moshiach, turning a prayer that "The L-rd shall be King over the entire earth" into reality.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 14, pp. 164-70)

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