



SIMCHAS BEIS HASHOEIVA

Kedusha and Simcha

Every Sukkos, the *Beis HaMikdash* was all afire with the festivities that celebrated the *mitzva* of *nisuch hamayim*, when water was poured on the *mizbei'ach*. In fact *Chazal* noted that "Whoever never witnessed *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* has never in his life seen true joy."

After the first *Yom-Tov* was over, the *Azara*, the courtyard in the *Beis HaMikdash*, would be prepared for the *simcha*. Balconies were built to accommodate all the women who came to watch, so that they should stand separate from the men. Golden candlesticks were set up, fifty *amos* high, with four gold bowls atop them. Four ladders led to the top of each candlestick, and four young *kohanim* mounted them, holding large jugs of oil which they poured into the golden bowls. Thick wicks were made from worn-out clothing of the *kohanim*, and when the candlesticks were lit, their brilliant light lit up every courtyard in Yerushalayim.

The *levi'im*, standing on the fifteen steps overlooking the gathering, played various musical instruments. The greatest *chachomim* and other men of stature danced joyfully, while all the other *Yidden* watched. Some of the *chachomim* would bear burning torches in their hands while singing *Tehillim* and other praises, and others heightened the *simcha* by performing incredible feats. *Chazal* relate that Rabbon Shimon ben Gamliel would juggle eight lit torches, which never touched each other. He would also bend down and kiss the ground and then draw himself up again, a feat which no one else could do.

Two *kohanim*, trumpets in hand, were stationed at the Upper Gate of the *Beis HaMikdash*. As the roosters crowed to announce the first light of dawn, they sounded their trumpets, and as they descended the steps on their way to draw the water, they blew additional rounds of blasts. When they reached the Eastern Gate, they would turn to face the *Beis HaMikdash* and exclaim: "We belong to *HaShem* and our eyes are turned to *HaShem*."

The water was drawn with a golden container from the spring of Shiloach, near Yerushalayim. When the *kohanim* returned from there to the gate of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the trumpets would be sounded again. A *kohein* would ascend the

ramp of the *mizbei'ach*, and on its left side he would pour the water into a silver bowl which led down to the depths under the *Beis HaMikdash*.

In his later years, Rabi Yehoshua ben Chanania recalled: "When we used to rejoice at the *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva*, our eyes saw no proper sleep throughout the entire Sukkos. In the morning, the *korban tomid* was offered, followed by *Shacharis*, and then the *korban mussaf*. From there we would go to the *beis hamedrash* to study. Then we would go and eat. *Mincha* was followed by the afternoon *tomid* – and then the *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* began once more."

(סוכה מ"ח ע"א, נ"א ע"א וא"ך)

This event was called *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva*, which means "the celebration of the place of drawing." The plain meaning of that name refers, of course, to the drawing of water. In addition, *Chazal* point out another meaning: from that holy celebration, the people present drew *ruach hakodesh*, for where there is joy, the *Shechina* rests. Indeed, it was from his participation in *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* that the *navi* Yonah was granted the prophetic inspiration of the *Shechina*.

(ירושלמי סוכה פ"ה ה"א)

Today we cannot physically participate in the *Nisuch HaMayim* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The Alter Rebbe therefore teaches that each of us must therefore perform its equivalent in our own *avoda*. What is the spiritual equivalent of the pouring of water? – Quenching the burning love that a *Yid* has for *HaShem*, and from this, arriving at a state of inner *bittul*. This must be retained (as hinted at in the word *atzeres*) and continued, through the study of Torah.

(לקוטי תורה סוכות ע"א סע"ג)

Rejoicing in our Times

The Rebbe taught that although the original rejoicing would take place in the *Beis HaMikdash* on the occasion of *Nisuch HaMayim*, today, too, we can have this *avoda* – just as today we can carry out the *avoda* of the *korbanos*, by *davening*. The Rebbe noted that today we even have certain advantages, since with us the rejoicing begins from the first night, and even ordinary people can actively participate.

The Rebbe added that in order for the *simcha*

to be real, we must first understand it. On the other hand, this understanding and feeling must find expression in physical dancing.

(מעייני הישועה ע' 43)

One night on *Chol HaMoeid*, the talmidim of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva in Dokshitz arrived at the *sukkah* of Reb Yehoshua Lein to *farbreng* and rejoice in *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva*. The chossid told them, "What kind of *simcha* can one possibly have without studying beforehand the *maamar* that begins *U'She'avtem* (which explains the reason for the joy)?"

The *bochurim* went off to bring a few copies of *Likkutei Torah* from their homes and then studied that *maamar* for over an hour. Only then did they rejoice, dancing till late at night.

(לקוטי סיפורים פערלאוו ע' ש"ח)

After *Maariv* on the second night of Sukkos, the *Tzemach Tzedek* would *farbreng* in honor of *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva*. He would explain profound concepts in *Chassidus*, and then *niggunim* were sung and the chassidim would dance. The *Tzemach Tzedek* himself would dance so vigorously that even the *yungeleit* were unable to keep up with his pace. After the *farbrengen* he would study a *halacha* in *Choshen Mishpat* in depth, so that the sweat of the *mitzva* (*zeiah shel mitzva*) should dry, thus ensuring that the energy previously generated by *kedusha* should not be diverted to *kelipa* (*yenikas chitzonim*).

(סר"ש תשי"ג ע' 10)

From the year תשמ"א (1980), the Rebbe delivered a *sicha* after *Maariv* on each night of Sukkos, explaining the distinctive significance of that particular day and of the *Ushpizin* who come to visit. That year some *chassidim* celebrated *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* by dancing, first in the Shul and later in the streets. The Rebbe encouraged their practice and explained the advantage of bringing the *kedusha* outside of the *Shul* and into the streets.

(מעייני הישועה ע' 7, שיח"ק תשמ"א ה"א ע' 195)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Why did only the great *chachomim* dance at the original *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva*? And what changed today?
- Can one rejoice without understanding what he is joyous about?

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THE KEDUSHA OF CHOL HaMOEID

Days of Kedusha

The *Mishna* says that one who relates disrespectfully toward the *moados*, forfeits his share in Olam HaBa. Bartenura explains that this refers to one who works on *Chol HaMoeid* or drinks and eats his meals as if these were ordinary weekdays.

(אבות פ"ג מי"א ובפי' הרע"ב)

The fruit in Rabi Yannai's orchard required harvesting on *Chol HaMoeid*, and since this was an unexpected monetary loss, he picked them at that time. The following year, other orchard owners postponed their fruitpicking until *Chol HaMoeid*. Seeing this, he made his orchard hefker and did not pick its fruit, because through him others had been brought to sin, by working during *Chol HaMoeid*.

Ravina once had an opportunity to make a sale on *Chol HaMoeid* that would earn him six thousand zuz. He decided

to wait until after *Chol HaMoeid*, and the price soared to twelve thousand zuz, bringing him a significant profit.

(מועד קטן י"ב ע"ב, י' ע"ב)

The Alter Rebbe *pasakens* in the *Shulchan Aruch* that on *Chol HaMoeid* there is a *mitzva* of *simcha* just as on *Yom-Tov* itself. Due to this obligation, one's clothing on *Yom-Tov* and also on *Chol HaMoeid* should be finer than one's *Shabbos* clothing.

(שו"ע אדה"ז תקכ"ט ס"ו-ז)

The Friediker Rebbe would wear

a silk *kapote* throughout the entire *Chol HaMoeid*, as was his *minhag* on *Shabbos* and *Yom-Tov*. The Rebbe would do the same.

On the third day of *Chol HaMoeid Sukkos* תש"מ (1979), when the Rebbe came into *shul*, he turned to the photographer Reb Levi Itche Freiden and said, "Today is *Yom-Tov*; today one should wear *Yom-Tov* clothes."

(קובץ פניני העשור ע' 12, רשימת היומן ע' קסב)



The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* writes: The days of *Chol HaMoeid* were not instituted for work, but for rejoicing before *HaShem*. This means gathering in *shuls* and listening to the sweet words of Torah, learning the *halachos* of Pesach during Pesach and the *halachos* of Sukkos during Sukkos.

At the level of *pshat*, the two words *Chol HaMoeid* mean "the mundane days of the festival." At a different level, the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that the *avoda* of *Chol HaMoeid* is to transform the mundane and weekday (*chol*) into a *Yom-Tov* (*moeid*).

(אור התורה בראשית ח"ד ע' 0341)

A Time to Learn

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* teaches: Work is forbidden on *Chol HaMoeid* in order to enable us to devote our time to rejoice and study Torah, not to celebrate and

party, *chas veshalom*.

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The author of *Seder HaYom* writes: One should not think that since he is not working, his time should be occupied with eating and touring. In

truth, these days are days of Divine goodwill (*yemei ratzon*) and were given to Yidden so that they can be free to learn Torah. There is heightened *kedusha* during these days, as can be understood from the extra *korban mussaf* and the extra *aliya* in *shul*. One should enjoy himself physically but should not forget to attend to his *neschama*, which should be his primary focus.

(מועד קטן פ"ב ה"ד, ספר החינוך מצוה שג, סדר היום – סדר ספירת העומר)

The Rebbe explains that since during *Chol HaMoeid* one is forbidden to do any

work, one is obligated to study Torah day and night, literally (*mamash*), just like someone who has all his work done by others, as explained in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* of the Alter Rebbe.

(לקו"ש ח"ז ע' 862, הלכות ת"ת פ"ג ה"ה)

CONSIDER THIS!

Is *Chol HaMoeid* a weekday or a *Yom Tov*?