

חג הסוכות

SIMCHAS BEIS HA'SHOEIVA

65

לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE KEDUSHA OF THE TIME

During the times of the Beis Hamikdash, tremendous festivities were held in celebration of the mitzvah of Nisuch Hamayim, pouring of the water on the Mizbei'ach. Chazal noted that "Whoever never witnessed the Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva, has never in his life seen true joy."

After the first Yom Tov was over, the Azara would be prepared for the simcha. Balconies were built to hold all the women who came to watch, so that they should stand separate from the men. There were golden candlesticks 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 the ladders, holding in their hands large jugs of oil which they poured into the golden bowls. Thick wicks to light the oil were made from worn-out clothing of the kohanim, and when the candlesticks were lit, the light glowed so brilliantly that every courtyard in Yerushalayim was brightly illuminated.

The Levi'im would play many various musical instruments, as they stood on the fifteen steps above the gathering. The greatest chachomim and other great Yidden would dance joyfully in the celebration, while all the Yidden would watch. Some of the chachomim would bear burning torches in their hands while singing Tehillim and other praises of Hashem, while others performed incredible feats to increase in the joy. Chazal relate that Rabbon Shimon ben Gamliel would juggle eight lit torches, without any of them touching each other. He would also bend down to the ground, kiss the ground and draw himself up again, a feat which no one else could do.

Two kohanim were stationed at the Upper Gate of the Beis Hamikdash, holding trumpets in their hands. As the roosters crowed the first light of dawn, they blew 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."

With a golden container the water was drawn from the springs of Shiloach near Yerushalayim. When the kohanim returned to the gate of the Beis Hamikdash, the trumpets would be sounded again. The kohein would ascend the ramp and on the left side of mizbei'ach he would pour the water into a silver bowl which led down to the depths under the Beis Hamikdash.

Rebbi Yehoshua ben Chanania said, "When we used to rejoice at the Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva, our eyes saw no proper sleep the entire Sukkos. In the morning the korbon tomid was brought, followed by shachris, and then the korbon mussaf. From there we would go to the Beis Hamedrash to learn. Then we would go eat. Mincha was followed by the afternoon tomid and then the Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva began once more."

(סוכה מ"ח ע"א, נ"א ע"א ואילך)

Chazal say that this event was called Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva, the joy of drawing, also because one can draw רוח הקודש from there, for the shechina rests where there is joy. It is from Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva that the navi Yonah merited the inspiration of the Shechinah.

(ירושלמי סוכה פ"ה ה"א)

The Rebbe Maharash explains that Simchas Beis Hasho'eiva is a time of great joy, for it follows the teshuva of Yom Kippur, when the aveiros were transformed into zechusim. This causes the sparks of kedusha to be elevated to its source, which is a reason for tremendous rejoicing. By analogy, when two close friends have not seen each other for a long time and are separated by a great distance, the joy of finally meeting again is intense; and the greater the distance, the greater the joy.

(תורת שמואל, המשך וככה תרל"ז ע' 156)

The Alter Rebbe explains that since today we do not have the Nisuch Hamayim in the Beis Hamikdash, it must be performed by each person in their own avoda. The pouring of the water refers to the quenching of the burning love that a Yid has for Hashem, assuming a state of inner bittul. This must be retained (עצרת) and continued through the learning of torah.

(לקוטי תורה סוכות עה סע"ג)

REJOICING IN OUR TIMES

The Rebbe explained that although the original rejoicing would take place in the Beis Hamikdash on the occasion of the Nisuch Hamayim, however today as well we can have this avoda (as with the korbanos). The Rebbe noted that there certain advantages today, as it begins from the first night and even ordinary people can actively participate.

The Rebbe added that in order for the simcha to be real, it is necessary to preface it with an understanding of the joy; on the other hand, one must express this understanding and feeling in physical dancing.

(מעייני הישועה ע' 43)

After maariv of the second night of Sukkos, the Tzemach Tzedek would farbreng for Simchas Beis Ha'Sho'eiva. During the farbrengen, the Tzemach Tzedek would explain profound concepts in chassidus and then niggunim were sung and they would dance. The Tzemach Tzedek himself would dance so intensely that even the yungerleit were unable to keep up with its pace. After the farbrengen, the Tzemach Tzedek would learn a halacha in חשן משפט in depth, so that the sweat of the mitzvah (זיעה של מצוה) should dry, thus preventing the energy from going to klipah (יניקת החיצונים).

(סה"ש תש"ג ע' 10)

On one of the nights of Chol Hamoed Sukkos, the Rebbe Maharash would farbreng for Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva for only ten minutes. If the farbrengen lasted fifteen minutes, it was considered long. However, his children the Rebbe Rashab and the רד"א, would continue the farbrengen afterwards.

(סה"ש תרצ"ט ע' 300)

The Friediker Rebbe related: "Until the year תרנ"ה, the Rebbe Rashab would farbreng one night of Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva, and on occasion more. He would drink a lot of mashke and sing and dance for many hours, sometimes even for the entire night, and he would explain a concept in chassidus. Many times, he would cry so much at these farbrengens that his eyes and face would become swollen."

(רשימת היומן ע' ק"ע, מגדל עז ע' רכ"ה)

In the earlier years the Rebbe would farbreng in the sukkah on the first night of Chol Hamoed in celebration of Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeiva. However, later on this was discontinued due

to the large crowd that the sukkah could not hold. In the year תשמ"א, the Rebbe started saying a sicha after mairiv on each night of Sukkos, explaining the significance of that day and its אושפיזין who come to visit.

(מעייני הישועה ע' 7)

One night on Chol Hamoeid, the talmidim of Tomchei T'mimim of Dokshitz went to the sukkah of the chossid Reb Yehoshua Lein to farbreng and rejoice in Simchas Beis Hasho'eiva. The chossid told them, "What kind of simcha can one possibly have without learning beforehand the maamar 'ושאבתם' (explaining the reason for the joy)?" The bochurim went immediately and brought a few לקוטי תורה from their homes and they learned the maamar for over an hour. Only then did they rejoice, dancing till late at night.

(לקוטי סיפורים פערלאוו ע' ש"ה)

THE KEDUSHA OF חול המועד

DAYS OF KEDUSHA

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos says that one who embarrasses the מועדות (special days) does not have a portion in Olam Habah. The Bartenura explains that this refers to one who does work on Chol Hamoeid or drinks and eats their meals in a weekday-like manner.

(אבות פ"ג מי"א)

The Gemora relates the following incident: Rabbi Yannai owned an orchard whose fruits required harvesting on Chol Hamoeid, and being that this was an unexpected monetary loss, Rabbi Yannai picked the fruits during Chol Hamoeid. The following year, the other orchard owners pushed off their fruit picking until Chol Hamoeid. Seeing this, Rabbi Yannai made his orchard hefker and did not pick its fruit, because through him others had been brought to sin, by working during Chol Hamoeid.

(מועד קטן דף י"ב ע"ב)

The Alter Rebbe paskens in Shulchan Aruch that on Chol Hamoeid there is a mitzvah (מצות עשה) of simcha just like on Yom Tov itself. He concludes that due to the obligation of simcha, one's clothing on Yom Tov and Chol Hamoeid should be nicer 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, like the minhag on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Rebbe would do the same.

On the third day of Chol Hamoeid Sukkos תש"מ, when the Rebbe came into shul, he turned to the photographer Reb Levi Itche Freiden and said, "Today is Yom Tov; one should be dressed in Yom Tov clothing."

(קובץ פניני העשור ע' 21, רשימת היומן ע' קסב)

In a maamar, the Tzemach Tzedek explains that the avoda of Chol Hamoeid is to make the mundane and weekday (חול) into a Yom Tov (מועד).

(אור התורה בראשית ח"ד ע' 1430)

LEARNING TORAH

The Talmud Yerushalmi says: The reason work is forbidden to be done during Chol Hamoeid is to enable us to dedicate the time to rejoice and learn Torah, not to celebrate and party ח"ו.

The Sefer Hachinuch writes: The days of Chol Hamoeid were not established for work, but in order to rejoice before Hashem. This means, to gather in Shuls and listen to the sweet words of Torah, the halachos of Pesach during Pesach and the halachos of Sukkos during Sukkos.

The 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 special days (ימי רצון) and were given to the Yidden so that they can be free to learn Torah. There is added kedusha during these days, as can be understood from the extra korbon mussaf and the extra aliyah in shul. One should enjoy himself physically but should not forget to attend to his Neshama which is the primary focus.

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

The Rebbe explains that since in the days of Chol Hamoeid one is forbidden to do any work, one therefore has an obligation to learn Torah day and night ("ממש"), 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' 268, הלכות ת"ת פ"ג ה"ה)

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