



Message 10-4-07
Shemini Atzeret-Eight Day of Assembly
Leviticus 23:36-37
Numbers 29:35-39
1Kings 8:51-61
Matthew 5:17-20
Revelation 21:1-4

The seven days of Sukkot, which end with Hoshana Rabbah, are followed by another festival, Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly. The Torah says, “The eighth day shall be an assembly for you; you may not do any mundane work” (Numbers 29:35). It is a festival in its own right, independent of Sukkot, and is observed one day in the land of Israel; outside the Land of Israel it is observed two days. The fact that Shemini Atzeret is a separate Yom Tov (Good Day or Holiday) is evident in the blessing of Shehecheyanu (Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season), which is recited by the woman when lighting the candles and by the man when reciting the Kiddush.

The final day of Sukkot is called Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah. In the Land of Israel, the holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on the same day. Outside the Land of Israel, an extra day is added so that Simchat Torah is observed as the second day of Shemini Atzeret, on the twenty-third of Tishri.

The holiday is called Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah, because we conclude the reading of the last portion of the Torah. Although the name Simchat Torah does not occur in the Talmud, the festive character of the holiday is mentioned in the Zohar (Pinechas) and many other early writings.

Traditionally, the conclusion of the Torah or a tractate of the Talmud has been an occasion for a joyous feast. The Midrash derives this from the Scripture, which relates that King Solomon made a feast for all his servants after he was granted wisdom (1 Kings 3:15).

Leviticus 23:36b-37a

36b on the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you and you shall offer a fire offering to the LORD, it is an assembly, you shall not do any laborious work. **37a** These are the appointed festivals of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations...

Numbers 29:35-39

35 The eighth day shall be a restriction for you; you shall not do any laborious work. **36** You shall offer a burnt offering, a fire offering, a satisfying aroma to the LORD; one bull, one ram, seven lambs within their first year, unblemished. **37** Their meal offering and libations for the bull, the ram, and the lambs shall be in their proper numbers, as required. **38** One he-goat for a sin offering; aside from the continual burnt-offering, its meal-offering and its libation. **39** These are what you shall make for the LORD on your appointed festivals, aside from your vows and your free-will offerings for your burnt-offerings, your meal-offerings, your libations, and your peace-offerings.

The word atzeret is derived from atzar, to collect, to store. The purpose of this festival is to recap and to store in our memories everything we experienced and gained during the preceding Yamim Tovim (High Holidays), so that we will carry out the resolutions we have made, will retain the spiritual elevation we have reached, and will not lose them in the everyday life to which we are about to return.

But even more important than all of this is the idea behind Shemini Atzeret. What the LORD is saying here is that after spending the Messianic Age with us, He desires that we remain behind for another day or literally He is asking us to remain with Him forever. For this is what this day means. It is the Eighth Day of Assembly where we are instructed to remain at the close of Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles, where Yeshua now dwells among us or tabernacles among us to where instead of leaving, the LORD tells us to stay longer and remain with Him, entering into the eighth day or into that period that transcends time itself that realm known as eternity.

1 Kings 8:51-61

51 “For they are Your people and Your heritage, whom You have taken out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace; **52** may Your eyes thus be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call out to You. **53** For You have separated them for Yourself as a heritage from all the peoples of the earth, as You spoke through Your servant Moses, when You took our forefathers out of Egypt, O my Lord, the LORD God.” **54** And it was when Solomon had finished praying to the LORD this entire prayer and supplication, he stood up from having knelt on his knees before the Altar of the LORD with his hands spread out heavenward. **55** He stood and blessed the entire congregation of Israel in a loud voice, saying, **56** “Blessed is the LORD Who has granted rest to His people Israel, according to all that He has spoken; not one word has gone unfulfilled from the entire gracious promise that He pronounced through the hand of His servant Moses. **57** May the LORD, our God, be with us as He was with our forefathers, may He not forsake us nor cast us off, **58** to turn our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways and to observe His commandments, decrees and statutes that He commanded our forefathers. **59** And may these words of mine that I have supplicated before the LORD be near to the LORD, our God, day and night, that He may grant the just due of His servant and the just due of His people Israel, each day’s need in its day, **60** so that all the peoples of the earth shall know that the LORD is God – there is no other. **61** may your hearts remain perfect with the LORD our God, to follow His decrees and to observe His commandments as on this very day.”

During the week of Sukkot, seventy bulls were brought as offerings on the altar in the Temple. However, on Shemini Atzeret, only one bull was sacrificed. Why? The seventy represent the seventy nations of the world; the one bull of Shemini Atzeret represents the unique nation of Israel. You may compare it to a king who had held a festival for seven days and invited all of the country’s inhabitants (the nations of the world) to the seven days of feasting. When the seven days of feasting were over, he said to his friend (Israel), “Let us now have a small meal together, just you and I”.

And this takes us into the festival of Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is not biblically ordained by the LORD as one of His appointed times. The rabbis of old brought this festival into being to celebrate the end of the reading cycle of the Torah and its beginning. The significance of this particular festival is that it shows us the Word of God, who is Yeshua, is never-ending but a constant in our lives forever. I think that this is a very important point and ties in beautifully with Shemini Atzeret. In entering Shemini Atzeret we come into our full relationship with God. In the same way through Simchat Torah we celebrate the eternal Word of God, the Torah, through our relationship with the Living Torah Yeshua HaMashiach.

Matthew 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. **18** "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. **19** "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Revelation 21:1-4

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; **3** and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; **4** he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

The theme of Shemini Atzeret may be better understood if we think of it in terms of a bride and groom. During the wedding, they are both decked out in a wardrobe of exquisite, elegant clothes and jewelry. However, when they come together in their private chamber, they remove their garments and jewelry.

It is the same with Shemini Atzeret. During the seven days of Sukkot, seventy bulls were offered up on the altar, but on Shemini Atzeret-the moment they achieve unification with Yeshua-they brought only one bull. We have become echad, one in a unity; Israel joined to her groom, Yeshua.

And while Jewish tradition may say that the promises were for them as the descendants of those who stood at Mt. Sinai, the word of the LORD says otherwise.

Deuteronomy 29:9-14

9 You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD, your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers – all the men of Israel; **10** your small children, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water, **11** for you to pass into the covenant of the LORD, your God, and into His imprecation that the LORD, your God, seals with you today, **12** in order to establish you today as a people to Him and that He be a God to you, as He spoke to you and as He swore to your forefathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. **13** Not with you alone do I seal this covenant

and this imprecation, **14** but with whoever is here, standing with us today before the LORD, our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.

On Simchat Torah we end the Torah with the words le'einei kol Yisrael, "before the eyes of all Israel," and we begin with Bereisheet, "In the beginning the LORD created." The last letter of the Torah is a lamed: the first letter is a bet. Together they form the word lev, "heart." This teaches us that the most important thing is to love the LORD and His Torah-Yeshua with our hearts, with burning enthusiasm-that fire of the Ruach HaKodesh.

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