

Simcha on a New Level

Rabbi C. Cohen

Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzva 324) details the progression from Sukkos to Simchas Torah.

Sukkos, otherwise known as Chag Ha'asif, or the Harvest Festival, is a time of great rejoicing as it is when we gather in all our produce and bring it into our homes. On Sukkos, we are enjoined to channel this excitement towards Hashem, and rejoice at the blessings that He has given us. To this end, we are commanded to take the *arba minim* in hand, to remind us to channel this excitement and joy.

Simcha, happiness, is so fundamental, that one cannot properly connect to Hashem in its absence. It is too easy, however, for one's excitement to be misplaced and celebrated inappropriately, forgetting Hashem in the process. Therefore, the Torah commands us to take the *lulav* and *esrog*, in order to enable us to better connect with Hashem. The Chinuch continues by explaining that there is no need to take the *lulav* and *esrog* on Shemini Atzeres when we connect on an even deeper level with Hashem.

R' Chaim Friedlander (Sifsei Chaim, Moadim 1 p344) explains that Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres represent two disparate aspects of *simcha*. On Sukkos, the Festival of Harvest, we rejoice over our physical blessings. We celebrate by utilizing these gifts as *mitzva* objects, thereby expressing our recognition and appreciation to Hashem. Living in a *sukka* serves to remind us that He continually protects us, while waving the *lulav* and *esrog* in each direction symbolizes that everything comes from Hashem.

On Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah we step it up a notch. Our intrinsic connection with Hashem on these days is the very cause of our *simcha*.

On Rosh Hashana, we acknowledge Hashem as King and on Yom Kippur we merit to return to Him and receive a favourable judgement. On Sukkos we remind ourselves of His protection and physical gifts. Following this, we are able to attain a new level of *simcha*. We are no longer concerned that we may get side-tracked into celebrating in a detrimental matter. We no longer need to utilize physical, external props to remind us of this and to channel this *simcha*. It is the close relationship with Hashem Himself, that gives us cause to rejoice.

It is for this reason that while we have no specific *mitzvos* on this *chag*, we celebrate with the Torah. It is primarily through studying the Word of Hashem that we connect to Hashem. It is this connection that we aim for over this *chag*.

Following Sukkos, we no longer live in a Sukka or shake the *lulav* and *esrog*. It is the *simcha* of the Torah and connection with Hashem, that we must take with us.

Hopefully, we will all return to school on Tuesday with a heightened appreciation for our Torah learning.

Wishing you a wonderful Shabbos and Yom Tov,
Rabbi Cohen, Mr Leventhall and the Yavneh Boys team