

SHOFAR

אלול תשע"ט - תשרי תש"פ SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2019

לפני ה' תטהרו



כשלא ילבינו

שנה טובה ומתוקה



A Good & Sweet Year

שורו ישנים משינתכם
אני לדודי ודודי לי



אתה הראת לדעת
מפי א-ל יברך ישראל



חג הסכת

שמחת בחגל



לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

May you all be blessed with a happy, healthy and successful new year!

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The Month of Elul



The Elul season is of unusual importance in the religious life of the Jewish people. This is because the month of Elul is dedicated to the spiritual preparation for the coming season of Yomim Noraim (The Days of Awe, consisting of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Thus, beginning with the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul, the Shofar is sounded every day in the synagogue (except on Shabbos). The blowing of the Shofar acts as a solemn reminder that the Days of Judgment are fast approaching. In this Elul season, the Jewish person takes account of his spiritual life and makes amends to G-d and man for the errors he has made during the past year. Charity is given abundantly. Thus, before the Yomim Noraim period begins, the Jewish person who heeds the Elul message experiences a great spiritual uplifting in every aspect of his conduct.

Selichos Services



During the week before Rosh Hashanah, special Selichos services are recited. Selichos prayers are for forgiveness and mercy, for the ending of Israel's sufferings and for an era of peace for all mankind. On Erev Rosh Hashanah morning, the Selichos service is longer than usual, for this being the day preceding the new year, we devote more time to worship and introspection.

The Month of Tishrei



The month of Tishrei may be divided into two parts: The period of Yomim Noraim (The days of Awe, centering around the New Year and the Day of Atonement), and the period of the Z'man Simchaseinu (The Season of Joy), which is based on the festival of Succos.

Rosh Hashanah



Rosh Hashanah, which marks the beginning of the Jewish new year, is celebrated on the first and second day of the month of Tishrei. Unlike other nations that celebrate their New Year's day with hilarity and boisterous gaiety, we observe our New Year as a most solemn festival. Rosh Hashanah is known in the Torah as Yom Teruah (the day of blowing). In the prayers we refer to it as the Day of Judgment, the Yom Hadin, the day on which the Almighty determines the future course of events for each and every individual for the coming year. There is a tradition that on Rosh Hashanah the judgment is "written down". This is to say it may still be changed during the Ten Days of Repentance. In the last moments of Yom Kippur, however, the judgment is "sealed". On the first night of Rosh Hashanah people bless each other with the words "Leshana Tovah Tikasvu Visaychosmu"- "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year".

Holiday Customs



It is customary on Rosh Hashanah night following the services to have a regular holiday meal (kiddush, challahs, etc.). At this meal, one should take a piece of apple and dip it in honey and say, "May it be your will, Hashem our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that You renew for us a good and sweet new year."

The Shofar

The outstanding Mitzvah of Rosh Hashana is the listening to the sound of the Shofar. So closely linked is the shofar to the essence of the day, that the Torah refers to the day not as Rosh Hashana but as “Yom Teruah”, a day of blowing.

Maimonides in Hilchos Teshuva writes that while the blowing of the Shofar is a Torah decree and may defy human comprehension, there is an allusion in it, namely “awake sleepers from your sleep...examine your deeds...repent...improve your ways and deeds.”

The Fast Day of Gedaliah

The day after Rosh Hashanah, the third day of Tishrei, is observed as the Fast Day of Gedaliah. The reason for the fast is as follows: When Nevuchadnetzar, the King of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C.E., he appointed a prominent Jewish leader by the name of Gedaliah as Governor of Judah. Gedaliah made a sincere effort to save the Jewish nation. However, his rule lasted only two months. He was murdered by men who were jealous of his power. With this treacherous murder, all organized Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael came to a complete halt. When the third day of Tishrei occurs on a Shabbos, the fast is postponed until Sunday.

Shabbos Shuva

The Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as Shabbos Shuva, the Shabbos of Repentance. The name is derived from the Haftarah, which begins with the word Shuvah-“Return O Israel, to the L-rd your G-d”. We devote the Shabbos before Yom Kippur to the main theme of The Ten Days of Repentance-deep regret for past wrongdoings, and a profound determination to correct our ways in the future.

Yom Kippur

On Erev Yom Kippur (the day preceding Yom Kippur), it is our solemn duty to seek forgiveness from people whom we harmed or offended during the past year.

According to a teaching of the Mishna, “Yom Kippur provides atonement for sins between man and G-d, but, for sins between man and his fellow man, Yom Kippur does not provide atonement until he appeases his fellow man”. (Yoma, Chapter 8).

The spirit of the Day of Atonement finds its supreme expression in the synagogue, where all assemble to join in Divine worship, to ask G-d’s forgiveness for our sins through fasting, prayer and charity. One should not wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur. Shoes made of man-made material are obligatory. It is a mitzvah to have a proper holiday meal prior to the fast, so that the fast will be less difficult.

Succos

The “Ten Days of Awe and Repentance” are followed by the “Season of Our Rejoicing”. This is one of the names given to the holiday of Succos, for the Torah commandment to “rejoice” is mentioned more often in connection with the holiday of Succos, than for any other Yom Tov.

Succos begins on the fifteenth day of Tishrei, at the time in Israel of the ingathering of the crops-a further cause for rejoicing as one looks with a sense of pride and accomplishment upon the fruits of one’s labor of the previous months.

The seven-day holiday of Succos is one of the Sholosh Regolim, the three festivals when all Jewish males over the age of thirteen were commanded to come and celebrate the Yom Tov in the proximity of the Holy Temple. (The other two Regolim are Pesach and Shavuot).

Succos (Cont.)

The Temple celebration during Succos was highlighted by the ceremony of water-drawing. The ceremony was unique in that all year the libations on the Altar were performed with wine, but on Succos, water was also used. Our sages have stated that “whoever has not seen the joy at the place of water-drawing has never seen true joy in his life!” (Succah 51). The joy expressed in this ceremony was the joy of a simple and pure acceptance of G-d’s will as symbolized by clear water, in contrast to the acceptance that is based on understanding, symbolized by wine.

The dominant mitzvah, of course, is the Succah. The Succah is built before the holiday begins. Almost anything can be used for the walls, but the roof covering must be kosher s’chach, which is plant-life material meeting certain specifications. Evergreen branches, cornstalks or bamboo are popularly used. During the entire festival we live in these temporary dwellings as much as possible. It is the practice to pronounce the blessing for the Succah whenever eating a meal there.

The Succah is symbolic of the clouds of glory which protected the Jews during their forty years in the wilderness. These clouds of glory, serving as shade and shield, were an ever-present reminder of G-d’s kindness and love for His children. As we sit in the Succah, we too are aware of the need to be grateful for G-d’s protection.

A most beautiful and meaningful mitzvah of Succos is the “taking of the four species”. The four plants enumerated in the Torah are the Esrog (citron), Lulov (palm branch), Haddassim (myrtles), and Aravos (willows). Much energy and money is expended in acquiring the most beautiful ones possible. This mitzvah should be done early in the day, but it is permissible until sunset. The Lulav, Hadassim and Aravos are taken in the right hand and the Esrog is in the left hand and held next to the other three species. A left-handed person would reverse the procedure and hold the Lulav in the left hand and the Esrog in the right hand. All are swayed together, in accordance with various customs. The “Four Species” are also used during Hallel and Hoshanos every day of succos with the exception of Shabbos.

While women are not obligated in this mitzvah, they have generally taken upon themselves to perform it throughout Succos.

This mitzvah has extraordinary relevance to our lives today. In our oral tradition, it is explained that each of these four kinds corresponds to a different type of person, from the esrog which has both refreshing taste (Torah learning) and delightful fragrance (good deeds), to the aravah, which has neither of these qualities. Despite their difference, the Torah instructs us to take these four and bind them together, for they compliment one another, and only when there is true harmony among the Jewish people can we hope for an ideal existence.



Hoshana Rabbah



Hoshana Rabbah is the name of the seventh day of Succos. It is the final day of Chol Hamoed Succos (the Intermediate Days), and is the last day on which we can make the blessing on the lulav. Special prayers, called Hoshanas are said towards the end of the morning services. These prayers are accompanied by the beautiful ceremony in which everyone circles the Shulchan seven times, lulav and esrog in hand. Hoshana Rabbah is the final day on which G-d might change our inscription for a good year. Although the gates of heaven have officially been closed at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur service, it is still possible for G-d to open them one last time on Hoshana Rabbah, as we ask him to do so in our prayers on this day.

Shemini Atzeres



Shemini Atzeres corresponds to the eighth day of the holiday of Succos, but it is a separate and complete Yom Tov in its own right. The Midrash likens Shemini Atzeres to the special feast of a king for his beloved son. For a full week, the king celebrated with all his kingdom. After the festivities, the king said to his son, “It is difficult for me to part with you. Please stay another day to celebrate”. For seven days of Succos we brought seventy sacrifices to the holy Temple on behalf of all the nations. (“If the nations of the world would have known the value of the Temple for them, they would have surrounded it with fortresses in order to protect it”.-Midrash Rabbah). G-d set aside an eighth day of celebration on which only one holiday sacrifice was offered, this one on behalf of the Jewish nation, and it became a day of unique celebration between G-d, and his loyal children, the Jews. The above parable can be linked to the name of the holiday itself. Atzeres means holding back, referring to the king who held back his son from leaving with the rest of the celebrants. Outside the Land of Israel, we eat in the Succah on Shemini Atzeres. However, the blessing for “dwelling in the Succah” is not recited.

Simchas Torah

Simchas Torah is celebrated the day after Shemini Atzeres, “Simcha” denotes joy and great rejoicing. That is certainly the case on Simchas Torah. The Torah scrolls are taken out from the Ark, and everyone, scholars and laymen alike, dance around the shul, proudly taking turns clutching the holy Torah scrolls to their hearts. Everyone present becomes passionately involved in the hakafos, as these dances are called.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים

Next Year in Jerusalem

