

CHAG SAME'ACH. These days are the 22nd and 23rd of Tishrei 5787, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. Corresponding to October 3 & 4, 2026

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THE PRAYER FOR RAIN, GESHEM

Each year on Shemini Atzeret the chazzan chants a special liturgical poem which invokes the memories of the Patriarchs and biblical leaders, all using the context of water. Avraham "followed [God] like rain," Yitzchak was born after Avraham told the angels "let you take a bit of water," etc. While each stanza refers to water in a positive tone, the final stanza takes a darker direction in asking Hashem to remember the twelve tribes of Yisrael who passed through the waters of Yam Suf, the Sea of Reeds. The poet adds: "to their offspring whose blood was spilt for you like water, turn to us – for woes engulf our souls like water." The water we pray for is the water of blessing. Water can also create devastation as in the cases of drowning and harsh storms like hurricanes. Our Sukkot holiday is usually tainted by excessive rain, reminding us that not all rain can be a blessing. We recognize this in the context of this poem that we pray for the brachah of rain, and not the devastation that can come about through excessive rain. May Hashem respond to our prayers.

SHEMINI ATZERET

With this holiday we exit the Sukkah which has dominated our living quarters for the past week. Rav Soloveitchik wrote as follows:

The individual, indeed mankind as a whole, sits at a small, insignificant booth. He thinks his little booth is the whole world; there is nothing beyond his own little universe. Man's principle interests usually are concentrated around his family. He has no intellectual connection to the rest of the world. What does he know about the world outside his natural boundary? What does modern man know about the secrets of nature and the mysteries of life? *"Do you believe that by acquiring knowledge you have learned all there is to know?"* (Job 38:18) We have a false perception about the heights that modern science has reached. In reality the greater the scientist the more honest he will be in stating how little we truly know about the secrets of life and nature. No matter how much we progress we will never discover the secret of creation. Even the great telescopes that peer into the distant corners of the universe offer us no greater insights into the greatness of Hashem than a small booth, a Sukkah. In the final analysis man sits cramped in a tiny Sukkah. Man would do well to understand that outside his small, familiar Sukkah is a great infinite world, a world that he knows nothing about and will never comprehend.

Asser T'Asser

We are commanded to make sure that we give the tithing that the Torah expects of us. Usually this extended reading of the end of Re'eh is read only on the last days of the Pilgrimage Festivals when it coincides on Shabbat. The exception is Shemini Atzeret. That is because in origin the Torah tells us that Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret are linked to the plentiful bounty that makes the nation happy in harvesting all the fruits and crops that Hashem has blessed us with. Hence, even when it is not Shabbat, we should be reminded of our responsibility of giving tzedakah and taking care of people less fortunate than we. It is a good reminder for us during the end of the holiday season to take stock of where we are financially and to make sure that our tzedakah obligations are considered as a high priority in setting goals for the year. We take care of our families first and foremost, but we can never reject the overtures made by those who approach us for needy funds. Many people who do not have the necessities of life approach us during the year on a regular basis. We must always make sure that they are considered high on our priority list so that we could really enjoy with a clear heart and conscience how Hashem has blessed us.

V'Samachta
You Shall Be Happy In Your Holiday

With this statement at the end of the Torah reading of Shemini Atzeret, we realize the responsibility that we have to take care of our family, making sure that the rejoicing is at a proper level. Our Sages in the Talmud (Pesachim 109a) state that a man is obligated to make his wife and children happy during the festival as it is recorded. How does he do this? The men are happy with wine, women with gifts of new clothing. The Yerushalmi adds that we should make sure that our children receive gifts of nuts (and other sweet delicacies) in order to enhance these days as days of joy. As we see from the Talmudic text, each person's gifts are personalized to remind us that everybody is not the same, men, women and children. It's true on an individual level as well, and we should make sure the mandate of being happy receives our attention. Sometimes the holidays become burdensome because of the loss of income and work time. We should never look at these holidays as a burden, but truly a time of family rejoicing. As the holidays come to a close, we renew the family connections that are sometimes taken for granted throughout the year with those family members who are present, and those who live out of town.

SIMCHAT TORAH

In the brachot that Moshe gives the tribes of Israel before he dies, he mentions the relationship between Zevulun and Yissachar, "rejoice Zevulun when you go out, and Yissachar in your tents" (33:18). Zevulun were the merchants and tradesmen, and they had a relationship that they developed with their brothers of the tribe of Yissachar who were totally in Torah study. In fact our Sages tell us that there were over 200 leaders of the Sanhedrin that came from the tribe of Yissachar alone. Moshe was promising them that as long as they would maintain that partnership with Yissachar, Zevulun would be guaranteed of being successful in all their business endeavors. That is why, says the Kli Yakar, Moshe told them that unlike other business people who do not celebrate until they return from business trips, you can celebrate when you go out on the business trip because you are assured of success. Your assurance emanates from your relationship with your brother Yissachar. As long as they are in the tents of Torah studying, then Zevulun will be assured of success in business.

Moshe's Burial Place

"And no man knew his burial place until this day" (34:6). The Talmud (Sotah 14a) relates that when the Romans sought to locate Moshe's grave, they were unsuccessful, for when they ascended the mountain it appeared as if he were buried below them; while when they went to the bottom of the mountain, his grave seemed to be on top of the mountain. This Talmudic statement begs for a novel interpretation. The Yalkut Sofer interprets this Midrash homiletically. Moshe Rabbeinu represents the entire Jewish nation, and his fate is the fate of the people.

Throughout the generations the other nations of the world have utilized two methods in their attempts to destroy the Jewish people. The first method was to treat the Jews favorably in the hope that they would assimilate with their gentile neighbors, and thereby lose their identity as a nation of Hashem. The second method was to persecute and torture them through terrible decrees and by inciting pogroms to physically eradicate Bnei Yisrael. Try as they might, both methods have proven to be unsuccessful. When the non-Jews adopted the position of raising the status of the Jewish people and giving them prestige and honor, they realized that this method would not succeed, so they changed their tactics and began oppressing them. However, this method also failed. After degrading and persecuting them, they thought that perhaps they should once again change their plan and elevate the Jews.

The upshot is no man knows Moshe's burial place until this very day. No-one has, or ever will be able to bury Klal Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael remain a vibrant and thriving people eternally. This is, in essence, the divine promise of Netzach Yisrael – the eternity of the Jewish people.

Chatan Torah

One time a very boorish and ignorant Jewish person paid an enormous amount of money to buy for himself the honor of Chatan Torah, to be the bridegroom of the Torah for the Simchat Torah services. The chuppah is created by an outstretched tallit. When the rabbi noticed who the Torah's bridegroom was, his comment was: This man is an extremely religiously observant Chatan because he hasn't seen the Kallah for an entire year!

HAFTORAH

The Haftorah for Simchat Torah is the first chapter of the Book of Yehoshua. It would seem that this is unlike many of the other Haftarot of the year where the sought-after theme in Prophets is an echo of the theme of the Torah reading of that morning. In this case it seems to be the continuity of the next chapter in TaNaCH. Moshe dies, Yehoshua takes over. Another way of looking at this, of course, is that Moshe was the first King of Israel, and Yehoshua had the halachah of a King of Israel as well. Both are the only ones referred to as servants of Hashem. The Rambam explicitly states that a person who rebels against the king is culpable for capital punishment, and he derives it from the verse at the end of this Haftorah. The most important aspect is that the life of Torah for the Jewish people continued after Moshe's death. Yehoshua was not only an arch disciple, but he was the successor who was able to lead the Jewish people as if they were still basking in the shadow of Moshe Rabbeinu. (RED)

TORAH QUIZ 5787

- Who said to Whom:
 - Am I my brother's keeper?
 - Why did you hit me three times?
 - With whom is found the goblet shall die.
 - Gather together and I will tell you what will happen in the End of Days.
 - Take the boy and nurse him.
 - It should be for him a Covenant of Eternal Priesthood.
- Each country is a descendant of the three sons of Noach. Which son is the ancestor of the following:
 - Mitzrayim (Egypt)
 - Canaan
 - Yavan (Greece)
 - Yisrael
 - Ashkenaz (Germany)
- In what place did the following die, and in which Parshah is their death recorded: a) Avraham b) Moshe c) Miriam d) Aharon e) Yaakov
- What sin did Hashem commit against the moon?
- In what area of Halachah does the day begin in the morning?
- In what two ways is Man on a higher level than the Animals?
- Where are the two cases when the Torah says there were Cheruvim?
- How old was Noach when the Flood began?
 - How old was Avraham when Yitzchak was born?
 - How old was Yishmael when he was circumcised?
 - How old was Yosef when he was sold?
 - How old was Yaakov when he was introduced to Pharaoh?
- FOOD
 - what food did Avraham offer the angels?
 - what food did Lot offer the angels?
 - what food did Malki-Tzedek offer Avraham after the war?
 - what food did Yaakov cook for Esav when Esav came in hungry?
- What are the three Mitzvot recorded in Chumash Bereishit?
- What happened in a) Shechem b) Machanayim c) Shittim d) Peniel
- Give me another name for a) Yosef b) Shelumiel c) Yitro d) Yaakov e) Binyamin.

- How old were the following men when they died?
 - Adam
 - Yaakov
 - Moshe
 - Aharon
 - Yishmael
- What two animals spoke in the Torah?
- For how many years was Yosef a slave?

For how many years was Yosef the viceroy?
- In V'Zot HaBerachah, Moshe blessed all the tribes except one. Which one?

ANSWERS FOR TORAH QUIZ 5787

- Cain to Hashem
 - The donkey to Bilaam
 - The brothers to the Viceroy.
 - Yaakov to his sons.
 - The daughter of Pharaoh to Yocheved.
 - Hashem to Bnei Yisrael about Pinchas.
- Mitzrayim from Cham
 - Canaan from Cham
 - Greece from Yepheth
 - Yisrael from Shem
 - Germany from Yepheth.
- Avraham in Eretz Yisrael, Chayei Sarah
 - Moshe in Mt. Nevo in Moav, V'Zot HaBerachah
 - Miriam in Kadesh, in the desert, Chukat
 - Aharon in Mt. Hor, Chukat
 - Yaakov in Egypt, Vayechi
- Originally Hashem created the sun and moon as equal size both in the daytime. The moon pointed this out to Hashem. Hashem then made the moon smaller and placed it at nighttime. The moon complained. Hashem admitted that He wronged the moon.
- In the world of sacrifices and in the world of learning Torah.
- In knowledge and in speech.
- The Cheruvim were the destructive angels guarding the Garden of Eden. The Cheruvim were also the angelic children atop the Holy Ark.
- Noach was 600. Avraham was 100. Yishmael was 13. Yosef was 17. Yaakov was 130.
- Avraham offered the angels cakes, tongue with mustard, butter and milk.
 - Lot offered the angels Matzah.
 - Malki-Tzedek offered Avraham bread and wine.
 - Yaakov cooked bread and lentil stew.
- Pry Urvu (have children. Milah (circumcision). Gid HaNasheh (not to eat the displaced sinew).
- Shechem: several things especially the selling of Yosef
Machanayim: angels greeted Yaakov upon returning to Israel.
Shittim: the sin of P'or. Pinchas killed Zimri and Cozbi.
Peniel: Yaakov wrestled with the angel of Esav.
- Yosef: Tzafnat Panai'ach
Shelumiel: Zimri
Yitro: 6 other names including Chovav and Putiel
Yaakov: Yisrael and Yeshurun
Binyamin: Ben Oni
- Adam: 930
Yaakov: 147
Moshe: 120
Aharon: 123
Yishmael: 137
- The serpent to Eve.
The donkey to Bilaam
- Yosef was a slave for 13 years. He was the viceroy for 80 years.
- Shimon