

## Hoshana Rabah, Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

JEWISH PEOPLE CRY OUT, "SAVE US ADONAI ! "

### Hoshana Rabah

As we approach the end of Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, Jewish people in Israel and around the world celebrate with three concluding festive days. The seventh and final day is called **Hoshana Rabah** (Great Salvation), when the people cry out "Hoshiana Adonai" - Save us Lord!

Centuries ago, a great multitude of Jewish people had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Sukkot (booths) and when they heard that Yeshua was coming, they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out,

*"Hosha - Na!" (Save us!). "Baruch Haba B'shem Adonai" (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord)! Melech Yisrael (King of Israel)!"* (John 12:12-13)

Their cries are not in vain, for God promises that **all who call upon His name will be saved.** (Romans 10:13)

"And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls." ([Joel 2:32](#))

On this final day of the Feast, a special ceremony is performed called **Simchat Beit Hashoeva** (Rejoicing of the House of Drawing of Water), originating from a Second Temple period custom in which the cohen (priest) would draw water from the **Pool of Siloam** and pour it out upon the altar.

This pool is the place where Yeshua sent a man who had been blind from birth as part of the act of healing him. **"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**" (John 9:7)



In this ancient water ceremony, the Jewish people would follow the cohen in a joyous processional of singing, dancing and rejoicing, reciting hallel (Praise) Psalms (tehillim) and chanting the Scripture from Isaiah 12:3:

**"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation (Yeshuah)."**

Yeshua, the word used in this verse is also the Hebrew name for Jesus the Messiah. It means **'God is salvation' or God saves.**

## Shmini Atzeret

The Hebrew word for 'eighth' is 'shmini'. It is a significant number, being the day that every Jewish male child is brought into covenant with the God of Israel through the ceremony of circumcision (Brit Millah). God's covenant with Israel also promises 'rain in its season' as long as the people of Israel walk in obedience.

I will never forget when I came to Israel for the Brit Milah ceremony of my second grandson, Yoah, born in Feb 2009. Israel had been experiencing a terrible drought at that time; but immediately after Yoah was brought into covenant with the Almighty God, it began to rain...and rain...and rain! It poured for the rest of the week and beyond. Even when I went up to Haifa it poured such abundant rain that the streets began to flood. People said they had never seen anything like it. A pastor from America had come to the congregation and prophesied the rain to be a sign of God's favor and blessings that He is about to pour out upon His people in Israel. Halleluyah!



*Hannah & her daughter Courtney at Yoah's Brit Millah*

Rabbinic Tradition teaches that on the eighth day of assembly, **Shemini Atzeret**, God judges the world for water, deciding on the amount of rainfall for the coming year, therefore the Jewish people recite special prayers for rain on this day.

*“For seven days present food offerings to the Lord, and **on the eighth day** hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the Lord. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work.” (Leviticus 23:36; see also Numbers 29:35)*

Water is a recurring theme during the festival of Sukkot; but why is there such an emphasis on water? Besides the obvious need for rain to water the earth, the rains also symbolize **showers of blessing** and specifically, the **hope of the coming Messiah**.

I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. (Ezekiel 34:26)

Rain is desperately needed in Israel! Water is such a precious resource here. After a long, hot, dry summer in Israel, the people must have felt their critical need of water; and yet they did not withhold the water, but poured it out on the altar before the Lord. This sacrificial act demonstrated their faith in God to provide the rains they would need in the upcoming year.

Likewise, when we feel at the end of our resources, if we will give sacrificially to the Lord, He will pour back into our lives, providing for our needs. When we are feeling lack in any area of our lives, this is the worst possible time to withhold; it is a time to give in faith that God is our provider. I heard someone once say, “If you have a need, give a seed.”

The Bible says, “Give and it shall be given unto you...”; but this principle extends far beyond the area of finances into every aspect of our lives. Whatever we give out will be poured out upon ourselves.

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, **will be poured into your lap**. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

If we want to experience more love, we need to give more love to others. If we need encouragement – we can go out and find someone else to encourage. And if we need a financial blessing, probably the best thing we can do is go give some money away.

Yeshua understood these spiritual principles and acted upon them. He knew that when we pour ourselves out, God will pour back - in abundance!

Yeshua was” **poured out like water**”, as described in the Messianic Psalm 22, verse 14: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.”

However, it was after He **poured out His soul even unto death** on a cross, that God poured out **the ‘rain of the Holy Spirit ‘** upon the earth.

On the last day of the Feast, Yeshua stood up and invited everyone who was thirsty to come to Him and drink of the Living Waters. By this ‘water’, he spoke of **the eternal Spirit of God**.

On the last and greatest day of the festival (of Sukkot), Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” (John 7:37-38)

In this hot, dry country of Israel it is easy to become dehydrated if we don’t drink enough water. Sometimes we may be thirsty without even realizing it. If we don’t purposefully drink enough water, this can even lead to dangerous physical collapse. We can live for quite a while without food but life quickly dies without water.

So too do we need to drink deeply from the wells of living water that Yeshua provides through relationship and fellowship with Him. The vultures of hell circle overhead, watching for their next meal. They are just waiting for someone to collapse from spiritual sunstroke and dehydration. But we can drink of the living waters of salvation – before it’s too late!

Yeshua said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) If we will accept Yeshua’s invitation to come to Him when we are weary or full of sorrow and drink from the Spirit, then we can prevent a spiritual collapse.

None of us are camels; we humans cannot travel for long distances without drinking water. We may not necessarily feel thirsty, but we need to come daily and drink deeply from the fountain of living waters to quench our thirsty soul.

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” (Isaiah 55:1)

## Simchat Torah

Following the 8<sup>th</sup> day, the fall feasts are concluded with Simchat Torah – meaning ‘joy of the Torah’. This day also completes the weekly Torah readings (parashot) with Deuteronomy 34; but then immediately a portion from Genesis 1 is read, reminding us that our study of the Torah never ends. As soon as we conclude, we begin again.

Jewish people love the Torah and have diligently preserved the Word of God for centuries.

*Oh, how I love Your Torah; It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*  
(*Psalms 119:97-98, 105*)

Simchat Torah gives joyful expression to the Jewish people’s love of Torah.

What is Torah? This Hebrew word, Torah, is often translated in most English Bibles as ‘Law’; however this is a rather poor translation. The word ‘**torah**’ comes from the roots **yarah**, which means **to shoot, aim, or point to**, and **morah**, meaning **teacher**.



Therefore, the Torah is God’s instructions to His people. These instructions teach us how to live on this earth and point us to eternal life through Yeshua.

The Torah, in its strictest sense, includes **the five books of Moses**: Genesis (B’reisheet), Exodus (Shmot), Leviticus (Vaykira), Numbers (Bamidbar), and Deuteronomy (D’varim).

However, Yeshua and Paul both quoted from other books of the Bible, including the Psalms and the Prophets, and called them Torah (law).

"Yeshua answered them, '**Is it not written in your Law (Torah), I said, You are gods**'"? (*John 10:34*) In this passage, Yeshua is quoting *Psalms 82:6*.

"In the Law (Torah) it is written: "With men of other tongue and other lips I will speak to this people..." (1Cor. 14:21) This quote Paul refers to as law is from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 28:11.

Another word for Torah often used by Jewish people is the Tanakh תנ"ך. The Tanakh is a Hebrew name for all the books of the Old Testament. This word is actually an acronym: T-N-K {Hebrew letters tav, nun, kaf} - an abbreviation for: Torah, Neviim (prophets) and Ktuvim (Writings – Psalms, proverbs, etc).

Observant Orthodox Jews consider another whole compilation of writings as ‘Torah’. These are called the ‘oral law’ and include the Talmud, Mishnah, and Gemorrah, comprised of rabbinical interpretations of scriptures. Many consider the oral law of equal weight and authority as the written Torah and spend

the majority of their time and study in these books, sometimes to the exclusion of the written word itself.

However, most followers of Yeshua do not accept the Talmud as 'law' and rely upon the written scriptures that comprise both the Tanakh and the Brit Hadashah (New Testament).

So why do we have a special day just to rejoice in the Torah of God? It is because the Word of God is a tree of life for us; and if we would just take hold of it, we would see that all its paths are pleasantness and will lead us to peace (shalom).

The Torah contains all the wisdom and instruction we need to live healthy, happy, successful, prosperous lives. The Haftarah (prophetic portion of Scripture ) for Simchat Torah includes the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the book of Joshua (verses 1-18).

The Lord said to Joshua, ***“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.***

***Study this Book of Instruction (Torah) continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.***  
{Joshua 1:7-8 (New Living Translation)}



God initially chose to reveal His Torah to the nation of Israel; and He gave them the mission to spread its light and teachings to every nation of the earth. Yeshua is the living word that became flesh and dwelt amongst us. While Yeshua fulfilled and did away with the old sacrificial system, He makes it clear that He never came to abolish the Torah, or God's moral guidelines for mankind to live in righteousness.

### **Yeshua's Teaching about the Law**

<sup>17</sup> “Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. <sup>19</sup>

So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19 N.L.T)

On this day, of Simchat Torah, all the ornately decorated scrolls are taken out of the 'ark' in which they are kept and preserved so carefully all year long. Jewish people all around the world parade around and around the synagogues, in circles called 'hakafot', holding their precious Torah, accompanied by jubilant singing and dancing.

*Sterling silver Torah case*



Young and old, male and female, may all partake of the honor of dancing, singing, and rejoicing with the Torah on this special day.

The barrier (machitzah) that separates the men from the women is, for this one day, removed, and all may rejoice as One People.

We may also hope and pray for a day when the machitzah (dividing wall), which has already been pulled down by the ultimate sacrifice of Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) will be removed forever; and we will all rejoice in the Torah as One (Echad) in His hand. Halleluyah!

Will you stand with Israel and rejoice with her as she rejoices in the Torah – the eternal Word of God.

Love in Yeshua,

Hannah & family  
Ramat Razel, Israel

[www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)



Avi holding a Torah scroll on Simchat Torah in Israel

### About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.

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**“For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)**

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