



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH

MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG

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Shemini Atzeret – Separation Anxiety

ביום השמיני עצרת תהיה לכם כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו.

“The eighth day shall be an atzeret for you; you shall perform no work of labor.” (Bamidbar 29:35)

The day following the seven-day holiday of Succot is called *Atzeret*. What does this term mean? Rashi explains that *Atzeret* means “restriction”, on that day, one is restricted from performing work. But if so, why isn’t every day of Yom Tov called an *Atzeret*? Why is the eighth day singled out solely as *Atzeret*?

Rashi on this pasuk offers a second explanation: *atzru milatzeit* - “They were restrained from leaving.” This refers to the halacha of *ta’un lina*, which mandates that when one offers a sacrifice, they must remain near the Beit HaMikdash for an additional night.

Rashi then presents a third explanation from the Midrash Aggada:

ומדרשו באגדה, לפי שכל ימות הרגל הקריבו כנגד ע’ אומות, וכשבאין ללכת, אמר להם המקום, בבקשה מכם עשו לי סעודה קטנה כדי שאהנה מכם.

“During the days of the holiday, the nation sacrificed on behalf of the seventy nations, and when they were ready to leave, the Almighty said: ‘Please make me one additional meal so I can rejoice with you.’”

Throughout Succot, Bnei Yisrael offered seventy sacrifices on behalf of all the non-Jewish nations. Hashem requested that Bnei Yisrael stay one more day, so they could rejoice together — alone. Rashi explains *Atzeret* as a term of endearment, akin to a father who holds back his children from leaving, saying: “Your departure pains me.” After the intense celebrations of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succot in the Beit HaMikdash, Hashem finds it hard to let us go.

The *ba’alei mussar* ask: How does one more day help? Doesn’t it just prolong the pain? Any kindergarten teacher will tell you that when dropping a child off, the best approach is a quick departure; lingering only makes the separation harder. So why does Hashem prolong it?

CELEBRATING TORAH

Rav Yitzhak Mirsky¹ suggests that Hash-

1. Rav Yitzhak Mirsky, *Hegyononei Halacha* vol 3 p78



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em's reluctance to see us leave is because He does not want us to forsake the spiritual level attained over the holidays. The *Yamim Noraim* are a time of intense spiritual elevation. How does an extra day strengthen our bond and commitment to Torah?

Shemini Atzeret is combined with Simchat Torah (in Israel, they are on the same day). Through celebrating Torah, we affirm its central role in our lives. This ensures that we never truly “depart” or separate from Hashem as long as we continue learning and living by the Torah's precepts.

On Simchat Torah, we dance and encircle the *bima*. Why not just dance in a circle? Rabbi Yitzhak Isaac Schorr (cited by Rav Mirsky) explains that dancing around the *bima* symbolizes the Jewish people's connection to Torah study. We don't just revere the Torah scrolls locked away in the *Aron*. The Torah's place is on the *bima*, the site of active learning and engagement. Torah without learning does not connect us to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We carry Torah with us, celebrating study as a living bond.

Hashem requests one more day, a day without the *shofar*, *lulav*, or *succah*. A day devoted solely to celebrating Torah, the glue that binds us to Him throughout the year.

A UNIFIED NATION

Another explanation, offered by some Hasidic masters, focuses on the phrase “*kasheh alai predatchem*” - “Your departure is difficult for Me.” While the simple meaning refers to God's sadness at Bnei Yisrael leaving Jerusalem to return home, the word *predatchem* (“**your** departure”) can also mean “your separation.” This hints not at separation from God (which would have been depicted by “*predateinu*”), but separation from one another.²

Hashem grieves when He sees us part after

2. *Predateinu* would refer to a separation between Hsahem and Am Yisrael.



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experiencing our national unity during the holidays. Therefore, He asks for one more day to witness all his people celebrate together. He does not want us to return to our homes divided; instead, we come together to dance around the Torah, acknowledging that despite differences, the Torah unites us as one nation.

HEART ON THE LEFT

Man was created with his heart on the left side of his body. Usually, the right side is



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viewed as stronger and more important. Why, then, is such a vital organ placed on the left?

One suggestion is that when we face another person, their heart aligns with our right side. Our hearts are designed to focus on and connect with others — whose hearts are on our right.

CONCLUSION

Shemini Atzeret teaches us that with Hashem, there is never truly a “goodbye.” The Yamim Nora'im and Succot may end, but Hashem draws us close one more time to remind us that the bond of Torah and the unity of Am Yisrael are not seasonal experiences, they are eternal.

On this day we learn that our connection to God is not found in dramatic rituals alone - not in the shofar, not in the lulav, not even in the succah, but in the daily embrace of Torah, which accompanies us everywhere. We also learn that our hearts were fashioned to beat

in rhythm with one another. To feel the cry of another Jew, to rejoice in each other's joy, to dance together around the Torah that belongs to us all.

May we live with that awareness that the Torah is our anchor, that every Jew is our family, and that Hashem is always holding us close, until the ultimate day when all of Am Yisrael will dance together in Yerushalayim, in everlasting joy. ■

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