

The shoemaker had acted at the last possible moment, as the Germans were already beginning to burn the sacred objects in the warehouse.

"How can we possibly hide the Torah?" The shoemaker asked the group of young men who would meet for services every Shabbat in a hidden corner of the barracks.

Someone had an idea, and the group set to work. They plied a plank off of one of the wooden bunks and made a space in which to put the small Torah scroll. The plank was then returned to its place.

The night of Simchat Torah arrived, and the sense of excitement rose. The inmates silently made their way to the place where the Torah scroll was hidden. They feared that the guards would find the Torah, and that their lives were in jeopardy. As a precaution, it was decided not to remove the Torah from its place. Instead, the plank was moved to the side, revealing the sacred parchment.

A survivor later testified: "On that Simchat Torah we held the traditional Hakafot dances in our barracks. But they were not done in the usual way. The Torah lay in hiding, and we danced around it humming the joyous Simchat Torah tunes under our breaths. We entered in small groups, and mutedly circled the bunk. One by one, we then bent over to kiss it before exiting."

Aryeh (who later assumed the name Arnold Steiner) survived the war. On the very day that the Russian Army freed them Jan 20, 1945, he married Baila (now Barbara). They made their way to the US, where they raised their family. Miraculously, the Torah survived the war as well and was brought to Israel by Rabbi Noach Adelist. It is now housed in the holy ark of the Gerer synagogue in Bnei Brak.

Live & Laugh

At an Optometrist's Office:

"If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place."

Mazal Tov!
Chosson Torah: Ari Poyurs
Chosson Bereishis: Jared Landsman

Calendar

Monday 1 Oct - SHEMINI ATZERES

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Hallel: 9:15 am
- ◆ Yizkor & Geshem
- ◆ Mincha: 5:40 pm
- ◆ Candlelighting: not before 6:39 pm from a pre-lit flame (Blessings for Yom Tov & Shehecheyanu)
- ◆ Flags, Kids Carnival, L'Chaims for the Adults, Hakafos & Dancing
- ◆ Simchas Torah Dinner

Tuesday 2 Oct - SIMCHAS TORAH

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am (one minyan only)
- ◆ Small Brocha
- ◆ Ladies Shiurim & Breakfast
- ◆ Hakafos & Dancing
- ◆ Aliyahs for all
- ◆ Big Brocha
- ◆ Mincha: 5:50 pm
- ◆ Yom tov Ends: 6:39 pm

Simchas Torah Ladies Programme
 Join Sydenham's Rebbetzins for Breakfast & Inspiration

Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman
 Men, Women & the Messianic Era

Rebbetzin Estee Stern
 Another Holiday?
 Let's Focus on the Finale

Tuesday 2 October 10:15am
 Sydenham Shul Community Centre
 Two Talks followed by Delicious Breakfast

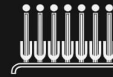
SYDENHAM-HIGHLANDS NORTH HEBREW CONGREGATION
Shütbl

Special thanks to our sponsors. You can still become one!
 Contact the Shul Office 011 640 5021



Good Yom Tov SYDENHAM!

Published by the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation Johannesburg, South Africa



1 & 2 Oct 2018 Shemini Atzeres 22 & 23 Tishrei 5779

12 Simchat Torah Facts Every Jew Should Know

By Rabbi Menachem Posner

1. Simchat Torah Comes After Sukkot

Shemini Atzeret ("The Eighth [Day] Gathering") comes after 7 days of Sukkot. On it, we celebrate Simchat Torah ("The Joy of the Torah"), since it is the day when we finish the annual Torah-reading cycle and begin anew.

2. In the Diaspora It Is Two Days Long

The Bible describes it as a one-day holiday, beginning at sundown and ending the following night. Like most other holidays, outside of Israel it has expanded into two days, celebrated on 22-23 Tishrei.

The first day is simply called Shemini Atzeret (since, counting from day one of Sukkot, it's the eighth day), and the second day, when the Torah is completed, is known as Simchat Torah.

3. We Sit In the Sukkah Without a Blessing

Just like Shemini Atzeret "bled" into the day after (and went from one day to two), Sukkot observances "bled" into Shemini Atzeret (going from 7 days to 8). For this reason, it is customary among most diaspora communities to sit in the *sukkah* on Shemini Atzeret (but not Simchat Torah). However, since it is no longer Sukkot, the blessing is not recited, and neither do we take the *lulav* and *etrog*.

4. It Is Its Own Holiday in Six Respects

Is Shemini Atzeret a holiday of its own, or is it an extension of Sukkot? The rabbis of the Talmud grappled with this very question and concluded that it is considered an inde-

pendent holiday in the following six areas:

1. In Temple times, there would be a separate raffle to determine which priests would be honored with performing the various services of the day, unrelated to the raffle held for the Sukkot honors.
2. We say the Shehecheyanu blessing (either when lighting candles or when saying Kiddush), thanking G-d for bringing us to the milestone of this new holiday.
3. It is its own festival, as evidenced by the fact that we do not sit in the *sukkah*.
4. The *musaf* ("additional") offering brought in the Holy Temple was different from that which was brought on Sukkot.
5. The Levites sang a different song in the Temple, Psalm 12, which begins, "For the choirmaster on the eighth."

The liturgy said at Kiddush is different, clearly describing it as a different holiday with a different name.

5. We Light Candles Each Night

Like on all holidays, we usher in the day with candle-lighting before the evening meal (when Shemini Atzeret coincides with Shabbat, be sure not to light the candles on Shabbat). On the second night, make sure to kindle your candles from a pre-existing flame, since striking a match or lighting a lighter is forbidden.

6. We Say Yizkor on the First Day

The time-honored Ashkenazi custom is to say Yizkor, the memorial for departed loved ones,

in synagogue on the first morning of Shemini Atzeret. In Israel, the solemn Yizkor is meshed together with the Simchat Torah festivities, making for a roller coaster of emotions.

7. We Begin to Mention Rain

Marking the start of the rainy season (in the Middle East), we begin to mention rain in our thrice-daily prayers from the Musaf (“Additional”) prayer on Shemini Atzeret morning. This is dramatically marked with special additions to the cantor’s repetition of the Musaf (called Geshem, “Rain”), sung in a traditional tune, evocative of the soul-stirring High Holiday melodies.

Interestingly, we do not begin to *ask* for rain until several weeks later (on the 7th of Cheshvan in Israel, or in early December in the diaspora).

8. We Circle the Synagogue at Night and By Day

On Simchat Torah evening and morning (as well as on Shemini Atzeret eve in some communities), there is a special ceremony called *hakafot* (“circling”). The Torah scrolls are removed from the ark and joyously paraded around the *bimah*, the reading platform in the center of the synagogue, seven times.

9. Everyone Dances

Simchat Torah services are punctuated by joyous dancing and singing. Children typically dance with toy Torah scrolls and flags. In times gone by, the flags were often topped with apples and lit candles. The Torah scroll is rolled up, and everyone connects to it equally, the simpleton dancing alongside the scholar. As we dance with the Torah scroll, we become “the feet of the Torah,” unified in pure joy and love.

10. We Celebrate Finishing the Torah and Starting Anew

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Website: www.sydshul.co.za

www.facebook.com/sydenhamshul

On Simchat Torah morning, we read from three Torah scrolls⁴ (if the synagogue has three scrolls). The first scroll is used to read the final portion of the Torah, Vezot Habera-chah; the second is used for the first portion of Bereishit, Genesis; and the verses describing the sacrifices of the day are read from the final Torah. The person called up for the final *aliyah* of the Torah is known as the *chattan Torah* (“Torah groom”) and the person called for the opening verses of the Torah is called *chattan Bereishit* (“Genesis Groom”).

11. The Priestly Blessing Is Done Early

The custom in the Diaspora is for the priests to bless the congregation with Birkat Kohanim (the Aaronic Blessing) on festivals. But there is also a law stating that the priest may not perform his sacred duty while inebriated. Since Simchat Torah dancing is often accompanied by (responsible) drinking, the custom is for the priests to administer this blessing during Shacharit (morning services), which precedes the dancing, instead of the usual Musaf, which follows the dancing.

12. It Is G-d’s Goodbye Party

Simchat Torah is the grand finale of a season that began with the solemn repentance of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and then transitioned into the joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. The sages compare this final day to the following analogy: A king threw a grand feast for seven days. All citizens of the kingdom were invited for the seven days of partying. He then told his loved ones: We have fulfilled our duty to the citizenry. Now let me and you continue with what remains. This is our final party with G-d before we enter the year ahead, supercharge and inspired by the holiday.

Simchat Torah in the Nazi Labor Camp

By Rabbi Menachem Posner

Until World War II, the Polish city of Czestochowa had been a bustling center of Jewish life. Then came the bitter day when the Nazis invaded Poland. In the fall of 1939, before Rosh Hashanah, the Nazis entered Czestochowa and began persecuting the Jew-

ish population.

The ghetto, one of the largest in Poland, was established in April of 1941, and the first deportation started in September of 1942, on the day after Yom Kippur. The Nazis had just dispatched over a quarter million Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka. To them, the Czestochowa Ghetto, with just 50,000 Jews, was small potatoes. During the course of that year, the Nazis and their willing lackeys arranged several “aktions,” in which they rounded up the Jews for deportation and extermination. But most of the Jews were deported in that first “Great Aktion,” when they were brutally taken in cattle cars to the Treblinka extermination camp.

The Germans left several thousand Jews in the ghetto. They had to work from morning to night in the factories near Czestochowa. One factory produced metal and another made bullets. Merciless SS officers stood over the workers and did not allow them to stop working for a moment.

Unique among the Jewish workers was a shoemaker. An expert at his craft, he was assigned to repair the shoes and boots of the Nazi soldiers and officers. In order to fulfill his duties, he was granted special freedoms, and was allowed to walk between the nearly empty ghetto and the labor camp, where the surviving Jews were now confined.

His name was Aryeh Szajnert, and he was more than just a shoemaker. A native of the city, he had excellent connections and frequently used them to better the lot of the poor prisoners. It was not uncommon for him to enter the camp with packages of food and other goods.

It had happened once that Aryeh saw five girls being taken for hard labor. One of the girls, Baila Zyskind, had arrived at the camp from Majdanek crying, fearful of what lay ahead. He stepped in and apparently bribed people for the remainder of the war in order to keep her and her fellows from hard labor.

And so it was that just before Rosh Hasha-

nah, the shoemaker arrived at the labor camp with a shofar. It was with bittersweet feelings that the Jews clustered into the shoemaker’s small workshop during the brief midday break to hear the muted shofar blasts. How did he lay his hands on the precious artifact? No one knew.

One day, during the holiday of Sukkot, rumors began to swirl. “The shoemaker is late. He has not yet returned from the ghetto. Who knows if he is OK?”

It was usual for the shoemaker to return late, after the inmates had been given their meager rations. He would go directly to the camp kitchen, where a modest meal had been reserved for him.

But this time, when he finally arrived, he did not go to the kitchen. Instead, he went to his workroom, where he was seen doing something behind a large wooden plank.

Word soon spread that the shoemaker had managed to smuggle a small Torah scroll into the camp! “When Simchat Torah comes, we get to dance with an actual Torah scroll,” said the shoemaker, his eyes ablaze.

Despite the badgering and questioning, the shoemaker refused to say how he got the shofar and now the Torah scroll. But word soon leaked out.

The Nazis had appropriated a large warehouse on the outskirts of the ghetto, where they collected Jewish sacred objects. The warehouse was heavily guarded, making it almost impossible to take anything out of it. Placing his life on the line, the shoemaker was able to bribe the officer in charge. And that was how he got the shofar.

In order to get the Torah scroll, he promised the officer that he would make a pair of fancy boots for him, just like he had made for the most senior commanders. The officer let him take a Torah scroll.

The shoemaker chose a small scroll and wrapped it around his body so that he would avoid attracting the attention of the guards.

◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org, zahavi