

THE HOLIDAY EDITION

For Kindergarten



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CANDLE LIGHTING

The Torah is more than a set of stories and laws. It is our way of looking at life, and shows us how to live – and treat each other – in a meaningful way.

So, to keep a connection to the Torah's messages, we study a different portion each week, completing the entire Torah over the course of a year. Simchat Torah is the day that we end – and begin anew – our yearly cycle.

Simchat Torah means "Rejoicing with the Torah." It is a festive holiday, during which we sing, dance and rejoice; we're feeling the joy at having a special way of thinking to help us through life.

Simchat Torah celebrations are a time to dance with the Torah and appreciate our ability to lead meaningful, beautiful lives.

It's interesting that we dance with closed Torah scrolls. It's not a day to spend on reading the Torah as much as celebrating the Torah. One reason is that, when it comes to reading, we each relate to the Torah in different ways. On Simchat Torah, our ability to read and understand is not the central point; our celebration is about our connection to the Torah. We each have that connection, no matter how much Torah we can read or understand. It's G-d's gift to us all.

And THAT'S reason to celebrate!

THE DIALOGUE

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR THE CHABAD HEBREW SCHOOL COMMUNITY

IT'S SIMCHAT TORAH!

By: Malkie Herson & Dena Torgeman

An Aron Kodesh is a beautiful piece of furniture that sits right in front of the shul, synagogue. In it, are the Torah scrolls.

On any given day, if you were to put your ear to the Aron Kodesh, you would hear silence. On any *other* day, but not today! Today, the Torahs are squealing with delight and nearly dancing on their feet.

Impossible, you say? Are you certain that Torahs don't squeal and that Torahs don't dance! Well, join me as we peek behind the curtains of the Aron Kodesh and listen in...

The Torah with the red-velvet cover is heard first. "Look, all the chairs are removed from around the shul. I see tables - covered in lovely lace cloth - being set up in its place. Yippee!"

"Yeah, look over there!" said the Torah scroll with the navy blue cover. "Someone's bringing in bowls of yummy snacks and food! I can't wait!" She puffed out her silver chest.

"They're bringing in piles of small, colorful flags. Looks like this will be the *best* night of my year!" another Torah scroll whispers gleefully.

The white curtain covering the Aron Kodesh quivers. She is a new curtain. The members of the shul had just installed her in time for Rosh Hashana. "Why? What is this all about?" she asks in a small voice.



The smallest Torah at the end speaks up. "Tonight," she began, beaming with pride, "is Simchat Torah. It's our special night. Tonight is a party for us! Tonight, we are taken out and held tightly and lovingly."

"Huh? I know I haven't been in shul long, but I was here long enough to know that you Torahs are taken out *every* Shabbat and holiday, and on some weekdays, too! I've seen you held lovingly by the congregants all the time," said the curtain feeling slightly confused.

"Yes, you are right," answered the eldest Torah in the Aron Kodesh. "True, all year long, people study Torah. And, as you say, every Shabbat and holiday and some weekdays, too, we are taken out from the Aron Kodesh, brought to the Bimah (table upon which the Torah is placed as it is read) but today is different. Just you wait... I don't want to ruin the surprise."

Moments later the shul begins to fill with people. Kids of all ages. Teens. Adults. Even tiny babies. All dressed in beautiful holiday clothing. The shul is full and the atmosphere is incredibly lively.

The cantor and the rabbi call attention to the group. They recite some prayers and then the festivities begin! The Aron Kodesh is opened and the Torahs are taken out. None remain inside. Whirlwinds of people holding hands in circles dance around and around. People are jumping and bopping as if they weigh nothing at all! Everyone's voice sings together in beautiful harmony, expressing joyful, upbeat tunes. There is not a face in the room that is without a smile. The smiles stretch from ear to ear! Laughter echoes against the cheery singing.

"I still don't get it," mutters the curtain to herself.

The Aron Kodesh begins to talk, "You were correct when you said that the Torahs are taken out often. But, usually, they are taken out and studied; they are put on the Bimah, opened up and read. But, today is different. Today, the Torahs remain closed. Today, we celebrate the very fact that Hashem gave us the Torah! We are celebrating the Torah – the extraordinary gift Hashem gave to each and every one of us.

We're so happy that we're bursting with excitement! Come on, join in the celebration!"

The curtain fluttered in response. "Okay, it all makes sense now," she thought happily.



THE DIALOGUE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ◆ Obviously curtains don't ask questions and scrolls and wooden furniture don't give explanations, but have you ever met someone who didn't understand your Jewish practices? What did that person ask and what did you answer? Without quoting directly from the story, how would you explain Simchat Torah to a friend who asked? How would you explain the Torah?