
SUCCOS

Ahead to the Past, and Back to the Future

2009 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplovitz

Whenever someone completes the study of a section of the Torah, he makes a "*Siyum* -- Conclusion" celebration. He publicly reads the closing sections of what he has studied. He then thanks G-d for giving him the opportunity to learn His Torah and to complete the study of this particular topic.

We will do the same thing on Saturday night and Sunday morning. The second day of Shemini Atzeres is called "*Simchas Torah* -- Joy of the Torah." The Torah is divided into 54 weekly Torah Portions that are read over the course of a year. (Several of these Torah Portions are doubled up in order to finish within the year. This is necessary because: 1) unless it is a leap year, which, on the Jewish calendar has 13 months, there are fewer than 54 Saturdays in a year; 2) any Saturday that coincides with a major festival has a special Torah Reading, rather than the regular Torah Portion.) After a year of weekly readings, we will conclude the final Portion of Deuteronomy. On Saturday night and Sunday morning, all of the Torahs will be removed from the Ark. Various members of the congregation will take turns carrying the Torahs around the synagogue. This procession is accompanied by singing and dancing. In many places, especially in Yeshivas, where Torah study is primary, the evening celebrations can continue until the wee hours of the morning, and the morning celebrations can continue until late afternoon. On Simchas Torah, we re-affirm our commitment to keep and to learn G-d's Torah. As soon as we finish the Torah, we go right back to the beginning and start to read Genesis 1:1. We never stop learning.

© 2009 Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplovitz. Reprint permitted for non-commercial use with attribution to torahtalk.org.