

For all inquiries and דאָס, please call 845-821-6200 or E-mail: TorahTavlin@aol.com

You see, the *Chosson Torah* is a bride and groom relationship. When a young man and a young woman are acquainted with one another and are mutually attracted, there is no need to have a *shadchan* - matchmaker, involved, and no payment is necessary. However, if the two are total strangers and are brought together by a matchmaker, the latter receives a fee for his services."

"The same is true in this case," quipped the *rov*. "When a *Torah* scholar receives the honor of *Chosson Torah*, it is a loving relationship, because he and the *Torah* have known each other for a long time and have developed a mutual fondness. In a situation, though, where the person receiving this special honor is a total stranger to the *Torah*, there obviously had to be a matchmaker, who had to be given his fee!"

TORAH GEMS

(äi-èě ñçôô) 'ááá àùòú àì áääáo úéàì î ìè íèì äéáú úòòò éééî ùä íáéá

Shemini Atzeres is an unusual *Yom Tov*, in that it is recognized as a *עֲדָתָא לֵאמֹר אֶת־עַצְמָא* - *Festival in its own right*, yet it could not exist without the previous *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*. The link between the two festivals is underlined by Rashi's comment in the *gemara* (צ"ל אֶת־עַצְמָא), that it is its own festival because, "*We do not sit any more in the Sukkah.*" In other words, it is a *Yom Tov* which retains a unique *simcha* to retire from the *Sukkah* to one's home. This explanation certainly underlines the connection between *Sukkos* and *Shemini Atzeres*, but on consideration it is a remarkable statement. We know that the *mitzvah* of *Sukkah* is for seven days and after that the Jew is to return home, but should the returning be deemed a special *simcha*? Should it be regarded as a *mitzvah*?

R' Benzion Firrer ZT"l gives a timeless explanation. When we leave our homes in order to go into the *Sukkah*, we are mindful of the fact that we are not our own masters; that we cannot rely on "עֲנֵה לִי חֲזָקָתִי וְיָדִי עֹשֶׂה" - "*My strength and the power of my hand.*" We need the help and protection of the Almighty in all of our endeavors. We are likewise reminded that this world is merely a corridor to the world to come. However, leaving the comfort of our home into a temporary structure could implant a dangerous misconception. One may possibly think that he is obliged to escape into this spiritual haven for all time. Leave the real world behind, once and for all, and live a purely ascetic life. He could even imagine that the *sukkah* is the final target of all his aspirations. Thus, *Shemini Atzeres* followed by *Simchas Torah*, comes to teach us that there is no escape from the real world. Of course our aspirations must always be godly and spiritual, but having, as it were, recharged our spiritual batteries, we are now obliged to return home and accept the obligations that come with living in this world, with a joy unique to *Shemini Atzeres* and the fulfillment of its *mitzvos*.

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ǎǎĩîðé àîûà , íöøàî ãìáé ìàðùéǎ áøçèì ûǎ÷îä úéá ãëúòùn ä"a÷ä òãëù éðôî
àìéóúá ãǎĩî ðóéáð àùî ãì øøîæǎ àùî ì ðá÷ ò íéðððçúáǎ ééáá àòù áúáǎǎ
.ē"ò æøæǎǎ ìèáéǎ àùî ãĩðéǎ ãðǎðǎ

[illegible]

מעשה אבות....סימן לבנים

'ááá àiè ò ìúç ùà ù îê êé÷là êéìò ùéùé äöüä úçîüá äçîüà äùéù

On *Simchas Torah*, when the annual reading of the *Torah* is completed, it is customary to call a learned scholar - one who has delved into the intricacies and tasted the sweet pleasures of the *Torah* - to the reading of the final portion. This honor is referred to as *Chosson Torah* - literally, the bridegroom of the *Torah*, indicating a loving relationship between the person who is engaged in study and the *Torah* itself. Just as a groom and bride share a loving relationship, so too the *Torah* and its scholars achieve a lasting bond and enjoinder.

The story is told that in one community, a wealthy man who was totally unlearned wished to receive the distinct honor of *Chosson Torah*. He approached the *gabbai* and requested to be given this wonderful honor, however, the *gabbai* was extremely hesitant and reluctant to oblige. A man not taken to having his wishes refused, the rich man offered a substantial sum of money to the *gabbai*, and the caretaker could not resist the temptation. When the rich man was actually called up and smugly performed his obligation, the *rov* of the shul, suspecting that this was done for financial gain, confronted the *gabbai*. "Is it true that you were paid to give this honor to him?" asked the *rov* in an accusatory tone. The *gabbai* held out for a time before admitting that he was indeed paid to extend this honor to someone totally ignorant of *Torah*.

Seeing that man was truly sorry, the *rov* softened his tone in order to mollify the chastened *gabbai*. After all, it was a mistake and he was unable to resist the forceful manner in which he the rich man approached him. The *rov* looked at his trusty *gabbai* and said, "In truth, I can understand this situation quite well.