Shemini Atseret and Simhat Tora

SHEMINI ATSERET

The day after the seventh day of Sukkot (also known as hosha'na rabba) we celebrate another Holiday: "Shemini Atseret" which technically, is a different and independent Holiday from Sukkot.

During Shemini Atzeret we do not have anymore the Mitsva of Lulab and Etrog.

As for the Sukka, in Israel during shemini atzeret the sukka should not be used. The meals should take place at home. If one would use the Sukka in Israel on Shemini Atseret it would incur into the prohibition of adding an additional Mitsva (lo tosif!).

In the Diaspora, however, because of the ancient calendar system, we still use the Sukka during the first day of Shemini Atseret, but without reciting any blessing.

As we explained yesterday, the end of Sukkot indicates the beginning of the new rain season. This is why from the Musaf prayer of Shemini Atseret, we change the words *morid hatal* (You make the dew descend) for the prayer of the rain *mashib haruah uMorid haGeshem*, "You make the wind blow, and the rain descend."

It is important to notice that at this specific point we are still not *asking* HaShem for rain. We begin by *praising* God for His wisdom and power to produce precipitation. By saying *mashib haruah* we are acknowledging God as the source of rain, and by extension, as the ultimate source of our livelihood.

SIMHAT TORA

In Israel the holiday of Shemini Atseret is also Simhat Tora. Outside Erets Israel, as with any other holiday (=Yom Tob), we celebrate the holiday for two days. The second day of Shemini Atseret is also known as Simhat Tora, when we celebrate the end of the annual cycle of Tora reading, and the uninterrupted beginning the new reading cycle, from Bereshit.

We sing and dance around the Tora, expressing our joy for being part of the people chosen by God to follow His Tora.

We should celebrate Simhat Tora with this real happiness: "During Yom Tob a person should not drink too much… because drunkenness and frivolity is NOT part of the Mitsva of happiness, but foolishness and licentiousness… and we were commanded to attain a level of happiness that is part of worshipping HaShem… and one cannot worship HaShem by frivolity and drunkenness" (MT Yom Tob, 6:19).

As haRambam explained, a Jew does not need to get drunk to feel happy and/or to express this happiness. People who need to get drunk in order to feel happy do that because they want to "forget" who they are, turning off their senses and escaping the reality of their lives. We are AM ISRAEL, the chosen people. And even when personally we might be living difficult times, we still derive immense happiness from the fact that we have the privilege to belong to the people of God.
Maimonides explains that our greatest joy derives from knowing that we have the privilege to serve God, as God wants to be served: "The greatest way to worshiping God is by being happy because we are doing the commandments of God, and being happy because we love our God" (MT H. Sukka veLulab, 8:15).

Don't forget to do 'erub tabshilin
This year 5775 Shemini Atseret falls on a Thursday (beginning Wednesday Oct. 15th at night) and Friday, followed by Shabbat. And although most of the cooking for these three days will be done before Sukkot begins, some of the cooking might be done also during Friday Oct. 17 in preparation for Shabbat (Oct.

18th).
As we know, cooking is allowed on Jewish Holidays (Yom Tob) as we learn from Shemot 12:16 "…You shall not do any work on these days [=Yom Tob], except preparing food for everyone to eat, this is the only thing it may be done for you" . However, our rabbis explained that it is only allowed to cook during Yom Tob whatever will be consumed during that Yom Tob, but we cannot prepare or cook on Yom Tob food that will be consumed after that particular day. Thus, when a Holiday occurs on Friday we cannot cook from Yom Tob to Shabbat. Unless an 'erub tabshilin is prepared.
'erub tabshilin consists in 1.preparing prior to Yom Tob some cooked and baked food, 2. declaring that we are preparing this food for Shabbat (there is a special blessing and text to say when we put together the 'erub. See below) 3. storing that food for Shabbat and 4. eating that food during Shabbat. Thus, when we begin cooking for Shabbat before the Holiday begins, our rabbis authorized to continue the preparation of food from Yom Tob to Shabbat.
In practical terms: Wednesday October 15th, before sunset we should put aside a plate with some cooked and baked foods and keep this food for Sabbath. This plate is what we call the 'erub. Since some food is already prepared for Shabbat before the Holiday, the cooking that will take place during the Holiday will be considered an addition or in more accurate terms an extension (the word 'erub in this context means "extension") to the food that has already been prepared before the Holiday began. Althought the rabbis forbade to cook from Yom Tob to Shabbat, they authorized to cook in order to add more food to a meal that has already been prepared for shabbat.
The following Berakha is recited while holding the plate with the foods (='erub) in one's hands:
"Baruch Ata A- donay E-lohenu Melekh ha'Olam Asher Qiddeshanu beMitsvotav veTsivanu AL MITSVAT ERUB"
□□□□□□ ,□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□
□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□□□□□ ,□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□
Then we read the following text in which we declare that by preparing this 'erub we are allowed to do all necessary work and cooking from Yom Tob to Shabbat.
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ ,□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□
Then we place the ‘erub in the refrigerator and we keep it until Shabbat. For the concept of ‘erub to make sense we must eat that food at some point during Shabbat (October 17th at night and October 18th).
The general practice is to prepare the ‘erub with a cooked egg and one loaf of bread. Many people will also add meat, rice and other types of cooked foods.