Shemini Atseret, Simchat Tora and Alcohol Consumption

Nothing contradicts the idea of Simchat Torah more than drunkenness.

Maimonides writes:

“During Yom Tob [and this includes Simchat Torah, Y.B.], a person should not drink too much [alcohol]… because drunkenness and frivolity are not part of the mitzvah of being joyful; they are part of vulgarity and ignorance… and [the Torah has commanded us] to reach a level of happiness that reflects our service to Hashem… a person cannot serve God with frivolity, mental lightness, or drunkenness” (Ibid., 6:19). “The highest way to serve Hashem is by feeling happy to fulfill [His will by observing] His commandments…” (Maimonides, MT Hilchot Sukkah veLulav, 8:15).

As HaRambam explained, a Jew does not need to become intoxicated to express their happiness. Someone who needs to become drunk to feel happy is doing so to “forget” his misery, shut off his reasoning and consciousness to escape his present, and, most of the time, to flee from a senseless life.

We, AM ISRAEL, are the chosen people.

In Simchat Torah, we do not drink excessively because we should embrace and celebrate the privilege of belonging to the people of God with full sobriety and awareness.