



Dancing with the feet is one thing,
but dancing with the heart is another.

MAZEL TOV

Sheila Bleckner

on the well-deserved honor of
Kallat Torah
at B'nai Jeshrun on Simchat Torah.

**In giving, “the human contribution is the essential ingredient.
It is only in the giving of oneself to others that we truly live.”**

**The Conservative Synagogue of the Hamptons thanks all who continue to
send donations
for this year’s High Holy Days appeal:**

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Please let us add your name here.

Candle Lighting Friday, October 9th 6:08 pm

Torah Reading for Shemini Atzeret

Annual: Leviticus Deuteronomy 14:22 - 16:17

Maftir: Numbers 29:35 - 30:1

Haftarah: I Kings 8:54 – 66

Torah Reading for Simchat Torah

Torah: Deuteronomy 33:1 - 34-12; Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Maftir: Numbers 29:35 - 30:1

Haftarah Joshua 1:1 – 18

October Shabbat Services at CSH

Saturday October 17 and 31

Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah Musings

Simchat Torah Trivia: <http://bloghd.blogspot.com/2005/10/simchat-torah-trivia.html>

- Simchat Torah originated in Babylon and was not celebrated in Israel until the end of the Gaonic period (ie. - totally Diaspora festival!). The reason is that in Babylon, the Jews had the same one-year cycle for reading the Torah we do today, whereas in Israel they finished the Torah every three / three and a half years, and not always on the same date. When the EY communities finished the Torah, they would hold a festive meal, but no 'Simchat Torah' as we know it.
- The festival originally did not involve reading from Bereshit, but merely finishing Devarim. Hence, the original term was not 'chatan Torah' but 'chatam Torah' -- sealer of the Torah. There was, of course, no chatan Bereshit.
- The original name wasn't 'Simchat Torah' but 'Yom Habrachah' -- the day of the blessing, after VeZot Habrachah -- the last chapter of the bible which was read on that day, and after the haftarah they read then, in which Shlomo gave blessings (I Kings 8:22). In Spain it was known simply as 'the last Yom Tov of Chag.' In North Africa it was 'Yom Hasiyum' - the day of completion. The name ST originated in Spain, after the Gaonic period.
- The minhag of hakafot is an adaptation of the minhag of going round the bimah seven times on Hoshanah Rabah with lulavim/aravot. Hakafot on ST were not known at all until the last third of the sixteenth century, and the first time we hear about it is in Tzfat in the days of the Ari, from where it spread out to other communities. Previously, some communities in Ashkenaz took out all the Sifrei Torah, but it took 150 years for the minhag of hakafot to spread, after it was mentioned in several books and after Jews from EY travelling to other communities helped institute it.
- Customs for Simchat Torah which we know about because there were Shailas as to whether they were permissible include bringing spices and incense to shul and burning them in front of the Sefer Torah.
- In Israel between the 17th-19th centuries, during hakafot, people used to hold lit wax candles, and this minhag also spread (in several places they used to use havdalah candles...). Another fire-related minhag was getting the children to burn the schach from succot on ST.
- Other lost minhagim: Worms -- they would dance around bonfires on ST. In other places in Ashkenaz celebrations of ST involved *jumping over* a fire. In a small number of communities the singing on ST was accompanied by musical instruments played by non-Jews -- and at times by Jews (In Venice, for example, there was a debate over whether the players could use an organ as it was used in churches; other instruments, however, were ok). In other places eg. Sarajevo, they played drums during hakafot. In some Ashkenazi communities, particularly in Poland and the Balkans, in the seventeenth century, they let off fireworks and firecrackers. Many people used to eat and drink in shul whilst the Torah was being read, often food baked by the women of the community...
- There were many special minhagim for the women on ST, including in some places,

decorating the sifrei Torah after Minchah on Shmini Atzeret in preparation for ST; selling the 'women's mitzvot' for the rest of the year -- which included, I note, sweeping the floor of the shul -- throwing candy on the chatanei Torah; and honouring the wives of the chatanei Torah as 'Kallot Torah.' Once hakafot began, women were graciously allowed to watch proceedings, even in communities eg. Yemen where women generally did not come to shul at all. In Southern Russia, women were actually allowed into the men's section; in Lithuania, women and girls came into the synagogue to kiss the Sifrei Torah; in Baghdad, each shul used to lay out all of its sifrei Torah and both the men and the women used to go from shul to shul kissing each Sefer.

- The tendency to confuse ST with Purim has a long history. The Cohanim's blessing was changed from Mussaf to Shacharit so that the Cohanim would not be drunk when they said it; in some communities it was cancelled altogether. There are also a number of poems about ST which equate the festival with drinking and frivolity from very early on, as well as rabbinic warnings on the matter. There were lots of parodies of religious songs (including Echad Mi Yodeah, and Kiddush) that were popular in ST, and there was also a minhag of appointing a 'Purim rabbi / Purim head-of-kehillah' on ST and of allowing the young *bochurim* to take over proceedings, including the old shtick of tying people's tallitot together, stealing food from ovens, etc. etc. This was all very widespread but apparently Salonika was particularly known for letting the service become jokey.

Biting off the Pitum A curious custom of comparatively recent origin (ca. 18th century) is the practice of some women to bite off the apex of the etrog after its ritual use has been completed. It was rumored that this action was conducive to the bearing of a male child.

Contemporary sages who took note of the practice conjectured that its therapeutic qualities were based on the tradition that the fruit which Eve had proffered to Adam was an etrog. Eve had sinned by eating the etrog. Her pious daughters atone for her sin by biting of the pitum but refrain from eating the fruit. They are thus entitled to a heavenly reward, particularly if they follow up the demonstration of their restraint with a generous contribution to charity.

The obligation of Jewish women to atone for the sin of Eve is mentioned in midrashic literature. Rashi quoted Bereshit Rabbah to the effect that the duty of lighting Sabbath candles devolved on women because they must atone for Eve, who by her transgression had extinguished the light of the world (Shabbat 32a, Rashi, Iske Reshit). Women who light candles are rewarded with scholarly children (Shabbat 32b). A similar reward was expected by women who atoned for Eve by biting off the pitum.

from [The Biblical and Historical Backgrounds of Jewish Holidays](#) by Abraham P. Bloch, pg. 205.

The Diary of Samuel Pepys Wednesday 14 October 1663

www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1663/10/14/index.php

...Thence home and after dinner my wife and I, by Mr. Rawlinson's conduct, to the Jewish Synagogue: where the men and boys in their vayles, and the women behind a lattice out of sight; and some things stand up, which I believe is their Law, in a press to which all coming in do bow; and at the putting on their vayles do say something, to which others that hear him do cry Amen, and the party do kiss his vayle. Their service all in a singing way, and in Hebrew. And anon their Laws that they take out of the press are carried by several men, four or five several burthens in all, and they do relieve one another; and whether it is that every one desires to have the carrying of it, I cannot tell, thus they carried it round about the room while such a service is singing. And in the end they had a prayer for the King, which they pronounced his name in Portugall; but the prayer, like the rest, in Hebrew. But, Lord! to see the disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than people knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more and indeed I never did see so much, or

could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this.

THE SHABBAT OF HAKAFOT -- <http://www.hebron.com/english/article.php?id=230>

In the "Abraham Avinu" Synagogue there were two holy arks that housed the Torah scrolls. One for new and kosher scrolls and one for those old and unusable ones. The scrolls of the later ark were used only to dance with on the "Simhat Torah" festivities.

Many years ago, an unfamiliar guest with a respectful appearance appeared in town and came to the synagogue at prayer time. When he was invited to take a Torah scroll to read, he acted as if "he owned the place" and took out a old scroll from the wrong Ark. The people began to grumble, but he ignored them all.

While reciting the proper passages, he walked to the reading desk in the center of the synagogue and was about to place the scroll on it when the Rabbi intervened. "These scrolls are unfit to read from, they are only used to be danced with," whispered the Rabbi to the guest. The guest listen attentively and said: "Well, then we should dance with it." The worshipers were stunned: "Now?! On a regular Shabbat?! Hakafot?! Noticing the uneasiness among the crowd, the Rabbi said: "Maybe the man is correct. It would be a disgrace to the scroll if it would be put back without use. Perhaps we should do Hakafot.

The guest took slow steps and began reciting the verses for Hakafot. "Fight my battles, O Lord, Wage my Wars...." At the completion of the morning services, when all went home, they looked for the guest but he was not to be found. The next day, Sunday, it became known that there had been a plan to attack the Jews on that very same Shabbat. However, when the attackers came near the synagogue, they just turned away. Then it was very clear to the people that their guest was a very special guest sent to them from heaven. Perhaps he was one of the Forefathers?

Simchat Torah Songs <http://www.jewishpathways.com/simchat-torah-1>

Donations

Stacy Menzer in honor of Sheila Bleckner being called as Kallat Torah

The next time you are looking for a meaningful way to celebrate a simcha, a birthday, a promotion, remember a loved one, or comfort a mourner, please consider making a donation to The Conservative Synagogue of the Hamptons.

Quote of the Week

It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of personkind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely. Leo Buscaglia

Shabbat shalom v'chag sameach.
Wishing you a joyous Simchat Torah.

Stacy

Stacy Menzer
President
The Conservative Synagogue
Of the Hamptons
PO Box 1800
East Hampton, NY 11937

631 725 8188
www.synagoguehamptons.org