



Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

Watch overview videos:

1. Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah (1:54)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNFrX74x1TA>
2. Simchat Torah (2:51)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzoa7eKKIMw>

Basics:

Shemini Atzeret

Pronunciation: she-mee-NEE ah-TSEH-reht (♫ <http://bit.ly/16zcEqD>)

Meaning: Assembly of 8th Day

Jewish Date: 22th of Tishrei

Secular Date: Generally falls around late-October to early-November

Length: 1 Day

Themes: Gathering of the Tribes, Rain

Simchat Torah

Pronunciation: she-mee-NEE ah-TSEH-reht (♫ <http://bit.ly/1ezSTHo>)

Meaning: Rejoicing Torah

Jewish Date: 23rd of Tishrei

Secular Date: Generally falls around late-October to early-November

Length: 1 Day (Diaspora Only)

Themes: Celebrating the Torah

History & Overview:

Read: <http://bit.ly/1ajSAJZ> & <http://bit.ly/1gCF768>

- Shemini Atzeret is a holiday that focuses on the intimate relationship between the Holy One and the Jewish people
- Shemini Atzeret is mentioned 2x in the Torah.
- Simchat Torah is a post-biblical holiday that began in the Middle Ages and marks the end of an annual cycle of reading the Torah and the beginning of the next.

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- We read the final portion of the Torah and then immediately begin the first chapter of Genesis

Customs

Read: <http://bit.ly/1bpeZYJ> and <http://bit.ly/GTJgp2>

- Greetings:
 - Chag Sameach
 - Lit: joyous festival
 - Idiomatic: Happy Holiday
- Prayers for Rain
- Saying "good bye" to the Sukkah with final meal
- Celebrations – Dancing with the Torah
- Kol HaNe'arim (all the children) – a special children's aliyah on Simchat Torah day
- Chatan/Kallah Torah (B'reisheit) – special honor to those who receive aliyah for the final parsha of the Torah or the first parsha of the Torah.
 - Note in Orthodox communities, there will only be a Chatan (groom) as they do not allow women (Kallah – bride) to stand on the bimah.

Halakhah & Liturgy

Read: <http://bit.ly/1gCHEgS>

- Most forms of work are prohibited
- Shemini Atzeret
 - Prayers for rain
 - From Shemini Atzeret until Passover
 - Inserted 2nd blessing of the Amidah during Shacharit service
 - “Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem” (“He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall”).
 - On Shemini Atzeret specifically, there are special prayers and piyyutim (liturgical poems) added to the silent Amidah that focus on asking the Holy One for rain.
 - English: <http://bit.ly/1ezUtZH>
 - See full text (Conservative): <http://bit.ly/1f7yPNU>
- Simchat Torah
 - Erev Simchat Torah
 - Reading of part of last parsha of Torah – often Deut 33:1-34:12,
 - Hakafot – Dances with Torah (Simchat Torah)
 - Torah scrolls carried in seven circles around the sanctuary
 - See full text (Conservative): <http://bit.ly/180AVss>
 - Simchat Torah Day

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- Hakafot – Dances with Torah (Simchat Torah)
 - Torah scrolls carried in seven circles around the sanctuary
 - See full text (Conservative): <http://bit.ly/180AVss>
- Reading of Torah
 - V'Zot HaBerachah Deuteronomy (33:1-34:12) the last parshah of the Torah.
 - B'reishit (Genesis 1:1-2:3), the first portion of the Torah
 - Pinchas (Numbers 29:35-30:1) as the Maftir portion

Sources and Bibliography

Books:

- The Jewish Holidays: A Guide & Commentary, Michael Strassfield
- Seasons of our Joy, Arthur Ocean Waskow
- The Jewish Book of Days, Jill Hammer
- Celebrating the Jewish Year: The Fall Holidays, Paul Steinberg
- The Rosh Chodesh Table: Foods at the New Moon, Judith Solomon
- Seasons for Celebration, Karen L. Fox and Phyllis Zimmler Miller
- Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Patkin Teutsch

Websites:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNFrX74x1TA>
- <http://www.ou.org/chagim/shmini-simchat/shminiwhat.htm>
- <http://www.ou.org/chagim/shmini-simchat/geshem.htm>
- http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4526/jewish/Holiday-Customs.htm
- http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/1288672/jewish/Shemini-Atzeret-Guide.htm
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shemini_AtzeretSimchat_Torah/Shemini_AtzeretSimchat_Torah_101.shtml
- <http://www.morim-madrachim.org/en/Content/AR/4208/when-a-circle-is-more-than-a-circle-the-hakafot-of-simchat-torah?firstreq=1>
- <http://www.ou.org/chagim/shmini-simchat/default.htm>
- http://telshemesh.org/tishrei/the_circle_of_simchat_torah.html
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shemini_AtzeretSimchat_Torah/In_the_Community/Morning_Service/Ashkenazi_Prayer_for_Rain.shtml
- <http://jhom.com/topics/rain/tefillat.html>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geshem>

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- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simchat_Torah