

THE HOLIDAY EDITION
For Grades 3-5



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CANDLE LIGHTING

The Torah is more than a set of stories and laws. It is our way of looking at life, and shows us how to live – and treat each other - in a meaningful way.

So, to keep a connection to the Torah's messages, we study a different portion each week, completing the entire Torah over the course of a year. Simchat Torah is the day that we end – and begin anew - our yearly cycle.

Simchat Torah means "Rejoicing with the Torah." It is a festive holiday, during which we sing, dance and rejoice; we're feeling the joy at having a special way of thinking to help us through life.

Simchat Torah celebrations are a time to dance with the Torah and appreciate our ability to lead meaningful, beautiful lives. It's interesting that we dance with closed Torah scrolls. It's not a day to spend on reading the Torah as much as celebrating the Torah. One reason is that, when it comes to reading, we each relate to the Torah in different ways. On Simchat Torah, our ability to read and understand is not the central point; our celebration is about our connection to the Torah. We each have that connection, no matter how much Torah we can read or understand. It's G-d's gift to us all.

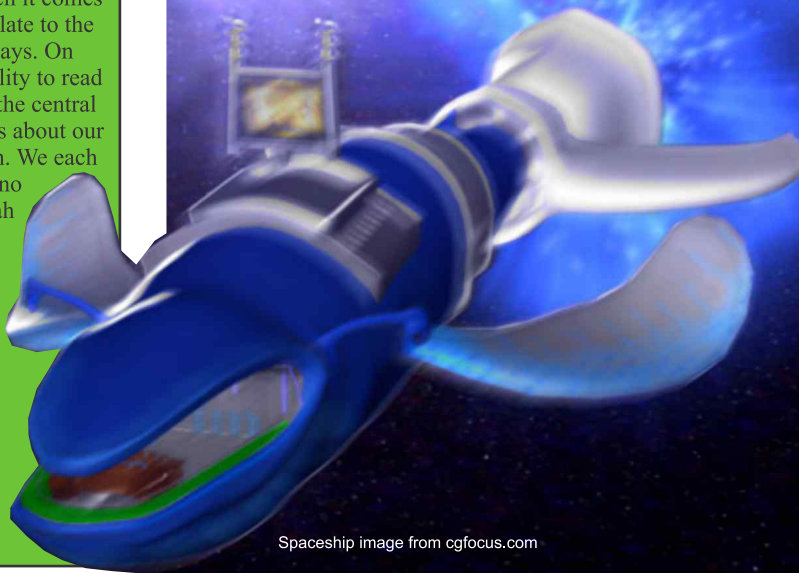
And THAT'S reason to celebrate!

THE DIALOGUE

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR THE CHABAD HEBREW SCHOOL COMMUNITY

IT'S SIMCHAT TORAH!

By: Malkie Herson & Dena Torgeman



Spaceship image from cgfocus.com

The radar beeped as the aliens drew closer to the ground. The spacecraft descended, and then stopped in its place as it reached the treetops. They could now get a real good look at what those humans were up to. "Strange behavior, I presume," said the alien ringleader as he peered at the computer screen that projected images of the people below. He watched with fascination as he saw people dressed in fancy clothing, dancing in the front yard of a building. The humans seemed quite happy; you could see it in their smiling faces and hear it in their joyfully singing voices. And they were all dancing around one guy who was carrying something large and decorative in his arms. "What is this all about?" the alien asked. His colleagues just shrugged their shoulders. They hadn't the slightest clue! "Beam him up! That man in the middle! And make sure the load he's carrying comes with him!" the alien commanded, as he imagined what treasure or riches may be in that package. Surely it was something extraordinary if all those people were circling around it, dancing with pure bliss.

Suddenly a large, white beam shot down to the center of the people who were dancing, enclosing the man in the middle. Without any effort on his part, he floated up the beam and into the spaceship. It was now time for questioning.

"What is your name, and what galactic clan are you from?" the leader alien demanded.

The man blinked in disbelief. Had he just been abducted by aliens? Nervous for what might happen next, he quickly came to his senses, eager to answer the alien's inquiry. "M-m-my name is Dan. I'm not sure what you mean by galactic clan..."

"Surely you are part of a group of people, are you not? What is this assembly that dances around you?"

"Oh, I, uh, I'm Jewish. Those people are my fellow community members. We are all Jewish," Dan answered.

"Jewish...hmm...interesting," the alien pondered. His eyes were fixed on the large, velvet and gold adorned object in Dan's arms. Now that he got a closer look at it, he was even more curious to know what powers it held. But he would get to that soon enough. "So, tell me, Dan, why were all those Jewish people dancing around you?"

"Well," Dan began to explain, "today is a Jewish holiday called Simchat Torah. On this day, we dance and rejoice with the Torah. Wait...I'm still holding the Torah!" He hadn't even realized it was still in his arms!

"The Torah? What is this Torah you speak of? What powers does it possess?" the alien questioned.

"Well, that's an interesting way of putting it! The Torah does have 'special powers.' It is a gift from Hashem, G-d that teaches us how to live and be good people. The Torah teaches us how to fill the world with goodness and holiness," Dan explained.

"The Torah teaches how to fill the world with goodness and holiness," the alien echoed. "Interesting. So what is so special about this Simchat Torah holiday? Why on this specific day are you dancing around and celebrating? Does this Torah gift expire or disappear with time?"

"Oh no," Dan chuckled. "We have the Torah forever, but we celebrate especially on this day because we're celebrating all

that we have experienced this past month. You see, we had the beginning of our Jewish calendar year, called Rosh Hashana, when we were reminded that the year to come is full of sweet possibilities. Ten days later, we reflected on the past and thought about what we can do to make amends. That holiday was Yom Kippur. In order to make amends and accomplish all the good we know we can, it's always better together! On Sukkot, which is the third holiday we celebrate, we are reminded that we all support each other as a community, and Hashem supports us too!"

Before Dan could go any further, (you could tell he was excited about explaining this sort of stuff), the alien stopped him impatiently. "Wait, wait, wait. What does all of this have to do with dancing and singing? Your human-Jewish practices confuse me," he interrupted.

"That's a good question. I was just getting to that! You see, these holidays have been a remarkable experience for us. We've grown as people and as a community! We are supported in our efforts by Hashem; Hashem gives us help and knowledge through the Torah. And so, to celebrate this, we take a break and dance and dance and dance! And we sing! And we rejoice! We celebrate!"

The alien's eyes narrowed as he looked at Dan in confusion. "It sounds like you have a lot of work to do, as Jewish people. How can you possibly stop what you're doing and dance? That sounds quite irresponsible."

"We are so happy and so enthusiastic. We just have to move! We just have to express that bursting feeling of excitement! When we stop and rejoice, we then have the strength and positive attitude we need so that we can do what we need to do!" Dan described.

"I've heard enough!" the alien said, turning to his alien counterparts. "Beam him back down! He has important work to do back on earth!"

And Dan was beamed back down to the ground, floating down the white light that he had traveled going in the opposite direction minutes earlier.

"Simchat Torah, eh? Celebration, hmmm... Think we could fill our galaxy with goodness and holiness?" the alien pondered, as the spacecraft zoomed into space.



alien image from gaygamer.net

THE DIALOGUE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ◆ You obviously haven't ever met an alien, but have you ever met someone who didn't understand your Jewish practices? What did that person ask and what did you answer? Without quoting directly from the story, how would you explain Simchat Torah to a friend who asked? How would you explain the Torah?