




Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah Fact Sheet


 The 22nd of *Tishrei*, the day after the seventh day of *Sukkot*, is *Shemini Atzeret*. In Israel, *Shemini Atzeret* is also *Simchat Torah*. Outside of Israel only the second day of *Shemini Atzeret* is *Simchat Torah*. *Shemini Atzeret* is the 22nd and 23rd of *Tishrei*; *Simchat Torah* is the 23rd of *Tishrei*.

 *Shemini Atzeret* means “the gathering of the 8th day” and is separate from *Sukkot*. It’s intended to carry on the joy we feel from *Sukkot* for one extra day. It’s best explained this way: Adonai is like a host, who invites visitors for a limited amount of time, and has such a great time that the guests are invited to stay for one more day.

 *Simchat Torah* means “rejoicing in the Torah,” and marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah.

 On *Simchat Torah* we read the end of Deuteronomy and then roll the Torah all the way back to the beginning so we can also hear Genesis. This reminds us that the Torah is a circle and never ends.

 *Simchat Torah* is a time for celebration. We dance with the Torah during multiple *hakafot* (processions), sing loudly, and celebrate another year of reading and studying the Torah.

 *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are holidays on which we are not supposed to work, and instead are supposed to immerse ourselves in joy and celebration.