

Are You the Same?

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Simhat Torah

On Simhat Torah, we read the final verses of the Torah and then immediately read the first verses. The traditional symbolism is that we never really conclude our reading of Torah, our study of Torah. The moment we complete the cycle, we begin again from the beginning.

I heard from my teacher, Rabbi Joseph H. Gelberman, that, when he was a boy of about seven, he once asked his father as they were on their way to the synagogue (it was a Shabbat morning), "Papa, where are we going?"

"We are going to the synagogue," his father answered.

"And what will we do there, Papa?"

"We are going to listen to the reading of the Torah."

"What part of the Torah will we hear, Papa?"

And his father identified the week's Torah reading.

"But, Papa, didn't we hear that portion of the Torah read at this time last year?"

"Yes, my son; we did."

"Papa, isn't the Torah just the same this year as it was last year?"

"Yes, my son; the Torah is just the same this year as it was last year. But, my son, are you the same?"

As soon as we complete the cycle of the Torah reading, we begin again. Not because there has been any change in the Torah, but because, with G*d's Help, there have been changes in us; we are no longer the same as we were last year.

Hag Sam'eah.

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