

# A Short Explanation of Sh'mini Atzeret

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Delivered to Ohev Yisrael September 26, 2013

*Sh'mini Atzeret* means the 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Holding Back and, because it follows the seven days of *Sukkot*, some call it the 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Assembly or the 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Completion; strictly speaking, it is not the last day of *Sukkot* – it is an added day given to us by God as though to say: “I care for My people so much that I will give them an additional day of celebration.”

*Sh'mini Atzeret* appears twice in connection with *Sukkot*, where the *Torah* recites the festivals; they are Leviticus 23:33-36, and Numbers 29:12, 35-40; I will read from Leviticus 23:

*“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. 'On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. 'For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.”*

*Sh'mini Atzeret* is the last commanded feast of the biblical year and, because of the inclusion of a sin offering by fire, it is sometimes thought of as the final day of the season of repentance that begins with *Yom T'ruah* (*Rosh Hashanah*). As in the case of *Sukkot*, *Sh'mini Atzeret* is associated with the Autumn harvest, but also with the Israelites' need for water in the form of winter rain.

*Sh'mini Atzeret* is also mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:8-10, where the Temple's altar was dedicated for seven days of the feast, and a sacred assembly was observed on the eighth day.

Now there is an important Scripture that we discussed at our *Sukkot* service and, although it does not specifically refer to *Sh'mini Atzeret*, I want to mention it again here. The Scripture I'm speaking of is Zechariah 14:16-17:

*“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.”*

This Scripture is of great significance in prophesying that all the nations of the earth will one day come to recognize their connectedness to Israel, and Israel will rekindle its awareness that it is a "kingdom of priests" that is meant to bring the blessing of God's Word to the Gentile world.

Let me conclude with an important Scripture from the New Covenant that I believe refers to *Sh'mini Atzeret*. John 7:37-43 speaks of “the last great day of the feast” as a time when Yeshua referred to Himself as the source of living water, and reads this way:

*“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Yeshua was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Mashiach.” But some said, “Will the Mashiach come out of Galilee? “Has not the Scripture said that the Mashiach comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” So there was a division among the people because of Him.”*

I believe the "last day, that great day of the feast" spoken of in [John 7:37](#) is *Sh'mini Atzeret*, and not *Hoshana Rabbah*, the seventh day of *Sukkot*. I have two reasons for believing this. First, *Sh'mini Atzeret* is given Sabbath status by Scripture, whereas the seventh day of *Sukkot* is not. Second, early rabbinical writings associate *Sh'mini Atzeret* with prayers for rain and the pouring of water because water was needed in the agricultural season; that is situationally consistent with Yeshua's metaphoric use of water in identifying Himself as Messiah. *Hoshanah Rabbah*, by contrast, is not associated with water at all in rabbinical literature, and almost all we know about its meaning and elevated status comes from *Kabbalistic* sources.

So now that I have told you all I know about *Sh'mini Atzeret*, let's turn our attention to worshipping the Lord.