

# A Short Explanation of Simchat Torah

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In the diaspora, *Simchat Torah* is commonly celebrated the day following *Sh'mini Atzeret*, but in Israel, is combined with *Sh'mini Atzeret*, similar to what we are doing tonight. *Simchat Torah* is not a biblically mandated celebration; in fact, it does not surface in Jewish literature until about the year 1000. It literally means "the celebration of the *Torah*," and it marks the end of one cycle of *Torah* reading, and the beginning of the next. In recognition of this, we dance around the synagogue seven times with both of our *Torah* scrolls, passing the scrolls one to another, after which we read the concluding verses of Deuteronomy from one of them, and the first part of Genesis from the other. In showing this much attention to the *Torah*, let us be mindful that the *Torah* is but five of the sixty-six books in the Bible. So when we see the *Torah Scrolls* carried around the room, let our hearts rejoice for the entire Bible that God has given us.

There is another aspect to this that I would like you to think about, and that is that our traditional cycle of reading the *Torah* that begins with *Simchat Torah*, drives our reading of the rest of the written Word of God, and that the *Torah* is the foundational document upon which the rest of God's written Word is built.

John 1:1-3 & 14 states:

*"In the beginning was [the Logos] the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing made had being." ... "The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw his Sh'khinah, the Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."*

So the Book of John identifies Yeshua as the *Logos* Word of God, who was there at the time of creation and was responsible for it. Did Yeshua disappear from human affairs between creation and the time of His incarnation? Not likely, so as we celebrate *Simchat Torah*, the completion of our *Torah* reading cycle, the re-rolling of the scrolls, and our beginning to read again at Genesis 1:1, let us be reminded of the never-ending nature of the Word of God and of Yeshua Himself, the *Logos* made flesh.

Yes, we in Messianic Judaism give a great amount of attention to the *Torah*, but not because it is greater in inspiration than the rest of the *Tanakh* and the *B'rit Chadasha*, but rather because it is a foundational building block and mystically connected to Yeshua in a way that even we only partially understand, and that most believers in the world do not even think about.

Let us now turn out attention to celebrating the *Torah*, and worshipping the Lord.