

# Pnimitiyut

*The Inner Dimension of Torah*

*Simchat Torah Edition*

Simchat Torah

כ"ג תשרי תשפ"ז

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## THE DANCING

All year long, our relationship with the Torah is one of opening. We open the scroll, read the words, study the arguments, trace the commentaries. We come to Torah to understand it. Simchat Torah overturns all of that. On this one night, the scrolls are rolled shut. No reading. No studying. We hold them to our hearts — and we dance.

This is not a lesser way of relating to Torah. The Alter Rebbe teaches: every Jewish soul has a specific letter in the Torah. Not a concept, not a lesson — a letter. Before learning, before understanding, before any of it, the connection is already there — letter to soul, written in fire before the world began. On Simchat Torah we touch Torah at that level. The body knows what the mind cannot reach. And so the body dances.

The Zohar states it plainly: 'Yisrael ve'Oraita ve'Kudsha Brich Hu chad hu' — Israel and the Torah and the Holy One are all one. Three that are one. You cannot fully separate them. When you hold a Torah scroll pressed to your chest and begin to circle, something is happening that goes beyond ceremony. A unity that was always true is briefly made visible. Not accomplished — revealed.

We finish Vezot HaBracha — the last parasha, the final words of Moshe Rabbeinu — and without pausing we open to Bereishit and begin again. The Torah ends with the letter Lamed, and begins with the letter Beit. Together: Lev — heart. The Torah begins and ends inside the heart. And we keep going around.

The human being is built of three: mind, heart, and body. Not three parts that happen to coexist — three levels of a single structure, a **בנין האדם**, each one waiting to be completed. On Rosh Hashana it was the mind that acted — to crown 'ה as King is a decision the intellect makes about the nature of reality. On Yom Kippur it was the heart — the locking at Neilah was a cleaving, the heart pressing against 'ה and refusing to let go. On Sukkot it was the body — we moved in, slept under the s'chach, sat in the rain, a physical act of trust.

Simchat Torah is the moment all three sync. The **בנין האדם** is whole. And when the entire person — mind, heart, body — is aligned and present and complete, dancing is not something you choose. It is what is revealed.

### *The First Hakafot*

It was the first Simchat Torah after the passing of the Baal Shem Tov. The disciples had gathered in Mezeritch, where Reb Dov Ber, the Maggid, had taken on the leadership. But for many of them, their hearts were heavy. The Besht had passed that Shavuot, and the wound was still fresh. The question that no one said aloud hung over the beit midrash: how do you dance when your rebbe is gone?

The Torah scrolls were taken from the ark. The music began. Reb Dov Ber received the largest scroll — the one the Besht himself had always taken — and the first hakafa began. The disciples watched him. He was barely moving. He walked slowly around the bimah, eyes closed, the scroll held against his chest with both arms. When the seven circles were finished he stopped and handed the Torah to a student without a word. His face was wet.

Late that night, after the shul had quieted, one student gathered his courage and approached. The Maggid looked at him.

*‘Rebbe — during the hakafot, when you were holding the Torah — you were somewhere else. Where were you?’*

The Maggid was quiet for a long moment. Then he sat down, and spoke.

*‘When they placed the Torah in my arms I closed my eyes. And I was back — in the Besht’s shul, Simchat Torah night, three years ago. He was dancing. You know how he danced — not like a man, like a flame. He caught my eye and said, without stopping: “Dov Ber, do you know what is happening right now? Every year on this night the Torah descends from its place. Not the letters, not the words — the Or, the hidden light of the first day, the light the Torah was written with. It enters every scroll. When you hold it and dance — you are not holding paper and parchment. You are holding the light of the first day.”’*

*‘Tonight, when the Torah was placed in my arms, I felt it. And I wept, because I understood: he is gone, but the Torah is still here. The light is still here. He gave it to me. And I must give it to you.’*

The student stood, walked to where the scrolls were resting, lifted one, and began to dance. Another student saw him and did the same. Then another, and another. Somewhere in those hours the Maggid himself stepped back into the circle — and this time, his face was bright. By the time dawn came the beit midrash was full of singing. No one remembered they had arrived carrying grief. They only knew that the light was still here, it had always been here, and they were dancing in it.

— The Maggid of Mezeritch