

Isn't one Yom Kippur enough? We make such a big deal about the "closing of the gates" at the end of Yom Kippur, and then, evidently the gates open again. The rabbis teach that we have another day like Yom Kippur, Hoshana Rabbah, the last day of Chol Hamoed Sukkot, on which we can be forgiven again for any leftover sins. On Hoshana Rabbah we prepare to ask for rain the following day, and we ask to be saved yet again. We have a full ten days after Yom Kippur to complete our apologies, to throw our sins away with Tashlich, and to finish the season of repentance. If we took Yom Kippur seriously, why do we need this second chance?

Hoshana Rabbah, which falls this coming Sunday, is supposed to feel a lot like Yom Kippur. Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Arukh*, the Code of Jewish Law, notes the similarities of customs.

*Those who are careful have the practice of immersing themselves before dawn, just like on the day before Yom Kippur. There are some who wear a kittel like on Yom Kippur. This is because on the holiday [of Sukkot], the matter of water is decided. (Orach Chayim 664)*

We are supposed to experience the day as if it is a mini-Yom Kippur. The tunes we use are those of Yom Kippur, and even the greeting of the day is the same as that of Yom Kippur: *Gmar Chatimah Tovah*, may you be completely sealed for good.

Why do we need *another* closing of the gates? Isn't it enough that we begged for our lives last week, that we prayed that we be sealed in the Book of Life?

Actually, when we get honest, no. It's not quite enough. For sure, it is a miracle to live another year, and we must never take that for granted. Still, Sukkot-- the festival of joy-- might make us pray for a particular *kind of life*, a life where we can not just survive, but enjoy our lives, as well. On Shmini Atzeret-- the day after Hoshana Rabbah-- it's not just our lives, but the rain that comes into our lives which will be decided. Will we have a year of surfeit or a year of scarcity? A year of healthy rain, or a year of destructive hurricanes? On Yom Kippur, we pray that we might live through the coming year. But on Hoshana Rabbah we pray that we might live *well*, with a sense of abundance and safety.

It's one thing to live; yet another to live with joy. At the end of this festival of joy, Hoshana Rabbah lets us acknowledge that we want more than just to be inscribed in the Book of Life. We want the full package, the gifts of life *and* the gifts of abundance, peace, and blessing. When we wish each other a *Gmar Tov* on Hoshana Rabbah, the wish is even greater than that of Yom Kippur. "May you be sealed," we say to one another, "not only in the Book of Life, but in the Book of Blessings, as well." May blessings of joy, deep satisfaction, and a sense of true abundance rain down upon each of us in the coming year. Shabbat Shalom.