

## Rabbi's Article II

*Be Happy!*

Based upon a verse in our Torah-portion, Maimonides (-[Link](#)) rules (-Laws of Lulav, Chapter 8, Laws 12-14):

*"Even though it is a mitzvah to rejoice on all the festivals, there was an additional celebration in the Temple on the festival of Sukkot, as (-Leviticus 23:40) commands: 'And you shall rejoice before G-d, your L-rd, for seven days.'*

*What was done? On the eve of the first day of the festival, they would set up a place in the Temple where women [could watch] from above, and men from below, so they would not intermingle with each other.*

*The celebration would begin on the night after the first day of the festival. Similarly, on each day of Chol Hamo'ed (-[Link](#)), after offering the daily afternoon sacrifice, they would begin to celebrate for the rest of the day and throughout the night.*

*What was the nature of this celebration? The flute would be sounded and songs played on the harp, lute, and cymbals. [In addition,] each person would play on the instrument which he knew. Those who could sing, would sing. They would dance and clap their hands, letting loose and whistling, each individual in the manner which he knew. Words of song and praise were recited.*

*This celebration does not supersede either the Sabbath or the festival [prohibitions].*

*It is a great mitzvah to maximize this celebration. The common people and anyone who desired would not perform [in these celebrations]; only the greatest of Israel's wise men: the Rashei Yeshivot (Heads of Study Halls), the members of the high court, the pious, the elders, and the men of stature. They were those who would dance, clap their hands, sing, and rejoice in the Temple on the days of the festival of Sukkot. However, the entire people - the men and the women - would come to see and hear."*

In the times of the Holy Temple (-[Link](#)) on the holiday of Sukkot, the sages (*Rabbinical*) instituted the *Water Libation* upon the altar, which was celebrated with great festivities --called *Simchat Bet Hoshoeva* (-[Link](#))-- from the second day of Sukkot unto the end of the holiday. Now, one would think that this is the festivities that Maimonides is speaking of, however, Maimonides is building his ruling on a verse in the *Torah*, which makes it *Biblical*, and not Rabbinical. Which leads to a contradiction with the law itself: Maimonides starts with stating that this festivity is based upon a verse --which makes it Biblical--, but then Maimonides goes on to say that it "would begin on the night after the first day of the festival," and the reason seemingly is because, "This celebration does not supersede either the Sabbath or the festival [prohibitions]," hence, on the first day of the holiday there could not be, "The flute would be sounded and songs played on the harp, lute, and cymbals. [In addition,] each person would play on the instrument which he knew." Now, if the festivity was Biblical, then why would it not override all the Rabbinical prohibition of playing music?! Additionally, being that it is a Biblical commandment, how can there be a difference between who celebrates ("The common people and anyone who desired would not perform [in these celebrations]; only the greatest of Israel's wise men: the Rashei Yeshivot, the members of the high court, the pious, the elders, and the men of stature")?!

The explanation is that Maimonides is not saying that there is a *new* and *separate* commandment concerning the joy of the holiday of Sukkot. Rather, the commandment is concerning *all* holidays (-Deuteronomy 15:14), "And you shall rejoice in your Festival -you, and your son, and your daughter..." However, being that we find in our Torah-portion that the verse, "And you shall rejoice before G-d, your L-rd, for seven days," is making an emphases concerning the joy of holidays concerning Sukkot, hence, Maimonides is ruling, "Even though it is a mitzvah to rejoice on all the festivals, there was an additional celebration in the Temple on the festival of Sukkot." However, being that there is no *new* or *separate* mitzva concerning the *extra-joy* of Sukkot, hence, this *extra joy* does not constitute to, "supersede either the Sabbath or the festival [prohibitions]."

However, being that this specific *extra joy* of holiday joy of Sukkot is a Biblical emphases, why then is not for everyone equally to celebrate?

Maimonides, after the laws of the *extra joy* of Sukkot states (-ibid, Law 15): "The happiness with which a person should rejoice in the fulfillment of the mitzvot and the love of G-d who commanded them is a great service." Meaning that the *extra joy* of Sukkot is not a (separate) Biblical commandment, but an emphases upon the general Biblical commandment of joy, driven by a feeling of the preciousness, and of cherishing fulfilling a mitzva, driven by a deep and tangible love of G-d.

Being that we are speaking of an *extra joy* coming from a deep emotional commitment to fulfilling G-d's commandments, therefore, there is a difference in the levels of expressing and celebrating this *extra joy*, each in relation to the different levels of feeling the preciousness and of cherishing fulfilling a mitzva. Hence, you have, "The greatest of Israel's wise men: the Rashei Yeshivot (Heads of Study Halls), the members of the high court, the pious, the elders, and the men of stature. They were those who would dance, clap their hands, sing, and rejoice in the Temple on the days of the festival of Sukkot." But nevertheless, "However, the entire people - the men and the women - would come to see and hear," manifesting their own level of *extra joy*, driven by their own love of G-d and preciousness in fulfilling His commandments.

An amazing lesson: One may think, *I can be happy on the auspicious days of Sukkot, a portal to joy. However, after Sukkot, on a regular day, how can I truly be happy?!* Hence, Maimonides --after the laws of the *extra joy* of Sukkot-- states that each and everyone of us can, and must, experience joy in fulfilling the commandments of G-d. This includes the commandments of (-Ethics of our Fathers, Chapter 2, Mishna 12), "And all your deeds should be for the sake of Heaven," and (Proverbs 3:6), "Know Him in all your ways."