**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**Deracheha: Women and Mitzvot**

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Dedicated in memory of Rabbi Jack Sable z”l and

Ambassador Yehuda Avner z”l

By Debbi and David Sable

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**Dancing with the Torah**

How did the custom of dancing with the Sefer Torah on *Simchat Torah* come about? How can women celebrate Simchat Torah during the *hakafot*?

# Celebrating Simchat Torah

The widespread custom of celebrating Simchat Torah by dancing with the Torah in the synagogue is a relatively recent innovation in Jewish terms.

Sukkot has always been a time for great rejoicing, *zeman simchateinu*. In the time of *Beit Ha-mikdash*, the *Simchat Beit Ha-sho’eiva* [festival of the water-drawing] on *chol ha-mo'ed* included dancing, though Rambam points out that only the scholars would dance, while the general populace looked on.

Rambam Hilchot Shofar Ve-sukka Ve-lulav 8:14

It is a mitzva to increase this celebration. It was not done by the ordinary people and whoever wanted to; rather, the great sages of Israel and the heads of the *yeshivot* and the Sanhedrin and the pious ones and the elders and men of [notable] deeds, they were the ones who would dance and clap and play music and rejoice in the *mikdash* on the days of the holiday of Sukkot. But all the people, all the men and women, came to see and to hear.

On Yom Tov itself, however, dancing was not customary, and was even in violation of a rabbinic prohibition:

*Beitza* 36b

These are the [matters prohibited] because of *shevut* [on a rabbinic level]…and that they not pound, and not clap, and not dance.

Still, as early as the geonic period, we have record of communal dancing on Simchat Torah – as well as rabbinic approval of the practice:

Geonic Responsa *Sha'arei Teshuva* 314

On this second day of Yom Tov, which is the last, we are accustomed that even some of the elders dance when praises are said to the Torah. But this is because [the prohibition against dancing] is *shevut* [rabbinic] and they acted leniently on this day only, in honor of the Torah.

The custom to dance in honor of the Torah on Simchat Torah was considered sufficiently weighty to override a rabbinic prohibition.[[1]](#footnote-1) Not surprisingly, this custom is first recorded outside of Israel, in Babylonia, where the second day Yom Tov of Shemini Atzeret was also the day on which the annual cycle of Torah reading was completed.[[2]](#footnote-2)

How did the *Sifrei Torah* become part of the dancing?

Especially given how careful we are about [honoring the Torah](https://www.deracheha.org/contact-with-sefer-torah), how did the custom to dance with the *Sefer Torah* develop?

In the Middle Ages, inspired by the *hoshanot* (circuits with lulav and etrog on Sukkot), a practice began in Ashkenaz of removing all *Sifrei Torah* from the *aron kodesh* on Simchat Torah, and of circling the *bima* with them, much as we circle the *bima* for *hoshanot* over the course of the holiday. Rema provides a report:

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 669 Rema

We call the last day of Yom Tov “Simchat Torah,” because we rejoice and make a festive meal for the completion of the Torah, and we have a custom that the one who completes the Torah and the one who begins *Bereishit* pledge donations and invite others to make a festivity. They had the custom in these lands to take out all the Torah scrolls from the *aron* on Simchat Torah at *ma’ariv* and *shacharit*, and sing songs and praises, each place in accordance with its custom. They also had the custom to go around the *bima* of the synagogue with the Torah scrolls, like we go around it with the lulav, and it is all for rejoicing.

Rema does not specifically mention dancing here, though he does write about singing in honor of the Torah. He also notes without criticism that customs vary: "each place in accordance with its custom."

Though these developments were centered in Ashkenaz, Rema's late sixteenth-century contemporary in *Eretz Yisrael*, Arizal, innovated another such custom— dancing with the *Sefer Torah* for a full seven circuits around the *bima*.[[3]](#footnote-3) This practice was popularized in the eighteenth century by a work of unknown authorship called *Chemdat Yamim*.[[4]](#footnote-4)

*Chemdat Yamim* III Sukka 8

…One who increases all types of rejoicing before the *Sefer Torah* arouses rejoicing above, for 'the mother of children is happy,' [with] 'joy and glory,' and therefore we take out the Torah scrolls and stand them up in their wedding canopy and first make a great rejoicing before the scrolls as [for] a groom and bride who enter the wedding canopy…Afterwards the great ones of Israel, the Torah sages, take the Torah scrolls out of their wedding canopy and open their mouths with a pleasant voice of song and praise and thanksgiving and melody and thanksgiving to God before the Torah scrolls and go around the *bima* with them seven circuits (*hakafot*) corresponding to the seven circuits of Hoshana Rabba…It is fitting for every servant of God to increase all types of rejoicing before the *Sefer Torah*, to caper and to dance wildly with fitting songs and not be concerned about his own Torah honor, lest they mock him and he become despised in the eyes of the masses. For even if he is a great one in Torah, still King David the anointed one was much greater than he and even so when he brought the holy ark up to Yerushalayim, he danced wildly with all his strength before God…

*Chemdat Yamim* writes that *kevod ha-Torah* should not constrain joyous dancing during the *hakafot –* though in his description, the Torah itself is still treated carefully and held specifically by the *talmid chacham*. This hierarchical mode of celebration is reminiscent of *Simchat Beit Ha-sho’eiva*, at which the sages took the lead, though here the lay people do more than just look on.

As the practice of *hakafot* spread, so did the variations on how to perform them. For example, Rav Chayyim David Ha-levi Azulai, another major popularizer of the practice, had one person standing still with a Torah at the *bima* for the whole time.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Chida, *Tziporen Shamir* 12

First of all, they would place the Torah scroll on the *teiva (bima)* and a God fearing person would remain by it with his hand holding the *Sefer Torah* for the whole time of the *hakafot* [circuits]…

These sources describe people dancing in honor the *Sifrei Torah*, while they are supported at the *bima* or held for dancing by prominent religious figures in the community.

Expanding the Celebration

Very recently, and most prominently in Ashkenazi communities with many scrolls (and lighter scrolls, without heavy Sefardi casings), *hakafot* have expanded to allow for ordinary members of the congregation to pass around the Torah and dance while holding it. Though this has become the accepted practice in many communities, it does not align neatly with the *halachot* of [*kevod ha-Torah*](https://www.deracheha.org/contact-with-sefer-torah) or the earliest records of *hakafot*.

In fact, when this practice began to spread, in the late nineteenth century, the Rav in Bucharest attempted to put a stop to it by taking the controversial step of having fewer *Sifrei Torah* brought out of the *aron kodesh* at each service, even though doing so went against a custom recorded by Rema:[[6]](#footnote-6)

Responsa *Simcha La-ish* OC 4

He saw that the honorable people of substance were not carrying the Torah scrolls to make circuits with them, but rather the masses and children. They did not treat them with *kevod ha-Torah* in accordance with proper behavior. He saw fit to enact that they take out only seven scrolls at night and seven scrolls during the day and seven scrolls at *mincha* …

This effort notwithstanding, the practice of passing the Torah around among the members of the congregation has taken hold in many synagogues.

# Women Celebrating the Torah

Women have celebrated Simchat Torah in a range of ways. Three main modes of celebration have become prevalent: watching, dancing, and dancing with a *Sefer Torah*. There are also synagogues in which women learn Torah together during at least part of the time of the *hakafot*.

Watching

In many synagogues, women watch the men dance, much as Rambam describes lay people observing *Simchat Beit Ha-sho’eiva*. Jerusalem-based blogger Chana Jenny Weisberg writes about how this can be especially fulfilling for a woman who devotes herself to enabling her husband and children to study Torah.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Chana Jenny Weisberg, 'How I Felt about Not Dancing on Simchat Torah,' Jewishmom.com

We JewishMOMs work so very, very hard the entire year enabling our children and our husbands to go off and learn Torah and sometimes teach Torah. Some of us even make some time in our crazy busy lives to learn and teach some Torah ourselves. We continue holding up the Torah even when we don’t feel well, even when we are SO tired, even when it’s very difficult. Because we know that is what being a JewishMOM is all about. So this Simchat Torah, sitting in my seat, watching my husband dance around and around with our 1-year-old on his shoulders, our 4 and 6-year-olds clinging to his tallis, and our 9-year-old a few steps ahead, I felt the intense pleasure of pure, unadulterated nachas. As I sat there, I felt Hashem whispering in my ear, “Chana Jenny, you work so hard holding up my Torah all year long. Today is a gift for you to just enjoy and rest and, in your heart, just today, dance with Me.”

For other women, and not only those who are unattached, looking on at the men's section is less satisfying. These women long to express their love of and connection to Torah by dancing with and kissing the Torah directly.

Batya Gold (pseudonym), Dancing on the Edge, *Jewish Action*, Winter 1999[[8]](#footnote-8)

Simchas Torah has always been a complicated day for me, and for most women I know. I have wandered from shul to shul, trying to find a way of celebrating that feels right. Women are supposed to feel vicarious participation by watching the men dance and sing. Yet as women enter into a more direct relationship with Torah study, indirect participation on Simchas Torah no longer works for many of them. Instead of reinforcing one’s bond to Torah, it creates alienation. Instead of *simcha*, it creates pain.

Dancing

In some synagogues, women dance in the *ezrat nashim*, without a *sefer Torah*. One might think that this is an innovative synagogue practice. Women's dancing for Simchat Torah, however, is not entirely new.

The women of medieval Worms were accustomed to dance in honor of the Torah late on the afternoon of Shemini Atzeret, just before Simchat Torah:

Rav Yosef Yozef Ha-levi, beadle of Worms in the 17th century, quoted in Ya'ari, p. 210

The custom of women between *mincha* and *ma'ariv* of that day [*erev* Simchat Torah]: they come in their best, most beautiful, and most expensive clothes and enter the outer room of the synagogue before the outer door of the women's synagogue. Most of the women, especially the younger women, link hands, with the wives of the *chatan Torah* and *chatan Bereishit* taking the lead, and they circle round and round and sing 'Yigdal' and songs that they usually sing in honor of groom and bride…

Women's dancing on Simchat Torah is widely permitted, as a matter of giving honor to the Torah. For example, Rav Avraham Yosef (son of Rav Ovadya and chief rabbi of Cholon) takes it as a matter of course:[[9]](#footnote-9)

Rav Avraham Yosef, *'Simchat Torah Le-nashim,'* Moreshet.co.il, 5774

The *simcha* itself certainly is permitted [to women] including, of course, dancing and clapping. The problem arises when they seek to dance with Torah scrolls…

# Dancing with a *Sefer Torah*

Including a *Sefer Torah* in women's celebrations has been met with more reservations than dancing without one. Here are some of the most commonly raised considerations regarding women dancing with a *Sefer Torah*. Similar arguments apply to women's dancing with a Torah at a *hachnasat Sefer Torah* celebration, when a new Torah scroll is brought to a synagogue or other institution.

**I. The Nidda Custom** In our previous installment, we discussed a custom among some women to avoid attending synagogue or touching a *Sefer Torah* while menstruating. Even communities that observe this custom waive it in cases where it would cause women "great anguish." In his evaluation of women's dancing with a *Sefer Torah* on Simchat Torah in the mid 1970's,[[10]](#footnote-10) Rav Menachem M. Schneersohn reportedly questioned whether there was sufficient anguish on Simchat Torah to override the custom in favor of having women dance with Torah scrolls.

Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, letter to Rav Shlomo Riskin, 13 Kislev 1976 (from translation)

…Another aspect of the problem, which although it is not connected specifically to Simchat Torah and to the *hakafot*, is still directly connected to the question of what should be the practical custom in this matter [women dancing with the Torah]. I mean the halacha brought in *Shulchan Aruch* OC 88, which relates to women in certain circumstances [menstruation] regarding visiting synagogue and the *Sefer Torah*, etc…"For it will be a great anguish for them when everyone gathers but they stand outside." One should note that the question there deals with entering the synagogue; even then, anguish is not enough [to permit it], but only 'great anguish.' We see from this that in such matters, especially regarding the *Sefer Torah*, we have no power or authority to create new customs… and certainly not to permit holding *hakafot* with a *Sefer Torah* [for women].

Over the past forty years, anguish at not being able to dance with the Torah on Simchat Torah may have developed for some women into "great anguish" of the sort that could override the custom even where it is practiced. Greater availability of more effective menstrual hygiene products could also affect the relevance of this custom.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This custom is not obligatory to start with, and women today do come to synagogue when menstruating. It is difficult to argue that women should not dance with a Torah on Simchat Torah based on a custom that has fallen out of practice, and that can be overridden when necessary.

**II. *Kevod ha-Torah*** Another common reservation is that dancing with the *Sefer Torah* has gotten out of hand among men, and that ideally only the scholars and leaders of the community should be dancing with the *Sifrei Torah*, as was originally the case. If so, extending the wild celebrations to women would only exacerbate the issue, expanding a practice that should be reined in.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Rav Yaakov Ariel notes that not all synagogues include dancing with Torah scrolls as part of their men's celebrations, and that such dancing can even lead to damage to the scrolls.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Rav Ya'akov Ariel, *Halacha Be-yameinu*, pp. 252-3

It is not known what is the source of the men’s custom to dance with the Torah scrolls. The original custom was to dance **around** the Torah scrolls placed on the *bima*…Dancing **with** Torah scrolls is greatly problematic. It causes levity towards the scrolls. It is one of the reasons that scrolls become invalid [damaged or torn so they cannot be used for public readings]…Why, then, are women interested in practicing specifically a custom which already has objectors?...If women indeed wish to rejoice truly on Simchat Torah, I would suggest to them that they do this on their own, in their own atmosphere and their own location. There they can rejoice and dance, around the Torah, as in the original custom, and not with the Torah…

Rav Ariel believes that his suggestion of having women dance around a Torah scroll set down in the middle of the circle could address concerns about *kevod ha-Torah.*[[14]](#footnote-14)

Taking a similar but more optimistic approach, Rav Nahum Rabinovich sees women's *hakafot*, with women dancing around a distinguished woman holding the Torah, as an opportunity to refocus a community's relationship to *hakafot*, with an eye *to kevod ha-Torah*.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Rav Nahum Rabinovich, Responsa *Siach Nachum* 40

It seems, in my humble opinion, that if the congregation wants to implement a practice that will provide gratification to women [*Chagiga* 16b] on Simchat Torah, and thus establish that in the women's section one of the prominent women holds the Torah, and others dance before her in a manner of honor and glory [to the Torah]—certainly there is a rectification here, one that involves no prohibition whatsoever, for it was never prohibited for women to hold a *Sefer Torah*. Perhaps even the men will learn from this to act with appropriate respect.

A discussion about whether and how to institute women’s *hakafot* offers an ideal opportunity for a community to consider how their Simchat Torah practices can best honor the Torah, the synagogue, and Yom Tov. In this context, it may be entirely appropriate for respectful dancing with the Torah to include women as well as men. Communities of women may also develop new variations on this custom, or revive old ones, possibly inspiring the men to do the same.

**III. Synagogue Custom** A third consideration, one that Rav Schneerson pointed to as well, is that this practice is an innovation.

Rav Herschel Schachter makes this case (among others) in a piece co-signed by a number of prominent Yeshiva University Roshei Yeshiva, and reporting opposition by Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Moshe Feinstein to *hakafot* and women's *tefilla* groups:[[16]](#footnote-16)

Rav Herschel Schachter, *Be-ikvei Ha-tzon* 5, p. 32

This [women's *hakafot* and women's *tefillot*] involves the problem of a clear and very pronounced change from the tradition of our forefathers, and the problem of breaching boundaries of Jewish custom and separating from the ways of the community. Specifically, there is unique [halachic] meticulousness regarding synagogue customs… After study and considered discussion in a group of some of the Rabbis of the Yeshiva, it seems clear that all of these practices [women's *hakafot* and women's *tefilla* groups] are prohibited…Especially [regarding] the matter of synagogue custom, the later authorities were very stringent…For its [the synagogue's] status is that of a lesser *mikdash*…

It is unclear if the strong language here would have been employed the same way had the matter of women dancing with a *Sefer Torah* been raised separately from women's *tefilla* groups. In any case, innovative practice is especially thorny in the synagogue. It is perhaps along these lines that Rav Aharon Lichtenstein reportedly differentiated between synagogues and other settings:[[17]](#footnote-17)

Rav Ze'ev Weitman, 'Hakafot Simchat Torah for Women,' Letter to Alon Shevut Community, Tishrei 5788.

Rav [Yosef Zvi] Rimon himself says that, following consultation with Rav Lichtenstein, he permitted dancing with a *sefer Torah* at a girls’ *midrasha* [seminary]. But according to him, Rav Lichtenstein permitted this only in a seminary, because from a halachic perspective it is permissible but it is not suitable or proper for a community synagogue.

Rav Lichtenstein may have felt that the customs of a synagogue have more weight than other venues. His reported position is not that the act is prohibited in synagogue, but that it is inappropriate there because it is not customary.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The argument about protecting synagogue practice is particularly interesting given that the *hakafot* themselves are a relatively recent innovation in most communities, and that their practice continues to evolve. For example, after the fact, Rav Ya'akov Elyashar gave his approbation to the change in custom in Bucharest to taking out only a portion of the scrolls at each set of *hakafot*:[[19]](#footnote-19)

*Simcha La-ish* OC 4

For the enactment was already made… and the entire congregation accepted and agreed on this enactment with good will, and the enactor’s intention was to honor the Torah, it is not fitting to go back and change the enactment that they should go back to their original custom after the deed was already done with the agreement of all the congregation. Granted, if they had asked and looked into it before acting, we would have said not to change their custom. But after they already acted for a year or two with agreement, we should strengthen the hand of the enactor and anyone who complains about them for the sake of custom is acting inappropriately…

Rav Elyashar argues that a new Simchat Torah custom that contravenes a relatively older custom can become accepted*.* The case of women dancing might even be easier to accept, because it doesn’t uproot a prior custom, but adds a new one.

The more permissive opinion of Rav Rabinovich also emphasizes the importance of custom and of care in addressing this matter:[[20]](#footnote-20)

Rav Nahum Rabinovich, Responsa *Siach Nachum* 40

There is no prohibition against women dancing with a *Sefer Torah*, on condition that they treat it with appropriate respect. But on the other hand, one should not change a synagogue's custom without the agreement of a majority of the congregation. In most congregations, women did not have the custom of dancing with the *Sefer Torah* on Simchat Torah, and if they want to change the custom they need to ask the community for their opinion. Of course, if there is a Rav of the community, nothing should be done without his agreement.

It is important to note that Rav Rabinovich's responsum was addressed to a community in which there was serious internal opposition to women dancing with a Sefer Torah. It is possible that he would have taken a less hesitant tone with a different community.

**IV. Increasing Simcha** Yom Tov should be a day of joy for the entire community. We have seen the words of *Chemdat Yamim* that “one who increases all types of rejoicing before the *Sefer Torah* arouses rejoicing above.” Eliya Rabba adds that we should enable everyone to rejoice as much as possible:

Eliya Rabba 669

One should cause the masses to rejoice in the joy of the mitzva in whatever way is possible [on Simchat Torah].

The Talmud teaches us of the halachic importance of *nachat ru'ach le-nashim*, gratifying women.[[21]](#footnote-21) In considering the question of women dancing with a Sefer Torah, the potential positive impact on the community should also be taken into consideration.

Concluding Thoughts

Based on some or all of the first three considerations above, a number of halachic authorities have either prohibited or expressed reservations about women dancing with *Sifrei Torah* on Simchat Torah. Many specific communities, however, find these reservations surmountable and do have dancing for women with a *Sefer Torah* in order to increase the *simcha*.

This is not a cut and dried halachic discussion. Consequently, how women of a given community should celebrate Simchat Torah is a communal issue, that communities may resolve in a range of ways. Regardless of what conclusion is reached, all of us stand to benefit from learning more about the *hakafot*, from refreshing our acquaintance with the laws of *kevod ha-Torah*, and from seeking to enhance our *simchat Torah* on Simchat Torah.

● Why is this such a big deal?

The symbolism of the Sefer Torah is at the heart of this issue. From the start, when Rambam extends rulings about thinking about Torah to the [physical scroll](https://www.deracheha.org/contact-with-sefer-torah/), we learn that the Sefer Torah, beyond its own holiness, represents Torah itself.

For a woman to be close to a Sefer Torah can be meaningful to her because it symbolizes being close to Torah. Many women have little to no contact with a Sefer Torah over the course of the year and feel that distance most strongly on Simchat Torah.

For men to hand over a Sefer Torah to women during hakafot may feel like relinquishing something exceedingly precious. When men don't hand over a Sefer Torah so that women can rejoice over it, it can give rise to a sense among some women that men are controlling access to Torah. This can be particularly painful to women who engage in Torah study regularly, whose access to the words of Torah is deeply meaningful and who may long for access to the physical scroll as well. Other women may feel uncomfortable with the idea of holding a Sefer Torah.

Even if a Torah is not handed to the women in a shul, a synagogue community and its leadership should carefully consider how still to convey the message that they respect and value women's portion in and engagement with Torah. To this end, they might consider designating a specific woman to hold the Torah or placing it on a table in the women’s section, as Rav Ya'akov Ariel suggested, to ensure kevod ha-Torah is maintained while providing an opportunity for women to rejoice with the scroll.

Deracheha Editor-at-large Sarah Rudolph presents her take on what it means for women to dance as an expression of women’s joy and portion in Torah, even without a scroll: [[22]](#footnote-22)

Sarah Rudolph, "Simchat Torah Doesn't Have to be a Men's Holiday

…Holding the scroll, that, to my mind, is secondary. The real point is that we have an equal right to rejoice in our sacred heritage. Nobody is making us chat; ultimately, no one is stopping us from dancing. If it’s a men’s holiday, that is because we let it be….On Simchat Torah, I dance for the concept of Torah, not the object. I dance for myself and my love of Torah study. I dance for the joy of the completed cycle of reading, and I dance for the joy of beginning all over again. I dance because I will shortly have tears in my eyes, like I do every year, as I listen to the account of Moses’ death in the last few verses of the Torah. I dance because I will shortly be awed, as I am every year, when we begin again and read, “And it was evening, and it was morning, one day.” The very beginning of everything; something, where there had been nothing.

*This being said, we should still be sensitive to the fact that many women have a difficult time navigating feelings of disenfranchisement, especially on Simchat Torah, when the Torah scrolls remain in the men's section. These feelings can be especially strong among women who are deeply involved and invested in Torah.*

*We need to engage in education and dialogue to bring us to a point where every Jewish woman can give expression to her love of Torah on Simchat Torah and where our communities make it clear that they celebrate women's connection to Torah.*

# Further Reading

Rabinovich, Rav Nahum. Responsa *Si'ach Nachum*, *Siman* 40.Rudolph, Sarah Davis, "Simchas Torah and Women," *Torahmusings.com*, 2017. Available here: <https://www.torahmusings.com/2017/10/simchas-torah-women/?fbclid=IwAR1KgEgdzcS_77sppDs_hO6wlYLr3Q1mdTkRzTilhCfsAS66lwQH4sITdSA>

Student, Rav Gil, "Women Dancing with Torah Scrolls," Torahmusings.com, 2014. Available here: <https://www.torahmusings.com/2014/10/women-torah-scrolls/>

Weitman, Rav Ze'ev, "*Hakafot* Simchat Torah for Women." Letter to Alon Shevut Community, Tishrei 5788. Available here: <https://www.alonshvut.org.il/objDoc.asp?PID=623590&OID=623608>

Ya’ari, Avraham. Toldot Chag Simchat Torah. Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-rav Kook, 19. (Originally published 1964).

1. After citing the Ge’onim, Maharik makes this point. In contrast, customs which entailed Torah-level prohibitions were not waived for honoring the Torah.

Shu”t Maharik 9

“Here, a *minhag* [custom] done in honor of the Torah overrides even a *shevut* (rabbinic prohibition), namely, dancing on Yom Tov.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In *Eretz Yisrael*, Shemini Atzeret is observed for only one day. Furthermore, the custom in *Eretz Yisrael* was to complete the reading of the Torah only about every three years, so there was no annual celebration of its completion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Although his practice was originally to dance on the night following Simchat Torah, rather than on Yom Tov itself. See Ya'ari, pp. 266-270. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Although *Chemdat Yamim* was a very influential work, it was also alleged to be Sabbatean. Available here: <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=49706&st=&pgnum=508> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Available here: <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=34732&st=&pgnum=37> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Available here: <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=466&st=&pgnum=18> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Available here: <http://jewishmom.com/2016/10/25/how-i-felt-about-not-dancing-on-simchat-torah/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Available here: <https://jewishaction.com/opinion/dancing-edge/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Available here: <http://shut.moreshet.co.il/shut2.asp?id=166467> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. We are still attempting to obtain a copy of the original letter to share here.

The Hebrew translation of the letter from which we prepared this translation is available here: <http://www.haoros.com/Archive/index.asp?cat=11&haoro=7&kovetz=902#ftn37> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This case differs from that of "*guf naki*" regarding *tefillin*, which may not refer to menstruation at all and which is a halachic obligation (not a mere stringency) because *tefillin* are worn on the body. See our article on *guf naki* here: [deracheha.org/tefillin-2-guf-naki](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CLNovick%5CDownloads%5Cderacheha.org%5Ctefillin-2-guf-naki) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Available here: <https://www.yeshiva.org.il/ask/1197> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ariel, Rav Ya’akov, *Halacha Be-yameinu* (Ashkelon: *Machon Ha-Torah Ve-ha-aretz*, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This suggestion could also address the concern about the *nidda* custom, in communities for which that is relevant. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Available here: <http://www.ybm.org.il/Admin/uploaddata/LessonsFiles/Pdf/9592.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In *Mi-pninei Ha-Rav* (below), he quotes Rav Soloveitchik as making this assertion in extreme terms, though Rav Soloveitchik's approach was debated (as was Rav Moshe's position):

Rav Y. B. Soloveitchik, quoted in Rav Herschel Shachter, *Mi-pninei Ha-Rav*, p. 142

It [women dancing with the Torah on Simchat Torah] is in total opposition to our entire tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Available here: <https://www.alonshvut.org.il/objDoc.asp?PID=623590&OID=623608> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See also Frimer and Frimer, “Women's Prayer Services Theory and Practice,” *Tradition* 32:2 (Winter 1998): 5-118, note 213, which reports that Rav Lichtenstein, on a theoretical level, "also maintained that women dancing with the *Sefer* *Torah* on *Simhat* *Torah*was halakhically permitted." Available here: <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/english/tfila/frimmer3.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Available here: <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=466&st=&pgnum=21> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Available here: <http://www.ybm.org.il/Admin/uploaddata/LessonsFiles/Pdf/9592.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Chagiga 16b

Rabbi Yosei said: Abba Elazar told me: Once, we had a calf for a *shelamim* [peace] offering, and we brought it to the women’s courtyard, and the women leaned on it. Not because leaning on a sacrifice applies to women, but in order to give gratification to the women [*nachat ru’ach la-nashim*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Available here: <https://www.kveller.com/simchat-torah-doesnt-have-to-be-a-mens-holiday/> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)