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the Fall Feasts of Israel

Sukkoth

by haRold Smith

a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)

"You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am YaHoVeH your Elohim." Leviticus 23:42-43

Legend has it that our forefather Abraham sat in his tent with the flaps of the tent folded up on all four sides so he could welcome weary wayfarers from every direction. This lovely image of patriarchal generosity is evoked by the holiday of *Sukkoth*. The Feast of *Sukkoth* is the most flamboyant of the seven feasts mentioned in [Leviticus 23](#) ([click on highlighted words to view content](#)). It is the most public, and noisy and joyous. Celebrated on the fifteenth through the 22nd days of the seventh month (i.e., *Tishri*), it is also called the "Feast of Tabernacles," or the "Feast of Booths." "Booth" and "Tabernacle" are attempts to translate the Hebrew word *sukkah* (the plural is *sukkoth*) which means a makeshift shelter, or a hut. The Hebrews were instructed by YaHoVeH [through Moses](#) to commemorate this festival by "living in booths" because YaHoVeH protected them as they wandered in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. Just as *Pesach* (Passover) commemorates the coming out of Egypt, *Sukkoth* commemorates the journey itself and YaHoVeH's watchful protection over his wandering people.



...a tabernacle

Every able-bodied person is required to "dwell" in the *sukkah* during the festival. In modern traditional rabbinical observance however, dwelling in the *sukkah* involves at a minimum the taking of one meal there. Some actually sleep in their *sukkahs*, if they live where weather permits it. Living in the *sukkah*, an imperfect dwelling, is to help the dweller to recall how the Israelites were completely vulnerable and totally dependent on YaHoVeH during their wanderings in the wilderness. The fact that the thatch of his *sukkah* is open enough to let in the rain also means it is open enough to allow a view of YaHoVeH's creation. How often in our lives, when we feel secure in the world we have built for ourselves, do we lose sight of YaHoVeH? In general, there is a two-fold meaning to this celebration in Israel and throughout the world. The first being the Fall Harvest found in Leviticus 23 that teaches it is a time of bringing in the harvest and thanksgiving. Many believe that the Puritan Colonists who landed in America were great students of the Hebrew scriptures and based the first American Thanksgiving on *Sukkoth*. The second meaning found in the command to dwell in booths is in memory of Israel's 40 years of wilderness wandering.

Another translation of the word *Sukkoth* is "habitation." As we camp in our dwellings in present time we need to remember that the same *Elohim* is watching over us today and that, if we let Him, He inhabits our lives with a care beyond our imagination. Part of the ritual orthodox traditions surrounding *Sukkoth* include blessings said over the "Lulav" (palm branch), "Etrog" (a fruit from Israel that looks like a large lemon); also the "Hadas" (Myrtle) and "Arava" (the youngest branch of the willow before it opens). These are called the four spices because of the compelling nature of what they portray. First the Etrog, which tastes sweet and has a delightful aroma, represents a person with knowledge of Torah and good deeds. The Lulav which comes from a fruit called the Date Palm tastes sweet but has no fragrance meaning that some people have knowledge of Torah but no good deeds. The Hadas is just opposite of the Date Palm - having a nice fragrance but no taste (good deeds without the true knowledge of Torah). Arava has neither taste nor smell and speaks of persons without knowledge of Torah or good deeds. [James 2:17](#) sums this up by saying "Faith without works is dead." *Sukkoth* is



known also as "Zman Simkhatenu" the Time of Rejoicing) - the knowledge that YaHoVeH has made available His habitation and lives within those who keep His Words and embrace the Life exemplified by Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel - is certainly a time for rejoicing in this era.

Sukkoth And The Birth of Messiah

There are three times YaHoVeH commanded the Hebrews to assemble in the Temple in Jerusalem. On these three Holidays they were to present offerings to Him. Those three are: the first day of *Matzoh* (Feast Of Unleavened Bread, the first day after *Pesach* - renamed *Passover*), *Shavu'ot*, (renamed *Pentecost*) and *Sukkoth* being the third and last of the three ([Exodus 23:14-17](#), [Deuteronomy 16:16](#)). The month of *Tishri* falls in September or October on Western Calendars and the three holidays contained therein are *Yom Teruah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkoth*. These three are often called the *Second Advent*. With the *First Advent* in springtime, we have the the Feasts of *Pesach* (*Passover*), *Matzot* (*Unleavened Bread*) and *Re'shiyth* (*First Fruits*). Yeshua died on *Pesach*, He was buried on the Feast of *Matzot*, and (after rising on the third day) presented Himself to YaHoVeH on *Re'shiyth* as the **First Fruit of Resurrection**. Because of the portal reclaiming *echad* with YaHoVeH opened by the Resurrection of Yeshua, 50 days later His Father sent His Breath of Life on the following Feast of *Shavu'ot* (*Pentecost*). We can see that YaHoVeH is setting up a pattern. Let us then look at the remainder of the three Feasts to see if something as important as the Birth of the Messiah would surely fit into this pattern.

With the celebration of *Sukkoth* having so many wonderful teachings in it, you would think that the Messianic Writings (NT) would have reference in it of *Sukkoth* - well, it does. [John 1:1](#) says, the Word not only was with YaHoVeH, but **the Word** was the very manifestation of the Nature and Essence of YaHoVeH Himself. Then in [John 1:14](#) we read that the Word became **manifested** in flesh and dwelt among us and we saw *His Sh'kinah*, *the Sh'kinah glory of the Father upon His Son full of Grace and Glory*. But did you notice the word John used to describe this event? He said **"dwelt"** among His people. This English word "dwelt" is translated from the Greek word **skeno** and the Greeks translated that from the Hebrew word *sukkah* which, as we have just seen, is translated as the English "tabernacle." John was describing the Holy Day of *Sukkoth* - the Holy Day that celebrates the dwelling of YaHoVeH among His people. A more correct translation of that scripture would read: "And the Word was made flesh and **tabernacled** among us." If the first Advent showed Yeshua's death on the cross on *Pesach*, buried on *Mazot*, resurrected at *Re'shiyth* and the Breath of Life poured out on *Shavu'ot* - do you think that YaHoVeH would let such an important event as the birth of His Son go unheralded? *Sukkoth* shows that YaHoVeH would dwell ("tabernacle") in the midst of His people through the Resurrection of the Messiah, Yeshua. Since we know that Yeshua died on *Pesach* and we also know His ministry lasted **3 1/2 years**, this is ample evidence for us to backtrack 6 months to put us right at *Sukkoth*, the date of His Birth 33 years earlier. The celebration of December 25th as the birth of the Messiah **is pagan** in its origin and comes from the Roman Empire. The early *Roman* Catholic Church often "christianized" pagan days of celebration to accommodate new converts. This date in December was an ancient feast that celebrated the return of the sun after the winter solstice. It has absolutely nothing to do with the birth of Yeshua. Christians began to say that since there was no real proof of the Messiah's birth date - this would do. What they did not consider was John's description using the term "Tabernacle" or "Booths" or "*Sukkoth*."

One of the ceremonies of *Sukkoth* that took place before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE was the pouring of water - a time of prayer for water and rain in Israel. Each morning of *Sukkoth*, the priests went to the pool of *shiloach* (today called *silom* in the city of David) near Jerusalem to fill a golden flask. Shofar blasts greeted their arrival at the Temple's Water Gate. As they would bring it back to the Temple crowds of people would follow them dancing and singing the *Hallel* ([Psalms 113-118](#)). The highlight of this event was when the priests would pour the water so that it flowed over the altar of the Temple simultaneously with wine from another bowl (called **the water libation**). It became known as *Simchat Beit Hashoavah* - the rejoicing (*Simchat*) at the place of (*Beit*) the water drawing (*Hashoavah*). The question to be asked is: why



would there be so much rejoicing at the pouring of water? It has to be more than rejoicing of the future rain on Israel, as important as that might be. It is because as we read in [Isaiah 12:3](#), "Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation." The English translated word **salvation** in Hebrew is *Yeshua* - **the name** of the Messiah! This was much more than the pouring out of water at the Temple, or even for the rain. The *Simchat Beit*

Hashoavah pointed directly to the coming of the Messiah and the day of **redemption** when the water of the YaHoVeH's Spirit would be poured out upon all Israel. Now we can appreciate the scripture that was recorded on one day in the Messiah's life during a *Sukkoth* celebration:

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water".' Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him (to be the promised Messiah) were to receive, for as yet the Breath of Life had not been given, because Yeshua was not yet glorified." John 7:37-39

Think for a moment of the time and place of these words being proclaimed by Yeshua. It was *Sukkoth* and it was the time of the pouring of the water. The crowds were filled with those who had expectation of the Messiah and the redemption He would bring to YaHoVeH's family of Israel. At the moment of the time of the pouring of the water the Messiah stood and made this bold proclamation. He was saying, "I am the Messiah, do you truly want the living water of the spirit of YaHoVeH? If you truly want the *Beit Hashoavah*, believe in Me as the Messiah of Israel." After eight days of *Sukkoth* the celebration ends and on the 8th day, our Messiah was circumcised.

How, then, are the feasts contained in **the 613 ordinances** of the Torah to be kept? Are they to be observed by the legalistic tenets of the religion of Judaism? Or, should they be **elevated** to the higher level of Spirit Yeshua spoke of? I keep all the feasts - just not in the ritualistic manner to which most are accustomed. I worship the Father in Spirit **and** Truth - not substituting one for the other (**John 4:23-24**). He has become my *Teruah* because I am constantly listening for His trumpeting (voice); I don't live for a week out under the stars because YaHoVeH has become my *Sukkot* where I constantly abide; He is my *Shavu'ot*, daily filling me with His Spirit; He has become my *Pesach* (redemption); He is my *Kippur* (atonement); etc. So, while acknowledging these events by my **elevation** of them in Spirit in this generation (as with **His Temple**) and **not abolishing** them, I have found the ritualistic manner in which most celebrate the feasts to not be necessary.

"Come, everyone who thirsts come to the waters; and he who has no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price... For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." Isaiah 55:1, 44:3

The Fall Festivals Of Israel Series
Part One: Yom Teruah - Awakening Blast
Part Two: Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement
Part Three: Sukkoth - Feast of Tabernacles

a discussion of Sukkoth



???Questions???

Please feel free to email me at harold@hethathasaneer.com. While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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