

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles/Booths)

Leviticus 22:26-23:44, Numbers 29:12-16, Zechariah 14:1-24, Revelation 7:1-10



This year (2011), beginning on the evening of October 12th and lasting until October 19th, we celebrate the Festival of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles or Booths) which completes the cycle of the Fall feasts.

After the somber, introspective time of Yom Tru'ah and Yom Kippur, Sukkot is a joyous celebration. During this festive season, we recall how God's faithfulness provided for our ancestors as they wandered the Sinai wilderness for forty years before entering the Promised Land.

At Sukkot we remember God's kindness and mercy in leading and guiding Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and protecting them by night with a pillar of fire, and for providing them with daily manna. Just as Israel dwelt in temporary dwellings (called Sukkot in Hebrew), so are we to dwell in sukkot for this entire week (Tishrei 15-21).

Most people in Israel and Jewish people all over the world build a temporary hut or shelter with a covering of branches or palm leaves. For seven days and nights, we eat in the sukkah and consider it our dwelling; some even live in the sukkah entirely for the duration of the festival.



Another custom for Sukkot is to take four kinds (arbah minim): an etrog (citron), a lulav (Palm frond), three **hadassim** (myrtle twigs) and two **aravot** (willow twigs), which are waved in all six directions: right, left, forward, up, down and backward.



Rabbinic tradition explains that these represent the kinds of personalities that make up the community of Israel. They are held together and a blessing is recited over them to bless the unity of all people, which is emphasized on Sukkot.

One of the names of Sukkot is the **Festival of the nations**. In Israel, people gather from all nations of the earth to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

Another name for Sukkot is: **The Season of our Joy**. Each night of the feast, a water drawing ceremony takes place in remembrance of the ones that used to take place in the Holy Temple.

This ceremony not only celebrates the hope of winter rains in Israel, but also symbolizes the future Messianic Redemption when the Spirit of God (symbolized by the water) is poured out upon the nation of Israel. This will bring great joy!

“Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)

Even today, many Jewish people gather in near the Western Wall to dance, sing and rejoice before the Lord. People fill the synagogues and streets with singing and dancing with tremendous joy until the wee hours of the morning.

The Prophets tell us that a day will come when the exiles of Israel return to Zion, her streets will be filled with the sounds of joyful melodies; sorrow will disappear.

“The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” (Isaiah 51:11)

The seventh and final day of sukkot is called **Hoshana Rabah** (Great Salvation). It marks the end of the period of judgment that began on Rosh Hashanah. The rabbis tell us that no one has known true joy until they have experienced the joy of this final evening of the feast of Sukkot.

Yeshua (Jesus) stood up on this final day of the Feast of Sukkot (Festival of Tabernacles), probably during the **ceremony of the drawing of the water** and proclaimed Himself to be the source of Living Water. He invited all who were thirsty to come and drink, **the water representing the Spirit (Ruach Hakodesh)**.

“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” (John 7:37-39)

The Haftarah (Prophetic Portion of Scripture) for Sukkot describes in graphic violence God's punishment of the nations who come against His holy city of Jerusalem. The book of Zechariah contains an apocalyptic vision of the destruction of all the nations which attacked her.

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...” (Zechariah 14:1)

The judgment on the nations is characterized by earthquakes, plagues, heavy darkness, and signs of nuclear destruction, all manifesting God's personal intervention on behalf of Israel.

Finally the nations will see that Israel is the apple of God's eye and woe to the one who dares to touch her.

The Lord declares through the Prophet Zechariah, “On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, **I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.**” (Zechariah 12:3)

Finally all the nations will be converted to the God of Israel and will worship Him in Spirit and Truth. In that day, **YHVH will be King over all the earth; in that day, YHVH shall be One and His name One.** (Zechariah 14:9)

As their first act of worship, all nations will be required to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. All those who survived the judgment but refuse to come and celebrate Sukkot will be cursed with drought. (Zechariah 14:16-19)

Many Christians who believe that these ‘moadim’ (God appointed times of Feasts and Festivals) have been abolished will perhaps need to reconsider their theology when they are required to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot or else be dried up from lack of rain.

Many of God's people from the nations are coming year by year to the Land of Israel, to the city of Jerusalem, to celebrate Sukkot together with the people of Israel in a beautiful foreshadowing of what will take place after the Lord returns and establishes His Messianic reign on earth.

Man of War

God is portrayed in these prophetic passages as **a Divine Warrior**. One of God's names is **Ish Milchama (Man of War)**. **“The Lord is a man of war,”** (*Exodus 15:3*) He fights for Israel and

delivers her from all the nations who surround her: **“Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fights in the day of battle.”** (Zechariah 14:3)

YHVH stands on the Mt of Olives and in an awesome display of His mighty power, splits the Mountain in two! In the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, God split the Reed Sea in order to bring forth, out of the waters, a nation unto Himself.

Crossing through the waters of the Reed Sea represents the birth of the nation of Israel. At the end of time, a ‘New Jerusalem’ will be re-born by this splitting of the Mt. of Olives. The **Mount of Olives is a famous, ancient burial site**. By splitting this place of death, Yeshua declares His victory over death, and gives birth to the New Jerusalem in the Messianic Kingdom.

Gan Eden Restored

When the Lord places His feet on the Mt of Olives and it splits into two, springs of water flow forth, like the breaking of the amniotic sac, thus releasing the **waters of birth**. This hidden stream beneath Jerusalem will flow out to irrigate the Land and make it like a Garden of Eden once again, thus bringing healing to the nations.

“Then the angel showed me the **river of the water of life**, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And **the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations**. (Revelation 22:1-2)

Therefore, God is seen, in Zechariah’s prophetic end time vision, not only as a powerful warrior, taking vengeance for Zion’s sake, but also as a gentle midwife who helps to bring forth the rebirth of the heavens and earth.

God will bring forth a New Jerusalem which will live in safety: **“And there shall be no more extermination; but Jerusalem shall dwell safely.”** (Zechariah 14:11) The Hebrew word used for extermination is **cherem**, which is usually translated **‘curse’**.

There will **no longer be a curse** that will bring destruction and exile.

“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.” (Revelation 22:3)

Jerusalem will never again be threatened by enemies, war or drought. Weeping and sorrow will be no more, for God will answer when they cry out to Him for help.

“People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.” (Isaiah 30:19)

No longer will there be famine or sickness, or death; no more mourning, or crying or pain. All the old will pass away and all things will become new.

‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ (Revelation 21:4)

This festival of Sukkot has tremendous significance, not only for Israel, but also for the nations for several reasons:

- 1) Sukkot reminds us that our God is faithful to lead and guide and provide for His people, even in a wilderness season.
- 2) While dwelling in a temporary shelter, we are reminded that we are only pilgrims and strangers passing through this time on earth; and that Heaven is our true home.
- 3) The Prophet Zechariah warns God’s people in the nations to stand with Israel and not to join with those who come against Jerusalem in the end times.
- 4) The remnant that survives out of the nations must be prepared to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles together with Israel when the Lord Yeshua returns.
- 5) Some Biblical scholars believe that Tabernacles is the actual time of Yeshua’s birth, since the shepherds were more likely out in the fields in the fall, rather than the winter.
- 6) When Yeshua returns upon the blast of the shofar on the Feast of Trumpets, and all His people will recognize Him as their Messiah and mourn for him on the Day of Atonement, then He will finally establish His Messianic Kingdom of righteousness on Sukkot.
- 7) On the Feast of Tabernacles, God will finally ‘tabernacle’ with His people and dwell amongst us, thereby completely fulfilling Sukkot and the entire cycle of the Feasts of Israel.

“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell (tabernacle) with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3)

This is the final fulfillment of Sukkot:

“The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)



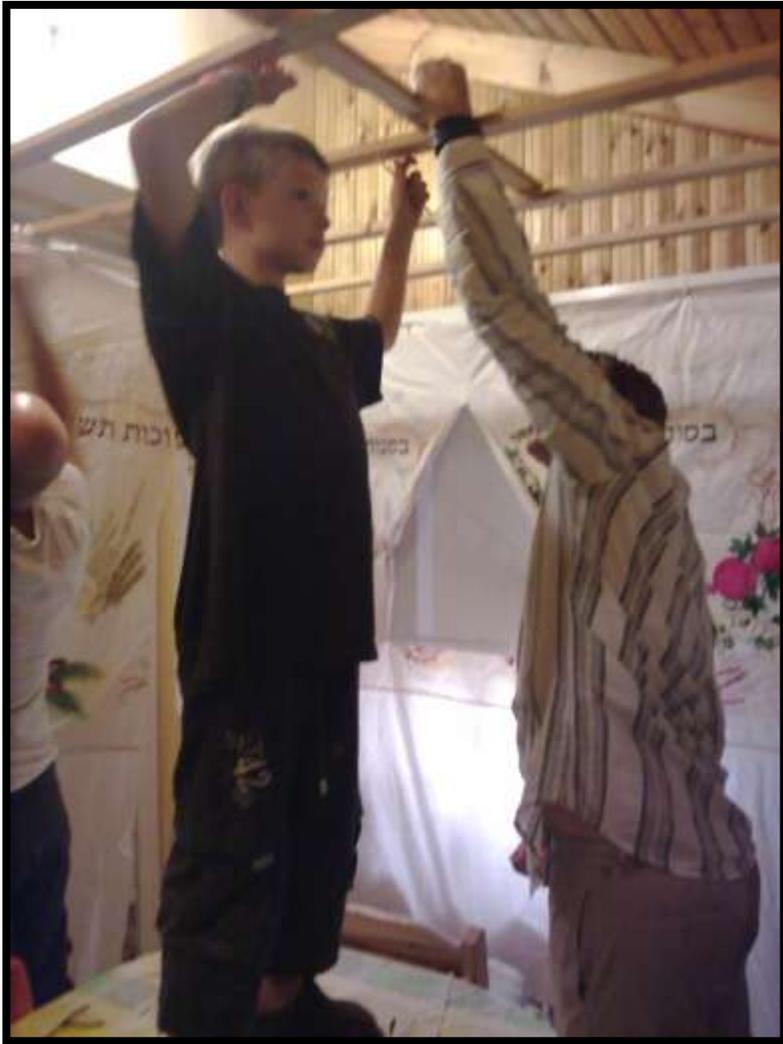
Here is a sukkah the children built at the Messianic Jewish school in Jerusalem where Liat attends. We remember that God has promised to shelter us in His personal sukkah (סכה) in times of trouble.

“For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle (Sukkah (סכה) in Hebrew); In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” (Psalm 27:5)

Chag Sameach (Happy Holidays)

Love Hannah, Timothy, Liat & Avi

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Putting up the family sukkah in Israel