

# סוכות

## **Sukkot - the Feast of Tabernacles**

The feast of Booths - Feast of Ingathering (*Chag Ha-Asif*)  
and *Simchat Torah* or Rejoicing in the Law  
and *Shimini Atzeret* the eighth day



**"Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu, Melech ha Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvo-sav, vi'tsavanu lay-shave ba- sukkah"**

"Blessed art thou O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with His *mitzvot* , and instructed us to sit in the *sukkah*"

[www.aish.com/holidays/sukkot/default.asp](http://www.aish.com/holidays/sukkot/default.asp)

(*Sukkot* - Tabernacles ( or Booths ) is found in Deuteronomy 16 starting at v13, Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. Be joyful at your Feast--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

Also, Leviticus 23 v39-43 says, " `So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.' "

( *Sukkot* is the plural form of *Sukkah* - adding "*ot*" in Hebrew is equivalent to adding an "s" in English )

(Sukkot is pronounced as "sue **coat**" - emphasis on the second syllable )

*Sukkot* is the seventh of the seven feasts in *Torah* (the five books of Teaching (Law)) ( Remember seven is for completeness) Tabernacles is the only feast with specific instructions to Rejoice.

(Tabernacles is reckoned by scholars to be the time of *Yeshua's* birth. ) (see also [Dates in the Christian Calendar](#))



**Simchat Torah** (Rejoicing in the *Torah*) is celebrated on **22nd Tishrei**, the day after the end of Tabernacles, and marks the reading of the last portion of *Torah* and the reading of the first portion in the next year. (*Torah* is read right through every year) The Torah scrolls are carried around the synagogues with great joy, sometimes with dancing, and possibly spilling out onto the streets and throwing candies to the children. (Perhaps we could enthuse this much about our Bibles)

**22nd Tishrei**, The day after the end of Tabernacles is also celebrated as ***Shmini Atzeret***; the eighth, extra, day of assembly. Someone said that it is like God saying, "Wasn't that good to celebrate together - lets have one more day." It culminates the celebration of renewal and thanksgiving and invokes anticipation of the Messianic Age.

Memorial (***Yizkor***) services are said in synagogue in remembrance of family members and friends who have died.

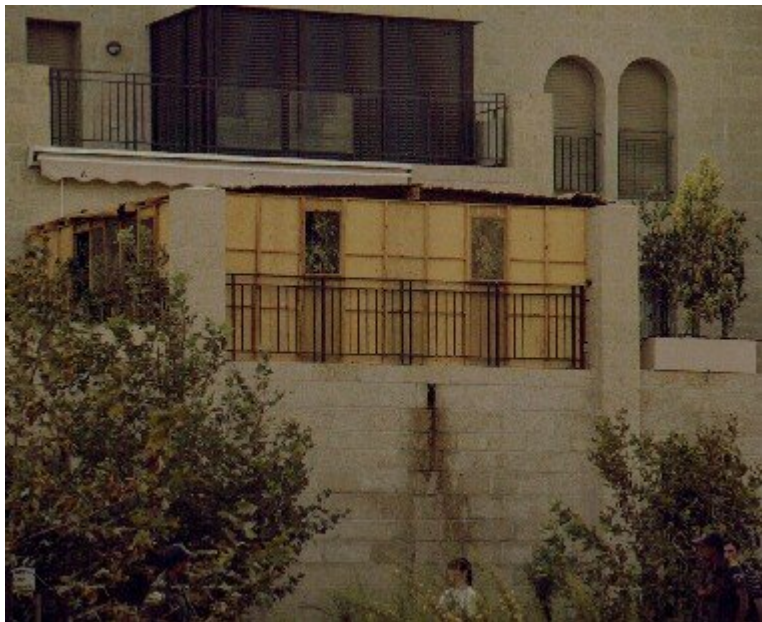
### Tabernacles / Booths Looking back

The Hebrews in the Exodus had to live in booths for 40 years because of their unbelief and disobedience. The situation was only temporary and GOD was still in their midst, providing for them.

**Sukkah** would be better translated as **shed** or **shack** or **shelter** \*, and the nature of the **sukkah** in which Jews eat their meals at this time is a reminder of the transitory nature of this life and the need for humility before our God. The shelter could also be a reminder of the shelter which field labourers lived in during harvest time or even the shelters in Jerusalem that accommodated the masses of pilgrims for the feast.

\* Tabernacle is a translation of ***Mishkan*** - which is the "Tent of Meeting" which preceded the Temple in Jerusalem.

### Booths Now and Looking forward



At Tabernacles Jews build booths outside, roofed with branches. They decorate them with fruit and foliage. They live in them or eat their meats in them. They must be able to see the stars through the roof as the meal starts once the third star can be seen. The meal includes all sorts of seasonal fruit and vegetables, salads, stuffed vegetables, apple strudel, plum dumplings.

Living and eating in a **Sukkah** is a reminder that our "bricks and mortar" life is only temporary and that we should not cling too tightly to it. Just as the weather gets cooler and we feel satisfied and comfortable after the harvest, God tells us to go and live in shacks for a while. Think on this.

### The Four Species

The Jews have a pictorial ritual using a citron (or Etrog) and branches from three trees, bound together, representing four sorts of people, all bound together in one (Jewish) nation under GOD'S care .

At various times during the celebrations, the four species (***Arba minim***) are waved in all six directions (North, South,

East, West, up and down) to emphasise that God is everywhere. They are also carried in procession around the *bimah* in the synagogue. The processions, carrying the arba minim are called *Hoshannas* because a prayer including the refrain *Hosha na* is recited. *Hosha na* means "Save us". (Here we have the connection with palm branches and hosannas as *Yeshua* rode into Jerusalem)

***Etrog*** sweet taste & smell,  
( Citron - a citrus fruit looking like  
a lemon)

***Lulav*** Sweet taste no smell  
( Date palm branches/ leaves)

***Hadas*** no taste sweet smell  
Myrtle branches/leaves



like people who read *torah* and do good

like people who read *torah* but don't do good

like people who don't read *torah* but do good

***ARaVah*** no taste or smell  
Willow branches/leaves

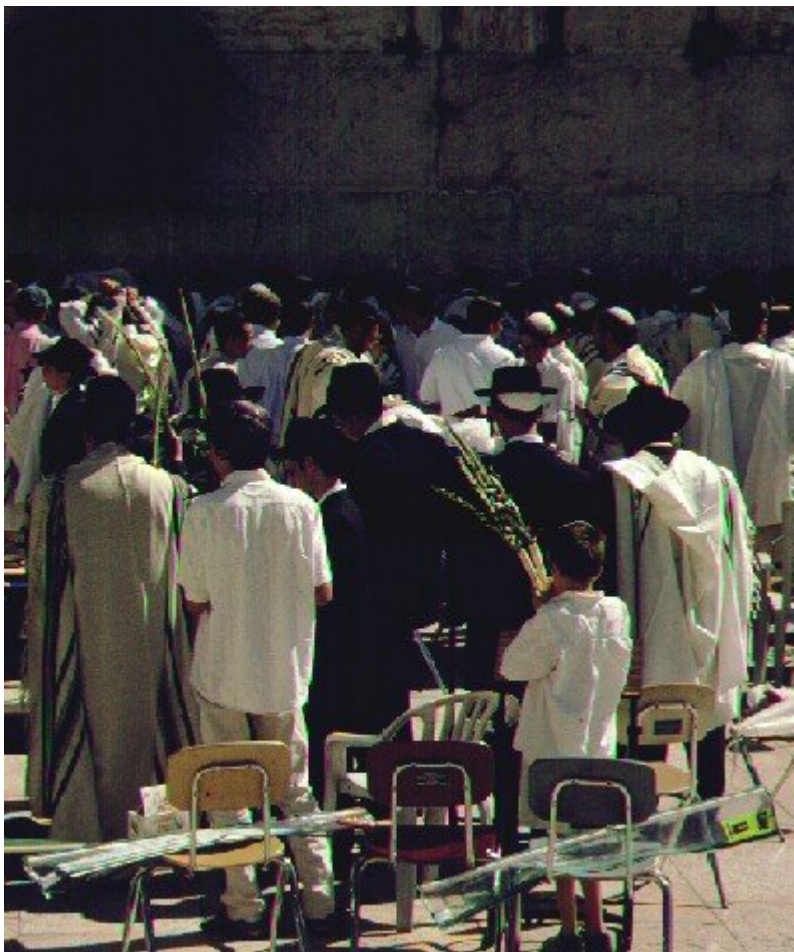
like people who don't read *torah* or do good

GOD looks after us all but wants us all to be like the *Etrog*. This is true to a point, but suggests that many Jews have missed the point of redemption by faith. The waving of the *lulav* bundle to all four points of the compass, signifies the ministry is to the whole world through God's chosen people of priests (Israel).

The booths and the special meals eaten in them celebrate GOD'S goodness in another harvest and rest from the labour of a years agricultural cycle.

The roofs of the booths are loosely made so that it is possible see through them to heaven and remember the temporary nature of our present life. The feast starts once the third star can be seen in the sky.

Being a harvest festival, fruit and vegetables feature prominently in the celebrations. Dishes such as stuffed cabbage (Holishken), aubergine dishes and Apple Strudel are popular. The celebration also looks forward to the next year.



### Temple rituals at Tabernacles

#### *Simchat bet ha Sho'ebhah* - Joy of the House of Drawing (water) - Ceremony of Water Libation



### Siloam

Every morning of the feast there was a joyous procession to the Pool of Siloam, with music, headed by a priest with a golden pitcher (a little over 2 pints). At the same time there was a procession to the Kidron Valley to collect willow branches which were made into a canopy over the altar of burnt offerings. As the sacrifice proceeded, the priest returning with the water entered through the Water Gate (named for this event). With a threefold trumpet blast he poured the water into a silver receptacle on the altar.

The actual Pool of Siloam has recently been discovered a little further down this water course. See ....The Pool of

The rainy season begins after Tabernacles. Rain is needed to soften the ground ready for ploughing. This celebration

became associated with looking to the Lord for the rains. It also reminded of the water out of the rock in the wilderness, and of messianic promises such as Isaiah 12 v3 about "joyfully drawing water from the springs of salvation". It is interesting that this offering of water is made at the end of the dry season when water is scarcer - thus it is an act of faith; trusting in the rains to come.

### **Lighting the Temple**

In this seasonal celebrations the people remembered that as well as the rain, plenty of sunshine was needed and the people were thanking GOD for the sunshine and acknowledging him as the true light. ( "The Lord is my light and my salvation" Ps 27 v1) who would give them spiritual life through Messiah.

At the end of the first day of Tabernacles, the worshippers congregated in the Court of Women where a great illumination took place. Four huge golden lamps or candelabras, each with four golden bowls were filled with oil by four youths of priestly descent. They had to use four ladders for this task. According to the saying, "There was not a court in Jerusalem that was not lit up by it". Around the lamps a sacred dance was conducted by *hassidim* (saints) and prominent leaders with flaming torches in their hands. This was accompanied by Levites playing harps, lutes, cymbals, trumpets and "instruments without number" standing on the fifteen steps leading up from the Court of Women to the Court of Israel, according to the "songs of Degrees" in Psalms.

The symbolism of this event looked back and forward

In the past God led Israel in the wilderness with the pillar of fire and His *Shekeinah* had dwelt in the Tabernacle and the first Temple (but not in the second Temple)

In the future Messiah would be the light of YHVH arising on the people

### **Hashanna Rabba - The Great Hosanna**

On the last day of the feast ( *21st Tishrei* ) - The day of the Great Hosanna was celebrated. It was the climax of the day that was the climax of the whole season of feasts / holy days. - ( **Hosanna** translates as "Save Now" ) The people prayed especially for GOD'S salvation through *Meshiach* / MESSIAH - (the anointed one )

A joyous crowd assembled, carrying palm branches a couple of metres in length. It was said to resemble a forest in motion if seen from a rooftop. There was silence in the crowd as the priest said the *Hallel* (praise) Psalm 118, to which the people responded at every line with **Halleluyah**. The people processed seven times around the altar.

As they got to verses 25 - 29 they joined in with the words "*Hossana*, make thy salvation now manifest, o Lord" and "O Lord send now prosperity" and they would wave their palm branches. As they reached the words "*Baruch haba bashem Adonai*" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD", the godly would greet the coming Messiah in their hearts, knowing it applied to Him. ( see The significance of Names in the Bible )

The joy of this celebration became proverbial. "He that has not seen *Simchat bet ha Sho'ebhah* has not seen joy in this life"

It was on this "last great day of the feast", the day of messianic expectation, that Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink" (John 7 v37). He offered living water to anyone who would believe and accept him. He was saying "Look to me and be saved - I AM the great Hosanna" (see also Threads on Water)

### **Shimini Atzeret**

Tabernacles is the only feast to have an extra day. It has been suggested that the LORD is saying to his people at the end of the Feast, "Hasn't this been good? Lets spend another day together." The people will have gone back into their homes but the rejoicing continues on this crowning day, which celebrates the completion of renewal and invokes anticipation of the Messianic age. The eighth day in scripture speaks of resurrection and new beginnings, so this day, coming at the end of the cycle which leads up to the Ingathering, speaks of the consummation of all things. It looks to the end of the earthly rest (The seventh Millenium) in the commencement of eternal heavenly glory. (See Revelation 21 and 22)

John chapter eight tells us that it was on the day after the *Hoshanna Rabbah* that Jesus was back in the Temple, where he said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life." (John 8 v12) Clearly the significance of the Lighting of the Temple would still have been fresh in the minds of those present on this day of great messianic hope.

In spite of this most of the religious leaders rejected him, because ...

- a they loved their rituals more than they loved their GOD.
- b They wanted what GOD would do for them politically not spiritually.

Thus the majority missed out on entering their rest in their hearts; but also as a nation. ( Remember, when Jesus/ *Yeshua* wept over Jerusalem he said "....if only you had known on this day what would bring you peace." ) (The Exodus Jews were "saved" from Egypt but failed to enter into their rest in the promised land )

### **The Significance of Tabernacles for non Jews ( *Goyim* - the Nations)**

Tabernacles was the first feast to be rediscovered by Christians. Why is it relevant and how does it fit into God's plans?

## The Nations

The bundle of the four species is waved to all four points of the compass, signifying that the ministry is to the whole world through God's chosen people of priests (Israel). Also, seventy bulls were sacrificed during *Sukkot*; seventy being the number of nations in the known world at that time. Thus *Sukkot* is a feast for the nations - not just Israel.

Tabernacles figures prominently in the last chapters of Zechariah. The prophet talks of the nations coming to attack Jerusalem and then, after God has defeated them, of the nations coming up to Jerusalem at Tabernacles. Clearly this talks of representatives of the nations (the armies first, and then the nations' chosen representatives)

Remember that Tabernacles is all about the culmination or completion of God's purposes, when Jerusalem is the metropolis of God's Kingdom on Earth - not just of Israel. Tabernacles is also about Ingathering. The *Talmud* and the *Mishna* single out Tabernacles as being prophetic of when, after Israel's national Day of Atonement, the nation will be the channel of blessing for the world - spreading the knowledge of their Messiah over the whole earth.

This is certainly something to look forward to and many Christians are already, voluntarily representing their nations at this feast. (see [Tabernacles snaps](#)) It is also well worth celebrating for all its teaching value, even at home.

## Jesus as fulfillment

He is the Tabernacle of GOD. In him all the fullness of GOD dwells (John 1 v14) (For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form - Col 2 v9)

If we are correct in believing he was born at Tabernacles, this fulfils the point of Tabernacles as he left his home in Glory and came to dwell in a frail mortal body. He is GOD in our midst ( For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them - Matt 18v20)

The ultimate fulfillment will be his second coming to take us to our rest.

Until then he is the rest for our souls (Come unto me and rest all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest Matt 11 v28) We should not be asking for things from Jesus - not for Jesus to give us life - he is our life; not to give us rest - he is our rest.

Click the picture to hear the *Shema* blessing -  
"Hear o Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One.  
Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is forever"



## Our walk

The seventh step in our walk - spiritual maturity - rest in our souls.  
Jesus comes for us.)

( Not sinless perfection - not until

Paul spoke of having reached this point ( Phil3v12-14 "Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, ...." and Phil4 vll-13 ".... for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."

## Prophetic - End Times

Zechariah 14 v16 talks of the Nations coming up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Since 1980, the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem has sponsored a feast for Christians from many nations around the World. These Christians delight to go and share with Israel and stand with Israel. It is a wonderful time of coming together for Christians and Jews, but merely a foretaste of what is to come. The 2000 (5761) feast coincided with the flare-up of conflict. The Jerusalem Post observed that, "The Jews are canceling but the Christians are still coming." The Jewish families watching the parade through the streets of Jerusalem (it went ahead as usual) were even more welcoming

than usual. They were so touched by the love and support of Christians from around the World. See **Tabernacles snaps**

Ultimately, the fulfillment will be rest for planet Earth when Messiah has come and taken up his rule on Earth having bound Satan and banished evil.

This will be the thousand year Shabbat, THE Millenium. Isaiah 51 v11 says, "The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing:...." (see **Shabbat, The Sabbath**) also Rev 20 and 21

Then note the river of the water of life coming out from the throne of GOD and the Lamb in Rev 22 and the link back through scripture ( Ezekiel 47 and Genesis 2 v10)

See also **End Times Prophecies and the Future of Israel**

### **Some concluding thoughts**

Remember, the cycle of seven feasts starts with *Pessach*, the feast of deliverance, and ends with *Sukkot*, the feast of ingathering and rejoicing at God's keeping during our journey of faith. We can only celebrate the last feast if we started our journey at the first feast !

The ingathering/culmination of forty years wandering brought the children of Israel into the land God promised them for ever! We are seeing Jews making *Aliyah* (being ingathered) from all the nations. Surely this is an end times sign.

Romans 11 (the wildolive teaching) talks of "And so all Israel shall be saved" and of "until the full number of the gentiles have come in." Is not this the final ingathering of the cultivated and the wild branches together; finally united in Yeshua.

Much of the material for this page comes from "The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah" by David Baron ( see **Books**)