

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

חג סוכות

by Avram Yehoshua

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES חג סוכות	1
THE FEAST	2
THE POOL OF MESSIAH	4
THE WATER CEREMONY	6
THE LAMPSTANDS	8
The Campout	9
THE PROPHETIC PICTURE	10
JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF SUKOTE	11
WHY CELEBRATE SUKOTE?	12
HOW TO CELEBRATE SUKOTE	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY	15
Article and Internet Cites	15

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The Feast of Tabernacles¹ (or Booths) commemorates the time that Israel was in the Wilderness with God, dwelling or tabernacling in tents made of branches and leaves, and that God provided for her daily needs for forty years. The feast is known by a number of different names in Scripture, one of which is the Feast of Ingathering. This refers to its agricultural aspect, once Israel came into Canaan. The Feast of Ingathering is the last of the three harvests: spring, summer and autumn, and it's the greatest harvest.

It's also called the Festival of Yahveh, or just 'the Feast' (or 'the Festival').² We read of this designation in a number of places in the *Tanach* (the Hebrew Bible without the New Covenant, i.e., the Old Testament):

1st Kin. 8:2: 'All the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at *the Feast*, in the month *Aetanim*, which is the seventh month.' (It's in the 7th Hebrew month that the Feast of Tabernacles occurs, corresponding to October.)

2nd Chr. 5:3: 'All the men of Israel assembled themselves to the King at *the Feast* that is in the seventh month' (See also 1st Kings 8:65; 2nd Chron. 7:8).

So, it's not surprising that it's called *the Feast* by John the Apostle: 'Now *the Feast* of the Jews was near, the Feast of Tabernacles' (Jn. 7:2). It wasn't just any feast that John was speaking of, but the Feast of Tabernacles. This is brought out in the Greek with the article *the* in front of Feast.

Yeshua would use two traditional ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles to reveal both His deity and His desire to sustain, provide and nurture Israel. These are the Water Ceremony and the nightly lighting of the large Lampstands.

The three main holy times of Yahveh are *Pesach*, *Shavuote* and *Sukote* (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles; spring, summer and fall, respectively):

Pesach pictures the death of the lamb that God used to free Israel from Egyptian slavery, and the death of Yeshua, the Lamb of God, that freed Israel from sin and eternal death to purity and eternal life. The barley harvest is associated with this holy time.

Shavu'ote pictures Yahveh giving the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, and on the same day 1,470 years later, the promised Holy Spirit to Israel (Ezk. 36:24-27; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:1f.). The wheat harvest is associated with this holy time.

Sukote commemorates the 40 years that Israel wandered in the Wilderness when Yahveh fed, sustained their clothing, and was a shelter for them. *Sukote* is the final and greatest harvest of the year. It speaks of Yahveh's provision and shelter for us in the Wilderness of this world, and of us being the Harvest of the Lord at the End of Time (Rev. 14:15-19).

¹ The Hebrew for The Feast of Tabernacles חג סוכות is pronounced *Hag Sukote*.

² Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor in Chief, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, 7th Edition (New York-Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), p. 893.

The Hebrew *Sukote* סֻכּוֹת (plural for *suka* סֻכָּה) signifies dwellings, booths or huts made by interweaving branches and leaves together. Every year Yahveh commands Israel to dwell in these make-shift ‘tents’ to remember that He was their Provider and Shelter in the Wilderness, and that our life in this world is only temporary. Israel was to exchange the security of their permanent homes for the frailty of a *suka*, a booth or temporary dwelling place. The concept that God was conveying to Israel was that they shouldn’t put their *trust* in material possessions that offer no real security. Only by allowing God to be our *suka* (protective covering; our dwelling place; Ps. 91) is one really secure.

In 2nd Peter 1:13-14, the chief Apostle tells us that he regards our existence now as a type of temporary tent. When we are glorified we’ll exchange our transient existence here for the permanence of our glorified bodies:

‘Yes, I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle (tent) to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle (tent), even as our Lord Yeshua haMashiah has showed me.’ (2nd Peter 1:13-14)

The Feast of Tabernacles has two distinct themes: the historical–theological, which means that it really happened: the Sons of Israel actually dwelt in *sukote* in the Wilderness for 40 years (and there is a theological meaning for us today), and the agricultural, commemorating the final harvest of the season and it’s prophetic significance.

THE FEAST

The Feast of Tabernacles, known also as The Feast, is the last of the annual Feasts of Israel. I’ve *italicized* the Feast’s special features from Lev. 23:33-36; 39-43:

“Again Yahveh spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the Sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Feast of Tabernacles *for seven days to Yahveh*. On the first day is a holy assembly—you must do no labor of any kind. For seven days you must present an offering by fire to Yahveh. *On the eighth day* you must have a holy assembly and present an offering by fire to Yahveh. It is a Sabbath assembly. You must do no labor.’” (Lev. 23:33-36)

‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, *when you have gathered in the crops of the Land*, you must celebrate the *Feast of Yahveh* for seven days, with a Sabbath rest on the first day and a Sabbath rest on the eighth day. Now, on the first day you shall take for yourselves *the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook*, and *you must rejoice before Yahveh your God for seven days*. You must celebrate it as a Feast to Yahveh for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. You must celebrate it in the seventh month.’ (Lev. 23:39-41)

‘*You must live in booths for seven days. All the native-born in Israel must live in booths*, so that your generations may know that *I had the Sons of Israel to live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt*. I am Yahveh your God!’ (Lev. 23:42-43)

The Feast of Tabernacles, like all the Feasts of Yahveh, were not vacations or holidays in the secular sense. They are holy times of gathering unto God to meet Him and to rejoice in His presence for the things that He has done for us.

The three major feasts above are feasts to Yahveh (Lev. 23: 34, 39 41, also 23:6; Num 28:17; Dt. 16:10, etc.). He brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery and made them to dwell in booths (Lev. 23:42-43). The

reenactment of the booths is meant to drive that point home. It is divine cause for holy celebration. This is one of God's 'holy vacations,' which means that we worship Him and rejoice before Him (Lev. 23:40).

One of the strange things about the Feast is that although it's only for seven days, the day after it ends is called the eighth day and it's a Sabbath (more on this in the prophetic picture). In Dt. 16:14, Yahveh says, 'we must rejoice' or literally, that 'you will be filled with joy,' as you celebrate *Sukote*. The reasons for both the seven day feast of *Pesach* and *Sukote* is to express the Joy that Yahveh has given us for what He has done. He's freed us from slavery. Every six months we are to disengage and rejoice for seven days before Yahveh and with others who have been freed. This is part of the Joy of walking in the Law of Moses. As a side point, it's often heard that 'no one can keep the Law.' So, this is their reason for not keeping any of it, but to celebrate this wonderful time that was given to us by God is to see that there are many things about God's Law that most believers don't realize.

The Feast begins on day 15 of the 7th month. This day is a Sabbath. No work is to be done of any kind, except food preparation for the day.³ It's a day to fully rejoice before Yahveh. Israel had gathered its crops and was now able to rest after her labor. The use of the foliage and palms branches, etc., speaks of the kind of tents that they would be dwelling in. These booths or huts were to be a living picture to their sons and daughters that Yahveh had caused them to live that way after their freedom from slavery. In other words, He was their true Shelter and their Provision in the Wilderness, and He would be their Shelter and Provision in the Land that He had given to them, as they obeyed His voice (i.e. His commandments and statutes, etc.).

The Wilderness is a picture of this life that we are currently going through, and the fact that Israel refused to believe Yahveh, that He would defeat the giants in the Land (Num. 14), is a picture of us coming to Yeshua, being delivered out of Satan's Kingdom, but still needing to learn the lesson of death to self, in the Wilderness of this world, in order to enter into the realm where all the promises of God are, 'Yes,' and 'Amen!' (2nd Cor. 1:20)

All Israel, over 20, fit for war (not counting the Levites) died in the Wilderness because of unbelief. All except Joshua and Caleb. So, why the Wilderness experience for us? So that we, like Israel, would be humbled and learn that Man doesn't live by bread alone, but by *every Word* that comes from the mouth of Yahveh (Dt. 8:1-3).

It would be the sons of the ones brought out from Egypt who believed God and entered into the Promised Land. Not for a vacation, but to fight for every city in the Land and totally destroy the inhabitants. Each pagan people in the land of Canaan (the Amorites, Canaanites, etc.), represent a carnal reality (i.e., each tribe's name reveals a fallen, dominant, carnal Adamic trait, like pride or human compassion, etc.). When we have died to self and become alive unto Messiah Yeshua we're able to conquer those spiritual strongholds within us.⁴

The fire sacrifices for the Feast (Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:12-38) symbolize our dealing with sin in our life by dying to self 'in the Holy Spirit,' and totally re-consecrating ourselves to the King of Kings.

³ This principle is taken from Ex. 12:16 where God allows food preparation for the first and seventh days of Passover, which are also annual Sabbaths.

⁴ See *The Seven Tribes of Canaan* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Seven-Tribes-of-Canaan.pdf> for more on how the different tribes living in Canaan typify the Adamic nature.

THE POOL OF MESSIAH

The Rabbis of old said, 'If you hadn't seen Jerusalem at *Sukote*, you don't know what joy is.' In Yeshua's time, a million Jews would come to Jerusalem and dwell in tents. They would come from all of Israel (Judah and Galilee at that time) and from all the nations where God had dispersed us (Acts 2:5-11). It must have been quite a sight. The Temple of Yahveh was their central focus.

At the Temple there were two Jewish ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles that Yeshua alluded to. They were the Water and Lampstand ceremonies. The Water Ceremony was done for 7 days (not 8). The 7th day was known as the Great Hosana (Lord! Save us!). These shouts of *hoshiana* (Hebrew) was Israel crying out to Yahveh to save them—it was specifically a cry for the Messiah to come.

The Bronze Altar of Sacrifice in the Temple was overshadowed by a canopy of branches to make it look like a *suka*. A priest would take a gold pitcher and go to the Pool of Siloam to get water. Siloam means 'sent one' and refers to the Messiah as the Sent One of Yahveh. The pool was named for the coming Messiah. The Greek word is 'apostle.' It means 'sent one.' When Yeshua told the blind man to wash in the waters of Siloam (Jn. 9:7, 11) he washed in the waters of the Sent One. The Hebrew for the pool is *ha'Shilo'ach* הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ, which literally means 'the Sent One.' This is a biblical title for the Messiah and one that Yeshua used of Himself more than 30 times in the book of John. Some examples of this are:

'For He whom God has *sent* speaks the Words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure.' (John 3:34)

"Yeshua said to them, 'My food is to do the Will of Him who *sent* Me and to accomplish His Work.'" (Jn. 4:34)

'so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who *sent* Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who *sent* Me has Eternal Life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.' (Jn. 5:23-24)

'I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear I judge and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who *sent* Me.' (Jn. 5:30)

'But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John. For the Works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about Me, that the Father has *sent* Me.' (Jn. 5:36)

'Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the Works themselves.' (Jn. 14:11)

The last two refer back to Numbers 14:11 and rebellious Israel in the Wilderness:

"Yahveh said to Moses, 'How long will this people despise Me?! How long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?!'"

Yeshua was saying the same thing. With all the miracles (works) that He did, many people were still fickle concerning Him being the Messiah.

'And the Father who *sent* Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His Voice at any time, nor seen His form. You do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He *sent*.' (Jn. 5:37-38)

"Yeshua answered and said to them, 'This is the Work of God—that you believe in Him whom He has *sent*.'" (Jn. 6:29)

'For I have come down from the Heavens, not to do My own will, but the will of Him

who *sent* Me. This is the will of Him who *sent* Me, that of all that He has given Me, I lose none, but raise them up on the Last Day.’ (Jn. 6:38-39)

‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who *sent* Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the Last Day.’ (Jn. 6:44)

‘As the living Father *sent* Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.’ (Jn. 6:57)

“So Yeshua answered them and said, ‘My teaching is not Mine, but His who *sent* Me.’” (Jn. 7:16)

“Then Yeshua cried out in the Temple, teaching and saying, ‘You both know Me and know where I am from, and I have not come of Myself, but He who *sent* Me is true, whom you do not know. I know Him because I am from Him and He *sent* Me.’” (John 7:28-29)

“Therefore, Yeshua said, ‘For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who *sent* Me.’” (John 7:33)

Another powerful reference that Yeshua was pointing to when He spoke of being sent by the Father was the greatest prototype of the Messiah—Moses. God says to him,

‘Come, and I will *send* you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the Sons of Israel, out of Egypt.’ (Exodus 3:10)

Yeshua speaking of being sent by the Father is a direct reference back to Moses, the first savior of Israel. Another place where ‘being sent’ is seen to speak of the Messiah is in the messianic passage of Deuteronomy 18:18-19. This speaks of Yahveh sending a prophet who would be *like* Moses:

‘I will raise up a prophet from among their brothers *like you* and I will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come to pass that whoever will not listen to My words, which he shall speak in My Name, I Myself will require it of him!’

That Moses was a unique prophet is acknowledged by all Jews. This can be seen from the fact the only Moses spoke ‘face to face’ with Yahveh (Num. 12:6-8f.). Neither Father Abraham, nor Isaiah, nor Elijah nor anyone else has ever done that. This is also seen from what is written about Moses after his death:

‘Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom Yahveh knew face to face.’ (Deut. 34:10)

Yeshua, in using the term ‘sent,’ points to the Prophet who would be like Moses:

“Yeshua said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God. For I have not even come on My own initiative, but He *sent* Me.’” (John 8:42)

The Book of Hebrews literally calls Yeshua the Apostle (*the Sent One*) and High Priest of our faith (Heb. 3:1). The Pool of the Sent One (Siloam) is where the priest with the gold pitcher came on all the days of *Sukote* to get water for the ceremony. He was symbolically getting Living Waters from the Messiah. The Pool or Waters of Siloam and the concept of the Sent One of Yahveh is conceptually identical. If only they had been open to drawing Living Waters from the One whom the pool had been named after. Yeshua told the blind man to wash in the Pool and when he did, the Waters of the Sent One of God healed him.

THE WATER CEREMONY

As the priest with the pitcher of gold filled it with ‘the Waters of Messiah’ and approached the Temple steps, another priest with a gold pitcher filled with wine met him and together they went up the Temple steps to the Bronze Altar amid hundreds of thousands of Jews singing the Hallel (Psalms 113–118; psalms of praise to Yahveh) and waving the branches (palm, myrtle and willow) and the fruit of the land, which pictured Yahveh as both the One who gave them shelter and who provided for them. The joy was indescribable. A million hands and hearts lifted up in praise to Yahveh for what He had done in providing food and protection for Israel, both back in the Wilderness and ‘now.’

The Levites led the people in singing and playing the musical instruments of King David.⁵ The shofars blasted along with the trumpets, etc. Sacrifice was offered and the contents of the pitchers poured out, mingling together as they fell into the silver basin pipeline at the base of the Bronze Altar. This was an expression of thanks for past, present and future rains. No rain, no food. No food, no life. Their prayers that day were for future rain. The wine mingled with the water pictured life with joy. It was a picture of messianic hope. As Moses supplied water in the Wilderness to Israel, so Messiah would provide Living Waters for Israel. Jeremiah speaks of these Living Waters. Israel had gone after other gods, but the water of those gods was foul for Israel. It was an illusion. Worship of another god was a deception:

“‘Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, oh Heavens at this and shudder! Be very desolate!’ declares Yahveh. ‘For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, *the Fountain of Living Waters*, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water’” (Jer. 2:11-13).

Isaiah also speaks of God’s Living Waters and His desire that Israel come to Him for heavenly Food. This speaks of the Body and Blood of Messiah Yeshua:

‘Listen! Everyone who thirsts, come to the Waters! And you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me and eat what is good and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen!, that you may live and I will make an everlasting covenant with you according to the faithful mercies shown to David...Seek Yahveh while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near!’ (Is. 55:1-3, 6)

Into this Temple setting and understanding of the water ceremony comes Yeshua on *Sukote* and proclaims Himself the Living Waters of God. The Apostle John writes that it was in the middle of *Sukote* that Yeshua taught:

‘Now the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was at hand’ (John 7:2), and ‘about the middle of the Feast Yeshua went up into the Temple and taught.’ (Jn. 7:14)

Yeshua was teaching in the Temple during *Sukote*. On the 7th day, with the background of the water ceremony in the Temple, *Yeshua proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah of Israel, the Fountain of Living Waters:*

“On the last and greatest day of *the Festival*, Yeshua stood there and cried out: ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me! Let the man keep coming and keep drinking who believes in Me! As Scripture says, ‘From his innermost being shall flow *Fountains of Living*

⁵ 1st Chron. 23:5; 2nd Chron. 7:6; 29:26-27. See also, 1st Sam. 18:6; 2nd Sam. 6:5; 1st Chron. 15:16; 16:5, 42; 2nd Chron. 5:13, etc.

Waters!’”” (Jn. 7:37-39)

We know that it was the 7th day, and not the 8th day, as the 8th day had no water ceremony. The 8th day wasn't part of *Sukote* proper.

A land without water pictures a people in rebellion to Yahveh (Ps. 63:1). A people who have not the water or food of Yahveh. God has given us of His Spirit that we might be used as a vessel that contains the Waters of Life, for us as well as for others who are thirsting for True knowledge of the God of Israel, and one day, the greater fulfillment of *Sukote* will come, as Rev. 22:1, 6 speak of:

‘Then he showed me *a River of the Waters of Life*, clear as crystal, coming from the Throne of God and of the Lamb,’

“Then He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one who thirsts from the Spring (Fountain) of the Waters of Life *without cost.*’”

These are direct references to the food and wine, without cost, of Isaiah 55:1 and the Fountains of Living Waters in John 7:37-39. Red wine has a double symbol: joy and sacrifice. Psalm 104:15 speaks of this joy:

‘And wine which makes man’s heart glad and olive oil to make his face glisten and bread which strengthens man’s heart.’

The color of the red wine also pictured the blood of the sacrifice. Water is equal to life. Perhaps it was this ceremony of drawing water on *Sukote* that John was alluding to when he wrote about Yeshua’s side being pierced and water coming out:

‘But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified and his testimony is true. And he knows that he is telling the truth so that you also may believe.’ (Jn. 19:34-35)

The Blood and Water of Yeshua, falling upon the Earth meant that the Earth would produce a great Harvest of people filled with heavenly Joy. It’s a picture of believers in Yeshua, for we are all made of the dust of the Earth. When the Blood and Water of Yeshua are in us, the Lord will have a harvest of people who have been fed and nurtured on the very Food and Drink of Heaven—Himself! (Jn. 6:55).

This is The Drawing of the Water Ceremony at *Sukote* and how Yeshua revealed Himself to be not only the Messiah, but God in the Flesh. He used the very words that Yahveh used in Jeremiah (Living Waters) to reveal His deity. Being Messiah, He is the Son (Ps. 2:2, 6-7). As the Son of Yahveh He is able to give us the Living Waters of Joy, or as Yahveh spoke through Isaiah, ‘Therefore, you will joyously draw waters from the Springs of Salvation’ (Is. 12:3).

Israel is a dry and thirsty land (Wilderness) without the Waters of Heaven today, but that will soon change as the Rain from Heaven will descend upon her, who has paid double for all her sins (Is. 40:1-2). The world is a wilderness of darkness, but Yahveh has been providing Living Waters with Joy (Messiah Yeshua) for both Jew and Gentile for 2,000 years now.

THE LAMPSTANDS

In the evenings during *Sukote* there was a ceremony involving the lighting of the Lampstands in the Temple. In the days of Yeshua, 1,470 years after the Cloud and the Fire on Mt. Sinai in the Wilderness, the Lampstand ceremony pictured the Fire in the Cloud by night. In the Courtyard of the Temple, high on the Temple Mount platform, four huge lampstands were placed. These were shaped in the form of a menorah (the seven branched Lampstand in the Holy Place). These four lampstands were high enough that ladders were needed to climb to the top of them, while the pants (undergarments) of the Levitical priests served as wicks for the olive oil. All of Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside would be lit up for miles around.

This fire and light were also symbolic of Creation Light and of the Light of Salvation or Freedom. Israel was saved from the darkness of Egyptian slavery. This was literally pictured in the ninth plague. There was thick darkness in Egypt, but light in Goshen for the Hebrews. Darkness, of course, symbolizes evil.

The Fire of God was especially seen in the *Shekinat* Yahveh, the Shekinah Glory Cloud (Pillar of Cloud by night with Fire in it). This was the Holy Spirit and the visible Presence of the invisible God. This Cloud of God guided Israel in the Wilderness for 40 years, and what *Sukote* harkened back to, while the lampstands symbolized this God's fiery presence:

‘Then the Cloud covered the Tabernacle and the Glory of Yahveh filled the Tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the Tabernacle because the Cloud had settled on it and the Glory of Yahveh filled the Tabernacle. *Throughout all their journeys*, whenever the Cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle, the Sons of Israel would set out, but if the Cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys the Cloud of Yahveh was on the Tabernacle by day and there was Fire in it by night in the sight of all the House of Israel.’ (Ex. 40:34-38)

The light from the Lampstands was also a picture of God's Light of Creation, as well as His salvation, freedom, provision, shelter and guidance in the Wilderness, now going forth from Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah 2:3 proclaims:

“And *many peoples will come* and say, ‘Come! Let us go up to the Mountain of Yahveh, to the House of the God of Jacob. That *He may teach us concerning His Ways and that we may walk in His Paths. For the Torah will go forth from Zion, the Word of Yahveh from Jerusalem.*”

Adding to this night time scene of Lampstands is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jewish people were on the Temple Mount *holding lit torches*. It must have been an incredible setting. The torches were seen to be a reflection of the Temple light, which was God's Light being reflected through His people Israel. Into all this, on the 8th day of the Feast, Yeshua shouts,

‘I am the Light of the world! He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the Light of Life!’ (Or, the ‘Light which gives Life,’ John 8:12).

Yeshua was not only proclaiming His Messiahship, but again, His deity as God the Son. No prophet of God before Him ever said anything like that, not even Moses. No one could claim that they were the Light of the World. Here we see Yeshua declaring that He and the Father were one in nature (i.e., deity). For we know that Yahveh is also the Light of the world:

‘Yahveh is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? Yahveh is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?’ (Ps. 27:1).⁶

⁶ For more on the deity of Messiah Yeshua, see *Yeshua—God the Son* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-God-the-Son.pdf>.

The Camp-Out

I remember a time when I had been asked to speak at a church camp-out. At the campfire, when it was dark, we could all see one another when we were around the fire. We could see where to walk to get to the tents that were near, but when I left the campfire and went to the outskirts, to a trail that I knew was there from the afternoon, I was quite surprised. In the dark I couldn't tell a tree from the trail. It was then that the point came home to me of just how important it is to walk in the Light of Messiah in this world of darkness. If I had tried to go down that trail, a branch could have poked my eye out. I couldn't see anything. Or a wild animal might attack me without me even being aware that it was there, and all because there was no light. I saw that it was very dangerous to go anywhere in this world without His Light shining on my path.

‘Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and a Light to my path.’ (Ps. 119:105)

Yeshua sheds His Light on the Way or Path to the Father, in this world. *In Yeshua* we come to know the Father. He is real, compassionate and self sacrificing. Our journey to Him is lit up by Yeshua, the Light of the world. We don't have to stumble along the Path of Life. We can see clearly where we are going and we are able to confront anything on our Path because of Him who is the Light.

In Revelation we see both the Father and the Son as the True Light:

‘I saw no Temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple, and the City has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the Glory of God has illumined it and its Lamp is the Lamb.’ (Rev. 21:22-23)

In Rev. 7:9-17, a multitude of Gentiles are waving palm branches. This is a picture of the commandment to take branches, found in the Feast of Tabernacles, the End-Time Feast of Israel:

‘Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you must rejoice before Yahveh your God for seven days.’ (Lev. 23:40)

The taking and the waving of the branches thanked God for giving them homes in the Wilderness, and watching over them, etc. Now, though, they are in the Heavens with God, thanking Him for being their Light and protection and for glorifying them. Hallelu-Yah!

Psalms 27:5 says,

‘For in the day of evil, He will keep me safe in His *Suka* (dwelling). In the Shelter of His Tent, He will hide me.’

The ‘day of evil’ is the Day of Judgment. If we are ‘in Yeshua’ we’ll be safe on that Day. The *suka* of God (Messiah Yeshua) is also the Secret Place of the Most High, as Psalm 91:1 states.

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Yahveh, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress!, My God, in Him I will trust!’” (Psalms 91:1-2)

Both the secret place and the shadow of the Almighty are Yeshua.

With the knowledge of the ceremonies of *Sukote*, the Feast of Tabernacles comes alive for us today and we begin to understand the profound significance of Yeshua's words in John. We also see how the meaning of *Sukote* has been *interwoven* throughout the Scriptures for us to see Yeshua as our Messiah. The celebration of *Sukote* has been given to us by God the Father so that we can know more about Him and remember all the things that He's done for Israel in sending His Son to be our *suka*.

THE PROPHETIC PICTURE

Sukote is *Yahveh's* Feast of *Thanksgiving*. In other words, the nation holiday of Thanksgiving, as celebrated in the United States, Canada, and England, on different dates, is Satan's counterfeit of *Sukote*.⁷ *Sukote* pictures the final agricultural harvest of Israel and the Final End Time Harvest of *Yahveh* on Earth, as well as the current ingathering (harvest) of Jews from all over the Earth today, to Israel. Jews from more than 100 different countries have now 'come home' to Israel (Ezk. 36:22f.).

The Final End Time Harvest for all believers will come after the Tribulation and after the Thousand Year reign of Messiah (the Feast of Trumpets—*Yom Truah*) in Jerusalem (Rev. 20:4-6; Ezk. 40-48), and after the Day of Judgment (*Yom HaKipurim*, Rev. 20:11ff). *Yeshua* will be with His followers at the *Sukote* table with His Bride, called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17).

Sukote lasts for seven days and so did ancient Jewish weddings. The Marriage Supper will also last 'seven days,' symbolic of the seven days of *Sukote*. It's a wedding and believers are His Bride!

The Eighth Day, a holy Sabbath, is the 'conclusion' to the honeymoon of *Sukote*. It's the end of the Wedding Week and the Beginning of Eternity as the Wife of Messiah *Yeshua* (Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 21:9).

Yahveh desires all His people Israel (both Jew and Gentile who believe in Messiah *Yeshua*) to celebrate *Sukote* today. The Prophet *Zechariah* speaks of this, and also gives a warning to those who refuse to celebrate *Sukote*:

Zechariah 14:16: 'Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, *Yahveh* of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.'

Zech. 14:17-19: 'And it will be that *whichever of the families of the Earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahveh of Hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them. It will be the plague with which Yahveh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles...*This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.'

At a time that hasn't yet come to pass, most everyone on Earth will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. They will give thanks to the God of the Jews for the rain and the crops that they have received from His hand. If some nations won't, great will be their punishment. If rain doesn't fall it means there won't be any crops. It's called a famine and many people will die due to the lack of food from the *harvest* because of their failure to acknowledge the King of Kings in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Most Christians today do not recognize the Feasts of Israel, nor do they care to, saying that the Law of Moses is done away with and they don't have to keep 'those Jewish things.' Here is a Scripture that has yet to be fulfilled, which speaks of the thousand year reign of Christ, from the Throne of His Father David (Luke 1:30-33; Rev. 22:16). In that day their pride and ignorance will give way to repentance and observance of the King's way of living out their faith in Him, and those of you who have shared the Light of the Law with them will be vindicated by the King.

⁷ See *Thanksgiving Day—Pagan?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Thanksgiving-Day-Pagan.pdf>.

JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF SUKOTE

The special event that separates this Feast from all the others is the building of the *suka*, the make-shift, hut-like structure made of branches and leaves interwoven together, and the waving of branches and fruit. These symbolized how Israel lived in the Wilderness for 40 years and God's provision for them both there and in the Promised Land—Israel.

Sukote (plural for *suka*; booths, tabernacles) can be seen all over Israel, but today they're prefab, made of metal poles and linen for the roof and sides. They're next to homes, on top of roofs, alongside restaurants, and wherever else people can put them up. Most Israelis will eat in them, although most don't obey the commandment to sleep in them (Lev. 23:42) because of the perverse rabbinic interpretation that says that one doesn't have to sleep in them. Of course, ancient Israel in the Wilderness not only ate in them, but also slept in them.

Different kinds of branches are commanded to be woven or used together to make the *suka* and the rabbinic *lulav*, coming from Lev. 23:40:

'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, *palm branches* and *boughs of leafy trees* and *willows of the brook* and you must rejoice before *Yahveh your God for seven days.*' (Lev. 23:40)

The branches used by the Rabbis are the palm, myrtle and willow.⁸ They bind them together, calling it a *lulav* (after their palm branch designation)⁹ and wave it, along with the *etrog*,¹⁰ during a ceremony in the synagogue symbolizing God's mastery over the universe. The synagogues will have special services dedicated to *Sukote* and the protection and guidance that God gave, and still gives, to Israel.

As the Eighth Day fades into history the Rabbis have devised a 'Ninth Day' called *Simchat Torah*. It literally means, 'Joy of the Torah' and celebrates the end of the traditional Torah readings in Deuteronomy and begins the readings all over again in Genesis. This is rabbinic, that the Torah readings end and begin on this day,¹¹ but it's the reason for *Simchat Torah*, even though the Rabbis rightly believe that the Torah was given to Israel on *Shavu'ot* (the Feast of Weeks) in the summer around mid-June, which means that their readings should either begin then, or in the first Hebrew month, when Moses led Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12:1-2). Wikipedia states:

"*Simchat Torah*...is a celebration marking the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings and the beginning of a new cycle...In the morning, the last *parashah*¹² of Deuteronomy and the first *parashah* of Genesis are read in the synagogue. On each occa-

⁸ Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 893.

⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lulav> states that the *lulav* is 'a ripe, green, closed frond of the date palm tree...To qualify for use as one of the' three branches of the rabbinical ceremony, 'the *lulav* must be ramrod straight, with whole leaves that lay closely together, and not be bent or broken at the top. The term *lulav* also refers to the *lulav* in combination with' the two other branches (from the myrtle and willow trees) 'that are bound together to perform' the rabbinical good deed or *mitzva* 'of waving the *lulav*.'

¹⁰ From <http://www.tradewindsfruit.com/etrog.htm>: An *etrog*, Hebrew for the citron, is a 'medium to large sized bumpy yellow skinned citrus having a very acidic flavor. Primarily the skin is used, and the fruit plays a role in the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. The origin of the citron is unknown, but it was the first cultivated citrus fruit, with records dating back to 4000 BC. It was a common fruit in the Mediterranean region and today is cultivated primarily in Sicily, Corsica, Crete, Greece and Israel, as well as a number of Central and South American countries.'

¹¹ In the synagogue every Sabbath, the Torah is read, section by section so that in a year's time, one cycle is complete.

¹² *Parasha* is a section (usually a couple of chapters) of the Torah that is read each Sabbath.

sion, when the ark¹³ is opened, all the worshippers leave their seats to dance and sing with all the Torah scrolls in a joyous celebration...In Orthodox and Conservative communities outside Israel, *Shemini Atzeret*¹⁴ is a two-day holiday and the *Simchat Torah* festivities are observed on the second day' (i.e. the ninth day). 'The first day is referred to as *Shemini Atzeret* and the second day as *Simchat Torah*, although both days are officially *Shemini Atzeret* according to *Halakha*, and this is reflected in the liturgy. In Israel, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are celebrated on the same day. Reform congregations, even not in Israel, may do likewise."¹⁵

WHY CELEBRATE SUKOTE?

The celebration of *Sukote*, as well as all the Feasts, not only honor Papa God and Messiah for what They have done and Who They are, it's commanded. It's a matter of obedience to the Lord that *Sukote* be observed. Satan's lie is that 'the Feasts and the Law were only for the Jews,' but Gentile believers are grafted into Israel (Rom. 11) and her rules should become theirs (Leviticus 16:29; 17:15; Romans 11:11f.; Ephesians 2:11f.).

Sukote was an ancient and present reality in the life of Israel, as well as a future reality. It also speaks of the ongoing reality of the Son of Man and how the Feasts experientially make us knowledgeable about our God and King. Yahveh placed within each Feast a prophetic picture that points to the future for the last three annual feasts. We're also created 'to celebrate' things, and to worship God through His celebrations and He has given us much to celebrate about. It's interesting to note that Col. 2:17 speaks of the Feasts as signs or pictures of the *future*, what is still to come:

'Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink *or in respect to a Feast or a new moon or a Sabbath day*, things which are **a shadow of things to come**, but the substance belongs to Messiah.'

Paul speaks of the Feasts, etc., in the present tense with the Greek verb *estin* (is/are). The Greek literally states that the Sabbath and Feasts 'are a shadow of the coming things,'¹⁶ not 'were a shadow of things to come.' When we know and walk in the Feasts of Israel we know more about the substance of our Messiah; who He is and what He has done for us, and also about things to come.

Paul is warning the Colossians that they shouldn't let others judge them, *to condemn them*, as to **how** they kept the Feasts and Sabbaths, etc. The Church, however, teaches that because Paul brings them up that he was against those things, but note well that he never mentions 'to keep Sunday, Christmas, Easter or Thanksgiving, and especially not Halloween!', or that one could eat pig or any other unclean animal, fish or bird. The days and ways weren't observed by Christians in Paul's day. They only came into the Church later, and that, through the Roman Catholic Church, not the Apostles. The point here is that the Christians were observing the Feasts, Sabbaths and new moons and Paul is wanting the Colossians to know that others shouldn't judge to condemn them as to *how* they observed the Feasts, not that they shouldn't observe them.

What Paul was fighting against in the letter to the Colossians were Colossian Gnostics who had come to

¹³ The ark in this case is the wooden cabinet, overlaid with embroidered cloths, that houses the Torah, and other, scrolls. The scrolls are taken out for the service and read from.

¹⁴ *Shemini Atzeret* means the concluding eighth day Sabbath (i.e. the day after the seven day Feast of Tabernacles).

¹⁵ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simchat_Torah.

¹⁶ Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators, J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 702.

believe in Christ, but were still immersed in darkness and condemning the other believers for not fasting¹⁷ on those days or eating what they prescribed, etc.

Here are four reasons why we should celebrate the Feasts of Israel:

1. To obey Yahveh, which is always a blessing (Lev. 23:33-44; Num. 9:9-14; Dt. 16:13-15).
2. To follow in the footsteps of Yeshua. Yeshua observed the holy days every year of His adult life. Also, all the Apostles and believers continued to observe *Sukote* and all the Feasts *after* the resurrection (Acts 21:20, 1st Cor. 5:6-8; Col. 2:16; Rev. 12:17).
3. To enter into the rest and ‘holy celebrations’ (holy vacations!) that God has given us every six months (Passover coming six months before *Sukote*, and after *Sukote*). It’s God’s way of disengaging us from the world for times of joy and refreshment in Him. Of course, there’s the one day of *Shavu’ot* (Pentecost) in the summer and also the Feast of Trumpets in the autumn.
4. To spend quality time with the Lord, family and friends, *sanctioned* by God for His people. Many are still trapped in Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving Day. These are pagan feasts. These believers don’t realize that Satan is not only a counterfeiter, but a poor one at that. These pagan feasts are only one day. Passover and *Sukote* are seven days. *Sukote* thanks God for the fall harvest. What are Christians doing thanking God for the fall harvest on ‘Thanksgiving Day’? It’s not authorized by God in the Bible, but it is found among the ancient pagans as a feast to their gods. (No, the Pilgrims weren’t the first to celebrate it.)¹⁸

These four points are godly reasons for celebrating God’s holy time of *Sukote* and all His Feasts. As we enter into the reality of this Feast we find Him and ourselves in a way that no other Feast can bring to us. For in this Feast we come to sense the Lord dwelling or tabernacling (*suka*) with us. Our sense of His protection and provision is made evident in our time with Him and what He has created this Feast for—His people Israel, both before and after the Resurrection. Isn’t He Wonder-Full?!

Sukote is a *living* reminder of God’s gracious deliverance from Egypt and provision in the Wilderness for Israel in spite of their carnal and repugnant attitude toward Him. As we enter the *suka*, we are reminded of that, and we also realize God’s gracious deliverance and provision for us as we wander in the wilderness of this world, and our less than gracious attitudes toward Him at times.

Israel rebelled against Yahveh. His ways weren’t their ways, and it’s a teaching for us, too (1st Cor. 10:1f.). We have to die to self in the Wilderness that ‘a new generation’ can be raised up that will believe God and His word of bringing us into the Promised Land (of making us like Yeshua), which means death to self, that He would increase in us as we decrease. It involves total consecration to our Lord and Savior, as symbolically pictured in the daily sacrifices for the Feast (Num. 29:12-38).

Is God really our dwelling place in this world (Ps. 90:1)? Is He really enough for us or do we crave the garlic, leeks and onions of our former slavery to Satan? Is He really enough or do we cringe in fear and refuse to believe because of the giants who inhabit the Land of blessing that God wants to give us? (Our very soul!) As we lie down in the *suka* and become one with ancient Israel in the Wilderness, may we come to see our cravings and fears that block us from going on with God. Let us confess our sins and determine, with His Spirit, to follow the Master in *all* things.

Praise God for His Spirit of tenderness and power that enables us to be Born Again and become one with Messiah. He has overcome our obstinate nature that we might marry Him and live with Him in His *Suka* for eternity!

¹⁷ This is brought out with Paul speaking of their ‘self imposed religion’ and ‘neglect of the body’ (Col. 2:23), and their worship of angles (Col. 2:23). Also, Gnosticism taught the need for angelic intermediaries that must be gone through in order ‘to reach’ the transcendent God (Col. 1:15f.)

¹⁸ See *Thanksgiving Day—Pagan?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Thanksgiving-Day-Pagan.pdf> for why it’s pagan.

HOW TO CELEBRATE SUKOTE

It's great to have a congregation of people celebrating it with you, camping out. With at least eight days, there would be special times for meetings and rejoicing before Him. Feasting would be a big part of this as well as the study of His Word, with praise and worship. Waving the branches and the fruit before Yeshua (any good fall fruit will do) as a reminder of God's provision in the Wilderness *suka*, and all He did, as well as what He will do, is also part of His commandment to rejoice.

If you only have yourself and possibly some family members or friends, you might consider going to a place where you can have some relative privacy; a state park, or a backyard, and either build a *suka* there, if weather permits, or dwell in a tent or a cabin. Praise and worship the Lord. Feast and invite your neighbors and tell them what God has done for you, the least of which is that He gives you an eight day holy vacation because of what He did for ancient Israel, what He has done in Messiah for us (He dwells within us) and what He intends to do for us forever—dwelling with Him in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21).

When Ruti and I lived in the States we would camp out with members of our congregation at a state park. Sometimes we would try different state parks and sometimes we would go to the same one year after year. It would get to be that by the time we had to leave the park we didn't want to go back to civilization! We were so 'at peace' and very grateful for the fellowship, the study of His Word, praise and worship times, and times of peace and quiet and being with our Lord.

When making a *suka* one needs to be aware that the commandment 'to live in it' applies only to the native born here in Israel (Lev. 23:42). That doesn't mean that people in the States and Europe, etc., shouldn't celebrate the Feast, but that they can determine if they should sleep out in their *sukote*, or camping tents, or cabins during this time because of weather conditions. After Ruti and I realized the 'native born' aspect of the Feast, and it took many years before we saw this, we would rent cabins at that same state park instead of sleeping out in tents and bearing the brunt of the inclement weather that would sometimes happen during *Sukote* in Oklahoma. Israel, on the other hand, with its pleasant climate at *Sukote*, is ideal for sleeping out. Seems like God thinks of everything.

Why celebrate *Sukote*? Because Yahveh commands His people Israel to celebrate it, reflecting His provision, both natural and spiritual. What we eat, when we assemble, what days we celebrate as holy and what attitudes we walk in, etc., should all revolve around the God of Israel and what His Word tells us. At least for those who take Him seriously. He's our God and He determines the Way we should walk, just as a father should determine the way his son lives. With the Blood and Spirit of Messiah Yeshua we can walk in the Holy Days and all the other commandments that pertain to us, as Yeshua and all His Apostles did. As we keep His Ways we are proclaiming to our Father first, that we value Him above everything and everyone else, and then to the world, that we are part of His Chosen people.

Sukote is a time where Yahveh commands us to cease from our daily activities and rejoice before Him for seven (eight) days:

'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook and you must rejoice before Yahveh your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it as a Feast to Yahveh for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. You must celebrate it in the seventh month.' (Leviticus 23:40-41)

May You Sense His Dwelling within You this Sukote!

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¹⁹ This article was revised on 30 March 2016.