

HOLY CONVOICATIONS

(MAJOR FESTIVALS)



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“ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra’el: ‘The designated times of ADONAI which you are to proclaim as holy convocations are my designated times.” (Leviticus 23:1, 2)

סֻכּוֹת Sukkot - The Feast of Tabernacles

“ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra’el, ‘On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of Sukkot for seven days to ADONAI. On the first day is to be a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work. For seven days you are to bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI; on the eighth day you are to have a holy convocation and bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI; it is a day of public assembly; do not do any kind of ordinary work.” (Leviticus 23:33-36)

“Just what exactly is a **“sukkot”** (say “soo-coat”) anyway?” This is the usual question that I receive around this time of year, from people that I meet. Well, this is the plural form of the Hebrew word translated as “booth,” “tabernacle,” “tent,” or “hut.” Its singular is **“sukkah,”** and, based on the command to dwell in temporary booths for seven days (Lev. 23:42, 43), we can see why the Feast is called by this name. Moreover, the Torah mentions this festival in connection with the “end of the year” in at least two significant locations:

Exodus 23:14-17

" 14 Three times a year, you are to observe a festival for me. 15 Keep the festival of matzah: for seven days, as I ordered you, you are to eat matzah at the time determined in the month of Aviv; for it was in that month that you left Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed. 16 Next, the festival of harvest, the firstfruits of your efforts sowing in the field; and last, the festival of ingathering, at the end of the year, when you gather in from the fields the results of your efforts. 17 Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Lord, ADONAI."

Exodus 34:18-34

" 18 Keep the festival of matzah by eating matzah, as I ordered you, for seven days during the month of Aviv; for it was in the month of Aviv that you came out from Egypt. 19 "Everything that is first from the womb is mine. Of all your livestock, you are to set aside for me the males, the firstborn of cattle and flock. 20 The firstborn of a donkey you must redeem with a lamb; if you won't redeem it, break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you are to redeem, and no one is to appear before me empty-handed. 21 "Six days you will work, but on the seventh day you are to rest - even in plowing time and harvest season you are to rest. 22 "Observe the festival of Shavu'ot with the first-gathered produce of the wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year. 23 Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Lord, ADONAI, the God of Isra'el. 24 For I am going to expel nations ahead of you and expand your territory, and no one will even covet your land when you go up to appear before ADONAI your God three times a year."

Did you notice the underlined phrases in the two passages above? The first reference states that the festival of ingathering is to occur "at the end of the year," which from the Hebrew reads "בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה, b'tzeyt ha-shanah." The second passage states that the festival of ingathering is to occur "at the turn of the year," which in Hebrew reads "הַשָּׁנָה הַתְּקוּפָה, t'kufat ha-shanah." Common to both phrases is the term "ha-shanah," which naturally and normally refers to "the [ha] year [shanah]." But what are the terms "b'tzeyt" and "t'kufat" trying to tell us? The first term carries the root word yatzah צָא, which according to the BDB means, "to go out, come out, exit, go forth."¹ The second term carries the root word t'kufah תְּקוּפָה, which according to the BDB means, "coming round, circuit of time or space, a turning."² Given what we know about the rabbinic Talmudic decision to refer to Yom T'ruah as Rosh HaShanah, a time when the agriculture cycle is emphasized, to include harvesting, etc., we can now appreciate their recognizing this time of year as Rosh HaShanah—the head of the year. This simple exegesis of scripture helps to clear up the tension between those who feel that the rabbis have overstepped their authority by referring to the festival of Yom T'ruah by its more familiar name Rosh HaShanah, and those who feel that the bible gives warrant for such usage of terms. Back to the subject at hand.

¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Lexicon (BDB), צָא.

² Ibid, תְּקוּפָה.

“Why in the world would HaShem want his people to dwell in a tabernacle for seven days?” “What is so important about the concept of ‘dwelling’ anyway?” I will answer that question at the end of our study. For now, I want the readers to know that the idea behind the sukkah as a **“temporary dwelling place,”** is a somewhat major theme of the Bible, a theme which I will discuss shortly. Sukkot is known in Judaism by a few other names as well:

- The Season of our Joy
- The Festival of Ingathering (Heb: Chag Ha'Asif)
- The Feast of the Nations
- The Festival of Dedication
- The Festival of Lights

I only want to develop the “temporary dwelling place” theme for our study. From this commentary, the reader will soon see that there is a lot of **“Messianic redemptive history”** tied up in the concept of “dwelling.” HaShem has had a grand plan of becoming the one and only God of his people, from the beginning of history. Having said that, I will work from a basic outline this time. Let's examine my main points:

1. Sukkot: Past History

- A. Exodus 25:1, 2, 8, 9
- B. Leviticus 23:34-43; 26:11, 12
- C. Ezekiel 37:27, 28 (Prophetic)

2. Sukkot: Present Reality

- A. John 1:14; 14:23b; 17:23
- B. Hebrews 8:1, 2, 10
- C. Jeremiah 31:33 (Prophetic)

3. Sukkot: Future Redemption

- A. Romans 11:25, 26
- B. Revelation 21:3
- C. Zechariah 14:16 (Prophetic)

Sukkot: Past History

Having already quoted our theme verse for the **Mikra'ey Kodesh** series (Leviticus 23:1, 2), I want to go backwards into the Torah to a time period before the giving of the instructions for the Feasts, back to when HaShem instructed the people to build him a **Tabernacle**. Exodus chapter twenty-five (**Parashah T'rumah** in the weekly Torah readings) talks about gathering the materials together to construct a **“dwelling place”** for HaShem to live among the people, as their one and only God (Deuteronomy 6:4). This tabernacle was to be put together using materials that were freely and wholeheartedly contributed by Am Yisra'el (the people of Isra'el). They were not to be forced to give. The first point I want to emphasize is: the building of the “dwelling place” was an act of free will; the people wanted it built, and thereby contributed to it's building.

Only after this important detail of HaShem's Tabernacle was addressed could he state in 25:8, "I [will] dwell among them" (KJV, emphasis mine). In Leviticus chapter twenty-three, HaShem instructed the people to build sukkot in memory of the temporary dwelling places that they had while wandering in the desert. But the most important temporary dwelling place during that period was still the Tabernacle. To be sure, according to **past history**, once the people built a Tabernacle for HaShem, he indeed did come to "**dwell among his people**" as he said he would, and they did behold his Sh'khinah (manifest Glory of God)! In the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:27, 28, HaShem is seen as saying once again that his "**home will be with them,**" however, this reference is in the future tense. What could he be saying to us? Let's read on.

Sukkot: Present Reality

John's opening account of Yeshua's ministry here on earth is a most revealing one. In chapter one of his Gospel, we find a seemingly ordinary statement, until we examine the underlying Hebrew thought behind it. Here's the statement: "The Word became a human being **and lived with us**, and we saw his Sh'khinah..." (Verse 14) This immediately brings to memory the indwelling, manifested Glory, present in the earthly Tabernacle. But the Tabernacle had long since been replaced by a more permanent Temple structure. Moreover, the Sh'khinah of HaShem is reported to have been displayed fully in the person of Yeshua (Colossians 2:9)! In John 14:23, and 17:23, Yeshua says that anyone who loves him will keep his words. The response is that the Father will demonstrate his own love for the individual, and that the both of them (Father and Son) would come to make their abode with him (KJV, paraphrase mine)! This type of "dwelling" is really a perfect one. One might even suppose that this type of "dwelling among men" was indeed the complete revelation of HaShem's dwelling with men. Or was it? The book of Hebrews, chapter eight, tells us that our Great High Priest Yeshua was "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Verse 2, KJV) It is true, our Messiah's atoning death brought about the **present reality** that "any individual who calls upon his name, will receive HaShem's salvation (Joel 2:32; Romans 10:13). Moreover, according to the Torah, this **personal** acceptance of Yeshua is the only sign of a genuine relationship between a Holy God and his people (John 14:6-21, Hebrews 8:10). But the Feast of Sukkot is a holy convocation that speaks of **corporate** involvement. Is there still some future "dwelling with men" that HaShem is waiting for? What does our prophetic Scripture (from Jeremiah) for this point say? "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (31:33). So God is consistent in his intentions. But let's read further.

Sukkot: Future Redemption

Having just gone through Yom Kippur, and a study on the same, we as believers should now be intimately familiar with the effectual, atoning death of Yeshua, which brought about the very real and "present reality," that today, anyone can become a child of God. To be sure, the Torah promises that the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) will "**dwell within**" the believer, bearing witness with their ruach (spirit) that they truly are offspring of the Holy One, Blessed be He (Romans 8:16). At this time you may say, "But Ariel, I

thought that Yeshua's indwelling Spirit **was** an eternal one. What's all this talk about a "temporary dwelling place?" Well, the study's focus is on the "dwelling place of HaShem." In a very real way, each and every one of us believers is Yeshua's sukkah! We have become his "permanent dwelling place," within a "temporary" vessel. Once this corruption is exchanged for incorruption, we will shed the "temporary" aspect (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). However, I'm still inquiring about the "dwelling place" of HaShem. Where is his sukkah today? Romans 11:25, 26 begins to hint of a future time when all Isra'el shall know the salvation of their God, once and for all ("Baruch HaShem! May that day come soon!"). Tied up within that **future redemption**, is the concept that HaShem started with way back in the days of the TaNaKH: "I [will] dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8, KJV, emphasis mine). From the prophetic book of Revelation, we learn that there will be a day, when the final plan of HaShem will be fully realized among men. Chapter twenty-one, verse 3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the **dwelling of God** is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them" (NIV, emphasis mine). Don't you see where this is all leading? The concept of HaShem making his final dwelling place with his people is so important that even the prophet Zechariah foretold of a time when everyone living in the Millennium will have a divinely-appointed opportunity to participate in the Feast of Tabernacles (see 14:16)!

Even with the **past history** of the Tabernacle, and the **present reality** of Yeshua's Spirit within us as believers, we still have a final, corporate **sukkot** to experience! Moreover, when Yeshua returns to rule from Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) in bodily form, even our current relationship with him, will take on an entirely different aspect! In our age, many Jewish people (and I imagine a few non-Jews as well) will participate in the Feast of Sukkot this year. Let us believers be ever mindful of the purposes that HaShem has for mankind, that are tied up in his **Mikra'ey Kodesh**, his **Holy Convocations**. Sukkot brings the Feasts in Leviticus Chapter twenty-three to a conclusion. HaShem has ended on the grand theme of "**temporary dwelling places**" involving mankind. Only, with the final "dwelling place" of HaShem, there will be nothing temporary about it! The Feast of Tabernacles is the end of the Mikra'ey Kodesh. The revelation of John's vision is the end of the book! And so it is the end of our study.

I will conduct a study of the **Minor Feasts of Isra'el** in a separate series. You are invited to study along with me, if you felt that this current one was informative. "Shalom," and "blessings," as you seek to deepen your understanding, and strengthen your relationship, to the whole Word of God. Study to show thyself approved (2 Timothy 2:15)!

"Chag Sukkot Sah-meach!"

(Happy Feast of Tabernacles)

For further study, read: Exodus 25:1, 2, 8, 9; Leviticus 22:26-23:44; 26:11, 12; Numbers 29:12-16; 1 Kings 8:2-21; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:27, 28; 38:18-39:16; Zechariah 14:1-21; John 1:14; ch. 7; 14:23b; 17:23; Romans 11:25, 26; Hebrews 8:1, 2, 10; Revelation 21:3

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