

סוכות

Sukkot - Feast of Tabernacles

This shabbat's lesson brings us to the third and final festival of the Fall Feasts. The final festival is known as Sukkot in Hebrew and Tabernacles in English. A sukkah was a temporary dwelling made of leaves, twigs, branches, and anything natural that would provide some shade. The Festival of Sukkot begins on the 15th of Tishri and is designed to remind us that when we were delivered from Egypt we had to dwell in sukkot during our wilderness sojourn. Thus Sukkot is the conclusion of the Festivals which began at Pesach. Even as Pesach teaches us about redemption, Sukkot reminds us that those who are redeemed will dwell with G-d and He will dwell with them.



In modern times the synagogue usually builds a sukkah and the children will decorate it with flowers and leaves. It is not unusual to see oranges, apples, grapes, and other fruits hanging from the roof of the sukkah. The roof of the sukkah is covered with branches but the roof must still allow one to see the stars at night. Since this is a harvest time, also vegetables, fruits, and dairy dishes are often served.

During a special service at the synagogue, palm branches are waved and yellow citron are held. Citron are large lemon-like fruits called an etrog. The palm branches are tied together with myrtle and willow branches to form a lulav. Both the lulav and the etrog are used to symbolize the different fruits from the land of Israel (Lev 23:40; Nehemiah 8:15), and are symbolic of the various kinds of people whom G-d calls to Himself.

Sukkot has Messianic implications since the Messiah promised He would one day tabernacle (same word as sukkah) on this earth and all would know Him. The prophet Zechariah (14:16-19) spoke of the feast of Sukkot which one day would be a day of worship for those who believe. In the Apostolic scriptures there are two texts that intersect with the feast of Sukkot. On the last day of Sukkot (Hoshanah Rabbah) there were two special ceremonies held. The first ceremony involved walking around the Temple with torches and then standing these torches against the walls of the Temple (Isaiah 49:6). The second ceremony involved taking water from the pool of Siloam and bringing it to the Temple symbolizing the day when Messiah would be as well known as the waters that covered the earth (Isaiah 11:9). Yeshua in reference to these occasions said "I am the light of the world," and "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 8:12; John 7:37-38).