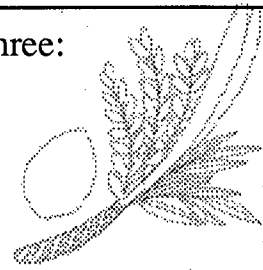


# סוכות

## *Sukkot - Rejoice before HaShem*

The specific mitzvot related to the Festival of Sukkot are three: to dwell in a Sukkah, to bring into the Sukkah the four species prescribed in the Torah, and to rejoice before HaShem.



On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of Adonai for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a 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 shall rejoice before Adonai your G-d for seven days. 41 'You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to Adonai for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations . . . (VaYikra 23:39ff)

Traditionally, the foliage spoken of here has been interpreted to be the Etrog (beautiful fruit), palm branches, myrtle (leafy trees), and willows. The palm, myrtle and willow are bound together to form a single unit, held in one hand, and the etrog in the other.

Interestingly, the festival of Sukkot has both an historical as well as an eschatological emphasis. Thus, the festival celebrates the fact that when we were redeemed from Egypt, we had no permanent dwelling, so we constructed temporary huts (sukkot) in which to dwell. Yet, since we were free to worship and serve HaShem having been redeemed from the slavery of Egypt, we could genuinely rejoice before Adonai. The fact that we had very little made no difference—the essential things in life (relationship with G-d, relationship with family) were ours and therefore we could rejoice.

Unfortunately, as G-d blesses us we have a tendency to forget how important these essentials are. In the business of life we can neglect to enjoy the really important things in life, and become "out of focus," thinking that the things we possess (as good and important as they are) are more important than our relationship with G-d and with each other. Therefore, HaShem has given us the wonderful mo'ed (festival) of Sukkot, to focus upon the most important things in life, and in that contemplation to recognize what true rejoicing is. It is for this very reason that from ancient times it became a tradition to read and study Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) during the week of Sukkot.

But the festival also has a view to the millennial age when Yeshua will reign in the Holy City. For Zechariah prophesies that in that time all of the nations will be required to celebrate Sukkot (Zech 14:16ff). For this reason, it has become the tradition to shake the lulav in every direction of the compass (including up and down) to represent the time when HaShem will bring people from all four corners of the earth to celebrate before Him in Jerusalem. This harvest motif is also emphasized by decorating the Sukkah with fruit, symbolic of the rich and complete harvest that one day will be HaShem's.