

# סוכות

## *Sukkot - Feast of Tabernacles*

The final festival in the yearly cycle is known as “Sukkot” in Hebrew, and “Tabernacles” in English. 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 God and He will dwell with them.

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, which traditionally have been used to fulfill the commandment to bring “fruit of a beautiful tree” into the sukkah (Lev 23:40). Three other species (foliage of the palm, myrtle, and willow) are also designated in this text, which are traditionally bound together to form the 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 have traditionally been seen as symbolic of the various kinds of people who make up a community.



In John’s Gospel, we read that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The word “dwelt” in the Greek means to “pitch a tent or make a temporary dwelling.” The noun form of this Greek word is used in the Lxx to translate סֻכָּה, *sukkah*. In one sense, then, we can say that Yeshua came to dwell in our humble place, like sitting in a sukkah. The prophet Zechariah (14:16-19) spoke of the feast of Sukkot as a time of worship for all of God’s children, and that all of the nations would come to Jerusalem for the yearly celebration. 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 because of the Messiah’s reign, the knowledge of Israel’s God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). In reference to these Sukkot ceremonies, Yeshua 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).

Following the seven days of Sukkot is the Eighth Day, or Shemini Atzeret (Num 29:38). Since Sukkot is specifically said to be seven days long, Shemini Atzeret is not part of Sukkot. Yet since it is called the “Eighth Day,” it is clearly connected to the seven days of Sukkot. In a prophetic way, the seven days of Sukkot represent the “week” of Yeshua’s millennial reign. This being the case, Shemini Atzeret represents the world to come which is ushered in immediately following the millennial reign of Messiah. Shemini Atzeret is a “holy convocation” and is a festival sabbath upon which ordinary work is to be suspended (Lev 23:36).

Following Shemini Atzeret, it became tradition to celebrate the joy of the Torah (Simchat Torah), since in the annual cycle of readings, the Torah has been finished, and the cycle of readings begins again. The joy is not that the readings have finished, but that we may begin again, from Gen 1, to study the Torah for another cycle. Traditionally the torah scrolls are paraded about the synagogue, and the whole congregation (including the children) are given an opportunity to see the unrolled Torah scroll. It is a time of renewed appreciation for God’s gift of His written word.