After the solemnity of the Season of Repentance, we arrive at the joyful festival of Sukkot. This seven day long festival takes place five days after Yom Kippur and usually falls in September or October. Directly following these seven days, an extra sabbath is declared, called Shemini Atzeret, meaning "Eighth day of assembly." It is considered to be a separate holiday, yet at the same time a part of Sukkot. *"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 the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day"* (**Leviticus 23:39**).

Feast of Tabernacles

The word *sukkot* means "booths" or "tabernacles," thus giving this Appointed Time the frequently-used name Feast of Tabernacles. God commanded the people to dwell in booths to remind them of His care for their forefathers when He brought them out of Egypt: *"You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God"* (**Leviticus 23:42-43**). This act of dwelling in booths is also reminiscent of the tabernacle, otherwise known as the tent of meeting, where God's presence dwelt during Israel's sojournings (**Exodus 25:8**).

In addition to remembering the provision of the past, this was a time where the people were depending on God to meet a very present need: the proper timing of rain. In the land of Israel, Sukkot is placed right in between the fall harvest and the ensuing rainy season. It is a time for rejoicing in the blessed harvest and entreating God to send the rain, not too early as to ruin the harvest, yet not too late so that the next season's crop is stunted: *"It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil"* (**Deuteronomy 11:13-14**).

Season of Our Joy

Not only is this a naturally happy time, but God Himself commands His people to rejoice: *"And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns"* (**Deuteronomy 16:14**). We have come out of the most somber feast (Yom Kippur), and now it is time for everyone in the community to celebrate God's forgiveness and faithfulness to His people.

The joyfulness surrounding this festival led to some interesting activities. One such ceremony was called the Celebration of Water Drawing. A priest would draw water from the Pool of Siloam; this "living water," as it was called, represented the Holy Spirit (**Joel 2:28-29**) and was poured out upon the altar. This draws itself from **Isaiah 12:3**: *"Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation."* It was during this ceremony when Yeshua said, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'"* (**John 7:37-38**).

The connection between Yeshua and Sukkot is too important to ignore. In fact, there is strong evidence that He was born during this festival. This theory takes into consideration the time of Zechariah's (John the Baptist's father) temple service to approximate the time of the events surrounding John's birth, with Yeshua's birth happening around six months afterwards (**Luke 1:36**). In **John 1:14** it is written, *"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."* The word "dwelt" here is literally translated as "tabernacled." He put on the temporary shelter of a human body so that He could bring *"great joy which will be for all the people"* (**Luke 2:10**).

Feast of the Nations

Sukkot is called the Feast of the Nations. It was specifically ordained not just for the children of Israel, but for all mankind, both now and in the future. During the dedication of the first Temple, which took place during Sukkot, the foreigner is given a special blessing (**1 Kings 8:41-43**). In the future, all the nations will come up to Jerusalem in pilgrimage to celebrate Sukkot, as it says in **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, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths."* Those who don't go up to celebrate will receive no rain (**verse 17**). In **Revelation 7:14-15** we see those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (repentance on Yom Kippur) will serve God day and night, and He will be their tabernacle.

As believers in Yeshua, we have been given an incredible opportunity to live in the Kingdom today. We don't have to wait until Messiah returns to honor God's Appointed Times, but we can participate in them and experience the blessing they bring right now.

This year, let's celebrate Sukkot looking forward to that day when God Himself will make His dwelling with us and we will rejoice in the tabernacle of His presence forever (**Revelation 21:3**).

How to Celebrate

- Build a *sukkah* of your own! It should be a temporary structure with at least three walls, decorated with plant material. The roof should not be complete so that you can see the sky through it. You do not need to live in it, but eat at least one meal per day in the *sukkah* and recite a blessing.

- In **Leviticus 23:40**, God commands, *"Take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees (traditionally etrog, a lemon-like fruit), palm branches, and boughs of leafy trees (traditionally myrtle branches) and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days."*

- This is a time where extra hospitality and generosity are encouraged. Invite friends and family over to share in your celebration.

- The day after Shemini Atzeret is called Simchat Torah, which means "Rejoicing with the Torah." It marks the renewal of the annual cycle of public Torah reading and is honored by great celebration and thankfulness for the word of God. While it is not an Appointed Time of God, it is a valuable celebration.

If you have any questions about Sukkot or anything related to Judeo-Christianity, we would love to help!

Email: contact@JudeoChristianClarion.com
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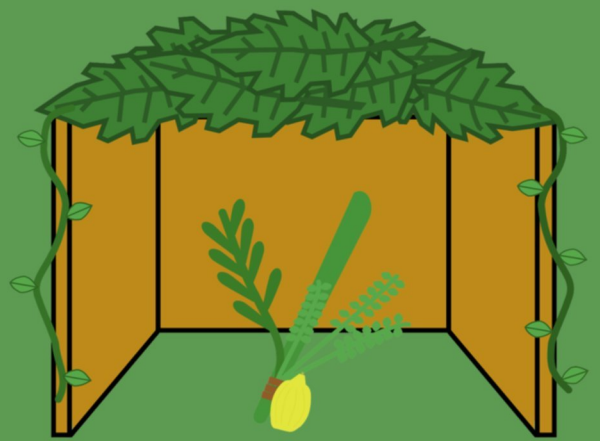
SUKKOT

God Dwelling With Us



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