

SUKKOT "Booths"  
Leviticus 22:16-23:44; Numbers 29:12-16

The Feast of Sukkot is the last of the three "pilgrim" Feasts that require the men of Israel to go up to Jerusalem and to appear before YHWH.

**Exodus 23:14-17** *Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year. <sup>15</sup>Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before Me empty:) <sup>16</sup>and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. <sup>17</sup>Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before YHWH ELOHIM.*

**Deuteronomy 16:16-17** *Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before YHWH thy Elohim in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before YHWH empty: <sup>17</sup>every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of YHWH thy Elohim which He hath given thee.*

Clearly these three Feasts are connected to the agricultural life of the land of Israel. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is in the month in which the barley is *aviv*<sup>1</sup> and ripens. The Feast of Weeks is celebrated seven weeks after the barley harvest and coincides with the wheat harvest. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, is celebrated after the last harvest of all the other crops of the field and vineyard. Three times a year all the males of Israel are to appear before YHWH with the tithe of the land.

Some scholars believe that these celebrations were first and foremost celebrations of the agricultural life and economy of the people of Canaan, only later to be adopted by the children of Israel and invested with historical meaning. While there is clearly an agricultural aspect to these celebrations, the Torah is explicit that the historical aspect of the Feasts came first. The connection between the historical and the agricultural aspects of the celebrations is not without purpose. These three Feasts, Chag HaMatzot (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), Chag Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks), and Chag Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles), all celebrate Israel's journey from the land of bondage to the land of promise. All three of these Feasts are connected to some remembrance. Chag HaMatzot recalls the haste in which the children of Israel left Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 16:3** *Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.*

Chag Shavuot is the celebration of YHWH giving the Torah at Mount Sinai. While there is no Biblical evidence that this was the exact day the Torah was given to the children of Israel, we do know that it was given in the third month of the year.

**Exodus 19:1** *In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*

Since Chag Shavuot comes seven weeks after the firstfruits of the barley are offered, it would place the giving of the Torah and the arrival of Israel at Sinai towards the beginning of the third biblical month.

Chag Sukkot celebrates the reality that the children of Israel lived in tents, huts, and booths as they crossed the wilderness on their way to the promised land.

**Leviticus 23:42-43** *Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: <sup>43</sup>that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am YHWH your Elohim.*

So we see that these three pilgrim Feasts are not three separate events, but the continual telling of the story of Israel's departure from Egypt, receiving the Torah, and journeying through the wilderness. The fact that the tithe of the harvest is connected to each of these Feasts serves several purposes. First and foremost the tithe serves as a sort of receipt to YHWH, declaring Him paid in full. The firstfruit of the harvest is the evidence that YHWH has delivered on all of His promises.

**Exodus 6:6-8** *Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am YHWH, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: <sup>7</sup>and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you an Elohim: and ye shall know that I am YHWH your Elohim, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am YHWH.*

The firstfruit of the land of Israel could be brought only when Israel was in the land. The firstfruit of the land could be brought only if the land itself brought forth fruit. So it is that the firstfruit is the evidence that YHWH brought us to the land and that the land was indeed a fruitful land. By repeating this act from generation to generation, each generation is given the opportunity to recount the history of Israel's deliverance and redemption as well as YHWH'S faithfulness to His promises. The fact that the tithes and offerings were to be brought up to Jerusalem was likewise a reminder that Israel's survival and economy is solely dependant upon the faithfulness of YHWH ELOHIM. We have learned in previous studies that the name YHWH carries with it the connotation of keeping promises. The Eternal One revealed His name to Moses during the encounter at the burning bush.

**Exodus 3:13-15** *And Moses said unto Elohim, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The Elohim of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? What shall I say unto them? <sup>14</sup>And Elohim said unto Moses, EHYEH ASHER EHYEH<sup>2</sup>: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, EHYEH<sup>3</sup> hath sent me unto you. <sup>15</sup>And Elohim said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH ELOHIM of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.*

But later YHWH spoke to Moses, saying:

**Exodus 6:3** *And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, but by My name YHWH was I not known to them.*

At first it would appear that the name YHWH was not known by the patriarchs and their descendants until Moses received it at Sinai. But we should remember that earlier the Torah revealed:

**Genesis 4:25-26** *And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: for Elohim, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. <sup>26</sup>And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of YHWH.*

Thus the Torah makes clear to us that the name YHWH was known from the time of Seth. Clearly the patriarchs were aware of the name YHWH; nevertheless, they had not yet experienced or known the attributes associated with that name. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Holy One was the maker of covenants and the giver of promises. The patriarchs knew the

Holy One as El Shaddai, the All Sufficient One; but the generation of Moses and Joshua came to know El Shaddai as YHWH, the fulfiller of covenants and promises. Bringing the tithes of the firstfruits of the harvest is a declaration therefore that YHWH has kept His promises.

With the Feast of Sukkot there is yet another reason for bringing the tithe of the harvest. Before we make this connection between the tithe and Chag Sukkot, we should understand the purpose of the tithe. First we need to understand that the tithe belongs to YHWH.

**Leviticus 27:30-32** *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is YHWH'S: it is holy unto YHWH. <sup>31</sup>And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. <sup>32</sup>And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto YHWH.*

We should realize that YHWH has no need of our tithes and offerings. As the psalmist declares:

**Psalms 50:10-12** *For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. <sup>11</sup>I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. <sup>12</sup>If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof.*

While the tithe belongs to YHWH, we witness in the Torah that He uses it to feed those who have no inheritance in the land.

**Deuteronomy 14:28-29** *At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: <sup>29</sup>and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that YHWH thy Elohim may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.*

**Deuteronomy 26:12-13** *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; <sup>13</sup>then thou shalt say before YHWH thy Elohim, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all Thy commandments which Thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed Thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.*

The Levite, stranger, fatherless, and widow, while lacking an inheritance in the land, are all given the honor of eating at YHWH'S table from YHWH'S portion. Failure to give the tithe robs not the Levite, stranger, fatherless, and widow, but YHWH Himself. By giving the tithe, the people of Israel are reminded that they too, like the Levite, stranger, fatherless, and widow, are completely dependant upon YHWH for their existence and sustenance. By tithing, the children of Israel are also protected from selfishness, avarice, and obsession with materialism. By tithing, the children of Israel are reminded that they are a people and the body of YHWH in the world. Tithing is one of the means by which the whole body is nurtured and fed.

As we have already stated, Chag Sukkot is the memorial celebration of Israel's wilderness wandering; but like all the Feasts of YHWH, Chag Sukkot is multidimensional in its applications. Leviticus 23 describes the Feasts of YHWH as being *mo'adim*<sup>4</sup> and *mikra'ay kodesh*.<sup>5</sup> While generally translated as "Feast," the Hebrew word *mo'ed*<sup>6</sup> means "appointed time." The Hebrew word *mikra*, usually translated as "convocation," means "rehearsal." Therefore when we celebrate the Feasts, we are keeping YHWH'S appointed, holy rehearsals.

We have already seen that each *mo'ed* and *mikra kodesh* of YHWH celebrates some past event. Chag Sukkot, for example, celebrates the time when Israel lived in booths, huts, and tents on the wilderness journey from Egypt to the land of promise. But as is true for all the *mo'adim* of YHWH, Chag Sukkot has a present application as well. To remember means that we put back

into our minds something that was once there. It is to recall in present reality some event or memory that once occupied our thoughts and lives. By keeping the *mo'adim* and *mikra'ay kodesh* of YHWH in each generation, we bring the memory of these events back into our present collective consciousness. YHWH did not simply command us to mentally remember the events of the wilderness wandering. All of the *mo'adim* and *mikra'ay kodesh* contain in them physical aspects that we are to embody in our lives.

In the *mikra* or rehearsal of Chag Sukkot, all the men of Israel are to go up to Jerusalem and live in booths made of branches, palm fronds, and leaves. As the people of each generation endeavor to build their temporary living quarters, they not only remember, but also relive the events of wandering in the wilderness. Each generation may then experience the original journey from Egypt to the land of promise. By keeping the Feast of Sukkot, each generation may lay claim to this rich heritage and remember that it is YHWH who sustained them through the wilderness. Every year as we live out this appointed rehearsal we are reconnected to our past, our people, and our heritage. By keeping the appointed rehearsals of YHWH we find our identity among the covenant people of YHWH; thus by recalling and reclaiming the past, we find our place and our calling in the present. We are the people whom YHWH delivered out of bondage in Egypt and led for forty years in the wilderness, providing for our every need and bringing us into the land He promised to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We should understand that rehearsals are also designed to prepare us for something yet to come, a specific appointed time. Beyond reliving the past, the celebration of Chag Sukkot is a rehearsal for a prophetic time in history. While the children of Israel were capable of both reading and writing, books were rare and very expensive. Unlike today, every believer did not have his own Bible to study. It was for this reason that the Torah was read publicly every seven years at Chag Sukkot.

***Deuteronomy 31:10-11*** *And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, <sup>11</sup>when all Israel is come to appear before YHWH thy Elohim in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.*

The Torah also teaches that parents are responsible for teaching their children the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of YHWH as contained in the Torah.

***Deuteronomy 4:9-10*** *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; <sup>10</sup>specially the day that thou stoodest before YHWH thy Elohim in Horeb, when YHWH said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.*

***Deuteronomy 6:6-7*** *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: <sup>7</sup>and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

***Deuteronomy 11:19*** *And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

When we read each of the above quoted passages in its larger context, we see a direct connection to not only verbally teaching the Torah but also to diligently doing the Torah. In Hebraic thinking, doctrine is what we do, not simply what we believe or speak. Teaching was done largely by example. How did parents diligently teach their children the Torah? They taught their children by doing the Torah in their homes. Thus by keeping the *mo'adim* and *mikra'ay kodesh*, the appointed holy rehearsals, parents not only taught their children the past and

allowed them to connect with their heritage in the present; they also prepared them for all that was about to come.

Yeshua and the apostles warned us of the consequence of unpreparedness.

**Matthew 24:42-43** *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Master doth come. <sup>43</sup>But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.*

**Luke 12:47** *And that servant, which knew his Master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

**Revelation 3:3** *Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:2** *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of YHWH so cometh as a thief in the night.*

**2 Peter 3:10** *But the day of YHWH will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

Unless I am greatly deceived, the majority of believers reading this commentary are doing so outside the land of Israel. This is because the great majority of the children of Israel are still scattered to the ends of the earth. The House of Judah has already begun its return to the land of Israel, but the House of Israel is still living in ambiguity and exile. Just as was true of the children of Israel in Egypt, so too those of the House of Israel and even many from the House of Judah have grown very comfortable in the lands we live in. We have made our homes in exile. We have raised our families in exile. We have put down roots in the lands of our exile. But there is coming a time – which I believe has already begun – when YHWH is calling His covenant people out of hiding and eventually back to the land of their heritage.

As long as we are living under other forms of government we will never be able to truly LIVE the Torah. Since the children of Israel are to bear the image of YHWH in the world by embodying YHWH'S self-revelation, the Torah, we must live in the land of Torah under the reign of Messiah for this to happen. As long as we are scattered to the nations, our light is diminished and the image of YHWH is incomplete; therefore there will come a time when we will be gathered to the land.

Since the Torah teaches that what happens to the fathers happens also to the children, we should look to the past for understanding as to what will most probably happen in the future. When Jacob and his children reunited with Joseph in the land of Egypt, the Torah tells us that the children of Israel were quite at home there.

**Genesis 47:27** *And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.*

In the Hebrew this verse tells us a somewhat different story. It is possible to read this verse in Hebrew as saying that the land of Egypt possessed the children of Israel. We might remember that the children of Israel left the land of promise because of a severe seven-year famine. When they came to Egypt, Joseph placed them in the most fertile land in the whole of the kingdom. There was plenty of food and grazing land, and water for their families, their herds, and their crops. Their hearts were satisfied and content. But this was not to be the land of their heritage. Thus we witness Jacob causing his children to swear an oath that they would not bury him in the land of Egypt, but would return him to the land of promise.

**Genesis 47:29-30** *And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray*

*thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: <sup>30</sup>but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place.*

**Genesis 49:29-30** *And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpeleah, which is before Mamre, <sup>30</sup>in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place.*

By this oath Jacob assured that his sons, beginning with Joseph who had been in Egypt the longest and had the most to leave behind, would indeed leave Egypt and return to the promised land. Unfortunately, once they had completed their promised task of burying Jacob, they all returned to their possessions in the land of exile and turned their backs on the land of their heritage.

Here we may remember the contrast between Abraham and Lot. When YHWH called Abram to leave his country, kinfolk, and father's house, the Torah tells us that Abram departed as soon as YHWH had spoken to him.<sup>7</sup> Abraham's nephew Lot, on the other hand, was commanded to leave the city of Sodom, for YHWH was about to destroy the city. The Torah reports the response of Lot and his family to this command of YHWH to leave the land.

**Genesis 19:14-16, 26** *And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place, for YHWH will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. <sup>15</sup>And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. <sup>16</sup>And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; YHWH being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city....<sup>26</sup>but his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*

Lot and his family were so comfortable where they were that they hesitated to leave, even when YHWH clearly enumerated the danger and destruction they were facing. Messiah teaches us that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also.<sup>8</sup> Even though their calling was to be a people of the Torah in the land of the Torah, the children of Israel clearly found their treasure in Egypt. Therefore when the time was right, YHWH turned Egypt against the children of Israel. What once was a life of pleasure and leisure slowly became a life of bitter hardship and oppression. Eventually the children of Israel would cry out to be delivered from the land of Egypt and to live in the land promised to their fathers. The time would come when Israel would be driven from the land of Egypt into the wilderness.

Those of us who have made our homes, raised our families, and put down roots in the land of our exile need to be mindful that an appointed time is coming when YHWH will gather those scattered to the ends of the earth.

**Deuteronomy 30:3-4** *That then YHWH thy Elohim will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither thy Elohim hath scattered thee. <sup>4</sup>If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will YHWH thy Elohim gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee.*

**Isaiah 11:12** *And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

**Isaiah 56:8** *YHWH ADONAI which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.*

**Jeremiah 32:37** Behold I will gather them out of all countries wither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.

**Ezekiel 37:21** Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.

Unfortunately, it may take bitterness and adversity to drive us from the comfort of our countries, kindred, and homes. The book of Revelation speaks of a time when all people will be unable to buy or sell without the mark of the beast.

**Revelation 13:16-17** And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: <sup>17</sup>and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of a time when the children of Israel will be sought out and hunted.

**Jeremiah 16:16** Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith YHWH, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

We may understand this passage in both a positive and a negative light. In the positive aspect we may relate it to Yeshua's calling his disciples to become fishers of men.

**Matthew 4:18-19** And Yeshua, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. <sup>19</sup>And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

May it be that many of the children of Israel will respond like father Abraham to the invitation of Yeshua and even now begin preparing for the day of our gathering. On the other hand, we may see that those who do not accept the invitation of Messiah to leave country, kinfolk, and home to return to the land of our calling will be hunted by hunters, as was the case in the terrible days of the Holocaust. In speaking of the end days Yeshua warned of a coming tribulation that would be worse than anything we have ever seen in the world, including the Holocaust.

**Matthew 24:20-22** But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: <sup>21</sup>for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup>And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Most likely it will be at this time that many believers in Yeshua and keepers of the Torah will be hunted out, driven from their countries, kindred, and homes. The appointed rehearsal of Chag Sukkot is a means of preparing us for the day when we will once again be called to leave the comfort of our exile and head toward the land of Torah. Once again we may be wandering through the wilderness and living in booths, tents, and huts of leaves and branches, trusting that YHWH our Elohim will deliver us and provide for us as we endure the purging fires of the wilderness. So it is by keeping YHWH'S appointed rehearsals that we prepare our families for the day of our return. By learning now how to build shelters in the wilderness, how to tithe and share our resources, how to set up a camp, and how to orient ourselves toward the land of Torah, we will be preparing each generation for what yet lays ahead.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Aviv* is a stage of maturity or ripening of the barley crop, in between young, immature grain and fully ripe grain. It is ripe enough to be destroyed by hail, but not ripe enough to be eaten directly out of the

---

field or crushed and ground into flour. The KJV English translation, “green ears,” is really not accurate enough to understand the precision of this ancient Biblical term.

<sup>2</sup> I AM THAT I AM

<sup>3</sup> I AM

<sup>4</sup> *Mo'adim* means “appointed times.”

<sup>5</sup> *Mikra'ay kodesh* means “holy rehearsals.”

<sup>6</sup> *Mo'ed* is the singular form of *mo'adim*.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 12:1-4

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:21