The Feast of Tabernacles

Chag ha-Sukkot (חֵג הַסְכוֹת)

The Feast of Tabernacles (*Chag ha-Sukkot* [ntopin and in Hebrew) is the climax of God's liturgical calendar. This festival was also called the Feast of Ingathering, for it was the time of rejoicing over the completion of the harvest in the agrarian Israelite society. The fact that this festival began on the fifteenth day of the month of Tishri (at the full moon) is also parallel with the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth day of Abib (at the full moon). Both the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles began their celebrations on the two days of the year when night and day are equal, for they were on the day (and night) of the full moon at the time of the vernal equinox (Unleavened Bread) and the autumnal equinox (Tabernacles).

The Feast of Tabernacles is discussed in Exodus 23:16 and in Leviticus 23:39-43. Historically Israel dwelt in booths, brush arbors constructed of tree limbs and other foliage, that served as reminders of their journey to the Promised Land after their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. This festival was also remembered as the time on which Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, one of the most celebrated events in Jewish national history.

The Feast of Tabernacles is recognized among the Jewish people as simply "The Feast" and is called "The Season of our Joy." It is also believed to be a universal festival for all peoples, regardless as to their ethnicity. As a matter of fact, Zechariah 14:16-19 predicts that all the nations of the world will join in the celebration of the Festival of Tabernacles during the Messianic Kingdom in the Age to Come.

During the time of Jesus, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with great excitement and fervor. The ceremonies associated with the festival had profound significance to the Israelite people. Great menorahs were lit all over the city so that its golden walls gleamed. The people danced before the Lord with all their might, particularly on the last great day of the feast when the High Priest brought water from the Pool of Siloam and poured it with great ceremony on the altar as a petition for rain and a bountiful harvest for the next year.

Some have suggested that Jesus may have been born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is commonly held that the ministry of Jesus was of three and one-half years in duration (calculated according to the number of Passovers which Jesus celebrated), and that

his ministry began at the time of his thirtieth birthday (Luke 3:23). Since it is certain that Jesus was crucified at Passover, if he were thirty-three and one-half years old at his death, it follows that he would have been born around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, six months before the Feast of Passover. Tabernacles may well have been the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4) at which the Jesus chose to tabernacle with men (John 1:14).

It has also been suggested that since the temple of Solomon was dedicated at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Christian community may also have been initiated during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus ordained the twelve apostles. Whatever the case, the Festival of Tabernacles has great significance to both Jews and Christians in that it speaks of the fragility of human existence, the fact that all humans are created equal in God's eyes, and that even God himself has tabernacled with humans by manifesting his Shekinah in the wilderness tabernacle and by manifesting himself in his Son, Jesus.

Since the Scriptures confirm that everyone in the world will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the Age to Come, it is certainly appropriate for Christians to join with their Jewish friends to honor this festival and its personal and corporate implications. Some even believe that the Messiah will appear at this time of the year in the time appointed by the Father. Surely this season is an appropriate time to speak of the climactic event of the ages and to anticipate the coming of Israel's Messiah, the King of kings and the Lord of Iords.

Christians can commemorate The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) by constructing a booth or hut (tabernacle) to remind themselves and their children that the riches of life are nothing without relationship with God. Symbols that help to bring the celebration to life and serve as object lessons include the shofar, the menorah, the prayer shawl, banners, and other biblical symbols..

For detailed information about the Feast of Tabernacles, *Sukkot*, read *Our Lost Legacy: Christianity's Hebrew Heritage* by Dr. John D. Garr or go to www.HebraicCommunity.org to connect with the *Stability* series and other teaching materials about virtually any subject relating to Christian celebrations of biblical festivals and Christian use of biblical and Jewish symbols.

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