

Yeshua and the Feast of Sukkot

By Dan & Brenda Cathcart

The video version is available at: <https://youtu.be/9EdBmv5cXzI>

The scripture reading is 1st Chronicles 16:27-34

In last week's teaching we demonstrated through examination of the scripture that Yeshua was most likely born at or near the Feast of Sukkot and how this long-established festival had profound Messianic implications. But there is more to the story.

The Feast of Sukkot plays an integral part in the life and times of Messiah Yeshua. Its rituals and ceremonies practiced by the Jewish people for many generations are a powerful foreshadow of Yeshua as the Messiah and king of Israel. Even the various names given for aspects of the Feast of Sukkot hold special messianic significance. As we closely examine these rituals and ceremonies, and observe Yeshua's words and actions while He attends the Feast of Sukkot in Jerusalem, especially His last one just six months prior to His crucifixion, We will begin to understand how the early believers saw the fulfilment of the prophetic nature of this amazing moed or appointed time.

During the Feast of Sukkot, all the priests would be on duty at the Temple to serve the large number of pilgrims coming to this feast. To facilitate the public rituals and ceremonies of Sukkot, the priests were divided into three groups. One group took care of all the offerings and sacrifices which the pilgrims brought to the Temple. A second group, headed by the high priest, oversaw drawing the water for the water pouring ceremony.

This second group of priests went out the Water Gate, on the south side of the Temple complex, down to the pool of Siloam. The high priest used a golden vase to draw water from the pool. The water was known as living water because this pool was constantly refreshed by a flowing spring. We briefly mention this water pouring ceremony with a quote from the Talmud last week.

“He that hath not beheld the joy of the drawing of water hath never seen joy in his life.”ⁱ

The high priest's assistant had a silver vase filled with wine. At the head of a large procession, the high priest carried the living water back to the temple. The road down to the pool and back was lined with pilgrims. They all sang the hallel Psalms 113-118, Isaiah 12:3, and from the song of Moses.

Exodus 15:1-2 NKJV 1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! 2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

The celebration of water pouring came out of the commandment to rejoice during the Feast of Tabernacles and Isaiah's prophecy about drawing water from the well of salvation.

Isaiah 12:2-3 NKJV 2 Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'" 3 Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.

In the Ceremony of Water Pouring, the high priest takes water from the pool of Siloam. The word "Siloam" is from the root word "shalach," number 7971 in the Strong's Concordance meaning sent out, sent forth, or sent

away. The source of the water in the pool is the spring of Gihon. Gihon is derived from number 1518 meaning to gush forth, break forth, labor to bring forth, to draw up, or to take out. Gihon is also the name of one of the rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden and, as such, is certainly a river of Living Water.

The written word of God, or Torah, is often compared to flowing water. As water flows from high ground to low, so Torah flows from heaven to earth bringing life. Likewise, Yeshua, the Living Word, comes down from heaven to earth and brings everlasting life. Through the celebration of water pouring, we see a powerful picture and further evidence of Yeshua's birth at the Feast of Sukkot. Yeshua burst forth from heaven, as Living Water, sent out to bring life!

While this second group of priests are engaged in drawing the living water, the third group of priests go out from the Temple through the Beautiful Gate, down to the Motzah valley, and cut willow branches 25-30 feet in length. As they traveled back up to the temple in a procession, waiving the long branches, their pathway would be lined with pilgrims waiving their own "lulav" consisting of a myrtle, willow, and palm branch and an etrog (citron fruit). They would wave their lulavs and sing the same Psalms as the other group. These priests would form a procession thirty feet apart, take one step, wave the willow, then take another step. The waving of the willows created a wind which represents the Spirit of God coming from the East. They continued in this fashion all the way back to the temple. This was done to fulfill the commandment found in Leviticus 23:40

Leviticus 23:40 NKJV 40 'And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

As the two groups converged on the temple, another priest stood on the southeast corner of the temple wall and played a flute calling them into the temple. Since the flute was a pierced instrument, he was called the pierced one. Believers would perhaps remember that Yeshua was "pierced" by a Roman spear during His crucifixion. The imagery here is beautiful, especially as we remember that Yeshua is the Living Water. The pierced one is summoning both the Holy Spirit, and the living water "sent out" from the pool of Siloam to the temple.

Once these two processions reached the Temple, they would proceed to the altar where the willow branches would be placed against the sides of the altar, so the tops bent over the altar forming a Sukka like structure. The shofar was blown three times and the priests walked once around the altar singing the words from Psalm 118:25:

Psalms 118:25 NKJV 25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.

The high priest with the water and his assistant with the wine proceeded up the altar ramp to the altar itself where there were two silver bowls. They poured the water into one bowl and the wine into the other. Each bowl had a hole in the bottom allowing the water and the wine to flow out together at the base of the altar. Three blasts of the silver trumpets followed the pouring of the water and the wine signaling the start of the Temple music. The Levites sang the Hallel, Psalms 113-118. The people would join in on Psalm 118:25 and wave their lulavs. They would wave them east, south, west, north, up, and down as a sign of God's sovereignty over the four directions of the compass as well as the heavens and earth.

It was during this ceremony of the water pouring that Yeshua, on the seventh and great day of the feast, stood up in the Temple and declared that He was the source of living water!

John 7:37-38 NKJV 37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

The Feast of Sukkot was also known as the Festival of Light. With the temple activities going on around the clock, four huge torches were lit in the temple courts providing light throughout the night. They stood some 75 feet high and each one held many gallons of oil. The wicks were made from strips of linen from the worn and soiled garments of the priests. The torches would burn all night long. Jerusalem is at a high elevation, the glow from these giant torches could be seen all the way to the coast and out in the Mediterranean Sea for some 200 miles. Therefore, during the Feast of Sukkot, Jerusalem was known as the "light of the world."

The apostle John describes Yeshua as a great light which comes into the world.

John 1:4-9 NKJV 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

The Feast of Sukkot is also called the "Season of our Joy." King David submitted his first Psalm of praise, recorded in 1 Chronicles 16, in honor of the ark of the covenant being brought into Jerusalem following the defeat of the Philistines who had come against God's people. Prophetically we can see Yeshua coming into Jerusalem with triumph after winning the victory over the nations that will come against Jerusalem in the final days. David's Psalm is full of praises to God and resounds with exuberant joy.

1 Chronicles 16:27-34 NKJV 27 Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and gladness are in His place. 28 Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Give to the LORD glory and strength. 29 Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! 30 Tremble before Him, all the earth. The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved. 31 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." 32 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it. 33 Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD, For He is coming to judge the earth. 34 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

When the Jews celebrated the Feast of Sukkot for the first time following the Babylonian exile, they celebrated like never before! The sages say that the celebrations were more joyful and exuberant than anything seen in their lifetimes. Imagine the even greater joy of the celebration as we gather at the Feast of Sukkot when Yeshua comes again!

Sukkot is also known as the "Feast of Nations." In addition to the regular daily offerings and sacrifices, 70 bulls were offered over the seven days of the feast representing the 70 nations of the earth. This is done because the Children of Israel were to be priests to the nations.

Exodus 19:6 NKJV 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

The apostle Peter said that the role of the believers was also to be priests to the nations.

1 Peter 2:4-5 NKJV 4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Skipping to verse 9

1 Peter 2:9-10 NKJV 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Remember from last week's teaching we learned that the nations are mentioned as being included in the joy of Messiah's coming!

Luke 2:10 NKJV 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

The prophet Ezekiel describes the millennial Temple that is yet to be built and describes the reign of the "prince." Ezekiel describes how sacrifices will be brought to the LORD at that time.

Ezekiel 45:21-25 NKJV 21 "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22 "And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. 23 "On the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering. 24 "And he shall prepare a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each ephah. 25 "In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall do likewise for seven days, according to the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil."

During the millennial reign of Yeshua, the priests will bring the offerings before the LORD. The Feasts will be observed by the prince, Yeshua, as well as all the people. In fact, the prince, is the one who provides all the offerings.

The Feast of Sukkot is the feast celebrating the final harvest at the end of the growing season. Deuteronomy tells us that this is the time when all the grain has been gathered and threshed. The grapes have been put through the winepress. The harvest is complete.

With this language of the harvest, the Feast of Sukkot is also known as the "Feast of Ingathering." The harvest began with the barley harvest in the early spring when Yeshua rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits. It continued with the initial wheat harvest when the Holy Spirit came on the Feast of Weeks fifty days later and the first believers were baptized. The wheat harvest continues until the end of the season. The harvest is complete with the gathering of the grapes and fruit of the trees.

Yeshua taught His disciples about the final harvest at the end of the age using a parable about wheat and tares.

Matthew 13:24-30 NKJV 24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 "But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 "So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Not understanding the significance of the parable, some of Yeshua's disciple later asked Him what it meant.

Matthew 13:36-43 NKJV 36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

As we celebrate the Feast of Sukkot each year, we are reminded of Messiah Yeshua in every aspect of our celebration. We learned that Sukkot is a remembrance of God's provision while in the wilderness. Through the traditional ceremonies and rituals of Sukkot, we learned that Yeshua is both the living water and the light of the world. Through the Feast of Sukkot, we learned that the times we live in today are the times of the growing season and the work of the harvest is not yet complete. We learned That Yeshua came into the world at this time, the king is born! And on some future Sukkot Yeshua will be crowned King of Kings and take His rightful place on the throne of David in Jerusalem. So, as we celebrate the Feast of Sukkot this year, let us remember all these things and, it was and will someday forever be, the season of our joy!

Study Questions:

1. Discuss each of the 4 alternate names of the Feast of Sukkot mentioned in this teaching, what are other ways in which they are shadows of Messiah Yeshua? (1: Festival of Light, 2: Season of our Joy, 3: Feast of Nations, 4: Feast of Ingathering)
2. How does our reading for this teaching, 1 Chronicles 16:27-34, speak of the themes and aspects of the Feast of Sukkot?
3. The Feast of Sukkot ends with an 8th day celebration called Shimeni Atzerat which is observed as a Sabbath. Biblically, eight is the number of new beginnings. What are some of the new beginnings that are associated with this day?
4. Where else does the Harvest metaphor show up in connection with the coming of Messiah?
5. Other than the sacrifice of the 70 bulls, how does the Feast of Sukkot live up to the name "Feast of Nations?"
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

