

How can someone not love Sukkot? Everything about it speaks of joy, fellowship, and rest. Yes, I must admit that Sukkot is my favorite of all of HaShem's appointments. Some of what I love about Sukkot is that for me it simply says what it says. It is where my experience with this lovely time seems to match up with what Scripture speaks of. Beloved, this is the way it should be with all of the Feasts of HaShem. How sad that many of us are only now discovering the treasure left for us in these appointed times. How sad that for some of us, our life experiences have not added sounds, smells, and tastes to the commandments regarding G-d's appointments with His people. I was not raised in a traditional Jewish home. I want something different for my children, and my grandchildren. I want them to know by experience how to adjust their lives to HaShem's calendar, and to His clock. I want it to be "natural" for them, because it was not for me.

Sukkot, on the other hand, is already so firmly established in my life experience, it is as if I have always lived with its yearly reminder of the shadow of the Pillar of Cloud that sheltered us from the heat of the wilderness... and the bright Pillar of Fire that lit our joyous evenings when our Beloved G-d lead us as a new bride under His canopy of stars. If you have celebrated Sukkot with your family, in a *sukkah*, then maybe you know what I am talking about. ***It's the best of the best.*** It is the last of the eight *Mo'adim* [appointments, feasts] of Leviticus 23. What starts with Shabbat, and then Passover... is culminated in Sukkot, which is itself is a picture of perpetual Shabbat. Think about that for a moment. Who could not love a perpetual Shabbat? *Yom Shekulo Shabbat* [Day When all is Shabbat]. This is what Sukkot is about: remembering our Beloved King's glory when we were in the wilderness, and anticipating His glory in the World to Come.

For seven days we dwell in *sukkot*, which are shelters that are partially open to the sky. We enjoy the shade in the daytime, and yet can see the stars through openings in the roof. Our days are spent resting, praying, eating, and studying. Our nights are full of family time, singing, dancing, and weighty discussions. We do it as obedience to Creator of Heaven and Earth. We do it in remembrance.

That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am HaShem your G-d.

Leviticus 23:43

The Sages understood that the "booths" of the wilderness were metaphorically speaking of the Cloud of Glory that led us through the wilderness. *Sukkot* [booths, tabernacles] comes from the root verb *sakak*, which means to cover, to shelter, or to protect. Psalms 105:39 makes this connection between the *sukkot* [booths] and the Pillar of Cloud and Fire.

He spread a cloud for a covering [masak, from the same root verb sakak]; and fire to give light in the night.

Psalms 105:39

As usual, the Sages have given us uncanny insights into the text. Imagine what a time that was. HaShem dwelt in our midst. There, in the center of our camp was the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle], and above the *Mishkan*, and spreading out over the camp, was a cloud by day and a fire by night. There was His clear and unmistakable Presence. He was our Beloved King Who had wooed us away from Egypt and the world, and had placed His love upon us - and Who now sheltered us beneath His Cloud of Glory.

This brings us full-circle to the *Yom Shekulo Shabbat* idea. You see, this is the scene that will be present in the World to Come, in the Messianic Age.

*In that day the Branch of HaShem shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When HaShem has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then HaShem will **create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.** For over all the glory there will be a **covering** [chuppah]. And there will be a **tabernacle** [sukkah, singular of sukkot] for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.*

Isaiah 4:2-6

It is said that the Shabbat is 1/60th of the World to Come (something the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews would agree with). It gives the smallest taste of what it will be like to rest in the eternal rest of Messiah. Beloved, Sukkot as well is a taste of the World to Come - where we will rest with our King beneath the eternal shelter of His Presence.

What's not to love about that?

Commonly Asked Questions about Sukkot

How do we make a *sukkah*? There are lots of traditional rules, but Scripture does not itself give much insight except in the wilderness picture. Seeing the stars at night, and being somewhat sheltered from the sun in the day is part of what gave us the traditional "At least three somewhat sturdy walls, and a roof of vegetation (branches, leaves etc.)."

When do we put up our *sukkah*? Traditionally, it should be put up the day after Yom Kippur, but certainly in time for the first evening meal on *Erev Sukkot* [Evening of Sukkot].

Do I have stay in a *sukkah* all day long? May you? Yes. Must you? No. Spend some time each day. Traditionally, eating and sleeping are seen as preferable times.

What if it rains? Didn't your mother tell you to come in out of the rain? By all means, go inside. It is a time of rejoicing, not whining. Get in where it is dry.

What am I supposed to *do* for seven days? The first day is a Shabbat. During the time of Sukkot, study *Kohelet* [Ecclesiastes], and ponder the difference between "living under the sun" as the rest of the world does, and "living under the Cloud of Glory." All is ***not*** "vanity" for us!

Are lulav's kabbalistic? I have no idea, but they are Scriptural. Yes, it is a command to take the "Four Species" - and tradition says to wave them. What does it mean? There are many possibly explanations but my favorite is this one: "What is the purpose of the *lulav*? To ask Messiah when He comes, what the purpose of the *lulav* is."

*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 HaShem your G-d for seven days.*

Leviticus 23:40

Is it seven or eight days long? Both. We are commanded to dwell in *sukkot* for seven days, but the parable² is given that it is like a great banquet that goes on for seven days, but on the eighth day, the king invites his close friend to a simple meal.

The eighth day is also a Shabbat, but we are not commanded to dwell in *sukkot* on this day. For that reason the eighth day, *Shemini Atzeret*, is not considered part of *Sukkot*³. In Israel, it is also *Simchat Torah*, the day we end the Torah cycle and begin it again. We will read the last parasha, and then roll the scroll back to *B'reshit* and start again! In the Diaspora, the day after *Shemini Atzeret* is *Simchat Torah* (23 Tishrei).

Let's Rejoice! The Bridegroom comes!

¹ Berachot 57b

² Sukkah 55b

³ Rosh Hashanah 4b