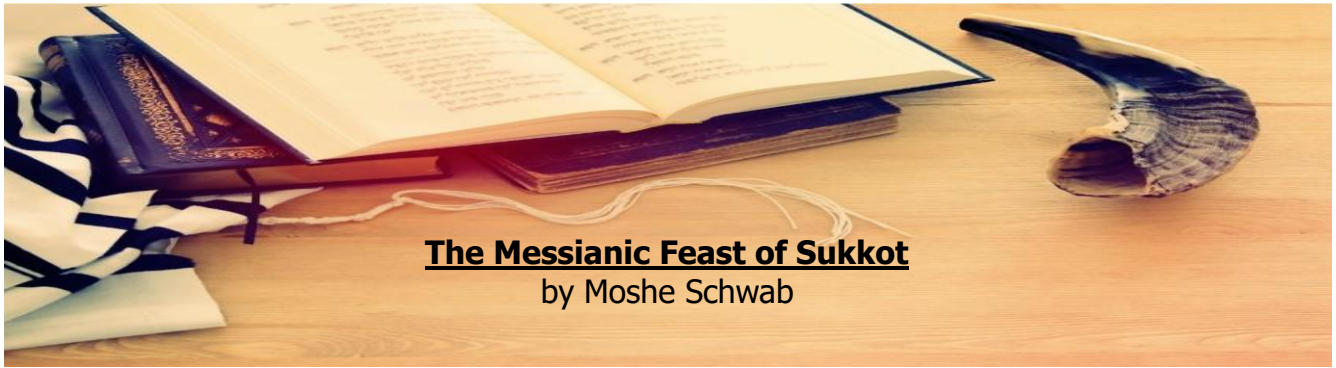




The Messianic Feast of Sukkot

by Moshe Schwab

Names

Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Ya'akov – James
Yeshua – Jesus (in Hebrew it means "Salvation")
Yĕhōvāh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
Yochanan – John

Terms

Cohanim – priests
Sukkot – A feast of joy and thanksgiving
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement
Yom Teruah – Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year

Introduction

Sukkot is one of the three major feasts of God that we are commanded to observe. Celebrations around God's feasts can be a wonderful time to get together. I feel so connected to the feasts of God as I celebrate them. I remember this one particular Sukkot activity years ago; the Torah scroll was brought outside and read; we had snacks and fellowship; a group of people played music; some people danced, and others talked and enjoyed the time of celebration. I remember the warm Fall evening air and how exciting and wonderful it felt to be there and enjoy the celebration.

Sukkot is a picture of the wedding feast when we will be with Yeshua (Jesus) and God for 1,000 years. 2 Timothy 2:11-14 NKJV says,

"This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, he also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit."

The scripture says that we are to die to our old ways of life, endure, and be faithful. He is faithful. It says we will reign with Yeshua; this was a faithful saying of theirs. It must be talking about Yeshua's future reign. Some confuse this with Yeshua's return which will occur on Yom Teruah – the day of shouting or blasting. The angels were shouting for joy when Yeshua was born, and the trumpets were blasting all over Israel announcing the feast of Yom Teruah. The Fall feasts point to Yeshua's return someday on Yom Teruah;¹ God's future judgment on Yom Kippur; and Sukkot to our future celebration in the future kingdom with Yeshua. Because some say Yeshua was born on Sukkot, it throws off the understanding of these future events.

¹ Read my paper on Rosh Hashanah (Yom Teruah) and the Birth of Yeshua. <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/observing-the-feasts>

It is clear; Sukkot points to our future celebration with Yeshua and not to the coming and return of Yeshua. People start off in the wrong direction with these spiritual pictures of God's feasts and we then lose the obvious meaning of what they refer to. Notice that Shaul said that this was a saying of theirs. They looked forward to their reign with the Messiah and we are to look forward to being with Him also.

Sukkot is one of the Fall biblical holidays that make for a busy time of year. Yom Teruah (the Jewish New Year, the 1st of Tishri) starts out the holidays; then Yom Kippur, the God appointed day of confession of sin and repentance; and finally, the Feast of Sukkot. All this transpires in just 15 days. The Jewish writings record that just before Yom Kippur, Moshe came down from Mount Sinai for the second time with the second set of tablets,² the ten commandments. The first time he came down, the people were sinning by worshiping a golden calf; this time they were not sinning; Israel remained faithful. This always should remind us that God wants us to repent and turn away from our sinful behaviors; He will forgive us. Rabbi Yochanan said, "If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing;"¹ John 1:9 CJB.

Rabbi is just a word in our culture describing a Jewish leader. It used to mean great one and Yeshua said that is wrong; it doesn't mean that anymore. It can be about attitude. Someone once told me they were ordained. I came to understand that they meant I better listen to them, and I had better get down on my knees before them. Attitude can determine how we follow that quote by Yeshua. Some of the most wonderful and humble people I have met have been rabbis because Judaism teaches the godly principle of not being proud but being humble.

If they are proud and arrogant and acting like God, then title or no title, they are proud. Proverbs 16:5 NKJV says, "Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD." Again, we need to understand the context. **They were acting proud, so Yeshua went after them.** They were detestable to God. Some names are wrong because of what they represent. Father is wrong because that is an attribute of God. Priest is wrong because a true priest of God is a decedent of Aaron. There are absolutely no true acting priests at present.

After Yom Kippur, the celebration of Sukkot follows just a few days later on the 15th of Tishri and it is a time to celebrate a renewed relationship with God, it is a time of joy for God's provision, and also a harvest festival. Some who observe Sukkot make temporary structures called a sukkah and they may live in it. It is to remind us that Israel lived in the desert and how God is their provider, and that His presence was with them in the desert in the form of a cloud by day and the shekinah glory at the "Tent of Meeting" by night. God is also our provider and Sukkot is the time to celebrate that. Our Thanksgiving Day in some countries comes from the feast of Sukkot.

Yeshua was the presence of God and Yochanan refers to Him several times as a light; just like the shekinah glory as the presence of God lit up the sky at the "Tent of Meeting." That is

² I found a source for the timing of Moses' second trip down the mountain with the commandments at, <http://www.truebiblecode.com/understanding356.html>.

the true meaning of the scripture in John 1:14. Yeshua was the presence of God. It does not mean He came on Sukkot.

It should not only remind believers in the Messiah that God is our provider, but of the joy that Yeshua the Messiah brings to our lives and how we can have the presence of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit. We are to be led by the Holy Spirit just as Israel was led by God in the desert.³ Also, because Sukkot is a time of renewed relationship with God following Yom Kippur, Sukkot points to the future age when we will have a new and special relationship with God and be with God for all eternity.

There are some ceremonies that are associated with Sukkot. God commands us to rest on the 1st and 8th days and to take nice looking branches and fruit and rejoice before the Lord. Some do this with specific branches and fruit consisting of a lulav. The Eighth Day is a day of rest and some use that to celebrate the end of the cyclic Torah reading, but it is only a day of rest. The Eighth Day is separate from Sukkot but is often considered part of Sukkot. It is a final day or rest and is a picture of our final eternal life with God. Doing something on this day hides this spiritual picture, so they should not be done. Israel was commanded to assemble for the feast of Sukkot and Messianic believers should also assemble for this feast.

God's Feasts

Most importantly, Sukkot is one of God's feasts. What other reason do we need to observe it? As I share on the verses from Leviticus about Sukkot, I will share more details on how we can observe this feast. Why observe God's feasts? One of the reasons for believers in the Messiah Yeshua to observe the feasts of God is when Rabbi Shaul (Paul) tells us to keep the Passover, "For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the Seder not with leftover hametz, the hametz of wickedness and evil, but with the matzah of purity and truth;" 1Corinthians 5:7-8 CJB. The translator of this verse clearly sees the feast of Passover (Pesach) in these verses and correctly translates the passages in that context.

The entire New Testament needs to be understood within the Jewish biblical context of the place and time it was written for a correct understanding of the Bible. In verse 7, the word "Pesach" is the Greek word "*Pascha*" referring to the Passover.⁴ Also, I understand that the Greek word translated "celebrate" should be properly understood as the Hebrew word that refers to guarding, namely guarding or observing the feast (see note on *shamar* which means to guard).⁵ The Hebrew word "*shamar*" is used for guarding the Passover in Exodus. "And

³ When the cloud moved from over the Mishkan (the Tent of Meeting), Israel would follow the cloud in the desert.

⁴ "g3957. *πάσχα* pascha; of Aramaic origin (compare h6453); the Passover." Enhanced Strong's Dictionary.

⁵ A number of Bible teachers say that the words "celebrate the feast" should be understood to mean "guard the feast" from the Hebrew word *shamar*. There is strong evidence to support this as the corresponding word in the Hebrew has to do with the command to observe the Jewish feasts – namely, the Hebrew word *shamar*. *Shamar* is translated as "keep" 283 times in the KJV and as observe 46 times in the KJV; it often refers to keeping God's commandments. Since there is relative action associated with the word Shaul uses in 1 Corinthians 5:8, *shamar* is the best Hebrew word for Shaul's encouragement to keep the feast. He says to keep the feast *with purity*. From the lexicon we read about the Hebrew word *shamar*: "shâmar, shaw-mar'; a primitive root; properly, to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; generally, to protect, attend to, etc.:—beward, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep(-er, self), mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch(-man)." This information came from:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H8104&t=KJV>

you shall observe (*shamar*) this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever;" Exodus 12:24 CJB. It is quite possible that Shaul had this scripture from Exodus in mind when he wrote 1 Corinthians 5:8 when he says that we are to "celebrate." That means that we as Messianic believers should guard the feast of Passover and keep it. The KJV version of the Bible says to "keep the feast." Keep is another meaning of the Hebrew word *shamar*. So, it points to guarding the observance of Passover.⁶ If we are commanded to observe the Passover, all the believers in the Messiah should be keeping all of God's feasts as well. They are God's feasts and not just Jewish feasts. Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts."

*What Could Possibly be Wrong with
Something that Brings us Closer to God*

It is not good practice to base doctrine on one scripture so guess how many times the word for Sabbath rest (the feasts of God have days of rest) is mentioned in the New Testament portion, 62 times.⁷ Are you surprised? Also, most believers agree that the 10 commandments are to be kept and one of the 10 Commandments refers to the weekly Jewish feast of Shabbat. So, we are not basing our belief to keep God's feasts on only one scripture and there is also historical evidence as well.

Other reasons to celebrate God's feasts are: to remember the works of God, to remind us how God has blessed man, how the God of the universe cares about us, to remind us of who God is, to bring us closer to God, to fellowship with other believers, to mark the seasons and times of the year, they connect us with the believers of the past, they can be "pictures" of what God has done, is doing, and will do, and they often accompany good food. We need food and why not have some good food? Some say they don't want to observe old, outdated feasts, but what could possibly be wrong with the things I just mentioned? Is there something wrong with bringing us closer to God?

Let's look at the verses in Leviticus regarding how we are to observe Sukkot. In doing so, we will understand how we can observe Sukkot in this Messianic age and also recapitulate and uncover some more rationale for observing Sukkot.

Scriptures about Sukkot

Leviticus 23:39-43 CJB:

39 Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.

⁶ The translators of the King James Version probably saw the connection of Exodus 12:24 with 1 Corinthians 5:8 and the Hebrew word *shamar* which means to guard because they translated the word for feast as "keep the feast."

⁷ The number of times the Greek word referring to Shabbat is used in the New Testament portion, 62. From: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4521&t=KJV>. The Hebrew word for Shabbat is used 108 times in the Old Testament portion. From: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H7676&t=KJV>

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.

41 You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths,

43 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 the Lord your God.

Summary and Comments on Leviticus 23:39-43

Erev Sukkot is the beginning of the fifteenth day of the 7th month in the evening, v. 39

Erev Sukkot refers to the first evening of Sukkot. Evening and morning were the first day; so, the biblical or Jewish day of the feast starts in the evening. Sukkot was one of the three required pilgrimage feasts⁸ for those living in Israel.

It is a required feast for every believer in Yeshua because, as I mentioned earlier, the early believers in Yeshua kept the feasts so this was accepted doctrine and practice. We see historical evidence to the fact early believers observed God's feasts. The Bible says we should keep God's feasts. Also, there are many Messianic correlations regarding Sukkot and the other biblical feasts. They are, after all, God's feasts.

We should celebrate the three main feasts with other believers in the Messiah just as Israel was to celebrate these feasts together.⁹ It makes sense; believers in the true God celebrated the feasts together and so should Messianic believers in the true God.¹⁰ Messianic correlations and teachings should be included for those who believe in Yeshua because we are in a Messianic age. Not only does our family celebrate Sukkot with other believers in Yeshua, but we try every day of the feast to recognize Sukkot and talk about Sukkot.

Sukkot is a time to remember God's provision, v. 39.

Sukkot follows the harvest and so it should remind us of God's provision. This idea of provision sounds familiar to people in the Americas because we have a Thanksgiving Day in

⁸ "The Three Pilgrimage Festivals, in Hebrew Shalosh Regalim (שלוש רגלים), are three major festivals in Judaism—Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles, Tents or Booths)—when the ancient Israelites living in the Kingdom of Judah would make a pilgrimage to Temple in Jerusalem, as commanded by the Torah. In Jerusalem, they would participate in festivities and ritual worship in conjunction with the services of the kohanim ("priests") at the Temple." Quoted from, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Pilgrimage_Festivals.

⁹ The Messiah Yeshua said that someday it would not be necessary for all people to come up to Jerusalem for the feasts, but it was to be done in other areas of the world. **This has come to pass.** "The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Yerushalayim ... the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshipping him. God is spirit; and worshippers must worship him spiritually and truly." John 4:21, 23-24 CJB.

¹⁰ Ya'akov (James) as leader of the early believers of Yeshua the Messiah when talking about the Gentiles said essentially that they need to get grounded in the Torah; that implies that Gentiles also need to keep the feasts of God. Talking about new believing Gentiles: "For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat;" Acts 15:21 CJB.

the Fall. According to some historians, we have this day because the earliest settlers of the American colonies (the Pilgrims) observed God's feasts.

*We should remember how God provided
for us both physically and spiritually*

We should not only remember how God has provided for us physically, but how He has provided for us spiritually through the Messiah. In this Messianic age, Sukkot would be an appropriate time to celebrate what the Holy Spirit has done for us. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) said that believers in Yeshua (Jesus) have the Holy Spirit living in them; "Don't you know that your body is a temple for the Ruach HaKodesh who lives inside you;" 1 Corinthians 6:19 CJB. The Holy Spirit is our spiritual helper to help us follow God and keep His commandments (John 14:26). We have the Holy Spirit in this temporary body just like a sukkah is a temporary structure that is sometimes lived in during Sukkot. And like I said, it is the working and presence of God in our lives just like Israel had the presence of God with them in the desert.

We are to rest from our regular jobs and unnecessary work on the 1st and 8th day, v. 39.

There are some differing opinions on the practice of observing The 8th Day, also known as Shemini Atzeret, as a day of assembly. Numbers 29:35 NKJV says, "On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work." My JPS (Jewish translation from the Hebrew) translation says, "solemn gathering." I have done some Hebrew translating over the years, but I am not a Hebrew scholar as the people were who translated the Hebrew scriptures. Why did they translate the Hebrew word to "close out" as "sacred assembly" or "solemn gathering?" In an article I once read, it says that the Hebrew says it was merely a "closing day" and a day of rest. I have found the JPS Bible has taken some liberties with their translation of the Bible at times (and so has Christian translations of the Bible) and the JPS even says we are not to say God's real name even though it does not say that in the Hebrew. Even Strong's Dictionary shows they translated it wrong. At times, the translators are just perpetuating their false theology.

Also, according to the scholarly article that I read, The 8th Day is most likely simply a day of rest and for the closing of Sukkot. That's what it was in second Temple times before 70 AD with a closing ceremony in Jerusalem.

1 Kings 8:66 NKJV says,

On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

The 8th day was simply a closing out and a day of rest. They went to their tents with joy. Joy accompanied God's feast days. They are God's feasts. Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV says, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Fat refers to having meat with the meal not just eating fat. Eating the fat of an animal is forbidden (see Leviticus 7:23). Also, note that the Levites taught the people on God's Shabbat and

on His feasts. Nehemiah 8:7-8 NKJV says, "The Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading." It is good to have some appropriate exposition of the scriptures so people can understand them.

The feasts of God are meeting times with God, and it is good to learn and grow on our own or through good teaching on God's feasts and also on the weekly feast of Shabbat. The word translated seasons (*moedim*) is the Hebrew word for meetings in Genesis chapter 1. Genesis 1:14 NKJV says, "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and, seasons, and for days and years.'" The lights in the sky are for signs and meetings. The Bible said that Moshe went to hear from God at the "tent of meeting" in Hebrew, at the *ohel moed*. Exodus 33:7 KJV says, "Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, the tent of meeting." *Moedim* (meetings) is the plural used in Genesis 1:14. *Moed* (meeting) is the singular form in Exodus 33:7.

Of course, they most likely had customs and extra practices in the second Temple period, but extra observances do not need to be practiced. The 8th Day has taken on extra practices in our era and people who treat these practices as commandments are following people and not God the Bible says (see Isaiah 29:13). Let's talk about this some more.

The extra man-made activities surrounding Shemini Atzeret.

Some include extra man-made traditions in their observance of Shemini Atzeret. The root for the Hebrew word *atzeret* is the Hebrew word *asar* which means, to "restrain, retain, close up, shut, withhold, refrain, stay, detain, halt, or stop" according to Strong's Dictionary. The word *atzeret* probably should be understood as a closing up, a stop, or halting of Sukkot. So, how did this word get translated as a "sacred assembly?" The word *atzeret* is used in Jeremiah and translated as assembly.

Jeremiah 9:2 NKJV says,

Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for travelers; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

The translated word for *atzeret* there seems a little forced. It is saying that Israel was an assembly of transgressors, of sinful people. It is not calling them to a sacred assembly but referring to them as a people, they are acting sinfully. So, the translation of *atzeret* as a sacred assembly is incorrect. As I have said, *atzeret* referring to The 8th Day means a closing out ceremony like the one we see in 1 Kings 8:66. In Jeremiah 9:2, perhaps we could say from the definition of the word *atzeret* that as a people, Israel was 'closed off' or 'had stopped' keeping God's commandments. It is sometimes difficult to translate the meaning of a foreign word with just one word. Word for word translations are very helpful and are what I prefer though because we can look up the translated word and perhaps get a better understanding of what that word actually can mean. This is one of those cases.

A side note on Jeremiah 9:2.

Some people say that Israel never followed God the way they should have. That is not true. So, we need to talk about this more. It is important to mention that not everyone in Israel

was engaging in sin at the time, but as a nation, they had become very sinful. They were not so predisposed to sin at one time. It is so sad, isn't it? Nations can deteriorate into sinful behaviors. Take for example the leftist regime of China which according to some sources murdered some 70 million of its own people in the 20th century. Their leftist religious system became the belief system of that nation and sadly, it became one of the most murderous societies in the history of mankind.

Isaiah the prophet also felt at one time that most of the people of Israel had forsaken God. 1 Kings 19:14 NKJV says, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." God says to Isaiah in 1 Kings 19:18 NKJV, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." There are always some people who follow God and His good commandments who are deterrent to the terrible evil of sinful societies in the world. There seems to be a tipping point though for nations that makes that nation into an evil society.

That's what happened in China and Russia and other countries that believed in leftist religions in our era. That is what happened to Canaan at one time. Leviticus 18:24-25 NKJV says, "Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants." Their sin caused the destruction of their own nation. You could say that the sinful leftist concepts of China caused them to murder their own people, and it is still going on today. We do not know where it will all end. Also, we know that Israel entered a dark era in their history because of their sin, their evil behaviors. Jeremiah was warning them and trying to get them to repent of their sin. People often fool themselves into thinking there are no consequences for sin, but they are wrong.

The History of Shemini Atzeret.

Also, when I talk about the extra activities of Shemini Atzeret, I am mostly referring to the man-made holiday of Simcha Torah which involves the turning back of the scroll to Genesis and reading the last portion of Deuteronomy and some of Genesis. It is a man-made holiday and not commanded in the Bible. It was explained to me at my Bar Mitzva training that people were interested in observing the turning back of the scrolls, so they made it into a tradition that is sometimes observed on Shemini Atzeret. Back then, their Bibles were written on scrolls and that practice is still maintained by some. Of course, as afore mentioned, it seems obvious that the word *atzeret* does not mean a sacred assembly. Some take a strong exception to The 8th Day being only a day of rest with a closing ceremony and include the man-made holiday of Simcha Torah in their celebration of Shemini Atzeret.

The Orthodox sect of Judaism in Israel celebrates 1 day for Shemini Atzeret so they celebrate Simcha Torah on The 8th Day. Outside of Israel the Orthodox celebrate 2 days of Shemini Atzeret so they celebrate Simcha Torah on the ninth day. All the Reformed sect of Judaism also celebrates Simcha Torah on Shemini Atzeret since they believe that it is not necessary to

keep an extra day for the feasts. I do not believe we should be doing extra activities on Shemini Atzeret so I believe that the turning back of the scroll can be done at another time.

How did Simcha Torah get started? They used to read the Old Testament scriptures out loud on Sukkot. The prophets split up the readings of the Torah into 54 sections so they could be read every week. Ya'akov (James real name) says about the Gentiles learning and keeping the Torah, God's Old Testament commandments in Acts 15:21 NKJV, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." So, they would read the last portion of the Torah on Shemini Atzeret and then begin reading the first portion in Genesis on the next Shabbat. I do not believe we must do a lot of activities on The 8th Day, so we often read the last portion on the Sabbath before The 8th Day. There should be a closing ceremony for Sukkot because The 8th Day, Shemini Atzeret, is supposed to close out Sukkot.

However we celebrate The 8th Day, it can represent the final eternal rest in God's future kingdom. The 8th Day seems to point to our eternal blessings in God's future kingdom. We could call it the "perfect day" because it points to a perfect future era. Just as God's creation was very good, believers and followers of the true God, His Messiah, and His commandments will be in a restored wonderful future kingdom of God. Revelation 21:21 NKJV says, "And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." God can do that because He is God.

Shemini Atzeret is a shadow picture of the future eternal kingdom of God.

We see that God's creation is referred to as a day in Genesis 2:4 NKJV, "This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." So, the word "day" can refer to a period of time and not just a day. Since the word day in Hebrew can also be a period of time, this then shows us that The 8th Day could be a shadow picture for God's future eternal kingdom. The creation account in Genesis Chapter 1 suggests an exact day between events and that would be amazing in itself but that the word day is used as a summary of the entire creation account suggests the word for "day" can also be a period of time or an era. For example, Psalms 90:4 NKJV says, "For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past." God can create everything in a second. God does not need a day since He is God. But, because the word day can also mean a period of time, it is reasonable to think of The 8th Day after Sukkot as pointing to and representing our eternal time or era in the future glorious kingdom of God.

Yom Teruah or Rosh Hashanah points to the return of our Messianic King Yeshua with the Trumpets blowing announcing His return. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." Yom Kippur, also called the Day of Atonement, is a day of confession of sin, and points to the future time of judgement by God. Sukkot is often referred to as The Feast, and it points to our future celebration with our God and the Messiah. Doing something on The 8th Day other than resting on The 8th Day then seems to distort the concept of The 8th Day being representative of the eternal blessings in God's future kingdom.

Finally.

Also, some people will not stay in the sukkah on The 8th Day because they understand that Sukkot is over. Immediately after the day of rest of The 8th Day, most people take their sukkah down unless it is used for temporary housing such as in a stable for animals, a barn, or a cabin. Yeshua was born in a converted sukkah (a manger) on Yom Teruah which means The Day of Shouting. It was not Sukkot yet, so their sukkah was empty and ready and available to stay in. It makes sense that God had a place prepared for the birth of Yeshua. The angels were shouting on The Day of Shouting the day Yeshua was born, and the trumpets were blowing announcing the day of the feast and the birth of our king. The inns were full because people were going to Jerusalem for the Fall feasts of God, namely, Yom Teruah (also known as Rosh Hashanah), Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. Bethlehem is very close to Jerusalem.

How do we observe this closing out of Sukkot in our modern world? For some, it is difficult to do this with other people, and I suggest saying prayers of thanks and concluding with the Aaronic prayer. The only option for some is to meet with people who make the day into a day of activities, and we do not do this, and I suggest you do the afore mentioned activity. If you want to get together with others to conclude Sukkot on The 8th Day, you can get together with others who practice this more appropriately. You could observe the closing of Sukkot with your family, a friend or friends, or even do that online or on the phone. I know of one person who has an online meeting for The 8th Day.

The Bible mentions to take some beautiful fruit and branches from different tree species and rejoice before God for 7 days, v. 40.

It does not specify how this is to be done, so long as it is done. Ceremonies surrounding the shaking of a lulav are made up by man and are not binding. The lulav consists of an etrog, and palm, myrtle, and willow branches. These four species are shaken together with the etrog up; to the right, to the back, to the left, and to the front up and down. This shaking is done three times in each position. When we do this, we also shake. It is called an offering and it is like we are making an offering of ourselves. Shaul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God; Romans 12:1 NKJV. So, this festival can also remind us that we are to give ourselves to the Lord; we are to live for the Lord. Also, when we shake the four species in different directions it reminds us how God is everywhere and is our provider.

Using nice looking branches from all or some of the three species mentioned in the Bible would be preferable only if available; it does not mention that we must use all three. A specific fruit is not mentioned as long as the fruit we use looks nice. Prescribed methods give us a way to celebrate but are extra laws and not binding. The important thing is to rejoice before God. We can also decorate for the holiday using branches and various fruits.¹¹ Since the specifics of how we rejoice are not mentioned, decorating would also be an acceptable way to rejoice before the Lord. I prefer to rejoice before God by waving beautiful branches before the Lord, and we do some decorating in our sukkah and in our home so that we rejoice before the Lord during the whole time of Sukkot.

¹¹ Putting out a bowl of fruit and decorating with branches are a couple good ways to rejoice before the Lord. We also hang up fake fruit in our home and Sukkah for decorations. We have also cut out pictures of fruit and wrote the fruits of the Holy Spirit in them for decoration. There are lots of appropriate ways to decorate for Sukkot and the biblical holidays.

We should also be thinking about how the Holy Spirit helps us to be a tzadiq (righteous), to do what is right. This connects with the command to take beautiful fruit and branches. Believers should exude the beauty of God through how they live. The work of the Holy Spirit is beautiful to God because it helps us to do what is right and be just. The Bible says that those that do what is right will see God's face. "For ADONAI is righteous; he loves righteousness; the upright will see his face;" Psalm 11:7 CJB. The context of Zephaniah 3:17-18 is about a future time and Messianic kingdom. It talks about those who have desired to follow God by observing God's feasts:

Zephaniah 3:17-18 CJB

ADONAI your God is right there with you, as a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you and be glad, he will be silent in his love, he will shout over you with joy. "I will gather those of yours who grieve over the appointed feasts and bear the burden of reproach" [because they cannot keep them].¹²

God's appointed feasts are to be kept. If we have not been observing them, it may take some time to get used to the idea, but God gave us His feasts so that our calendar revolves around Him (our lives should revolve around God anyway, right). Our lives often revolve around secular holidays like Thanksgiving or New Years Day. By using the biblical calendar and observing God's feasts, we live more around God and His past, present, and future acts of favor (His "chane" in Hebrew which means grace). Shabbat is a feast that we get to observe every week, and it is the high point and end of our week.

Also, another point about the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit can help us to have good fruit in our lives; Shaul talks about the Holy Spirit helping us to have positive results (fruit); "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self control;" Galatians 5:22-23 CJB. As a Messianic harvest festival, Sukkot is also a celebration of the fruit or results of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of those who desire to be a tzadiq (a righteous person), a person who wants to live right.

Sukkot is to last 7 days and it is to be observed forever, v. 41.

Sukkot itself is to last 7 days and the practices associated with it last 7 days. There is a final day of rest after Sukkot on the 8th day. The Bible says the Feast of Sukkot is to be observed forever, so it has not been done away with as some say.

Israel was to live in a sukkah (tent, hut, or secluded place)¹³ for 7 days as a memorial for their time in the desert, vv. 42-43.

It is surely okay to stay in a temporary structure for Sukkot, but is not necessary for Messianic believers because our bodies are now "temples" of the Holy Spirit as previously mentioned.¹⁴ The "Tent of Meeting" or Mishkan in the wilderness is where the presence of

¹² Other translations translate Zephaniah 3:18 out of context and remove the reference to God's feasts. Any believer in the time Zephaniah was written would understand that **the assembling of believers took place on God's feasts**.

¹³ "h5521. סֻכָּה sukkâ; fem of 5520; a hut or lair:— booth, cottage, covert, pavilion, tabernacle, tent." Enhanced Strong's Dictionary.

¹⁴ "Don't you know that your body is a temple for the Ruach HaKodesh who lives inside you;" 1 Corinthians 6:19 CJB.

God manifested itself in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night for 40 years every day. Believers in the Messiah have the presence of the Holy Spirit every day in our lives if we don't grieve the Holy Spirit. "Don't cause grief to God's Ruach HaKodesh;" Ephesians 4:30 CJB. Causing grief to the Holy Spirit is not allowing the Holy Spirit to do its work in us by disobeying God and so the presence of God is not manifest (is not showing) in us.

A temporary residence or sukkah can be anything we do not live in on a permanent basis like a cabin, barn, or tent etcetera. In the time of Yeshua, they used their sukkah for animals and for raising their Passover lamb. Yeshua was born in a sukkah on Rosh Hashanah; see Luke 2:7. It's really simple; the family did not need their sukkah yet because it was Rosh Hashanah. The blowing of the trumpets on Rosh Hashanah heralded the coming of the king, namely the Messiah King Yeshua. Some believe that Yeshua was born on Sukkot, but I believe that He was born on Rosh Hashanah, and I detail why in my article on Rosh Hashanah.¹⁵

Yeshua was the physical presence of God in Israel just as the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night were the presence of God for Israel in the desert. The Bible said Yeshua "tabernacled" or tented among us referring to the Tent of Meeting in the desert where Israel saw the presence of God. So, the scripture referring to be "tabernacled" refers to the presence of God being among us and not a particular day.

For Messianic believers Sukkot is a time to remember God's provision and presence with Israel in the desert wilderness. It is a time to remember the provision and presence of God in the lives of believers in Yeshua through the Holy Spirit. Through the presence of God in us and the Holy Spirit, we return at least in part to the fellowship with God that He has always wanted for mankind.¹⁶ "What we have seen and heard, we are proclaiming to you; so that you too may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Yeshua the Messiah." 1 John 1:3 CJB.

Also, a couple of the themes of Sukkot have to do with water and light. In the Temple period, the Jews had a water ceremony and also had a lighting show during Sukkot. Those who have the Holy Spirit have living water (in them in the form of the Holy Spirit) and are able to tell others about this living water from God. Yeshua tells us to come to him and drink. He said, "Whoever puts his trust in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being! (Now he said this about the Spirit);" John 7:38-39 CJB. Also, those who receive

¹⁵ Most agree that Yeshua was born in the Fall and not in the Winter because it would be too cold for the shepherds to be in the field in the Winter. Also, because the accommodations were sparse at the time Yeshua was born, we know that it was a major Jewish holiday. Rosh Hashanah makes the best sense since it is the day the trumpets sound. When the trumpets sounded the shepherds could take off work because it announced the beginning of a holiday, and they could go look for the messiah that the angels had announced to them. Another name for Rosh Hashanah is Yom Teruah which means day of shouting and the angels were shouting about the coming of the messiah. None of the other feasts have quite this correlation to the coming of the messiah. Passover correlates with Yeshua giving Himself as the Passover lamb for our sins and does not really correlate with His birth. Almost all scholars believe Yeshua was born during either Rosh Hashanah or Sukkot. I wrote an article on why Yeshua was born on Rosh Hashanah (<https://www.teshuvahsa.org/observing-the-feasts>).

¹⁶ Shaul says now he knows in part, but in the future kingdom he will know fully. "Now I know partly; then I will know fully;" 1 Corinthians 13:12 CJB.

the, "light of the word" who is Yeshua, also become lights to others. (Matthew 5:14; John 9:5).¹⁷

During Sukkot, families can form Messianic traditions like eating outside or going camping. Just like it was important for Israel to remember God's provision for them in the wilderness and the presence of God at the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting), it is important for us in this Messianic age to understand that God takes care of us and that we also have the presence of God in us and the work of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Colossian 1:27; Acts 1:8).¹⁸

What Have We Learned

There are many reasons believers in the Messiah Yeshua are to celebrate Sukkot and the feasts of God. Rabbi Shaul commands believers to guard the feast of Passover and that also implies an adherence to the other biblical feasts. Early believers in the Messiah kept God's feasts, they are God's feasts, Leviticus 23:2. Many believers in Yeshua have kept the feasts over the centuries and that includes the weekly feast of Shabbat which is given in the 10 Commandments. We get our doctrine from the early believers in Yeshua who celebrated the feasts of God, so there is no reason to believe that we are not to keep the feasts of God. God commands us to keep His feasts. Like I said, 'What could be wrong with getting closer to God by keeping God's feasts?' Believers in the true God have celebrated the feasts of God for thousands of years. Some do not, but they should be keeping God's feasts.

Also, there are many appropriate and relevant Messianic correlations that can be made for the observance of God's feasts and the feast of Sukkot. For Sukkot, there is a correlation between the Tent of Meeting (Mishkan) where the presence of God was in the desert and the Holy Spirit in our temporary bodies, our physical bodily tents. The Holy Spirit is to lead us much like the cloud led Israel in the wilderness. There is a correlation between the work and help of the Holy Spirit that helps believers in Yeshua to live right which is God's will for believers both past and present. There are "fruit" or positive actions that result from the work of the Holy Spirit, and this fits well with the idea of a harvest festival celebrating God's provision.

Sukkot is a feast to give thanks to God for His provision, a time of joy, and a time of spiritual renewal. Perhaps it is also a time to respond in kind to God for all He has done and give ourselves sacrificially to God.¹⁹ We are commanded both in the Tanakh and the New Testament portion to give thanks. It says in Psalm 118:1 CJB, "Give thanks to ADONAI; for he is good, for his grace continues forever;" (Also see, Psalm 100:5, 107:1, 136:1; 1 Chronicles 16:34), Rabbi Shaul said, "In everything give thanks, for this is what God wants from you who are united with the Messiah Yeshua." 1 Thessalonians 5:18 CJB. By observing

¹⁷ "You are light for the world;" Matthew 5:14 CJB. Yeshua said, "I am the light of the world;" John 9:5 CJB

¹⁸ "God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory;" Colossians 1:27 NKJV. Christ is the word Messiah or Anointed One. Also, in Acts it says, "But you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh comes upon you;" Acts 1:8 CJB.

¹⁹ "I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you. In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the 'olam hazeh. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.;" Romans 12:1-2 CJB.

God's feasts our lives revolve around God's calendar instead of a secular calendar; it gives us the opportunity to keep our hearts and minds closer to God throughout the year. God's favor or grace (chane in the Hebrew) has been given to mankind throughout the ages and continues to this day and to this time, and forever. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Finally, it is also a time to remember that Sukkot correlates to the future eternal feast in the presence of our God and King.²⁰ Some day in the future kingdom we will celebrate this feast with the Lord. After all, God says it is to be celebrated forever.²¹ We will celebrate all He has provided for us. We will also celebrate all He has done for us through Yeshua. In the future we will be with God, and He will be our complete provider. As I previously mentioned, Sukkot is also a time of renewal because it immediately follows Yom Kippur. Therefore, Sukkot correlates with our relationship with God in the future kingdom. In the past we had the presence of God at the Tent of Meeting (Mishkan) in the desert and at the Temple in Jerusalem. In the present we have the presence of God through the Holy Spirit that is in us. And, in the future we will be with the Holy Spirit and in the presence of God. The final day of rest after Sukkot, The Eight Day, points to the continuation of God's eternal presence with us, a Sabbath for all eternity!

A Song, from Psalm 136²²

Hodu l'Yēhōvāh ki tov. Ki l'olam chasdo. (*see note on God's name)

Hodu l'Yēhōvāh ki tov. Ki l'olam chasdo.

Hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu l'Yēhōvāh ki tov.

Hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu l' Yēhōvāh ki tov.

Give thanks to Yēhōvāh He is good. His mercy endures forever.

Give thanks to Yēhōvāh He is good. His mercy endures forever.

Give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks to Yēhōvāh He is good.

Give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks to Yēhōvāh He is good.

***Explanation of the True Name of God**

We should use the real name of God at times because that is the proper thing to do.

Yēhōvāh is the actual name for God as seen in the pointing of 2,363 different manuscripts to

²⁰ Early believers in the Messiah Yeshua celebrated God's feasts until the Roman Empire tried to take over Christianity and began persecuting believers for celebrating God's feasts, so some information on how early believers celebrated God's feasts has been lost. Believers have become more informed of late; they have correlated all of God's feasts with what God has done in the past, with what God is doing in the present, and with what God will do in the future. For example, Passover refers to Israel's deliverance from Egypt so they could serve God and also to the believers in the Messiah who are delivered from sin so they can serve God. Shavuot or Pentecost correlates with the giving of God's grace by the giving of the commandments at Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Holy Spirit. So, we also have correlations for Sukkot for the past, present, and future. Some of the things that correlate to the future feasts are, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Teruah and the return of Yeshua; Yom Kippur correlates to the Judgment Day; Sukkot correlates to the celebrating with God in the future kingdom. It obviously makes sense to return to the roots of the gospel (God's message), celebrate God's feasts, and make the proper correlations to the feasts. We have made some progress in breaking from false unbiblical traditions, but we still need to go further and get back to our biblical roots and observe God's feasts. We obviously do not have to celebrate all the made-up stuff that is not in the Torah, but we should do the best we can to obey the Bible.

²¹ "It shall be a statute forever;" Leviticus 23:41 CJB.

²² These are the words of the song for Psalm 136 that I learned years ago. Here is a link for the melody:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6WtFr8JQMA>

date; seen only once as Yehoveh; never as Yahweh. According to Nehemia Gordon, 26 rabbis throughout antiquity also attest to this pronunciation. Also, one of the "church fathers" in early Christianity also says that is how it was pronounced (Nicetas, Bishop of Heraclea: 2nd century, from The Catena on the Pentateuch, published in Latin by Francis Zephyrus, p. 156.). When we address someone of importance, we use their name and title out of respect. It is proper to use God's name and I encourage you to use His true name at times with respect.

Exodus 3:15 CJB says that Yĕhōvâh is the name of God forever and for all of time, "God said further to Moshe, 'Say this to the people of Isra'el: Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh [ADONAI], the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya'akov, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered generation after generation." Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh is written as ADONAI and has been substituted for the actual pronunciation of God's name which is Yĕhōvâh. God's name as Yĕhōvâh is used 6,841 times!²³ Also, we should especially take note; Yeshua said He would not return until they say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of Yĕhōvâh." Yeshua is quoting Psalm 118:26 where Yĕhōvâh is translated as LORD in some Bibles and is the Hebrew word, יהוה.

²³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah>