

Sukkot סוכות



The Feast of Sukkot סוכות / Tabernacles

serves to remind us that after the Exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel spent the night in tabernacles on their way to the land of Israel, after which God had brought them out of bondage in Egypt. The biblical commandment says that one must dwell in a tabernacle for seven days, during which most of the work activities are permitted. See in the book of Leviticus, chapter, 23, verses 42-43: מב בסוכות תשבּוּ, בַּשָּׁבֹעַ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים; כָּל-הָאֶזְרָח, בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, יֵשְׁבוּ, בַּסּוּכּוֹת. מִגַּלְמֵעוֹן, יִדְעוּ דוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם, כִּי בַּסּוּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. אֲנִי, יְיָ-וְהָאֱלֹהִים. 42” You shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are born Israelites shall dwell in booths:43That 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 the LORD your God.” (King James 2000 Bible). In Hebrew the exact commandment is literally “to sit” in the Sukka. So, when one does it for the first time in a certain year and says the relevant blessing to it, one says it while sitting. Work is not forbidden. For example, the shops are open. Schools in Israel are closed because Sukkot is recognized as one of the national holidays by the ministry of education for vacation purposes.

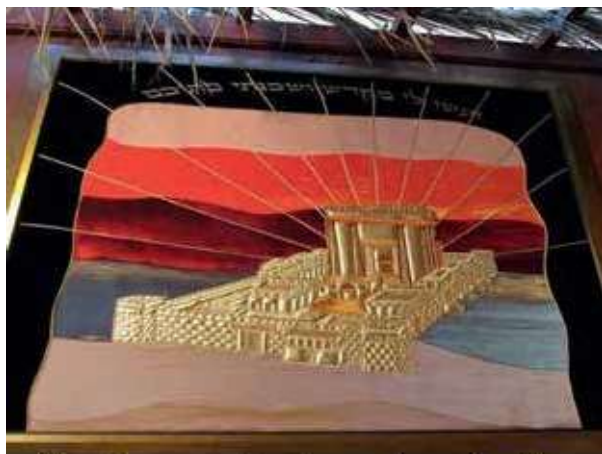
Sukkot is the third of the pilgrimage holidays of the Bible, on which one made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in biblical times. Sukkot is also called the harvest festival in the Torah. At the end of the seventh day of the festival, the holiday “**Shmini Azeret**” שְׁמִינִי עֶזְרַת takes place. The first day of Sukkot is a day of rest and after that follow six holidays, which are not non-working days. In English, the name “Shmini Azeret” means “a meeting on the eighth day”. This holiday is again a day of rest. In the Land of Israel, on this day, the 22nd of Tishrei, the feast of “Simchat Torah” (the joy of the Torah) also takes place. Simchat Torah

is celebrated outside the Land of Israel the day after Shmini Azeret. The feast of Sukkot appears first in the book “Shemot” (Exodus), chap. 23, verses 14,15 before, as well as in “Shemot” (Exodus) chap. 34, verse 22, “Vayikra” (Leviticus) in chap. 23, verses 39 to 43 and in the book “BaMidbar (Numbers) in Chap. 29, verses 10 to 39, as well as in the book “Dewarim”

(Deuteronomy), chap. 16, verses 13 to 16.

The Tabernacle, the “Sukka” (hut), the main feature of the Sukkot holiday, commemorates the temporary overnight stay of the Children of Israel as long as they were on their way to the promised Land of Israel. Thus, the Tabernacle is the classic symbol of the provisional. In addition, the scholars explain that the Tabernacle is meant to remind us that the Children of Israel were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land under the protection of the Clouds of Honor (Ananei Ha Kawod הכבוד ענני). The clouds of honor also served to show the Children of Israel the way in the desert during the day.

See the book of Shemot (Exodus), chap. 13, verse 21, and in chap. 14, verse 19.



Have them construct a sanctuary for Me,
so that I may dwell among them.
Exodus 25,8

Later, after the establishment of the “Mishkan”, The Tabernacle (also called the **Tent of Congregation Ohel Moed אוהל מועד** and the **Ohel haEdut אוהל העדות** **The Tent of Testimony** and the **Mishkan HaShechina** **The Dwelling of the Providence**) **משכן ה**, the cloud of honor also served to signal to the Children of Israel that they should leave

and move on to the next station with the tabernacle. The special guiding function of the cloud is described in the book of BaMidbar (Numbers), chap. 9, verse 15. The cloud is also mentioned in Psalm 105 and in the Book of Nechemia, chap. 9, verse 12. The tabernacle of the feast of Sukkot thus commemorates the miracles that God gave to the Children of Israel on the way to the Promised Land. The roof of the tabernacle (“Sukkah”) in Israel is usually covered with palm branches. It is done so that one leaves enough space between the branches so that one can see at least three stars through the roof at night. This nature of the roof of the Tabernacle is also meant to remind one of the Providence. One of the most famous customs of the Feast of Tabernacles is the hospitality in the sukkah. Guests are invited to the sukkah. The 7 guests of honor, the Ushpizin (guests in Aramaic) are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aharon and David. (In some ethnic groups, Joseph is replaced by Solomon.)



As in the book of Leviticus, chapter 23, verses 39-43 we read that the Sukkot holiday is a thanksgiving when the wheat harvest is collected. It takes place in

autumn. Since the first day of the Passover holiday, after the Mussaf prayer, the prayer in which one asks for dew is spoken. From the 8th day of Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret שמיני אתרת, the prayer changes from the request for dew to the request for rain (משיב הרוח Meshiv haRuach umorid haGeshem). A special ceremony was held in the temple, the Nissuch Majim (water pouring) on the altar of the sacrifices, to ask for a rainy year. Of course, the rain was of particular importance for a people who relied on agriculture. Carrying the water in decorated containers from the Shiloach Fountain of Jerusalem to the Temple was accompanied by dances and joyful musical ceremonies, called Simchat Beit HaShoeva שמחת בית (the joy of the water well). It was said that those who did not see the joy of Jerusalem, the Simchat Beit HaShoeva, have not see joy... According to the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy), chapter 16, verse 14, it is a veritable commandment to be joyful on these holidays. Since the holiday was at the end of the harvest season, the joy was already great.

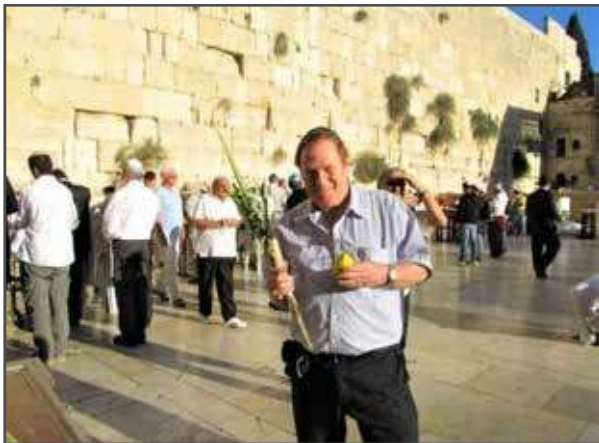


In addition to the commandment to sit in the tabernacle, the above text states that four plants must be offered as a sign

of joy before God. These four plants are traditionally referred to as the **ארבעת מינים** (the four species). These are: a citrus fruit **פרי עץ הדר** (the rabbinic interpretation speaks of the fruit called Etrog **אתרוג**), a Lulav **לולב** (a palm branch from the tree top), three myrtle branches, Hadas, and 2 branches of the Arwei Nachal **ערבי נחל** (Arvei is the plural form of Arava, a stream willow.) (Not to be confused: Arava is also the biblical name of the plains between the Yam HaMelach, the Dead Sea, and the Red Sea.) It is customary to take the four species to prayer in the synagogue on the days of the Feast of Tabernacles, except on shabbat the day of rest. After the reading of the Torah one participates in a dance in a circle (hakafa) in a counter-clockwise direction around the central table of the synagogue, on which the Torah scroll is placed during prayer. Outside the reading hours of the Torah, the Torah scrolls are placed in the Aron HaKodesh **ארון הקודש**, the cabinet of the sanctuary (Torah = sanctuary) on the east wall of the synagogue, i.e. close to Jerusalem. On the seventh day people walk or dance seven times around the Torah table. Thus, both the seven days of the festival and the seven rounds (Hakafot) are reminiscent of the seven days of creation.

The 4 species (4 Minim **ארבעת המינים**) are symbolic of the 4 groups of Society among the Children of Israel: The Etrog (the citrus fruit) stands for a tree that has both smell and taste. This corresponds to the person who both learns the Torah commandments and implements them with good deeds. The Lulav (the palm tip) is reminiscent of the good-tasting dates, but it has no smell. The Lulav thus stands for the person who

learns Torah but does not implement it with good deeds. The Haddas (the myrtle) has a wonderful smell, but has no taste. So, the myrtle stands for a person who does good but does not learn the Torah. The Arava ערבה (the stream willow) has neither taste nor smell. It corresponds to a person who neither learns Torah nor does good deeds. This is how one recognizes the four species of the Children of Israel. And it is customary to hold the palm tip together with the 3 myrtle branches and the two stream willow branches firmly together in one hand. This is reminiscent of the fact that even thin branches, which are individually very flexible and fragile, can become strong and unbreakable as soon as they are bound (i.e. together). This is to illustrate the idea that once the Children of Israel are united together, they become strong through the community.



An ancient coin from the time of the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans in 135 A.C.E. shows the 4 species and illustrates the ancient tradition. (Photo by Tamar HaYardeni).

During the Sukkot holidays, the custom is to hold the 4 species during the synagogue prayer and to shake them in the 4 wind

directions. (According to Rabbi HaAri in the order: to the south, north, east, up, down and west). A psalm prayer is said, "Ana Adonai Hoschia na" אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא (Please, LORD, redeem us"). Therefore, these rites are called the Hosh'a'not, the prayers of salvation. On the last day of the week of the Sukkot holiday, there are usually many request prayers (Hosh'a'not). Therefore, the day before Shemini Azeret is called Hosh'a'ana raba (Many Pleas for Salvation). The custom is to beat the ground with 5 branches of the stream willow in order to shake off the sins again in time for that day, because the next day God's judgment on people, according to Jewish tradition, becomes final.



During Temple time, a number of daily sacrifices were made on the Sukkot holidays. The Mussaf sacrifices consisted of bulls, rams and sheep. The rams are known to remind the LORD of Abraham and the binding of Isaac. Together in the 7 days there were 70 sacrificial animals in number. Some scholars interpreted the number 70 in the context of the 70 nations mentioned in the Bible. This universal reference to the Torah commandment is clearly emphasized

in the book of Zachariah in chapter 14. Today, thousands of Christians also tend to participate in the Jerusalem March during the Sukkot holiday.

On the second day of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Shemita Year (the seventh year, the year of rest of the soil), according to the commandment in the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy) chapter 31 in verses 9-13, the people were gathered to receive Torah instruction from the wise men. This commandment of Hakhel (the ingathering) was an extraordinarily solemn grand ceremony with thousands of people. Among other things, the central prayer "Hear Of Israel" שמע ישראל of Devarim / Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4 was spoken aloud. In this sentence one expresses faith in God.



Since 1967, the commandment of the Hakhel in front of the Kotel (the Western Wall) has been held in Jerusalem with great ceremony. In 1994, even Israel's then President Chaim Herzog publicly read from the Torah at the Hakhel. Herzog came from a famous rabbinical family.

It can be mentioned here that the Bible book of King Solomon is called Kohelet קהלת. As explained above, Hakhel means "to gather" and Kohelet means "The Assembler". The well-known English

name of the Bible book is Ecclesiastes, but this does not convey the meaning of the Hebrew name "Kohelet", which means "The Assembler". The English word comes from the Greek word for 'assembly'. Because King Solomon called his book Kohelet to invite the people to learn the Torah together around the Torah scroll, i.e. to gather. Solomon did not want to teach the people as a single 'preacher'. (On the topic of the correct translations of the names of the books of the Bible, you will be able to read more in my upcoming English Bible Commentary Book "Hebrew Pearls of the Torah" which is due to come out soon.



Sukkot, according to the prophet Amos, is both the comforting promise and the commandment to settle the Land of Israel: Chapter 9, verse 11: " "On that day I will raise up the fallen shelter of David, And wall up its gaps; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old;"



Ari at Hakafot Simchat Torah in Nes Ziona



A rabbi carrying a Torah scroll at the Kotel

Simchat Torah שמחת תורה (The Joy of the Torah): On the last day of the Sukkot festival, at Shemini Azeret, the reading of the last weekly portion of the Torah is completed, and immediately afterwards begins again. Then begins the public reading of the first part of the weekly portion in the first book of the Torah, Bereshit (Genesis), the section Bereshit (In the beginning). The great joy of having finished reading the Torah (the five books of Moses) is great. The man who is honored with the reading of the first part of the weekly portion, Bereshit, is called Chatan Bereshit חתן בראשית (The Bridegroom of the Bereshit Section). The Torah is considered a bride of the People of Israel. In the evening after the end of the Shemini Azeret feast day, the joy of the Torah reading is celebrated by even taking the Torah scrolls out of the synagogue and placing them on tables outside (In Israel even in the middle of the streets, or on public stages and squares). Special Bible verses are read, and then men carry the Torah scrolls in circles (the so-called second Hakafot הקפות) around the Torah tables. It is a special honor and

joy to be invited to carry the Torah scroll. In most cases, the honor is associated with a donation to the poor or to the synagogue for the preservation of the Torah scrolls. There are 7 circling of the Torah (Hakafot) made. One dances with the Torah scrolls, and everyone (including women and children) can touch or kiss the Torah scrolls. (In the synagogues, the areas for men and women are usually separated. The Torah reading is done by men. In modern reform synagogues, there is no separation of the areas of men and women.)

The fact that the Torah scrolls are carried and celebrated in a united manner is intended to underline that each of the people of Israel has a direct connection to the Torah, regardless of whether they have learned much or little Torah! Everyone is equally close to the Torah!

According to the great scholar Don Isaac Abrabanel (1437-1508), the festival Simchat Torah has its roots in the Land of Israel in the tradition of "Hakhel" (assembly). According to Abrabanel, on the Shmitta Year, the High Priest finished

the Torah reading before the people at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles Sukkot, on the Shemini Azeret, the joy of the Torah. (Source: Abrabanel on Dewarim (Deuteronomy) chapter 31, in the weekly section VaYeLech.)

Remark: The above photos of the Sukkah in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem and of the decorations of the Sukkah at the Kotel (Western Wall) I took during one of my annual Jerusalem Sukkot pilgrimage visits.



Psalms 147, 2



Psalms 122, 6



Leviticus 23, 42



Deuteronomy 8, 8

Color

Jewish and Israeli Holidays

By Ari Lipinski

A Journey through 3800 Years of Jewish Tradition
in the Biblical Land of Milk and Honey



Jewish and Israeli Holidays by Ari Lipinski

In this book Ari Lipinski offers the readers for the first time in English descriptions and explanations about 37 Jewish and Israeli holidays and days of remembrance in one volume and in chronological order according to the Jewish calendar. Ari also presents famous Bible commentaries of Jewish sages and rabbis (including Rashi, Maimonides and Abarbanel) about the Torah sources of the different holidays and their customs and traditions spanning 3800 years.

You will find chapters about all the major holidays including Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Feast of Weeks), Rosh HaShana (The Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Tabernacles), Hanukkah (Holiday of Lights), Tu BiShvat (New Year of the Tree), Purim, Yom HaShoa (Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day), Yom HaZikaron LeChalalei Ma'arachot Israel (Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of the Wars of Israel and Victims of Actions of Terrorism), Yom HaAzmaut (Israel's Independence Day) and Jerusalem Day.

Ari Lipinski shares with the readers some special personal stories and unique experiences related to some of the holidays and certain world-famous historic figures and events in Israel's history. The book also includes some well-known prayers and blessings relevant to the major holidays. Furthermore, the readers will enjoy the many beautiful illustrations and photos related to the holidays, their customs and traditional foods as well as trees mentioned in the Bible and historic locations from all over Israel.

And much more...



SimpleStory
Digital Publishing

ISBN 9798854680974



9 798854 680974