

# Feast of Booths (Sukkot)

The Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) was the third pilgrimage festival which required all males to come to Jerusalem each year. It took place at the end of the fall harvest and involved living in temporary structures, booths, for seven days. It is the most joyful and festive of all Israel's feasts, and also the most prominent feast, mentioned more often in Scripture than any of the other feasts. It was this festival that inspired the pilgrims at Plymouth to offer their thanks to God for the harvest, so our Thanksgiving Day celebration grew out of this festival!

The booths (sukkah) are a reminder that the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, after the Lord led them out of Egypt, pitching tents or building temporary huts. The sukkah represents the faith they had in the Lord that He would take them safely to the promised land. The booth is also a reminder of our temporary earthly home. Jesus said in John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

On each day of the festival, a priest would go to the Pool of Siloam to draw a pitcher of water that would be taken to the temple and poured out as the community prayed for God to send rain for the next season's crops. It was during this time that Jesus said in John 7:37-38: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

At the conclusion of Sukkot, there is a celebration called Simhat Torah (rejoicing in the Torah). This is the point in synagogues when the end of the Scripture is read and the yearly cycle of readings begins again. All the scrolls that contain the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) are taken out and carried in a colorful procession around the synagogue. Everyone participates in the parade, including the children who carry flags and decorated banners.

## **Ways to Celebrate:**

**Build a Sukkah.** Start building your sukkah as soon after Yom Kippur as possible. This is not meant to be a strong structure; rather, it is a rough shack built by hand. One of the significant features is that each family builds its own little hut together. If you can use the wall of your house or garage, the corner of a fence structure or hedge, do so! Improvising is the name of the game. You might use cement blocks with a bean pole or grape stake inserted to make a corner. For the sides use bedspreads, sheets, a drop cloth, plywood, cardboard, or whatever you happen to have available. Construct a simple lattice or trellis roof. Be sure to make the sukkah large enough for all the family to be inside at the same time.

**Have dinner outdoors.** Enjoy as many meals as possible outside in your sukkah. Hang out as a family and watch the first of the stars come out.

**Read the end/beginning of the Bible.** Gather your family and read the last few chapters of Revelation, followed by the first few chapters of Genesis. You can also find many yearly Bible reading plans online that you could begin on the last day of Sukkot.

## Resources

Celebrating Biblical Feasts. Martha Zimmerman.

Walk with Y'shua Through the Jewish Year. Janie-sue Wertheim and Kathy Shapiro.

Feasts of the Bible. Dr. Sam Nadler.

The Feasts of the Lord. Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal.