

Essay-The Meaning of Sukkot and Its Connection to Tents

Summer is almost here and many are looking forward, no doubt,
to a time of camping out in tents, in other words, in a sukkah!

You have heard it said that Sukkot is only about the final Moedim of Yahweh. But what if it is so much more?

The Sukkot Moedim

Leviticus 23:42 – *“You will dwell in a sukkah for seven days; all natives of Israel will dwell in a sukkah.”*

John 14:3 – *“I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be.”*

Tabernacles official Hebrew name is Sukkot [H5521 סוכות]. Sukkot means: booths. An individual booth is called sukkah. Sukkot is the seventh and final moed commanded by Yahweh to be celebrated, and is also the third and final feast of the fall feasts.

Of the three harvest festivals Sukkot is the most joyous and is still well known as the *“Season of our Rejoicing”*. Today, Sukkot still begins on Tishri 15, – five days after the Day of Atonements or Yom Kippurim, and also lasts for seven days.

Prior to the feast, Jewish celebrants build a temporary shelter alongside their home in honor of the temporary homes used by their ancestors in the wilderness. Building the sukkah each year is great fun for the children and they treat it the same as building a fort and then camping out in it in the backyard. It is common for a sukkah to be decorated.

All meals are eaten in the sukkah (booth), and the entire family sleeps inside the sukkah as well, except during inclement weather or due to health problems.

Temporary Tents

Why Call it Sukkot

Leviticus 23:42-43 – *“You will dwell in booths seven days; all native-born Israelites will live in sukkot so that generation after generation will know that Yahweh made the children of Israel live in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your God.”*

The word, Sukkot [H5523 סֻכּוֹת] means a booth – a basic, crude, or temporary shelter, a tent.

Did the Hebrew slaves coming out of Egypt simply decide to erect temporary tents to sleep in every night? Not according to the Leviticus scriptures!

They dwelt in sukkot (booths) because Yahweh made them do so. So, we must ask, *“Is the Sukkot moed just about sleeping in booths during the Exodus?”* And to this we must reply, *“Perhaps not.”* Perhaps Sukkot commemorates where they camped, not what they slept in. Perhaps Sukkot honors what Yahweh did, not so much what the Hebrews did!”

Exodus 12:37 – *“The Israelites journeyed from Ra’amses to Sukkot.”*

Numbers 33:5 – *“The Israelites left Ra’amses and camped at Sukkot.”*

Note the key words, “camped at sukkot” The Hebrews left Ra’amses and then camped at a place called Sukkot the very first night! Perhaps this town got called “shanty town” because of the many booths they built. If so, this would not be the first time that a place or town got called Sukkot.

Genesis 33:17 tells us that Jacob also built a booth and called the place Sukkot: *“Jacob journeyed to Sukkot, built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Sukkot”*.

Jonah 4:5 tells us that Jonah also built a booth to sleep in: *“So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a sukkot, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city”*.

2 Samuel 11:11 tells us that the soldiers on campaign slept in sukkot: *“Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in sukkot.’”*

And a day is coming when Yahweh will once again raise the sukkah of David (**Amos 9:11**).

Provision

Exodus 13:21-22 – *“Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, didn't depart from before the people.”*

The Hebrew people had spent 430 years in Egypt.

- In Egypt they had real houses, real roofs, reliable shelters.
- They had fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic!
- They had bread made with leaven.
- But then, in an instant, they were taken out of their security and placed in booths out in the desert at a place called Sukkot, and all they had to eat was unleavened bread, matzo!

The Hebrews were only able to provide sukkot, tents, or booths, to sleep in.

- They had no protection from enemies – so Yahweh provided protection for them.
- The cloud by day, and the fire by night.
- The choice to leave Egypt was a huge leap of faith.
- Now, the Hebrews had to rely on Yahweh to provide all of their needs of food and shelter.

This is the earth shattering event that Sukkot celebrates – faith in Yahweh.

Comparisons

The Pesach and Sukkot moedim are six months apart. The 15th of Tishri is exactly six months after the 15th of Nisan, the start of the Chag Ha’Matzah moed.

The seven days of Sukkot is as far away from the seven days of Pesach as one can get. The difference: Pesach celebrates what the Hebrews ate whereas Sukkot celebrates where the Hebrews slept. Both honor Yahweh's provision.

Pesach represents being as close, experientially, to Yahweh's protection and provision as one can get.

- Spring is when the seeds are planted.
- It is at this time that one must place complete trust in Yahweh to bring the seeds to a harvest.

Sukkot, however, represents being as far away, experientially, from security and provision as one can get.

- Fall is when the harvest has been gathered, and the barns are full of grains, etc.
- It is at this time that one feels the most self-sufficient, but Sukkot reminds us that we are not self-sufficient, that all of our provision truly comes from Yahweh.
- And Yahweh remembers this event, saying: *"I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your weddings; how you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown"* (Jeremiah 2:2).
-

Permanent Tents

Preparing a Place – Older Covenant

Exodus 23:20 – *"I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you and bring you to the place I have prepared."*

1 Chronicles 15:1-12 – *"David assembled all Israel in Yerushalayim to bring the ark of Yahweh up to its place, which he had prepared for it . . . and said to the Levite clan leaders 'Consecrate yourselves, both you and your kinsmen, to bring the ark of Yahweh the God of Israel up to the place I have prepared for it'."*

2 Chronicles 1:4 – *"David set up a tent for the Ark of Yahweh in Yerushalayim."*

In the Older Covenant a place generally denotes a geographical location, but can also refer to the specific building (tent) in which a person or an item is to dwell. This place is supposed to be a permanent dwelling residence for the person or item, but often ends up being temporary.

Exodus 23 is speaking of the land of Israel which Yahweh had prepared for the former Egyptian Hebrew slaves to be their permanent dwelling place. History thus far has shown this place to be mostly temporary, but in the future this land will become the permanent residence place of the Jews. Likewise for the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting. Today David's tent is not available, but Yahweh proclaims that he will re-establish it (**Acts 15:16-18**).

Preparing a Place – Newer Covenant

John 14:2 – *"In my Father's house are many places to live. If there weren't, I would have told you; because I am going there to prepare a place for you."*

1 John 3:2 – *"We do know that when Yeshua appears, we will be like him; because we will see him as he really is."*

Yeshua states that there are many places in his father's house in which to live. In Greek, this is the word mone [G3438 μονή] which means an abode, dwelling place, mansion, or house. This place is meant to be a permanent residence, not so much a movable tent.

Mone comes from the root word, meno [G3306 μένω], which means to remain or exist permanently. However, the second use of place in this verse is an entirely different Greek word, topos [G5117 τόπος], which denotes a room, or a living quarters. These quarters can be small, or very extensive.

Is Yeshua only preparing a home, a physical dwelling for his bride? Certainly so. He is preparing a dwelling in which the bride will eat, sleep, bathe, entertain guests, and live in forever.

However, this verse hints at so much more. Yeshua is also preparing for his bride a spiritual body that is immortal and incorruptible (**1 Corinthians 15:52-54**). This body will be a spiritual body that is like his own resurrected, immortal, spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:52-54)! ***How amazing is that?***

Conclusions

Pesach represents Yahweh's care. Pesach calls for us to wholly accept that provision, even when our homes are well stocked, safe, and secure.

Sukkot represents our need. Sukkot calls for us to leave our home and trust Yahweh when we least feel we need to. Real security always comes from Yahweh. Sukkot is about the gift of faith and love that we give Yahweh, and the gift of love and care that he gives us in return.

Sukkot celebrates both the forty year period during which the Hebrew people wandered in the desert while living in temporary shelters and the day of ingathering of fruit and vine crops.

Sukkot is one of the most joyous celebrations and is well known as the "Season of our Rejoicing".

Sukkot honors what Yahweh did, not so much what the Hebrews did! This is the earth shattering event that Sukkot celebrates – faith in Yahweh.

Sukkot today celebrates a return to Yerushalayim to celebrate Sabbath and will find its final fulfillment when Yeshua returns to Earth, gathers all nations together, and sets up his Millennial Reign, a temporary period of one thousand years before eternity begins.

Yeshua states that he is preparing a place for his bride to live. This place is the physical home, i.e. a house, mansion, or other building in which the bride will dwell, eat meals, bathe, sleep, and entertain guests But this place is also the spiritual body into which the soul will dwell for all eternity.