

Focusing on the celebration of Sukkot (booths), it began as the fall harvest, enjoying the results of labor, and acknowledging God's presence.

Exodus 23:16

Also you are to observe ... the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year, **when you gather your crops from the field.**

Leviticus 23:33-36

YHVH spoke to Moses saying: "Speak to sons of Israel, and say, On the **fifteenth day of this seventh month** is the Feast of Sukkot, for seven days to YHVH. On the first day there is to be a holy convocation - you are to do no laborious work. For **seven days** you are to bring an offering by fire to YHVH. **The eighth day will be a holy convocation to you**, and you are to bring an offering by fire to YHVH. It is a solemn assembly - you should do no laborious work."

Leviticus 23:40-42

"On the first day you are to take choice fruit of trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and **rejoice** before YHVH your God for seven days. You are to **celebrate** it as a festival to YHVH for **seven days** in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations - you are to celebrate it in the seventh month. You are to live in sukkot for seven days. All the native-born in Israel are to live in sukkot."

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

"You are to keep the Feast of Sukkot for seven days, **after gathering in the produce from your threshing floor and winepress.**" So you will rejoice in your feast - you, your son and daughter, slave and maid, Levite and outsider, orphan and widow within your gates. Seven days you will feast to YHVH your God in the place He chooses, because YHVH your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hand, and you will be **completely filled with joy.**

So we celebrate by making temporary structures - booths (not tents) - in honor of the forty years that YHVH sustained the Israelites completely, and how He continues caring for us, as we obey Him and walk in the path He gives us.

Sukkot also linked with sharing the Torah with all the people.

Deuteronomy 31:10-13

Then Moses commanded them saying, "At the **end of every seven years**, in the set time of the year of cancelling debts, **during the feast of Sukkot**, when all Israel comes to appear before YHVH your God in the place He chooses, **you are to read this Torah before them in their hearing.** Gather the people - the men and women and little ones, and the outsider within your town gates - so they may hear and so they may learn, and they will fear YHVH your God and take care to do all the words of this Torah. So their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear YHVH your God - all the days you live on the land you are about to cross over the Jordan to possess."

Here are some special times of celebrating Sukkot.

Solomon builds the Temple

1 Kings 6:1,37-38

Solomon dedicates the Temple

1 Kings 8:2-6

The Glory of God fills the Temple

2 Chronicles 5:11-14

Solomon's sacrifice of dedication - the word for "dedication" is Chanukah.

2 Chronicles 7:1-10

Rededication of the Temple after Babylonian captivity - Cyrus's Proclamation

Ezra 1:1-5

After settling in, the people began to participate in the feasts and holidays.

Ezra 3:1-3

Ezra 3:4

They also kept the Feast of Sukkot as it is written, and offered the prescribed number of daily burnt offerings according to the requirement for each day.

Later, Ezra and Nehemiah and the Levites read the Torah to the people.

Nehemiah 8:1 TLV

Then all the people were brought as a single body into the plaza that was before the Water Gate. They said to Ezra the scribe, "Bring out the Torah scroll of Moses that YHVH had commanded Israel."

Nehemiah 8:7-12 TLV

[The Levites instructed the people in the Torah - the people understood.]

Nehemiah 8:13-18 TLV

[The leaders understood they should be preparing for Sukkot, so they gathered materials to make a lulav and began the feast.] The entire assembly who had returned from the captivity made sukkot and dwelt in the sukkot. Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day Bnei-Yisrael had not done so - and the joy was very great. Day after day from the first day to the last day, he read from the scroll of the Torah of God. So they kept the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, according to the regulation, there was a solemn assembly.

The festivals (feasts) all point to the life of Yeshua.

Sukkot - His birth and circumcision (covenant per Genesis 17:10-14)

Pesach - His death

Bikkurim - His resurrection

Shavuot - the celebration of receiving the Torah now adds sharing His life story by reversing Babel - the Holy Spirit giving fluency of languages

Yom Teruah - announce the Day of the Lord - His return

Yom Kippur - His judgment

Sukkot - being with Him forever

slides: *Why Sukkot Is Yeshua's Real Birthday*

Yeshua's birth happened during the Roman empire because it was a time of relative peace in all western civilization, from 27 BC through 180 AD. The Romans built amazing roads, and had peacekeeping forces along those roads, so travel of great distances was possible with a sense of safety.

The Romans wanted a census, so they required everyone to register. It was easy to get the Jews to do this, because each year all of them had to go to the temple in Jerusalem for three of the feasts. The Romans took advantage of that - they were not in a hurry like we are today, so they could wait a year or two for results. We just learned that Sukkot was the time Yeshua was born, so Yosef and Miriam accomplished the census registration and Sukkot at the same time, because the temple was fairly close to Bethlehem.

Luke 2:1-4

Now it happened in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to register all the world's inhabitants. This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone was traveling to be registered in his own city. Now Yosef also went up from the Galilee, out of the town of Natzeret to Judah, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and family of David.

When Was Yeshua Born?, Q&C, BAR, July/August 2013, John A. Cramer, Professor of Physics, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia

The birth of Yeshua is often dated to 4 BC, based on the fact that both Luke and Matthew associate Yeshua's birth with Herod's reign (Herod realized the Magi would not tell him where they found the child, so he had all male babies up to 2 years old murdered; shortly after that Herod died). There is reason to reconsider this as the date of 4 BC as Herod's death. It is based on Josephus's remark in Antiquities 17.6.4 that there was a lunar eclipse shortly before Herod died. This is ascribed to the eclipse of March 13, 4 BC. Unfortunately, this eclipse was visible only very late that night in Judea, and was a minor and only partial eclipse. There were no lunar eclipses visible in Judea thereafter until two occurred in the year 1 BC. Of these two, the one on December 29 gets my vote, since it was the one most likely to be seen and remembered.

Why was there no room in the inn? At Sukkot, all Jews who could travel came to Jerusalem from everywhere, so even outlying areas like Bethlehem were full, AND EVEN THE SUKKAHS (Sukkot) WERE FULL. So Yosef and Miriam stayed in a sukkah intended primarily for the livestock - but at least it was a shelter.

Luke 2:6

But while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

music video: *O Holy Night*

Then the trip to the Temple for purification of Miriam and dedication of Yeshua.

Leviticus 23:3b6

The eighth day will be a holy convocation to you.

Luke 2:21-24

When eight days had passed for His brit-milah [also the eighth day of Sukkot], He was named Yeshua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days of their purification were fulfilled, according to the Torah of Moses, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present to YHVH. As it is written in the Torah of YHVH, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to YHVH." So they offered a sacrifice according to what was said in the Torah of YHVH: "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons."

Luke 2:25-38

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and pious, waiting for the consolation of Israel. The Ruach ha-Kodesh was on him. And it had been revealed to him by the Ruach ha-Kodesh that he would not die before he had seen the Anointed One of YHVH. So in the Ruach, Simeon came into the Temple; and when the parents brought the Child Yeshua to do for Him according to the custom of the Torah, Simeon received Him into his arms and offered a bracha to God, saying, "Now may You let Your servant go in peace, O Sovereign Master, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples: 'A light for revelation to the nations' [Isa.42:6;49:6;60:1-3] and the glory of Your people Israel." And His father and mother were marveling at the things that were said about Him. And Simeon offered a bracha over them and said to Miriam His mother, "Behold, this One is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that is opposed, so the thoughts of many hearts may be uncovered. (And even for you, a sword will pierce through your soul.)" Now Anna, a daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher, was a prophetess. She was well advanced in age, having lived with a husband only seven years and then as a widow until age eighty-four. She never left the Temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers. And coming up at that very instant, she began praising God and speaking about the Child to all those waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

music video: *O Come, O Come Immanu-El*

What about the wise men - the Magi? In *Matthew 2:1-21* we have that story. The Magi saw the star of the new king of the Jews, so they first went to Jerusalem to find the child - this was about 2 years after His birth. King Herod (who was NOT a Hebrew) learns from the priests and Torah scholars that Micah 5:1(2) shows Bethlehem as the birthplace of the eternal king.

Two years after the birth - the family was in a home, not in a sukkah.

Matthew 2:1-5

Now after Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When King Herod heard, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had called together all the ruling kohanim and Torah scholars, he began to inquire of them where the Messiah was to be born. So they told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet Micah."

Matthew 2:7-10

Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child. And when you have found Him, bring word back to me so that I may come and worship Him as well." After listening to the king, they went their way. And behold, the star they had seen in the east went on before them, until it came to rest over the place where the Child was. **When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.**

music video: *Rejoice With Exceeding Great Joy*

Matthew 2:12-13

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another way. Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of YHVH appears to Yosef in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the Child, to kill Him."

Matthew 2:16

Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became furious. And he sent and killed all boys in Bethlehem and in all its surrounding area, from two years old and under, according to the time he had determined from the magi.

Matthew 2:19-20

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of YHVH appears in a dream to Yosef in Egypt, saying, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those seeking the Child's life are dead."

What about Christmas today?

Part of it is a genuine celebration of Yeshua's birth, but at the wrong time. The rest of the celebration is pagan. That time of year is approximately the start of winter in the northern hemisphere. The winter solstice begins December 21 or 22, the shortest day. The days after that are longer, so those days became a celebration that winter is slowly going away. It coincides with existing pagan celebrations, such as the Roman festival of Sol Invictus, which celebrated the rebirth of the sun. The first recorded celebration of Christmas on December 25 occurred in 336 AD during the reign of Emperor Constantine. This reflected a strategic decision to integrate Christian celebrations with popular pagan festivals, making it easier for converts to embrace Christianity - or maybe the other way around! About 87% of the world's population lives in the Northern Hemisphere, so the majority of people see Christmas in winter. There are many other traditions of Christmas also not related to Yeshua.

Most of God's festivals occur at equinox - spring or fall - meaning equal night. Thus the seasons of these festivals are similar in both Northern and Southern Hemispheres. The celebration of Yeshua's birth at Sukkot is in relatively good weather, no matter which hemisphere you live in.

The more important item is WHY Yeshua was born as a human. God promised a deliverer in Genesis 3, and many more times in the rest of the Tanach. He promised He would be with us - God with us - Immanu-El. He was with us in the exodus from Egypt to Canaan, as the pillar of cloud and fire. He sent temporary deliverers by sending "judges" to help pull us back toward Him. He can't just dwell with us if we are not able to be in His presence - our sin must be "covered" (by sacrifice) so we can get near to Him. We need a substitute.

The animal sacrifices of the Torah only temporarily covered our sin at that time. Yeshua had to come as one of us, to substitute for the death of each of us because of our sin. He was the ultimate sacrifice, to confirm all these previous sacrifices. Go to Isaiah 53 - the servant who pays for our sins is a human, not an animal! The substitute must be normal human, just like us. Not an angel, not another animal - a human, born of a woman, growing through childhood just like us, becoming an adult just like us, having the same temptations that we have, subject to physical problems just like us. Only a sinless man could pay that penalty (representing both sexes because a man has X and Y chromosomes).

Hebrews 9:12

Messiah entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

But wait - He is the son of God!

Yes, but He denied Himself so that He could become our sacrifice.

Philipians 2:5-8

Have this attitude in yourselves, which also was in Messiah Yeshua, who, though existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be grasped. But He emptied Himself - taking on the form of a slave, becoming the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled Himself - becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Creator of the universe, the Word of God, gave up all that power and glory to become just like us, to die for us.

music video: *I Wonder As I Wander*

Now we have the privilege of looking back to His incarnation and enjoying His present help for us (through the Spirit).

music video: *ImmanuEl*

We have dark days ahead - we see some of prophesied evil happening now. After the final wars, especially against Jerusalem, all the earth will celebrate Sukkot.

Zechariah 12:3

Zechariah 12:9-10

Zechariah 13:1-2

Zechariah 14:1-3

Zechariah 14:4

In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which lies to the east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a huge valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north and half of it toward the south.

Zechariah 14:5-8

Zechariah 14:4-9

YHVH will then be King over all the earth. In that day YHVH will be Echad and His Name Echad.

Zechariah 14:12

Zechariah 14:16

Then all the survivors from all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, YHVH Tseva'ot, and to celebrate Sukkot.

Zechariah 14:17-19

The Creator of the universe, long before you existed, set in motion a plan to give you freedom - you can choose death or you can choose life.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, loving YHVH your God, paying attention to what he says and clinging to him - for that is the purpose of your life!

This is our perpetual celebration - God with us!