

## **SUKKOT – HIS PRESENCE AND PROVISION**

Wyn Laidig

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Our goal this week to enjoy each other; enjoy the fellowship; make new friends... but most of all enjoy our Father; enjoy His presence. And enjoy his provision. That's the purpose of Sukkot – to celebrate his presence and his provision.

What is Sukkot? Some of you celebrated this for many years... for many this is your 1<sup>st</sup> experience.

Hebrew Sukkot PL of Sukkah... a sukkah is a temporary dwelling, a shelter... it could be a tent, a cave, a lean-to, a shack, a make-shift building... really any place where a person could take shelter on a temporary basis. In our English Bibles, when they translate the Hebrew word Sukkah or the plural form of Sukkot, they often use the word tabernacle or booth. Feast of Tabernacles; Feast of Booths. These are really somewhat outdated terms in English today, so probably aren't the best terms to communicate to us. Some of the newer versions translate Sukkot as Shelters, and talk about the Feast of Shelters. This is probably better. But you can't go wrong with using the Hebrew, so that's what we are doing here. Sukkot.

So that's the name... but what really is it? And why do we celebrate it? What does Scripture say about it? Well, this is what we'll spend the entire week talking about. There is SOOO much here. I think you'll be surprised, those of you who have never celebrated this before.

### ***Leviticus 23:34***

“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD.

That's today... 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. We are doing what Scripture says to do, on the very day we are commanded.

Now it says that today begins the Feast of Sukkot to the LORD. If you know me very well, or have heard me speak, you've heard me talk about the personal name of our Father, and when our English Bibles say “the LORD” and LORD is in all capitals, that means it really doesn't say “the LORD” in the original Hebrew. Instead, in Hebrew, is the actual personal name of our Father, written with 4 consonants as YHWH. Since there were no vowels written in the Hebrew, we don't know for sure how to pronounce it, but there are two very good possibilities. Most of the time you'll here people say it is pronounced as Yahweh. And maybe so. However, another good possibility, which I happen to think is more likely, is that is pronounced Yahuah. So that is how I normally pronounce it.

Why is that important? Because in Scripture we are told to remember his name.

### ***Exodus 3:15***

Say this to the people of Israel, “YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

His personal name --Yahuah. And this celebration of Sukkot is a celebration to HIM “the feast of Sukkot to YHWH”!

So what else does Scripture about Sukkot?

### ***Leviticus 23:39–44***

“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees,

branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.

So we read for 7 days, God’s people were to live in Sukkot. We are doing that, with our tents. A tent is a sukkah.

And we are take fruit and branches of leafy trees and willows... Scripture isn’t clear on what to do with these things, but traditionally they were used to decorate the sukkah. Sunday afternoon Larry will helping us do that, if you would like to.

Note too that God commanded His people to keep sukkot “FOREVER throughout your generations”. This wasn’t just to be done for a while... or until Yeshua came, or until Pentecost, or until the temple was destroyed, or until any other time. FOREVER. As we talk more about Sukkot this week, I think you’ll understand why. Sukkot is a picture of what is to come. A picture our reigning with Jesus... with Yeshua, to use his Hebrew name... It is a picture of that ultimate kingdom where we live COMPLETELY in His presence.

Now some people will say, what a minute... this is OT stuff, and the OT doesn’t apply us, and even if it did, it says here that all NATIVE Israelites are to keep sukkot.. so that’s clearly not us. Well, first all, on Thursday evening I will be talking about this in detail... the OT, the old Covenant, the NT, the New Covenant, and hopefully help us to start thinking a bit more correctly about it really means for us to be under the new covenant. As for the phrase about native Israelites... what does Paul say?

#### ***Ephesians 2:11–19***

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles... [were] separated from Christ, **alienated from the citizenship of Israel** and strangers to the covenants of promise... But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints** and members of the household of God.

We, because of our faith in Messiah, are now counted as part of Israel. Citizens of Israel. In other Scriptures, Paul says we Gentiles are **Sons of Abraham**. And in Romans he teaches we Gentiles are “grafted in” in the olive tree of Israel. So we have been given the same privileges and responsibilities as the rest of God’s people. God sees us as citizens of Israel, sons of Abraham, and part of His covenant with them. So it’s our privilege AND our responsibility to celebrate Sukkot.

Notice something else about this Leviticus passage...

“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days.”

Sukkot is actually the 7<sup>th</sup> and last Appointed Time in the year. We’ll talk about all these appointed times on Monday night. But for now, just realize that this one, Sukkot, is number 7. What does 7 symbolize? 7 days of creation, 7 days in a week – **completeness**. So we have the 7<sup>th</sup> Appointed time, in the 7<sup>th</sup> month, lasting for 7 days. That’s a lot of sevens... not by accident. Sukkot symbolizes the completion of God’s plan. The millennium – when we reign with the Messiah. His presence is FULLY and COMPLETELY among us. His perfect plan of mankind is completed as we finally live in peace and unity and the fullness of joy with Him.

What else do we learn about Sukkot? Look at Dt 16:

#### ***Deuteronomy 16:13–15***

“You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, **when you have gathered in the produce** from your

threshing floor and your winepress. You shall **rejoice** in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will **bless you in all your produce** and in all the work of your hands, so **that you will be altogether joyful**.

So here we see the connection between harvest and sukkot. This was a 7 day Thanksgiving festival! In fact, the puritans back in 1621 at the first Thanksgiving modeled that celebration after Sukkot. Actually another name in Scripture for this same celebration of Sukkot is “ingathering” or “harvest”. Sukkot took place at the end of the annual harvest. The barley was harvested first, around Passover. The wheat was harvested next, around Shavuot (or Pentecost). And now, at Sukkot, it is harvest time for grapes, olives, dates, and pomegranates. It’s the very last harvest of the year. A time to say thank you to for God’s provision this year, and begin to pray for his blessings for the year to come.

It was a JOYFUL time. The most JOYFUL time of the entire year. For the entire week, God’s people gathered together, and celebrated, with food, with worship, with fellowship. That’s what we want to do together this week. Celebrate. “be altogether joyful”. Why? He is living among us! He is providing for us!

Sukkot celebrates YHWH’s presence and provision for his people – for us!

Let me close with one more thought. I find it very interesting that YHWH chooses to have His people celebrate his Presence and His Provision by having them use symbols that remind them of one of the most difficult times in their history. A time when they were at a low point. In the wilderness. In the desert. Being punished for their lack of faith! Just waiting, sometimes complaining, with no idea how long they would have to wait. Yes, they were learning to rely on Him, but the lessons were not fun. Most of us have been there. Some of us are there now. We are in our own desert, and it can feel like death. It can feel like there is no end. We can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel.

You know what? That’s the very time we need to hold on to His promises. That’s the very time we need to remember He is with us, caring for us. Sukkot is for us! And not just in the good times, but in the bad. It is a reminder that even in the desert, He is with us. His presence is with us. And he is providing for us. He did it back then, 3500 years ago, and He is doing it today. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.