

SUKKOT – MESSIAH’S BIRTH

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We know that we see the Messiah in all the Appointed Times. And Sukkot, the 7th appointed time, 7th month, lasting for 7 days, foreshadows the time when Messiah will dwell on this earth with his people, and he will reign as King, living in their midst... in OUR midst.

But some have suggested another connection with the Messiah too... his birth. I know our culture celebrates the birth of Yeshua on Dec 25, but the truth is that date was chosen simply because it was an existing pagan holiday that was already being celebrated. Yeshua was not born on Dec 25. When was he born? Well, we don't know for sure, but some have suggested it may have been during Sukkot. There are four reasons that I think this idea has merit.

First – the birth of Messiah fits with the symbolism and significance of Sukkot. Remember what Sukkot is all about... the presence of the Father dwelling in our midst. During the time of the Exodus, in the desert, God's people were living in His presence. The great pillar of cloud in the daytime, and pillar of fire at night was His very presence, with dwelling with them in the tabernacle, leading and guiding them. And this foreshadows the millennium – again, it is his presence dwelling with his people on this earth in his new kingdom. So what happened with Yeshua came to earth the first time, miraculously born as a child of Miriam in Bethlehem? Was it not also His presence dwelling among us? John says it was:

John 1:1-2,14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God... And the Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So Messiah's coming was the very presence of YHWH, dwelling among us. And that's exactly what Sukkot celebrates - God's presence among us. So it would certainly fit that for that Presence, in the person of Yeshua, to begin at Sukkot.

Second, linguistically, there is a connection in Scripture. As Larry mentioned the other day, the GK word that John used for the Messiah **dwelling** among us is from the root word root word **skene**. And what is interesting is that in the LXX, we find that same root used in the translation of the HB word **sukkot**.

Leviticus 23:42-43

You shall dwell in **booths (skene)** for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in **booths (skene)**, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in **booths (skene)** when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

So Scripture says we are to celebrate Sukkot by living in a **sukkah** or a **skene**, because the people of Israel lived in **sukkah's** or **skene's** during their 40 years in the desert. AND John writes that the Messiah came to earth and dwelt among us – **skene'd** among us. And the feast of Sukkot in Greek Scriptures, both New and Old Testament, is called the Feast of **Building Skene/**.

So if the Messiah was going to come and **skene** among us, could there be any more appropriate time than for that to begin at feast of sukkot, the feast of **building skene** when we are celebrating the fact that the Father **skene's** among his people.

The third reason has to do with where the Messiah was born. You know the story. Miriam and Yoseph go to Yoseph's home town of Bethlehem. She is pregnant. They are not married. It's a small town. Everybody knows Yoseph. Many are related to him. Yet, no one, not even family, seems to be able to make room for this woman, pregnant out of wedlock. Clearly they are being shunned. Finally one person agrees to let them use the stables. A shelter for animals... given the area around Bethlehem, this was most

likely a shepherd's cave behind one of the houses. A shepherd's cave is used as a temporary dwelling. Clearly this could be called a **sukkah**. So we have Messiah, the presence of the Father himself, coming to temporarily dwell among us, born in a sukkah, a temporary dwelling place. What would be more fitting than for this event to take place on Sukkot? Yeshua comes to the earth, born in a sukkah, to sukkah (or skene) among us... seems like it just might be something could "coincidentally" happen on Sukkot.

The fourth reason has to do with the season of the year when Yeshua was born. The birth took place just south of Jerusalem, in the Judean mountains. There the agriculture cycle is such that the grain is harvested in the spring until about June. Later in the year, about the first of November, the rains come; and then around December the fields are planted again for the next year's crop. The shepherds in the area can only let their flocks out in the fields after the grain harvest is complete, and before the planting for the next year. So that would generally be July – October; maybe as late as November.

Luke 2:7-8

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom. **And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field**, keeping watch over their flock by night.

So this really seems to bracket the time of Yeshua's birth more or less from July through October. That's not a strong argument, but at least we can see that it does fit with the timing of Sukkot, which is either in September or October.

The fifth and final argument has to do with the John the Baptists birth. Because if we know when John the Baptist was born, we know about when Yeshua was born. Listen to what the angel said to Miriam:

Luke 1:35–36

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and **this is the sixth month** with her who was called barren.

So from Luke we know that John was born about six months before Yeshua. So when was John born? If we can estimate that, we can just add 6 months and have an estimate of Yeshua's birth date.

Remember the story of John's father, Zechariah (**Zakarya**), was chosen to do priestly service:

Luke 1:5–9

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of **the division of Abijah (Aviyyah)**... Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

While he is in the temple, burning the incense, the angel Gabriel comes to him and says

Luke 1:13

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

You can imagine his excitement. They are both very old, without children, and now promised a miraculous birth.

Luke 1:23–24

And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived.

I am guessing he hurried home, and did his part as the husband as soon as possible to help that miraculous birth take place.

Now here's the thing. We know from 1 Chron 24 that the priests were divided into 24 divisions. And we are also given the order of service of those divisions, which was chosen by lot.

1 Chronicles 24:7-18

The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, the seventh to Hakkoz, **the eighth to Abijah**, the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizez, the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.

So we know that Zechariah, from the division of Abijah, was the 8th division out of 24. Each division served 1 week at a time. We know this from Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived during the time of Yeshua and wrote a number of documents that we have today.

Josephus: 7. (363) But David being desirous of ordaining his son king of all the people, called together their rulers to Jerusalem, with the priests and the Levites, and having first numbered the Levites, he found them to be thirty-eight thousand, from thirty years old to fifty; (364) out of which he appointed twenty-three thousand to take care of the building of the temple, and out of the same, six thousand to be judges of the people and scribes; four thousand for porters to the house of God, and as many for singers, to sing to the instruments which David had prepared, as we have said already. (365) He divided them also into courses: and when he had separated the priests from them, he found of these priests twenty-four courses, sixteen of the house of Eleazar, and eight of that of Ithamar; and he ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from Sabbath to Sabbath. (366) And thus were the courses distributed by lot, in the presence of David, and Zadok and Abiathar, the high priest, and of all the rulers: and that course which came up first was written down as the first, and accordingly the second, and so on to the twenty-fourth; and this partition hath remained to this day.

So assuming they started at the beginning of the year, Abijah's division would have served the 8th week of the year. Except for the fact that one week was Unleavened Bread and that would have disrupted the normal order of things. No doubt the high priest and his special assistants would have officiated during those very special appointed times. So taking that week into account, we can figure that Zechariah would have finished his service at the end of the 9th week of the year. Let's say he hurried home... an old man walking... give him a week for that. Then he and Elizabeth have relations and sometime during that month she becomes pregnant. Let's say that takes 2 week, the midpoint of a woman's 4-week monthly cycle. So that's the end of week 12. Now a typical full-term pregnancy lasts about 40 weeks. So that takes us to week 52. But there are only 50 weeks in a year, according to the Biblical calendar which is based on the lunar month. So we are now two weeks into the next year. So we have John the Baptist being born after the end of the 2nd week of the year – that would be the 14th or 15th day of the first month. Sound familiar?

What day is that? Passover on the 14th. The week of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th.

So if John is born on the 15th day of the first month, and we know from Luke that Yeshua is born 6 months later, that would make Yeshua born on the 15th day of the seventh month. Sound familiar?

That's the first day of Sukkot – the 15th day of the seventh month!

So there are five pretty good reasons why people think Yeshua may have been born on Sukkot. There are a lot of assumptions, I know. But you have to admit it really does make sense:

1. The Messiah's birth fits exactly with the symbolism of Sukkot – His presence dwelling among us; His provision for us in the great plan of salvation.
2. Linguistically, Scripture uses the word "skene" to describe the Messiah's coming, the same word used to describe Sukkot and Sukkahs we live in.

3. Yeshua was born in a sukkah, a stable, probably a shepherd's cave.
4. Shepherds in the field with their flocks means it was sometime after harvest and before planting, so the birth was sometime from July through October.
5. We can estimate that John the Baptist was possibly born in the middle of the first month, and we know that Yeshua was born about 6 months later, so we can estimate his birth in middle in of the seventh month... exactly at the time of Sukkot.

It's possible... I would say more than possible. Sukkot -- Celebrating God's Provision through his Presence in our midst – all fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, BOTH the first time and the second time.