

## SUKKOT – THE LATE SUKKOT

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Sukkot, 2013

### *Leviticus 23:39–43*

“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.”

Take palm fronds and leafy branches and after the final harvest, rejoice for 7 days and live in sukkah's.

It was at the end of the final harvest – olives, grapes, figs, dates, pomegranates. The harvest for the year was COMPLETE. It was like our thanksgiving, only 7 days long. They lived in shelters, *sukkah's*, because God told them to, to remember the time when they were in the wilderness, and had no crops, no produce, no homes to live in. Yet the Father provided for them, and His presence was there with them... He *sukkah'ed* with them. As He provides for us now, as His presence is here with us now.

And they would take palm branches and shake them and wave them, as a part of their rejoicing. Why? They related this to Psalm 118:25.

### *Psalm 118:27 (NIV)*

The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

Note that there is some ambiguity in the translation here... but in this case the NIV reflects the DSS and is likely the most accurate (as opposed to the ESV and others which insert the word “sacrifice”).

### *Psalm 118:27 (ESV)*

The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

### *Psalm 118:27–28 (DSS)*

The LORD is God, and he has given us light. *The cords of the festal procession are with branches* up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will exalt you.

So they see in Psalm 118:27 that there is a feast and a procession and there are branches involved. It must be sukkot, they say. That is the only feast where we are commanded to take branches. So they looked at the context of this Psalm. What else is happening here that can guide them (guide us) in our celebration of Sukkot? The verse before says this:

### *Psalm 118:25–26 (ESV)*

Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

So it seems that with their branches in hand, when marching up to the temple for worship on Sukkot, they would be shouting out “Save us we pray, O Yahuah” In Hebrew it would be:

**Anna Yahuah, Hoshi'ah-na** “Oh please YHWH, save us!”

This is where our word “hosanna” comes from. It literally means “save us!”

So with branches in hand, join the procession of the feast, marching up to the altar of the temple for their worship. Can you picture it? Waving the branches, shouting **Anna Yahuah, Hoshi’ah-na!**

But what does else does this Psalm say? Look at the prior couple verses:

***Psalm 118:19–24***

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. **The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.** This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

What is this passage about? The Stone has become the capstone – about Messiah – a day to rejoice! Salvation is here! The Messiah has come to save us!

Leviticus says take palm branches and rejoice before the Lord. That’s what they did. And they see it was connected to this Psalm that is clearly about the Messiah. So, Sukkot, as they saw it (and they were right!) is all about the Messiah, who will save them.

**Anna Yahuah, Hoshi’ah-na!** is a cry for the Messiah to come! And they are rejoicing, shaking their Palm Branches. This was how they celebrated Sukkot, every year.

Well, one year Sukkoth was skipped. What happened?

Some 160 years before the birth of Messiah, the land of Israel was ruled by the Greeks. After Alexander the Great conquered the land and taken it from the Persians 150 years earlier.

After Alexander the Great’s death in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his 4 generals. “**whoever is the fittest**” Lysimachus got Asia Minor. Cassander got Greece and Macedonia. Ptolemy took control of Egypt and the land south of Israel. Seleucus took control of the land North and somewhat west of Israel. Israel itself (Judea as it called at that time) was stuck in the middle, to be fought for. Eventually the Seleucids, gained control of Judea under **Antiochus IV epiphanies**, the most infamous rulers in the history of Seleucid Kingdom. His name essentially means “God Manifest”. This man was truly a picture of the anti-messiah, and clearly the one we have in the prophesies of the book of Daniel. He was going to put an end to this group of Jews and their anti-Greek culture.

The Greek mindset was their culture, called Hellenism, was supreme. Their mission was to change the culture of the lands they conquered, and turn them into Greeks; into their Hellenistic way of life. To worship the Greek gods and goddesses of their pantheon. They were zealous in their evangelism. They were forceful in their evangelism.

Antiochus seeking to subdue and unify his kingdom, began a campaign to force conversion to Hellenism. Jews had to either give up their practices (keeping Shabbat, keeping the appointed times, keeping Torah, circumcision, etc) or die.

***1 Maccabees 1:20–24***

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus... went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance.

***1 Maccabees 1:29–33***

Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to

Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock. Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel.

***1 Maccabees 1:41–50***

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and festivals, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. He added, “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.”

***1 Maccabees 1:54–63***

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew... they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. The books of the Torah that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the Torah, was condemned to death by decree of the king. They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.

Interesting that on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, the month corresponding to December. It seems probable this was right around the winter solstice, a time of great pagan celebration and sacrifice. He went into the temple and erected an altar, probably to Zeus, in the Temple, and he burned the Torah scrolls, and he sacrificed a pig there in the temple, and he went INTO the holy of holies, and threw pig's blood all over inside. He desecrated the temple in every way he could.

In Modi'in there was anger and talk of a revolt, so Antiochus' troops marched into Modi'in, to erect an altar and force the people to participate in their pagan ceremonies, and forcing them to eat sacrificed pork. A man named Mattathias, from the Hasmonean family, was the priest. In front of the crowd of people in Modi'in, Antiochus ordered Mattathias eat the sacrificed pig. He refused. To prevent a disaster, one Jewish man stepped forward to eat the pork. When he came forward, Mattathias stabbed him, along with one of the king's officers, and fled to the hills with his five sons and the rest of his family, where from there he began a revolt against Antiochus and his troops.

***1 Maccabees 2:15–28***

The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein to make them offer sacrifice. Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: “You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers. Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts.” But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: “Even if all the

nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. Far be it from us to desert the Torah and the ordinances. We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left." When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu. Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

It was guerilla warfare. A small band of poorly equipped untrained soldiers fighting the mighty army of Antiochus and the Greek Seleucids. Mattathias soon died, and his son Judah took over. Judah the Maccabee, Judah "the hammer". Under the leadership of Judah the Maccabee, with God on their side, after 3 years of fighting, they achieved victory. They recaptured Jerusalem, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, 165 BC, regained the temple and rebuilt the altar, **exactly 3 years after it's defilement.**

#### ***1 Maccabees 4:36-59***

Then Judas and his brothers said, "See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it." So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion. There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins. Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven. Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary. He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one. They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts. They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. Then they offered incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple. They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken. Early in the morning on the **twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev**, in the one hundred forty-eighth year, they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. **So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days**, and joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving offering. They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and fitted them with doors. There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed. Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

Jewish people, for the first time since before the days of Babylonian exile, controlled their land again!

They recaptured Jerusalem, and on the 25th of Kislev, 165 BC, regained the temple and rebuilt the altar, exactly 3 years after it's defilement. And they celebrated with a 8-day festival of rejoicing... what does that sound like? Sukkot! Tradition has it that they because they missed celebrating Sukkot due to the war, they kept it now. In fact, they couldn't keep Sukkot when they had no access to the Temple. Now that they cleansed the temple, repaired it, cleaned, rededicated it, the first thing they do is celebrate with a late Sukkot. Why Sukkot?

1. Solomon **dedicated** the Temple on **Sukkot**. God's **presence** was in the Temple. (I Kings 8:65, II Chron 7:8-9)
2. At the **regathering** of Israel, before Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple, they celebrated **Sukkot**, anticipating His presence again would soon fill the Holy of Holies (Ezra 3:3-4, Zech 14:16-17)
3. When the **rebuilding** was complete, Ezra & Nehemiah celebrated **Sukkot**. His presence again filled the temple (Neh 7:73, 8:13-18)

And now, once again, the temple is restored and cleansed. The pagan altar removed, the pig blood cleaned, the entire area purified and rededicated. And they celebrate Sukkot – celebrating the presence returning to the Holy of Holies. Celebrating his provision in giving them victory – giving them salvation over their enemies.

That special Sukkot celebration, over 2 months late, is where the tradition of Hanukkah comes from. But it was originally Sukkot. They would have waved their palm branches in procession to the Temple, bringing their sacrifices, and shouting **Anna Yahuah, Hoshi'ah-na** just like it says to do in Ps 118.

And from that time on, the palm branches became a symbol of independence. And their shouts of **Hoshi'ah-na** became their national cry shouting for victory. No one would ever forget that Sukkot, and the special meaning of those palm branches and how their cries for YHWH to save them had been answered.

It would be like if Pres of the United States declared Christmas should be celebrated in March this year because of a hurricane disaster or a terrorist attack in December – no one in the US would ever forget that year – the year that America had a late Christmas.

That year, 168 BC, the waving of palm branches and shouting Hoshi'ana “God Save Us” took on a new significance. They just won a revolution against the Greek Seleucid Kingdom!! This was a Sukkot celebration mixed with Independence Day – like the 4th of July. The first independence day in over 400 years!

Starting at this time, the palm branch became a symbol of God saving them by the sword. And “**Hoshi'ah-na**” god save us -- became the Jewish war cry. God save us became synonymous with kill the enemy.

But remember, Ps 118, and these cries **Hoshi'ah-na** for God to save us, were also about the Messiah. The rejected stone that would be the cornerstone.

So in the coming years, as they were again oppressed by the Greeks and later by the Romans, their cries of Hoshi'ah-na were cries for the Messiah to come and liberate them from their enemy. They wanted the Messiah as a military leader to kill the enemy and give them freedom once again. Hoshi'ana – Kill them! Come Messiah! Kill Them! Give us Salvation... Give us independence. Kill the enemy!

**Hoshi'ah-na** meant “kill them!” In Jesus' day it was a crucifiable offense to wear a palm branch. It meant kill the Romans. Independence!

Fast forward nearly 200 years. Yeshua is reaching the end of his ministry. Passover is approaching. Yeshua is walking from Jericho to Jerusalem, and he gets near the city, people come out to meet Him. They have heard of the miracles He has done. Even raising Lazarus from dead. They are sorely oppressed by the Romans, and wanting deliverance. Could this be the long-awaited Messiah? Could this

be the coming King? The one who would save them? Save them from their enemies? Give them independence from Rome? They are hopeful. They line the streets to meet him as he approaches.

***John 12:12–13***

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”

They waved palm branches and shouted **Hoshi’ah-na**. Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahuah. Words from Ps 118. But what are they saying? Free us from the Romans. Be our King. Deliver us! Kill the enemy! The Messiah is coming to liberate us. He coming to kill the Romans. He’s coming to lead the revolt! **Hoshi’ah-na!**

Now we can understand more why Yeshua wept as he approached the Jerusalem:

***Luke 19:41–42***

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day **the things that make for peace!** But now they are hidden from your eyes.

The things that make for PEACE – it’s not about killing the enemy. That was not his way. So how does Yeshua respond to their cries of Hoshi’ana?

***John 12:14–15***

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

He comes sitting on a donkey, as in Zech 9:9, where in the context of Zechariah this is statement is referring to the taking away of war implements. It’s about peace, not war. He comes not as a king on a war-horse to kill the enemy, but humbly, on a donkey, wanting to teach them Truth, and turn their hearts back to His Father. But they see Him and they wave their palm branches and shout. **Hoshi’ah-na**. And Yeshua weeps for them.

Tears of sorrow for because they totally missed the point of why he came.

As we celebrate Sukkot, and anticipate the return of the Messiah, and His dwelling, *sukkah’ing* in our midst, my prayer is that we do so for the right reasons. And that we will be ready for His return.

Would that you, even you, had known on this day **the things that make for peace!** But now they are hidden from your eyes.

I pray that His ways would not be hidden from my eyes, because of my preconceived notions, my distorted view of Scriptures, or my seeing the world through my human eyes rather than His.