

Lesson 10 – Feast of Tabernacles – Sukkot / Booths (חג הסוכות) / Ingathering

Observed: 15-22 Tishri (7th Month - September / October)

The Origins

Leviticus 23:33–43 (ESV)

³³ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 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...

⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year...

⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ 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.”

The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) is a week-long celebration of the fall harvest. It is one of the three pilgrimage feasts (Exod 23:14–17; 34:18-24; Deut 16:16). Sukkot is a joyous feast when people rejoice in God’s forgiveness and material blessings.



The feast commemorates the forty-year wilderness wanderings in remembrance of God’s faithfulness and protection (Num 13-14). During the Israelites’ wilderness journey, they dwelt in temporary shelters, or booths (tabernacles). On this holiday, the Israelites were to build and dwell in booths for seven days to remember God’s care for them in the wilderness.

Jewish people continue to celebrate Sukkot by building and dwelling in temporary booths. The sukkah (booth) is a temporary structure built of wood, or wood and canvas.

The four special plants used to cover the booths are myrtle, citron, palm, and willow. It is decorated with fall flowers, leaves, fruits, and vegetables.

The roof is made of branches and leaves with enough open spaces to see the stars. It is usually erected on a lawn or balcony and often at least one meal a day is eaten in the sukkah.





During Sukkot, a lulav is waved in all four directions (north, south, east, and west) and up and down to symbolize that God's presence is everywhere. The lulav is made of one palm branch, two willows, and three myrtle branches that are bound together and waved before the Lord representing "the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook" (Lev. 23:40) signifying God's provision of the harvest.

This feast also represents the final harvest when all nations will share in the joy and blessings of God's kingdom. This is signified by sacrificing of 70 bulls over the seven days (Num 29:13-32). The 70 bulls represent all the nations of the earth.

Temple Ceremonies

In Jesus' time, two ceremonies of water and light were part of the last day of Sukkot.

Water Ceremony - Each day of the feast, a priest came from the Temple down to the pool of Siloam carrying a golden pitcher. He was followed by those lulav-waving pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot. The priest would fill the golden pitcher with water from the pool and return to the Temple followed by crowds chanting from Isaiah, "we will gather water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3), and from the Psalms, "Hoshiana" transliterated "Hosanna," meaning "save us now" (Psalm 118:25). The priest would make one circle around the altar and then pour out the water praying for God to provide what He alone could give. On the seventh day, the priest would circle the altar seven times.

- The Pool of Siloam is a pool of water located on the southern slope of Jerusalem where Jesus sent a blind man to be healed (John 9).
- This brings to mind Jesus' "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem where the people laid down branches and shouted "Hosanna." (Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11)
- This ceremony on the last day of Tabernacles (John 7:2) is also the context when Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

Light - On the first day of Sukkot, three seventy-five-foot-high candlesticks were erected in The Court of the Women where the treasury was located. This is the very same treasury where Messiah noted a poor widow who gave her sacrificial gift (Mark 12:41-42).

- Possibly the next morning after the feast, when the torches would have been put out, Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Background Passages

Exodus 23:14–17 (ESV)

¹⁴ “Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶ You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. ¹⁷ Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God.

Exodus 34:18–24 (ESV)

¹⁸ “You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. ¹⁹ All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. ²⁰ The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed.

²¹ “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. ²² You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end. ²³ Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

Leviticus 23:33–43 (ESV)

³³ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 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. ³⁵ On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. ³⁶ For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.

³⁷ “These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, ³⁸ besides the LORD’s Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

³⁹ “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. ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native

Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ 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.”

Numbers 29:12–38 (ESV)

¹² “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall keep a feast to the LORD seven days. ¹³ And you shall offer a burnt offering, a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, thirteen bulls from the herd, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old; they shall be without blemish; ¹⁴ and their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, three tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two tenths for each of the two rams, ¹⁵ and a tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; ¹⁶ also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

¹⁷ “On the second day twelve bulls from the herd, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ¹⁸ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ¹⁹ also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

²⁰ “On the third day eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ²¹ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ²² also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

²³ “On the fourth day ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ²⁴ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ²⁵ also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

²⁶ “On the fifth day nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ²⁷ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ²⁸ also one male goat for a sin offering; besides the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

²⁹ “On the sixth day eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ³⁰ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ³¹ also one male goat for a sin offering; besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offerings.

³² “On the seventh day seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, ³³ with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ³⁴ also one male goat for a sin offering; besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

³⁵ “On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly. You shall not do any ordinary work, ³⁶ but you shall offer a burnt offering, a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish, ³⁷ and the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, in the prescribed quantities; ³⁸ also one male goat for a sin offering; besides the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

Deuteronomy 16:13–17 (ESV)

¹³ “You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

Isaiah 12:3 (ESV)

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Psalms 118:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!

Matthew 21:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’ ”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Mark 11:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will

send it back here immediately.’ ” ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Mark 12:41–42 (ESV)

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

John 7:37–38 (ESV)

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ”

John 8:12 (ESV)

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

BOOTHS, FEAST OF (תִּשְׁבֻּעַת הַסֻּכּוֹת, *chag hassukkoth*, σκηνοπηγία, *skēnorēgia*). Also known by its transliteration, Sukkot. One of Israel's three great annual festivals, celebrated at the time of the agricultural harvest, in gratitude for Yahweh's present and historical provision.

Purpose and Date

During this festival Israel gathered luxuriant boughs and built booths in which to live for the span of the festival. These acts were meant to remind them of the time spent wandering in the desert. The Feast of Tabernacles is the last of the seven feasts described in the Pentateuch, starting four days after the Day of Atonement. It begins after the completion of grain threshing and pressing grapes, on the fifteenth day of Tishri (the seventh lunar month, which falls in late September to late October).

Biblical Relevance

Old Testament

Leviticus provides the most detailed instructions, indicating the time span and purpose of the festival as well as the plants to be used for the booths (Lev 23:33–36; 39–44). It is to be a seven-day festival, with a Sabbath rest and sacred assembly on the first and eighth days. On the first day the people were to take branches from palms, willows, and other luxuriant trees and rejoice before the Lord, and they were to live in booths for the week so their descendants would know that they lived in booths when God brought them out of Egypt.

In Exodus the feast is generally described as the Feast of Ingathering, as one of the three pilgrimage festivals through which Israel celebrated the Lord, (Exod 23:14–17; 34:22). In Deuteronomy 16:13–15 the Feast of Tabernacles is equated with the Feast of Ingathering and is said to be a celebration for all the ways God has blessed Israel. Every seventh year, the Jubilee, the people were to read the law during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 31:9–13), as Ezra does in Neh 8:13–18 (see also Ezra 3:4). Nehemiah 8 makes the connection that the branches were to be used to make the booths.

The Feast of Tabernacles is referred to in Hos 12:9, where God threatens that Israel will again be forced to live in “tents” (סֻכּוֹת, *ohalim*) as they do in their festivals. In Zechariah 14:16–19 the feast is mentioned in a positive context: all the nations who once attacked Israel will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus celebrates the feast of Tabernacles in John 7, and it is within this context that Jesus invites the thirsty to drink from Him and declares that He is the light of the world (Ulfgard, *Story of Sukkot*, 258–61). At the beginning of John 7, His brothers tell him to go show Himself to the world, since this feast was one of the biggest gatherings of Jews (see Josephus, below, for other public events at this feast). Jesus' teaching at the feast relates to the importance of the reading of the law. Jesus' invitation to the thirsty to come to Him to drink in John 7:37–44 relates to references to the Feast of Tabernacles in Zech 14:1–21 and Ezek 47:1–12; the setting is the water libation service, where water was brought up to the altar and poured over it (Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 117–31). In John 8:12, when Jesus declares he is the “light of the world,” the setting could be the last night of the feast, when celebrants stayed

up all night in the temple courts, which were lit by enormous lamps (Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot*, 137–38).

C. W. Smith argues that the transfiguration has themes of the Feast of Tabernacles in the background (Mark 9:2–8; Smith, “Tabernacles,” 131–32). He also argues that the triumphal entry occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles and not prior to Passover (Mark 11:1–12:12; Smith, “Tabernacles,” 131; for other scholars making similar arguments, see Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 84–94).

Extrabiblical Literature

There are many extrabiblical references to the Feast of Tabernacles, including 2 Maccabees, Philo, Josephus, and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Feast of Tabernacles may be the model for the ritual purification of the temple when the people celebrated for eight days and even took branches (later this became Hanukkah; 2 Maccabees 1:9, 18; 10:6–8). Philo reflects philosophically on the feast of Tabernacles (*On the Special Laws* 2.33.204–13).

Intertestamental

Some of the literature from Qumran probably mentioned the Feast of Tabernacles, though those sections have not survived (e.g., 4Q327, 4Q394). In the Temple Scroll (11Q12–20) cols. 28–29, the various sacrifices to be offered on the various days are listed, though this passage is also fragmentary.

Two letters (one in Aramaic, one in Greek) from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt request that the four species of branches be sent to Jerusalem, presumably so they could celebrate Tabernacles (see also Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 31–102.)

Josephus

Josephus describes the types of branches and the citron (*etrog*) used in the feast, also adding which sacrifices were made (*Antiquities* 3.10.4). He notes that the festival is a time when the high priest should read the law to the whole assembly of Israel (*Antiquities* 4.8.12). Josephus connects the festival into biblical history by discussing how:

- Solomon brought the ark into the temple during the feast of Tabernacles (*Antiquities* 8.4.1, 5; 1 Kgs 8:2).
- Jeroboam built his temples so that his people would not have to travel to Jerusalem for this feast; he was celebrating it at Bethel as high priest when Jadon came and prophesied against the altar (*Antiquities* 8.8.4; 1 Kgs 12:25–13:10).
- Ezra celebrated the festival (*Antiquities* 11.4.1; 11.5.5).

Josephus mentions the feast several times in his narrative between the time of the Maccabees and the destruction of Jerusalem. As a major gathering of people, it seems to be the time for public appearances and reading popular opinion about prominent individuals, and so often public gestures are made and trouble occurs:

- Jonathan makes himself high priest (*Antiquities* 13.2.3)
- Antiochus VII and John Hyrcanus come to a truce (*Antiquities* 13.8.2)
- the crowds show that they adore the high priest Aristobulus, sparking Herod’s jealousy (*Antiquities* 15.3.3)

- Antigonus appears publicly to worship in fine clothes and armed guards, which proves to his brother Aristobulus I that he means to seize power (*Jewish War* 1.3.2)
- a group of pilgrims for the feast get in a fight with Samaritans (*Antiquities* 2.12.3)
- the hated Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus makes sacrifices at the Feast of Tabernacles, and all the people pelted him with the citrons they were carrying for the festival (*Antiquities* 13.13.5)
- Jesus son of Ananus prophesies against Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, four years before the Romans destroy the Temple (*Jewish War* 6.5.3)

Rabbinic Judaism

How to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles is the subject of an entire Talmudic tractate, the *Sukkah*, and includes:

- how (and how not) to build a booth (סֻכָּה, *sukkah*)
- how one should live and eat in it
- how the four species (palm branch, myrtle, willow, and etrog/citron) were used in the service
- how the feast was celebrated in the temple (including the willow procession and the water libation)

The symbolism of the booth may have been found in the shade, which would remind Israel of God's presence and protection while the people wandered the desert (Rubenstein, "Symbolism [1994]," 377–82). Or, the frail and temporary nature of the booth may have reminded Israel in its time of joy that the pleasures of this life are fleeting and that it should look to the life to come (Rubenstein, "Symbolism [1996]," 387, 395–96).

Scholarly Discussion

The most comprehensive study of the Feast of Tabernacles focuses on how it was understood in early Judaism (Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot*). The major opinions about the origin and nature of the Feast of Tabernacles include:

- The feast began as a spontaneous fall harvest festival that was eventually centralized and fixed to the calendar and, finally, given the historical significance of leaving exodus (Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 85–86; 94–96; 101; 104).
- It was originally an agricultural festival like that celebrated by the Canaanites (Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, 61–64).
- It was a New Year celebration like the Babylonians celebrated and not an agricultural festival (Volz, *Das Neujahrsfest Jahwes*, 13).
- It was like the Babylonian new year, but it celebrated the enthronement of the Lord (Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:119, 136).
- The Feast of Tabernacles was a covenant renewal celebration (see the summary of many form critics in Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 23–24).
- Modern studies pack more theological significance into the festival than it rightly contained; the festival is referred to often in ancient literature since it was the example of temple

worship par excellence, and not because of its inherent theological meaning (Ulfgard, *Story of Sukkot*, 12–13).

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TABERNACLES, FEAST OF.

Heb. *ḥaḡ hassukkôt*, ‘festival of booths’ (Lv. 23:34; Dt. 16:13), or *ḥaḡ hā’āsîp*, ‘festival of ingathering’ (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). This was one of the three great pilgrimage-festivals of the Jewish year; it was kept for 7 days from the 15th to the 22nd day of the 7th month. It came at the end of the year when the labours of the field were gathered in, and was one of the three annual festivals at which every male was required to appear (Ex. 23:14–17; 34:23; Dt. 16:16). It was a time of rejoicing (Dt. 16:14). The designation ‘feast of booths (tabernacles)’ comes from the requirement for everyone born an Israelite to live in booths made of boughs of trees and branches of palm trees for the 7 days of the feast (Lv. 23:42). Sacrifices were offered on the 7 days, beginning with thirteen bullocks and other animals on the 1st day and diminishing by one bullock each day until on the 7th seven bullocks were offered. On the 8th day there was a solemn assembly when one bullock, one ram and seven lambs were offered (Nu. 29:36). This is the last day, ‘that great day of the feast’, probably alluded to in Jn. 7:37. As a feast, divinely instituted, it was never forgotten. It was observed in the time of Solomon (2 Ch. 8:13), Hezekiah (2 Ch. 31:3; cf. Dt. 16:16), and after the Exile (Ezr. 3:4; Zc. 14:16, 18–19). The ceremony of water-pouring, associated with this festival in post-exilic times and reflected in Jesus’ proclamation in Jn. 7:37f.,

¹ Austin, B. M. (2016). [Booths, Feast of](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

is not prescribed in the Pentateuch. Its recognition of rain as a gift from God, necessary to produce fruitful harvests, is implied in Zc. 14:17 (*cf.* 1 Sa. 7:6).

This feast had a historical reference to the Exodus from Egypt and reminded the Jews of their wandering and dwelling in booths in the wilderness (Lv. 23:43). However, this is not evidence of the conversion of the agricultural festival to a historical one. Rather it points to the truth that Israel's life rested upon redemption which in its ultimate meaning is the forgiveness of sin.

This fact separates this feast from the harvest festivals of the neighbouring nations whose roots lay in the mythological activity of the gods.

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Tabernacles, Festival of

(or Booths, Ingathering, Heb. Sukkoth), along with Passover and the Festival of Weeks, one of three major pilgrimage festivals of Judaism. Celebrated for eight days (from the 15th of Tishri [late September or early October]), it was Israel's joyous, thanksgiving, autumnal harvest festival for the ingathering from the threshing floor and the winepress (Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Deut. 16:13–15). Its main distinctive ritual is the requirement to 'dwell in booths' in commemoration of God's protection of Israel during the wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:39–43; Neh. 8:13–18). The preeminent annual festival, called 'the feast of God' (Lev. 23:39; Judg. 21:19) or 'the feast' (1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; Isa. 30:29; Ezek. 45:23, 25; Neh. 8:14; 2 Chron. 5:3; 7:8; John 7:10; *cf.* John 7:2), it was the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8), the public reading of the Torah (every seven years, Deut. 31:10–11), and the future ingathering of all nations to Jerusalem to worship God (Zech. 14:16). **See also** Feasts, Festivals, and Fasts; Time. J.U.³

TABERNACLES, FEAST OF—the third of the great annual festivals of the Jews (Lev. 23:33–43). It is also called the "feast of ingathering" (Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:13). It was celebrated immediately after the harvest, in the month Tisri, and the celebration lasted for eight days (Lev. 23:33–43). During that period the people left their homes and lived in booths formed of the branches of trees. The sacrifices offered at this time are mentioned in Num. 29:13–38. It was at the time of this feast that Solomon's temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8:2). Mention is made of it after the return from the Captivity. This feast was designed (1) to be a memorial of the wilderness wanderings, when the people dwelt in booths (Lev. 23:43), and (2) to be a harvest thanksgiving (Neh. 8:9–18). The Jews, at a later time, introduced two appendages to the original festival, viz., (1) that of drawing water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring it upon the altar (John 7:2, 37), as a memorial of the water from the rock in Horeb; and (2) of lighting the lamps at night, a memorial of the pillar of fire by night during their wanderings.

² Freeman, D. (1996). [Tabernacles, Feast Of](#). In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 1148). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In [Harper's Bible dictionary](#) (1st ed., p. 1014). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

“The feast of Tabernacles, the harvest festival of the Jewish Church, was the most popular and important festival after the Captivity. At Jerusalem it was a gala day. It was to the autumn pilgrims, who arrived on the 14th (of the month Tisri, the feast beginning on the 15th) day, like entrance into a silvan city. Roofs and courtyards, streets and squares, roads and gardens, were green with boughs of citron and myrtle, palm and willow. The booths recalled the pilgrimage through the wilderness. The ingathering of fruits prophesied of the spiritual harvest.”, Valling’s Jesus Christ, p. 133.⁴

Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the period of the wilderness wanderings directly following the exodus from Egypt. It lasted seven days, beginning on the 15th of Tishri. It is also called the Feast of Ingathering, since it gathered the people together after the harvesting season and was the final pilgrim feast of Israel.

The feast opened and closed with convocations of the people. There were daily sacrifices. The final day of the feast may have had the same rules against working as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (MacRae, “Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” 258). The remembrance of the wilderness wandering was considered an occasion of joy, connected to God’s saving work on Israel’s behalf. A large number of sacrifices were offered during the week’s celebration (Num 29:12–38).⁵

⁴ Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Easton’s Bible dictionary](#). New York: Harper & Brothers.

⁵ Swann, J. T. (2016). [Feasts and Festivals of Israel](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.