

CANADIAN *Communique*

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A NOTE FROM STEVE

All holidays are not necessarily holy days. In Canada, for example, we celebrate Family Day in February, Canada Day in July, and Labour Day in September. These days are significant and important, but they are not holy days.

Scripture describes holy days as “feasts of the LORD” in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 23:4). Leviticus is the book in your Bible where the pages are probably still stuck together; neither Jews nor Christians pay much attention to it. But the Lord describes important holidays in Leviticus. He calls those holidays and feasts “holy convocations” (v. 4), and He expected His people to “proclaim [the feasts] at their appointed times.”

Since God appointed these feasts for holy purposes, they must be significant. He gave them specifically to the Jewish people, but their importance for

believers should not be overlooked. Leviticus 23 lists seven feasts of the Lord. Each one is also mentioned in other parts of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus celebrated the feasts while He lived on Earth. He died as the Passover Lamb and rose as the Firstfruits.

Each feast has a theme, and when understood progressively, they describe God’s redemptive plan for both Jews and Gentiles. The Feast of Passover points to redemption; the Feast of Unleavened Bread—sanctification; the Feast of Firstfruits—resurrection; the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)—the mystery of the church (both Jews and Gentiles); the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)—the regathering; the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)—national salvation; and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)—the



fulfilled Kingdom.

God set these appointed feasts on an agricultural time clock. Four occur during spring, around the harvest time of barley and wheat, and three occur during fall, in the month of Tishri. This issue of the *Canadian Communiqué* focuses on the fall feasts of Israel.

My four colleagues have vast experience in teaching about these special feast days, so I asked each of them to write about one of the fall feasts. John McKim describes Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which begins on the evening of October 2 and ushers in the year 5777. John Plantz teaches about Yom Kippur, which follows 10 days later.

Larry Mitchell provides insight into Sukkot, which begins five days after Yom Kippur and lasts seven days. Last, Richard Tovia explains the significance of Simchat Torah, the day that follows Sukkot and celebrates the Torah, God's Word.

Steve Herzig is the director of FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



The Feast of Trumpets

Rosh Hashanah

Leviticus 23:23-25



The Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah, is the first of the three fall feasts mentioned in Leviticus. It marks the Jewish civil New Year and tells of our Lord's Second Coming.

Rosh Hashanah means "head of the year." But Scripture never refers to the feast by that name. It became known as Rosh Hashanah in the second century AD. Over time, the celebration of the New Year began to overshadow the holiday's scriptural observance.

The Month. Tishri, the seventh month, was holy according to Mosaic Law. Significantly, Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first day of this Sabbath month—the same month in which Israel's autumn holidays occur. The ancient Israelites celebrated the new moon of the seventh month by long blasts on the trumpet, signifying the month's solemnity and uniqueness.

The Memorial. Perhaps God instructed the Israelites to blow trumpets as a memorial at this feast to remind them of historical events that involved trumpets. Exam-

ples include the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, Israel's victories in war, and the tumbling of the walls of Jericho.

Maybe it was also to remind them of the binding of Isaac, where Abraham sacrificed a ram instead of Isaac after he found the ram stuck in a thicket by its horns. According to Jewish tradition, the left horn of this ram was blown at Sinai, and the right horn will herald the coming of the Messiah.

God instituted the holiday as a "day of blowing," but after the Diaspora, Jewish people began to celebrate the holiday for two days, since the precise timing of the new moon could not be easily determined.

Modern Observance. Today, the observance of Rosh Hashanah bears little resemblance to the biblical Feast of Trumpets. The Jewish people believe that on Rosh Hashanah, God reviews three books: one for the righteous, one for the wicked, and one for the in-between. God then metes out judgment on Yom Kippur.

The week before Rosh

Hashanah, Jewish people pray the *Selichot*, communal prayers asking God for forgiveness. Then they perform the ritual of *Tashlich*, where they "cast off" their sins in a body of water. They blast the shofar 100 times each day, both for a wake-up call and to confuse Satan into believing the Messiah has already come. The Jewish people celebrate by eating holiday foods such as apples dipped in honey, symbolizing the desire for sweetness in the new year.

The Message. The message of the Feast of Trumpets is a call by God to regather His people for that future day. That day, which no one knows but the Father, is symbolized by Yom Kippur.

At Christ's post-Tribulation appearing, He will regather Israel with the sound of a trumpet, and Israel will be restored permanently to the Land (Isa. 27:12–13; Amos 9:14–15; Mt. 24:29–31).

John McKim is the Saint John, New Brunswick, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.





YOM KIPPUR

Leviticus 23:29-32

Several years ago, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) invited me to speak at a fundraiser for their tree-planting program, with which I have been involved for many years. The fundraiser occurred during the time of Yom Kippur, so someone suggested I speak on the topic.

I explained from the Hebrew Scriptures how the Jewish feasts point to the Messiah, and how Jesus, the Yom Kippur sacrifice, “takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). When I had finished speaking, the JNF representative told me, “I have never heard this before.”

Her daughter returned to school the next day at Gray Academy (located at the Asper Jewish Community Campus in Winnipeg) and told her teacher and fellow students that Jesus was Jewish and that He was the Yom Kippur sacrifice. I hope and pray they search the Scriptures for themselves to see that these things are so!

The Jewish people observe Yom

Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, annually on the 10th day of Tishri. When Aaron, the high priest, prepared for this day, he arrayed himself with a tunic of fine linen (Ex. 39:27), which was symbolic of blameless righteousness (Rev. 19:7–8). He entered the Holy of Holies three times on this day. First, he entered to make a cloud of smoke with incense to hide the mercy seat from open vision. Second, he entered with the blood of a bullock to atone for his and the priesthood’s sins. Third, he entered to sacrifice a goat on the altar for the sins of the people and to sprinkle its blood on the mercy seat. Also on that day, he placed his hands on the head of a scapegoat—symbolically transferring the Jewish people’s sins to it—then sent the goat into the wilderness.

The high priest’s actions foreshadowed the actions of the Messiah who would act as our High Priest, sacrificing Himself for our sins. Just as the high priest alone could enter the Holy of



Holies and offer atonement (Lev. 16:17), the Messiah alone could bring about our atonement. But unlike Aaron, who had to offer a yearly sacrifice, Jesus sacrificed Himself once and for all for the sins of mankind. Now we have direct access to God through the blood of the Messiah.

After the Temple's destruction in 70 AD, a high priest could no longer offer

Yom Kippur sacrifices. So today, Jewish people observe the Day of Atonement by fasting, praying, and imploring God to "Seal us in the Book of Life for good."

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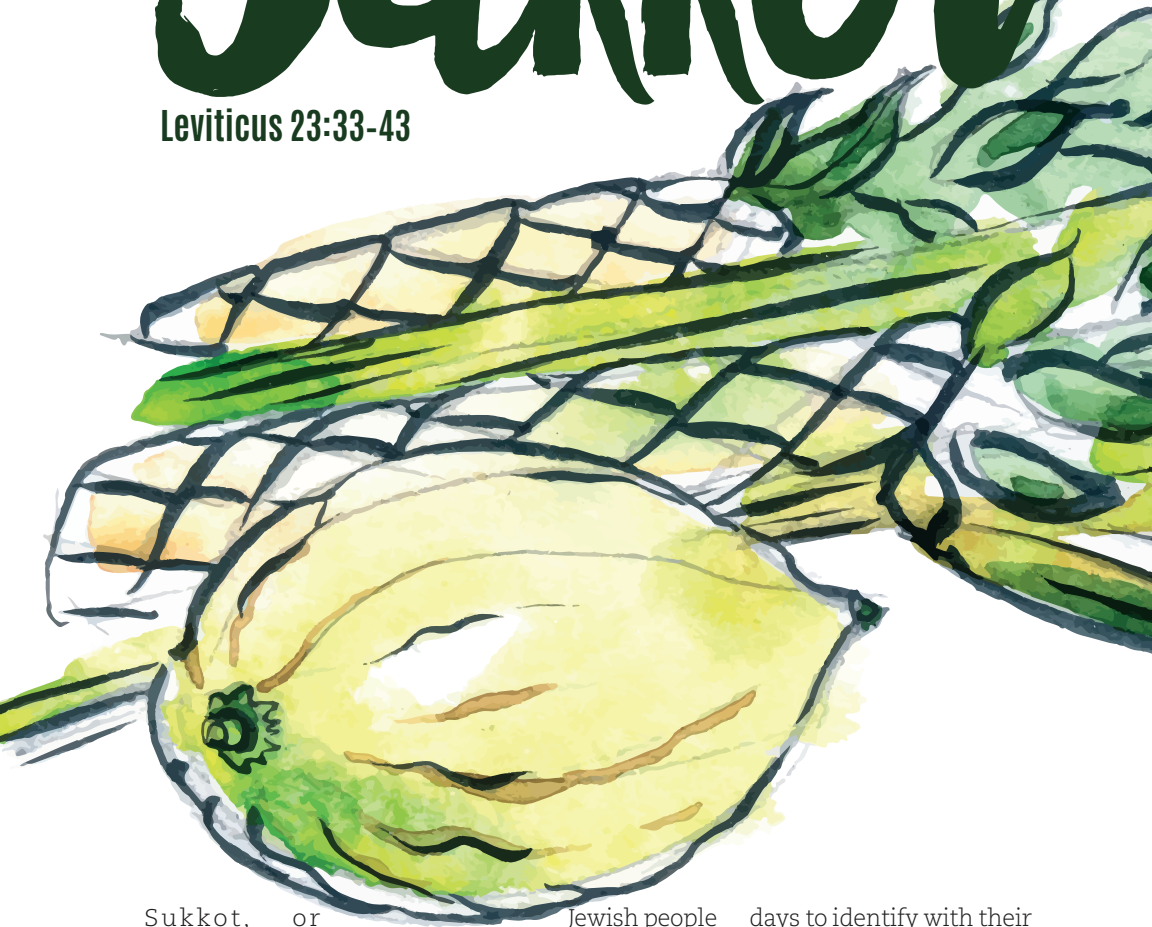
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Sukkot

Leviticus 23:33-43



Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles, begins this year on October 16 at sundown, five days after Yom Kippur, and commemorates God's provision and protection of the

Jewish people during their 40-year trek through the wilderness.

Modern Observance. During Sukkot, Jewish people around the world camp out in temporary booths (*sukkahs*) for seven

days to identify with their forefathers and remember God's provision (Lev. 23:42). They celebrate God's dwelling (tabernacling) with His people.

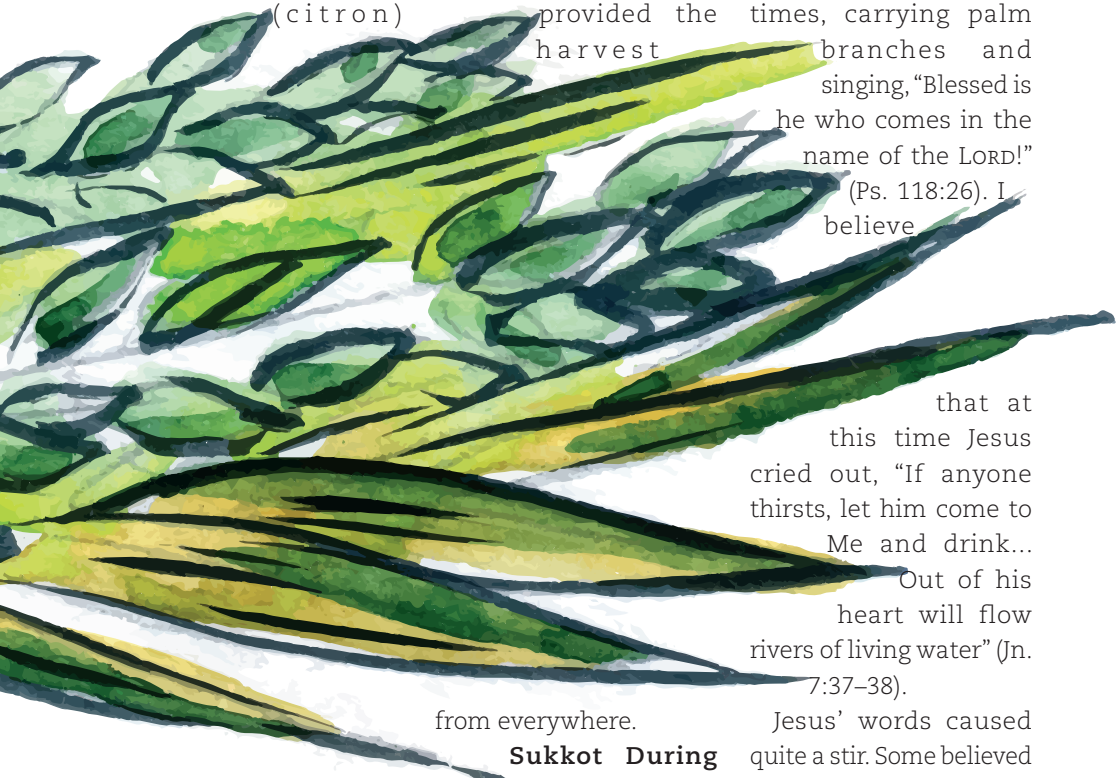
Sukkot also celebrates the final harvest of the

year, so Jewish people thank God for sending the rain that watered the crops. Each person waves a *lulav* (bundle of palm branches) and an *etrog* (citron)

means “please save.” On the seventh day, they would walk around it seven times. They walked in all directions to demonstrate that God provided the harvest

(Yeshua).”

When the high priest poured out the water libation at the brazen altar, other priests marched around the altar seven times, carrying palm branches and singing, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Ps. 118:26). I believe



that at this time Jesus cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink... Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:37–38).

from everywhere.

Sukkot During Jesus’ Ministry.

The events of John 7 took place during the Feast of Tabernacles. On the last day of the feast, the high priest gathered a pitcher of water from the Pool of Siloam, which was believed to contain living water. The people shouted Isaiah 12:3: “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation

Jesus’ words caused quite a stir. Some believed Him, and others, like the religious leaders, tried to get Him arrested. Like that day during Sukkot, Jesus’ words continue to stir people today—some to reject Him, and others to trust Him.

during synagogue services.

Historical Observance.

Historically, the Jewish people stayed in booths during Sukkot as they do today during the holiday. But in addition, the Jewish people would walk around the Temple altar once a day for six days and offer a series of prayers, each ending with the *Hoshanah*, which

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SIMCHAT TORAH

*All the world is dancing, singing,
On this joyous holiday.
Hearts are merry, voices ringing,
See how the Torah leads the way.
On! On! March along!
All our voices join in song.
Hear the melody, lively, gay;
This is Simchat Torah day.¹*



Psalm 119:77 says, “Your law is my delight.” Such is the reason for the holiday of Simchat Torah. *Simchat Torah* means “rejoicing in the Torah [Law].” Simchat is derived from the Hebrew word *Simcha*, which means “joy.”

It begins the day after Sukkot ends, when the final section of the annual Torah reading concludes. The congregation finishes reading the last section of Deuteronomy and then begins the cycle again with Genesis 1. This annual reading cycle symbolizes the eternal nature of God’s Word.

This year, Simchat Torah begins at sundown on October 23 in Israel. Outside Israel, the observance always begins a day later. The Jewish people hold synagogue services that evening and then again the next morning.

During the service, Jewish men—holding the Torah scroll—dance around the synagogue seven times, which they call making “seven circuits.” They sing and celebrate until someone places the Torah scroll back in the ark, the ornamental cabinet that houses the Torah scroll.

Observance of Simchat Torah began late in the first century AD and developed throughout succeeding centuries.

Around the 17th century, it became what we see today. This celebration concludes the cycle of feasts for the year.

What can we learn from the celebration of Simchat Torah? Jesus, the Living Word, became flesh (Jn. 1:14). He did not come to abolish the Torah, but to fulfill it (Mt. 5:17–20). Jesus placed God’s law in our hearts, as the prophet Jeremiah prophesied He would do many years before the time of Christ (Jer. 31: 31–34).

Jesus is the central theme throughout God’s Word. Through His keeping of the Law and sacrificial death on our behalf, He justified all who place their faith in Him. This truth should fill our hearts with joy and make us want to dance, as we rejoice in the Living Torah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTE

- 1 “Yom Tov Lanu” from Harry Coopersmith, comp. and ed., *The New Jewish Song Book* (New York, NY: Behrman House, Inc., 1965), 15–16.

Richard Toviah is the Winnipeg, Manitoba, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



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