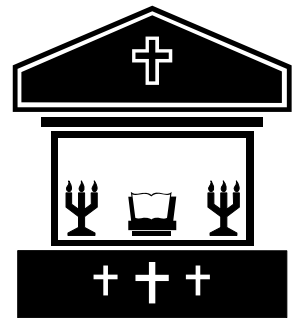


OBSERVE The FEASTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN YOUR OWN HOME

By **Jerry Schmoyer** Copyright © 1996
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THE SABBATH

THE LAST SUPPER/PASSOVER

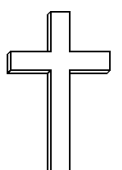
SFIRAT HAOMER (First Fruits)

SHAVUOTH (Pentecost)

ROSH HASHANAN (New Year)

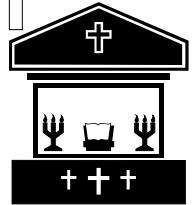
***YOM KIPPUR (Day of
Atonement)***

SUKKOTH (Tabernacles)



OBSERVE The FEASTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN YOUR OWN HOME

By Jerry Schmoyer



Our Last Supper/Passover meal last April was so well received I thought I'd look into some other Jewish feasts we could study and celebrate. Instead of coming together to do them as a group I'll give you the information in this newsletter, one each issue. You can study and observe them in your own home, with some other home school families or your support group, with a Sunday School class or your whole church. Please let me know if you do any of these. I'd really like to know how it went and hear your suggestions to improve it. Write me at: Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State St., Doylestown, Pa. 18901. God bless and enjoy!

THE SABBATH

THE SABBATH IN GOD'S PLAN The Sabbath was the number one Jewish holy day. The name comes from the word *Shabbat*, meaning "rest." The Jews were told to rest from work on the seventh day as God did in creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12). The Sabbath observance was not meant to be the burden the Jews made it. It was to be a precious gift to bless them (Mk. 2:27). The Pharisees misinterpreted what it meant to 'rest' so badly that they opposed Jesus Himself when He tried to show them the true purpose of it (Mt. 12:7, 12). God's basic truth in the Sabbath is that man needs a regular time of rest each week. This time is to be filled with special family joy and attention to God.

THE SABBATH TODAY We are no longer under the law, and therefore have no obligation to observe the Sabbath as the Jews did. In fact, the day we do celebrate is the first day of the week (Sunday) signifying new beginnings -- the day Jesus came back to life. Still, it can be very informative and educational to take a week-end some time and, alone or with another family, plan a Sabbath celebration similar to what the Jews did (and many still do) each weekend. This is a nice way to begin a vacation or to use during a vacation, too. Following are some suggestions:

SABBATH FRIDAY You will need 2 white candles in holders (with matches), grape juice, a bowl of water and a towel, two rolls/loaves of bread or matzo, and a napkin. Clean your home, kitchen, set things up, and get dressed like you are having company. That will get your children's attention! Mothers, put everyone to work helping, don't do it all yourself. Remember, this is a FAMILY celebration! For a centerpiece on your table use something from nature (flowers, fall leaves, etc). Approach the event as a time of peace, coming into God's presence. Your table is like an altar, a place where you meet with God (Dt. 14:26b).

Just before sunset everyone gathers at the table. God established days to go from sunset to sunset in Bible times, so the Sabbath was from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Mother begins with the evening prayer: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of our universe, who is the Author of peace. you who made the Sabbath holy, You who called upon us to honor this Sabbath, enter our home this night. Almighty God, grant us and all our loved ones rest on this Sabbath day. May the light of the candles drive out from among us the spirit of anger and the spirit of fear. Send Your blessing that we may walk in the ways of Your Word and Your light. Enter our hearts this night. Heavenly Father, we rejoice in Your creation! It is from you we receive every good and perfect gift. Giver of life and love, grant us Your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Then mother lights the candles. The woman does this because the first woman, Eve, extinguished the light. Also the light of the world, the Messiah, was to be the seed of the woman. The first candle stands for CREATION, when God brought light out of darkness. The second is REDEMPTION and speaks of Jesus as the light of the world. Then the mother silently prays that each child may grow up with hearts open to understand and appreciate God's Word.



Then the father stands and goes to each child one at a time. He places his hands on the child and prays for their current needs and future service for God. Next he compliments his wife by reading Proverbs 31:10, 27-30 to her.

Next all softly and prayerfully sing a familiar chorus such as "This Is The Day, " "Jesus Loves Me," etc. Then the father prays for the grape juice: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine." Each one drinks some juice (you can use one cup for all or each can have his own juice). Grape juice stands for life, representing the life of the grape. To us it also pictures Jesus' blood shed to give us eternal life. Washing hands with the bowl and towel is done the same way, with the father saying: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments and instructed us concerning the washing of hands." This is a way of dedicating our hands to God's service. Now each one, in turn, beginning with the father, blesses the bread (the meal to come): "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

Now the meal is eaten -- leisurely and in peace. You can eat a family favorite, or make something Jewish (such as we had at the Last Supper meal, or get recipes from the library, a Jewish friend, or me). Do try to make your own bread, especially matzo if possible. To the Jews it was the main staple of life, like manna, and reminds us that Jesus is the bread of life. It was present in the tabernacle on the Table of Showbread. When done the Jews always closed in prayer before leaving (Dt. 8:10), a practice that would be nice to use regularly! The father prays "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who provides the fruit of the earth for our use. We bless you for fulfilling continually Your promise that while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not fail. Teach us to remember that it is not by bread alone that we live. Grant us ever more to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord. O God, our Heavenly Father, look in favor upon the homes of Your people. Defend them against evil and supply all their needs according to the riches of Your wonderful grace. Make them sanctuaries of peace, love, and joy. Help us to follow You every step of our daily lives. May we always abide under the safe shadow of Your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Enjoy the rest of the evening together. Rest (Lk. 23:56) by doing something enjoyable as a family: sit and talk, play games, walk, read, visit with friends, etc. The Lord will bless this evening in a special way (Psalm 29:11).

SABBATH SATURDAY Start the day remembering it is the Lord's day and you are in God's presence (Psalm 32:11; I Cor. 10:31). God's Word should be the focus for this day. Read it, talk about it, think on it, sing it. This day should be free from work and filled with rest and doing enjoyable family activities. Keep food preparation to a minimum. Eat foods you have previously prepared for this day or eat light meals of fruit and bread. Include Bible verses, passages and stories in all you do. Read a passage and talk about it. Eat your normal meals, but include Bible reading as well as prayer before and after each meal.

As sundown approaches have the whole family go outside and look for the first three stars, signifying the end of the Sabbath. Help the younger children find them, too. Come inside for the ceremony closing the Sabbath. It is called Havdalah, which means separation, and concludes the Sabbath while introducing the new week. You will need two white candles, some fragrant spice (whole cloves are great), cup of grape juice and a bowl and a Bible. One of the children light the candles used last night. Another child holds the spice. Read together from the Bible a passage such as John 1:1-17; Luke 23:54-56; 24:1-8. The grape juice glass is filled to overflowing (a sign of the fullness and completion of the week (place the glass in a bowl to catch the overflow). As the juice overflows, Sabbath departs. With head bowed, Father leads the family in prayer, a benediction filled with thanksgiving to God. The candles are extinguished by dipping the flames in the spilled juice. The spice box is passed from person to person, signifying the fragrance of life which has just been experienced in the Sabbath. The intention is that this last fragrance will carry you through the pressures of the week until you are able, once again, to celebrate Sabbath. Repeat (or read) together the 23rd Psalm.

For more detailed information, recipes, table decorations, art & craft objects to make, etc., see *"God's Appointed Times,"* by Barney Kasdan (Lederer Publications) or *"Celebrate the Feasts,"* by Martha Zimmerman (Bethany House Publishers). Both are excellent resources and available in paperback.

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JESUS' LAST SUPPER

A Reenactment of the Last Supper/Passover Jesus Had Before His Crucifixion

1. PREPARATION

House totally cleaned, NO food with leaven allowed to remain anywhere

Special set of dishes and cooking pans used only for Passover gotten out

First-born son fasted whole day before Passover meal

Rich would invite poor neighbors to share the meal, remembering they all were poor in Egypt

"Bedikath Chametz" - Previous evening the head of the family would search for and collect any leaven left in the house (Ex 12:19-20). Then they would burn it, after searching by candlelight (Zech 1:12).

-Reminds them of when God will search Jerusalem with a Candle (Zech 1:12)

-Pictures SIN being removed, as leaven is a picture of sin (I Cor. 5:6-9; 16:7-8; Gal. 5:9)

-Teaches us to have no sin when partaking of Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28)

BEFORE the search:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments and have told us to remove the leaven."

AFTER the search:

"Whatever leaven remains in my possession which I cannot see, behold, it is null and accounted as the dust of the earth."

2. TABLE ARRANGEMENT

Everyone wore their best garments (why Jesus had his best seamless robe on when crucified).

Reclined to eat (in Egypt were dressed with sandals and staff ready to go). This showed they were at peace & rest, FREE from Egypt.

Slaves stood to eat, but the Jews rested on left elbow. When tired they sat up for awhile.

Table was LOW with rugs or mats or cushions on 3 sides to recline on. Purpose of the table was so things wouldn't spill and to keep away from bugs and dirt on floor.

Participants were Jesus and the 12 disciples. The owner of the home was not present (perhaps he or his servant served). None of the women were present, either. This was man/leadership business this night.

3. ON THE TABLE

They did not use dishes to eat back then, there was only a serving dish when the time came to eat. Usually one large dish was brought out at a time.

They had no knives, forks, spoons (a recent invention used by Western civilization). Food was eaten by the fingers, or a piece of bread used as a spoon/scoop.

Eating stood for fellowship, and those who shared the same bowl established a close bond of friendship forever, even on to their children.

All shared common drinking glass/cup.

Pitcher of grape juice was put on the table. Jews didn't use fermented grape juice at Passover. Used boiled grape juice and mixed it so it was 2/3 water, wine/grape juice = picture of JOY, symbol of blood of grape.

Jews in wilderness had no door posts, so they substituted drinking grape juice for putting blood of lamb on the door posts. Juice poured stood for the blood shed, and juice drunk stood for the blood applied.

Four times cups filled and juice drunk, from 4 "I wills" in Ex. 6:6-7:

CUP OF SANCTIFICATION (start of service)

"I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians"
CUP OF JUDGMENT (before meal)
"I will rid you out of their bondage."
CUP OF REDEMPTION (after meal)
"I will redeem you with an outstretched arm."
CUP OF PRAISE (end of service)
"I will take you to me for a people."

4. CANDLES LIT ("Brechat Haner")

By lady of the house, because from the seed of woman the Messiah will come to bring light
(Gen. 3:14-15; Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:22-23; 4:16)

As she lights the candles she says:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by the commandments and has commanded us to kindle the Festival-light.

"Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us in life, and has preserved us, and has enabled us to reach this season."

5. CUP #1 - SANCTIFICATION (Kiddush)

This first cup sanctifies the meal, sets it apart from common meals.

The Kiddush is said before the cup is drunk.

"Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

"Blessed Are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, Who chose us out of all the people and selected us over all of the nations, and made us holy through His commandments., Lovingly, O Lord our God, You have given us Sabbath days for rest and festival days for joy, this Sabbath day and this feast of Passover, anniversary of our freedom, honoring our departure from Egypt; for you have chosen us and made us holier than other peoples and caused us to inherit the Sabbath and Your holy festivals. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who made holy the Sabbath, the people of Israel and the festivals."

Cup 1 drunk while reclining on left elbow.

Luke 22:14-16 spoken by Christ at this time.



6. HAND WASHING #1 (Urchatz)

Host washed own hands and then took bowl of water and towel around to all to symbolically act out their purification, too.

At this point Jesus washed the disciples feet FOR them. (Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-17)

7. SEDER PLATE BROUGHT OUT

Contained 2 bitter herbs (lettuce and salt water; and horseradish) as well as matzo.

8. BITTER HERBS (Karpas)

Bitter Herbs (lettuce or parsley) = bitterness of slavery in Egypt

Sweet to the taste at first, then becomes bitter = Egypt at first gave the Jews the best part of the land, then embittered them

Lettuce or parsley = picture of hyssop used to smear blood on doorposts

Saltwater = tears shed in Egypt

salty water of Red Sea (miraculous passage through it)

Greens dipped by all

Blessing given by head of the meal:

"Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruits of the earth."

Greens eaten by all

9. MAIN COURSE BROUGHT OUT

LAMB: picture of the lamb's blood shed to protect them in Egypt (today have an old shankbone on the table as a reminder because they can't sacrifice any animals without a temple)
UNLEAVENED BREAD: since they had to leave Egypt quickly there was no time for it to rise ; this is a picture of no sin in life
CHAROSETH: picture of the clay used to make bricks

10. MIDDLE MATZO BROKEN (Yachutz)

Matzo = unleavened bread, flat and round, picture of sinless Christ pierced in shape of cross
Three matzos (on Sabbath had 2 for the double manna on Sabbath, on Passover had one more than that!) Picture of the Trinity

Prayer given:

"This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All that are hungry come and eat. All that are in need, come and celebrate the Passover with us."

Middle Matzo taken = picture of Christ leaving God the Father and God the Spirit in heaven and coming to earth (Incarnation)

Middle Matzo broken = Christ's body broken for sin

1st Half back between other 2 matzos = death Jesus' soul/spirit went to heaven

2nd Half: (Afikomen = Greek "One Who Has Arrived") back into napkin, wrapped up and hidden until cup 3 = picture of Jesus' body wrapped in linen and buried until day 3.

11. STORY OF THE EXODUS (Maggid)

Exodus 12:1-13 read or told, showing the necessity of shedding innocent blood, the innocent for the guilty. In Exodus it is a picture of physical deliverance, but it foreshadows the spiritual deliverance Christ will provide and shows that in picture form.

12. THE FOUR QUESTIONS

By the youngest child (disciple John at the Lord's Last Supper)

Child: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

Leader solemnly replies: "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord redeemed us with a mighty hand. If the Holy and Blessed One had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our grandchildren, too, would be Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. This is why, even though we might be wise and learned and experienced, though we might know the Torah well, it is our duty to tell the story of the outgoing from Egypt; and the more one tells of the outgoing from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is."

The youngest child continues to ask:

1. "On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we only eat matzo which is unleavened bread?"
2. "On all other nights we eat vegetables and herbs of all kinds; why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?"
3. "On all other nights we never think of dipping herbs in water or in anything else; why on this night do we dip the lettuce in salt water and the bitter herbs in charoseth?"
4. "On all other nights we eat either sitting upright or reclining, why on this night do we all recline?"

The leader replies: "I am glad you asked these questions. This night is different from all other nights because on this night we celebrate the going forth of the Jewish people from slavery into freedom. Why do we eat only matzo tonight? When Pharaoh let our forefathers go from Egypt they were forced to flee in great haste. They had no time to

bake their bread and could not wait for the yeast to rise. The sun which beat down on the dough as they carried it along naked it into unleavened bread called matzo

Why do we eat bitter herbs tonight? Because our forefathers were slaves in Egypt and their lives were made very bitter.

Why do we dip the herbs twice tonight? We dip lettuce in salt water because it reminds us of the green of springtime. We dip the herbs in sweet charoseth to remind us that our forefathers were able to withstand bitter slavery, because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.

Why do we recline at table? Because reclining was a sign of a free man long ago, and since our forefathers were freed on this night, we recline at the table.

13. CUP #2 - JUDGMENT

Leader pours 10 drops of juice into a container ("cup of iniquity") For the 10 plagues: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Swarms, Cattle diseased, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Death of Firstborn.



When the Egyptians filled up their cup of iniquity the judgment of God fell on them and drowned them in the Red Sea, and this is the cup of Judgments.

DAYENU ("We would Have Been Satisfied")

"If He had merely rescued us from Egypt, but had not punished the Egyptians - DAYENU

"If He had merely punished the Egyptians, but had not destroyed their gods - DAYENU

"If He had merely destroyed their gods, but had not slain their first-born -DAYENU

"If He had merely slain their first-born, but had not given us their property -DAYENU

"If He had merely given us their property but had not brought us through on dry ground - DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us through on dry ground, but had not drowned our oppressors -DAYENU

"If He had merely drowned our oppressors, but had not supplied us in the desert for forty years - DAYENU

"If He had merely supplied us in the desert for forty years, but had not fed us with manna - DAYENU

"If He had merely fed us with manna, but had not given us the Sabbath - DAYENU

"If He had merely given us the Sabbath, but had not brought us to Mount Sinai - DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us to Mount Sinai, but had not given us the Torah - DAYENU

"If He had merely given us the Torah, but had not brought us to the land of Israel - DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us to the land of Israel, but had not built us the Temple - DAYENU.

The leader picks up and blessed the cup.

"Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the Universe, creator of the fruit of the vine!"

All drink the cup and pass it around

14. HALLEL (PSALM 113-114) (Hallel)

"Hallel" is the name given to psalms of praise starting with "Hallelujah" (which means "Praise God.")

Here Psalm 113 and 114 are recited responsively.

Then the cups are again refilled.

15. HAND WASHING #2 (Rachatz)

Hands are now washed to be clean to eat the meal

This blessing is given by the leader"

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who made us holy by His commandments and commanded us concerning the washing of hands."

16. MATZO IS EATEN (Matzo)

The matzo unity (the 3 standing for the Trinity) is brought out.

The blessing is said:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

Leader breaks olive-size pieces off the middle (and, if necessary, the upper one too), and gives a piece to everyone.

Another blessing is given:

"Blessed Are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of unleavened bread."

All eat their matzo together.

17. BITTER HERBS (HORSERADISH) (Maror)

Bottom matzo is broken into olive-size pieces and dipped into bitter herb

Horseradish = bitterness of Egyptian bondage, persecution, suffering

Blessing said by leader:

"Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of bitter herbs."

Everyone eats the herbs together.

18. CHAROSETH (Korekh)

Leader takes 2 olive-size pieces of matzo from the bottom and picks up charoseth between them, like a sandwich.

Charoseth: reddish-brown mixture of chopped apples, nuts, spices, etc. representing the clay from which the slaves made their bricks.

Sweet taste reminds them of servitude as prelude to sweetness of redemption.

In Jesus' day also mixed in figs, nuts, dates, pomegranates, almonds, and cinnamon bark or tube (to remind them of the straw they mixed with the clay bricks).

Matzo given out by leader, then dish of charoseth passed around.

Jesus made a special gesture of honor and love to Judas for He dipped and handed this to him (called the "sop"). This is where the account of Judas's betrayal and Peter's denials being predicted fit in (Mt. 26:15-21; 31-35; Mk. 14:18-21, 17-31; Lk. 22:21-23,31-38; Jn. 13:18-38)

19. MEAL IS EATEN (Shulchan Orech)

Full course gourmet meal served; appetizer, soup, chicken/turkey/kid/lamb, etc. If lamb, it is partly boiled and partly roasted so it doesn't resemble the sacrificed lamb as they can no longer sacrifice. What they are thus eating, in effect, is the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for since AD 70 it stopped being the Passover. Today they use an egg (roasted) which they cut and dipped in salt water to lament the fact they have no place to offer sacrifices.

During the meal Jesus comforted the disciples (John 14:1-31a).

After the meal the dishes were taken off the table.

20. AFIKOMEN EATEN (Tzaphun)

This is the final food of the Passover meal, so this will be the last taste left in the mouth (very significant to the Jews).

The hidden (buried) Afikomen (1/2 of the middle of the 3 matzos) is found and ransomed (redeemed) - (price paid to whoever finds it, like Jesus ransomed us with His blood.

Finding and unwrapping the Afikomen is a picture of Jesus resurrected (true Bread of Life, Manna of God)

With this Jesus instituted the bread of the Lord's Supper: "This is my body."

21. CUP # 3 - REDEMPTION (Boraych)

The cup is filled again.

Number 3 stands for deity (3 days in the grave until resurrected, like Afikomen found)



Blessing is given: "Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Who created the fruit of the vine."

This is where Jesus instituted the cup of the Lord's Supper: "This is my blood."

This act ended the Old Testament, and the rule of the law.

This act started the New Testament, and the rule of grace.

Up to now the Passover stood for physical deliverance from Egypt, from now on it was replaced by the Lord's Supper which stands for spiritual deliverance from sin.

22. ELIJAH'S PLACE

The Jews believed that when the Messiah comes He will come during the Feast of Passover, and he will be preceded by Elijah (Malachi 4:5). This prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptizer.

Throughout the Passover meal a place at one end of the table is vacant, and the front door slightly open. The best cup is set by this place.

At the end of the service someone is sent to the door and the sad report comes back, "I don't see him tonight, He's not coming. Perhaps he will come next year."

There is no mention of this at Jesus' last supper. Christ may have occupied the place the disciples set for Elijah and drunk that cup, further showing He IS the longed-for Messiah!

23. CUP # 4 - PRAISE

This cup stands for when Jesus returns to regather Israel.

Blessing by the leader: Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine." Then all drank this fourth cup.



It was NOT drunk by Christ that evening.

24. HALLEL (Psalm 115-118) (Hallel)

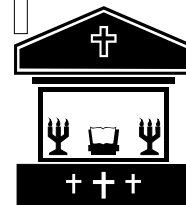
Then they sung all or part of Psalm 115-118 (especially 118), which would have been very meaningful to Christ at this time).

25. CONCLUSION

Today the Jews conclude with all saying, "Next Year In Jerusalem!"

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Sfirat Haomer

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Sfirat Haomer is the first part of the feast we know as First Fruits, done in early spring (Lev. 23:9-14). Also called Yom HaBikkurim, it follows closely after Passover. "Sfirat Haomer" literally means "the Counting of the Sheaf." It speaks of the earliest harvest that takes place in Israel, the barley harvest.

The very first batch of the very crop harvested in spring (barley) was to be brought to the priest in the Tabernacle/Temple. One omer (a half gallon) was the amount required. This is done in thanksgiving to God for what is to come.

From this day, probably the Monday after Passover, the Jews counted the days and exactly seven weeks later the final First Fruits offering was given. It was of wheat, the last grain to ripen. It was exactly seven weeks from the day the Jews celebrated the Passover and left Egypt until God gave them the law to live by at Mt. Sinai.

In the Old Testament times a priest would meet the Jewish pilgrims outside Jerusalem and usher them to the temple. As they carried their offerings, the priest would lead a praise service with dance, music and praise psalms. At the altar the priest took the sheaves, wove them in the air in every direction, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty over all the earth. (For more details see Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 256ff.)

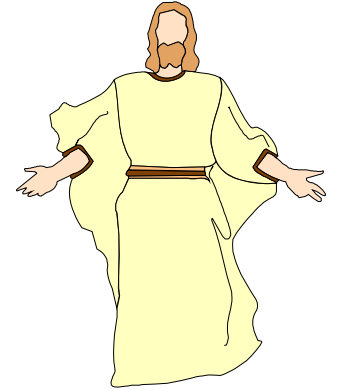
NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN Jesus came back to life on the day after Passover, the first day of the week, the same day as Sfirat Haomer. He is the first-fruits, the first one back to life, a promise of all those coming afterwards (I Cor. 15:20). Paul clearly sees Jesus' resurrection as the fulfillment of Sfirat Haomer. Just as the grain is lifted up for all to see, so Jesus, who died as a grain of wheat, was lifted up for all to see (John 12:23-24, 32). Fifty days later Shavuoth, the final harvest of First-Fruits was observed. We call it Pentecost. It was the day God gave the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Unfortunately,



this beautiful teaching has been lost to us because the council of Nicea (325 AD) forbid the observance of Passover (Jesus' death) and Sfirat Haomer (Jesus' resurrection). In its place 'Good Friday' and 'Easter' were established. Even the date was changed from the Passover of the Jewish calendar to the Sunday after the Spring Equinox. All of this was strongly influenced by pagan fertility worship and really had nothing to do with Jesus and the resurrection. It was a reaction against anything Jewish, but what a great loss of a fine, meaningful holy day it was for Christianity!

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD the loss of the temple as a place of sacrifice, the observance of Sfirat Haomer consisted primarily of prayers and blessings. The fifty days between the barley and wheat offerings were counted by the Jews.

CELEBRATING SFIRIT HAOMER TODAY Starting the day after the Jewish Passover (or the Christian 'Easter' if you would rather do it that way) count fifty days until Shavuot (Pentecost). Make this a time of anticipation as if you are waiting for a visit of your very best friend. Celebrate it with joy, remembering the first day you met that friend! The Friend, by the way, is the Holy Spirit who came on Shavuot/Pentecost. Count down by using a calendar or making a calendar with 50 squares. Each day glue a little barley (it is very inexpensive) on each day. Our Christmas Advent calendars where a window is opened each day is similar to this. By the way, use some of the barley to make barley soup, identifying with the Jews and what they ate at that time of the year.



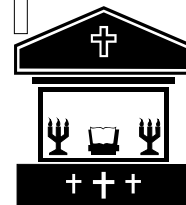
Find a time during the day when your family can regularly do this as part of their devotions. First of all the father reads: "Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD." Leviticus 23:16) Then the whole family says: "This is the (first, second, third, or whatever) day of the Omer." Then read a portion from the Psalms. Record another day on your chart (glue down barley or however you are going to do it). Close with a prayer of your choosing or use this that Jews still use: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has given us commandments to obey. It is our desire to be obedient to Your laws, knowing that they will enable us to live in a right relationship with you and with each other."

To help make the 50 day wait more memorable plant some seeds on the first day and watch them grow. Beans are especially good. Have the children print John 12:24 on a piece of paper and talk about it. Memorizing it would be good, too. Keep the soil moist (not too wet and not too dry).

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SHAVUOTH



THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Fifty days after Sfirat Haomer (First Fruits) comes the Jewish festival Shavuoth (Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks). In fact, Shavuoth" means "weeks" (it is 7 weeks after Sfirat Haomer). "Pentecost:" is a Greek word meaning "fiftieth day" ('penta' means five). Jews would bring an omer (1/2 gallon) of their first-ripening spring crop (barley) to the Temple the day after Passover. From that day on they would begin counting the days until they got to 50 (7 weeks later) when they celebrated Shavuoth (Pentecost, Weeks). Leviticus 23:15-21 describe the feast. It was a very important feast, one of the three that all men within traveling distance of Jerusalem were required to attend (Dt. 16:16).

This feast is also a memorial to the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai (Ex. 19), for that was 50 days after they left Egypt (on the day after the first Passover). It was on this day, 50 days after the resurrection, that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).



To the Jews this was a special time of thanksgiving for the spring harvest. God's faithfulness being shown here gave hope for an abundant fall harvest (Sukkoth). Giving thanks for present provision leads to faith for future addition.

What a wonderful God we have! He provides all our needs through His riches in glory in Messiah (Philippians 4:19).

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE The Jews would bake part of the wheat offering into two loaves of leavened bread. They were brought to the tabernacle/temple with great ceremony and waved in every direction before the Lord as a public statement of God's provision for all His people.

Animal sacrifices accompanied the wheat offering, showing the vicarious offering of the lambs to symbolize the need for an innocent victim to remove sin from the people (Lev. 17:11). As seen with the Passover, animal sacrifices foreshadow the ultimate Sacrifice - Jesus.

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN This feast is mentioned several times in the New Testament. Not only did the Holy Spirit come on this day, but Paul planned his travels in correlation with Shavuoth (I Cor. 16:8). The significance of Acts 2 is clear. Jews had just left the Temple, having heard Ezekiel 1 read about God's glory like fire, when they encountered Peter and the apostles showing God's glory the same way. It was the first God's glory was seen in 600 years!

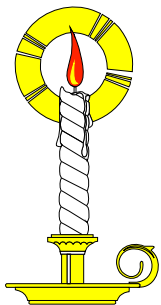
Shavuoth was thankfulness for the spring harvest, trusting that the later harvest (fall would naturally follow). While many Jews were 'harvested' by Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the final and full harvest is still to come (James 1:18). This will be a full-scale revival among the Jews. The spring harvest guaranteed the fall harvest. The ingathering of Jews at Pentecost guarantees a time to come when all of Jews will be gathered (Zech. 12:10).

JEWISH OBSERVANCE TODAY Since Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews lost the use of the temple mount, there can be no animal sacrifices offered so this is no longer any part of the celebration today.

Today Jews decorate their synagogue in greenery, flowers and baskets of fruit to symbolize the harvest aspect of Shavuoth (similar to what we do at our thanksgiving). The Scripture reading is Exodus 19-20, the giving of the law (which was given 50 days after Sfirat Haomer). Also Ezekiel 1 and Ruth (which took place during the spring harvest) is read. Many synagogues customarily hold their confirmation services for teens at this time to recognize their culminated childhood studies of the Law.

Home celebration for Jews today is similar to their other holidays. As Shavuoth gets near, the holiday table is set with the best linen and dishes. The holiday candles are lit by the women of the house. After the traditional blessings and prayer, blessings are said over the cup of drink. The challah bread is then blessed and shared by all. The meal includes lots of milk products because the Scriptures are described as "the milk of the word" (I Pt. 2:2).

CELEBRATING SHAVUOTH TODAY Fifty days after Sfirat Haomer, when your calendar has been completely checked off, celebrate Shavuoth. Decorate the house with greens, flowers -- anything reminding you of spring. Set the table with your best linens and dishes. Celebrate after Sunday, when the Jewish day started. The holiday candles are lit and the following blessing recited: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to be a light unto the nations and have given us Jesus, our Messiah, the Light of the World." " Grape juice and specially made or bought bread (with leaven) is present. These are blessed, then the holiday dinner is served. The meal should include lots of milk and milk products (cheese) to commemorate the milk of the Word of God. Talk about God's Bible and how special it is to us today. Read or tell the story of Ruth, a spring harvest book. Thank Him for it. Close in prayer asking God to send His revival among His people, the Jews.

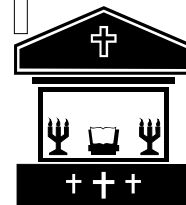


Shavuoth is the last of the cluster of spring festivals consisting of Passover (redemption by blood), Unleavened Bread), Sfirat Haomer (resurrection of Jesus, promise of our resurrection) and Shavuoth (Holy Spirit's coming, promise of future greater ingathering). These have already been fulfilled, and anticipate the final fulfillment in the fall feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles). Historically, we are living in the 'summer,' the gap between the spring feasts (fulfilled in the First Coming) and fall feasts (fulfilled at the Second Coming).

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ROSH HASHANAH

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND "Happy New Year!" That's what Rosh Hashanah is! "Rosh" means 'head,' or 'beginning.' "Hashanah" means 'the year' (Ezekiel 40:1). It is better known to us as the Feast of Trumpets. While the actual calendar of the Jews started with God's instructions about the Passover (Nisan - Ex. 12:1-2), this stands for their "spiritual" new year, a special time set apart for a new beginning with the Lord. It was so important they saw it as a new start with God, and thus the start of a new spiritual year. Today they send New Year's cards to each other commemorating this special time. To the Jews, who date their calendar years from the year of creation, this is also the birthday of the world. The Jews use this as a time to celebrate the King of creation.

Actually Rosh Hashanah is in the seventh month of the year (Tishri). To them, the seventh month is holy, just like the seventh day is holy. Just as the day before, Friday, becomes a time of preparation for the seventh day, so the month before, Elul, becomes a month of preparation for the seventh month. There are forty days from the first of Elul until the end of Rosh Hashanah (called Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement), called the Forty Days of Preparation. This is a time of soul-searching and preparation, the same as Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness before His ministry (Mt. 4:1-2). Forty as a time of preparation is common in the Bible (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Num. 13:25; I Ki. 19:8; Jonah 3:4-5).

This is also called the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah - Lev. 23:23-25) because it was commemorated by trumpet blasts. For the next ten days repentance and returning to God were to take place. It is a time to take stock of their spiritual condition and make whatever changes are necessary to make sure they will be pleasing to God in the coming spiritual year. These are called the "High Holy Days." They culminate with Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The Jews believed Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the second set of the Tablets of the law and descended on Yom Kippur.

Actually three strands are braided together to make Rosh Hashanah. First, it honors the **KINGSHIP OF GOD** and His authority over creation (Ps. 19:1-3, 7-11; 150:1-3; 33:13-15; Rom. 3:23). Secondly, it is a day of **REMEMBRANCE**, of one's place in god's plan. The third thread refers to the **REVELATION** of God. The sounding of the trumpet is a call to spiritual awakening.

The trumpet was a "Shofar," the Hebrew word for trumpet or horn, specifically a ram's horn (which what was used to produce the sound). In fact, many Orthodox men take a special water immersion to symbolize their cleansing at this time. Many rabbis see in this a glimpse of the future regathering of Israel by the Messiah (Mt. 24:29-31).

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN This feast becomes even more special when seen in light of the life of Jesus, who came to be the Messiah to regather Israel (except they rejected Him). Many scholars believe Jesus was born in the fall, and began His public ministry in the fall (Lk. 3:23). Could John's call to

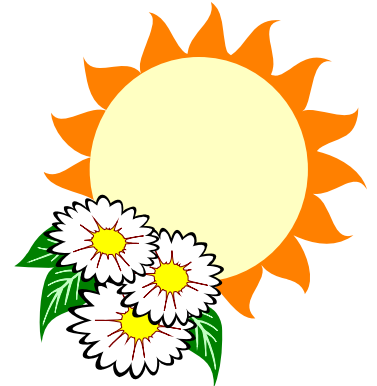
baptism, and Jesus' response to it, have been at the time of the preparation for Rosh Hashanah? Then the 40 days of Jesus' testing in the wilderness (corresponding to the forty days of the Shofar and repentance), followed by Jesus' message to repent and turn to God (as John was preaching). What better time could there have been for the Messiah to start His earthly ministry than during Rosh Hashanah? The Jews rejected and didn't respond, but will one day when He returns to the sound of the trumpet and regather Israel and then totally fulfill Rosh Hashanah (Isa. 27:12-13; Mt. 24:31). Consider more: it was a trumpet that was blown each morning calling the Jews to regather and hail their king. When we hear a trumpet we as believers will be regathered to meet our King (the Rapture - I Thes. 4:16-18). Just think! Any time the Shofar could sound for us, calling us to be with Him (Titus 2:13).

CELEBRATING ROSH HASHANAH TODAY Rosh Hashanah is not just another day! Set your table with your best. Take a little extra time and make some family memories. Blown the horn before the meal, if you've been doing it each day for the last 30 or not.

The Shofar (a horn, trumpet, or anything you can blow to make noise) is blown each day from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur - 40 days, except for Sabbath. In ancient times this was used to hail a king, and it speaks of the Jews appearing before their King of Kings in anticipation of personal judgment. It is a reminder to prepare one's self for God. After the horn is blown the following is said: "Awake, you that are sleepy, and ponder your deeds; remember your Creator and go to Him for forgiveness. Don't be like those who miss reality in their hunt after shadows, and waste your years in seeking after vain things which can neither profit nor deliver. Look well to your souls and consider your deeds; let each one of you forsake his evil ways and thoughts, and return to the Lord, so that He may have mercy on you."


Mother lights the candles and prays. Dad leads in prayer for the drink (grape juice) and bread. Pass a dish with apple slices around a dish of honey. This symbolizes the hope that the year will be a sweet one. The father gives a special prayer of thankfulness.

It is traditional to place a cooked fish with its head in front of the father, showing he is the head of the family and will fulfill his duties in that regard for the coming year. Carrots are eaten in abundance (raw and cooked) for the Hebrew word for carrots means "to increase" symbolizing that God will increase our blessings as we walk with Him. Another tradition is tasting the first fruits from a new harvest. Pick a favorite fruit and don't eat it for several weeks until this time. Waiting for it makes it especially good and makes us more thankful to God for it. A round, full loaf of bread is also eaten, symbolic of our desire for a full and round year. You can save some dough and make a ladder on the top of the bread, signifying our prayers are directed to God on high. Read and talk about Genesis 22:1-14, God's provision of a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place, a living picture of what was to come in His greater gift of Jesus.



You can celebrate the birthday of the world by making a cake and putting candles on it. After singing happy birthday to the world, and while eating it, talk about all the different parts of the world that are in the cake (milk from cows, eggs from chickens, both of which eat green leaves; candle light like stars in sky, etc.). Thank God for His wonderful world!

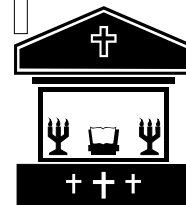
Taking a ritual bath or shower can be done to symbolize cleansing from God (as some Jews today still do). This is even more meaningful when you go to a body of water (lake, river, pool, etc.). After immersing in it, throw a stone in it as far as you can, showing our sins are as far as the east is from the west, as deep as in the depths of the sea.

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Resh  Hebrew is read from right to left, so the letter starts closed and opens. The past is closed, but the new year is an open future. Also, you could say the resh looks like a Shofar! Let the children learn to make this letter.

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YOM KIPPUR

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, has long been considered the most holy day in the Jewish biblical calendar. As the name implies, on this very day, once a year, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the nation (Lev. 23:26-32). It was the only time all year anyone entered there. Before entering, one goat the *Chatat* was slain as a blood sacrifice, symbolizing the innocent blood that must be shed to cover sin (Lev. 16). A second goat (*the Azazel*), the Scapegoat, would be brought to the priest who would lay his hands on it and confess the sins of the people, transferring them symbolically to the goat. This goat was then sent into the wilderness, a picture of sins being carried away. This was the culmination of the 40 days of preparation from Elul first, and especially the 10 days of repentance starting at Rosh Hashanah. Atonement follows repentance. What greater theme is there in the Bible?

When the High Priest enters God's presence He represents all the people, coming asking for mercy and forgiveness based on the innocent blood that was shed. Man cannot justify himself (James 2:10; 1 Jn. 1:8,10; Job 9:32-33; Lev. 16:29-34). All this was clearly fulfilled and finished by Jesus, for it all pointed to Him (Heb. 7:26-28; 8:7-8; 10:1-22; Jer. 31:31-34). Any who reject this way are condemned for eternity (Jer. 23:39; Rev. 20:15; Ps. 145:18).



NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN Paul talks about Yom Kippur in Romans 3:23-26.

"Propitiation" refers to atonement, a term any Jew of the first century who read Paul's letter would understand. On the cross Jesus was displayed as our atonement, our sacrifice, the fulfillment of what Yom Kippur was all about! Paul refers to Yom Kippur (Acts 27:9). Some feel that when Jesus read from Isaiah 61 about Himself in the Nazareth synagogue and was rejected (Lk. 4:16-22) it was in the season of repentance, near or on Yom Kippur. This would make this passage and claim by Jesus take on special significance. Unfortunately the Jews rejected their sacrifice for sin, but will accept Him when He returns (Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:25-27).

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE When the temple was destroyed in 70 AD the Jews were no longer able to offer animal sacrifices. They replaced it with *Tefilah* (prayer), *Teshuvah* (repentance), and *Tzedakah* (charity). Thus the observance today is very different

than in Old Testament times. There is a movement among Jews to day to return to animal sacrifices and they are actively reproducing the holy vessels and priestly garments in anticipation of when they will again be in possession of the Temple mount.

The Jews fast on Yom Kippur (Isa. 58:5; Lev. 23). This is to picture mourning for sin. Before sundown the evening before Yom Kippur (remember, the Jewish day goes from sundown to sundown) the Jews have a holiday meal. Then they fast. When they fast, they really fast! There is nothing to eat or drink -- nothing. No unnecessary bathing, entertainment or anything is allowed. (Exceptions are made for children under 13, sick adults and pregnant or nursing mothers.) A special synagogue service is held the evening that Yom Kippur starts, perhaps the most special of the whole year.

The next morning Yom Kippur continues. It is treated like a very special Sabbath. They attend synagogue services all day. All focuses on the need for atonement for sins. Services last all day, for the Jews believe judgment will come at the close of Yom Kippur if God doesn't show mercy and forgive.

After sundown, when judgment does not come, a special break-the-fast meal is served. Tasted first is sweet wine or grape juice, then sweet honey cake is eaten. This is all in anticipation of a sweet new year.

CELEBRATING YOM KIPPUR TODAY The meal before sundown down when Yom Kippur starts is to be a special meal, the last for 24 hours. Just like on the other holy days, the table is set with the best dishes and linens. White is used for table linens and clothing for it symbolizes what the holy day is all about: cleansing from sin (Isa. 1:18). Also, two candles are lit and blessings said over the grape juice and bread. Plan foods for this meal that will not make your fasting harder (no spicy foods, etc.). It should be similar to your meal for Rosh Hashanah and the Sabbath. After eating read the story of Jonah about God's judgment on sin.

After sundown the celebration starts with a blessing on the children. Lay your hands on each one and bless them, as Jesus did ((Mt. 19:13; Lk. 18:15). then a candle is lit in remembrance of a loved one who has died (Ex. 20:12).



The next 24 hours are for fasting and prayer. The days up to this time are spent in repentance and soul-searching, resolving personal problems and settling disputes with others (Mt. 6:14-15). Remember, fasting alone gains nothing, it is merely an outward way of showing what is going on inwardly (repentance, putting God before anything - Mt. 6:16-18). If a complete fast is too much for you or your children, have a partial fast (drink but no food, food but no desert or no meat, just plain basic food, or however you want to do it).

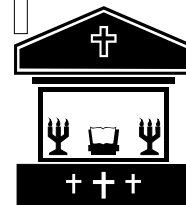
Hunger pains remind us that this is a serious time of mourning and repentance, of self-denial and serious calling on God, of giving up any fleshly appetite to be right with God. As you fast and pray this day pray for millions of Jews around the world, packed into synagogues and also fasting, that they would open their hearts to Jesus their Messiah (Rom. 10:1)!

When the sun again sets at the end of Yom Kippur a light meal (similar to bre akfast) is eaten to break the fast and the day closes with words from the Psalm (107:8-9). Divide up the amount of money you would have spent on groceries during Yom Kippur and put a portion on each person's plate after the meal. Let each one use it to help needy people in any way they choose. Now its time to start planning Sukkoth. You have 5 days to build it, don't put it off!

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SUKKOTH

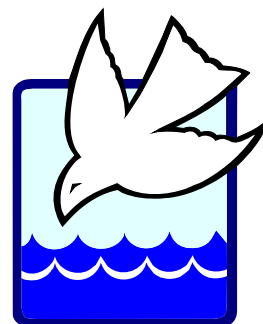
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Sukkoth is the third major holiday in the Jewish month of Tishri (Sept.-Oct.). They are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and five days afterwards Sukkoth (which lasts 8 days). Sukkoth is a time of bringing in the fall harvest. It is the Jewish "Thanksgiving." In fact, the Pilgrims, who were well versed in the Old Testament, probably based the first American Thanksgiving on Sukkoth. "Sukkoth" means "huts" (Genesis 33:17). That's why this feast is also called the Feast of Tabernacles (a tabernacle is a tent or a hut), or the Feast of Booths (also a hut, tent). This is one of the three feasts when all Jewish men who possibly could were to travel to Jerusalem (Lev. 23:39-43).

This feast was celebrated by building tents/booths as a reminder of the 40 years wandering when their forefathers left Egypt. God's Presence was with them in a special tent/booth which we call the 'Tabernacle.'

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN John uses the same word 'tent/booth' to describe Jesus' coming to earth (John 1:14). In fact, some Bible scholars make a good argument showing that Jesus was actually born on Sukkoth.

An important part of the celebration of Sukkoth was when a priest would take a pitcher of water from the Pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple. Crowds of people would follow: dancing and singing the Hallel Psalms (113-118). They would do this once a day for the first 6 days of Sukkoth and on the 8th do it 7 times showing the great joy they had in God. The highlight of this ceremony came when the priest would pour the water at the altar. This brought such a response from the people the rabbis said it was the most joyous time of the year for a Jew. Pouring the water was a picture of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all, bringing great joy (Isa. 12:3). It speaks of the coming time when God/Messiah will dwell ('sukkoth') with His people. When this happened while Jesus was in Jerusalem He clearly pointed out that HE was the water (John 7:14-39) poured out to bring blessing to all. Jesus was saying that if they truly desired what Sukkoth was all about they had to come to Him (Jn. 7:40-41).

While Jesus claimed to fulfill this, He was rejected so it never found fulfillment in His day. There is a future day coming when Messiah will 'sukkoth' with His people forever (Rev. 21:1-3;

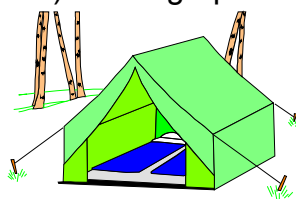


Amos 9:13-15; Zech. 14:16-21). This is called the Millennium, and God's Presence dwelling with His people will continue for eternity! Then the final fulfillment of Sukkoth will be celebrated (Zech. 14:16-17).

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE Sukkoth is a joyous celebration. The Torah is celebrated and paraded, children carry flags and banners decorated with appropriate symbols, and apples bearing lighted candles flicker brightly from the tops of poles. The light from the candles shows we are enlightened because we know God's Word (Ps. 119:105). The apple is to remind us to keep God's Word as the apple of our eye (Prov. 7:2). Children are given candy, showing God's Word is sweet (Ps. 19:8-10). Refreshments and house-to-house round off Sukkoth celebrations today. Each family returns to its home for the final feast which closes the festival.

CELEBRATING SUKKOTH TODAY This can be a very rewarding family time if you have a little space and a little time. Build your own booth/tabernacle in your yard. To make it really challenging, try doing it like the Jews did -- without nails. Use some poles for a frame and lay large grass, sticks, weeds, etc. over it. Start it right after you finish Rosh Hashanah. This will be the center of your activities, your new 'home,' as the Jews lived in the wilderness. At the very least, put up a camping tent or use some large pieces of cardboard to make a temporary structure. It reminds us that any abode we make on this earth is temporary (I Chron. 29:15; Heb. 11:8-10; II Cor. 5:1). Also, living closer to nature and the land makes it easier to praise God for the abundance it provides for us (Thanksgiving).

For eight days do something special in your Sukkoth: a meal, devotions, schooling, Bible study, rest time, games or whatever you choose. The first time you use it pray and dedicate it to God. Mother lights the traditional blessing candles (watch you don't start a fire!). Use grape juice and bread, as with the other feasts. Eat a special, favorite meal. Read and talk about John 1 in connection with a pitcher of water. It speaks of Jesus as the Living Water (Isa. 55:1; 58:11; 44:3). Also read and talk about Hebrews 13:14 (we are pilgrims in temporary homes) and John 14:1-7 (Jesus is making a permanent home for us in heaven). These can be done the first day or any of the other days.



The eighth and last evening of your feast should also be around a special meal together. Use water again. Pour some on the ground, a picture of the coming day when God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind. Close in prayer -- one-word prayers from each one present. Father starts with "Heavenly Father, we are each one thankful for ALL of the blessings you shower upon us" Each one name something they are thankful for. Close with "Help us to remember that You have invited us to come to You whenever we are thirsty and that You are the one who offers us the living water of life that gives us lasting peace through Jesus. Amen."

Have the children organize a parade one of the days of Sukkoth. Let them make banners, each with a different letter of the alphabet and something from God it stands for (B= Bible, C= Creation, etc.). Let the children be creative in how they want to use their tent/booth and what they want to do in it. Remember, it is a time of JOY for all!

For more detailed information, recipes, table decorations, art & craft objects to make, etc., see *"God's Appointed Times,"* by Barney Kasdan (Lederer Publications) or *"Celebrate the Feasts,"* by Martha Zimmerman (Bethany House Publishers). Both are excellent resources and available in paperback.