

Scripture Lesson Text

LEV. 23:33 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the feast of tabernacles *for seven days unto the LORD.*

35 On the first day *shall be* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein.*

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it *is* a solemn assembly; *and ye shall do no servile work therein.*

37 These *are* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day:

38 Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which

ye give unto the LORD.

39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

NOTES

Obedience in Feasts

Lesson Text: Leviticus 23:33-43

Related Scriptures: *Numbers 29:12-38; Deuteronomy 16:13-17; Nehemiah 8:13-18; Zechariah 14:16-19*

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT—"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:42-43).

Lesson Exposition

THE SCHEDULE FOR THE FEAST— Lev. 23:33-36

The time of year (Lev. 23:33-34). The Festival of Booths was so named because during those days, the people were to construct booths in which to live. Israel was to begin this celebration on "the fifteenth day of this seventh month" (vs. 34). The seventh month on the Hebrew calendar was Tishri, which elsewhere is said to be "in the end of the year" (Exod. 23:16). This refers to the ending of the agricultural cycle.

The fifteenth day of the seventh month was only five days after the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:34; cf. vs. 27). The two are in striking contrast: the Day of Atonement was the most solemn day of the year, while the Feast of Booths was a week of joyful celebration.

The times of the convocations (Lev. 23:35-36). The Feast of Booths was to last seven days (vs. 34), and although it was a time of joy, this was not a period of unbridled revelry. All Israel's rejoicing was to be "unto the Lord," and the first day was to be "an holy convocation" (vs. 35). The offerings of this feast (189 animals) outnumbered those in any other.

This multiplicity of sacrifices was appropriate for the time and nature of the feast. First, it was the culmination of all the annual harvest festivals, and a greater celebration was thus expected. Second, it was a thanksgiving festival, and thanks to God overflowed in the number of sacrifices offered.

Although this was a seven-day festival, the eighth day was to be set apart as a sacred assembly. Like the first day, the eighth was a Sabbath, featuring sacrifices and a solemn closing.

THE OFFERINGS FOR ALL THE FEASTS—Lev. 23:37-38

The feasts were alike in two ways. First, they were holy convocations. Second, they offered prescribed sacrifices. Offerings were to be made by fire to the Lord, including burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrificial meals, and drink offerings.

A FULLER DESCRIPTION OF THE FEAST—Lev. 23:39-43

The schedule restated (Lev. 23:39). Following the brief digression regarding offerings on festival days, our text returns to a description of

the Festival of Booths. The time of the feast is again stated, and the first and eighth days are specifically called "Sabbaths."

The manner of observance (Lev. 23:40-42). The boughs of trees had a major role in this feast. The booths in which Israelites were to dwell temporarily were to be constructed from them (cf. Neh. 8:15). "Goodly trees" (Lev. 23:40) appears to be a generic term to describe all the trees that follow.

"Goodly" can also be translated "beautiful" or "ornamental." "Thick trees" should be interpreted as trees thick in foliage—leafy shade trees. "Willows of the brook" can also be taken as poplars. The trees listed here are not the only ones used, as is evident from those used in Nehemiah's day, which included olive, pine, and myrtle (Neh. 8:15).

The observance of the Feast of Booths was a divine statute throughout all their generations. It was to be celebrated perpetually. Ironically, from Israel's entrance into Canaan until the Babylonian Exile, there is only one documented observance of this feast—when Solomon dedicated the temple (I Kgs. 8:2; II Chr. 7:8-10).

During the seven days of the festival, the Israelites had to live in the booths they made (Lev. 23:42).

The reason for the observance (Lev. 23:43). The Feast of Booths may have been a harvest festival, but the reason for its name and the practice of living in booths was distinct from this. It was to ensure that generations to come "may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

The major lesson to be learned from living in booths for seven days was not the privations their ancestors suffered in the desert. It was, rather, that

the Lord kept His protective hand over them, sheltering them from the elements and providing for all their needs (cf. Pss. 27:5; 31:20).

The Feast of Booths looks forward prophetically as well as backward historically. It will apparently be celebrated in the millennium (cf. Zech. 14:16-19; Matt. 17:4). It prefigures the renewal of the fallen booth (shelter) of David (Amos 9:11) and the security of God's redeemed people (Isa. 4:6).

Meanwhile, it reminds us that every harvest season should turn our thoughts to the One who made it possible.

—Robert E. Wenger.

QUESTIONS

1. At what season of the year was the Feast of Booths held?
2. What do we learn from the time of this feast in relation to the Day of Atonement?
3. What was the nature of the first day of the Feast of Booths?
4. Why was the great number of sacrificial animals appropriate for this occasion?
5. What was the purpose for the assembly on the eighth day?
6. How were all the festivals of Israel alike?
7. What kinds of branches were cut down at this feast?
8. How many references to the historic observance of this feast are found in the Old Testament?
9. What was the significance of the booths the Israelites made?
10. What role does this festival have in prophecy? What does it teach us today?

—Robert E. Wenger.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's words to Moses speak to us as well (Lev. 23:33).
2. Today's Christians could spend more time worshipping and celebrating God (vs. 34).
3. A day of rest from normal routine allows us to focus on what is really important (vss. 35-39).
4. God provides for us in our desert experiences; thus, we should rejoice (vs. 40).
5. God's blessing should be shared and celebrated with others (vss. 41-42).
6. Humans are prone to forget; we need frequent reminders of God's goodness to us (vs. 43).

—Barbara A. Edwards.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, commemorated the desert wanderings of the Israelites. What was there in this experience that was worthy of being celebrated?
2. This harvest celebration was a hands-on activity that required the worshippers to build a lean-to from branches. What does this tell us about having a public presence for worship?
3. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates God's gracious provision for Israel. What have you learned about God as a Provider (cf. Ps. 145:16; Ezek. 34:26-29; Matt. 6:26)?
4. Is there a Christian time of celebration and thanksgiving corresponding to the Feast of Tabernacles?

—Barbara A. Edwards.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 23:42-43).

The Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, known as Sukkoth on the Jewish calendar, takes place in late autumn. It falls at the end of the general harvest.

This sacred festival lasts one week of the Hebrew calendar. During this week, Jewish people are commanded to make and live in small huts (Lev. 23:41-43).

The celebration commemorates the period of wilderness wandering in Israel's history. It reminds God's chosen people that they were once tent dwellers, a people without a homeland.

This feast was one of celebration. During the feast, people worshipped God and offered prayers of thanksgiving for His provision. Sacrifices were also made (Deut. 16:16-17).

This festival reminds believers of our transient earthly nature. Though we dwell here on earth, our physical bodies are merely transitory and fading. One day, we will be free of our corruptible bodies. On that day when we pass from this earth, we shall receive a body that cannot perish. We will be raised with Him and be as He is (I Cor. 15:20-23).

We should be careful to maintain our bodies, knowing that they are set aside for Christ's work in us. We should rejoice in the booths we have been given and look forward to the ones we will receive.

—Jennifer Lautermilch.