

## Sukkot Study

By Yochanan Zaquantov

Sukkot is the third of three pilgrimage Feasts (Chagim) we are command to observe and keep each year. Some translations use tabernacles as a substitute for sukkot in English. What does Sukkot (Sukkot) mean in Hebrew? Does it mean temporary dwelling like a tent? Where do we keep Sukkot? What makes a sukkah, a sukkah? Why do we keep it? These are some of the questions we will look into as we examine Sukkot and what it means for us today.

Sukkah (samech-kaf-hey) is the Hebrew word for Booth. It is reference number 5521. It is also a feminine noun from a masculine noun Sok. On page 697 in the BDB, we find that the word Sukkah. Sukkot is the plural Feminine Noun. It can also be found on page 875 in the NEHC.

Let us look at some of the places this is used in the Tanakh.

Bereshit (Genesis) 33:17

17 But Jacob journeyed on to **Succoth (Sukkotah – 5523 סִכְתָּהּ)**, and built a house for himself and made **stalls (Sukkot סִכּוֹת)** for his cattle; that is why the place was called **Succoth (Sukkot – 5523 סִכּוֹת)**.

We see that this was shelter for his animals. 5523 sukkot is being used as a proper noun or in this case the name of a place. We also see that this was a structure that would shelter his cattle.

Yonah (Jonah) 4:5

5 Now Jonah had left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a **sukkah (sukkah סִכָּהּ)** there and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what happened to the city.

We see this was something that Yonah built for shade. The idea was to protect from exposure.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 4:5-6

5 Yehovah will create over the whole shrine and meeting place of Mount Zion cloud by day and smoke with a glow of flaming fire by night. Indeed, over all the glory shall hang a canopy, 6 **which shall serve as a pavilion (v'sukkah - and a sukkah וְסִכָּהּ)** for shade from heat by day and as a shelter for protection against drenching rain.

Over the shrine will be a covering that acts like a sukkah. Protect from heat by day and shelter from rain.

Ezra 3:1-4

1 When the seventh month arrived—the Israelites being settled in their towns—the entire people assembled as one man in Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brother priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his brothers set to and built the altar of the Elohey of Israel to offer burnt offerings upon it as is written in the Teaching of Moses, the man of Elohim. 3 They set up the altar on its site because they were in fear of the peoples of the land, and they offered burnt offerings on it to Yehovah, burnt offerings each morning and evening. 4 Then they celebrated the festival of **Tabernacles [Sukkot] (haSukkot הַסֻּכּוֹת)** as is written, with its daily burnt offerings in the proper quantities, on each day as is prescribed for it,

Even after being separated from the land they were able to read what was written and keep Sukkot.

Melekhim Aleph (I Kings) 20:12, 16

12 On hearing this reply—while he and the other kings were drinking together **at Succoth (in sukkot – basukkot בְּסֻכּוֹת)**—he commanded his followers, “Advance!” And they advanced against the city.

16 They marched out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk **at Succoth (in sukkot – basukkot בְּסֻכּוֹת)** together with the thirty-two kings allied with him.

Sukkot were used as a temporary shelter in war. These were not Israelites but they made shelters too.

Shemuel Bet (II Samuel) 11:11

11 Uriah answered David, “The Ark and Israel and Judah **are located at Succoth [sitting down/Stay in sukkot] (Sitting down or staying – yosh’bim יוֹשְׁבִים, in sukkot – basukkot בְּסֻכּוֹת)**, and my master Joab and Your Majesty’s men are camped in the open; how can I go home and eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As you live, by your very life, I will not do this!”

Here we see that the translation should read “sitting down or staying in sukkot”. Thus the Ark and Yehudah sat or stayed in sukkot while at battle.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:10-13

10 And Moses instructed them as follows: Every seventh year, the year set for remission, at the Feast of **Sukkot** (**Sukkot הַסֻּכּוֹת**), 11 when all Israel comes to appear before Yehovah Eloheykha in the place that He will choose, you shall read this **Teaching (et hatorah אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה)** aloud in the presence of all Israel. 12 Gather the people—men, women, children, and your ger in your communities—that they may hear and so learn to revere Yehovah Eloheykha and to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching. 13 Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere Yehovah Eloheykha as long as they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.

Think about the significance of this statement. First, all of Israel was there. (man, woman, sons, daughters, slaves, ger, etc...) Second, the teaching or torah was to be read every seventh year to them. Why was this important? The development of books was not happening yet. Thus the only way for them to hear what was required of them was when the teachings were read to them.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:13-16

13 After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of **Sukkot** (**Sukkot הַסֻּכּוֹת**) for seven days. 14 You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the ger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities. 15 You shall hold a festival for Yehovah Eloheykha seven days, in the place that Yehovah will choose; for Yehovah Eloheykha will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy.

16 Three times a year—on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Sukkot—all your males shall appear before Yehovah Eloheykha in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before Yehovah empty-handed,

Notice all were to come for not just the high days but for all seven days. Yes, the men were to bring their offerings from the ingathering of the fields but the whole family and holdings were to be there also. Notice this was after the harvest, which occurred and was celebrated every year by all the people.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:34-43

34 Say to the Israelite people:

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the **Feast of Sukkot** (**Sukkot חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת**) to Yehovah, [to last] seven days. 35 The first day shall be a **sacred occasion** (**miqra qodesh מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ**): you shall not work at your occupations (**kol melakhet avodah lo ta'osו לא תַעֲשׂוּ עֲבֹדָה לְכָל־מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדָה**); 36 seven

days you shall bring offerings by fire to Yehovah. On the eighth day you shall observe a **sacred occasion (miqra qodesh מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ)** and bring an offering by fire to Yehovah; it is a solemn gathering: **you shall not work at your occupations (kol-melakhchet avodah lo ta'osu כָּל־מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ)**.

Notice that seven days you bring offering. No Service Work or work in general. A set-apart reading or proclamation.

37 Those are the set times of Yehovah that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing offerings by fire to Yehovah—burnt offerings, meal offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it—38 apart from the sabbaths of Yehovah, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to Yehovah.

39 Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of Yehovah [to last] seven days: **a complete rest (Shabbaton שַׁבְּתוֹן)** on the first day, and a **complete rest (Shabbaton שַׁבְּתוֹן)** on the eighth day.

Now some instructions on building sukkot.

40 On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees (**fruit of beautiful trees Pari etz hadar פְּרִי עֵץ הַדָּר**), branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before Yehovah Eloheykha seven days. 41 You shall observe it as a festival of Yehovah for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law (Chuqqot) for all time, throughout the ages. 42 You shall live in sukkot seven days; **all citizens (all homeborn – Kol haezrach כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח)** in Israel shall live **in sukkot (basukkot בַּסֻּכּוֹת)**, 43 in order that future generations may know that I made the **Israelite people (Benei Yisrael בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** live **in sukkot (basukkot בַּסֻּכּוֹת)** when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I Yehovah Eloheykha.

The gathering of these materials is for the making of sukkot. Who is to make these? The Homeborn or Ezrach in Israel. Now what does that mean? Does it literally mean only those reared in Israel can build Sukkot? Let look at another verse, which gives us, an idea of how this was interpreted by the returning exiles when having the Hebrew text read to them.

Nehemyah (Nehemiah) 8:14-18

14 They found written in the Teaching that Yehovah had commanded Moses that **the Israelites must dwell [Sitting Down/Staying] in sukkot (Yesh'vu Benei Yisrael basukkot בְּיָשְׁבוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּסֻּכּוֹת)** during the festival of the seventh month, 15 and that they must announce and proclaim throughout all their towns and Jerusalem as follows, **“Go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles, palms and [other] leafy trees to make sukkot, as it is written.”** 16 **So the people went out and brought them, and made themselves sukkot on their roofs, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the House of Elohim, in the square of the Water Gate and in the square of the Ephraim Gate.** 17 **The whole community (kol haqahal כָּל־הַקְּהָל)** that returned from the captivity made sukkot and dwelt in **the sukkot—the Israelites (Benei Yisrael בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** had not done so from the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day—and there was very great rejoicing. 18 He read from the scroll of the Teaching of Elohim each day, from the first to the last day. They celebrated the festival seven days, and there was a solemn gathering on the eighth, as prescribed.

Here we see they interpreted homeborn in Israel as Benei Yisrael, which does go along with the idea of a citizen and not necessarily someone born in the land. We know this because the returning exiles were told to do this. Were they living in the land for those 70 years? No. Thus, all those of the tribes of Israel as well as those who converted would build Sukkot (sukkot). It is a law for all times for all generations.

Now from these scriptures we can see it is a requirement to be kept seven days in the year, those who are Israelites are to build Sukkot, and the whole family (including servants and sojourners (gerim)). We also see that we must construct them using the materials similar as specified in the Tanakh. It is a statue and must be kept for all time. So even in exile it should be kept.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 30:1-3

1 When all these things befall you—the blessing and the curse that I have set before you—and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which Yehovah Eloheykha has banished you, 2 and you return to Yehovah Eloheykha, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day, 3 then Yehovah Eloheykha will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where Yehovah Eloheykha has scattered you.

The word for Sukkot is derived from sokh, which is a masculine noun and reference number 5520 which is found on page 697 in the BDB and on page 875 in the NEHC. It is from the root Samech-Kaf-Kaf Sofit.

Tehillim (Psalms) 27:5

5 He will shelter me in His **pavilion** (**basukkoh** בִּסְכָּה) on an evil day, grant me the protection of His tent, raise me high upon a rock.

From here we can see this is a kind of shelter.

Tehillim (Psalms) 76:3

3 Salem became His **abode** (**sukko** סֹכֶוּ); Zion, His den.

This again alludes to a shelter.

Yermeyahu (Jeremiah) 25:38

38 Like a lion, He has gone forth from His **lair** (**sukko** סֹכֶוּ); The land has become a desolation, Because of the oppressive wrath, Because of His fierce anger.

Here we see the Noun here is used to describe a dwelling place

This Noun is from the word sakhakh 5526 (samech-Kaf-Kaf sofit) It has the meaning of to cover. It is found on pages 696, 697, and 967 in the BDB and on pages 875, and 1206 in the NEHC.

Shemot (Exodus) 40:3, 21

3 Place there the Ark of the Pact, **and screen off** (**v'sakota** וְסִכְתָּ) the ark with the curtain.

21 and brought the ark inside the Tabernacle. Then he put up the curtain for screening, and **screened off** (**vayasek** וַיִּסְכֶּה) the Ark of the Pact—just as Yehovah had commanded Moses.

The screen acted like a cover to shelter the ark.

Shemot (Exodus) 25:20

20 The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding (**sokh'khim** סֹכְחִים) the cover with their wings. They shall confront each other, the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover.

The wings were to cover the top cover of the Ark.

Shemot (Exodus) 37:9

9 The cherubim had their wings spread out above, **shielding** (sokh'khim סֹכְכִים) the cover with their wings. They faced each other; the faces of the cherubim were turned toward the cover.

Well we have seen that the Shakhakh is for shelter as a covering. But what about a tent is that also a covering.

We find in the Tanakh that the word for Tent in Hebrew is Ohel (Aleph-Hey- Lamed), which is reference number 168 and found on page 13 in the BDB and page 27 in the NEHC. It is used for the average tent and also used for the Tent of Meeting that is also called Mishkhan. We will look at that later.

Bereshit (Genesis) 9:21, 27

21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within **his tent** (aholoh אֹהֶל).

27 May Elohim enlarge Japheth, **And let him dwell** (v'yish'kon וַיִּשְׁכֶּן) **in the tents** (ba'aholey בְּאֹהֲלֵי) of Shem; And let Canaan be a slave to them.”

We see this is talking of Tents from the time of Noach. It was a dwelling and the word used here is Shakan.

Bereshit (Genesis) 12:7-8

7 Yehovah appeared to Abram and said, “I will assign this land to your heirs.” And he built an altar there to Yehovah who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched **his tent** (aholoh אֹהֶל), with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to Yehovah and invoked Yehovah by name.

Here Abram would travel so his dwelling was a tent.

Devarim (Deuteronomy)1:27

27 You sulked **in your tents** (ba'aholeykhem בְּאֹהֲלֵיכֶם) and said, “It is because Yehovah hates us that He brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to wipe us out.

Clearly they had tents in their traveling to the land of Canaan.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 5:27

26 May they always be of such mind, to revere Me and follow all My commandments, that it may go well with them and with their children forever! 27 Go, say to them, ‘Return **to your tents** (l’aholeykhem לְאַהֲלֵיכֶם).’

So Yehovah Commands them to return to their tents.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 11:6

6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them, along with their households, [and] **their tents** (vaet aholeykhem וְאֶת-אַהֲלֵיהֶם), and every living thing in their train, from amidst all Israel

We see that even the Tents were swallowed up.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:7

And you shall cook and eat in the place which shall choose Yehovah Eloheinu, and you shall turn in the morning and go **into your tents** (l’ohaleykha לְאַהֲלֵיךָ). (Interlinear)

They were to return to their tents in the morning after the Pesach sacrifice.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:14:15

14 Yehovah said to Moses: The time is drawing near for you to die. Call Joshua and present yourselves **in the Tent** (ba’ohel בְּאֹהֶל) of Meeting, that I may instruct him.

Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves **in the Tent** (ba’ohel בְּאֹהֶל) of Meeting. 15 Yehovah appeared **in the Tent** (ba’ohel בְּאֹהֶל), in a pillar of cloud, the pillar of cloud having come to rest at the entrance of **the tent** (haohel הָאֹהֶל).

Here we see that when they talked to Yehovah it was from the Tent of Meeting. It is also called the Mishkhan which is 4908 or Dwelling place of Yehovah. Mish’kan is from Min Shakan or from dwelling.

Melekhim Aleph (I Kings) 8:1-4, 66

1 Then Solomon convoked the elders of Israel—all the heads of the tribes and the ancestral chieftains of the Israelites—before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of Yehovah from the City of David, that is, Zion.

2 All the men of Israel gathered before King Solomon at the Feast, in the month of Ethanim—that is, the seventh month. 3 When all the elders of Israel had come, the priests lifted the Ark 4 and carried up the Ark of Yehovah. Then the priests and the Levites brought **the Tent (ohel אֹהֶל)** of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were **in the Tent (ba ohel בְּאֹהֶל)**.

Here the transition from the Tent of Meeting to the Temple. After the eighth day they returned to their tents.

66 On the eighth day he let the people go. They bade the king good-bye and went **to their homes [tents] (I'aholeyhem לְאֹהֲלֵיהֶם)**, joyful and glad of heart over all the goodness that Yehovah had shown to His servant David and His people Israel

So we see they did stay in Tents for the feast in Melekh Shlomoh's time. But In Nehemyah we did read that the Israelites had not kept the Feast of Sukkot in Sukkot since Yehoshuah Ben Nun. The Question is was it wrong for them to stay in a tent during the Feast of Sukkot? It does not indicate it was. However, It is a command that they were to live in Sukkot in both Nehemyah 8 and Vayikra 23. The materials for the Sukkot are even listed for us.

Another name for the Feast of Sukkot was the Feast of Ingathering. Ingathering is translated from the Hebrew word Asiyl or Asif (ah-Seeeph) (Aleph-Sameh-Fey-Sofit) which is a masculine noun. It is reference number 614 on page 141 in the NEHC and on page 62 in the BDB. In reference to this feast it is used in two places.

Shemot (Exodus) 23:16

16 and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of **Ingathering (ha'asif )** at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.

Shemot (Exodus) 34:22

22 You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest; and the Feast of **Ingathering (ha'asiyf)** at the turn of the year.

We can see what we have studied today that the Feast of Sukkot or Ingathering is kept in the Seventh Month starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> Day of that month and kept for seven days. We are to be there seven days as seen from the fact we were to bring offerings everyday to the Ohel (Tent) of Meeting or Mishkhan and later to the temple. It was to be a Miqra Qodesh (Set-apart Proclamation) but on the First day was to be a Shabbaton (Rest) as was the eighth day after the Feast. We also see that we are commanded to built sukkot as citizens and that we were to live in them for Seven Days. Though tents were used at that time and nothing says they cannot be used would we not be fulfilling the command if we

did not build sukkot. Also, the gathering was for the whole family and all the family's servants and the ger with them. We also see that this was a command for all time and not just for them while in the land. So we should keep it today. But what about the future?

Zekaryah (Zechariah) 14:16-19

16 All who survive of all those nations that came up against Jerusalem shall make a pilgrimage year by year to bow low to the King Yehovah of Hosts and to observe the Feast of Sukkot. 17 Any of the earth's communities that does not make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow low to the King Yehovah of Hosts shall receive no rain. 18 However, if the community of Egypt does not make this pilgrimage, it shall not be visited by the same affliction [plague] with which Yehovah will strike the other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Sukkot. 19 Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and of all other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Sukkot.

In the Future, all nations will be required to come up to Yerusalayim to keep the Feast of Sukkot.

We know that if we keep his commands he will restore us to our land.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:1-6

1 When all these things befall you—the blessing and the curse that I have set before you—and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which Yehovah Eloheykha has banished you, 2 and you return to Yehovah Eloheykha, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day, 3 then Yehovah Eloheykha will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where Yehovah Eloheykha has scattered you. 4 Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there Yehovah Eloheykha will gather you, from there He will fetch you. 5 And Yehovah Eloheykha will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your fathers.

6 Then Yehovah Eloheykha will open up your heart and the hearts of your offspring to love Yehovah Eloheykha with all your heart and soul, in order that you may live.

Let us start preparing to keep the Feast of Sukkot this year.