



**T**he final *moed* (appointed time by God) is *Sukkot*/the Feast of Tabernacles. It has its origin in the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. In order to commemorate this experience, in Leviticus 23, God commanded people to celebrate the feast on the 15th day of the seventh month, with a convocation and day of rest on the first day, followed by dwelling in *sukkot* (“tabernacles or booths”) for seven days, then another convocation and day of rest on the eighth day.

The people were also instructed to “take for yourselves the fruit of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of myrtle and willows” (Lev. 23:40). During the second temple period, the Sadducees interpreted that instruction to mean that the tree branches were to be used on the *sukkah*. But the Pharisees said that the branches were to be carried by the people. The solution was a compromise—

1. Branches would be placed as roofs on the booths
2. And the tree branches would be placed together in what is called a *lulav* and waved by the people in the Temple courtyard.

When building a *sukkah* there has to be a minimum of three walls. The most common custom is to eat meals in the *sukkah*, although some people will also sleep in them during the seven days.

Regarding the *lulav*, the custom is to bind one palm frond surrounded by three myrtle and two willow twigs. The fourth species is described as *pri eytz hada*—“fruit of a beautiful tree.” Jewish tradition teaches that it is a variety of citrus called the citron, also called *etrog* in Aramaic. But there is no evidence of its presence in the region until at least 800 years after the Exodus. It is possible that it was originally the fruit of the olive tree, because that is what

Nehemiah used when restoring the observance of *Sukkot* after the return from Babylonians captivity. It is likely that the citron/etrog came to Israel from India by way of Persia, at some point during the second temple period and, at that time, this citrus fruit was adopted as the “fruit of a beautiful tree.” Today, it is waved with the *lulav* in all directions, signifying God’s sovereignty over the entire universe.

In second temple times, *Sukkot* was the third and final pilgrimage festival (Ex. 23:14-17). Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, each family would set up their *sukkah* and camp out in it for seven days. Each day in the temple, special ceremonies took place, including the sacrifice of 70 bulls, representing the 70 nations of the world at that time, which indicates God’s provision for all people.

A unique feature of this festival was the pouring of water ritual. Each morning during the week, a procession of priests and Levites made their way to the Pool of Siloam where a priest would draw *mayim chaim* (“living water”) from the pool. They would return to the Temple and would be met by other priests carrying long willow branches, circling the altar and using their branches to form a *sukkah* over the altar. And then the high priest with the water would ascend the ramp to the altar and pour out the water into an opening below. This would be done in the presence of the people, each one holding their *lulav* and *etrog*, to the accompaniment of priests blowing silver trumpets and others singing God’s praises.

In the evening, ceremonies involving brilliant lights took place in the Temple’s Court of Women. Massive lampstands standing 75 ft high were set up in each corner. It is said that the light was so bright that all of Jerusalem was lit up by them (*Mishnah Sukkah 51a*).

It was in this particular context during the observance of *Sukkot* when Yeshua declared that He was “the Living Water” (John 7:38) and “the Light of the World” (John 8:12).

Moreover, Yeshua came to this world to establish the fulfillment of the original intent of the holy day—dwelling with God. For, as we are told in John 1:14—“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” That profound truth is further magnified by extensive evidence that Yeshua’s birth occurred during the time of *Sukkot*, not in December.

Altogether, these elements of *Sukkot*, plus many more, point toward the great future hope of believers in Yeshua from all nations, and that is dwelling together with the Lord throughout eternity.