

Feast or Famine

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Sukkot is the seven day festival that we celebrate in the fall of each year to remember the wilderness journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. During these 40 years, the Hebrew people were led by a cloud by day and a fire by night. They were fed miraculously manna from heaven and their needs were met supernaturally. Neither their shoes nor their clothes wore out for the entire journey. We remember this time of YHWH's dwelling power as we build a booth/Sukkah/tent and worship YHWH for seven days.

"So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to Yahweh for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before Yahweh your Elohim for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to Yahweh for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am Yahweh your Elohim." So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of Yahweh," Leviticus 23:35-44. This passage may seem a bit strange as it says that the Festival of Tabernacles is seven days, yet the eighth day is a time of rest and worship. What is so special about the 8th day of Sukkot?

"Throughout the year, the daily offerings in the Temple were accompanied by the pouring of wine on the altar; on Sukkot, water was poured in addition to the wine. The drawing of water for this purpose was preceded by all-night celebrations in the Temple courtyard, with music-playing Levites, torch-juggling sages and huge oil-burning lamps that illuminated the entire city. The singing and dancing went on until daybreak, when a procession would make its way to the Shiloach Spring which flowed in a valley below the Temples," says the Jewish Encyclopedia.

Though we like to camp during Sukkot and hope that it doesn't rain, Sukkot is about water. According to the sage Rabbi Eliezer (Sukkah 11b), we dwell in sukkah huts because the children of Israel were sheltered in the desert by the divine clouds of glory; the cloud imagery is no accident. Tradition even requires that the sukkah's roof must allow rainwater to penetrate. Even more, the four species used for the Sukkah are connected to water. "The lulav itself, the date palm, was the most water-loving plant of the desert; the myrtle (hadas) needs the most water of the mountain plants; the etrog fruit among agricultural trees requires the most rains to grow; and of course the "willow of

the brooks" (arvei nachal) are synonymous with abundant water, growing often with their roots right in the streams," says one web site.

As Sukkot ends another celebration is held. This holy day is often considered the 8th day of Sukkot but it is actually an altogether different holiday. "...On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Sukkot, seven days for YHWH... on the eighth day, there shall be a holy convocation for you," Leviticus 23:34.

Numbers 29:35, "On the eighth day you shall hold a solemn gathering; you shall not work at your occupations."

This eighth day of Sukkot is called in Hebrew "Shemini Atzeret." This term literally means "the eighth day of holding" or the "eighth day of assembly." On this day, we are commanded to gather together for worship and prayer. "Rabbinic literature explains the holiday this way: Elohim is like a host, who invites us as visitors for a limited time, but when the time comes for us to leave, He has enjoyed himself so much that He asks us to stay another day," says the Jewish Virtual Library.

There are not many specific commands for this day of worship. Infact, this day is usually forgotten by many observant Jewish and Christian people. Christianity insists that the Law of Moses has been superseded by the New Testament; therefore the festivals should not be celebrated. In Judaism, Shemini Atzeret has sadly been replaced by modern holiday of Israel called "Simchat Torah." This holiday occurs on the 9th day of Sukkot. Simchat Torah is a day for rejoicing in the Torah and marks the end of yearly Torah reading and the beginning of the new cycle. Judaism, for the most part, has replaced the reverence of Shemini Atzeret for "Simchat Torah." The Jewish tradition of Simchat Torah is a good time to rejoice for the Word of YHWH, yet the Biblical festival of Shemini Atzeret is a great time to hear from YHWH about His presence and power. Traditionally in the synagogue, Shemini Atzeret is commemorated only by adding a specific prayer to the daily petitions. This prayer is a request for rain. A prayer for rain is important as in ancient Israel; Shemini Atzeret coincided with the beginning of the rainy season. Accordingly, prayers for rain or "*tefillat geshem*" and good crops were recited. Many Orthodox Jews still recite the ancient prayers at this time.

The connection between rain and Shemini Atzeret will teach us much if we will allow our minds to be opened to YHWH's Torah. May the Ruach Ha Kodesh reveal Y'shua to us in Shemini Atzeret. Luke 24:45, "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." This must be our prayer on about holy day of Shemini Atzeret.

In Israel there is an early rain season and a time for the latter rains. It doesn't rain every other day in Israel! The "Early Rains" were the heaviest rains and they came during the months of September and October. The rivers would swell from the rains and it was these rains that would soften the parched, dry land from the hot summer months. The first rains are and were for the fruit crops. The latter rains would be in the spring for the harvest of grain.

One website says, "It is in October and Autumn when Israel has the harvest of grapes, olives, and other fruits. It is also when the Barley was sown. In January the wheat would be planted. In April you have what we call Passover, but what Jews call *Chag haMatzot*, The Feast of Bread (unleavened). The barley was harvested in connection with *haMatzot*, and seven weeks later, at *Chag haKatzir*, the Feast of the Harvest, the season of harvest was concluded with the wheat harvest, or first fruits, or what Christians usually call Pentecost."

The early rains are mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:14. To read this verse in context is to unlock treasures from YHWH's word. Deuteronomy 11:8, "Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Verses 12-22 urge Elohim's people to be faithful to Him, to keep His commandments. This passage reminds the Israelites that they have seen the signs of YHWH's glory and now they must trust Him for the future. The rain will come as the people are obedient to YHWH and show mercy to people. The persistence of the rain is linked directly to the faithful obedience of the people. Rain is conditional to the mercy and love of YHWH's people.

Deuteronomy 11:16, "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other Elohim, and worship them; And then YHWH's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which YHWH giveth you."

In the Scriptures, rain is symbolic of a new way of life. Rain is necessary for crops to produce, farmers to harvest, and life to continue. Rain is dew from heaven. It is substance from the Almighty. It occurs as a result of Israel's obedience and faith. Praying for rain was a central act of worship for those living in Israel during ancient times as drought meant hunger. It is the same for us today.

Deuteronomy 11:10-12. ""For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. "But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which YHWH your Elohim cares; the eyes of YHWH your Elohim are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year." Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel, is dependent upon YHWH for rain. This is an important concept to grasp. We are dependent upon YHWH for rain - for renewal for YHWH's power. Look back at Deuteronomy 11:10-12. How as Egypt irrigated? Egypt was not dependent upon rain for its crops as this nation would irrigate its own land. Israel, a land of peaks and valleys, was totally reliant upon the heavens for rain.

Consider Genesis 13:10, "Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of YHWH, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before YHWH destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)" It is easy for Lot to consider that these lands looked better but they were not.

The three lands mentioned (Sodom, Eden, and the area around the Jordan) were abundant with water from creation. Yet, the fall spoiled these springs and tainted their rivers."And YHWH Elohim made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground-trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates," Genesis 2:9-14.

Because these towns were watered from the ground, they did not have to depend upon YHWH for rain. However, their water was tainted from the curse upon the land and their moral development was devastating. Genesis 3:6-24 explains the fall of man and how the inhabitants of Eden were cursed. Genesis 18:20-21 shows how Sodom's sin was "exceedingly grievous." And Genesis 12:12 explains how Egypt was full of murder. The Land of Israel has a religious and moral advantage over other places of the earth. The substance from Heaven, the dew and the rain, is directly connected to the people's obedience and faith.

Israel was and is forced to trust YHWH for rain. They couldn't make it rain. They simply had to walk in obedience and trust the power of YHWH. This is the lesson we must learn today. The pagan nations placed no faith in YHWH and didn't look to the heavens for rain. We must decide to not be like these people. We are Israel and we should look to YHWH for rain - whatever that rain is for us in our life. We must trust YHWH.

The Ancient Hebrew Research Center teaches about the subject of trust:

"While the word "trust" appears 134 times in the King James Version of the Bible. There are several different Hebrew words behind the English. The English word "trust" is an abstract (cannot be sensed by the five senses), but Hebrew is a concrete oriented language where each word is associated with something that can be sensed by one or more of the five senses. Each of these Hebrew words have their own nuance of meaning that can aid in interpreting the passages they are found in.

Chasah strong's #2620

Psalms 18:2, "YHWH [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my Elohim, my strength, in whom I will trust"

This word has the meaning of "to lean on someone or something". If you are hiking with a group of your friends and you sprain your ankle, you are going to lean on one of your companions to help you out of the wilderness. Elohim is the one that we lean on when things get tough. We can also lean on our friends and family for support as well.

Betach strong's #982

Psalms 56:4, "In Elohim I will praise his word, in Elohim I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

This word has the more concrete meaning of "to cling". A related word, avatiyach (#20) is a melon which clings to the vine. Even though the melon is huge, just as our problems seem to be, the vine is very small. We may not see Elohim but, his is our strength, the one who nourishes us just as the vine nourishes the melon.

Yachal strong's #3176

Isaiah 51:5, "My righteousness [is] near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust."

This word is usually translated as hope but it does not mean to wonder if something will happen and "hope" it does but, to "know" that something will happen in the future. We do not hope that Elohim will protect us, we "know" he will. In the above passage the concrete image of holding onto Elohim's arm for support can be seen but, the word arm (zeroah) is a Hebraic euphemism (using one word to mean something else) for "strength". This passage is saying that the people will know that Elohim's strength will save them.

Aman strong's #539

Psalms 78:22, "Because they believed not in Elohim, and trusted not in his salvation"

The word aman means to "be firm". When setting up a tent you always choose "firm" soil to drive in your tent pegs so that when the wind blows, the tent pegs will not be pulled out of the ground collapsing your tent (see Is 22:23 where the word aman is translated as "sure" in the KJV). This word is the verb form of the word "amen". When we say "amen", we are literally saying I stand firm on this prayer"

We must trust YHWH. To trust Him means to put confidence in Him, to believe firmly. This is the lesson YHWH wants to teach us about rain and Sukkot. Our trust/faith in YHWH is what brings the rain - the solution to our problems. We can't toil or worry for rain and we shouldn't toil and worry about life. Being upset; being anxious; being fearful; being tense; is SIN.

Such behavior causes our life to be full stress and eventually disease. When we worry, when we fret we are actually limiting YHWH's power. We are stopping His rain from coming in to our lives!

Matthew 6:25-31, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how Elohim clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"

A person can't add time to their life by worry but you sure can take away time from your life! When we worry or when we are upset our body produces chemicals and acids that cause our stomach to sour, our blood pressure to rise, our nerves to become raw, and our day to go bad. We must choose to not be fearful. We must choose to trust YHWH and PRAY. One answer to anxiety is to pray in faith. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to Elohim. ⁷And the peace of Elohim, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Y'shua," Philippians 4:7-8. You can't make it rain. You can't make your husband change his ways. You can't rescue your family. You can't stop the persecution. You can't change your mother. You can't be the savior of your friends. You can't make it rain. You can't stop the boss from being rude. You can't change your past. You can't make your kids behave. You can't make a new house appear. You can't ...

What you can do is PRAY to YHWH and TRUST YHWH and then accept His peace. You can change you. This change MUST start with accepting YHWH's faithfulness. YHWH can handle your pain. YHWH can solve your problems. YHWH can change people. Your part is to trust YHWH and pray for the rain.

Water or rain in the Bible represents truth. Rain is truth in any given situation. We must be obedient to what YHWH has shown us and then trust Him for the harvest.

"Messiah loved the Church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and CLEANSE it with the WASHING of WATER by the word."
Ephesians 5:25, 26

"Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isaiah 57:20

"The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." Isaiah 60:5

Here's the problem - we may pray for YHWH to move or for our lives to change but THEN our actions are in total disregard for our prayers. The rain - the change that we need in our lives doesn't come because we aren't living in truth. We ask for a miracle but we don't have the faith to see such appear. Our lack of sanctification stops the blessings of YHWH. Think about ecosystems. You can't harm one ecosystem without harming others. We can't pray for healing and then continue to worry. We can't pray for people and continue to nag or frustrate them. We can't pray for relief and continue to place ourselves in danger.

Remember that the early rains in Israel are for the fruit. We need YHWH's rain to produce the fruit of the Spirit. When we totally trust YHWH THEN and only THEN can we walk in the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

We must match our prayers with our actions. Hosea 10:12-15, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek YHWH, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men. Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, And all your fortresses shall be plundered As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle- A mother dashed in pieces upon *her* children. Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, Because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel Shall be cut off utterly."

There is a parable about two farmers who desperately needed rain. Both farmers prayed for rain but only one of them went out and prepared his fields to receive the rain. Which one trusted Elohim to send the rain? YHWH will send the rain when He is ready. We must also be ready and have our fields prepared to receive from YHWH. We prepare our fields by study, prayer, fellowship with other believers, and listening to the voice of the Ruach.

There is direct correlation between our actions; our trusting; and the rain of the Spirit. This connection ties end time events to this message of trust. During the millennial kingdom, when Y'shua reigns upon this earth for 1,000 years, the entire world will keep the Torah. The earth will change after the tribulation and all of humanity will be dependent upon the rain from YHWH. Those who choose not to follow the Torah will not have rain. They will not have a harvest and they will suffer famine until they die. Those who do not keep Sukkot will face a famine of rain. Zechariah 14:18-19, "And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then

on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which YHWH afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Festival of Sukkot. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."

To read this passage in context is to experience an alarming realization of the power in trusting in YHWH. Those who do not trust in Him during the End Times will face a plague of panic. Some will die as their hearts fail them. Others will suffer a famine from their disobedience. Those who cling to YHWH will be blessed. During the end of days and today, it is feast or famine. Zechariah 14:1-19, "Behold, a day is coming for YHWH, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then YHWH will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then YHWH my Elohim will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to YHWH, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. And YHWH will be king over all the earth. On that day YHWH will be one and his name one. The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security. And this shall be the plague with which YHWH will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. And on that day a great panic from YHWH shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other. Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps. Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which YHWH afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the

punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths."

Shemini Atzeret is the eight day of assembly. This is the last and 8th day of Sukkot. The number eight is the number of new life. We can have a new life if and only if we will trust YHWH for the rain. Trusting YHWH and walking in obedience results in blessings of rain (whateer rain is for you.) When we chose to not have faith or obedience we will face famine. A person who keeps the Feasts of YHWH will be blessed. Those who chose not to trust in YHWH will face the repercussions of such decisions. The theme of Shemini Atzeret is trust. We need to learn to trust YHWH and follow His commands. As we put our faith in YHWH the rain, our needs will be met and we will be blessed. Its feast or famine - the choice' the trust - is yours.