

Sukkot: Consumption and Dwelling Together

• Rosh HaShannah

Rosh HaShannah is the Feast of Trumpets, and literally Yom Teruah, Day for Blowing the Shofar. What is the significance of the shofar blasts? It is a call to the wayward wife to return—a call for repentance.

• Yom Kippur

• Sukkot

The Festival of Sukkot hastens immediately on the heels of Yom Kippur. The sorrow of the maiden's unfaithfulness during her period of betrothal is swept away by the forgiveness and cleansing afforded by the Yom Kippur atonement, and the rejoicing of the wedding feast begins.

The Sukkah symbolizes dwelling together. Here, the groom takes His bride into His own dwelling, a dwelling He has made for her, and the marriage is consummated. Nothing but joy can prevail: the bride and groom have joy unspeakable, for finally—at last, that which is promised is realized.

It is common to eat in the Sukkah, and thus the “marriage supper of the Lamb” fits into this picture well. What is more, the Festival of Sukkot is the only one prescribed in the Torah to be eight days long. Yet there is an issue: the Feast is described as seven days, yet requires assembly on the eighth day. The Sages have made much of the question whether or not the eighth day, called “Shemini Atzeret” is part of Sukkot or not. No one can actually decide. It is thus seen as connected to Sukkot, but a Festival unto itself, nonetheless.

What does this symbolize? The seven days represent the “week” of the world's history, with the seventh day the “millennial rest.” The eighth day must therefore represent eternity, connected to the millennial reign of Messiah, but distinct from it. The picture is obvious: God and His bride will remain forever, moving from His millennial reign directly into eternity: “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Here, then, is a picture (one of many) that helps us understand why the Festivals are so important for God's people. They remind in symbolic and real ways of God's desire to “dwell among His people,” to engage in that intimate relationship pictured between the husband and his wife. This is the “big picture” of redemption—of God's desire for His people.

The final word on this is simple: our marriages should reflect this cycle of redemption, a cycle so profound and infinite that God developed the whole scheme of the ages around it. Surely when Paul labels this a “great mystery” (Ephesians 5:32) he spoke well.