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## THE ABCS OF SUKKOT

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Our Father in heaven, you are our Creator, ruler, life-giver and sustainer and the giver of every good and perfect gift. You have given us your plan of salvation and your holy days. Thank you for Sukkoth and the privilege of fellowshiping together in the Sukkah as you have commanded in *the season of our rejoicing—Z'eman Simchateinu*. We ask these things in the name of your son and our Savior, Jesus Christ the Messiah.

*Chag Samech* to everybody on *Sukkoth* (soo-kote) the Feast of Tabernacles which is also known as the Feast of Booths, we are glad to have you with us. We pray that it will be a blessing to each and every one of you. We will begin the Feast with a special priestly blessing that God's priest would lift his hands up, separate his fingers from each other between the second and third fingers holding the index and the second fingers together and the third and little fingers together with the thumb down toward the middle of the palm. That is also the sign of "Spock" which was gotten from his Jewish heritage and used as the sign when Vulcans greeted one another.

This Levite priestly blessing is found in **Numbers 6:23-26**—"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'" Verse 27—"So they shall put my name on the children of Israel and I will bless them." This blessing was to be given by the priest on Israel when the people came together for the three sacred pilgrimage festivals. Sukkot is the third and final festival of each year combined with *Shemini Atzeret* and the greatest festival of joy in the scriptures. With *Sukkot* the cycle reaches its culmination in an exhilarating outburst of joy and a wealth of symbols that evoke memories of divine protection in the past, that lift our present to a higher plateau, and that point the way to the Messianic future.

The sukkah is an unusual symbol of protection—a fragile structure only minimally sheltering us from the elements is symbolic of God's sheltering hand which is the only protection that can be relied upon in this physical life. It is a reminder of the temporary dwellings in which God made the children of Israel live during their forty year journey in the wilderness and of the Clouds of Glory that protected them in their wanderings. The roof of green tree branches/palm boughs detached from the soil and laid loosely over the open top to give shade, yet allows looking up at the stars through the open spaces of the greenery. Like our temporary stay in the sukkah, life on earth is unstable and transitory. Drawing near and experiencing closeness to God is the source of our joy (*simchah*), the exciting gladness that is the hallmark of Sukkot.

Israel returned from Babylonian captivity in the days of Nehemiah (governor) and Ezra (priest and scribe). **Nehemiah 8:1-3**—"all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to

bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month (This was Yom Teruah/Feast of Trumpets) <sup>3</sup> then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. <sup>5</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing (on a platform of wood) above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God.” All the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Nehemiah said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for <sup>10</sup> **the joy of the LORD is your strength.**” It connects us with God. So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy. Do not be grieved. <sup>12</sup> And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.”

The JOY OF THE LORD is our spiritual and physical strength. A key to being strong is being joyful. Joy overcomes negative emotions of worry, anger, hostility, fear and anxiety. Joy is attuned with love. Having deep, tender feelings toward someone automatically brings joy and happiness and a sense of togetherness.

**Galatians 5:22-26**—“the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>3</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” **Love x Joy = Peace.** **Nehemiah 8:13**—“Now on the second day the heads of the fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. <sup>14</sup> And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths (*sukkah*) during the feast of the seventh month, <sup>15</sup> and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, **to make booths, as it is written.**’ ” Verse 16 —“Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths...with great gladness.”

We are blessed this year with a beautiful sukkah thanks to Michael, Walter and Shoah (11 yrs) who helped. We look forward to eating together in the sukkah today..We emphasize prayers for peace and prosperity, for water for our crops and the world. We celebrate with singing, dancing, waving the *lulav* with the four species and daily parade around the sukkah.

Passover is the first pilgrimage festival of the year. **Deuteronomy 14:23**—“And you shall eat before the LORD your God, **in the place where He chooses to make His name abide**, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. <sup>24</sup> But

if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you,<sup>25</sup> then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.<sup>26</sup> And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.”

When Israel came into the Promised Land, they kept the Passover at Gilgal. Later, they kept the Passover where the tabernacle was in Shiloh. Then in the days of King David, God moved the location of the Tabernacle to Jerusalem where he chose for his name to abide. **1Chronicles 21:18-26**—“Therefore, the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David that David should go and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.<sup>19</sup> So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place.<sup>26</sup> And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering.<sup>8</sup> At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.<sup>29</sup> For the tabernacle of the LORD and the altar of the burnt offering, which Moses had made in the wilderness, were at that time at the high place in Gibeon.” The Bible tells us where God put his name.

Just because property is donated to a church, it does not mean that God has put his name there as a place for the Feast. That is a stretch. When WWCG received property in Texas, Herbert Armstrong mandated that church members were to attend the feast there as God had put his name there. I questioned that, but where else was there to go? The feasts of the Lord are listed in **Leviticus 23**. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,<sup>2</sup> “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘the feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are my feasts** —statutes forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.’ ”

Verse 3--The weekly **Sabbath**.<sup>3</sup> Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. Sacred assemblies and no customary work is to be done.

1. Passover and Unleavened Bread.	Nisan 15	Commanded assembly – day 1 and day 7
2. Pentecost/ Pesach or Shavuot	Count 49	Commanded assembly – 50 <sup>th</sup> day
3. Feast of Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah.	Tishri 1	Commanded assembly
4. Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur.	Tishri 10	Commanded assembly – a day of fasting
5. Feast of Tabernacles/Sukkoth.	Tishri 15	Commanded assembly – day 1 Dwell in booths 7 days
		Rejoice 7 days: boughs of leafy palm, myrtle, & willow
6. Shemini Azaret	Tishri 22	Commanded assembly

**Exodus 12 and 14** says these feasts belong to God and he has given them to us and commanded us to observe them at their appointed times (Hebrew: *moadim*) and proclaim holy convocations on these days. **Verse 39-40**—calls the Feast of Tabernacles

by another name—*Festival of the Lord*—Hag ha YHVH. This definitely indicates that it belongs to the Lord. You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.” Why are we to do this?

**Verse 43**—“that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths (40 yrs) land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”<sup>4</sup> So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD. Today we can partake of that joy in the Sukkah in the backyard of our home and where ever we are scattered. The point that I want to make is that WWCG in the past (50 – 60 years ago) really missed the point about where God has placed his name. The place God chose was Jerusalem, as long as the temple was there. When the temple was destroyed and the priesthood was no longer functional, the command to build booths and dwell in them was still in effect. So we build the sukkah wherever we are located. The sukkah is an essential part of the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Galatians 3:15-18**—“Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.<sup>16</sup> Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.<sup>17</sup> And this I say, that the law (Levitical priesthood law added to that given at Sinai), which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant (the covenant that God made with Abraham) that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.<sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” The Levitical priesthood law was added because of sin (transgressions of breaking God’s law) as a tutor and a reminder for the people show and teach them the habit of obedience. **Verses 26-29**—“For you (Gentiles and Jews) who follow Christ) are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed (children), and heirs according to the promise.”

Becoming part of God’s church body through conversion, we have become part of spiritual Israel –sons of Abraham. Therefore, **Galatians 6:15-16**—“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision (Jew or Gentile) avails anything, but a new creation. And **as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.**” By repentance, baptism and the laying on hands we are now become a new creation—we are the spiritual Israel of God. Therefore, these feast days given to Israel now apply to us and we are subject to obeying and keeping the feast days that are ordained forever, because we are now the Israel of God. Not only that, but of the Anglo-Saxon tribe of Ephraim descended from Jacob and Joseph and thus are Israelite. Regardless of what color our skin is, if we are human and in the spiritual church of God we are the Israel of God. So all of God’s commandments and statutes apply to us now and that includes the annual holy days and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Notice how the Feast of Tabernacles reaches out to the Gentiles. When Christ returns to the Mount Olives and wages war against the rebellious nations of mankind and his

feet stand on the Mount of Olives, the whole world will come under his leadership. **Zachariah 14:4 -7, 9, 16 -18** —“It shall be one day which is known to the LORD—neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be —‘The LORD is one, and His name one’”—*Yahveh Eichod*. At that time we will all come to know Christ by the same name—*his true name*.<sup>16</sup> “It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>17</sup> And it shall be of the families of the earth who do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.<sup>18</sup> If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>19</sup> This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” In that day the knowledge of God will fill the earth.

Did you know that God wiped out the whole Syrian army in one night in the days of King Hezekiah of Judea? About 700 years before Christ the Assyrian army of approximately 176,000 men was invading the area of Judea and Jerusalem, and the angel of the Lord went forth and smote the army with a plague and in the morning all were dead. That was a pretty virulent plague!

When the Lord returns to rule this earth as King over all the earth, all nations who refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles will suffer plagues. This is the Feast of coming together in fellowship to worship the Lord and celebrating the joy of the bounty of the Lord and his protection, the feast that celebrates our having a relationship one on one with the Lord drawing close to him through prayer and praise in the sukkah, fortifying ourselves spiritually for the onslaught of all that lies ahead. **Zachariah 14:19-21**— is not referring to Moses law. It is God talking about the second coming of the Messiah to rule all nations of the earth and the consequence of not keeping His Feast of Tabernacles according to the new government of Christ on this earth. The temple will be rebuilt. The bells on the horses will have holiness to the Lord and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of Hosts. Everyone present will cook in them and eat before the Lord. “In that day, there will no longer be a Canaanite or unbeliever, or perverted person or an idolater in the house of the Lord of Hosts.”

We are celebrating that Feast today that the whole world will be celebrating in the future at the return of Christ. This is also mentioned in Isaiah 25:6, God says, “In this mountain, the Lord of Hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces (fat pieces), a feast of every kind of wine.” God will destroy the veil that has over the people’s eyes that has been blinding them. Today, the world around us has a veil covering their eyes so that they do not see and understand the word of God and his plan and the purpose of his holy days. God will wipe away tears from all faces. No longer will there be any anti-Semitism in the earth. No longer will there be hatred of Israel, or anti-American sentiment or division between the nations. There will be peace, harmony and joy because the Lord’s kingdom will be on earth and his teachings will go forth to all nations.

This is all summarized in **Isaiah 2:1**—“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the

mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it.<sup>3</sup> Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths.' For **out of Zion shall go forth the law**, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> He shall **judge** between the nations, **and rebuke** many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; **neither shall they learn war anymore.**" The law is NOT abolished. The feast days are not abolished. They are encoded in the Torah/Bible and this is God's law and the word of the Lord that is going to go forth to the world from Jerusalem (out of Zion) at Christ's return.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the kingdom of God on this earth. It pictures the millennial reign of Christ when He returns to this earth and establishes God's kingdom. **Isaiah 11** speaks about the day of Christ's return. "**There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.**"<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,

The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.<sup>3</sup> His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears;<sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. <sup>5</sup> Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,  
and faithfulness the belt of His waist."

There will be zero tolerance of wickedness and lawlessness in the kingdom of God. Those who practice wickedness and lawlessness will be annihilated. Notice, this is a description of what that world will be like.

<sup>6</sup> "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.<sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.<sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.<sup>9</sup> They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea."

The Feast of Tabernacles doesn't just portray the future, but it is a remembrance of the past. It is to teach us what it means to come out of Egypt under God's divine protection under His heavenly canopy (the cloud) through the desert and provisions of food (manna), water (drink) and safety (protection from armies and marauding caravans), just and He protected Israel. Israel learned lessons of obedience, faith and dependence

on God as they travelled and stayed in temporary dwellings. The sukkah has no solid walls to protect from weather, preying animals or enemies and reminds us our real reliance is on God. God performed miracle after miracle as He led Israel through the desert and saw that all their needs were met. Today, God gives us spiritual manna (His word) which will nourish us every day by reading it. So, understanding and keeping the Feast of Tabernacles is very important in God's plan.

*The Jerusalem Post* —“The Symbol of the Sukkah” by Rabbi Shulomo Riskin.” The Sukkah to sit in and the lulav to wave before God rejoicing are the two great symbols of the Feast of Tabernacles. Poem: Rules of the Sukkah (see attached copy) written by Rabbi Arthur Gould in Dr Seuss style.

*Aish.com*—“The ABCs of Sukkah” by Rabbi Shraga Simmons.

“Following on the heels of the High Holidays is Sukkot, a seven-day festival (8 days in the Diaspora) characterized by the outdoor Sukkah-huts that we sit in, and the "Four Species" of plants waved together each day. Sukkot is a holiday of immense joy, where we express our complete trust in God, and celebrate our confidence in having received a ‘good judgment’ for the coming year.

“Throughout the week of Sukkot, we eat, sleep and socialize in a Sukkah, reminding us that: The Israelites lived in huts during the 40 years of wandering in the desert.

God is our ultimate protection – just as He protected the Israelites in the desert with the Clouds of Glory (Exodus 13:21). “

**The Four Species** –“On Sukkot, we are commanded to wave the Four Species, each noted for its special beauty.

- Esrog – the citron, a fragrant fruit with a thick, white rind. It is often picked from the tree while green, and then ripens to a bright yellow.
- Lulav – the palm branch, which is defined in beauty by having a straight shape and leaves tightly bound.
- Hadas – the myrtle branch, which has a beautiful plated pattern of three leaves coming out from the same point in the branch.
- Arava – The willow branch, which should have oblong, leaves with a smooth edge.

We bind all the branches together: two willows on the left, one palm branch in the center, and three myrtles on the right. Say the following blessing, then lift them together with the Esrog and shake it in all directions, as a symbol of God's mastery over all Creation. The Four Species are waved each day.

Before waving the four species, say the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Bâruch Atâ Adonoy
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,	Eloheinu Melech hâ'olâm,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	asher kid'shânu b'mitzvotâv.
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֻלָּב.	v'tzivânu al n'tilat lulâv.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,  
Who sanctified us with His mitzvot, and commanded  
us concerning the taking of a palm branch.

“It is a special mitzvah to rejoice on Sukkot. To this end, the intermediate days of Sukkot are marked by celebrations called *Simchat Beit HaSho'eva*, commemorating the water libations that were offered during Sukkot in the Holy Temple. Sukkot is closely connected to ‘water’, as it is the day of universal judgment with regard to the blessings of rain and irrigation for the coming year.” It is the time when God decides how much rain and water he is going to give us for coming year which depends on us.

We are God's people and he will protect today as long as we obey and yield and submit to keeping his commandments, observe Torah and work with God in His Spirit and in Truth. Christ did not do it all on the cross 2,000 years ago. He started the process rolling by giving his life for us that our sins could be pardoned. Now he lives at the right hand of God the Father as our high priest and intervenes (intercedes) for us and prays to the Father for us and brings our prayers to the Father. Now, God is watching us as we draw close to Him and rejoice before him during this feast of Sukkoth every day for seven days and is deciding what he is going to do with us in the coming year. For example, how he is going to use us, what lessons we need to learn and what is needed to shape our character that he knows because we are in His presence. The more we rejoice and obey Him the more He is free to bless, strengthen and encourage us.

Sukkot is a time of universal blessing for all peoples; symbolized by the 70 additional offerings brought in the temple corresponding to the 70 nations of the world. People avail themselves and freely come to the water—the spiritual Feast. It is a time to come together before God as we are able and celebrate it correctly—dwelling in the Sukkah—visiting, sharing and encouraging one another and remembering to care for the poor. The Book of Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon, is read on Shabbat during Sukkot. The theme of Ecclesiastes is the folly of pursuing temporary pleasures of this world, as opposed to more eternal spiritual pursuits. Indeed, the Sukkah's flimsy construction reminds us that material possessions are transient and to teach us to look to God as our provider, protector, deliverer, and healer with all our heart, mind and soul. He is to be the focus of our life. Brethren, the feast is just beginning our celebration of JOY and celebration of the LOVE of God.

