

Fall Feasts of Israel

Lesson 11: Feast of Tabernacles (Part 1)

Instructor: Christy Voelkel

christyvoelkel@comcast.net

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Mikveh: Passages through Water

The Physical Act:

Being immersed in a bath of water and being drawn out (symbolic of death, resurrection and entering new life)

Purpose of the Act: based on God's use of the passages through water, what pattern is established for the performing of mikveh?

- Identification with a people and with God Himself
- Entering into/initiating a covenant
- An act of separation and sanctification
- A spiritual cleansing, not physical cleaning
- Answer of a good conscience toward God

Requirements for the Mikveh Bath: It had to be sourced in **living water** (running/moving/renewing waters).

"Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty [mikveh] of water, shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean." - Leviticus 11:36 NKJV

The mikveh bath had to come from a renewable source, such as a stream, spring of water, fountain, or lake with a renewable, recirculating source, so that the defilement might be carried away.

The mikveh is figurative of God Himself: God identifies Himself as the fountain of living waters

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns— broken cisterns that can hold no water." - Jeremiah 2:13

Mikveh: The Practice in Mosaic Law*

**The practice of mikveh is hard to identify in the Scripture. The Law speaks of various washings and bathings, but the actual practice of immersion is not clear. This is from my research of orthodox Jewish practices and what was taught by a Messianic Jewish rabbi.*

The purpose of the Law is to teach the children of Israel to discern what it means to be a holy and separate people before the Lord.

The transformation from one status to another—from unclean to clean, unholy to holy—requires an act of mediation, whether through blood, fire, or water.

The practice of *mikveh* was an act of mediation **for ritual purification**, but also signified a **permanent change in status**, as when entering into covenants. Events that represent permanent changes in status include:

Birth – a passage through waters happens with the breaking of the woman’s waters to facilitate new birth (they recognize the natural model; do not practice infant baptism)

Entering Covenants: (Conversion to Judaism, Marriage) Before marriage, both bride and groom would perform a mikveh as a public witness of entering into a permanent covenant with each other.

Death – bodies are washed in a mikveh-like manner to represent passing out of one realm and into another (permanently); also understood as the passing out of the Old Covenant. The requirements of the Law end at death.

The Day of Atonement:

- Requirement for the High Priest before entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (moving from the earthly realm into God’s realm).
- Performed as an act of repentance (renewal) – answer of a good conscience toward God

Mikveh: Hope in a Davidic King

Figurative use of the word, mikveh

“For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope [mikveh].” - 1 Chronicles 29:15 (Compare with Hebrews 11:13)

David speaks of a very different kind of *mikveh*. Here *mikveh* is translated as the word *hope* (in the KJV it is translated as “none abiding”).

At the inauguration of Solomon, David raises before the Lord the issue of Israel being ungathered as a nation, and as such, being without *mikveh* – hope. The children of Israel are aliens and pilgrims, like a gathering of shadows. **The hope of Israel being gathered and established as a nation is embodied in the future Davidic King.**

To be without *mikveh* is to be without hope. If you are not gathered into one body or nation, then you are without permanent status, like an alien having no rights in the land. **Identification is a vital function of *mikveh*.** It is a means of declaring identification with fellow believers. It gives a sense of permanence in the family of God. It gives us rights to claim the blessings and responsibilities for our part of the covenant relationship.

Mikveh: Hope for a kingdom

“When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands . . . For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.’” - Ezra 9:1-2

*“And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope **[mikveh]** in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.’” - Ezra 10:2-3*

“You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.” - Deuteronomy 22:9 (Laws of Forbidden Mixtures)

Ezra called all the men to assemble in Jerusalem within three days. Whoever had not come by the third day would be cut off from Israel. All the men sat in the open square as judgment began, and God sends torrential rain on them. (Ezra 10:7-11) They trembled because of the heavy rain.

Mikveh Ysrael: The Hope of Israel (God/Messianic King)

“O the Hope [mikveh] of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?”
Jeremiah 14:8

“O LORD, the hope [mikveh] of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. ‘Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.’” Jeremiah 17:13

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the coming Mediator who would embody everything that *mikveh* stands for:

- He is the manifest embodiment of Lord Himself
- He is our vessel of rescue who saves us
- He restores us to a right relationship with the Father
- In Him, we are separated and gathered into a holy body
- Through Him, we die to the Old Covenant and enter into a New Covenant. He Himself had to die to the Old Covenant. We identify with Him through symbolic death and resurrection of immersion baptism.
- Through Him, we find new and eternal life (new birth)
- He is our High Priest, who undertook a baptism so that He would be identified with us and become our Mediator
- He is the fountain of living waters that cleanses and purifies us
- He is our Hope

“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1 John 3:3

John's Water Baptism of Repentance

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." - Mark 1:4

John the Baptizer was a Levitical priest with a ministry of mikveh/baptism. His baptism was specifically associated with repentance and return. John identified himself as the one "preparing the way." What he was doing was completely in keeping with the Jewish expectation and preparation for the Day of Atonement. **The Jewish expectation was that a spiritual return to God would be followed by a physical return to the kingdom** (Acts 1:4-7).

John's baptism pointed to a coming Messiah and His kingdom. *"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ . . .?"*
John 1:25 Where did the Pharisees come up with the understanding that the Christ, when He came, would be known for a ministry of baptism? The mikveh ministry was the means of identifying the Messiah – Mikveh Ysrael, Hope of Israel, the Gatherer of Israel.

John's baptism was performed in the place where the nation had originally entered the kingdom under Joshua. The Jordan crossing was a replay of the Red Sea Crossing. To be mikveh-ed in this place had symbolic significance to the people. The Jewish people flocked to him for baptism to be identified as a nation under a coming Messianic king who would gather them into His kingdom.

The Sign of Jonah (the dove): The dove finding a place to rest would be a sign of His coming. Rising on the third day would be a sign.

New Covenant Baptism vs Old Covenant Mikveh

John's ministry of OT mikveh. It shares most of the imagery we associate with baptism, but there are basic differences.

The OT practice of *mikveh* was used a form of mediation to become ritually clean, an act of repentance and beginning again. It pointed to a Messiah yet to come. Once the Mediator came, the Mediator replaced the need for continual renewal by physical water washing, just as He replaced the sacrifices.

Our practice of water baptism is a **one-time identification with Christ who has come**. When we are baptized into Christ (Mikveh Israel), we are identifying with His death and resurrection. Just as the children of Israel were baptized into Moses, so we are baptized into Christ.

Old Covenant Mikveh is different from New Covenant water baptism (also different from the giving of the Spirit)

Acts 19:1-6 – Paul finds believers at Ephesus who have been baptized into the repentance aspect of John's baptism but had no understanding of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-4). Paul re-baptized them into an identification with Christ (Acts 19:5). Even so, the Spirit did not come on them without the laying on of hands. (Acts 19:6)

Acts 8:14-16 – The people in Samaria had been baptized with water in the name of Jesus and yet the Spirit was not given to them.

Acts 10:44-48 – First the Spirit falls on the Gentiles, then they are baptized in water.

The Reaping

Last of the grain harvest

- Reaping the grain
- Threshing the grain
- Bringing the good into the storehouse
- Burning the chaff

The grape harvest

- Reaping of grapes
- Treading the winepress

Beginning of olive harvest

- Threshing: shaking the tree
- Picking up individually
- Press out the oil

Reaping: Qatsar (Hebrew)

- **Qatsar** most often means to be reaped—to be **shortened or cut off** the way stalks of grain are cut off in reaping, or as reaping cuts off the growing season.
- It can apply to a **harvest of fruit** or a **harvest of people**.
- It can refer to reaping **something sown physically or spiritually**: associated with a man's works being judged with spiritual consequences.

*“He weakened my strength in the way; He **shortened** my days.” Psalm 102:23*

*“The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be **shortened**.” Proverbs 10:27*

*“He who sows iniquity will **reap** sorrow . . .” Proverbs 22:8a*

*“They have sown wheat but **reaped** thorns; they have put themselves to pain but do not profit. But be ashamed of your harvest because of the fierce anger of the LORD.” Jeremiah 12:13*

*“They sow the wind, and **reap** the whirlwind . . .” Hosea 8:7a*

*“Sow for yourselves righteousness; **reap** in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness; you have **reaped** iniquity . . .” Hosea 10:12-13*

The Reaping of Grain and Grapes

Threshing floors are places where judgments are made

- Gideon is given the sign of the fleece on the threshing floor (Judges 6:36)
- Ruth approaches Boaz on the threshing floor (Ruth 3)
- Uzzah dies when he stretches out his hand to steady the ark at Nachon's threshing floor. (2 Sam 6:6)
- **The Temple was built on a threshing floor: 2 Chr 3:1**

John the Baptist

“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” - Matthew 3:12

Twice Jesus performs a cleansing of the Temple's threshing floor – minor fulfillment

Treading the winepress is symbolic of judgment.

“The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.” – Lam. 1:15

“Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.” – Isa. 63:2-3

“Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.” - Joel 3:13 (Day of the Lord)

The Reaping of Grain

Reaping: Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:38-43)

“The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” - Matthew 13:38-43 NKJV

Parallels the Feast of Tabernacles in its themes of the final in-gathering following a time of judgment.

The Reaping of Revelation 14:14-20

The Gleaning

That which is taken and that which is left behind . . .

In the Old Testament, when you reap, you are told not to **glean your vineyard** or your field. Once you have made the initial cutting, you don't make a second pass. There are two Hebrew words, translated as "glean" in English:

Laqat: to gather, glean – a very broad use, not limited to gleaning a field. Gathering can apply to picking up things lying on the ground – manna, stones, wood, herbs, corn, olives, etc.

Alal: to act severely, deal with severely, make a fool of someone. It carries with it the idea of taking one's pleasure in humiliating or abusing someone, or gratifying one's desire in vexing or making sport of another. It is likened to the brutality of being in the hands of a child who doesn't know restraint.

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather **[laqat]** the gleanings **[leqet]** of your harvest. And you shall not glean **[alal]** your vineyard, nor shall you gather **[laqat]** every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God." - Leviticus 19:9-10*

*"When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean **[alal]** it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." – Deut. 24:21*

The remnant of the vineyards and fields are left to those with a remnant status among the people.

The Gleaning

People who are taken and people who are left behind.

Only in two places is **laqat** used in reference to people:

- Judges 11: Jephthah “gathers” to him worthless men (dregs of society).
- *“And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered [laqat] one by one, O you children of Israel.” - Isaiah 27:12*

The Lord likens the gathering of His people to an olive tree being threshed (shaken) so that the olives fall to the ground and are picked up one by one.

Alal is almost always used in reference to people, and always in the context of excessive judgment being rendered. Besides the Law regarding gleaning fields, it is translated as the word “glean” only a few times:

- Judges 20: When the tribe of Benjamin sided with the men of Gibeah who abused [alal-ed] the Levite’s concubine to death, Benjamin is gleaned [alal-ed] in battle and only a remnant is left.
- Jeremiah 6:9-11 *“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; as a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches.’ To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed . . . Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD. I am weary of holding it in. I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together; for even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days.”*

The Reaping

Future fulfillment: The Reaping and Gleanings of the End Times

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

- Matthew 24:40-42 NKJV

God will make the initial pass and gather those who are His to Himself. That is the taking – the Rapture. He will leave behind those who are not His.

The Tribulation is an alaling – a second pass – a taking of the gleanings or remnant in a complete reaping.

God gleanes – “alals” – deals severely with – the wicked and humiliates His enemies. As the Lord makes a second pass through His field/vineyard, more believers are gathered out of the gleanings. He will gather to Himself the remnant of Israel.

“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” - Isaiah 11:11-12

Feast of Tabernacles

aka Feast of Booths, Feast of Ingathering, Time of Our Joy

Hebrew: **Sukkot** (pronounced sue-coat) or Booths

Basic Observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

Torah (Law):

Lev 23:33–44

Num 29:12–31

Deut 16:13

Haftarah (Prophets):

1 Kings 8:2–21

Zechariah 14:1–21

Ezekiel 38:18–39:16

Book of Ecclesiastes
(Isaiah 12:3)

NT portion:

Matthew 17:4

Revelation 20:4–10

Revelation 2-3

John 7:37–39

Matt 25:21

From the Law (Leviticus 23:33–44)

- **Seven-day feast**, 15th-21st day of the 7th month (v34) held over for an eighth day
 - Seventh (last) day: **Hosannah Rabbah** or the **Great Day**, or **Day of Great Salvation**: when God decides whether to give rain or not (Zech 14)
 - **Eighth Day Assembly** (Lev 23:36) (Shemini Atzerets) also celebrated as the day for **Rejoicing in the Torah** (Simchat Torah) when the last passage in Deuteronomy is read and the Torah scroll is rolled back to begin again at Genesis.
- **Sabbath-rest** and holy convocation (assembly) (v35) A pilgrimage feast (Deut 16:16)
- Make offerings each day (v36, Numbers 29:12–31)
- **End of the wheat and grape harvest** (v39, Deut 16:13)
- Gathering of the **four species of branches** (v40)
- **Command to rejoice** before the Lord (v40)
- **Dwell in booths** (v42–43) (Sukkot)

From the Prophets (Temple days)

- **The Water-Drawing Ceremony/Lighting Ceremony** (plea for rain)

From Booths (Sukkot) to Kingdom

The sukkah is a rough, temporary shelter made with materials at hand.

Jacob's Booths

“And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths [sukkot] for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.” —Gen. 33:17

The core picture: Jacob in his centrally-located big tent, surrounded by his flocks housed in small booths all around him.

The Exodus Journey

The core picture: God in His centrally-located big tent and His flock camped around Him in booths.

During the journey, God dwells among His people, protecting and providing for them. The Law includes this command to preserve this picture for future generations with the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths).



From Booths (Sukkot) to Kingdom

Israel in the Land

When the children of Israel keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the Land of Israel, the booths are no longer just rough shelters. They are decorated with branches, vines, and harvested fruits.

Everyone living in the land of Israel are required to assemble at the place where the Lord chooses to put His tent (Deut 16:16). Once Jerusalem is established, everyone must make the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the assembly.

They are to eat and sleep in sukkot for all 7 days of the festival. They are called to rejoice in their vine-covered booths in remembrance of the Exodus and in acknowledgement of the Lord's provision and protection from year to year.

Solomon's Kingdom and the Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:2–21; cf 2 Chr 5:13-14, 7:8-10)

This picture of the Feast of Tabernacles reaches its greatest expression in when Solomon chooses to dedicate the Temple at the celebration of this feast. During the dedication, the Shekinah glory comes down to fill the Temple.

Elements of the picture:

- Every family rejoices under a vine-covered sukkah
- A time of rest from labor (end of the harvest)
- Celebration of God's provision and protection
- God in His Shekinah glory dwelling among His people in the Temple
- The great Davidic King reigning over the kingdom
- Israel gathered around Jerusalem, rejoicing in their booths
- Period of national rest and prosperity under Solomon's reign

From Booths (Sukkot) to Kingdom

So, what happened to the Kingdom picture of the Feast of Tabernacles? (1 Kings 12:25-33)

“Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.” - 1 Kings 12:32-33

What happens when Israel corrupts the picture of the kingdom that God commanded them to keep?

Judgment comes and the Northern kingdom is taken away into Assyrian Captivity

Jonah was a prophet from the Northern kingdom who ends up in Assyria (Nineveh) in the generation preceding the captivity. There is a prophetic picture of the coming judgment against the Northern Kingdom painted into the episode of the vine, worm and east wind. **Read Jonah 4:5-8**

- A man rejoicing under a vine-covered sukkah. **What is this a picture of?**
- A worm comes and eats away at it until the picture died. **Who is the worm?**
- The east wind begins to blow. **What form of judgment descended on the northern kingdom?**
- Jonah is a prophet of the northern kingdom who never returns from Nineveh. **Does the northern kingdom ever return to the land after they are taken to Assyria?**

From Booths (Sukkot) to Kingdom

The Return: Read Ezra 3:1-6, 10-13

"They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day. Afterwards they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons and for all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid." - Ezra 3:4-6 NKJV

When Israel returns, they begin with a celebration of the fall feasts.

Why would God orchestrate the timeline so that these are the feasts they celebrate?

Which feast is not celebrated of the three?

What message is God giving them?

Remember the elements of the first Temple:

- God in His Shekinah glory dwelling among His people in the Temple
- The great Davidic King reigning over the kingdom
- Israel gathered around Jerusalem, rejoicing in their booths
- Period of national rest and prosperity under Solomon's reign

What elements are missing when they begin celebrating these feasts again?

The prophets under Ezra are Haggai and Zechariah, and they do some vision-casting . . .

From Booths (Sukkot) to Kingdom

The Return of the Glory: Haggai 2:1-9

The Return of the God and the King: Prophecies of Zechariah

Zechariah 2:10-11 – The Lord shall dwell among His people again

Zechariah 3:8 – The coming of the Servant, who is the Branch

Zechariah 6:11-12 – the crowning of the King-Priest who builds the Temple

Zechariah 8:12, 19 – A return to prosperity and plenty, fasting to feasting

Zechariah 9:9-10 – The coming King (lowly and riding on a donkey)

Zechariah 9:14 – The Lord will blow His trumpet and defeat the nations

Zechariah 12:10-14 – A day of pouring out of the Spirit and great national mourning when Israel recognizes the One who they pierced

Zechariah 13:7 – Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. One-third of the people will be brought through the fire for refining and testing.

The Return of the Kingdom: Zechariah 14:1-26 (Read for the Feast of Tabernacles)

- All nations will come to worship the King yearly at the Feast of Tabernacles
- No worship, no rain (giving of rain becomes associated with the feast)



At Jesus' Transfiguration:
"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" - Matthew 17:4

The Readings for the Feast of Tabernacles

Torah (Law):

Lev 23:33–44

Num 29:12–31

Deut 16:13

1 Kings 8:2–21 The Dedication of Solomon’s Temple at the Feast

Zechariah 14:1–21 The Messianic Kingdom

Ezekiel 38:18–39:16 The Gog-Magog War

Haftarah (Prophets):

1 Kings 8:2–21

Zechariah 14:1–21

Ezekiel 38:18–39:16

Book of Ecclesiastes

(Isaiah 12:3)

Book of Ecclesiastes A reminder of the fleetingness of life

Isaiah 12:3 *“Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”*
(recited for the Water Drawing Ceremony)

NT portion:

Matthew 17:4

Revelation 20:4–10

Revelation 2-3

John 7:37–39

Matt 25:21