

Converging Sukkot Themes

¹In the beginning (bereshit) was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-4, 14).

John (a Hebrew speaker born and raised in Israel) chooses the exact same terminology as Genesis, the very first Book of the Torah: *“In the beginning (bereshit) Elohim created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1)*. He then tells us that when the Word became flesh it tabernacled among us. He chose the staging by alluding to *Sukkot*, that is, tabernacles. We established last week that *Sukkot* is not only the Feast of His Birth but also *Sukkot* is the Feast when the First Temple was dedicated (*2 Chro. 5, 1 Ki. 8*) – the time when the *Shekinah* Glory and the Spirit of God manifested in the *Tanakh*. From this Feast of Tabernacles forward, Israel could perceive and experience the presence of the Almighty with them until the time they themselves would drive it away. The same is with *Yeshua*, He was and is tabernacled with us until we ourselves choose to drive Him away. *Sukkot* is the festival of His indwelling.

Yeshua was about thirty years old (*“Yeshua was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry...” Luke 3:23*) immediately before or immediately after His thirtieth birthday, that is, during the season of *Sukkot*, the festival of the ‘Joy in the Harvest.’ About the time of *Sukkot*, nearly two thousand years ago, *“...the word of God came to John Ben-Zechariah in the desert”* and immediately he began immersing the people in Judah and surrounding areas (see Luke 3:2 and Matt. 3). But people began to wonder if perhaps the long-awaited Messiah had now come in the person of John. We are told: *“¹⁵The people were in a state of great expectancy, and everyone was wondering whether perhaps Yochanan himself might be the Messiah; ¹⁶so Yochanan answered them all, ‘I am immersing you in water, but he who is coming is more powerful than I – I’m not worthy to untie his sandals! He will immerse you in the Ruach HaKodesh and in fire. ¹⁷He has with him his winnowing fork to clear out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the straw with unquenchable fire!’” (Luke 3:15-17)*. This is the staging chosen by *Adonai* for Messiah *Yeshua* to enter the scene – a *mikvah* service during the days of *Sukkot* in the Jordan River. As His first step in public ministry, *Yeshua* undergoes a *mikvah*. Here we see the principle of the First Step in Establishing “New Creations” (the beginning of the *Kingdom of Heaven* on the earth) – to be immersed in water. Scripture goes on to say: *“²¹Now when all the people were immersed, Yeshua also was immersed. And while He was praying, heaven was opened ²²and the Ruach ha-Kodesh came down upon Him in bodily form like a dove. And from out of heaven came a voice, “You are My Son, whom I love—with You I am well pleased!” (Luke 3:21-22)*

Look at the parallel in Genesis. In the beginning, we are told that the Spirit of God (*Ruach Elohim*) hovered over the waters (the waters of creation), but it could not land anywhere – the earth was unformed and void. Evidently, the first step in any new creation is being immersed in water. Similarly, for us humans, immediately after conception we are immersed in the waters of our mother’s womb. Creation needed an immersion, that is, creation needed a *mikvah*. The very next thing created is light (*Or*, Hebrew), and *“the light was good. (Tov, Hebrew)”* On the very first day of creation the light was divided (separated) from the darkness as one of the very first acts of creation. We also need a *mikvah* to separate the light of Messiah in our hearts from the former darkness of our lives before we came to Messiah. When the earth had a *mikvah* during the days of Noah, we note a connection with *Sukkot* when Scripture states: *“⁴The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat” (Gen. 4:4)*.

Peter (Shimon ben Yonah) evidently saw this connection when he wrote: *“This also prefigures what delivers us now, the water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but one’s pledge to keep a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Peter 3:21)*. Peter makes a connection between the waters of immersion and the work of Messiah.

John the Baptist {*Yochanan ben Z'kharyah (Yah Remembers)*}, is the one whose miraculous birth precedes the birth of *Yeshua* some thirty years and six months earlier. John and *Yeshua* were nearly the same age (exactly six months apart) and related by blood (family) as it is written in Luke 1. This John is the Elijah mentioned in the Gospels. *Yeshua* himself said: *"Indeed, if you are willing to accept it, he is Eliyahu, whose coming was predicted"* (Matt. 11:14). In Matthew 17 *after six days* on top of a high mountain *Yeshua* was transfigured before them: *"¹After six days, Yeshua takes with Him Peter and Jacob and John his brother, and brings them up a high mountain by themselves. ²Now He was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Yeshua"* (Matt. 17:1-3). *Elijah* the prophet and Moses the Deliverer and author of the *Torah* are right before their eyes bearing witness to who *Yeshua* really is. Peter immediately wants to build a sukkah: *"⁴Peter responded to Yeshua, "Master, it's good for us to be here! If You wish, I will make three sukkot here – one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"* (Matt. 17:4). A sukkah? It was not Sukkot, and they are in the Galil, not Jerusalem. But the *Sukkot* connection is made and then the Father chimes in: *"This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"* How do you say listen in Hebrew? Is it not *sh'ma* (which means to show that you heard by obeying)? *Yeshua* then tells them: *"¹²I tell you that Elijah already came; and they didn't recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted. In the same way, the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.¹³Then the disciples understood that He was speaking to them about John the Baptist"* (Matt. 17:12-13).

During Sukkot, therefore, we have a number of converging themes and people: *in the beginning (bereshit)*, the creator (*Yeshua*), the Spirit (*Ruach*), the Father (*Abba*), Elijah (*Eliyahu*), Moses (*Moshe*), *Yeshua* in person, John the Baptist, Peter (*ben Yonah*), multiple *sukkot*, the transfiguration and *mikvah*.

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26, Matthew 24:37). So today *Yeshua* is asking you and me this question: *Are you ready for my return in Sukkot?* What will our response be this year?