

Messianic Rabbi: No, We Do Not Need to Live in a Sukkah

Every Autumn, people around the world gather materials together and build sukkot, or tabernacles in their yards. The brave ones actually sleep in their sukkah under the stars exposed to the elements, while the less adventurous only eat their meals while sitting inside their booth.

Those who build these simple shacks with see-through roofs that barely protect the inhabitants from the wind and rain do so in response to the commandments found in Torah, such as Leviticus 23:39-43:

“So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you are to keep the Feast of ADONAI for seven days. The first day is to be a Shabbat rest, and the eighth day will also be a Shabbat rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit of trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and rejoice before ADONAI your God for seven days. You are to celebrate it as a festival to ADONAI for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations—you are to celebrate it in the seventh month. You are to live in sukkot for seven days. All the native-born in Israel are to live in sukkot, so that your generations may know that I had Bnei-Yisrael to dwell in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am ADONAI your God.”

And Deuteronomy 16:13-15:

“You are to keep the Feast of Sukkot for seven days, after gathering in the produce from your threshing floor and winepress. So you will rejoice in your feast—you, your son and daughter, slave and maid, Levite and outsider, orphan and widow within your gates. Seven days you will feast to Adonai

your God in the place He chooses, because Adonai your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hand, and you will be completely filled with joy.”

As we read in the verses above, we see that the native born children of Israel were commanded to live in sukkot for seven days as a memorial reminder that G-D brought them out of the land of Egypt.

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This biblically commanded feast was to be celebrated at the end of every year’s harvest. By celebrating at the end of the harvest, those celebrating not only could rejoice in their deliverance from Egypt, but also in G-D’s abundant provision as they gathered in their harvest.

This dual-purpose celebration allowed those who lived in the promised land to always connect their deliverance and freedom from Egypt with the blessings of their land forever and annually reminding them that they weren’t just “set free from”—they were also “set free to.”

However, when we actually read the commandment above you will notice that the command to dwell or live in a sukkah was only given to the native born in Israel.

Those of us who live outside the borders of the promised land have no commanded responsibility to either build sukkot or dwell in them.

However, and this is a *huge* however, while we don’t *have* to, we can *choose* to. We, especially those of us who have been born anew through faith in Yeshua (Jesus), while not obligated to keep this commandment, are free to choose to build sukkot and dwell in them.

After all, have we not been delivered by G-D from our personal Egypt? Have we not been blessed with the greatest gift of all, the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)? Are we not seeing before our eyes the greatest harvest in history, the end time revival brought about by the "Latter Rain?"

So, while the truth is that those outside Israel don't have to build and live in sukkot, we do have the privilege to choose to, and by choosing to, we are reminded every year that just as our ancestor's journey through the wilderness was temporary, as they traveled to their permanent home, our journeys are also temporary, but our home in our promised land is eternal.

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