

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 248

IN BOOTHS YOU SHALL DWELL

A Covenant Deep Dive into *Chag HaSukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles / Booths) and the Eighth Day

What Did Yahweh Command in the Feast of Booths, What Does It Mean in Body and in Spirit, What Is the Last Great Day, and How Are Its Holy Convocations Kept Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

September 2026

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
<i>Sukkot</i> (booths) is one of the three pilgrimage feasts of Leviticus 23, kept without interruption in Jewish life for over two thousand years: the booth, the four kinds, seven days of rejoicing, and the Eighth Day <i>Shemini Atzeret</i> (the eighth-day closing assembly). Rabbinic tradition calls it <i>zeman simchatenu</i> (the season of our joy), echoing Deuteronomy 16:15.	The Gospel of John places a major discourse of Yeshua at this feast, on "the last day, that great day of the feast" (John 7:37). Mainstream Christianity largely left the feast behind, but Churches of God, Messianic congregations, Sacred Name assemblies, and Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem keep it today. The Tanakh speaks first: Zechariah 14:16 calls the nations themselves to keep it.	Islam has no Feast of Booths, but its Hajj preserves the same pilgrim pattern: a commanded journey, a season of "numbered days" of remembrance (Q. 2:203), and nights spent in simple tents at Mina. The Qur'an names tents as a mercy for the traveler (Q. 16:80). The Tanakh's booth is the oldest witness to the pilgrim's temporary dwelling.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one appointed time: the Feast of Booths and the Eighth Day that closes it. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books are cited by their English names only. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English versification; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Historical claims — Second Temple practice, later customs, modern observance — are graded against the two-or-three-witness standard and labeled as *corroborated*, *partly corroborated*, or *not established*. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, and the Qur'an are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The statute of the feast, its offerings, its dwelling, its joy, and the seventh-year public reading
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Zechariah	Solomon's dedication at the feast, Jeroboam's counterfeit feast, the fallen booth of David, and the nations going up to keep Sukkot
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles	The shelter of Yahweh's booth, the Hallel, and the restored keeping of the feast after the exile

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Sukkah 2:9; 3; 4:5, 4:9; 5:1–4; Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2; Talmud Sukkah 11b, 48b, 55b; Rashi on Leviticus 23:36	How the feast was kept in the Second Temple and after; the water libation; the seventy bulls; the meaning of the Eighth Day
Historical sources	Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 3.244–247; 13.372–373; Bar Kokhba letters (Cave of Letters); Book of Jubilees 16	Independent witness to Second Temple and early Roman-era practice
New Testament	John 1:14; 7:2, 7:37–39; Matthew 17:4; Revelation 7:9; 21:3	The feast as it appears in the Christian scriptures
Qur'an	Q. 2:196–203; 16:80; 22:27–28	The pilgrim pattern and the tent in the Islamic witness

I. FRAMING THE STUDY — WHY THE FEAST OF BOOTHS, AND WHY NOW?

I-A. The Last Appointed Time of the Year

The seventh month holds three of the appointed times of **Leviticus 23**. The first day is the Day of Shouting, studied in Doc 234. The tenth day is the Day of Atonement, studied in Doc 239. How the month itself is set was studied in Doc 240. The fifteenth day opens the last and longest feast of the covenant year: seven days of dwelling in booths, closed by an eighth day of holy assembly. This document completes that seventh-month series.

The timing is not academic. This document is being written in the very week of the feast. By the calculated Jewish calendar, the fifteenth day of the seventh month began at sunset on Friday, September 25, 2026. By the sighted-moon reckoning discussed in Doc 240, it begins at sunset on Saturday, September 26. Section IX sets out both calendars in full.

I-B. The Questions and the Method

This study answers six questions in the Tanakh's own terms:

First: What exactly did **Yahweh** command? The statute is examined in five Torah witnesses before anything else is said (Section III).

Second: What is its physical meaning — harvest, booth, offering, and rejoicing (Section IV)?

Third: What is its spiritual meaning — what does the booth teach the heart (Section V)?

Fourth: How has it been kept across Israel's history, and where did later tradition add to the text (Sections VI and VII)?

Fifth: What is the Eighth Day — ***Shemini Atzeret*** (the eighth-day closing assembly) — and what is meant by "the Last Great Day" (Section VIII)?

Sixth: How are its holy convocations kept today, without a Temple, and who is keeping them (Sections IX and X)?

The method is the standing method of this Institution. **Deuteronomy 19:15** requires two or three witnesses before a matter is established. Each finding is graded on that standard. Where a practice comes from later tradition rather than the written text, it is named as tradition — neither condemned for being old nor accepted for being popular.

I-C. What the Library Has Already Established

Five earlier documents bear directly on this one. The 613 Laws course, Lesson 18, established the three pilgrimage feasts as a unit: the command to rejoice (**Deuteronomy 16:14**), to appear before **Yahweh** (**Deuteronomy 16:16**), and not to come empty-handed. Doc 240 established how the seventh month is fixed and why the covenant community's calendars can differ by a day. Doc 233 studied **Amos 9:9–11**, where the sieve of judgment is followed by the raising of *sukkat David* (the fallen booth of David). Doc 227 studied **Isaiah 4:1–6**, which ends with a *sukkah* (booth / shelter) over Zion for shade and refuge. Doc 238 studied *yeshuah* (salvation / deliverance) — the very word that **Isaiah 12:3** places in the wells from which Israel draws water with joy. The present study gathers these threads around the feast itself.

II. THE HEBREW VOCABULARY OF THE FEAST

The Torah gives the feast several names, and each name carries part of its meaning. The table sets the core vocabulary side by side.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>sukkah</i> (סֻכָּה, booth / shelter); plural <i>sukkot</i> (סֻכּוֹת, booths)	H5521	A temporary shelter of branches — the covered hut of the field-watcher, the herdsman, or the soldier in camp	Leviticus 23:42–43
<i>sakhakh</i> (סָכַח, to cover / screen)	H5526	The root of <i>sukkah</i> (booth / shelter): to cover over, to screen, to overshadow protectively	Psalms 91:4; Exodus 25:20
<i>chag</i> (חַג, pilgrim feast)	H2282	A feast kept by going up — from <i>chagag</i> (to keep a pilgrim festival)	Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:16
<i>asif</i> (אָסַף, ingathering)	H614	The gathering in of the year's final harvest — grain from the threshing floor, grapes from the press, fruit from the orchard	Exodus 23:16; 34:22
<i>tequfat ha-shanah</i> (תְּקופַת הַשָּׁנָה, the turn of the year)	H8622	The circuit or turning point of the agricultural year, when the old harvest closes before the rains	Exodus 34:22

HEBREW TERM	STRONG 'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>miqra qodesh</i> (מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ, holy convocation)	H4744 / H6944	A sacred calling-together — an assembly summoned by Yahweh on a set day	Leviticus 23:35–36
<i>shabbaton</i> (שַׁבָּתוֹן, sabbath rest)	H7677	A solemn rest day — here the first day and the eighth day	Leviticus 23:39
<i>melekbet avodah</i> (מְלַאכֶּת עֲבֹדָה, laborious work)	H4399 / H5656	Occupational or servile labor — narrower than "all work" of the weekly Sabbath and Atonement	Leviticus 23:35–36
<i>atzeret</i> (עֲצֻרָת, closing assembly)	H6116	From <i>atsar</i> (to hold back / restrain): an assembly that holds the people, a closing gathering	Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35
<i>ezrach</i> (אֶזְרָח, native-born)	H249	The native of the land, like a tree rooted where it grew — named as the one commanded to dwell in booths	Leviticus 23:42
<i>samach</i> (שָׂמַח, to rejoice); <i>akh sameach</i> (אֶךְ שָׂמַח, wholly joyful)	H8055 / H389	Rejoicing commanded as an obligation; "you shall be nothing but joyful"	Deuteronomy 16:14–15

Four observations follow from the vocabulary.

First, the word *sukkah* (booth / shelter) comes from a root that means to cover protectively. The same root is used of the cherubim whose wings *sokhekhim* (overshadow) the mercy seat (**Exodus 25:20**), and of **Yahweh** who covers His people with His pinions (**Psalms 91:4**). The booth is built by human hands, but the word itself points upward to the One who covers.

Second, the feast has two Torah names, and they face different directions. *Chag ha-asif* (the feast of ingathering) looks at the field and the harvest (**Exodus 23:16**). *Chag ha-sukkot* (the feast of booths) looks back to the wilderness (**Leviticus 23:43**). The physical and the historical meanings are built into the names.

Third, the restriction on work is different from the weekly Sabbath and Atonement. On those days *kol melakhah* (all work) is forbidden (**Leviticus 23:3, 28**). On the first and eighth days of this feast only *melekbet avodah* (laborious work) is forbidden (**Leviticus 23:35–36**), and the Torah elsewhere

permits preparing food on the festival days: "only what every person must eat, that alone may be done by you" (**Exodus 12:16**). The feast is a rest built for a meal.

Fourth, the eighth day carries its own name, *atzeret* (closing assembly), from a root meaning to hold back. The Eighth Day is not simply "day eight of the booths." Section VIII examines it separately.

III. FIVE TORAH WITNESSES TO THE STATUTE

The Torah states the command five times, in four books. Each witness adds something the others do not.

Witness One — Exodus 23:16 and 34:22: The Feast of Ingathering

"And the Feast of Ingathering at the going out of the year, when you gather in your labors from the field" (Exodus 23:16).

"And the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year" (Exodus 34:22).

The earliest witness names the feast only by its harvest. It is given twice — once in the Book of the Covenant at Sinai and again in the covenant renewal after the golden calf — and both times it is one of three occasions on which "all your males shall appear before the Lord **Yahweh**" (**Exodus 23:17; 34:23**). The covenant broken at the calf was renewed with this feast still inside it.

Witness Two — Leviticus 23:33–43: The Full Statute

"On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths, seven days to Yahweh. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. Seven days you shall bring an offering by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you... it is a closing assembly; you shall do no laborious work" (Leviticus 23:34–36).

"And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your Elohim seven days... You shall dwell in booths seven days; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths, so that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am Yahweh your Elohim" (Leviticus 23:40, 42–43).

This is the fullest statement, and it gives the feast its whole shape: the date (the fifteenth of the seventh month), the length (seven days plus an eighth), the two *shabbaton* (sabbath rest) days, the taking of four kinds of growth, the command to rejoice, the command to dwell in booths, and — uniquely

among the feasts — a stated reason: "so that your generations may know." The feast is a teaching act. It is built to carry memory into the next generation.

The passage also contains a feature easy to miss. **Leviticus 23:39** begins again — "surely on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land" — after the chapter had already closed its list at verse 37. The Torah returns to this feast after summarizing all the others, as though it could not be finished in one pass.

Witness Three — Numbers 29:12–38: The Offerings of the Days

The priestly calendar gives each day its offerings. On the first day: thirteen bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs, and one goat for sin. Each following day the bulls decrease by one — twelve, eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven — so that the seven days together bring seventy bulls. Then the pattern breaks. On the eighth day: "one bull, one ram, seven lambs" (**Numbers 29:36**). No other feast in the Torah carries anything like this volume of offering, and no other feast ends with such a sudden change in scale.

Witness Four — Deuteronomy 16:13–17: The Command to Rejoice

"You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast — you, your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your gates... because Yahweh your Elohim will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, and you shall be wholly joyful" (Deuteronomy 16:13–15).

Moses restates the feast for the people about to enter the land. He adds three things. The joy is extended by name to seven kinds of people, four of whom — the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow — had no harvest of their own. The feast is kept "in the place **Yahweh** chooses" (**Deuteronomy 16:15**). And the joy is intensified: *ve-hayita akh sameach* (and you shall be nothing but joyful). No other feast carries that phrase.

Witness Five — Deuteronomy 31:9–13: The Reading of the Torah

"At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time of the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before Yahweh your Elohim... you shall read this Torah before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people — men, women, little ones, and your stranger within your gates — so that they may hear and learn to fear Yahweh your Elohim" (Deuteronomy 31:10–12).

The last witness makes the feast the setting for the public reading of the whole covenant every seventh year. The verb is *haqhel* (assemble), from *qahal* (assembly) H6950, and later tradition named the ceremony *Hakhel* (the Assembly). The largest gathering of the year, in the season of the fullest barns,

was chosen as the moment for the whole people — including the stranger — to hear the covenant read aloud.

Finding on the Five Witnesses

Five witnesses in four books of the Torah establish the feast beyond the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard. They agree on the date, the seven days, the eighth day, the booth, the rejoicing, the inclusion of the stranger and the poor, and the appearing before **Yahweh**. The feast is called *chuqqat olam* (a statute forever) "throughout your generations" (**Leviticus 23:41**). Its standing is not in question in the Tanakh. What later traditions dispute is how it is kept, which Sections VI through IX examine.

IV. THE PHYSICAL MEANING — HARVEST, BOOTH, AND OFFERING

IV-A. The Last Harvest and the Turn of the Year

In the land of Israel the grain harvest ends in early summer. The grapes are trodden and the olives and late fruit are gathered by the seventh month. After that comes the autumn rains and the plowing. The feast falls exactly at that hinge: the barns are full, the threshing floor and winepress are finished (**Deuteronomy 16:13**), and the sky has not yet opened. The Torah calls the moment *tequfat ha-shanah* (the turn of the year) (**Exodus 34:22**).

Physically, then, the feast is a thanksgiving for a finished year's work, kept by farming people at the one point in the year when they could leave the fields. That is why the command is timed "when you have gathered in the produce of the land" (**Leviticus 23:39**) and why the blessing is promised "in all your produce and in all the work of your hands" (**Deuteronomy 16:15**).

IV-B. The Booth — Where the Name Comes From

The Torah itself supplies the first *Sukkot* (booths) of Israel's history. On the night of the Exodus, "the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot" (**Exodus 12:37**; **Numbers 33:5**). The first place the freed people slept was named Booths. From Sukkot they moved to Etham, "and **Yahweh** went before them by day in a pillar of cloud... and by night in a pillar of fire" (**Exodus 13:20–21**). The name had already belonged to a place in the life of Ya'akov, who "built himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the name of the place is called Sukkot" (**Genesis 33:17**).

What exactly the wilderness booths were has been debated since antiquity. The Talmud records the dispute: one sage held that the "booths" of **Leviticus 23:43** were the clouds of glory that surrounded Israel, and another held that they were actual booths the people built (Talmud Sukkah 11b; the attributions are reversed in the Sifra). The text supports both readings in part. The people did live in

tents (**Numbers 24:5**) and made shelters of what the desert oases provided; and the text also places **Yahweh's** cloud over the camp as a covering (**Numbers 10:34**, "the cloud of **Yahweh** was over them by day"; **Psalms 105:39**, "He spread a cloud for a covering"). **Grading:** that Israel dwelt in temporary shelters in the wilderness under **Yahweh's** cloud is *corroborated* by several witnesses. Whether **Leviticus 23:43** refers chiefly to the shelters or to the cloud is *not established* either way; both readings teach the same thing — Israel lived exposed, and **Yahweh** covered them.

IV-C. Seven Days of Fragile Dwelling

The booth is commanded for seven days — long enough to change a household's routine, not merely to visit a symbol. A booth is not a house. Its roof lets in light and rain; its walls do not lock. For a people who had been promised "great and good cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things which you did not fill" (**Deuteronomy 6:10–11**), the booth was a yearly move out of those houses into something that could not protect them by its own strength.

Moses states the danger the booth guards against: "when you have eaten and are full, and have built good houses and dwelt in them... then your heart is lifted up and you forget **Yahweh** your **Elohim**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (**Deuteronomy 8:12–14**). The booth is kept at the season of the fullest barns precisely because that is the season of forgetting.

IV-D. The Four Kinds — What the Text Actually Names

Leviticus 23:40 names four kinds of growth to be taken on the first day: *peri ets badar* (the fruit of a goodly / splendid tree), *kappot temarim* (branches of palm trees), *anaf ets avot* (boughs of a leafy / thick tree), and *arvei nachal* (willows of the brook). The table sets the text beside the three main readings practiced today.

TEXT (LEVITICUS 23:40)	RABBINIC READING	KARAITE READING	SAMARITAN READING
<i>peri ets badar</i> (fruit of a goodly tree)	The <i>etrog</i> (citron) specifically	Splendid fruit trees, used in building the booth	Many kinds of fine fruit, hung as the booth's ceiling
<i>kappot temarim</i> (palm branches)	The <i>lulav</i> (closed palm frond)	Palm branches for the booth	Palm fronds in the booth's frame
<i>anaf ets avot</i> (boughs of a leafy tree)	The <i>badas</i> (myrtle)	Leafy branches for the booth	Leafy branches in the booth

TEXT (LEVITICUS 23:40)	RABBINIC READING	KARAITE READING	SAMARITAN READING
<i>arvei nachal</i> (willows of the brook)	The <i>aravah</i> (willow)	Willows for the booth	Willows in the booth
How they are used	Bound together and held and waved each day (Mishnah Sukkah 3)	Building materials, read together with Nehemiah 8:15	Built into an indoor booth roofed with hundreds of pieces of fruit

The rabbinic reading follows the order of the verse: "you shall take... and you shall rejoice before **Yahweh**." The taking is joined to the rejoicing, not to the building. The Karaite and Samaritan readings point to **Nehemiah 8:15**, where the returned exiles were told to "go out to the mountain and bring olive branches, wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." The Nehemiah list is not identical to **Leviticus 23:40**, but it shares palms, myrtle-type growth, and leafy branches, and it ties the branches to building.

Josephus, writing in the first century, describes the feast of his day: the people built booths and carried in their hands a bundle of myrtle and willow with a palm branch, together with the fruit of the *persea* (citron) (*Antiquities* 3.244–247). The Bar Kokhba letters from the Cave of Letters (c. 135 CE) include requests to deliver palm branches, citrons, myrtles, and willows to the rebels' camp for the feast.

Grading: that Second Temple and early Roman-era Jews held the four kinds in hand is *corroborated* by three independent witnesses (the Mishnah, Josephus, and the Bar Kokhba letters). That this is the only possible meaning of **Leviticus 23:40** is *not established*; **Nehemiah 8:15** is a genuine Tanakh witness for using such branches to build. Miqdash Bethel's position is that both practices keep the command, and neither should be made a test of fellowship.

IV-E. The Seventy Bulls

The seventy bulls of **Numbers 29:12–32** are the largest offering series in the Torah. The text gives no reason for the number. Rabbinic tradition offered one: "These seventy bulls — to what do they correspond? To the seventy nations" (Talmud Sukkah 55b, in the name of R. Elazar), with the single bull of the eighth day corresponding to Israel alone. The seventy nations are an echo of the seventy descendants of Noah in the table of nations of **Genesis 10**. **Grading:** the number seventy and the decreasing pattern are *textual*. The link to the nations is a *later interpretation*, though a striking one, since **Zechariah 14:16** does make this the feast of the nations. It should be taught as tradition, not as the Torah's own explanation.

IV-F. The Joy That Includes the Poor

The physical feast was also a physical distribution. The Levite had no field; the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow had no harvest. **Deuteronomy 16:14** names them among those who rejoice, and the prohibition on coming empty-handed follows immediately: "every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of **Yahweh** your **Elohim** which He has given you" (**Deuteronomy 16:17**). The harvest feast was designed so that no one in the gates went without. Its joy was a shared table, not a private one.

V. THE SPIRITUAL MEANING — FIVE WITNESSES

The Tanakh uses the feast's own vocabulary far outside the feast. Five lines of witness show what the booth is meant to teach the heart.

Witness One — Yahweh Is the True Shelter

"For He shall hide me in His booth in the day of trouble; He shall conceal me in the secret place of His tent" (Psalms 27:5).

"You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a booth from the strife of tongues" (Psalms 31:20 [Hebrew 31:21]).

"And there shall be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from storm and from rain" (Isaiah 4:6).

In all three texts the word is *sukkah* (booth / shelter), and in all three the booth belongs to **Yahweh**. The human booth is flimsy; His is not. The feast asks the covenant person to sit for seven days in a shelter that cannot save him, so that he learns where his real shelter is. Doc 227 found that **Isaiah 4:5–6** ends with **Yahweh's chuppah** (canopy) and *sukkah* (booth / shelter) over Zion; the feast rehearses that promise every year.

Witness Two — Remembering Dependence

"So that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:43).

"He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna... that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone... Your garment did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:3–4).

The booth is a memory of dependence. In the wilderness Israel had no fields, no barns, and no walls; every day's food came down from **Yahweh**. The feast is kept at harvest, when Israel had fields, barns,

and walls, and asks them to remember that the harvest came from the same hand as the manna. "You shall remember **Yahweh** your **Elohim**, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth" (**Deuteronomy 8:18**). Doc 229 found **Deuteronomy 8:17–18** to be the Tanakh's central rebuttal to self-made prosperity; the feast is that rebuttal in the form of a week.

Witness Three — Joy as Covenant Obligation

"And you shall rejoice before Yahweh your Elohim seven days" (Leviticus 23:40).

"And you shall be nothing but joyful" (Deuteronomy 16:15).

"Serve Yahweh with gladness; come before His presence with singing" (Psalms 100:2).

The Day of Atonement, five days earlier, commands the covenant person to *anah* (afflict) the soul (Doc 239). The Feast of Booths commands him to rejoice. The order is intentional: return and cleansing first, then joy. The joy of the feast is not the joy of the careless — it is the joy of the forgiven. The Tanakh sets the same order in **Nehemiah 8**: the people wept when they heard the Torah read, and were told, "This day is holy to **Yahweh** your **Elohim**; do not mourn or weep... for the joy of **Yahweh** is your strength" (**Nehemiah 8:9–10**) — and within days they were building booths (**Nehemiah 8:14–17**).

Witness Four — The Covenant Heard

"And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read in the book of the Torah of Elohim" (Nehemiah 8:18).

The feast is the Torah's chosen setting for hearing the covenant. **Deuteronomy 31:10–13** assigns the seventh-year reading to it, and **Nehemiah 8:18** records that Ezra read the Torah on every day of the feast. The spiritual meaning is plain: the booth is not only a place to eat; it is a place to listen. The generation that sits under branches is the generation that is taught.

Witness Five — Yahweh Dwelling Among His People

"And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month" (1 Kings 8:2).

"My dwelling place shall be with them; I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people" (Ezekiel 37:27).

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, says Yahweh. And many nations shall be joined to Yahweh in that day" (Zechariah 2:10–11 [Hebrew 2:14–15]).

Solomon chose this feast for the dedication of the Temple, and on that occasion "the glory of **Yahweh** filled the house of **Yahweh**" (**1 Kings 8:11**). The feast of Israel's temporary dwellings became the feast of **Yahweh**'s permanent dwelling among them. The prophets carry the theme forward: **Yahweh**'s *mishkan* (dwelling place), from *shakhan* (to dwell) H7931, will be with His people, and many nations will be joined to Him. The booth teaches that Israel lives in temporary dwellings so that **Yahweh** may dwell among them.

The Physical and the Spiritual Side by Side

ELEMENT	PHYSICAL MEANING	SPIRITUAL MEANING	TEXTS
The booth	A temporary shelter of branches for seven days	Yahweh alone is the true shelter; memory of wilderness dependence	Leviticus 23:42–43; Psalms 27:5; Isaiah 4:6
The ingathering	The last harvest of grain, grapes, and fruit	Thanksgiving; guarding the full heart from forgetting	Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 8:10–18
Seven days	A full week out of the house	Completeness; a whole cycle given to Yahweh	Leviticus 23:36, 42
The eighth day	A closing assembly after the booths	A new beginning beyond the completed seven	Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35
The four kinds	Fruit and branches of the land, taken in hand or built into the booth	Rejoicing before Yahweh with the gifts of the land	Leviticus 23:40; Nehemiah 8:15
The poor at the table	The Levite, stranger, fatherless, widow fed	Covenant joy is shared joy; not empty-handed	Deuteronomy 16:14–17
The reading of the Torah	Public reading every seventh year	The covenant heard by every generation, the stranger included	Deuteronomy 31:10–13; Nehemiah 8:18
Water and rain	The season of the first autumn rains	Yahweh the source of rain and of salvation	Zechariah 14:17; Isaiah 12:3

VI. THE FEAST IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY — KEPT, COUNTERFEITED, AND RESTORED

The Tanakh records the feast at five turning points in Israel's history, and later sources add a sixth and seventh. The table sets them in order; the commentary below draws out what each teaches.

PERIOD	WHAT THE RECORD SAYS	SOURCE	GRADE
Wilderness	Israel's first camp after Egypt is Sukkot; the people live in tents under Yahweh's cloud	Exodus 12:37; 13:20–22; Numbers 33:5	Textual
Joshua's generation	Implied full keeping of the booths in the land — Nehemiah says it had not been done so "since the days of Joshua son of Nun"	Nehemiah 8:17	Textual (by implication)
Solomon (c. 10th c. BCE)	The Temple dedicated at the feast in the seventh month; seven days and seven days; the eighth-day assembly	1 Kings 8:2, 65–66; 2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8–10	Textual
Jeroboam (c. 930 BCE)	A rival feast set in the eighth month "which he had devised from his own heart"	1 Kings 12:32–33	Textual
Return from Babylon (c. 538 BCE)	The returned exiles keep the feast "as it is written" before the Temple foundation is laid	Ezra 3:1–4	Textual
Ezra and Nehemiah (c. 445 BCE)	Booths built on roofs, courts, and gates; the Torah read every day; the eighth-day assembly	Nehemiah 8:13–18	Textual
Second Temple, 1st c. BCE – 1st c. CE	Water libation; torch-lit rejoicing in the Court of the Women; willow processions; the four kinds in hand	Mishnah Sukkah 4–5; Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 3.244–247; 13.372	Corroborated as history, not commanded in the text
Bar Kokhba (c. 135 CE)	Rebel letters request palm, citron, myrtle, and willow for the feast	Cave of Letters papyri	Corroborated

PERIOD	WHAT THE RECORD SAYS	SOURCE	GRADE
Medieval to modern	Simchat Torah added on the eighth (or ninth) day; Hoshana Rabbah treated as the final sealing of judgment	Geonic and later custom; Zohar	Later additions

VI-A. Solomon: The Feast of the Dwelling

Solomon's dedication is the high point of the feast in the Tanakh. The ark was brought into the Holy of Holies, the cloud filled the house, and Solomon prayed the great prayer of **1 Kings 8**, which includes the foreigner who "comes from a far country for Your name's sake" (**1 Kings 8:41–43**). The two accounts differ in a detail that deserves notice. **1 Kings 8:66** says Solomon sent the people away "on the eighth day"; **2 Chronicles 7:9–10** says they held the *atzeret* (closing assembly) on the eighth day and were sent away on the twenty-third day of the month. The Chronicler's fuller account explains the King's summary: the dedication of the altar ran seven days, the feast ran seven more, the eighth day of the feast was kept as an assembly, and the dismissal came at its close. The people "went to their tents joyful and glad of heart" (**1 Kings 8:66**).

VI-B. Jeroboam: The Counterfeit Feast

"And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that was in Judah... in the month which he had devised from his own heart" (1 Kings 12:32–33).

The first recorded corruption of the feast is not its abandonment but its relocation. Jeroboam kept the date — the fifteenth — and the form — "like the feast that was in Judah" — but moved the month and the place for political reasons, so that his people would not go up to Jerusalem (**1 Kings 12:26–28**). The text's verdict is in one Hebrew word: *millibbo* (from his own heart). Doc 240 used this passage as the Tanakh's warning against privately devised calendars. It stands here as a warning for every tradition, including this one: a feast that looks right but is set by human convenience is Jeroboam's feast, not Yahweh's.

VI-C. Nehemiah: The Feast Restored by Reading

The restoration of the feast after the exile did not begin with a decree. It began with reading. On the second day of the seventh month the leaders gathered Ezra "to understand the words of the Torah, and they found written in the Torah" the command to dwell in booths (**Nehemiah 8:13–14**). They obeyed at once, on roofs, in courtyards, in the Temple courts, and in the squares by the Water Gate and

the Gate of Ephraim, "and there was very great gladness" (**Nehemiah 8:16–17**). The feast was restored by people who read the text for themselves and did what it said. That is the pattern this document commends.

VI-D. The Second Temple: Water, Light, and a Warning About Additions

The Mishnah describes the feast as it was kept in the last generations of the Second Temple. Each morning a golden flask of water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam and poured on the altar together with the wine libation (Mishnah Sukkah 4:9). Each night of the intermediate days, great golden lamps were lit in the Court of the Women until "there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit by the light of the place of the water-drawing," while pious men danced with torches and the Levites played on the fifteen steps that correspond to the fifteen Songs of Ascents (Mishnah Sukkah 5:2–4).

"Whoever has not seen the rejoicing of the place of the water-drawing has never seen rejoicing in his life" (Mishnah Sukkah 5:1). Willows were set up around the altar, and each day the priests circled it once — seven times on the seventh day — saying "Please, **Yahweh**, save now" from **Psalms 118:25** (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5).

The water libation was disputed in its own time, because the written Torah does not command it. Josephus records that when King Alexander Jannaeus stood by the altar at the feast, the people pelted him with citrons (*Antiquities* 13.372). The Talmud records that a Sadducee priest poured the libation on his feet instead of the altar and was pelted with citrons by the people (Talmud Sukkah 48b).

Grading: that the water libation was practiced in the late Second Temple is *corroborated* by independent witnesses. That it was commanded by the written Torah is *not established*; it was an oral tradition the Sadducees rejected. The Tanakh's own water theme — **Isaiah 12:3**, **Zechariah 14:8, 17**, **Ezekiel 47** — is real and is examined in Section VII, but the ceremony itself belongs to tradition.

VII. THE PROPHETIC MEANING — THE FEAST OF THE NATIONS

No other appointed time is carried as far into the prophets as this one. Five witnesses show what the Tanakh expects the feast to become.

Witness One — Hosea 12:9: Back to the Tents

"And I, Yahweh, your Elohim from the land of Egypt, will yet make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast" (Hosea 12:9 [Hebrew 12:10]).

Hosea addresses a prosperous merchant Ephraim who said, "Surely I have become rich" (**Hosea 12:8**). The promise is two-edged: **Yahweh** will strip away the false security and bring the people back to the

tent life of the wilderness — the life the feast remembers. The *mo'ed* (appointed feast) here is the Feast of Booths. The feast is the pattern for both judgment and renewal.

Witness Two — Amos 9:11: The Fallen Booth of David

"In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and build it as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11).

Doc 233 examined this verse as the resolution of the sieve of **Amos 9:9**. The word is *sukkat* (booth of), not *beit* (house of). David's royal house is pictured as a fallen booth — something that can be rebuilt by **Yahweh** alone. The restoration of the kingdom is described in the feast's own vocabulary.

Witness Three — Isaiah 25:6–8 and 12:3: The Feast for All Peoples and the Wells of Salvation

"And in this mountain Yahweh of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food... and He will swallow up death forever" (Isaiah 25:6–8).

"And with joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3).

Isaiah's banquet on the mountain is not named as Sukkot, but it shares its marks: a feast for all peoples, on **Yahweh's** mountain, with rejoicing. The water verse is the one the Mishnah later attached to the water-drawing ceremony. The word for "salvation" is *yeshuah* (salvation / deliverance) — the word Doc 238 studied at length. In the prophetic reading, the joy of the harvest feast becomes the joy of deliverance drawn up like water.

Witness Four — Zechariah 14:8–9, 16–19: The Nations Go Up

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And whoever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain" (Zechariah 14:16–17).

This is the single most direct prophecy of any appointed time. After the day of **Yahweh**, when "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" and "**Yahweh** shall be King over all the earth; in that day **Yahweh** shall be one, and His name one" (**Zechariah 14:8–9**), the surviving nations keep Sukkot every year. The penalty fits the season: the feast falls at the start of the rains, and the nation that refuses has no rain. The Mishnah's teaching that "on the Feast the world is judged concerning water" (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2) reflects the same connection.

Two points must be held together. First, the prophecy makes the Feast of Booths the one appointed time explicitly required of the nations in the Tanakh. Second, the prophecy speaks of "everyone who is

left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem" — it describes an age after judgment, not the present. **Grading:** that the Tanakh foresees the nations keeping Sukkot is *textual and corroborated* (**Zechariah 14:16–19**; with **Isaiah 2:2–3** and **Zechariah 8:20–23**). The question of whether the nations are obliged to keep it now is answered by the Torah's own invitation to the stranger (**Deuteronomy 16:14; 31:12**), not by Zechariah alone.

Witness Five — Ezekiel 37:27 and 47:1–12: The Dwelling and the River

Ezekiel joins the two great themes of the feast in his vision of restoration: **Yahweh's** dwelling with His people (**Ezekiel 37:26–28**) and the river that flows from the threshold of the house, deepening as it goes, until it heals the Dead Sea and waters trees whose "fruit shall be for food and their leaf for healing" (**Ezekiel 47:1–12**; compare **Joel 3:18** [Hebrew 4:18]). Dwelling and water — the two central images of the feast — become the two central images of the age to come.

Finding on the Prophetic Witness — and What Is Not Established

Five witnesses establish that the Tanakh makes this feast the feast of the restored kingdom and the gathered nations. Several popular teachings, however, go beyond the Tanakh, and they are graded here so that no reader mistakes them for the text:

The Feast as the thousand-year reign. Churches of God and many Sabbath-keeping groups teach that the Feast of Booths pictures a millennium of Messiah's rule. The number one thousand comes from Revelation 20:4–6, not from the Tanakh. The Tanakh does foresee a reign of **Yahweh** over the nations associated with this feast (**Zechariah 14:9, 16**). The length of that reign is *not established* by the Tanakh.

Yeshua was born at the Feast of Booths. Some Messianic and Hebrew Roots teachers argue this from John 1:14 ("the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us") and from a reconstruction of Luke's priestly-course chronology. The argument is an inference built on inferences; it has no two witnesses and the Tanakh is silent on it. It is *not established*.

Hoshana Rabbah as the final sealing of judgment. The teaching that the verdict of the Day of Atonement is sealed or delivered on the seventh day of the feast comes from the Zohar and later custom. The Tanakh does not teach it. It is *not established*.

VIII. THE EIGHTH DAY — SHEMINI ATZERET AND "THE LAST GREAT DAY"

VIII-A. What the Torah Says About the Eighth Day

The Torah speaks of the eighth day in four places, and every time it sets the day apart from the seven that come before it.

TEXT	WHAT IT SAYS	WHAT IT ESTABLISHES
Leviticus 23:36	"On the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you... it is a closing assembly; you shall do no laborious work."	A <i>miqra qodesh</i> (holy convocation) and an <i>atzeret</i> (closing assembly) of its own
Leviticus 23:39	"On the first day a sabbath rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath rest."	The eighth day is a <i>shabbaton</i> (sabbath rest), matching the first
Numbers 29:35–38	"On the eighth day you shall have a closing assembly... one bull, one ram, seven lambs."	Its offering breaks the pattern of the seven days entirely
Leviticus 23:42	"You shall dwell in booths for seven days."	The dwelling in booths is commanded for seven days, not eight

The Writings confirm that Israel kept the eighth day as a distinct assembly: "And on the eighth day they held a closing assembly" (**2 Chronicles 7:9**); "and on the eighth day there was a closing assembly, according to the ordinance" (**Nehemiah 8:18**). Five witnesses in all — three in the Torah, two in the Writings — establish the Eighth Day as a separate holy convocation, attached to the feast but not identical to it.

VIII-B. The Word *Atzeret* — Holding Back, and a Warning

Atzeret (closing assembly) comes from *atsar* (to hold back / restrain / shut in) H6113. The same noun names the seventh day of Unleavened Bread (**Deuteronomy 16:8**), and a fast-day assembly: "Consecrate a fast, call a closing assembly" (**Joel 1:14; 2:15**). The idea is a gathering in which the people are held — kept together before they are sent home.

The same word also carries the Tanakh's sharpest warning about the feasts. Isaiah hears **Yahweh** say, "I cannot bear iniquity with the *atsarah* (solemn assembly)... your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates" (**Isaiah 1:13–14**). Amos hears, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your *atsrotekhem* (solemn assemblies)... but let justice roll down like waters" (**Amos 5:21, 24**). The

closing assembly can be exactly what **Yahweh** rejects, if it is kept without justice. Doc 239 found the same principle in **Isaiah 58** for the Day of Atonement. The Eighth Day is not protected by its holiness from being emptied by the people who keep it.

VIII-C. The Eighth-Day Pattern in the Tanakh

The Torah uses "the eighth day" repeatedly as the day on which something that has been prepared for seven days enters its covenant function. The pattern is consistent enough to be named.

TEXT	SEVEN DAYS OF...	ON THE EIGHTH DAY...
Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3	Life outside the covenant sign	The son is circumcised into the covenant
Exodus 22:30 [Hebrew 22:29]; Leviticus 22:27	The firstborn animal with its mother	It is given to Yahweh
Leviticus 8:33–9:1	Priestly consecration at the tent door	Aaron's priesthood begins, and the glory appears (Leviticus 9:23)
Leviticus 14:8–10; 15:13–14	Waiting in cleansing	The cleansed person is brought before Yahweh
Ezekiel 43:26–27	Atonement and consecration of the altar	"From the eighth day onward" the priests offer, and Yahweh says, "I will accept you"
Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35	Dwelling in booths	The closing assembly: a new, separate holy day

Grading: the eighth-day pattern itself is *textual and corroborated* by more than five witnesses. Applying it to the Eighth Day of the feast — as a day of entering, after seven days of temporary dwelling, into something permanent — is a *reasonable covenant inference*, drawn from the text's own repeated use of the eighth day. It is offered as interpretation, not as a statement the Tanakh makes about this day in so many words.

VIII-D. Which Day Is "Great"? — Three Traditions Compared

The phrase "the Last Great Day" comes from the King James rendering of John 7:37, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried." It is used by Churches of God, Sacred Name

assemblies, and many Messianic congregations for the Eighth Day. But Jewish tradition gives the name "great" to the seventh day, not the eighth. The table sets the usages side by side.

NAME	WHICH DAY	WHO USES IT	BASIS
<i>Hoshana Rabbah</i> (the Great Hoshana)	The seventh day of the feast (21st of the month)	Rabbinic Judaism	Seven circuits of the altar with willows, "Please, Yahweh , save now" (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5; Psalms 118:25)
<i>Shemini Atzeret</i> (the eighth-day closing assembly)	The eighth day (22nd of the month)	Rabbinic and Karaite Judaism; Samaritans	Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35
The Last Great Day	The eighth day	Churches of God; Sacred Name assemblies; many Messianic congregations	John 7:37 (KJV), read as the eighth day

Scholars divide on which day John 7:37 means. Those who read it as the seventh day point to the water-drawing ceremony, which reached its height on the seventh day and fits the words that follow: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37–38). Those who read it as the eighth day point out that the eighth day is the last day of the whole festival period and a *shabbaton* (sabbath rest) of its own. **Grading:** which day John meant is *not established*. The Tanakh itself does not call either day "great." It is called the eighth day *atzeret* (closing assembly) and *miqra qodesh* (holy convocation). Miqdash Bethel uses the Tanakh's name, and recognizes "the Last Great Day" as a legitimate English name for the same day in the communities that use it.

VIII-E. What the Eighth Day Means — Three Readings Graded

Reading one — "Stay with Me one more day." Rashi, commenting on **Leviticus 23:36**, compares the Eighth Day to a king who invited his children to a feast for several days; when the time came to leave, he said, "My children, I ask of you, stay with me one more day; your parting is hard for me." The Talmud's parallel speaks of a king who, after a great banquet for many, asks his beloved friend for a small meal alone (Talmud Sukkah 55b). The reading fits the text's shift from seventy bulls to one, and from a feast for all to an assembly held back. It is *tradition*, but it is tradition that arises from the text's own features.

Reading two — the judgment of those who never knew. Churches of God and the Assemblies of **Yahweh** teach that the Eighth Day pictures the resurrection and judgment of all who lived and died without knowing **Yahweh**, drawn from the "great white throne" of Revelation 20:11–12. The nearest Tanakh witnesses to a general resurrection — **Ezekiel 37:1–14**, **Isaiah 25:8**, and **Daniel 12:2** — are real, but none of them is tied to the Eighth Day in the text. **Grading:** *not established* as the meaning of the day; it is a doctrinal application built on a New Testament text.

Reading three — completion and entrance. Read from the Tanakh's own eighth-day pattern (VIII-C), the Eighth Day marks the move from seven days in a temporary booth to a closing assembly in **Yahweh**'s presence — from the provisional to the permanent. **Grading:** *reasonable inference* from corroborated textual pattern.

The three readings are not all equal. The first two are traditions; the third is an inference from the text. None of them may be taught as the Torah's own stated meaning, because the Torah does not state one. What the Torah does state is enough: a holy convocation, a sabbath rest, a separate offering, a closing assembly — and, by the Chronicler's report, a people sent home "joyful and glad of heart for the goodness that **Yahweh** had done" (**2 Chronicles 7:10**).

IX. HOW TO KEEP THE HOLY CONVOCATIONS TODAY

IX-A. What a Holy Convocation Is

A *miqra qodesh* (holy convocation) is a calling-together that **Yahweh** Himself summons. **Leviticus 23:2** calls all the appointed times "the appointed times of **Yahweh**, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations." The weekly Sabbath is a holy convocation "in all your dwellings" (**Leviticus 23:3**), which shows that a holy convocation is not bound to one building. The Feast of Booths has two: the first day and the eighth day (**Leviticus 23:35–36**). Both are also *shabbaton* (sabbath rest) days (**Leviticus 23:39**). On both, laborious work stops and the covenant community gathers.

IX-B. What Is Forbidden and What Is Permitted

DAY	WORK RESTRICTION	WHAT REMAINS PERMITTED	TEXT
Weekly Sabbath; Day of Atonement	<i>kol melakhah</i> (all work)	Rest; worship; acts of mercy	Leviticus 23:3, 28–31
First and Eighth Days of the feast	<i>meleket avodah</i> (laborious / occupational work)	Preparing the food that is eaten that day	Leviticus 23:35–36; Exodus 12:16

DAY	WORK RESTRICTION	WHAT REMAINS PERMITTED	TEXT
Intermediate days (days 2–7)	No restriction stated in the text	Ordinary work; the booth and the rejoicing continue	Leviticus 23:36, 40–42

The intermediate days are often called by their rabbinic name, *chol ha-mo'ed* (the ordinary days of the feast). The Torah places no work restriction on them. They are still feast days: the booth is kept, the rejoicing continues, and **Numbers 29** assigns them offerings. A covenant person who must work during them has not broken the feast; one who must work on the first or eighth day should arrange leave in advance, as the Churches of God and Jewish communities routinely advise their members.

IX-C. The Calendar for 2026

Doc 240 explained why the covenant community's calendars can differ by a day. In 2026 they do. The table shows the feast by both reckonings. Each day begins at sunset the evening before.

DAY OF FEAST	CALCULATED JEWISH CALENDAR	SIGHTED-MOON RECKONING	STATUS
Day 1 (15th)	Sat, Sept 26 (from sunset Fri, Sept 25)	Sun, Sept 27 (from sunset Sat, Sept 26)	Holy convocation; sabbath rest
Days 2–6 (16th–20th)	Sun, Sept 27 – Thu, Oct 1	Mon, Sept 28 – Fri, Oct 2	Feast days; booth and rejoicing
Day 7 (21st)	Fri, Oct 2 (Hoshana Rabbah)	Sat, Oct 3 (also the weekly Sabbath)	Last day of the booths
Eighth Day (22nd)	Sat, Oct 3 (Shemini Atzeret)	Sun, Oct 4	Holy convocation; closing assembly; sabbath rest

Outside the land of Israel, rabbinic Judaism keeps the first two days as festival days and adds a ninth day, Simchat Torah (Sunday, October 4, 2026). That additional day arose from the old uncertainty about when the court had sanctified the month, when messengers could not reach distant communities in time; it is kept today as custom. The sighted-moon dates above follow the reported sighting of the seventh-month crescent in Israel on the evening of September 12, 2026, and match the

dates published by the Assemblies of **Yahweh** (first high day September 27, Last Great Day October 4). In keeping with the position stated in Doc 240, Miqdash Bethel does not sanctify its own calendar or claim the office of the court. It keeps fellowship with the covenant community's calendar and names the one-day difference openly, so that each household can keep the feast with a clear conscience.

IX-D. The Feast Day by Day

WHEN	WHAT THE TEXT COMMANDS	HOW IT MAY BE KEPT TODAY
Before the feast	Gather the harvest; prepare to appear (Deuteronomy 16:13, 16)	Build the booth after the Day of Atonement; set aside the giving; arrange leave from work for the first and eighth days
Evening before Day 1	The day begins at evening (Leviticus 23:32 by analogy)	Gather the household in the booth; read Leviticus 23:33–43 aloud; give thanks for the year's provision
Day 1	Holy convocation; no laborious work; take the four kinds and rejoice (Leviticus 23:35, 40)	Assemble with the covenant community; take or build with the branches; eat festive meals in the booth
Days 2–6	Dwell in booths; rejoice seven days (Leviticus 23:40, 42)	Eat meals in the booth; read a portion of the Torah each day (Nehemiah 8:18); invite the stranger and the lonely
Day 7	The last day of the booths	Pray Psalms 118 ; give the festival gift if not already given (Deuteronomy 16:17)
Eighth Day	Holy convocation; closing assembly; no laborious work (Leviticus 23:36)	Leave the booth; assemble; read Deuteronomy 31:10–13 and 1 Kings 8 ; close with thanks for Yahweh's goodness (2 Chronicles 7:10)

IX-E. Building a Booth According to the Text

The Torah gives no measurements for the booth. The rabbinic rules on height, walls, and the ratio of shade to sun (Mishnah Sukkah 1) are tradition. The Tanakh itself gives four guides:

First: it is temporary. It is a *sukkah* (booth / shelter), not a house, and it is lived in for seven days (**Leviticus 23:42**).

Second: it is covered with growth. **Nehemiah 8:15** names olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and leafy branches as the materials gathered "to make booths, as it is written."

Third: it may stand wherever the household lives. In **Nehemiah 8:16** the booths stood "each on his roof, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of **Elohim**, and in the squares." A balcony, a yard, or a porch serves.

Fourth: it is a place of joy, not of misery. The Mishnah records that if rain falls so heavily that the food is spoiled, one may go into the house, and compares the rain to a master throwing a pitcher back in his servant's face — a sign that the rejoicing is not accepted that day (Mishnah Sukkah 2:9). The Tanakh's command to rejoice (**Deuteronomy 16:15**) is not kept by suffering in a booth that cannot shelter. The sick, the very young, and those who cannot safely sleep outdoors keep the booth as they are able; this is covenant wisdom, not medical advice.

IX-F. Not Empty-Handed, and Not Alone

Deuteronomy 16:16–17 forbids appearing before **Yahweh reiqam** (empty-handed) and sets the measure: "as he is able, according to the blessing of **Yahweh** your **Elohim**." Without a standing altar, the principle is kept as the Lesson 18 study set out: giving to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, the four kinds of people named in **Deuteronomy 16:14**. The booth is the natural place for this: a table under branches is an easy place to seat a guest. The feast is not kept alone if it can be helped. The Torah's joy is a household and community joy.

IX-G. What Changes Without a Temple, and What Does Not

ELEMENT	TEMPLE ERA	TODAY	WHY
Offerings of Numbers 29	Brought daily by the priests	Suspended	Offerings are bound to "the place Yahweh chooses" (Deuteronomy 12:5–14)
Pilgrimage to Jerusalem	Required of every male three times a year	Kept in principle; fulfilled by those able to go	Deuteronomy 16:16 ; the place remains Yahweh's choice
Dwelling in booths	Commanded	Fully kept	Not tied to the altar (Leviticus 23:42)
Holy convocations; rest from laborious work	Commanded	Fully kept	Holy convocations were kept "in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:3)

ELEMENT	TEMPLE ERA	TODAY	WHY
Rejoicing and including the poor	Commanded	Fully kept	Not tied to the altar (Deuteronomy 16:14–15)
Reading of the Torah	Every seventh year at the feast	Kept; many communities read daily through the feast	Deuteronomy 31:10–13; Nehemiah 8:18

The feast is one of the most keepable of the appointed times without a Temple. Of its six main elements, only the offerings are suspended. The booth, the rest, the assembly, the joy, the giving, and the reading all stand.

X. WHO KEEPS THE FEAST TODAY

The Feast of Booths is kept today across more communities than any other appointed time outside Passover. The table lists the main groups, how they keep it, and when they are keeping it in 2026. Dates are taken from each group's own published calendar where available.

COMMUNITY	HOW THEY KEEP IT	2026 DATES	CALENDAR
Rabbinic Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform)	Outdoor booth with a roof of branches; the four kinds (<i>lulav, etrog, badas, aravah</i>) waved daily except on the Sabbath; Hallel; Hoshana Rabbah; Shemini Atzeret; Simchat Torah	Sept 25 (eve) – Oct 3 in Israel; to Oct 4 outside Israel	Calculated Hebrew calendar
Karaite Judaism	Scripture-only keeping; booths built with the branches of Leviticus 23:40 and Nehemiah 8:15 ; no rabbinic additions	Set by the sighted crescent in Israel	Sighted moon and barley
Israelite Samaritans (fewer than 1,000, at Mount Gerizim and Holon)	Pilgrimage up Mount Gerizim on the first day; the booth built indoors, its ceiling made of hundreds of pieces of fruit; "the most joyous" of their feasts	Their own priestly calendar; reported in 2026 to fall about a month later than the Jewish date	Samaritan priestly calendar

COMMUNITY	HOW THEY KEEP IT	2026 DATES	CALENDAR
Messianic Jewish congregations	Booths, the four kinds, and readings from both the Torah and John 7	Generally Sept 25 – Oct 3	Usually the calculated calendar
Churches of God (United Church of God; Church of God, a Worldwide Association; Living Church of God; Church of God International; Church of the Eternal God; Continuing Church of God)	Eight days at festival sites worldwide, with daily services and family activities; the eighth day called "the Last Great Day"; teaches the feast as a picture of the coming Kingdom	Sept 26 – Oct 2; Eighth Day Oct 3	Calculated Hebrew calendar
Sacred Name assemblies (e.g. Assemblies of Yahweh , Bethel, Pennsylvania, founded 1969; and the assemblies surveyed in Doc 240)	Holy convocations on the first and eighth days, feast sites, use of the Name	Assemblies of Yahweh : first high day Sept 27; Last Great Day Oct 4	Sighted moon (varies by group)
Independent sighted-moon fellowships	Gatherings timed to crescent reports from Israel	Day 1 from sunset Sept 26; Eighth Day Oct 4	Sighted moon
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem	A Christian celebration in Jerusalem (about 3,000 people from 70+ nations expected), citing Zechariah 14:16 ; seminars, worship, and the Jerusalem March; 2026 theme "The Lord Roars from Zion" (Joel 3:16)	Sept 25–30	Conference dates set to the Jewish calendar

Three observations follow from the survey.

First, the feast is being kept, in some form, by all three of the audiences this Institution addresses — Jews in every stream, Christians in several traditions, and in Islam the parallel pattern of the Hajj.

Zechariah 14:16 is not being fulfilled as written, but the movement of people toward this feast from outside Judaism is a documented, present-day fact.

Second, the differences between groups fall almost entirely on two questions: the calendar (Section IX-C and Doc 240) and the added customs (Sections VI-D and VII). On the core of the text — the booth, the seven days, the joy, the two holy convocations — there is striking agreement across communities that agree on almost nothing else.

Third, most Christian groups that keep the feast read it through a New Testament lens (the millennium, the Last Great Day as final judgment). Those readings are graded above as not established by the Tanakh. The keeping itself is a return to the written covenant; the interpretive overlay is a separate matter, to be tested, not simply adopted.

XI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE FEAST

Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Primary Understanding	A commanded pilgrim feast of booths, four kinds, and joy, closing with Shemini Atzeret. Kept continuously for two millennia; the only one of the three traditions that never stopped.	The earliest followers of Yeshua were Jews who kept the feast (John 7:2, 10). Mainstream churches later left it; it survives in Churches of God, Messianic, Sacred Name, and pro-Israel Christian communities.	No Feast of Booths. The Hajj preserves the pilgrim pattern: a commanded journey (Q. 22:27), "numbered days" of remembrance (Q. 2:203), and nights in tents at Mina.
Covenant Strength	Keeps the booth, the seven days, and the eighth-day assembly exactly as written. Revived the seventh-year <i>Hakbel</i> (public reading) in modern times. Honest about the dispute over the booths (Sukkah 11b).	Where kept, the feast is kept as a whole eight-day covenant gathering with rest on the first and eighth days, often with the stranger welcomed — directly in line with Deuteronomy 16:14 .	Q. 16:80 names the tent as a mercy for the traveler. The equality of pilgrims in simple garments echoes the leveling of the booth, where rich and poor alike leave their houses.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant Departure	Added a second festival day outside Israel from calendar doubt; added Simchat Torah; treats Hoshana Rabbah as the final sealing of judgment (Zohar) — none of these is in the text (Deuteronomy 4:2). Restricts the four kinds to one species each; Nehemiah 8:15 shows a broader reading.	Most of Christianity abandoned the feast without a Tanakh warrant. When kept, it is often reinterpreted through Revelation 20 (the millennium; the Last Great Day as the white-throne judgment) — readings the Tanakh does not establish.	Redirected the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Tanakh's feast is kept "in the place Yahweh chooses" (Deuteronomy 16:15), which the Tanakh identifies with Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:29 ; Zechariah 14:16).
Covenant Witness	The Jewish people's unbroken keeping of the feast is itself a witness to Leviticus 23:41 , "a statute forever throughout your generations."	The feast is the one appointed time the Tanakh explicitly assigns to the nations (Zechariah 14:16–19). A Christian who keeps it is not borrowing a Jewish custom; he is answering a prophecy about the nations.	The shared root of Hebrew <i>chag</i> (pilgrim feast) and Arabic <i>hajj</i> (pilgrimage) testifies to a common Semitic memory of the commanded journey to meet the Creator.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. The following declarations draw on multiple books and eras of the written Tanakh, and each is corroborated by more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Feast of Booths is an appointed time of Yahweh , a statute forever: seven days from the fifteenth of the seventh month, followed by an eighth-day closing assembly.	Leviticus 23:34–36, 41; Numbers 29:12, 35; Deuteronomy 16:13

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
II	The booth teaches dependence: Israel dwells in temporary shelters so that every generation will know Yahweh brought them out and sustained them, and will not forget Him in the season of plenty.	Leviticus 23:43; Deuteronomy 8:2–4, 12–18; Exodus 12:37
III	Joy at this feast is a command, and the joy is shared: the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow are named at the table, and no one appears before Yahweh empty-handed.	Deuteronomy 16:14–17; Leviticus 23:40; Nehemiah 8:10–12
IV	The feast is the covenant's appointed setting for hearing the Torah read aloud to the whole people, the stranger included.	Deuteronomy 31:10–13; Nehemiah 8:18; 1 Kings 8:41–43
V	The Eighth Day is a distinct holy convocation and sabbath rest. Its meaning is not stated in the Tanakh; "the Last Great Day" is a legitimate name for it, but no doctrine may be built on that name alone.	Leviticus 23:36, 39; Numbers 29:35–38; 2 Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 8:18
VI	The prophets make this the feast of Yahweh's dwelling and of the gathered nations: the booth of David raised, the living waters flowing, and all who remain of the nations going up year by year.	Amos 9:11; Zechariah 14:8–9, 16–19; Ezekiel 37:27; Hosea 12:9
VII	A feast set by human convenience is Jeroboam's feast, and a feast kept without justice is the assembly Yahweh hates. The booth, the rest, the joy, the giving, and the reading can all be kept today without a Temple, and should be.	1 Kings 12:32–33; Isaiah 1:13–17; Amos 5:21–24; Leviticus 23:3, 42

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE FEAST ASKS OF THE ONE WHO KEEPS IT

Behind every question about the feast — which calendar, which branches, which day is great — stands a simpler one: what does **Yahweh** want from the person sitting in the booth? Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: Leave the house.

For seven days the covenant person steps out of the house he built into a shelter that cannot protect him by its own strength (**Leviticus 23:42**). The booth is a yearly confession that "unless **Yahweh** builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (**Psalms 127:1**).

Second: Remember who fed you.

The barns are full at this feast. That is exactly when Moses warned that the heart is lifted up (**Deuteronomy 8:12–14**). Give thanks for the harvest to the One who gave the manna.

Third: Rejoice, and bring others in.

"You shall be nothing but joyful" (**Deuteronomy 16:15**). The joy is commanded, and it is shared with the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (**Deuteronomy 16:14**). A booth with an empty chair has room for a guest.

Fourth: Listen.

Read the Torah in the booth, as Ezra did "day by day, from the first day to the last" (**Nehemiah 8:18**). The feast was restored after the exile by people who read the text and did what it said.

Fifth: Look up and forward.

The booth is temporary because the dwelling it points to is not. **Yahweh** has promised that His *mishkan* (dwelling place) will be with His people (**Ezekiel 37:27**), that the fallen booth of David will be raised (**Amos 9:11**), and that the nations will go up to keep this very feast (**Zechariah 14:16**). Whoever keeps it now, in whatever calendar and whatever booth, keeps a rehearsal of that day.

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"You shall rejoice in your feast — you, your son and your daughter, your servant and your maidservant, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your gates.

Seven days you shall keep the feast to Yahweh your Elohim in the place Yahweh chooses, for Yahweh your Elohim will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands — and you shall be nothing but joyful."

Deuteronomy 16:14–15 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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