

## The “Festival of Sukkot” and the “Festival of the Ingathering”

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[Note: This is an abridgement of an article that can be found here:  
<http://www.ybn.co.il/mamrim/PDF/The%20Festival%20of%20Sukkot.pdf>.]

### Dual Significance – *Nes* and Nature

The Torah associates the three pilgrim festivals with two distinct concepts. First, the Torah relates them to the idea of *nes*, signs and indications that God, Who created the world, continues to function in it and control history. Thus, these festivals commemorate the Exodus from Egypt, the *nes* that molded Jewish history for all generations.

The Torah also associates the pilgrim festivals with the natural aspect of *Eretz Yisrael*, its agricultural cycles. Thus, they are connected to the ingathering, the spring harvest, and the first-fruit offering sanctified to God from the produce of the land. The entry into *Eretz Yisrael* is the return of the Israelite nation to the naturalness of its land: soil, agriculture, roots, and – arising from these – the manifestation of sanctity and the Temple.<sup>1</sup>

A natural nation is born and is formed in the land of its birth and celebrates natural and national festivals, marking agricultural and religious ritual dates and seasons. If it is exiled from its land or becomes assimilated in its own land among those it conquerors or those who conquer it, such a nation ceases to exist. *Am Yisrael*, however, is unique among the nations, as it was born and formed through the *nes* of the Exodus from the Egyptian exile. For *Am Yisrael*, *Eretz Yisrael* represents not a “natural homeland,” but rather an aspiration, a goal, a prayer, and a destiny; it represents the vision and longing to connect heaven and earth, the miraculous and the natural, history and agriculture. Thus, if *Am Yisrael*, Heaven forefend, is exiled from its land or remains under the rule of its conquerors in its land for a long period, it nevertheless lives on, surviving and praying for a new Exodus from Egypt and for the *nes* of the ingathering of the exiles.

Had *Am Yisrael* been a natural (territorial) nation, the natural festivals would have preceded the festivals pertaining to the historical *nes*; agriculture and religious worship

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<sup>1</sup> The Sanctuary and the service therein are similarly connected to the land, to nature and agriculture. The sacrifices and the incense – brought from plant and animal life – express the living connection between the Creator of nature and His creations. The purpose of the Sanctuary is to maintain the natural creation and to reveal in it the glory of God, Who watches and oversees all.

would have come before the historical sign and event, both chronologically and in terms of the natural order. But, as noted, if *Am Yisrael* were a natural nation, it would not have survived its history. The Torah therefore introduces the festivals as associated with the Exodus from Egypt – the historical *nes* – rather than the natural, agricultural season of spring, which is in the background.

In exile, *Am Yisrael* observes festivals commemorating the *nes* aspect, the defining events of the Israelite history for all generations: Pesach of the Exodus, Shavuot of the Giving of the Torah, and Sukkot of the wandering in the wilderness of Sinai and in the wilderness of the nations. In exile, *Am Yisrael* cannot celebrate the festivals of the spring, the harvest, and the ingathering – the festivals of nature and of the *Mikdash*. These latter festivals belong to a natural, agricultural cycle, and they are especially related to the Temple, where their respective offerings are brought “before the Lord God.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout the period of the Destruction and the exile, there was no possibility of celebrating the natural, agricultural festivals – not even in *Eretz Yisrael* – since in the absence of the *Mikdash*, God’s servants have nowhere to bring the *omer*, the *bikkurim*, or the produce of the ingathering. In exile, the nation was left with only token memorials of these agricultural, natural festivals – the counting of the *omer* (a period which came to be characterized by customs of mourning), Megillat Ruth on Shavuot, and the four species on Sukkot.

## A Dual Calendar

The dual significance of the festivals is connected to the dual yearly calendar of the Torah – a calendar of lunar months adjusted to the seasonal calendar of the solar, agricultural year.<sup>3</sup>

It is no coincidence that the Torah introduces the calendar of lunar months as the first commandment given to Israel:<sup>4</sup> “This month shall be for you the first month (*rosh chodashim*)” (*Shemot* 12:2). Only the moon renews itself from one month to the next; only the lunar cycle has a new beginning (*molad*), such that one may point to it and say, “**this** month.” Thus, Rashi explains, “[God] showed [Moshe] the new moon and said to him: ‘When the moon is renewed, it will be *Rosh Chodesh* for you.’”<sup>5</sup> Only the moon offers a real monthly cycle, such that there can be a “*Rosh Chodesh*” and so that one of these beginnings can be designated as the “first month” (*rosh chodashim*).

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<sup>2</sup> *Shemot* 23:17; 34:23; similarly, *Vayikra* 23:11, 15-16, 39-41 and *Devarim* 16:16.

<sup>3</sup> See Rambam, *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, end of positive commandment 153.

<sup>4</sup> See Rashi’s comment at the beginning of his commentary on the Torah, based on the *Midrash Tanchuma*. See also Rambam, *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, positive commandment 153, concerning the connection between this commandment and the existence of the Israelite nation, a point that fits well with Rashi’s comment.

<sup>5</sup> Rashi on *Shemot* 12:1, following the *Mekhilta* on *Parashat Bo*, *parasha* 1; see also *Rosh ha-Shana* 5a; *Pesachim* 6b; *Yerushalmi Rosh ha-Shana*, end of chapter 2.

The Egyptians, in contrast, lived according to a fixed and orderly solar calendar, adapted to the pace of life in Egypt and to the regular overflowing of the Nile – they had 12 months of 30 days and a 5-day celebration of the new year. The sun has no renewal; it has no 30-day cycle, neither precisely nor approximately, and its cycle measures only years. Similarly, nothing was renewed in Egypt; everything was fixed and cyclical.

Hence, the Exodus from Egypt had to begin with the lunar month as the basis for the calendar; only then could the revolution of renewal begin.

The two calendars are not entirely independent, however. The expression “*chodshei ha-shana*,” “months (i.e., ‘moons’) of the year,” already hints at the dual calendar. In nature, there is no “lunar year” and there is no “solar month” – a month is lunar and a year is solar. The end of the verse – “It is for you the first of the months of the year” – similarly connects the lunar month with the solar year.

It is, in fact, no coincidence that the Egyptian calendar was entirely solar, as the sun was awarded the most important place in the Egyptian pagan pantheon.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, a solely lunar calendar was maintained by desert tribes, who were not concerned with sowing, reaping, and gathering. Many of them also worshipped the moon (until the appearance of Islam). At the same time, most Arabian tribes, who were also engaged in agriculture, added leap months to the year. This continued until Muhammad prohibited the practice,<sup>7</sup> thereby creating a barrier between Judaism and Islam in the realm of the calendar.

Only the Babylonians and the Greeks (until the Roman conquest) on the one hand, and the Jewish nation on the other, maintained a dual lunar/solar calendar, but they did so for opposite reasons. The Babylonians and Greeks, who were able to carry out astronomical calculations with great accuracy, worshipped both the sun and the moon (especially the Babylonians). *Bnei Yisrael*, in contrast, learned from the Torah not to attribute any reign or power of will to either the sun or moon, rather viewing both as “luminaries” and as “signs for appointed times,” “for days and for years” (*Bereishit* 1:15).<sup>8</sup> They were commanded to follow a calendar that reflects all these phenomena

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<sup>6</sup> Most agricultural peoples, in ancient times as well as today, operate mainly in accordance with a solar calendar; the Roman, Christian calendar is, of course, a solar cycle.

<sup>7</sup> See Quran 9:36-37.

<sup>8</sup> The Torah’s definitions of the purpose of the sun and the moon in the account of the Creation are far-reaching in the battle against paganism. The sun and the moon, as well as the stars, are nothing more than “luminaries” – sources of physical light placed in the heavens by the Creator in order to “illuminate the earth” and to be signs by which to establish special appointed times, days and years – that is, to serve as the basis for the calendar. They are certainly nothing more than that. This declaration of monotheism at the very beginning of the Torah is echoed in *Devarim* 4:19-20: “Lest you lift your eyes heavenward and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars – the entire heavenly host – you are misled to prostrate yourself to them and serve

insofar as the One Creator uttered His word by which both sun and moon were formed and commanded that no natural force should be worshipped.

The Exodus from Egypt would not have been possible without *Bnei Yisrael* turning their backs on the Egyptian solar calendar and accepting the lunar calendar. On the other hand, they could not have entered *Eretz Yisrael* and engaged in agriculture in the land, without adapting the lunar months to the seasons of the solar year.

This explains the fundamental difference between the mitzva concerning the calendar as it was first given preceding the Exodus (*Shemot* 12:1) and the second iteration of the commandment, which addresses the future generations living in the Promised Land: “Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the house of slavery... This day you are leaving, in the month of spring” (*Shemot* 13:4-5). The first focuses exclusively on the lunar renewal, the revolutionary concept that is to separate *Bnei Yisrael* from the Egyptian solar calendar. The second identifies the month of the Exodus with the agricultural season of spring, the time that the produce of *Eretz Yisrael* ripens, thereby preparing the nation for entry into the land of the forefathers.<sup>9</sup> This confluence must be maintained through the concentrated effort of establishing the dual calendar and

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them, which the Lord your God allotted to all the nations under the entire heaven. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people of inheritance, as this day.” There is, in fact, an explicit connection between the verses in *Bereishit* and their interpretation by Moshe in *Devarim*, in terms of both language (“heavenly host,” “stars”) and the idea that the nations of the world attribute will and sovereignty to the “heavenly host” and therefore worship them. God does not intervene in the lives of the other nations to stop this practice, but He does intervene in the life of His chosen “nation of inheritance,” so that the historical Exodus from Egypt will complement and reinforce the Creation of the world to present the single teaching of monotheism. Here, too, we encounter in the Torah the dual significance of God’s act of creation and His control of history.

<sup>9</sup> The second iteration elaborates: “And it shall be that the Lord will bring you to the land of the Kena’ani... which He promised to your forefathers to give to you, a land flowing with milk and honey, and you shall perform this service in this month... seven days shall you eat *matzot*... and no leaven shall be seen by you, nor shall any leavening be seen by you throughout your borders” (*Shemot* 13:5-7). The many detailed commandments regarding the Pesach sacrifice and the observance of the seven-day festival may be perceived as a burden by the generations to come, who at that very time are busy preparing the harvest in *Eretz Yisrael*. Indeed, they may not even ask anything about it – like the son who “does not know how to ask” – not because they do not know how to speak, but because they will be so busy with the agricultural season and economic problems that their attention will not be directed towards the historical Exodus. Therefore, the parents’ generation, who still remembered the Exodus, would have to recount and narrate for the children’s generation the story of Israel’s revival as a people and the source of the Israelite identity arising from the Exodus: “And you shall tell your son” – who will not ask of his own initiative – “on that day, saying: for the sake of this God acted for me when I came out of Egypt” (*Shemot* 13:8) – for had we not come out of Egypt, dear son, you would not have fields to reap!

maintaining it: “And you shall observe this statute at its appointed time, from year to year” (*Shemot* 13:10).

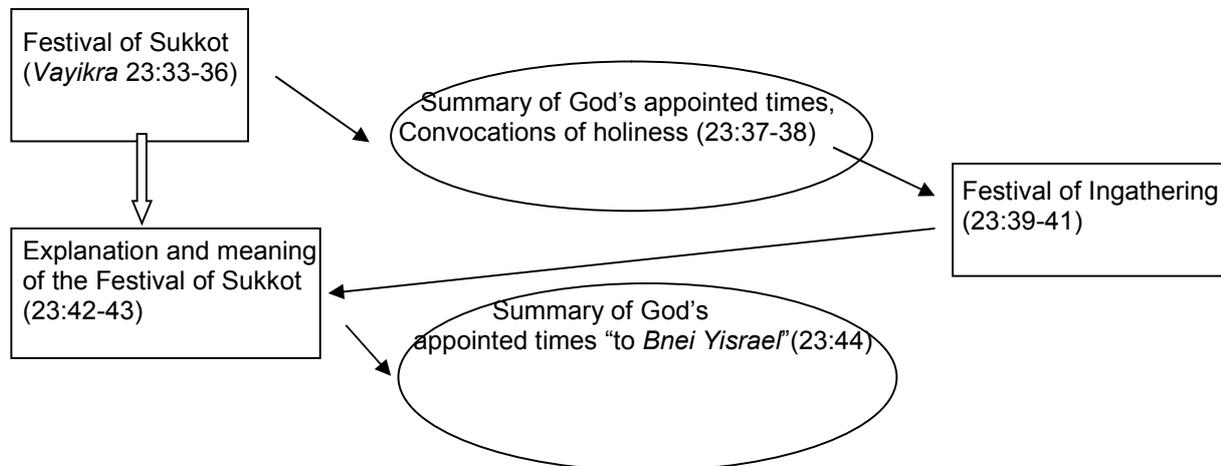
## Two Holidays on the Same Date

The first place in the Torah where the three pilgrim festivals are mentioned (*Shemot* 23:14-19) already notes the dual significance of Pesach and the festival of *Matzot*: “You shall observe the Festival of *Matzot*: seven days shall you eat *matzot*, as I have commanded you, at the time of the **month of spring**, for **then you came out of Egypt...**” The other two festivals appear there only in their agricultural, “*Eretz Yisrael*” form, with no connection to the Exodus: “And the Festival of the **Harvest**, the first fruits of your labor which you have sown in the field, and the Festival of the **Ingathering** at the end of the year, when you have gathered your labor from the field.” These are agricultural, religious festivals of the field, their essence being the bringing of the crops from the field in *Eretz Yisrael* “before the Lord God.”

Similarly, not a word about any historical memory of the Exodus and the giving of the Torah is mentioned in relation to either the “Festival of the Harvest” (Shavuot) or the “Festival of the Ingathering” (Sukkot) in *Parashat Ki Tisa*, with the giving of the second Tablets: “And the Festival of Shavuot shall you observe, with the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of the Ingathering at the end of the year” (*Shemot* 34:22). Indeed, had the Torah concluded with *Sefer Shemot*, we would have had little way of knowing how to observe the “Festival of the Ingathering” – or even when to observe it.

However, the section on the festivals in *Sefer Vayikra* (chapter 23) clarifies that Sukkot is celebrated in the seventh month, joining it to the Festival of the Ingathering. In fact, the principal innovation of this section is that the “Festival of the Ingathering” is also the “Festival of Sukkot.” First, the Torah details that the Festival of Sukkot is observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month as one of the “convocations of holiness” (*mikra’ei kodesh*), which are a “commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt” (*Vayikra* 23:35-36). The text then presents a summary of the “convocations of holiness:” “These are God’s appointed times...” (23:37-38). Only then does the Festival of Ingathering, known to us from *Sefer Shemot*, make its appearance: “Indeed, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you harvest the crops of the land, you shall celebrate a festival to God for seven days...” This “parenthetical unit” explains the significance of the *sukkot* mentioned earlier.

The following diagram of the closing section of the unit on the festivals describes this structure accurately:



It is apparent that the “Festival of Sukkot” and the “Festival of the Ingathering” are in fact two festivals on the same date. Lest we think that the historical “Festival of Sukkot” supersedes or pushes aside the agricultural “Festival of the Ingathering,” the Torah begins its description of the Festival of the Ingathering with the word “*akh*,” “indeed.” The agricultural Festival of the Ingathering of *Eretz Yisrael* is not uprooted, nor in any way diminished, by the historical Festival of Sukkot of the Exodus that has been joined to it. It remains valid and relevant, and both aspects together mold the “festival” that concludes the year.<sup>10</sup> The mitzva of the Festival of Sukkot is the *sukka*, while the four species are the focus and the mitzva of the Festival of the Ingathering; these two *mitzvot* express the double festival on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note that we are not speaking of a dual significance of a single festival, as in “the Festival of Matzot... at the time of the month of spring” (*Shemot* 23:14; 34:18), but rather two distinct festivals that occur simultaneously. Each festival – the Festival of Sukkot and the Festival of the Ingathering – is established at its proper time (for 7 days, starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month), sanctified (“God’s appointed times, *mikraei kodesh*”), requires rest (“On the first day, a *shabbaton*, and on the eighth day, a *shabbaton*”), and has its own particular commandment (*sukka*/the four species).

## The *Mussaf* Offering

<sup>10</sup> See my article on the apparent contradiction between the verses which place the Festival of the Ingathering “at the lapse of the year” and the Mishnaic definition of “Rosh ha-Shana for years”: [http://www.ybn.co.il/mamrim/PDF/ybn-Rosh\\_HaShana.pdf](http://www.ybn.co.il/mamrim/PDF/ybn-Rosh_HaShana.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> This is in contrast to the conventional way of looking at the festival, according to which *sukka* and the four species are two *mitzvot* of the singular Festival of Sukkot.

The fact that these are in fact two separate festivals and not one single festival is attested to by the list of *Mussaf* sacrifices in *Bamidbar* 28-29. On all the festivals, a single ram and seven lambs are offered; only the number of bullocks varies (one or two). On the festival that occurs on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, however, two rams and fourteen lambs are offered on each day of the festival. This doubling shows that the sacrifices are for two festivals, not one.<sup>12</sup>

A further consideration arising from this analysis concerns the “riddle of the bullocks” – on this seven day holiday, unlike any other, the number of bullocks offered each day in the *Mussaf* sacrifice descends in order from 13 to 7, totaling 70 (*Bamidbar* 29:13-32). In light of the above, we must take into consideration that the bullocks are meant for two festivals, and any explanation that fails to take this into account cannot represent a complete solution.

I would like to suggest a possible explanation. The offering for the first day of the Festival of Sukkot is seven bullocks, along with one ram and seven lambs (as customary on the other festivals). These seven bullocks are brought to mark the judgment of the seventh month of Tishrei; as the *mishna* explains it, “On the festival [of Sukkot] we are judged regarding water.” On the first day, we offer one bullock for each of the days of Sukkot; on each subsequent day, one less bullock is offered, corresponding to the remaining days, just as Beit Shammai argues regarding the descending number of lights to be lit on Chanuka (*Shabbat* 21b). At the same time, however, we must offer the sacrifices of the Festival of Ingathering: six bullocks each day, together with one ram and seven lambs. These six bullocks are derived from the two bullocks offered on each of the three pilgrimage festivals, which conclude with the Festival of Ingathering.

Thus, the thirteen bullocks on the first day of the festival are actually 6+7; the twelve offered on the second day are 6+6; the eleven offered on the third day are 6+5, and so on, until the 7 offered on the last day of the festival are 6+1, as this is the last day of judgment of the Festival of Sukkot, in the seventh month.

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in detailing the *Mussaf* sacrifice, the text makes no mention of any name for the festival – neither “Sukkot” nor “Ingathering:” “And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month there shall be a *mikra kodesh* for you, you shall perform no labor of work, and **you shall celebrate a festival unto God for seven days**” (*Bamidbar* 29:12). This description, however, includes the definitions given to both of the festivals in *Vayikra*: “On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Sukkot, **for seven days, unto God**. On the first day [there shall be] a *mikra kodesh*, you shall perform no labor of work... on the eighth day [there shall be] a *mikra kodesh*...” / “Indeed, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, **you shall celebrate God’s festival for seven days**...” (*Vayikra* 23:34-36, 39). Thus, the *Mussaf* section incorporates both festivals – both the historical Festival of Sukkot, related to the Exodus from Egypt, and the agricultural Festival of the Ingathering, related to the Temple.

## Seven Days

An important point of distinction between the two festivals is the meaning of the concept of “seven days.” The *gemara* teaches that the mitzva of taking the four species applies for seven days based on the verse, “And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days,” concluding that this refers only to days, not nights. The mitzva of *sukka* also applies for seven days based on the verse, “You shall dwell in *sukkot* for seven days,” but this mitzva applies at night as well.<sup>13</sup>

The reason for this is clear. The Festival of Ingathering, associated with the mitzva of taking the four species, is characterized by “rejoicing before God” in the Temple, as it is there that the *omer*, *bikkurim*, and ingathered produce are offered. Since the sacrificial service in the Temple is performed almost exclusively by day, the verse “You shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days” must mean “by day and not by night.” On the other hand, the commandment concerning the *sukka* lasts for “seven days” – day and night – because the Festival of Sukkot is a “civilian,” general festival that applies in all places and times, independent of the Temple: “Every member of Israel shall dwell in *sukkot*... in order that your generations will know that I caused the children of Israel to dwell in *sukkot* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt” (*Vayikra* 23:43). We must dwell in our *sukkot* day and night just as *Bnei Yisrael* dwelled in *sukkot* when they left Egypt, and in the same way that a person dwells in his house during the year.

According to the Torah, the commandment to take the four species applies for all seven days only in the Temple. *Chazal* deduce the obligation to take the four species elsewhere from the verse, “And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the beautiful tree, palm branches, and boughs of the thick-leaved tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days” (*Vayikra* 23:40) – but this applies only on the first day (*Sukka* 43a). Today, by rabbinic decree, we take the four species all seven days in memory of the Temple, but we do so specifically in the synagogue during the recitation of *Hallel* and we “wave” them. Thus, this “taking” resembles the *omer*, which is brought to the Temple and waved, and the *bikkurim*, which are taken from throughout the land, are brought to the Temple, and are rejoiced with for seven days.

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<sup>13</sup> *Sukka* 43a-b. The *gemara* there compares the seven days/nights of the mitzva of *sukka* to the seven days/nights of the *miluim*, the consecration sacrifices. Compare Rambam’s *Hilkhot Shofar, Sukka, ve-Lulav* 6:5 and 7:10, 13.

## Unity and Disparity

Despite our conclusion from *Vayikra* 23 that there are two different holidays that fall out on the same date, the impression from other sources is that we are, in fact, dealing with one festival with a dual nature. Thus, in *Devarim* we are told, “The **Festival of Sukkot** shall you make for yourself, for seven days, **when you have gathered in** your corn and your wine” (*Devarim* 16:13). In this sense, Sukkot is little different from Pesach, about which we read, “**Observe the month of spring**, and you shall make a **Pesach** unto the Lord your God, for in the **month of spring the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt**, at night” (*Devarim* 16:1).

This trend in understanding the festival is similarly expressed in halakhic formulations and historical events. For example, the *midrash halakha* interprets the verse in *Devarim* as a directive to create the *sukka* itself from the leftovers from the winnowing floor and the winery (*Sukka* 12a). Thus, the Ingathering and Sukkot join together to form a single unity, expressed in the agricultural produce of *Eretz Yisrael*; that which remains from the ingathering is used to cover the *sukka*, in commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

It appears from the literal reading of the text that up until the time of Ezra and Nechemia, *Bnei Yisrael* did not, in fact, dwell in *sukkot*: “And all the congregation, those who returned from the captivity, made *sukkot*, and they dwelled in *sukkot*, for since the days of Yeshua bin Nun *Bnei Yisrael* had not made them, until that day” (*Nechemia* 8:17). However, the *sukkot* of the returnees from Babylon were not the regular *sukkot* of *Am Yisrael* “in all of their dwelling places,” “in memory of the Exodus from Egypt.” Rather, they were the *sukkot* of the people of Jerusalem and of the pilgrims: “They made themselves *sukkot* – each man upon his roof, and in their courtyards, and in the courtyards of God’s House, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Efrayim” (*Nechemia* 8:16).

I believe that until then, a certain separation had existed between the Festival of Sukkot celebrated “in the provinces” and the Festival of the Ingathering, which was celebrated in the Temple and its environs. Whoever observed the pilgrim festival celebrated the Festival of Ingathering in Jerusalem, with praise and thanksgiving, with “palm branches, and boughs of the thick-leaved tree, and willows of the brook” and “fruit of the beautiful tree.” The Festival of Sukkot of the Exodus from Egypt fell, in effect, to those who remained at home – “every native-born” – just as the *sekhakh* of the *sukka* fell to whatever was left from the produce of the ingathering. The Festival of Sukkot therefore

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<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in the view of R. Yehuda (*Sukka* 36b-37a), the *sekhakh* of the *sukka* may only be of one of the four species exclusively, creating a complete correspondence. This opinion is rejected by *Chazal*, but was adopted by the Samaritans (and I have seen such a *sukka* with my own eyes on Mount Gerizim).

went almost unnoticed in the Temple; the pilgrims (who were not very numerous, as long as most of the nation offered sacrifices at the *bamot* near to their dwelling places, as testified to in *Sefer Melakhim*), even if they did erect temporary *sukkot* around the Temple, were theoretically exempt from this festival based on the principle of the exemption extended to emissaries for a matter of mitzva or those who are on a journey.<sup>15</sup> Thus, even though the Torah juxtaposes the two festivals in terms of time and thematic parallels, they were celebrated distinctly and separately to a considerable extent; the tension between the physical act of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and dwelling in *sukkot* “in memory of the Exodus from Egypt” was simply too great to be bridged.

The *de facto* separation between the pilgrims to Jerusalem and the householders who dwelled in *sukkot* led, according to the testimony of the text, to a significant weakening of both festivals. There was no situation of a common national celebration of the festival – neither the Festival of Sukkot, nor the Festival of the Ingathering. A minority took part in the pilgrimage, and not many dwelled in *sukkot*.

At this point, Ezra the Scribe aimed at realizing the words of the Torah to turn the Festival of Sukkot into a festival of the pilgrims, and this solved the problem.<sup>16</sup> The returnees from exile built *sukkot* for the Festival of the Ingathering together with the residents of Jerusalem. Thus, Jerusalem was full of *sukkot* on the rooftops, in the courtyards and the open spaces, and “olive branches and branches of the oil tree (wild olive), and myrtle branches and palm branches and branches of the thick tree” (*Nechemia* 8:15) – the four species and the *sekhakh* of the *sukkot* – were joined together. This binding together by Ezra saved and reestablished the Festival of Sukkot, which now included also the Festival of the Ingathering – and so it is celebrated to this day.

The *Simchat Beit ha-Shoeva* celebrated in Jerusalem during the nights of *Sukkot*<sup>17</sup> further cemented the unification of the two festivals, turning the rejoicing “before the Lord your God for seven days” (*Vayikra* 23:40) into a **rejoicing day and night**, as in the sacrifice of *miluim* and the *sukka*. This ongoing rejoicing of seven full days was so great

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<sup>15</sup> *Sukka* 26a; Rambam, *Hilkhhot Yom Tov* 6; Shulhan Arukh, *Orah Chaim* 640.

<sup>16</sup> On that Sukkot-Ingathering festival, the returnees from Babylon were for the most part gathered in Jerusalem, whether as residents or pilgrims visiting for the festival, as well as because of the great gathering that Ezra had called for at the beginning of the seventh month (Rosh ha-Shana) for the purpose of reading the Torah (*Nechemia* 8:1). This gathering was made possible because most of the returnees lived around Jerusalem, as deduced from *Ezra* 2 and *Nechemia* 3 and 11, such that an assembly was much easier to arrange than it had been throughout the First Temple Period. The division of the kingdom and the institutionalization of the local *bamot*, together with the great distances from Jerusalem (as foretold in the Torah; *Devarim* 12:20; 14:24), generally prevented the assembly of pilgrims to the First Temple.

<sup>17</sup> See *Sukka* 51 and 53a.

that in many sources, the joy of the Festival of Ingathering is transformed from a day-service and praise-giving in the Temple to a celebration with dancing and performances at night. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, we no longer experience the tension between the *sukka* as a temporary, festive home, and the pilgrimage to the Temple. The joy of the ingathering has fused with the memory of the *Beit ha-Shoeva*, and the *sukka* and the four species have become the two *mitzvot* that characterize the festival, instead of each characterizing one of two concurrent festivals.

### The Development of Sukkot

According to what we have argued, the seventh month originally included only the agricultural celebration of ingathering; thereafter, two conjoined festivals were established, and only at the end was the agricultural celebration merged into the historical one. Why does the Torah choose to present this “developmental” composition of the Festival of Sukkot instead of setting down at the outset, in *Sefer Shemot*, the formulation in *Devarim*: “The Festival of Sukkot... when you have gathered in your grain and your wine” (*Devarim* 16:1), just as it describes the “Festival of Matzot... at the time of the month of spring” (*Shemot* 23:14, 34:18)? Indeed, “Sukkot” in *Sefer Shemot* (and in *Parashat Masei*) is the name of a place – the first station where *Bnei Yisrael* encamped after the Exodus and the place where they ate their *matzot*. Accordingly, we should celebrate “Sukkot” along with Pesach. Why was the holiday moved to coincide with the Festival of the ingathering?

The apparent reason for this unique phenomenon is the significance of the “*sukkot*” of the Exodus. According to the literal reading of the text, these *sukkot*, in which *Bnei Yisrael* dwelled in the desert, represent and recall the entire journey in the desert, “all the way which the Lord your God has led you for these forty years in the wilderness” (*Devarim* 8:2). As the Rashbam correctly explains (in his unusually long commentary on *Vayikra* 23:43):

“In order that your generations will know [that I caused *Bnei Yisrael* to dwell in *sukkot* when I brought them out of Egypt]” – This should be interpreted simply, in accordance with those who maintain in *Massekhet Sukka* (11b) – a literal *sukka*. And this is the explanation of the matter: “The **Festival of Sukkot** shall you make for yourself [for seven days], **when you have gathered in** your grain and your wine” (*Devarim* 16:13) – **when you have gathered in the produce of the land** and your houses are full of every sort of goodness – grain and oil and wine – in order that you will remember that I caused *Bnei Yisrael* to dwell in *sukkot* **in the desert for forty years, with no place of habitation and with no portion of inheritance** – and for this you shall give thanks to Him Who gave you an

inheritance, and houses full of goodness, and do not say to yourselves, “My power and the strength of my hand have achieved this valor for me.”...

And therefore we come out of homes full of all sorts of goodness at the time of the ingathering and dwell in *sukkot*, to remember that *Bnei Yisrael* had no inheritance in the wilderness and no houses to inhabit. And **it was for this reason that the Holy One, blessed be He, established the Festival of Sukkot at the time of the ingathering of grain and wine**, “Lest your heart grow haughty over your houses full of all sorts of goodness;” “Lest you say, ‘Our hand has performed this valor for us.’”

Rashbam, as usual, addresses the literal text and notes that the ingathering is the first, agricultural date of the festival in the seventh month, while the historical Festival of Sukkot was joined to it, with a new significance, at the end of the section on the festivals in *Sefer Vayikra*. This joining contains a moral, educational message of supreme importance, which is made explicit in *Sefer Devarim*.<sup>18</sup> This joining represents the Torah’s strategy for preparing for the abundant blessing expected in *Eretz Yisrael* by recalling the tribulations of the way after the Exodus from Egypt and throughout the forty year journey in the desert.

Observing the Festival of Sukkot alongside Pesach would aptly commemorate the Exodus, but this would not be sufficient to counter the dangers of the abundance and the pride expected in *Eretz Yisrael*. The moment the Torah moved the “*sukkot*” to the seventh month, transforming the concept of the “Sukkot” of the Exodus to the dwelling in “*sukkot*” for forty years with no houses and no inheritance, the concept of “*sukkot*” assumed a new significance that is truly connected, educationally and morally, to the Festival of the Ingathering. However, this move took place only after the stay in the wilderness was lengthened, such that *Bnei Yisrael* would not proceed directly to *Eretz Yisrael*. In *Sefer Shemot* (23:20-33), there is still the possibility of a speedy entry into the land – until the sin of the golden calf and the sins of the wilderness, leading to the decree of forty years of wandering. Therefore, the new aspect of the Sukkot appears for the first time in the section on the festivals in *Vayikra* (which was given at the Tent of Meeting, after the sin of the golden calf), and it assumes its full significance only in *Sefer Devarim*, in the encounter with the abundance of the land flowing with milk and honey.

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<sup>18</sup> The same lesson can be found in the Song of *Haazinu* and the Grace After Meals, the only blessing which is explicitly commanded in the Torah; see Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 1:1-3.