



# A Celebration Service for the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) 2009/5770

by Mary-Frances Bartels



## Blessing over the Celebration

**Marty:** Blessed are you, O L-RD our G-d, King of the universe, who has instructed us to rejoice in this festival and gather together in this place. We humbly ask your presence to rest upon this celebration that we may come closer to you and renewed for more pleasing service to you.

**M-F lights the candles.**

**M-F:** May the festival lights we now kindle inspire us to use our gifts to spread your word and light to all the world. Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai, e-lo-hay-nu me-lech ha-olam, a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-Y'shu-a, a-sher bish-mo mad-li-kim a-nach-nu ner shel yom tov.

Blessed are you, O L-RD our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us in Y'shua, in whose name we light the festival lights. Blessed are you, O L-RD our G-d, King of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us, and has brought us to this festive season.

With love our L-RD gave us festivals, feasts, and sacred seasons. This day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the season of Thanksgiving, rejoicing, and anticipation.

**Marty:** Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai, e-lo-hay-nu me-lech ha-olam, a-sher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu lay-shev ba-sukkah.

**M-F:** Blessed are you, O L-RD, our G-d, King of the universe who blessed us with good teachings and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah.

## Introduction

**Marty:** The festivals of the Jewish year are divided in two sections - The Spring Feasts and the Autumn Feasts. As believers in Y'shua we know that our L-RD fulfilled the Spring Feasts by His work in coming to earth 2000 years ago. He is the Passover Lamb and frees us from all sin.

**Stephen:** But, what about the Fall Feasts?

**Marty:** These are the festivals that have yet to be fulfilled.

The first of the fall feasts is Rosh Hashanna, the New Year, and is also known as the Feast of Trumpets. It begins the 10-day period known as the Days of Awe ending at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On Rosh Hashanna our Jewish brethren celebrate G-d's majesty and His remembrance of His everlasting covenant with Israel. The shofar is blown during the service.

The Talmud states the traditional belief that the world was created on Rosh Hashanna.

Some believe that Rosh Hashanna will mark Y'shua's return. Zechariah and ancient rabbis understood this holiday's connection with the coming of Messiah. Paul describes the Rapture in I Cor 15:51-52, “. . . we will all be changed --- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For **the trumpet will sound**, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

**M-F:** Yom Kippur is Israel's most solemn holy day. Though known as the Day of Atonement, it more accurately might be described as a day of judgment. On that day Jews fast and repent of sins. During the time of the Temple this was the only day of the year when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for his and the people's sins. It was also the only time of the year when YHWH's name was pronounced aloud. Jews believe that on Yom Kippur the L-RD writes the names of the repentant in the Book of Life and the book is closed.

Y'shua spoke of a future day of judgment. Matthew 25:31-34:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “come, you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. . .”

**Marty:** Now we come to Sukkot. Five days after Yom Kippur, the Feast of Tabernacles, the longest and most joyous festival of the Jewish year, typically remembers the time when the Jews wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus. It is also called the Festival of the Ingathering (Hag ha-Asif) or Harvest, a Thanksgiving for G-d's provision throughout the year. It is one of the three festivals that G-d commanded the Israelites to assemble at the Temple in Jerusalem. Since our spiritual ancestors moved from place to place they could not build permanent homes in which to live. Instead, they had to build temporary shelters in which to stay for a night, a week, or perhaps a month or longer. They did not have durable dwellings until they reached the Promised Land of Israel. In the same way, we remember that we, too, are only pilgrims in this life on earth and await our permanent home with Y'shua.

### **Command to Celebrate**

If the Four Species are available, Marty motions towards or picks up them when Kyle says “take choice fruit.”

**Kyle:** The command to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles is found in Leviticus 23:39-43  
So, beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the L-RD for seven days...Your are

to take choice *fruit* from the trees, and *palm* fronds, leafy *branches* and *poplars* \* . . . Rejoice before the L-RD...This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come...Live in booths for seven days... so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the L-RD your G-d.

**Ryan:** Our L-RD Y'shua celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. As reported in John 7, it was during this time that he taught, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

### What Does it Mean?

- *A Harvest Festival*

**Marty:** Though a harvest is typically understood as the gathering of *food* for daily sustenance, as believers in Y'shua we know there are other "harvests," some in the present and others yet to come. A harvest can **only** come **after** work is done.

**M-F:** In Hebrews 12:5-11 we learn that a harvest of *righteousness* comes after we submit ourselves to G-d and His discipline. The result of this harvest is peace and life.

**Stephen:** Y'shua spoke of a harvest of *souls*. John 4:34b – 36: “. . . Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper . . . harvests the crop for eternal life . . .”

**Kyle:** In the endtimes the *earth* itself will be harvested. First mentioned by Y'shua when He was on earth in Matthew 13:30, 40-42), John expounds further in Revelation 14:14-19.

. . . and seated on the cloud was one “like a son of man” with a crown of gold . . . and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel . . . called . . ., “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” . . .

Sing: “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” or other appropriate harvest-themed song

- *A Thanksgiving*

**Marty:** As stated previously, this Festival was to be celebrated after the harvest was gathered. The Jews, as we, need to remember that G-d is the Great Giver of all we have. One of the attributes of our L-RD is Jehovah-Jireh — G-d Will Provide. Not only has He graciously sustained us this past year, but He will also supply us with all we need in the future.

The fruit on the altar (**motions toward fruit**) is a tangible reminder of our L-RD's bounty to us. The Hebrews also thanked our L-RD for the returning rain, without which the next year's crops

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\* The “four species” --- etrog (choice fruit), date palm, myrtle (leafy branches), and willow (poplars)

would be doomed.

**All:** O L-RD, we recognise you as the Great Source of all we have, our lives, our needs, friends, and family. Help us to focus our eyes on you and to seek your kingdom first. We thank and praise you for providing for this family over this past year and trust in your provision in the days to come.

**Sing:** “Jehovah Jireh” Midi from Internet

- *G-d is Our Shelter.*

**Marty:** Let us examine the concept of G-d as our shelter: Psalm 61:3-4 state: “For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.”

**Kyle:** G-d is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. (Ps. 46:1)

**M-F:** All too often in this life we get so busy that we neglect our relationship with the Rock of our salvation. The simplicity of this sukkah reminds us that our lives need not be so complex. All we need is to love and worship G-d and He will take care of the rest.

**All:** O L-RD, Our G-d, we laud and magnify you for your great goodness towards us. You are our Mighty Fortress. Protect us from the crafty schemes of evil. Help us rest in your strength, knowing that you have already won the victory.

**Sing:** “A Mighty Fortress is Our G-d,” #228 *Lutheran Book of Worship*

- *Our Bodies are Frail and Our Future Dwelling*

**Marty:** Like this shelter, our bodies are frail. In Genesis 3 we read, “...for dust you are and to dust you will return. Psalm 103 says, “As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower in the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.” Life is short.

**M-F:** Our hope is not in what the world has to offer, but in what G-d is providing for us in eternity. In John 14 Y’shua assures us,

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in G-d; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

**Kyle:** Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5, “Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from G-d, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”

**Ryan:** Let us, like Paul, “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

**Stephen:** Let us look forward to that great time. Revelation 21 tells us,  
Now the dwelling of G-d is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and G-d himself will be with them and be their G-d. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

**All:** O L-RD, Our G-d, we look forward to that Day when you return and take all believers to be with you. We humbly implore you to strengthen us in the confident hope of our own resurrection and the life of the world to come. Help us by true faith and a godly life to prepare for the world to come, doing the work you have given us to do while it is day. Until then grant us the only true peace available, that of the peace of your presence until we dwell eternally in your Sukkat Shalom. To the glory of your Holy Name.

Sing: “Jerusalem, My Happy Home” (vs. 1, 2, 4, 5), #331 *Lutheran Book of Worship*

### **Our Response — Rejoice!**

**Marty:** Part of the command to celebrate is to rejoice. Indeed, another name for this holiday is Zeman Simhatenu, “Season of Our Joy.” The apostle Paul emphasizes this in I Thes. 5:16-18

**Stephen:** Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is G-d’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

**Kyle:** In Deuteronomy 17:14-15 states: “Be joyful at your Feast . . . For the L-rd your G-d will bless you . . . and your joy will be complete.”

### **M-F motions to the palm tree.**

**M-F:** Our palm tree is answer to the command to take palm fronds in our rejoicing. Throughout the ages palms have been used for joyous celebrations. About Y’shua’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem we read:

**Kyle:** They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the L-RD! Blessed is the king of Israel!” (Jn. 12:13)

**Marty:** Similarly about eternity we read:

### **Ryan:**

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in the front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:  
“Salvation belongs to our G-d, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Rev.

7:9-10)

**Marty:** Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai, e-lo-hay-nu me-lech ha-olam, a-sher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu ahl n'ti-lat lulav.

**M-F:** Blessed are you, O L-RD, our G-d, King of the universe who blessed us with good teachings and commanded us to take up the lulav.

Psalm 92: 1-5, 12-15

**Marty:**

It is good to praise the L-RD  
to proclaim your love in the morning  
to the music of the ten-stringed lyre  
For you make me glad by your deeds, O L-RD;  
How great are your works, O L-RD,

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**All:**

and make music to your name, O Most High.  
and your faithfulness at night,  
and the melody of the harp.  
I sing for joy at the works of your hands.  
How profound your thoughts!

...  
The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,  
planted in the house of the L-RD  
They will still bear fruit in old age,  
proclaiming, "The L-RD is upright;

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...  
They will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;  
they will flourish in the courts of our G-d.  
They will stay fresh and green,  
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in  
him."

Sing: "Hosanna," [Midi from Internet](#)

### Closing

**Marty:** Blessed are you, O L-RD our G-d, King of the universe, Giver of All Things, and Our Refuge. You have graciously opened the door for us to salvation through the sacrifice of your dear Son Y'shua. We praise You for this mighty deed that enables us to enter Your holy kingdom and thank you for this eternal hope we have in you. May Your Name be lauded and exalted forever.

**All:** Amen. Come, L-RD Y'shua.

Sing: "How Great Thou Art," #16 *Sing Joyfully*

All eat a snack or meal while listening to background praise music.

Key ---

**Marty:** Male leader

**M-F:** Female leader

**Stephen:** Participant #1

**Kyle:** Participant #2

**Ryan:** Participant #3