

Feast of Tabernacles / Sukkot

UNIT
2
LESSON
5

UNIT 2

Bible Reference

Exodus 23:16b; Leviticus 23:33–43;
Nehemiah 8:15

To the Teacher

Students will prepare booths for this lesson. If you wish to make this activity more elaborate, plan for extra space and material.

Preparation/Materials

- * 4–6 yardsticks or measuring tapes
- * Activity sheet, one per student
- * Journals
- * Unit organizer

Lesson Highlights

- * The Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, is the third pilgrim festival.
- * Sukkot joyfully celebrates the end of the harvest season.
- * Sukkot requires that the people build booths in which to live, eat, and sleep for seven days, remembering all the while God's provisions for his people in the wilderness.

Background

The Feast of Sukkot (pronounced soo-KOHT) is the third pilgrim festival, celebrated in the fall. Leviticus 23:33 tells us that this celebration begins on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tishri. The Feast of Sukkot (plural for the Hebrew word *sukkah* [pronounced SOOK-uh], which means “booth” or “tabernacle”) is a weeklong feast of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the harvest of fruit, grapes for wine, and olives for olive oil. In Exodus 23:16b, the Feast of Sukkot is referred to as the Feast of Ingathering, celebrating the end of the agricultural year, when all the crops were gathered in.

This feast also reminds the Jews that their ancestors had lived in tents in the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt. Even though this was the end of an extremely busy harvest season, during which everyone had labored long and hard, God's people came to God to acknowledge their total dependence upon him. He alone had taken care of his people when they had lived in tents during their wilderness years. Throughout nearly four decades, their feet hadn't even swelled, nor had their clothing and sandals worn out.

In anticipation of the festival, thousands of pilgrims streamed into the city of Jerusalem, carrying the branches and materials necessary to build their shelters. Each shelter was constructed from olive, palm, and myrtle branches (Nehemiah 8:15) and was called a *sukkah*. Still today, the *sukkah* is often decorated with hanging fruits and vegetables and reminds the people of God's abundant blessings throughout the year. The three-sided booths are flimsy and temporary, a reminder to the people that their lives are also fragile, in need of God's continuous protection. For one week, the Jews, including those who lived in Jerusalem year around, would live, eat their meals, and sleep in their shelters along the crowded streets. As the days of the feast progressed, the Jewish celebrations, including the waving of branches and singing, also increased in fervor.

On the final day of the festival, the people would make their way to the temple for the afternoon (3:00) sacrifice and the special ceremony of prayers for rain. Sukkot took place at the end of the dry season in Israel. Unless the rains would begin soon, there would be no harvest for the following year. Fervent prayers for rain, as well as cries for God's

living water, were included in the Feast of Sukkot's final afternoon ceremony. The Jewish people depended upon rain for water to provide for their crops and to sustain all living things. On the final day of Sukkot, the priests would gather and march en masse to

the Pool of Siloam. One priest would collect a golden pitcher full of the water, and together the priests would return in a procession to the temple. As they entered the temple, the shofar would blow, and the priest carrying the golden pitcher of water would step around the altar and pour the water into a bowl.

Lesson Steps



Bridge

1. Tell students: "Five days after the Day of Atonement, on the 15th day of the month, Sukkot begins! The Feast of Sukkot is a weeklong feast of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the harvest of fruit, grapes, and olives."
2. Have students turn to "Feast of Tabernacles / Sukkot" in the student text on page 75 and read it together.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES / SUKKOT

The Feast of Sukkot (pronounced soo-KOHT) is the third pilgrim festival, celebrated in the fall. Leviticus 23:33 tells us that this celebration begins on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tishri. The Feast of Sukkot (plural for the word *sukkah* [pronounced SOOK-uh], which means "booth" or "tabernacle") is a weeklong feast of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the harvest of fruit, grapes for wine, and olives for olive oil. In Exodus 23:16b, the Feast of Sukkot is referred to as the Feast of Ingathering, celebrating the end of the agricultural year, when all of the crops were gathered in. Still today, this feast reminds Jews that their ancestors had lived in tents in the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt.

Even though this feast came at the end of an extremely busy harvest season, in which everyone had labored long and hard, God's people came to God to acknowledge their total dependence upon him. He alone had taken care of his people while they had lived in tents during their years in the wilderness. During those decades, their feet hadn't even swelled, and their clothes and sandals hadn't worn out.

At the beginning of the festival, thousands of pilgrims streamed into the city of Jerusalem, carrying the branches and other materials necessary for building their shelters. Each shelter, or *sukkah*, was constructed from olive, palm, and myrtle branches (Nehemiah 8:15). Still today, the *sukkah* is often decorated with hanging fruits and vegetables, reminding the people of God's abundant blessings throughout the year. The three-sided booths are flimsy and temporary, a reminder to the people that their lives, too, are fragile, needing God's continuous protection. For one week, the Jews, including those who lived year around in Jerusalem, would live, eat their meals, and sleep in their shelters along the crowded streets. As the days of the feast progressed, the Jewish celebrations, including the waving of branches and singing, increased in fervor.



Scripture Link

1. Distribute the activity sheet, and assign groups of five or six students each.

NAME _____

1. Read Leviticus 23:33–43 and together as a class discuss the focus or main points of this feast. Verse 43 answers the question of why the people were to 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 LORD your God.” **The people were to bring choice fruits from the trees, as well as palm fronds and branches. They were to rejoice for seven days. The first and eighth days were for sacred assemblies and offerings, with no work being done.**

2. The Jewish mind-set is multisensory. What do you think Jerusalem may have looked, smelled, and sounded like during Sukkot? How do you think the food in the booths tasted? How did the experience feel? Numbers 29:12–40 may help you answer these questions, and Leviticus 23 provides details on the materials used to make each booth. **Answers will vary but may include crowded streets, noisy booths, a great deal of food, milling crowds, people eating in their booths, noisy and smelly animals of many types, blood, the smell of sacrifices, joyful people, and the smells of cooking fires.**

3. In Exodus 23:16b, the Feast of Sukkot is referred to as the Feast of Ingathering, celebrating the end of the agricultural year, when all of the crops were gathered in. Why is “Feast of Ingathering” also a fitting name for this celebration? **“Ingathering” makes one think about the crops that were gathered in: olives, grapes, wheat, and fruit—the same crops that were hanging from the booths!**

4. In Nehemiah 8:14–17, the Jewish people were reminded of this Festival of Booths, which God had commanded them to celebrate. Read the passage and write down some of the phrases that stand out in your mind about this particular celebration of Sukkot. **Answers will vary but may include that the people had to bring their own branches from a variety of trees for making the booths; that they built the booths all over Jerusalem—on rooftops, in courtyards, in the temple courts, and by the city gates; that all of the people participated in the celebration; that they had not celebrated like this since Joshua’s time, making their joy particularly great; and that they read the Book of the Law day after day during the feast.**

what I COMMAND you today”
(Exodus 34:11a)

UNIT 2 LESSON 5 31

2. Tell students, “You are going to work with a group in a unique setting that helps you think more realistically about Sukkot. Each group of five or six students is to measure an area that is about 6–8 feet wide and 10–12 feet long in which to work as a group. Tape measures and yardsticks are available for you to use. You may move around your desks and chairs to make this sukkah or booth for yourselves, but you must work only in your designated area. Feel free to sit on the floor to complete the activity sheet.”
3. Allow time for students to make their booth and complete the questions.
4. Students should remain in their “booths” to report their group’s answers to the class.
5. Have students move the desks back into the regular classroom arrangement and find their own seats. Then explain, “There is one more thing involved in the Feast of Sukkot that we don’t usually include in our celebrations of Thanksgiving or other harvest festivals. The Jewish people included prayers for rain at the end of each Sukkot festival.”
6. Have students turn to “Sukkot Prayers for Rain” in the student text on page 76 and read it together.

SUKKOT PRAYERS FOR RAIN

On the final day of the festival, the people would make their way to the temple for the afternoon (3:00) sacrifice and the special ceremony of prayers for rain. Sukkot took place at the end of the dry season in Israel. Unless rain began soon, there would be no harvest for the following year. Fervent prayers for rain, as well as cries for God's living water, were included in the Feast of Sukkot's final afternoon ceremony. The Jewish people depended upon rain to provide for their crops and to sustain the life of all living things. On the final day of Sukkot, the priests would gather and march to the Pool of Siloam. One priest would collect a golden pitcher full of the water, and together the people would return in a procession to the temple. As they entered the temple, the shofar would blow, and the priest carrying the golden pitcher of water would go around the altar and pour the water into a bowl.



Student Activities

1. Have students take out their journals and respond to the following questions.
 - What did you notice today about this feast that was meaningful for you?
 - How does the Bible memory work tie in with this feast?
 - Is there anything you are wondering about today?
2. Have students add Sukkot to their unit organizer. (List this as well as on the classroom calendar.)

Enrichment

- * **Biology.** Have students research the types of trees mentioned in the directions for making the booths. Do any of them grow in your general area? Have students research the crops grown by the Jewish people, how they might have stored their fruits and grains, and how they processed their olive oil.
- * **Construction project.** Construct an actual three-sided sukkah, making it as authentic as possible.
- * **Mathematics.** Compute, by reading Numbers 29:12–40, the number of sacrifices offered during Sukkot and the number of animals of each type brought before God. Make a chart or graph representing the different sacrifices.
- * **Writing.** Have students write a series of creative postcards to “send” from Jerusalem on each day of the Feast of Sukkot. Describe everything from the eyes of a Jewish boy or girl who is 10–12 years old.

Job: The Prologue

UNIT
3
LESSON
1

UNIT 3

Bible Reference

Job 1–2

To the Teacher

Students may not have had much exposure to the Book of Job, which too often tends to be glossed over or oversimplified. Verses are occasionally pulled out of context to justify or to comfort us in our own suffering or pain. But the message that the Book of Job teaches is important and relevant still today: We are to trust in God’s sovereign power and to worship him, even in times of adversity or when God’s ways just don’t seem to make sense to us.

The Book of Job is divided into three sections: Job’s dilemma (covered in this lesson), the debates or discussions, and Job’s deliverance. The literary structure of the Book of Job is symmetrical. The first section is a prose prologue in which Job is introduced, God shows his confidence in him, and the tragedies he experiences are recounted. Following this is a series of poetic debates between Job, several of his friends who have come to comfort him, and God. The Book of Job wraps up with an epilogue, also written in prose. In this first lesson, the emphasis is on the storytelling of chapters 1–2. Some preparation may be beneficial in terms of setting up the classroom to be conducive to understanding the literary technique the author uses to provide the background details unknown to the main character, Job. Perhaps setting up a special spot in which to tell the story may be helpful. If you are using the “playwright” option, a makeshift stage area could be plotted out. For additional help with exploring literary aspects of the Book of Job, see the *Literary Study Bible*.

The Bridge activity will provide a picture of many of the blessings in students’ lives. It might be wise to adjust the questions to suit

the physical and/or emotional needs or concerns of your particular students. The questions given are suggestions; feel free to add to them or skip over any that might not be favorable for your classroom setting or for your students’ backgrounds.

Preparation/Materials

- * Activity sheet, one per student
- * Crayons, markers, or colored pencils (red, yellow, blue, and black)
- * Copies of the Bible, preferably one per student or one per student pair

Lesson Highlights

- * God and Satan take part in a cosmic contest: Satan claims that God’s people follow him only because of the blessings he pours out upon them.
- * God allows Satan to strike all that his servant Job possesses and to afflict Job’s body with painful sores.
- * In all that happens to him, Job does not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Background

The Book of Job tells the story of a man who loses everything he has: wealth, children, and health. Without cursing God, Job asks the proverbial question “Why?”

Job 1:1–5 introduces us to the “blameless and upright” Job, who “feared God and shunned evil.” He was a wealthy man, as counted by an abundance of animals, numerous servants, and a burgeoning family. The opening verse tells us that Job dwelled in the land of Uz (in northern Arabia), and the narrative appears to be set at around the same time as the patriarchs (ca. 2000 B.C.). Evidently Job alternated between moving around with his cattle and spending his time

