

The Joy in the Harvestⁱ

“²You will multiply the nation. You will increase the joy. They will rejoice before You like the joy in the harvest, as they revel when they divide spoil... For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:2, 5) “A Savior is born to you today in the city of David, who is Messiah the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) is the *season of our joy* (Hebrew, *z'man simchateinu*) and is also known Scripturally as simply 'The Feast'. In Lev. 23:34 *Adonai* commanded Moses to observe *Sukkot* (the Feast of Harvest/Ingathering), starting on the 15th day of the seventh month (*Tishrei*) in the Hebrew Holy Year forever. This feast is also known as the Feast of Joy (Hebrew, *simcha*). This day begins an eight-day period from the 15th to the 22nd of *Tishrei*, followed by the day of rejoicing in the Torah (*Simchat Torah*). These eight days are known collectively as the days of our rejoicing or the days of gladness (*z'man simchateinu*).

The birth of God's greatest man and man's greatest God, *Yeshua* the Messiah is the pivotal event in all of human history. Scripture establishes that *Yeshua* was actually born during the time of *Sukkot*, in the fall of the year when the Word of God '*tabernacled among us*' (*“¹⁴And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us”, John 1:14*) – when God became man. The Book of Luke establishes for itself credentials, which are significant to every believer. Dr. Luke claims to have the accuracy of an eyewitness concerning details of the life and times of the Messiah: *“...have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, to write for you an orderly record... ⁴so you may know for sure the truth of the words you have been taught (Luke 1:3-4).”* Luke gives us details that help establish the birth of Messiah *Yeshua* during the Feast of *Sukkot*. We'll presume familiarity with the Jewish calendar.

Zechariah served in the temple at an appointed time twice each year – in the division or course of *Abijah*: *“⁵In the days of Herod, King of Judah, there was a kohen named Zechariah from the priestly division of Abijah. Elizabeth, his wife, was from the daughters of Aaron” (Luke 1:5).* These priestly *divisions or courses* in the Hebrew Scriptures and are found in 1 Chronicles Chapter 24:3-4, 5-10, where King David himself made the appointments.

Each period of service corresponded to one week of ministry, twice each year beginning on the 23rd of *Tishri*, after King Solomon dedicated the Temple during *Sukkot* (2 Chronicles 5:1-15; 7:1, 2; 7:8-10). Our analysis draws from the fact that if we establish when *Zechariah* was in the Temple in his course, we will know both when John the Baptist and *Yeshua* were **both** conceived and born.

The time of Zechariah's first biannual ministration in the Temple during the eight-course (*Abijah*) was during the later part of the Jewish month of *Kislev*, which corresponds roughly to the middle of December in our calendar. His second biannual ministration was during the 3rd week of the month *Sivan*, which corresponds to the 1st week in June in our calendar. We know that Zechariah was in his 2nd biannual ministration from the words of the Angel Gabriel in Luke 1:8-23. The Greek phrase: *“²³When the days of his priestly service had been completed...”*) clearly indicate that he had finished his duty for the year (he finished his 2nd biannual course).

We know that Elizabeth, Zechariah's barren and aged wife was to conceive *miraculously* and thus, John the Baptist is conceived in the beginning of the 4th week of *Sivan* (roughly our 2nd week in June). Elizabeth then hid herself for five months: *“...Elizabeth became pregnant and hid herself for five months... ²⁶Then in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by Adonai into a town in the Galilee named Natzeret” (Luke 1:24-25).* After Elizabeth was six months pregnant Gabriel was sent unto Mary (*Miryam*), the espoused wife of Joseph (*Yosef*) and announced to her: *“...The Ruach ha-Kodesh will come upon you, and the power of Elyon will overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One being born will be called Ben-Elohim. ³⁶Behold, even your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son in her old age; and the one who was called barren is six months pregnant. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸So Miriam said, '... Let it be done to me according to your word.' And the angel left her” (Luke 1:30-31; 35-38).*

Thus, *Yeshua* is conceived six months after Elizabeth conceived, during the 4th week of *Kislev*, corresponding roughly in our calendar to the 2nd week in December (Chanukah starts on the evening of *Kislev* 25, and from *Kislev* 29 to *Tishri* 15 is exactly 280 days). The human gestation period is 40 weeks or 280 days. If we count 40 weeks from the 4th week of *Sivan* we find that John the Baptist is born on or about *Nisan*

14/Passover. Neither Elizabeth's nor Mary's were ordinary human pregnancies. They were *Perfect, Spirit-led, Spirit-induced and Spirit-directed pregnancies* therefore, we can safely conclude that exactly at the end of the 40 weeks, John is born of Elizabeth and *Yeshua* is born of *Miriam* in Bethlehem (Hebrew, *Beit Lechem*, literally **the house of bread**), on or about the first day of 3rd week of *Tishri*, exactly 6 months from John's birth in the Jewish calendar. This is the beginning of *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles) in Scripture on the 15th day of *Tishri*. We know the Jewish people before the time of *Yeshua* look for the coming of Elijah on Passover (as indicated in any *Hagaddah*). *Yeshua* (and the angel Gabriel) confirmed that the Elijah that was to come before the *tabernacled Messiah* was indeed John the Baptist (*See Matt. 17:13*).

With the precision that has always characterized His actions, God brought forth His Son in the *fullness of time* (*Galatians 4:3-5*) and caused Him to *tabernacle* among men. Before that time, men of God constructed various tabernacle-like (tent-like) structures that were used to house His visitation. But when time came for God to be manifest in the flesh (*"He was revealed in the flesh, Vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Trusted throughout the world, Taken up in glory" 1 Tim. 3:16*) in a body prepared of the Father (*"Then I said, 'Behold, I come to do Your will, O God (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me)'"...⁹then He said, "Behold, I come to do Your will." He takes away the first to establish the second.¹⁰By His will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Messiah Yeshua once for all" Heb. 10:7, 9-10*) He sent *Yeshua*.

It was the Feast of *Sukkot* in the seventh month (*2 Chronicles 5:1-3*) when Solomon dedicated the great material dwelling-place which, though designed to do so, could not contain God (*"⁴⁷ But Solomon built a house for Him.⁴⁸ However, Elyon does not dwell in man-made houses. As the prophet says,⁴⁹ 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is the footstool of My feet. What kind of house will you build for Me, says Adonai, or what is the place of My rest?" Acts 7:47-49*), so during the Feast of *Sukkot*, a suitable dwelling place for all the fullness of Deity (*Colossians 2:9*) was brought forth in the likeness of sinful flesh (*"³ For what was impossible for the Torah—since it was weakened on account of the flesh—God has done. Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering, He condemned sin in the flesh" Romans 8:3*).

Placing the time of the nativity at *Sukkot* (*"Yeshua was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry..." Luke 3:23*) matches the descriptions of contemporaneous events and circumstances in the Gospels. Since the Feast of *Sukkot* is the time of ingathering, it would have been the most natural time of the year for the Roman government to impose taxation on the agrarian people of Israel. Autumn would also have been a time when *Miriam* (Mary) could have undertaken the journey (which was Roman Edict required) from Nazareth to Bethlehem (on an animal). Such a journey in her condition would have been virtually impossible during winter. At *Yeshua's* birth shepherds were said to be abiding (living) in the open fields around *Beit Lechem* watching their flocks at night. Since livestock was brought from the open fields around *Sukkot*, *Yeshua* must have been born *before* the winter months while there is still grass growing in the fields.

It is certainly more than coincidence that it was in *Sukkot* that the Word of God became flesh and *tabernacled* with men because throughout their history this has been a time when our Jewish people dwelt in *sukkahs* (booths) that face the east and searched the eastern skies for *the sign of the coming of the Messiah*. Real joy came into the world when the Word of God began to dwell with mankind in *Sukkot!* How much more significant is this historic time in God's already established calendar than the traditional time in man's calendar! *Sukkot* in Scripture was: (1) *The Feast that Messiah Revealed Himself*, (2) *When "...the dwelling (sukkah) of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them (Rev. 21)*, (3) *The Feast of Dedication of the First Temple & the Shekinah*, (4) *The First Festival Observed by Israel upon returning from the Babylonian Captivity*, (5) *The Time of the Restoration of the Second Temple* and (6) *Yeshua died in Passover and it is well-understood that He was about thirty-three and a half years old, placing His birth at Sukkot*. At the transfiguration Peter wanted to build *Sukkot* for Moses, Elijah and *Yeshua* (coincidence?) Unto us is born this day a Savior, *Yeshua the Messiah*. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men! Chag HaSukkot Sameach b'zman simchateinu! Shabbat Shalom!*

ⁱ For further details see my messages: *A Savior is Born* Oct. 12, 2019 & *In the Fullness of Time* Sep. 24, 2018