

Another View on Yeshua's Birth During Sukkot

"Therefore, the Holy One being born will be called Ben-Elohim...A Savior is born to you today in the city of David, who is Messiah the Lord" (Luke 1:35b, 2:11).

{A Little background}. I have been teaching on *Yeshua's Birth during Sukkot* since I was ordained as a minister in the Church of God Jerusalem Acres in 1981. The first person to teach on this was Dr. John Garr¹ who was a bishop in the denomination, a personal friend, and someone I collaborated with until the mid-to-later 1990s. Since being introduced to this I have strived to research further in order to refine this belief. Recently, *Hebrew for Christians*, an organization that I have a great respect for, published an article entitled "Christmas - Was Jesus born on December 25th?" By John J. Parsons. And I would like to share from that article and their view on *Yeshua's Birth during Sukkot*. Parsons wrote: *"As I hope to make clear, the crux of the arguments for the dating of the birth of Yeshua depend upon the date assigned to the "Course of Abijah" and the precise time that Zechariah – John the Baptist's father – was in the Temple when he was visited by the Angel Gabriel."*

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:

¹Now many have undertaken to organize an account of the events fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us from the start by the eyewitnesses and reporters of the word. ³Therefore it seemed best to me also, because I have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, to write for you an orderly record, most excellent Theophilus ⁴so you may know for sure the truth of the words you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4)

In *Luke's* own words, these *carefully investigated accounts* were given to *us as an accurate and ordered narrative*. *Luke* gives us details that establish the birth of *Messiah Yeshua* during the *Feast of Sukkot*. I will assume the reader has familiarity with the Jewish calendar. I believe that we can establish reasonable timing of the birth of the Messiah to be on or about the *Feast of Sukkot*.

"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)

Zechariah served in the temple at an appointed time twice each year – in the division or course of *Abijah*. These appointed times were called *divisions or courses* in the Hebrew Scriptures and are found in *1 Chronicles Chapter 24*. King David himself made the appointments (*1 Chronicles 24:3-10*).

Each *course* corresponded to one week of ministry, twice each year beginning on the 4th week (the 23rd) of the 7th month, after King Solomon dedicated the Temple during *Sukkot* (*2 Chronicles 5:1-15; 7:1, 2; 7:9-10*)

"³All the people of Israel assembled before the king at the festival in the seventh month...¹¹When the cohanim came out of the Holy Place (for all the cohanim who were present had consecrated themselves; they didn't keep to their divisions)" (2 Chr. 5:3,11 CJB) {"did not then wait by course" KJV; "without regard to divisions" TLV}

"¹When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of יהיה filled the house, ²so that the cohanim could not enter the house of יהיה; because the glory of יהיה filled יהיה's house." (2 Chr. 7:1-2, CJB)

"⁸So Solomon celebrated the festival at that time for seven days, together with all Israel, an enormous gathering; <they had come all the way> from the entrance of Hamat to the Vadi <of Egypt>. ⁹On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, having observed the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days. ¹⁰Then, on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, he sent the people away to their tents full of joy and glad of heart for all the goodness יהיה had shown to David, to Solomon and to Israel his people." (2 Chr. 7:8-10, CJB)

¹ John D. Garr, Ph.D., President & CEO of Hebraic Christian Global Community, See <https://www.hebraiccommunity.org/contributor/john-garr/> Also formed and led Restoration Foundations in the mid 1990s.

Parson's article elucidates: *"Recall that the Jewish Calendar begins in the spring (i.e., Nisan 1), so the first course of priests would serve for seven days and the following week the second course would serve. Every priest would serve during the week of Passover and Shavuot. By the tenth week the eighth course of Abijah would be called for Temple service and the course would continue without further interruption until the 24th course was completed at the end of Elul...The course of Abijah mentioned in Luke 1:5 places Zechariah's service in the Temple beginning on the second sabbath of the month of Sivan (week 10). His son John was then conceived sometime after this (Luke 1:23-24), probably the third or fourth sabbath of the month of Sivan (week 12). Adding 40 weeks to this (the normal time of human gestation) John would have been born sometime in the month of Nisan, perhaps around the time of Passover. Yeshua was conceived six months after John was conceived (Luke 1:24-27), so adding six months (24 weeks) to the end of Sivan implies the conception would have occurred near the time of Chanukah. Adding 40 weeks to this (the normal time of human gestation) Yeshua would have been born sometime in the month of Tishri, the Season of Sukkot."* This is a most concise and accurate summary of what has been my analysis these last 45 years.

Here is Parson's Article Pages 3 & 4:

Argument for a Tishri (Sukkot) Birth

There are several reasons to believe that Yeshua was born during the fall, in particular, during the festival of Sukkot ("Tabernacles"). Among the reasons cited are as follows:

1. Yeshua's cousin, John the Baptist, was conceived in mid Sivan (May/June) and born 40 weeks later on Nisan 15, the Passover, *because*:
 - a. John's father (Zechariah) was a Levite who was assigned to serve in the Temple during the course of "Aviyah," the 8th course of the year (Luke 1:5, 1 Chr. 24:10).
 - b. Since the cycle of service began on the first Shabbat of Nisan but both Passover and Shavuot require all priestly courses to serve, the actual time the 8th course would serve would be during the 10th week of the year. This places Zechariah's service in the Temple as beginning on the second Sabbath of the month of Sivan.
 - c. It is written that John was conceived shortly after this tour of duty (Luke 1:23-4). Therefore, John the Baptist was probably conceived shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan (i.e., late Sivan).
 - d. Therefore John the Baptist was born around Passover (Nisan 15). (Recall that Yeshua said that John the Baptist was a type of Elijah the prophet (Matt 17:10-13, cp. Luke 1:17). Even today it is customary for Jews to set out a special cup of wine during the Passover Seder meal in anticipation of the arrival of Elijah for the festival.)

2. Yeshua was conceived in late Kislev (Nov/Dec) and born 40 weeks later during Sukkot ("Tabernacles"), because:

- a. Yeshua was conceived six months after John (Luke 1:24-27, 36). Note that the "sixth" month refers to Elizabeth's pregnancy, *not* the month of Elul (cp. Luke 1:36).
- b. Six months added to late Sivan is late Kislev, which is the time of the conception of Yeshua (note that the first day of the Jewish festival of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated on the 25th day of Kislev, and Yeshua is called the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46)).
- c. From the 15th day of Nisan (John's birthday), we add six months to arrive at the 15th day of the 7th month, Tishri - the first day of the festival of Sukkot.

If the day of his birth were the first day of Sukkot, the day of his circumcision would be the eighth day, Shemini Atzeret/Sinchat Torah, which, like the first day, is a day of sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:39). On this day the Jews complete their annual cycle of Torah readings and start again from *Bereshit* (Genesis). Simchat Torah is considered to be a time of "fulfillment" of the Torah. The circumcision of Yeshua at this time indicates how he had come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17-18).

3. Circumstantial Evidences:

- a. John 1:14 states that the "Word became flesh and dwelt" with us. The Greek word "dwelt" [*skeinao*] comes from the word *skeinos*, which the LXX (Septuagint) uses for the *mishkan* (tabernacle). The name given for the feast of Tabernacles itself is called *Herotei Skeinon* in the LXX.
- b. King Herod most likely would use the opportunity of the Festival of Sukkot (in Jerusalem) to perform the census (certainly not Chanukah, since he detested and feared the Hasmoneans).
- c. Shepherds would not be out with their sheep in the dead of winter in Israel. The angel who appeared to the shepherds said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of *great joy* that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10). Since Sukkot was known as both a festival of joy and also as the "Festival of the Nations," the angel was actually giving them a greeting for the Festival of Sukkot. This is the only festival where the nations are positively encouraged to participate (Zech. 14:16-19).
- d. After Yeshua returns and sets up His kingdom on earth, it is written that only one festival will be celebrated by the nations: *Sukkot* (Zechariah 14:16) Why is that? Could it be that this will be a worldwide birthday party for Yeshua? (all the other festivals would have been fulfilled - Passover, First Fruits, Pentecost, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, but the remembrance of His birth would remain as a celebration).

- e. The Catholic church (in 336 AD) declared December 25th (on the Julian calendar) to be Yeshua's birthday in order to replace a pagan Roman holiday, Saturnalia. Ironically, December 25th was a celebration of the birthday of the sun god. The early church, in an attempt to get rid of the pagan holiday, declared December 25th to be the birthday of the Son of God.
- f. We know that Yeshua was 30 years old when He started His ministry (Luke 3:23), and, assuming (as many Bible scholars do) that He ministered for 3 1/2 years, we can count backwards from the crucifixion (during Passover in Nisan) 6 months to discover his birthday in Tishri.

Summary: Since Zechariah served during the tenth week and Elizabeth conceived shortly thereafter, we can place the date of Yeshua's birth during the festival of Sukkot.

Here is my summary (18Sep21): *Yeshua* is conceived six months after Elizabeth conceived, during the 4th week of the 10th month, corresponding roughly to the beginning of our 2nd week in December (*Chanukah* starts on the evening of the 25th of the 10th month (*Kislev*) and from the 29th of the 10th month to the 15th of the 7th month is exactly 280 days). The human gestation period is 40 weeks or 280 days. If we count 40 weeks from the 4th week of the 3rd month, we find that John the Baptist is born on or about *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 Lehem*, literally *the house of bread* in the *City of David*), on or about the first day of 3rd week of the 7th month, exactly 6 months from John's birth in the Jewish calendar. This is the beginning of *Sukkot* (the *Feast of Tabernacles*) in Scripture which starts on the 15th day of the 7th month: *"You will multiply the nation. You will increase the joy. They will rejoice before You like the joy in the harvest...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). We know the Jewish people before the time of *Yeshua* look for the *coming of Elijah* on *Passover* (as indicated in any *Haggadah*). *Yeshua* (and the *Angel Gabriel*) confirmed that the *Elijah that was to come before the Messiah was indeed John the Baptist*. So, we see that: *"when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Torah"* (Gal. 4:4, KJV). Happy Birthday *Yeshua*!