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THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES
SUKKOT – PART 9
CELEBRATION OF LIGHTS

Today is the eighth and final day of Tabernacles. It is a holy sabbath. It is also the seventh and final day of living in the Jewish lean-to-hut (sukkot). It ends at sundown.

Sundown today also begins another special celebration called Simchat Torah. We will discuss that tomorrow.

The seven days of living in their sukkot was a period of feasting and rejoicing. One of the most joyous and beautiful celebrations was a “celebration of lights” ceremony every evening called “Simchat Bet Hasho’ayva.” It was reminiscent of the descent of God’s shekinah glory that was manifested when Solomon dedicated the New Temple. II Chronicles 7:1 says, **“The fire (a great light giving source) came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple (house).”** The glory was so great that the priests could not enter.

It was the same shekinah glory that was so strong on Moses as he came down Mount Sinai with the tablets. His face shone so brightly from the light of God that the people’s eyes could not bear it. He had to put a veil over his face.

The Simchat Bet Hasho’ayva looked forward to the return of the shekinah glory in the future days of the coming Messiah. It ascribed “light” to Messiah who was referred to in scripture as the “star out of Jacob,” the “light of Israel,” the “light of the (gentile) nations,” a “refiner’s fire,” a “burning lamp” and “Sun of righteousness.”

It was on this Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus entered on this last day, a sabbath, into the temple where the convocation was being held and loudly declared in John 7:32-38, **“...if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink...”** declaring Himself to be the **“living water,”** a declaration of His Messiahship. (Jer. 17:13.)

The next day (on Simchat Torah) Jesus returned and declared in John 8:12, **“I am the light of the world...”**. Having just completed seven days of the “celebration of lights”, everybody clearly understood that He was publicly declaring Himself as Messiah.

The entire eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles spoke prophetically of God coming to dwell among His people. The Jews anticipated it but did not recognize it when Jesus came. We have the fulfillment of it in Jesus, the Messiah. However, there is still coming a future time when Israel will indeed recognize Him at His return. What they shall “someday” receive, we already “have” in Jesus. He tabernacles within us.