

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE FALL BIBLICAL FEASTS

PART 26 of 26

SIMCHAT TORAH

Yesterday, a high Holy sabbath, was the eighth and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This completed the final Biblical feast for the religious year for the Jews. God called them "His" feasts because they were given to Israel by God Himself to observe every year.

However, it is not the end of their special religious holidays and observances. Hanukkah and Purim were added by man even though they are mentioned in scripture up through Jesus' time on earth. They celebrate specific historic events of Israel.

Simchat Torah (pr. Sim-khat Toe-rah) is another observance added by Jewish leaders during the Middle Ages. Simchat means "Rejoicing." Torah is the first five books of the Old Testament which we call the Pentateuch. The Jews also call it "The Law."

It is celebrated the day after Tabernacles is completed, essentially adding a ninth day to the biblical feast. It means "Rejoice in God's Word (Torah, or Law). The Torah is the very foundation of Judaism. It has held them together as an identifiable religious and ethnic group for 3,500 years. It would be an appropriate consideration for them to add a celebration in special observance of the Torah which began around the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., varying according to geographical locations of the diaspora.

Persecutions of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries caused them to intensify their focus on the Torah. This brought a fervent increase in their celebration with much singing and dancing. However, the main focus of Simchat Torah is the reading of the Torah publicly in their congregations. Everyone is given an opportunity to read a portion out loud. To conclude it, the last part of Deuteronomy is read to show completion for the old year. Then the first part of Genesis is read to start the new year of reading.

While the Jews venerate the written word, Torah, we Christ-followers have the Living Word within us. We have so much more "word" in which to "rejoice" (Simchat). We do not need one special day to "rejoice" in the Word (Simchat Logos) because the Word (Logos) indwells us every day.

Philippians 4:4 says, ***"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice!"***