

T.F.S.

Three, five, and seven

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#204

***“Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse”. Henry Van Dyke***

## **The Feast of Tishri**

The Feast of Tishri is celebrated during the Jewish Festival of Sukkoth and by Scottish Rite Masons. It also commemorated the completion and dedication of King Solomon’s Temple. Sources do not agree about exactly when the Temple was started and finished. It is believed the corner stone was laid in 1012 B.C.E. and the Temple was completed in a little more than seven years on or about 1004 B.C.E. King Solomon postponed the dedication of the Temple until the Feast of Tishri, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Tishri which was six months after its completion, The month of Tishri is the first month of the Jewish sacred year.

*One of my fondest early recollections was the first time I went into the temporary structure my grandfather built next to the duplex we lived in (a sukkah mentioned below). When I was three, early one fall evening my mother told me to go downstairs to the sukkah. My grandfather was praying and the room glowed from a single candle light. He was dipping bread in a thick yellow substance. I remember how special I felt as he smiled and gave me my first taste of honey.*

The following is part of an article which was published by William J. Jason, 33° in 1999 and provides us more insight into the significance of the Feast of Tishri today.

## **The Feast of Tishri, Thanksgiving and the Mission of Freemasonry**

*Thanksgiving for the Creator's bounty should be the beginning of our service to others today.*

The Feast of Tishri in Freemasonry derives from the Jewish Festival of Sukkoth which is marked chiefly by the building of temporary structures (sukkah, singular; sukkoth, plural) made of boards, canvass, etc. and roofed with branches, especially pine branches. These structures are built against or near a house or synagogue and used during the Festival of Sukkoth chiefly as dining areas. Beginning on the 15th day of the month of Tishri the feast is celebrated for eight days by Orthodox and Conservative Jews outside of Israel, and for seven days by Reform Jews and by Jews in Israel.

Sukkoth celebrates the harvest and commemorates the period after the exodus from Egypt during which the Jews wandered in the wilderness and lived in huts. Also called the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Tabernacles, the biblical Festival of Sukkoth (also spelled Succoth) relates to the general celebration of Thanksgiving in America today and to Freemasonry, particularly the Scottish Rite's observance of the Feast of Tishri. Following the example of the Israelites and the New England Pilgrims, who started to celebrate a thanksgiving during a snowstorm and were inspired by the Biblical injunction to set aside a day of prayer and thanksgiving to God, a day which has become a traditional American observance, Thanksgiving Day. Scottish Rite Freemasons gather to acknowledge the mercies which God has poured upon them with lavish hand. It is a time of rejoicing, yet a time to pay humble adoration to the Great Architect of the Universe, without whose aid there would not be any harvest. Freemasonry is an organization with no religious agenda and these Masonic observances are done in a manner which is acceptable to men of all faiths. The Feast of Tishri one of the Rite's several ceremonies observing biblical events - for example, Maundy Thursday, Passover, and Easter Sunday.

The evolution of the Jewish feast of Succoth into an American national day, Thanksgiving, could not have occurred except in a climate of freedom and independence. Thus, this holiday is uniquely American and Masonic, since the same culture that nurtured religious freedom and toleration also nurtured the growth of Freemasonry. It is no coincidence that Freemasonry, while universal, has reached its greatest strength and acceptance here in the United States. Also, I suggest one reason for this growth and acceptance has been the striving of Masons to attain the character of the citron - to possess knowledge, that is, faith, while performing good works.

Rabbi Julius Nodel, 32°, in a Feast of Tishri address to the St. Louis Scottish Rite Bodies some years ago, said: "Among the symbols of Succoth are four species of plants - the citron, the branch of the palm tree, the myrtle leaves, and the willow leaves. The citron plant produces both fruit and fragrance. The palm produces fruit but no fragrance. The myrtle produces fragrance but no fruit, and the willow produces neither fruit nor fragrance. This teaches us that there are also four kinds of people. There are those that have knowledge and good deeds - they correspond to the citron. There are those who live a life of good deeds, but have no knowledge - they are like the palm.

There are those who have knowledge, but perform no good deeds - they are like the myrtle, and there are those who have neither knowledge nor good deeds - they are like the willow. Yet, on Succoth, all of these different species of plants are placed together and bound as one, thus teaching us that though there are different kinds of people on Earth, with their own interests and desires, accomplishments and failures, they must still be bound together in one universal brotherhood."

Consider the manifold charities of all Masonic and Masonic-related Bodies - the Blue Lodges, the Scottish and York Rites, the Shrine, the Eastern Star, Daughters of the Nile, etc. Each actively supports its own philanthropies as well as the charities of the other Masonic Bodies. The second, recent edition of "*Masonic Philanthropies, a Tradition of Caring*" contains as authoritative a tabulation as possible of Masonic philanthropy today. The author of this book, S. Brent Morris, 33°, conservatively estimates the Craft contributes in excess of two million dollars per day, of which 70% goes to the general American public. This sum is not given under duress or with the expectation of recognition or return, but voluntarily as a matter of duty.

We sometimes are asked why Masons devote so much of their time and energy to the cause of aiding those less fortunate. Possibly this little fable from Jewish folklore might explain. A wise and learned Rabbi, noting that his most promising student seemed saddened and preoccupied, asked the young man, "What's troubling you, my son?"

The student replied, "Rabbi, as I observe the injustice in the world and man's inhumanity to man everywhere, I have come to the conclusion that when God created the world, He didn't do a very good job."

In response, the Rabbi asked, "Do you think you could have done better?"

The student quietly answered, "Rabbi, I honestly think I could have."

To which the wise man responded, "THEN BEGIN!"

In the various Bodies of Masonry, men of all faiths may unite and each, in his own way, begin.

**Words to Live By: "Pride slays thanksgiving, but a humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grow. A proud man is seldom a**

**grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves”.**  
**Henry Ward Beecher**

**If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, please send them to: [shapiro.stanley@gmail.com](mailto:shapiro.stanley@gmail.com)**

The Education Videos by our education committee can be viewed at:  
<http://www.youtube.com/glmned>

The latest Masonic Monday Question, and some of the past questions, can be viewed at [www.Lodgebuilder.org](http://www.Lodgebuilder.org) and at [www.mn-masons.org](http://www.mn-masons.org)