SUKKOT, ESCHATOLOGY AND ZECHARIAH 14

SUMMARY

In two recent articles Konrad R. Schaefer analyzes Zech 14, where he considers the festival of Sukkot to have had an eschatological orientation already in early second temple times. This claim cannot be substantiated. Sukkot had a thisworldly focus: the people thanked God for the harvest and participated in the splendid temple rites with which the cult sought to stimulate the fertility of the earth. The role of Sukkot in the eschatological vision devolves from the fact that Sukkot was the leading temple festival during the second temple period. The prophet pictured worship in the eschatological temple in terms of the acme of cultic worship — the festival of Sukkot.

SOMMAIRE

Dans deux articles récents, Konrad R. Schaefer analyse Zach. 14, où il considère que la fête de Sukkot avait eu une orientation eschatologique dès les débuts de la période du second temple. Cela ne peut être soutenu. Sukkot a ce but précis : le peuple remercie Dieu pour la récolte et participe aux rites splendides du temple, par lesquels le culte vise à stimuler la fertilité. Le rôle de Sukkot dans la vision eschatologique dérive du fait que Sukkot était la plus importante fête du temple à son époque. Le prophète décrit le culte du temple eschatologique dans les termes de l'apothéose du rituel — la fête de Sukkot.

In two recent articles published in this journal, Konrad R. Schaefer analyzes the vivid eschatological vision of Zech 14.1 Schaefer discusses the dating and origin of the chapter, explores its relationship to

the rest of the Book of Zechariah and provides a comprehensive commentary. His study is thorough, insightful and textually sophisticated, and sheds light on both the meaning of the vision and its place in the thought of the prophet. The following pages take up a question discussed by Schaefer concerning the festival of Sukkot and its role in the eschatological vision. My analysis and conclusions differ from those of Schaefer and the line of scholarship upon which he builds. It is my hope that further reflection and discussion emerge from this dialogue.

The question: why does the prophet single out Sukkot as the festival to be celebrated in the eschaton? Once each year the nations are commanded to appear and bow down before the "Lord of Hosts," specifically on the festival of Sukkot:

All who survive of all those nations that came up against Jerusalem shall make a pilgrimage year by year to bow low to the King Lord of Hosts and to observe the Feast of Booths. Any of the earth's communities that does not make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow low to the King Lord of Hosts shall receive no rain. However, if the community of Egypt does not make this pilgrimage, it shall not be visited by the same affliction with which the Lord will strike the other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Booths. Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and of all other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Booths (Zech 14:19). 3

Presumably the visionary could have selected Passover for the annual ritual, or Shavuot (Pentecost), or, in the spirit of Isaiah 66:23, could have prophesied that "New moon after new moon, and Sabbath after Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship Me." Why Sukkot?

The answer, clearly, is that the prophet specifically connected Sukkot to the eschaton. Sukkot "more than any other festival took on eschatological significance." Sukkot had "eschatological meaning," "messianic significance," and "was associated with Messianic hopes." 7 However, generalizations such as these merely state the obvious conclusion from the prophecy. They are observations, not explanations. The question concerns the precise nature and provenance of the eschatological associations. Two positions should be distinguished:

(1) The annual observance of Sukkot in the second temple period included a substantive eschatological component. That is, the Jews observing Sukkot understood the festival to prefigure life in the eschatological age, and actively sought to bring the blessed future era through prayer and ritual. Their religious experience on the festival was suffused with eschatological hopes, feelings and thoughts. The festival symbols expressed eschatological themes. The prophet drew on that religious experience and the eschatological symbolism in formulating his vision of a universal observance of Sukkot in the eschaton.

(2) While the prophet drew on Sukkot imagery for the components of his vision and refracted them through an eschatological lens, the festival itself did not involve an eschatological experience. The association of eschatology and Sukkot was Deutero-Zechariah's innovation. 8 It does not reflect the typical character of Sukkot in the second temple period. In this case, the source of the prophet's eschatological association must be sought elsewhere.

There is much at stake here, for the nature and origin of the eschatological associations reveal a great deal about the character of the Jewish festivals, about second temple Judaism in general, and about Zech 14.

Schaefer is the most recent exponent of a line of scholarship that adopts the first position. His discussion of this question draws primarily on an article by Jean Daniélou, "Le symbolisme eschatologique de la Fête des Tabernacles," and he cites Sigmund Mowinckel's monumental Psalmenstudien II several times. 9 Daniélou, in turn,

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1 See Schaefer, p. 233 n. 4-e. Either the "not" should be deleted, or the meaning is that Egypt will not receive the plague of lack of rain, since Egypt depends on the Nile for water, but some other punishment.


5 G. W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," CJQ 22 (1960), 269.


8 I have formulated the possibilities in extreme terms in order to make clear the differences. The answer, of course, may lie somewhere between these poles.

9 Daniélou's article appeared in Irinichten 31 (1958), 19-40. He then published it with the title "La palme et la couronne," as the first chapter in a collection of his essays, Les symboles chrétiens primitifs (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961), 9-31. Here Daniélou added a few corrections and added a few footnotes, but it is for the most part, verbatim. An English translation of this book appeared under the title Primitive Christian Symbols,
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 depended heavily on Rashi, Ramban, and Maimonides, who were the primary interpreters of the text in their respective eras. The influence of these medieval commentators can be seen throughout the medieval period, as their interpretations were passed down through generations of scholars and sages.

In the medieval period, the study of the text became increasingly focused on its meaning and application in Jewish law and practice. Medieval rabbis and scholars devoted much of their time to interpreting the text and applying its teachings to the daily lives of the Jewish community.

In the modern period, the study of the text has continued to evolve, with new interpretations and perspectives being developed. Scholars have sought to understand the text in its historical and cultural context, as well as in its relation to other biblical texts and to the broader history of Jewish thought.

As the study of the text continues to develop, new insights and perspectives are being gained. The text continues to be a source of inspiration and guidance for the Jewish community, as it has been for centuries.
Before analyzing the claims for the deep eschatological character of Sukkot, it should be noted that most sources do not testify to this idea. Apart from Zech 14 and the Christian Scriptures, Sukkot is mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles, Josephus, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Jubilees, Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Plutarch. Not one of these literary sources provides any explicit link to eschatology. The purported implicit allusions are not persuasive, as I shall argue below. In any case, implicit evidence should build upon unambiguous proof derived from elsewhere. This argument from silence, of course, can only be pressed so far. But if the majority of sources from the second temple period offer no such evidence, presumption is against an eschatological orientation.

Arguments for an eschatological orientation of Sukkot proposed by Schaefer, Daniélou, Riesenfeld and others, can be grouped under the following headings: (1) Sukkot, the enthronement festival and eschatology; (2) Sukkot and the Typology of the Exod, (3) symbolism of the sukkah; (4) messianic character of the Halakha psalms; (5) coins, art, and the symbolism of the lulav and etrog; (6) symbolism of the crown; (7) the water libation and rain; (8) universalism; (9) Sukkot as inauguration of new time. I shall analyze these arguments in turn. This exercise is necessary, not for reasons of negative scholarship and skepticism, but because these claims have been taken for granted to the point where they are routinely cited in the literature. A comprehensive review of the evidence is therefore warranted.

17 2 Chr 5:3-7:11, 8:13.
19 1 Mac 10:21; 2 Mac 1:9, 1:18, 10:5-8.
21 Special Laws 1:189-200, 2:204-214: Flocos, § 116-24: On the Migration of Abraham § 202: On Flight and Finding § 189. Schaefer, however, refers to Philo as evidence for four of these arguments concerning the eschatological associations of Sukkot, paragraphs (a), (b), (f) and (g). He seems to follow Goodenough, Symbols, 4:148-61, who believed Philo represented "normative" Judaism, and argued that Philo reflects a "very mystical approach to Tabernacles" (4:155). A careful reading of Philo reveals neither a mystical interpretation of Sukkot nor sheds any light on Zech 14. For example, see below p. 13-14, the errant attempt to prove an eschatological significance of Sukkot from Philo's statement that the festival completes the agricultural year.
23 Questions Consideae IV 6,2. See below, p. 13-14.
24 See n. 11.

(1) Sukkot, the enthronement festival and eschatology. This argument rests on two claims: first, that Sukkot (or the ritual complex that later coalesced as Sukkot) was originally part of the ancient Israelite enthronement or New Year festival. Second, that this enthronement festival was the source of Israelite eschatology. Thus Mowinckel titled his classic study Das Kronbesteigtungs feste Jahnu und der Ursprung der Eschatologie. The reconstructed enthronement festival shed light on the Ursprung der Eschatologie because periods of political chaos, disappointment, suffering, unfulfilled hopes, and especially the destruction of the first temple and trauma of the exile, eventually caused the Israelites to lose faith in the efficacy of the festival. They no longer believed in YHWH's annual victory and so projected his enthronement and the entire mythic-cultic complex to the eschaton. The triumph of YHWH and the Israelite king, the joy of the feast, the reinvigoration of nature were referred to in the messianic era. Hope for good fortune in the coming year developed into hope for good fortune in the distant future; the annual divine judgment became the ultimate day of judgment; and the annual victory over the forces of chaos evolved into the final battle.

According to Mowinckel, eschatology, and hence the eschatological orientation of the festival, developed during the exile and characterized the second temple Sukkot festival. However, Mowinckel...
concentrated on the first temple period and never fleshed out precisely what this meant in real terms. He never explained what mythic dramas and rituals remained after the decay of the enthronement festival or how eschatological hope was expressed or experienced. 29 But where Mowinckel trailed off, Riesenfeld jumped in, elaborating a complex cultic history of disintegration of the original festival, followed by “democratic,” “spiritual” and “eschatological” transformation. 30 Riesenfeld drew heavily on the “Myth and Ritual” approach of Sidney Hooke and his colleagues. 31 He argued that the rituals of the festival were “eschatologized” at an early point. The second temple cult was geared toward the eschatological future, dedicated to dramatizing the messianic era and thereby actualizing the blessings. Sukkot was fundamentally an eschatological festival, and Zech 14 a typical expression of the beliefs of the worshippers throughout the second commonwealth. 32

These large-scale reconstructions of a New Year or enthronement festival are debatable. Mowinckel’s theory of an enthronement festival has always been controversial, and few scholars today subscribe to the general enthronement scheme. 33 The reconstructions of the Myth (p. 139). He then spells out his position more precisely: “In the prophetic books, the eschatological sayings in the strict sense all belong to the later strata, and come from the age of post-exilic Judaism” (p. 132; see pp. 125-154 passim). Pre-exilic prophets express “a hope of restoration” or “future hope” for better times to come, but they have in mind the atonement. Eschatology develops in “later Judaism,” (Psalms, 1:147: He That Cometh, 211H), which apparently refers to the exile and early second temple period. On the progression in Mowinckel’s thinking on this topic, see K. JEFFEPSEN, “The Day of Yahweh in Mowinckel’s Conception Reviewed,” JSOT 2 (1968:3), 49-55, and note JEFFEPSEN’s criticisms of Mowinckel’s final position. 34

Mowinckel divides the question of the origin of eschatology into two parts: the source of the content (“waher stammt der Inhalt”) and how it developed (“wie ist es dazu gekommen, dass es eschatologisch und eschatologisch ist,” p. 226). He devotes only 30 pages to the content (pp. 219-241), but only 10 to the second question (pp. 315-325), including the issue of the rituals and character of the new eschatologically-oriented festival.

Riesenfeld, 11-17.


31 And even if the basic idea of an annual royal-temple festival is conceded, that Mowinckel accurately reconstructed it is not. H. J. KRAUS, Worship in Israel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), 99-92, for example, relying exclusively on biblical sources and eschewing Mesopotamian parallels and later rabbinic sources, reconstructed a substantially different temple festival with a pronounced Israelite stamp. His reconstruction, as far as I can tell, involves none of the mythological motifs that characterize later eschatology.


33 PsSt, 296-297. And see Riesenfeld, 46-48.

34 PsSt, 126. The biblical passages to which Mowinckel refers, 2 Sam 5:18ff. and 1Kgs 8:62-66, say nothing of a specific “coronation” feast. Mowinckel finds support of the messianic banquet in Isa 35:6, an apocalyptic feast following the victory of YHWH. That the victory feast relates specifically to the annual enthronement festival is not in the text, and depends again on the overcanonic theory. See p. 3. I suggest that his discussion of the content, the first part of his essay, is more persuasive than his speculations about the historical trajectory of the decay of the festival “vom Erlebnis zur Hoffnung” (p. 315).

35 See the survey and criticism of the various theories in L. GAGGE, The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant Problems (Prague, 1948), pp. 52, 61-67, including criticism of Mowinckel, pp. 41-49 and 67-77.
Gunkel founds its origin in myth in and of itself, not in the cult drama and its mythic rehearsals. The Israelites came to believe that Endzeit gleich Urzeit and thus eschatology naturally developed out of creation myths. 39 Cerny argued that eschatology developed from the Israelite conception of Yahweh and his theophanies. Von Rad viewed it as a product of Israelite conceptions of the Holy War and of Yahweh as the divine warrior, which led to the notion of a “Day of Yahweh.” 40 Frost portrayed eschatology as an outgrowth of the exiguities of Israelite history and expectation of Yahweh’s intervention. 41 Many scholars focus on Babylonian and Persian influences. 42 If eschatology did not develop from cult drama, myth and ritual, then the question

39 H. GUNKEL, Schöpfung und Chaos in Ursel und Endzeit (Göttingen, 1906). In Genesis überseht und erblickt (Göttingen, 1902), 233-35, Gunkel supplemented his theory with the assumption that the Israelites observed the “procession of the sun,” that the point of sunrise at the vernal equinox changes each year giving the impression that the sun will revolve around the earth after thousands of years. From this astronomical cycle the Israelites concluded that there is a parallel cycle of ages, and the Urzeit will return at the Endzeit. 40 CERNY, ibid., 53-60. This provided the source of the content of eschatology, which was kindled by what Cerny calls Israel’s “historical reality,” namely grave national, political and religious crises. See pp. 87-93, 101-102. See too M. WEINSTOCK, “The Origin of the ‘Day of the Lord’ — Reconsidered,” HUCA 27 (1956), 26-49. 41 G. von RAD, “The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh,” JSS 4 (1959), 97-108. He refers to Zech 14 on p. 105. Von Rad argued against an influence of mythological ideas or cult worship, pp. 107-8. See too von RAD, Theologie des Alten Testaments II (Munich, 1961), 129-133. 42 S. B. FROST, “Eschatology and Myth,” VT 2 (1952), 70-80. See too Nathaniel SCHMIDT, “The Origin of Jewish Eschatology,” JBL 41-42 (1922-33), 102-115 and J. KAUSNER, The Mesanitic Idea in Israel, (trans. W. F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 19-23. Frost demonstrated that the eschatology of Esdras relies on eschatologies such as Amos, Isaiah and Zephaniah is devoid of typical motifs. Only the exilic and post-exilic prophets incorporate myth into eschatology. Frost suggests that the reason for this development is that the exilic Jews “found themselves in a world where Pagan myth was dominant, and it is understandable that they took to myth as the form in which they could express themselves.” In this view eschatology does not develop from the cultic festival. See too his Old Testament Apocalyptic (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 33-34 where he suggests that over the course of many centuries native Israelite eschatology was increasingly expressed in mythological terms, and that apocalyptic thought represents the “fusion of myth and eschatology” or “the mythologization of eschatology.” A similar distinction between “historical eschatology” and “cosmological eschatology” is made by Th. VOTZENZ, “Prophecy and Eschatology,” SVT 7 (1953), 195-200 (cf. 225-256), who finds the origins of eschatology in the historical and religious consciousness of Israel, pp. 223-24. See his criticism of Mowinckel, pp. 228-29. For additional criticism of Mowinckel’s eschatology, see GUNKEL, Einleitung in die Psalmen, 115-16.

43 For Babylonian influence on the origins of eschatology, see A. JEREMIAS, Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), 57-61, 594-617. For Iranian influence on the dualism of apocalyptic eschatology, see VOTZENZ, “Prophecy and Eschatology,” 227. H. GRESSMAN, Der Ursprung der jüdisch-israelitischen Eschatologie (Göttingen, 1966), 166-167, 244-247.claimed that a double influx of foreign mythic ideas resulted in an early pre-exilic eschatology and a later post-exilic dualistic type of eschatology.

of why Sukkot received such an important eschatological role remains open. Schaefer’s solution, when probed to its core, rests on a tenuous foundation. 44 Second, even if we grant this claim to Mowinckel — that the content of eschatology developed from the autumnal festival — we remain squarely in the realm of the history of ideas. It does not follow that the festival itself became eschatological, but only that its motifs influenced the eschatological thought of certain visionaries. At best, then, we have found some support that the eschatological Sukkot festival of Zech 14 was inspired by interpretations of enthronement festival/Sukkot motifs. But without wholeheartedly accepting the enthronement festival and its historical development exactly as Mowinckel charted it, there is no reason to believe that celebration of the festival of Sukkot involved an eschatological experience, as is routinely claimed. 46

To buffer the link to actual eschatological experience on Sukkot, therefore, Riesenfeld invokes Plutarch. 47 In his discussion of the god of the Jews, Plutarch refers to Jewish temple festivals of Dionysiac character.

First, he said, the time and character of the greatest, most sacred holiday of the Jews clearly befit Dionysus. When they celebrate their so-called Fast, at the height of the vintage, they set out tables of all sorts of fruit under booths and huts plaited for the most part of vines and ivy. They call the first [day] of the feast “Booth.” A few days later they celebrate another festival, this time identified with Bacchus not through obscure hints but plainly called by his name, a festival that is a sort of Procession of Branches’ or ‘Thyrus Procession’ in which they enter the temple each carrying a thyrsus. What they do after entering we do not know, but it is probable that the rite is a Bacchic revelry, for in fact they use little trumpets to invoke their god as do the Argives at their Dionysia... 48

Riesenfeld argues that since the Dionysiac cult involved mysteries, ecstatic rites, a savior-God, salvation-rituals, and hope of blessings

44 Schaefer does not explicitly accept the “Myth and Ritual” approach (although he explicitly references Mowinckel), but he repeatedly cites Danilou, who depends on Riesenfeld, a classic exemplar of “Myth and Ritual” and Mowinckelian theories. My point here is that the evidence upon which Schaefer depends ultimately stems from these studies. The same is true for the scholars listed in n. 11.

45 See n. 11.

46 Quaestiones Convivales IV 6.9; Riesenfeld, 29-32. He begins his chapter on “Cult and Eschatology” with this citation.

47 Translation from M. SRAIN, Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism (3 vols; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1974-84), 1:557-58, token from H. Hoffmeir, in the Leob series. I have altered slightly from “tents” to “booths” and changed “they call the first day of the festival Tautemnes” to “they call the first day of the festival Feast.” For discussion see Stern’s notes and A. BOCHLER, “La fête des cabanes chez Plutarque et Tactile.” REVJ 37 (1868), 181-202.
and immortality, and since Plutarch compares Sukkot to Bacchic rites, then, ergo, Sukkot had a similar character, i.e., eschatological. He insists that "on peut supposer que cette ressemblance ne dépendait pas de la forme extérieure des rites propres aux fêtes en question mais de leur caractère religieux." This statement is patently false, since it is precisely the external forms of the rituals, specifically the wine and vintage elements, that inspire Plutarch. In any case, Plutarch and his source — for Plutarch wrote this work in the late first or early second century, and here relies on an earlier source from Temple times — obviously know previously little of the "caractère religieux" of the Jews, since they conclude that Jews worship Dionysus. Rather than dismiss Plutarch as way off the mark, as did Tacitus many centuries ago, Riesenfeld trusts him completely: Plutarch would not have said what he did unless he really knew something of the truth!

At all events, it is Plutarch’s reference to fruits on tables in the booths, pointing to a festal meal, which Riesenfeld sees as evidence of Mowinckel’s messianic banquet specifically linked to Sukkot. The meal consumed in the sucka was a meal of communion with the deity imbued with eschatological hope and related to this eschatological banquet. Yet Plutarch’s description simply describes a typical festival ritual — consumption of the fruits of the harvest in a joyous meal. The description does not even link the booth to the cultic rituals, which are placed at "another festival" a few days later. Even if we assume a ritual or cultic meal was consumed in the booth, that this had any eschatological element has no support in the text.

(2) Sukkot and the typology of the exodus. Daniélon and Schaefer propose a different eschatological connection based on the festival of Sukkot as commemoration of the exodus. This idea appears first in Lev 23:42-43, a passage assigned to the Holiness Code: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I am the Lord your God." The argument is that the prophets modelled their vision of the "second exodus" and return from the exile on the exodus from Egypt. Sukkot, which symbolized the exodus, therefore "look on eschatological significance." However, most scholars consider the explanation of Lev 23:43 an artificial and historicizing interpretation; the exodus narratives say nothing of booths as dwellings during the desert trek. It was probably devised in the Babylonian exile and became more accepted after the destruction of the second temple. That it was widely known in the first temple period or widely accepted in the second temple period is doubtful. Neither Jubilees nor Josephus mentions the idea — both written long after the Torah and undoubtedly aware of the canonical explanation. For them, Sukkot had nothing to do with the exodus or its typology. It is very unlikely that the prophets associated Sukkot with the exodus from Egypt, much less that they based their visions of a second exodus on the festival.

Even if, arquendo, this connection was operative, we would expect Passover, far more than Sukkot, to be infused with an "eschatological significance." After all, the exodus from Egypt is Passover’s raison d’être, and the Bible expiates on the connection between the two. To answer this difficulty and explain why Sukkot superseded Passover, Schaefer and Daniélon focus on Sukkot as the end of the agricultural year, and bring support from Philo. Thus Schaefer writes:

The exodus was seen to presage the eschatological deliverance of God’s people. Sukkot celebrated this by adopting, more than any other feast, an eschatological meaning, corresponding with its completion of the annual agrarian cycle (Philo, De Specialibus Legibus (Spec.), 11, 204; See Daniélon, p. 20).

The logic of this inference is not altogether clear to me. How does "eschatological deliverance" follow from the "completion of the annual agrarian cycle"? In any case, Philo simply writes:

The last of the annual feasts, called Tabernacles, recurs at the autumn equinox. From this we may learn two morals. The second is that, after all the fruits are made perfect (גנובים), it is our duty to thank God

48 Tacitus, Historiae 5.6, in Stern, ibid., 2:226.
49 Riesenfeld, 46-47. A similar argument is made by Goodenough, Symbols, 4:156-158, although he speaks more of mysticism than eschatology.
50 Daniélon, Symbols, 2:3; Schaefer, 226. So Riesenfeld, 183.
Who brought them to perfection and is the source of all good things. For autumn (μετοχωρμάτις), as also the name clearly implies, is the season after the ripe fruit (μετε τήν ὑπόγραφα) has been gathered in...

Philos is actually saying nothing at all about the exodus, eschatology or even the completion of the agricultural cycle. He is punning on the autumn (μετοχωρμάτις) season as “after the fruits” (μετε τήν ὑπόγραφα), and learns from this etymology that the festival is the appropriate time to give thanks for the crops. Daniélou, who Schaefer references explicitly, seems to be arguing from a metaphoric “end” of the agricultural cycle symbolizing the “end” of time: “elle termine (τελειωμα) ce cycle agraire de l’année (Spec. Leg., II, 204).” But the metaphor is in the scholar’s mind, not in Philos. Moreover, the citation of the Greek term is misleading, as can be seen from the original context: the τελειωμα refers not to the end of the agrarian cycle, but to the complete ripening of the fruits, which need not have anything to do with the end of a cycle.

Exodus typology, with or without Philos, does not help. But this train of thought yields a somewhat more cogent argument, which derives from the symbolism of the sukkah.

(3) The symbolism of the sukkah. Lev 23:42 explains that the ritual booth commemorates the sukkah in which God caused Israelites to dwell. The rabbi interpreted these sukkah not as real booths but as the “clouds of glory” — sukkah, in biblical poetry, sometimes refers to a cloud or celestial pavilion. A protective cloud-cover symbolized the presence of God, sheltered the people from the burning sun, paved the way through the desert and defended them against enemy ones.

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Rabbinic sources expect the clouds of glory to return in the eschaton and once again provide divine protection. The festival sukkah symbolized, for the rabbis, both the clouds of glory which protected the people during the exodus trek and those which would return in the messianic future. On that basis Riesenhfeld argues the sukkah contributed to the overall eschatological tendency of the festival. He is correct that this symbolism points to a real eschatological experience associated with the festival. Residing in the sukkah, for the rabbis, probably did prefigure an element of messianic times. But this interpretation of the sukkah as symbol of the clouds of glory postdates the destruction of the temple, as H. Ulfswur correctly noted. It appears in rabbinic literature and it the targums, but in no pre-rabbinic or extra-rabbinic source. To conclude that the sukkah conveyed this experience in second temple time is unproven.

Rabbinic sources give the sukkah additional eschatological symbolism. In many rabbinic traditions the righteous dwell in special sukkah in the world to come, or in a sukkah God fashions from the skin of Leviathan, while the Messiah inhabits majestic canopies (huppot). Again, the sources post-date the destruction of the temple, and most appear in midrashic collections of the sixth century or later. Attempts to find pre-rabbinic precedents for this idea are not convincing. Daniélou, for example, claims that this symbolism “is doubtless one of the elements with the oldest messiannic significance” by appealing to Isa 32:18, which he translates, “Le peuple sera assis dans le repos (ανάπαυμα) et la paix et il demeurerà en confiance dans les tabernacles (σεφυρα).” This translation is misleading, since the Hebrew text is

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Compare the republished French version in Les symboles chrétiens, p. 11 and the English translation, Symbols, p. 3. In the original article, Daniélou does not reference the Greek. Apparently (and for good reason) he felt his argument needed more support, so he added this word in the republished version. He also added a footnote: “Theodoret, appelle fete de la consommation (overalde) a la fin de l’annee (Quarel. Et., 54: P.G. LXVII, 376 B).” But Theodoret is saying something completely different than Philo, and Philo something different than Daniélou.


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20 H. Ulfswur, Feast and Future: Revelaion 7:9-17 and the Feast of Tabernacles (ConRBT 22; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 121-127.
21 Riesenhfeld, 185-205, cited by Daniélou, Symbols, 8-9.
22 See the original French version, p. 25 (so in the republished French version, p. 16). Daniélou’s English translator, apparently troubled by the gap between Daniélou’s translation of the verse and the Hebrew, removes the quotation marks and thus renders it a paraphrase: “the life of the righteous in the messiannic kingdom is represented as a dwelling in abodes of peace” (p. 8). (The verse does mention maphot shalom, but whether these are abodes of peace is debatable.) Riesenhfeld, 187-205 also interprets Isa 32:18 in this way. But all his supporting texts are rabbinic.
mishkenot, not sukkah, although both are sometimes translated skéné or “tabernacle.” In any case, Isaiah only prophesies that the people will dwell securely, not that they will reside in special abodes in the eschaton. And even if the passage has an eschatological sense, there is no indication that these abodes have anything to do with the festival sukkah.

(4) The Messianic character of the Hallel psalms. The Hallel (Ps 113-118) was the main liturgy of the festival, recited each day at the temple. Ps 118:25, “Bedeck the festival with [willow-] branches at the corners of the altar,” probably refers to the willow procession, one of the festival rituals, and evidently was the liturgy accompanying the circumambulations of the altar. That the Psalms in general, and Ps 118 in particular, were interpreted Christologically led scholars to assume the messianic interpretation was an inherent part of the festival experience. Thus Daniélou writes:

Now this psalm refers to the Messiah as one who is to come: “Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini” (verse 26); and it bids him with the cry: “Hosanna - Save me!” (verse 25). This psalm contains too, another messianic text that the New Testament applies to Christ: “the very stone which the builders rejected has become the chief stone at the corner” (verse 22). All these passages show that the liturgy of Tabernacles was a very special occasion of messianic expectation.

Actually the passages show that the Gospel authors interpreted the Psalms, and perhaps the Sukkot liturgy, to refer to Jesus. That the Jews who celebrated at the temple understood them in a messianic sense is doubtful. Verse 26, “Blessed is he who comes,” probably refers to the pilgrim who has come to Jerusalem to worship. While the Mishna notes that they cried “Save now” (Hosanna) as the willows were placed around the altar, the rite is generally considered a rain-making ritual, like its counterpart, the water libation, and so the “Save now” or “Save please” should be understood in this light: God should save the people by providing ample rain. And verse 22 obviously says nothing about the Messiah.

(5) Coins, art and the symbolism of the lulav. This is one of the most slippery arguments. Goodenough devoted a chapter to Sukkot in his classic Jewish Symbols of the Greco-Roman Period. He claimed that the festival symbols, particularly the lulav and etrog, frequently appear in art, and indicate that Sukkot had a mystical, spiritual and eschatological meaning. The problem with this type of argument is that artistic symbols are notoriously difficult to interpret. How do we know what a symbol really meant? Morton Smith’s superb review article summarizing over twenty reviews of Goodenough shows that his conclusions cannot stand up to scrutiny. Goodenough sought to interpret almost all art in terms of a mystical, syncretistic, and anti-rabbinic Judaism; that Sukkot also emerges with this character comes as no surprise. The lulav, for example, appears on graves and catacombs, but so too do other symbols, and it is hard to prove convincingly that the lulav specifically represents resurrection or some other eschatological idea.

### Notes


65 Mishna Sukka 4.1, 4.8.


67 Symbols, 4.

68 That the author of John 7 connects several verses of this Psalm to Jesus’s prophecy on Sukkot suggests he was indeed acquainted with the temple liturgy. I treat this passage below.


70 Goodenough, Symbols, 4:145-65, 13:36-89. Riesenfeld, 48-56 and Ulfhed, Feast, 131-47 also discuss iconography in great detail. Similar arguments (also based on Goodenough) are advanced by Daniélou, Symbols, 6-8, 12-14 and Riesenfeld, 36-38.


72 The lulav as symbol of resurrection is obvious for Riesenfeld, 36. “Cos images symbolisent tout simplement l’espérance en la résurrection” (my italics). See J. Draper, “The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7:1-17,” JSNT 19 (1953), 138 and Daniélou, Symbols, 5. J. Z. Sarrur, Imagining Beligion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 10-16 tabulated 944 inscriptions from Rome, Beth She’arim and Egypt collected by Goodenough. He found 41 instances of a lulav, 30 of an etrog, 111 of a menorah, 27 of a phylactery, 18 of a shofar and 6 of the Ark. One could argue that since about half the symbols are lulav or etrog, the festival and its symbols must have been extremely important. Whether this means an eschatological importance is another question. In any case, Smith notes that this pictorial range is not impressive, that Jewish iconography “exhibits an extremely limited vocabulary.” It seems to me that the presence of the lulav and etrog, like that of the shofar and menorah, has more to do with the fact they lend themselves easily to pictorial representation. It is much harder to depict a Torah scroll, temple, or piece of matzah in an aesthetic and easily recognizable manner. For this reason the sukkah too appears infrequently, although, as we have seen, scholars have made much of its eschatological symbolism. We should also note that most cases it is not even clear that the “lulav” is the festival cluster rather than a generic palm.
The same may be said for symbols on coins. Let us focus on one concrete example. Ulfgrund notes that the lulav and etrog first appear on coins of the first revolt against the Romans, 66-70 CE. Of the five years in which coins were minted, all the coins with Sukkot symbols bear the imprint “Year Four,” i.e., 69-70 CE. Now the slogan on the coins changed from “Freedom for Zion” for years two and three to “Redemption of Zion” for year four. This shift in terminology, Ulfgrund argues, reflects a shift in aspiration from political freedom to messianic redemption, and the Sukkot symbols therefore possess a messianic message. Ulfgrund advances the dubious and unprovable assumption that when the Roman general Vespasian desisted from the campaign during that year, it was perceived “as a godsend by the rebels,” interpreted in messianic terms. All this is pure speculation. Vespasian hardly abandoned the campaign when he left, and Palestine to consolidate his power. Indeed, the Jews remained under siege in Jerusalem. “Freedom” and “Redemption” are basically synonymous in this context. We find, for example, that the coins of the first year of the second revolt read “Year One of the Redemption of Israel,” while those of the next year read “Year Two of the Freedom of Israel.” Would we conclude Bar-Kosiba renounced an original desire for messianic redemption in favor of political freedom?

Ulfgrund, Feast, 132-136. For many years several coins bearing lulav were assigned to Simon Maccabaeus. See e.g. F. W. Maddern, History of Jewish Coins and of Money in the Old and New Testament, ed. H. Ortmayer (New York: Kathan, 1967), 47-49. The consensus now assigns these coins to the second revolt and Simon bar Kosiba. See Avi-Yonah’s preface in Maddern, xx-xxi.

Other motifs on coins of the first revolt: lulav, amphora, vine leaf, palm branch between two bunches of fruit, three palm branches tied together, wreath of palm branches. See L. Kadman, The Coins of the Jewish War (Jerusalem, 1960), 81.

This claim is also found in Kadman, ibid., 91. “It seems, therefore, that the presentation of the lulav and etrog together with the legend for the redemption of Zion on the coins of year four symbolized not only the Feast of Tabernacles, but also the messianic hope of final redemption.” See also M. H. Davern, “Sukkot in the Late Second Temple Period,” Australasian Journal of Jewish Studies 6,2 (1992), 156-161.

Ulfgrund, Feast, 133. See there n. 572 for further references.


Amazingly, this is exactly what B. Kanari, “Dates Used in the Bar Kochba Revolt,” Journal of Roman Jewry 21 (1971), 14-45 and 75, argues. In general, the background of the Coins “Year Four... of the Redemption of Zion.” BASOR 129 (1953), 30 actually suggests! Initially Bar-Kosiba’s messianic claims were supported by Rabbi Akiba and other sages, but subsequently met with opposition, so he renounced them and changed his slogan. For criticism of this theory see P. Stav, Bar Kochba-Aufstand (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981), 62-68, who also demonstrates that the rabbinic traditions about the revolt are of doubtful historical worth (pp. 136-190) and M. Mor, below, n. 82, pp. 193-200.

Many scholars give the symbols on the coins of the second revolt, which also contain the lulav and etrog, eschatological meaning connected with Bar-Kosiba’s purported messianic pretensions. Recent scholarship, however, casts doubt on the messianic character of the revolt. In any case, many symbols appear on his coins: a temple facade, amphora, vine leaf, wreath, bunch of grapes, palm branch, palm tree, pair of trumpets and lyre. Would we say the amphora and vine leaf have a similar meaning? It is more likely that the lulav and etrog are general symbols of nature and fertility, like the bunch of grapes, vine leaf and palm, or symbols related to the temple. While Bar-Kosiba certainly hoped to capture Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, this need not reflect messianic or eschatological motivation, but simply national and cultural goals.


See the recent treatment of M. Mor, The Bar-Kochba Revolt: Its Extent and Effect (Jerusalem: Yad Ishaq Ben-Zvi, The Israel Exploration Society, 1991), 191-219 (Hebrew). Mor reviews all the evidence, including the coins (pp. 192-202), and demonstrates that nothing suggests Bar-Kosiba was considered the Messiah or used messianic symbols or titles. Nor does his lengthy analysis of the causes of the revolt mention messianism, pp. 59-97, although he does believe that different strands of messianism existed at the first revolt, pp. 228-29. He notes messianism may have been a source of opposition to the revolt, for those who thought in apocalyptic terms probably doubted human action could achieve the redemption, and were inclined to wait passively until the appointed time when God would do the work. See too M. D. Heng, “The Causes of the Bar-Kochba Revolt,” Zion 43 (1978), 10-11 (Hebrew). L. Mildenberg, The Coinage of the Bar Kochba War, ed. P. Mattatreh (Aarhus: Sauerland, 1984), 44-45, explains that the symbol of a rosette on the Bar-Kosiba coins was mistaken for a star and interpreted as a messianic symbol, a “fatal misinterpretation... nothing for the coins to do with Bar Kochba.” In general, see B. Kanari and A. Offerheinrich, “The Revolt of Bar Kochba: Ideology and Modern Scholarship,” JSJ 36 (1985), 33-60. The main rabbinic source for connecting the revolt to messianism is the questionable tradition in which R. Akiba calls “Bar Kochba” the King Messiah, only to be chided by a colleague (Yerushalmi Tamid 48). Mor, 191-201, shows that this tradition should be understood as a question concerning the necessary theoretical characteristics of the Messiah, not an historical claim about an individual. Other such rabbinic traditions are equally problematic, and tell more about “how later generations related to the revolt and the type of leadership of Bar-Kosiba.” P. Schäfer’s caution (see n. 80) against using rabbinic sources in reconstructing the history of the revolt also applies here. Indeed, the tradition dates from the third or fourth century. Christian sources that portray the revolt as messianic are theological polemics demonstrating the Jewish belief in a false Messiah; see Mor, 197-99. On Sukkot and the revolt see now H. Lapin, “Palm Fronds and Citrons: Notes on Two Letters from Bar Kosiba’s Administration,” HUCA 64 (1993), 111-136. The revolt, in any case, preludes the destruction of the temple.

Mildenberg, ibid., 46 explains the lulav and etrog as “items of ritual significance.” Mor, ibid., 302 interprets the palm, grapes and vines as symbols of the fertility of the land and of national, not necessarily religious, character.

See Mildenberg, ibid., 69-72.
One further example should help illustrate the difficulty of this enterprise. Much eschatological stock has been placed in paintings from the Dura Europos synagogue which supposedly depict Sukkot and its rituals. Aside from the fact that the synagogue and its pictures date to the third century CE and are therefore of questionable relevance to our question, the problem of interpreting art surfaces again. One badly damaged picture that depicts a procession has been interpreted as "The Dedication of the Temple" by King Solomon (1 Kgs 8). Several figures wear crowns, which led scholars to claim that the procession is the Sukkot ritual procession, and that the crown is a messianic symbol (see below). However, other scholars believe the scene depicts Joseph's coffin carried to Gabaah, or Aaron's coffin and burial procession, and has nothing to do with Sukkot. Again, even if the identification with Solomon is correct, the eschatological interpretation is tenuous.

Since we have touched on arguments for the eschatological symbolism of the lulav and etrog based upon coins and funerary emblems, let us examine the other evidence. The main literary inspiration derives from John 12:13 where crowds greet Jesus waving palms and crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" The scene probably incorporates Sukkot imagery and symbols, although this has been doubted by many scholars. Granting this point, it is nonetheless premature to write of the possibility of proof. For arguments favoring a Sukkot background, see C. W. F. Smith, "Tabernacles in the Fourth Gospel and Mark," NTS 7 (1960), 30-36; H. L. Lang, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 397; J. van Goudoever, Biblical Calendars (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 261-62.

(6) Symbolism of the crown. A reference to crowns or wreaths connected with Sukkot appears in exactly one passage, Jub 16:30. The heavenly tablets legislate: "it is ordained forever regarding Israel that they should celebrate it and dwell in booths, and set wreaths upon their heads, and take leafy boughs, and willows from the brook." A few references to crowns in Jewish sources can be found, although not specifically connected to Sukkot. Now wreaths, leafy crowns and garlands are typical dress of agricultural festivals and
procession in general. It is likely that these were routinely worn at Sukkot celebrations (and perhaps the other pilgrimage festivals as well), and complemented the lulav, another floral custom. That only one source mentions this common custom in relation to Sukkot suggests that they were considered of little significance precisely because of their ubiquity. Yet Daniélou focuses on the crown as a crucial element of Sukkot with major messianic symbolism. Why understand the crown in this light? Because Jesus wore a crown of thorns, and thus the crown became a messianic symbol in Christian tradition. But to read an eschatological meaning into Jubilees, into the crowns of the Dura painting mentioned above, and ultimately into Sukkot, is completely unwarranted.

(7) Sukkot and rain-making rituals. Sukkot follows the autumnal harvest and precedes the rainy season. A water libation, obviously a rain-making rite, was performed each day of the festival. The numerous agricultural rituals including the lulav, the willow procession, and circumambulations of the altar served to marshal the power of the cult to revivify nature. Zech 14:8 prophesies that living water will flow from the base of the temple, as does Ezek 47:1-12. That the nations who fail to make the pilgrimage to the temple are denied rain presupposes this function of the festival and the fertilizing powers of the temple. Thus scholars connect the vision of Zech 14 to an eschatological interpretation of the fertility producing elements of the festival.

This argument indeed has merit, but it must be formulated carefully. There is no evidence that the ritual itself, the water libation, was believed to have a salvific or eschatological significance. Its purpose was to produce water, pure and simple, not the Messiah, salvation or "eschatological rain." True, later rabbinic speculation would connect the libation to Isa 12:3, "You shall draw waters in joy at the well of my salvation." This tradition is opaque, for no exegesis of the verse is given, and, in any case, it cannot be imputed to earlier times. The same applies to the rabbinic tradition linking the libation to Zech 14 and Ezek 47. For the cult, the libation was not eschatological but mythic, in Mowinckel's sense of the term. Its efficacy was based on the mythic topography that viewed the temple or its "foundation stone" as the access point to the subterranean primordial flood-waters, the tehom. The libation descended though channels beneath the altar, stimulated the waters, and set in motion a process which led to the refertilization of nature, as several scholars have shown. Zech 14 projected an idealized version of the mythic topography to the eschaton. The annual invigoration of nature stimulated by the libation and the mythic view of the temple as source of fertility become reality. Thus the mythic impact of the libation, not the libation, is the operative eschatological motif. Note that Deutero-Zechariah has the nations make the pilgrimage to the temple in order to bow down to YHWH, not to perform a rain-making ritual. The ritual itself actually does not figure in the vision, but rather the temple and its mythic powers. Consequently it is mythic topography rather than the festival that informs the eschatological vision.


Or, of course, that wreaths were generally not worn on Sukkot, and the Jubilees tradition is idiosyncratic.

Daniélou, Symbols, 14-23 ("The eschatological character of the crown as denoting eternal blessedness is clear"; pp. 18-19); Riesenfeld, 48-51. Goodenough, Symbols, 4:157-58 attributes the crown to Hellenistic influence.

Mishna Sukka 4:1.4.

Riesenfeld, 42-45; Schaefer, 226, 228-29; Daniélou, Symbols, 4; Goodenough, Symbols, 4:151-54; Smith, "Tabernacles in the Fourth Gospel," 14.

103 Schaefer, p. 226 n. 333.

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Riesenfeld, 42-45; Schaefer, 226, 228-29; Daniélou, Symbols, 4; Goodenough, Symbols, 4:151-54; Smith, "Tabernacles in the Fourth Gospel," 143.
prayers at any time, not just on Sukkot. The ideology differs little in principle from the general priestly legislation that also accepts offerings from gentiles (Num 15:14-16; 18:8-10).

(9) Sukkot as inauguration of new time. This, for Schaefer; is the most decisive factor.

Sukkot may have been elected as the festival of lasting significance in the final age for any number of reasons, but there is one basic reason. Zechariah depicts the beginning of an unprecedented, final age. Elsewhere, Sukkot and its sister feast, Hanukkah, modeled after Sukkot, is associated with inaugurations, dedications: the liberation from Egypt (Lev 23:39-43); the recitation and renewal of the law (Deut 31:10-11); the inauguration of the ark into Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 8:65-66; 2 Chr 7:9); Jeroboam’s consecration of the Bethel temple and institution of a rival feast (1 Kgs 12:32-33); Ezra’s celebration of the repair of the altar (Ezra 3:3-4); the revival of the “ feast of the seventh month” in Neh 8:17-18. The new era means a new self-understanding of the people, comprised of Jews and gentiles ...

... Appropriately, Sukkot marks an inauguration, and that is precisely what Zechariah’s ending is concerned with, the advent of the final age.110

First, we should note that this analysis is more an observation than an explanation. Schaefer does not explain why Sukkot is associated with inaugurations and dedications. He observes that it is, and includes Zech 14 in this tendency. Second, an inauguration is not the same as a dedication, and several of the items on the list are neither the one nor the other. Lev 23:39-43 associates Sukkot with the desert trek, not the liberation from Egypt. The liberation, in any case, is not a dedication, and does not really inaugurate anything, except by the loosest possible definition in which any change or transition can be classified as an inauguration since something new begins.111 “The recitation and renewal of the law” is a type of covenant renewal ceremony, not an inauguration or dedication. Jeroboam established a festival, specifically to compete with the autumnal festival of the

109 Schaefer concedes that the prayer is “not specifically at Sukkot.” Moreover, as J. Levenson, “From Temple to Synagogue: I Kings 8,” Traditions and Transformations, ed. B. Halpern and J. Levenson (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 148-166 has noted, the prayer (at least this portion of the prayer, vv. 23-33) is an exilic addition and probably presupposes a synagogal setting. So even the roundabout association with Sukkot as the time of the dedication of the first temple disappears. Note too that eleven verses earlier the prayer uses similar language with respect to the Israelite: “Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this House” (1 Kgs 8:30). The point is that God should hear prayer and respond, not a call for universalism or particularism.

110 Schaefer, pp. 228-229.

111 An “inauguration” should involve formal ceremonies.
Jerusalem temple, so it naturally took place on Sukkot. The institution of a “rival” Sukkot feast on Sukkot does not prove that Sukkot itself is associated with dedications. The same is true of “the revival of the feast of the seventh month (Neh 8:17-18).” Clearly the revival of Sukkot had to take place on Sukkot. Nor is the vision of Zech 14 an inauguration except, again, in the loosest sense of the term. The vision portrays a new temple and the dawn of a new age, but does not describe any inauguration ceremony. This leaves the dedication of the first temple by Solomon and the re-dedication of the altar narrated in Ezra 3. Here Schaefer is correct, and, as we shall presently see, these dedications are related to the solution to our problem. But it is imprecise to claim that Sukkot was associated with dedications in general, or to suggest that this sheds any light on the role of Sukkot in Zech 14.\footnote{Moreover, it should be noted that “dedications,” “inaugurations,” and turning points are associated with both Passover and Sukkot. J. Bleckmann, in his commentary to Neh 8, points to six examples: the dedication of the first temple (Sukkot, 2 Chr 5-7), the completion of Hezekiah’s reforms (Pesah, 2 Chr 30), the completion of Josiah’s reforms (Pesah, 2 Chr 35:1-19), the completion of the first return (Sukkot, Ezra 3:1-6), the completion of the second temple (Pesah, Ezra 6:19-22) and the completion of Ezra’s reforms (Sukkot, Neh 8:13-18). This is a biblical historiographic trope. See J. Bleckmann, Ezra-Nehemiah (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1998), 389-290.}

II

This survey has proved disappointing, although rays of light have appeared from time to time. As a first step toward a solution to our question, it is necessary to appreciate the essence of Zech 14. The prophecy presents an ideal vision of the temple, the temple-city and the cult. Jerusalem, the temple-city, becomes the highest terrestrial point as the rest of the country flattens into a plain.\footnote{In mythic thought, the temple mount is the highest point on the earth. See Isa 2:2-4; Baw Shaddishin 69a-b.} The temple-city becomes a true source of fertility, its waters pouring forth throughout the year to all regions of the country (14:5-9). Everything within the city becomes holy; even the “hills of the horses” are inscribed “Holy to the Lord.” The inscription found on the diadem of the High Priest (Exod 28:36; 39:30), and regular pots become as holy as temple vessels (14:20-21). No Canaanite merchants taint the city, either compromising its purity or sanctity (14:21). YHWH becomes Lord of all the earth (14:9). No longer is his authority and existence recognized by Israel alone, but by all human beings. Therefore all nations perform an annual pilgrimage to worship in the temple and acknowledge his sovereignty.

The pilgrimage in Zech 14 thus represents idealized worship in the ideal temple. That worship takes place on Sukkot because Sukkot was the leading temple festival and the acme of cultic worship. Sukkot, more than any other festival, was associated with the temple, not with eschatology. When the prophet pictured worship in an ideal temple, he naturally pictured it in terms of the most important, elaborate and popular cultic observance: the autumnal festival. In other words, the temple is the key eschatological concept, while Sukkot is associated with eschatology as a reflex of its association with the temple.\footnote{See R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, “The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic,” VT 20 (1970), 1-15, who recognizes that visions of a reformed, purified or heavenly temple characterize apocalyptic thought.}

Sukkot, after all, was heleq, the festival, a title found in both biblical and rabbinic sources.\footnote{Ezek 45:25; 1 Kgs 8:2, 65, 12:32; Neh 9:14; Mishna Bikkurim 1:6; Mishna Hosh Hashana 1:2.} The autumnal harvest concluded the agricultural year, and peasants, now free from the arduous labors, could journey to Jerusalem for the celebrations. Although Passover and Shavuot (Pentecost) were also pilgrimages, they occurred in spring and summer, during the middle of the harvest season, and were not as well attended. Josephus too distinguishes Sukkot by noting that “this festival is observed by us with special care” and that it is “especially sacred.”\footnote{A.J. 15:50; A.J. 8:100-123.} Rabbinic accounts of the Sukkot temple rituals — the water libations; the willow procession; the circumbulations around the altar; simhat bet hashe’eva\footnote{“Joy at the place of water-drawing.” the all-night ceremony held in the temple courtyard, Mishna Sukka 5:4-1.} with its dancing, acrobatics and flaming torches; the recitation of psalms, the waving of lulaves — give a sense of the pageantry and splendor that characterized the festal week.\footnote{Mishna Sukka 3:1-5:4.} The rabbinic remark, “He who never saw simhat bet hasho’eva never saw true joy,” expresses the impression made by these ceremonies.\footnote{Mishna Sukka 6:1.} Whether we reconstruct the festival along the lines of Mowinckel or H.J. Kraus\footnote{Rabbinic literature, like Zech 14, idealizes the rituals to some extent, and the descriptions should not be taken as completely accurate. Nonetheless, one learns the basic contours of the temple rituals and the impression they made on the worshippers.} or the rabbinic traditions or some other way is

\footnote{See n. 33.}
SUKKOT, ESCHATOLOGY AND ZECHARIAH 14

Sukkot. Likewise, Deutero-Zechariah incorporates Sukkot in his vision because he pictures a restored temple, not on account of a dedication. It is not the inauguration of the new age, but the vision of a new temple and new worship that evokes Sukkot.

The parallel between Zech 14 and Maccabees is instructive. In 2 Macc 10:5-8 Jason of Cyrene describes the first Hannukah celebration thus:

On the very same day on which the temple was profaned by foreigners occurred the purification of the temple, on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month (that is, Kislev). Joyfully they held an eight-day celebration, after the pattern of Sukkot, remembering how a short time before they spent the festival of Sukkot like wild beasts, in the mountains and in the caves. Therefore, holding wretched wands, and graceful branches, and palm fronds, they offered songs of praise to Him Who had victoriously brought about the purification of His Place. By vote of the commonwealth they decreed a rule for the entire nation of Jews to observe these days annually.

The author suggests that the new festival originated as a substitute for a missed Sukkot celebration. Fighting the guerrilla war against the forces of evil, the faithful Jews could not observe Sukkot in its proper manner. After their victory in Kislev they replicated the festivities neglected two months previously. Inability to celebrate Sukkot was a principal consequence of losing the temple; resumption of its celebration the essential benefit of the temple’s rededication. So Deutero-Zechariah. The significance of the purified, eschatological temple is that Sukkot may be celebrated.

Similarly, the true significance of rain-making rituals, the imagery of water and the refertilization of nature, discussed above (7), depends on the mythic view of the temple and its place in mythic topography. Israelite myth viewed the temple as axis mundi and the foundation of cosmic order, as located above the subterranean waters and as the ultimate source of fertility. The cult. actualized those powers through ritual, tapping the temple’s resources and bringing blessing and fertility to the land. When Deutero-Zechariah projected the mythic powers of the temple to the eschaton, he prophesied that the

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120 For example, 2 Macc 10:21; 2 Macc 11:1-18. See the stately comment of M. Linder, ‘Hannouca et Souccot,” REJ 63 (1912), 26: ‘Entre Souccot et Hannouca le lien est le Temple; les deux fêtes sont des fêtes de Délicance, des fêtes du Temple.”

121 The eschatological orientation remains an open question. Clearly it derives from the social and political setting of the visionary and his community. This topic has been explored by P. D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalypse (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), who traces the development of apocalyptic thought in the Bible from its earliest glimmerings to the full-blown apocalyptic eschatology of Zech 14 and later texts. Hanson notes that in Zech 14 the attacking nations capture Jerusalem and exile half the population such that only a portion remains to benefit from divine deliverance. The vision is different, however, for it is Israel as a unified community, and happily foresees that half his habitation would be exiled, its houses plundered and women raped. The restructuring of the natural order also reflects deep despair with the current state of affairs and alienation from the priesthood and ruling classes. The evil ‘‘apocatastasis’’ has corrupted nature to such an extent that no purification is possible short of a radical upheaval through divine intervention. This despair is what makes the vision so thoroughly apocalyptic. Having abandoned hope of any historical rectification of the problem, the prophet defers deliverance to the eschatological future. See pp. 370-392. Now Hanson has been criticized for positing too radical a distinction between the “visionary” and “hierocratic” parties; see P. Cardall, “Twilight of Prophecy or Dawn of Apocalypse,” JSOT 14 (1979) 19-26; and P. Ackroyd, The Centurion in his Age (Sheffield, England, 1991), 137-38 (although Ackroyd acknowledges “sharp hostility both from outside the community but also from within.”). Still, in my opinion Hanson’s reconstruction best accounts for the apocalyptic motifs. In any case, it is the social matrix of Zech 14, whether we reconstruct it along Hanson’s lines or some other way, that provides the ultimate source of the prophet’s eschatological point of view.

122 Above, p. 29.

123 Cf. J. Levinson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 79: “There was in Israel a clear association between temple building and the seven-day celebration of Tabernacles.”

124 If there is any messianic symbolism on the coins of the revolt, it derives from the temple as the eschatological symbol. The imagery of water and the refertilization of nature, discussed above (7), depends on the mythic view of the temple and its place in mythic topography. Israelite myth viewed the temple as axis mundi and the foundation of cosmic order, as located above the subterranean waters and as the ultimate source of fertility. The cult. actualized those powers through ritual, tapping the temple’s resources and bringing blessing and fertility to the land. When Deutero-Zechariah projected the mythic powers of the temple to the eschaton, he prophesied that the
waters would flow directly from the temple or temple-city, that the entire country would be fertile and that rain would descend. True, it was on Sukkot, which occurred at the outset of the rainy period, when the main rituals directed to this end were performed. But the fertility imagery of the vision devolves primarily from the powers of the eschatological temple, and only secondarily from Sukkot rituals.

Celebrations of divine kingship took place on Sukkot for similar reasons. When worshippers came to the temple — the divine house, domain, throne, and footstool — they rededicated themselves to their God and renewed their devotion to his sovereignty. The community expressed its subservience to its God and king at his terrestrial abode where his presence was most keenly experienced. The nature of these ceremonies cannot be determined precisely. Certainly they did not involve the king or priest as embodiment of the deity, as may (?) have been the case in first temple times. More likely, divine kingship was acknowledged through liturgy and prayer, much as in the recitation of malkhuyot of the rabbinc liturgy, or through covenant renewal ceremonies such as that depicted in Deut 31:10-13. At all events, the temple was God's terrestrial throne, and it was on the leading temple festival that his kingship was experienced and acknowledged.

Focus on the temple also provides the key to understanding passages from the Christian Scriptures that stimulated the search for eschatological associations with Sukkot. In the climax of the "Tabernacles complex," John 7:1-8:59, Jesus prophesies "on the last and greatest day," of the festival. He declares: "If anyone thirsts, let him come [to me], and let him drink, who believes in me. As the scripture says, From him within shall flow rivers of living water." 139

Hearing this the people conclude the person before them is prophet and Messiah (7:40-41). Here are clear eschatological associations with Sukkot, as we expect from a Christian source depicting the advent of the Messiah. Still, the force of this prophecy and the role of Sukkot must be delineated carefully. Raymond Brown has noted that the importance of the episode derives from the "replacement motif" that runs throughout John. The Evangelist has Jesus replace the crucial Jewish institutions:

Jesus is the real Temple; the Spirit he gives will replace the necessity of worshipping at Jerusalem; his doctrine and his flesh and blood will give life in a way that the manna associated with the exodus from Egypt did not; at Tabernacles, not the rain-making ceremony but Jesus himself supplies the living water; not the illumination in the temple court but Jesus himself is the real light; on the feast of Dedication, not the temple altar but Jesus himself is consecrated by God.

Jesus replaces the temple as the source of fertility and fount of life. He fulfills the eschatological function of the temple envisioned by Zech 14 and Ezek 47, to directly issue forth the water which, in the mythic view of the temple, was stimulated through the water libation and other temple ceremonies. Thus rituals and modes of worship of the eschatological temple are realized in Jesus and no longer necessary. The eschatological significance again devolves from the role of the temple, and Sukkot figures in this equation by virtue of its status as outstanding temple festival. In illustrating how Jesus replaces the temple, the author makes it clear that even the preeminent temple festival is no longer necessary.

The Sukkot imagery of other passages of the Christian Scriptures should be understood in this light. Rev 7:9-17, for example, employs vivid Sukkot motifs. The assembled multitude carries palm branches or lulav; they cry "salvation" (sōlēria) corresponding to "deliver us" of Ps 118:25, at which point the lulav was shaken; the promise of "springs of living water" recalls the water associations of the festival; and the phrase "he who sits on the throne will shelter (or 'tabernacle'

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138 Most scholars believe the malkhuyot date from temple times.
139 My thinking on this subject is indebted to discussion with my colleague Dr. Daniel Fleming. Deutero-Zechariah's emphasis on "the King of Hosts" is again an eschatological projection of the annual recognition of divine kingship.
139 Scholars are divided as to whether the reference is to the seventh and last day of Sukkot itself, later known as Hoshana rabbah, or the Eighth Day festival, Shmini 'azel.
140 The translation is that of Brown, John, 305 who follows the "western" or "Christological" interpretation adopted by the Latin Church Fathers. Altering the punctuation slightly results in a different reading whereby the water emerges from the believer, not from Jesus: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says..." Other medications that result in slightly different interpretations have also been proposed; see Brown, 299-301, 331 and the literature cited there. This issue is of some consequence, for the two interpretations point to different scriptural passages as the basis for the saying. But these differences pertain more to Christian theology than the nature of Sukkot.
141 Brown, John, cxili and 104.
142 See also John 2:21-22.
143 Elsewhere the Christian Scriptures transliterate the phrase as hōsanna, and in these contexts the word may express acclamation, not a petition for deliverance. That the phrase is translated here as sōlēria suggests that the passage alludes to the Sukkot liturgy. Some scholars, however, suggest the phrase in Revelation evokes different biblical verses. See Ulffgard, Feast, 91 and E. Wernar, "'Hosanna' in the Gospels," JBL 65 (1946), 99-121.
144 Mishna Sukkot 3:8.
— skẖṉsēî) them with his presence” evokes the image of a divine sukkah.\(^{136}\) Now this scene is one of seven visions of eschatological worship that punctuate the lengthy description of the heavenly temple and new Jerusalem.\(^{137}\) That eschatological worship is modeled on Sukkot and its rituals. Yet again it is clear that the link between Sukkot and eschatology is a by-product of the festival’s association with the temple and not due to eschatological associations of Sukkot per se. The chain of association moves from eschatology to the temple to Sukkot. That is, the eschatological vision of the author includes a temple, and since Sukkot was always the outstanding temple celebration and most popular pilgrimage, he portrayed worship in that temple in terms of Sukkot. Like Zech 14:1, when the visionary imagined worship in the heavenly temple, he instinctively thought of Sukkot.\(^{138}\) Indeed, Draper convincingly argues that the passage is essentially a midrash on Zech 14, interpreting the prophecy in light of Christian apocalyptic thought.\(^{139}\)

This point is significant, for it calls attention to the common theme in these early Christian visions and Deutero-Zechariah. The early

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\(^{136}\) This scene has been thoroughly analyzed by H. Ullgard, Feast. The connection to Sukkot has been acknowledged by many scholars, beginning in 1719 by C. Vettin in Anaparischer Apocalypse I, 295-319 (cited in Draper, “The Heavenly Feast.” 133 with further references); J. Danilov, The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 341; Riesenfeld, 278 nn. 67-68; R. J. McKelvey, The New Temple (Oxford, 1959), 75-76; J. Comblin, “La liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem,” ET 29 (1953), 38-39; Ullgard and many others. Other motifs in the passage may also have been linked to Sukkot.


\(^{138}\) See McKelvey, Temple, 191.

\(^{139}\) Draper, “Heavenly Feast.” (above, n. 74). The same analysis might apply to Rev 21:1-22:5, which Comblin, “La liturgie,” has linked to Rev 3:1-7 and Sukkot (cited by Danilov, Symbols, 19). Motifs in common include: the twelve tribes (21:12), the throne of God (22:1-3), worship (22:3), God tabernacled (22:3—sukkah); living water (21:4, 22:1), the wiping away of tears (21:4), and the sign on the forehead (22:4). Comblin claims the stream of living water expresses the “eschatological symbolism of the water libation,” while the imagery of light (21:23, 22:5) derives from the “illumination ceremony” of Sukkot, i.e. simhâl bel hasho‘e’a. However, the parallels to Sukkot are metaphorical and vague — imagery of light, for example, is ubiquitous — and I am hesitant to see a Sukkot background. The imagery in the passage derives primarily from the temple. In the eschatological temple one finds the throne and presence of God, his sheltering presence, and divine light, glory and life (21:4, 21:23, 22:5). The stream of living water reflects the mythical view of the temple as the source of water for the entire world, as in Zech 14 and Ezek 47. Once again, if this is Sukkot imagery, it emerges as a reflex of the close connection between the temple and the festival.

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SUkkOT, eschatology and Zechariah 14

Christians considered the temple and its priesthood corrupt.\(^{140}\) Like Deutero-Zechariah, they turned to an idealized, eschatological temple in its place — the body of Jesus for John 7, the heavenly temple for Rev 7 — just as the prophet turned to the divinely restored temple of his vision.\(^{141}\) An eschatological temple included worship, and the zenith of temple worship had always been conducted at the festival of Sukkot. Worship in these eschatological temples is therefore focused on Sukkot.

111

In retrospect, a great deal depends on the nature of the cult in the second temple period. Did the festivals provide an eschatological experience for the worshippers, fill them with messianic expectation and prefigure elements of eschatological time? For Mowinckel and those who followed in his wake the answer was affirmative. Without a king, the enthronement festival proper could not take place. So Mowinckel wrote of a depressed and incomplete cult conscious of its limitations and looking toward the eschaton.\(^{142}\) Indeed, under the influence of the Priestly Code the second temple cult had been corrupted to the point where it was really not a cult at all. It had degenerated into a stage of obedience to the commandments of God, rather than the living, cult drama of first temple times.\(^{144}\) The cult was cut off from the “life and religious feelings of the community,” and was no longer considered the means to “produce a flow of blessings for the community.”\(^{144}\)

The Priestly School destroyed the “geist” of the old.

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\(^{141}\) Psalms, 36.35. See too 319: “Das ist die allmählich Erstarrung der ursprünglichen Lebensfrische des Kultes und das Schwinden der Unmittelbarkeit, der Naivität der

cultural approach that only the desiccated outer forms remained. The Wellhausen-esque Christian and romantic bias here is obvious. It is also ironic, for Mowinckel vociferously denied that the cult of the first temple and its liturgy, the Psalms, were eschatological. His “cultic” or “cult-functional” approach to Psalms supplanted a prevalent school of thought which understood the “enthronement” psalms as eschatological prayers. The cult operated in the here and now to “actualize” Israelite myth, to “make real” God’s presence, to repeat and reenact creation. YHWH comes each year, in cyclical time, for each year the forces of chaos threaten anew, and the primordial victory must be reactualized. Paradoxically, eschatology had its origins in the cult, but was incompatible with a functioning cult. The end of linearity has no place in the cultic rhythm of cyclical time. The cult was “Erlebnis” in the present while eschatology was “Glaube und Hoffnung,” and the two were mutually exclusive. So how could eschatology pervade the post-exilic period while the cult of the second temple functioned? Should not that cult and its liturgy have lived in the present and provided an “Erlebnis” just as its precursor? No, answered Mowinckel, because the second temple cult was not a cult. It was dysfunctional, not cult-functional. It offered not true ex-

145 Ibid., 36.
146 Mowinckel’s evaluation is all the more remarkable since much of his evidence for the enthronement festival derives from rabbinic sources which describe the rituals of the seemingly well-functioning cult at the end of the second temple period. So he is forced into tendentious dissociations. Despite the primitive and “organic” character of the willow procession that circled the altar on the seventh day of Sukkot (Mishna Sukka 4:3-5), Mowinckel determines that its “erigentlich Sukkot nicht mehr einleuchtend ist. Auch sie wird von nun an von den Gesichtspunkten des Nomismus betrachtet worden sein; man übt, weil sie gebeten ist. Die Prozession ist eine deutliche Verkümmerung derjenigen in Ps. 132 und Ps. 24” (PsSt, 268). He tends to refer to such rituals as “Segnungen” of the real drama of the first temple cult. See e.g. PsSt, 35-38. It is not surprising that he concludes the book (p. 325): “Durch die Leiden des Volkes ist die Anzahl seiner ursprünglichen Erlebnisse zwar in ersterlei, aber doch in verständlicher und noch wertvoller Form übermittelt worden. Aus der eschatologischen Stimmung ist ein Christentum, das ewige Ruhm-Gottes-Dank geboren.” See too M. R. Hauge, “Sigmund Mowinckel and the Psalms,” JSOT 2 (1988-89), 63-66, who cites other examples of Mowinckel’s disdain of the Priestly Code, and suggests: “The valuation is clearly dependent on traditional Protestant anti-ritualism and the Romanic school of the preceding century.”
148 Note how often Mowinckel uses the terms “Wirklichkeit,” “Wirklichkeitserlebnis,” “Anwesenheit,” “Gegenwart,” “advenitus,” “erwacht” (in the imminent sense), to describe the cult throughout PsSt.
149 PsSt, 315, cf. 261: “The cult is primary, the eschatology is derived.” For criticism of this radical dichotomy, see L. Cook, “Apocalypticism and the Psalter,” ZAW 104 (1992), 82-99, who shows cultic psalms reflect eschatological and proto-apoca-

150 I would like to express my deep gratitude to Baruch Levine, Stephen Geller, Daniel Fleming and Jonathan Klawans for their valuable suggestions and advice in writing this paper.