

Thankfulness

Harvest Celebration

Foundation

Bible passage : Leviticus 23.33-44

It is anticipated that this module will be used around the time of Harvest and can therefore be used to show a link between thankfulness and harvest. Agriculture was very important in ancient Israel, and most families had their own land which they worked. They were dependent upon a good harvest. Amongst the various festivals commanded by God in the Old Testament three have to do with harvest and the third of those, Tabernacles, fell at the time of our modern-day harvest in the UK.

Tabernacles was held at the end of the growing season, and like the other festivals a large part of it had to do simply with celebrating God's goodness by enjoying the fruit of the land. In our world today the ease with which many of us can obtain food leads us to take it for granted. We

"you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD"

tend to think of it as a right rather than remembering God's gracious goodness. Even though our traditional harvest hymns are not all that old they do focus on thanksgiving and sometimes use the themes of harvest to speak about the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tabernacles is described in various places but particularly Leviticus 23.33-44. The hard work of months of harvest was complete; there was good food to eat and the whole community was expected to join in.



Shelters in modern day Israel

Verse 34 of this passage in the original language gives the title still used by Jews today - Sukkot. It is usually translated as Booths, Tabernacles or Shelters.

On the first and eight days of the festival there was a Sabbath when no work would be done and the people would gather for a solemn assembly. Elsewhere we learn about some of the offerings that were to be made. But the people were also to make shelters for themselves, and for the week they would live in the shelters rather than their houses. During this week they would "celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days" eating the food that had been harvested. The living in shelters had an additional meaning, to remind them how God had brought the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. This double focus on God's goodness in creation and in redemption is common in the Old Testament festivals.

Harvest is therefore a time to celebrate God's goodness, to remember, rather than take for granted the food we eat, and a time to reflect on God's saving work through Jesus.



Harvest is an opportunity to remember God's goodness in the food we eat day by day.