

HISTORY AND MASONIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FEAST OF TISHRI

THE FEAST OF TISHRI IS BASED UPON THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES, "SUKKOT" DESCRIBED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS, CH. 23, VERSE 34, WE READ, " THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THIS SEVENTH MONTH (TISHRI) SHALL BE THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES FOR SEVEN DAYS UNTO THE LORD." IT WAS AT ONE TIME CONSIDERED THE GREATEST FESTIVAL AMONG THE EARLY HEBREWS.

THE DIRECTIONS FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE FEAST ARE RELATED IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS, "AND YE SHALL TAKE YOU ON THE FIRST DAY THE FRUIT OF GOODLY TREES, BRANCHES OF PALM TREES AND BOUGHS OF TICK TREES AND WILLOWS OF THE BROOK AND YE SHALL REJOICE BEFORE THE LORD YOUR G-D SEVEN DAYS."

IN ANCIENT DAYS THE JOYOUS FESTIVAL WAS OBSERVED BY THE ISRAELITES IN THE PALESTINIAN AUTUMN WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED THE AGRICULTURAL TOIL OF THE YEAR. THEY THANKED G-D AND PRAISED HIM FOR THE ABUNDANCE STORED IN BARN AND BIN, AND OFFERED PRAYERS TO HIM THAT HE SEND NEW RAINS FOR THE COMING YEAR.

THE MASONIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FESTIVAL REVOLVES AROUND THE DEDICATION OF KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE WHICH TRADITION INFORMS US WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES FOLLOWING ITS COMPLETION.

THE HOLIDAY COMMEMORATES THE WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES FOLLOWING THEIR DELIVERY FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT AND THE ULTIMATE ARRIVAL AT THE PROMISED LAND. DURING THAT PERIOD, THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONSTRUCT ANY PERMANENT LIVING QUARTERS, AND THEIR SHELTERS WERE OFTEN QUITE TEMPORARY. THE ROOVES

WERE THATCHED WITH PALM FRONDS AND OFTEN ENABLED THE OCCUPANTS TO GAZE OUT AT THE STARS AT NIGHT. IN THE MODERN OBSERVANCE TEMPORARY STRUCTURES ARE ERECTED TO SYMBOLIZE THESE ANCIENT SHELTERS. THE CHILDREN OFTEN PARTICIPATE BY PROVIDING HANDCRAFTED DECORATIONS AND HANGING FRUIT FROM THE FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING THE COVERING OF PALM FRONDS.

FINALLY THE OBSERVANCE CLOSES WITH A MORE SOLEMN NOTE, THE RECOLLECTION OF THE MEMORY OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES. YOU WILL NOTE THAT THIS ASPECT OF THE OBSERVANCE HAS BEEN INCORPORATED INTO OUR CEREMONIES THIS EVENING IN ONE OF THE TOASTS THAT WILL FOLLOW MOMENTARILY.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF OUR COUNTRY: WE SHALL ALWAYS BE MINDFUL OF AND UPHOLD THOSE FREEDOMS GRANTED TO US BY THE GREAT ARCHITECT ABOVE AND GUARANTEED UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION TO THE END THAT THIS NATION SHALL PROSPER IN ALL IT'S RIGHTEOUS UNDERTAKINGS, AND MAY FRIENDSHIP AND BROTHERLY LOVE PREVAIL AMONG US AND ALL GOOD MEN EVERYWHERE. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE GOVERNMENT OF OUR COUNTRY.

TO THE SUPREME COUNCIL WHO, IN THEIR DELIBERATIONS AND ENDEAVORS, ARE GIVING TO US THE BENEFIT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE THAT WE MAY BETTER SERVE OUR DAY AND GENERATION, KNOWING THAT BY FOLLOWING THEIR PRECEPTS AND EXAMPLES WE CAN MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE FOR OURSELVES AND OUR NEIGHBORS. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE SUPREME COUNCIL.

TO THE GRAND COMMANDER: MAY HIS IDEALS AND ABLE LEADERSHIP ALWAYS BE A CHALLENGE TO US TOWARDS HIGHER AND MORE NOBLE DEEDS. WE ASK DIVINE GUIDANCE FOR HIM AND PRAY THAT WE MAY BE WORTHY TO FOLLOW. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE GRAND COMMANDER.

TO THE CONSISTORY OF YOUR ALLEGIANCE: WHERE YOUR MIND AND HEART ARE ALWAYS OPEN TO THE ETERNAL TRUTH WHICH WILL GUIDE TO HIGHER AND MORE NOBLER PURPOSES. MAY YOU SUPPORT IT WITH RENEWED FAITH AND DETERMINATION TO THE END THAT TRUE BROTHERHOOD SHALL PREVAIL. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE CONSISTORY OF YOUR ALLEGIANCE.

TO THE GRAND LODGE OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA: WE SALUTE THE GRAND LODGE OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND PLEDGE OUR SUPPORT: MAY IT EVER BE THE CHAMPION OF THOSE PRINCIPLES WHICH MASONRY HAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED FOR THE BEST INTERESTS OF HUMANITY. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE GRAND LODGE OF FLORIDA.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE BRETHREN OF THESE DEGREES WHOSE LABORS HERE BELOW HAVE CEASED DURING THE PRESENT YEAR. ON THIS OCCASION WE PAUSE IN HONOR OF OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN. AND WE DO SO WITH A REALIZATION OF GREAT LOSS. THE GOOD THAT MEN DO LIVES AFTER THEM. AND BY THE PRACTICE OF THE GOOD AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE DEGREES OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN HAVE EARNED THAT REST WHICH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL. MAY THE REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE BRETHREN WHO HAVE GONE AWAY FROM AMONG US MAKE MORE DEAR TO US THOSE WHO REMAIN. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE MEMORY OF THE BRETHREN OF THESE DEGREES WHOSE LABORS HERE BELOW HAVE CEASED DURING THE PRESENT YEAR.

TO ALL MASONS AND MASONIC BODIES OF ALL RITES AND DEGREES, OVER THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH: HONORS AND LAURELS TO THE WORTHY; HEALTH TO THE SICK; COMFORT TO THE NEEDY; AND SUCCOR TO THE OPPRESSED EVERYWHERE. WE SOLICIT DIVINE GUIDANCE IN ALL OUR ACTIONS AND MAY THE TEACHINGS OF ALL RELIGIONS BE REFLECTED IN OUR LIVES TO THE END THAT WE SHALL BE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS AS WE PASS THIS WAY. MY BRETHREN JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO ALL MASONS AND MASONIC BODIES OF ALL RITES AND DEGREES EVERYWHERE.

FINALLY MY BRETHREN, TO OUR VISITORS, MAY THEY RETURN OFTEN IN PEACE AND FELLOWSHIP.