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Last Updated

August 31, 2021

Sukkot in Ezra-Nehemiah and the Date of the Torah

According to Ezra (3:4) and Nehemiah (8:14-15) the returnees celebrated the holiday of Sukkot according to the law as it “was written,” but differences between their celebrations and the prescriptions in the Torah suggest that the laws they had written were slightly different than ours. Was the Torah finalized by the time Ezra-Nehemiah was written?

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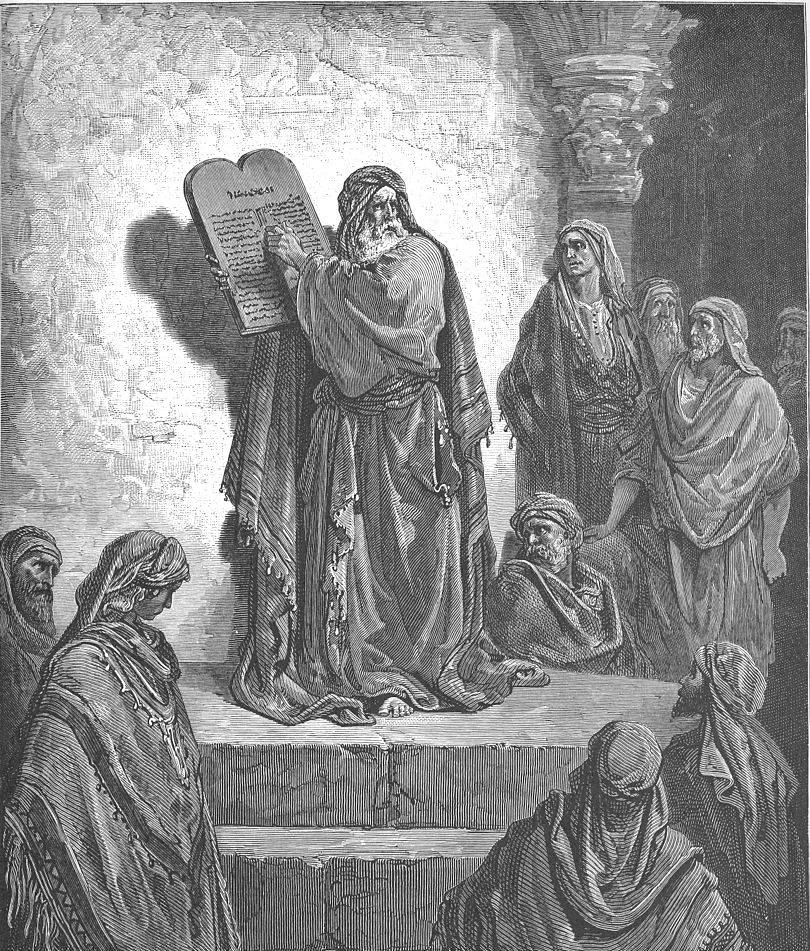
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Ezra Reads the Law to the People – Gustave Dore

The Reading of the Torah in Nehemiah 8 and the Discovery of Booths

According to Nehemiah 8, Ezra read aloud the torah to the population assembled in Jerusalem. He read it on the first day of the seventh month from early morning until midday (Neh. 8:3).  On the second day of the seventh month, the heads of the fathers-houses together with the leading priests and Levites gathered to Ezra to study the words of the law (Neh. 8:13).

They found written there that the people should live in booths during the holiday of the seventh month (Neh. 8:14-15):

וַֽיִּמְצְא֖וּ כָּת֣וּב בַּתּוֹרָ֑ה אֲשֶׁ֨ר צִוָּ֤ה יְ-הֹוָה֙ בְּיַד מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֲשֶׁר֩ יֵשְׁב֨וּ בְנֵֽי יִשְׂרָאֵ֧ל בַּסֻּכּ֛וֹת בֶּחָ֖ג בַּחֹ֥דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִֽי: וַאֲשֶׁ֣ר יַשְׁמִ֗יעוּ וְיַעֲבִ֨ירוּ ק֥וֹל בְּכָל עָרֵיהֶם֘ וּבִירוּשָׁלִַ֣ם לֵאמֹר֒ צְא֣וּ הָהָ֗ר וְהָבִ֙יאוּ֙ עֲלֵי זַ֙יִת֙ וַעֲלֵי עֵ֣ץ שֶׁ֔מֶן וַעֲלֵ֤י הֲדַס֙ וַעֲלֵ֣י תְמָרִ֔ים וַעֲלֵ֖י עֵ֣ץ עָבֹ֑ת לַעֲשֹׂ֥ת סֻכֹּ֖ת כַּכָּתֽוּב:

And they found it written in the law, which YHWH had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month, and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”

Accordingly we read that, the people did so (Neh. 8:16-17):

וַיֵּצְא֣וּ הָעָם֘ וַיָּבִיאוּ֒ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ֩ לָהֶ֨ם סֻכּ֜וֹת אִ֤ישׁ עַל גַּגּוֹ֙ וּבְחַצְרֹ֣תֵיהֶ֔ם וּבְחַצְר֖וֹת בֵּ֣ית הָאֱלֹהִ֑ים וּבִרְחוֹב֙ שַׁ֣עַר הַמַּ֔יִם וּבִרְח֖וֹב שַׁ֥עַר אֶפְרָֽיִם:

So the people went out and brought them, and made booths for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

וַיַּֽעֲשׂ֣וּ כָֽל הַ֠קָּהָל הַשָּׁבִ֨ים מִן הַשְּׁבִ֥י׀ סֻכּוֹת֘ וַיֵּשְׁב֣וּ בַסֻּכּוֹת֒ כִּ֣י לֹֽא עָשׂ֡וּ מִימֵי֩ יֵשׁ֨וּעַ בִּן נ֥וּן כֵּן֙ בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל עַ֖ד הַיּ֣וֹם הַה֑וּא

And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so.

These verses are very curious. Are they saying that the people had not celebrated the holiday of Sukkot since the days of Joshua son of Nun? (Jeshua is the post-exilic spelling for Joshua.) Or, are they saying that the people had not built booths and lived in them since the days of Joshua?

Sukkot in the time of Cyrus: Ezra 3 and Numbers 29

According to Ezra 3 however, the returnees did celebrate the holiday of Sukkot in the days of Cyrus (Ezra 3:4):

וַֽיַּעֲשׂ֛וּ אֶת חַ֥ג הַסֻּכּ֖וֹת כַּכָּת֑וּב וְעֹלַ֙ת י֤וֹם בְּיוֹם֙ בְּמִסְפָּ֔ר כְּמִשְׁפַּ֖ט דְּבַר י֥וֹם בְּיוֹמֽוֹ׃

And they kept the festival of booths, as written, the daily offerings by number according to the regulation, as required day by day.

Even though the holiday is called “Booths” in Ezra 3, there is no mention of the people making or living in them. Apparently, they were celebrating the festival according to the laws of Numbers 29, for they were sacrificing on each day the number of animals required by law.

The identical phrase used in Ezra 3:4 בְּמִסְפָּ֔ר כְּמִשְׁפַּ֖ט occurs in Numbers 29 seven times (vv. 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 37).[1] In fact, the book of Numbers is alone in prescribing a daily offering, an offering specific for each day of the holiday, so this is the law to which the author of Ezra 3:4 refers.

The laws of Sukkot in the book of Numbers make no mention of living in booths, nor of any other activity (such as taking particular plants and fruits) associated with the holiday beyond the daily sacrifices, so no other activity is cited in Ezra either beyond the offerings by fire of the day on its day.

Sacrifices but no Booths

This may be what Nehemiah means when he says that the holiday had not been celebrated the way that they were celebrating it in the time of Ezra. The returnees in the days of Cyrus did not celebrate Sukkot by building or living in booths or it would have been mentioned. They observed it then only by being careful to offer the number of sacrifices according to the day on its day.

According to 1 Kings 8:2, the holiday of the seventh month was also celebrated at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, and there too there is no mention of living in booths. It is the same in 2 Chronicles 7. The temple was dedicated during the festival of the seventh month, and presumably the appropriate sacrifices were conducted, but they did not build booths nor live in them. The holiday was apparently not even called “booths” then, but simply the festival of the seventh month.

The same is true of Ezekiel 45:25. The holiday of the seventh month appears to have been part of the New Year’s festival for the semi-annual ritual of purging and cleansing the temple. There was no demand to live in booths.

The Booths in Nehemiah’s Torah

According to Nehemiah 8, however, they read in the Torah that “the people should live in booths (בַּסֻּכּוֹת) during the holiday of the seventh month (8:14).”  Where in the torah is that written?

*Exodus*

Exodus, for example, states that you shall observe, not the festival of “booths,” but,

…וְחַ֤ג הָֽאָסִף֙ בְּצֵ֣את הַשָּׁנָ֔ה בְּאָסְפְּךָ֥ אֶֽת מַעֲשֶׂ֖יךָ מִן הַשָּׂדֶֽה:

…[T]he festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor” (Exod. 23:16).

No specific time on the calendar is mentioned, only the time of ingathering, of harvest.

*Deuteronomy*

Deuteronomy refers to the holiday as the festival of “booths,” but gives no instructions about when or how to celebrate it, only that it must be for seven days and at the time of the harvest of the “threshing floor and the wine press”  חַ֧ג הַסֻּכֹּ֛ת תַּעֲשֶׂ֥ה לְךָ֖ שִׁבְעַ֣ת יָמִ֑ים בְּאָ֙סְפְּךָ֔ מִֽגָּרְנְךָ֖ וּמִיִּקְבֶֽךָ׃  (Deut. 16:13). Presumably this time would vary from year to year. The holiday is called the “festival of booths,” but there is no command to build or live in them.

More importantly, we are told, that the holiday must be celebrated “before YHWH” in “the place that YHWH will choose” (Deut. 16:15-16), evidently at the temple in Jerusalem.

*Leviticus*

Perhaps Nehemiah refers to the laws in Leviticus 23:34-36:

לג וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר יְ-הֹוָ֖ה אֶל מֹשֶׁ֥ה לֵּאמֹֽר: לד דַּבֵּ֛ר אֶל בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל לֵאמֹ֑ר בַּחֲמִשָּׁ֨ה עָשָׂ֜ר י֗וֹם לַחֹ֤דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי֙ הַזֶּ֔ה חַ֧ג הַסֻּכּ֛וֹת שִׁבְעַ֥ת יָמִ֖ים לַי-הֹוָֽה: לה בַּיּ֥וֹם הָרִאשׁ֖וֹן מִקְרָא קֹ֑דֶשׁ כָּל מְלֶ֥אכֶת עֲבֹדָ֖ה לֹ֥א תַעֲשֽׂוּ: לו שִׁבְעַ֣ת יָמִ֔ים תַּקְרִ֥יבוּ אִשֶּׁ֖ה לַי-הֹוָ֑ה בַּיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁמִינִ֡י מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ֩ יִהְיֶ֨ה לָכֶ֜ם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּ֨ם אִשֶּׁ֤ה לַֽי-הֹוָה֙ עֲצֶ֣רֶת הִ֔וא כָּל מְלֶ֥אכֶת עֲבֹדָ֖ה לֹ֥א תַעֲשֽׂוּ:

33 YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of Booths to YHWH. 35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 Seven days you shall present YHWH’s offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present YHWH’s offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.

Leviticus presents here a description of a holiday called “Booths,” and a specific date on the calendar is given, but again, as usual, there are no instructions regarding the booths themselves.

We read then in vv. 37-38 a statement summarizing all the holidays that had been in described Leviticus 23 up to that point, beginning with the sabbath and the festival of Matzot and ending with the holidays of the seventh month (i.e., vv. 23:1-36):

לז אֵ֚לֶּה מוֹעֲדֵ֣י יְ-הֹוָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְא֥וּ אֹתָ֖ם מִקְרָאֵ֣י קֹ֑דֶשׁ לְהַקְרִ֨יב אִשֶּׁ֜ה לַי-הֹוָ֗ה עֹלָ֧ה וּמִנְחָ֛ה זֶ֥בַח וּנְסָכִ֖ים דְּבַר י֥וֹם בְּיוֹמֽוֹ: לח מִלְּבַ֖ד שַׁבְּתֹ֣ת יְ-הֹוָ֑ה וּמִלְּבַ֣ד מַתְּנֽוֹתֵיכֶ֗ם וּמִלְּבַ֤ד כָּל נִדְרֵיכֶם֙ וּמִלְּבַד֙ כָּל נִדְבֹ֣תֵיכֶ֔ם אֲשֶׁ֥ר תִּתְּנ֖וּ לַי-הֹוָֽה:

37 These are the appointed festivals of YHWH, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to YHWH offerings by fire– burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day– 38 apart from the Sabbaths of YHWH, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to YHWH.

*Leviticus – Addendum 1*

Lev 23:39 begins an addendum, returning to the festival of the seventh month:

לט אַ֡ךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה֩ עָשָׂ֨ר י֜וֹם לַחֹ֣דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֗י בְּאָסְפְּכֶם֙ אֶת תְּבוּאַ֣ת הָאָ֔רֶץ תָּחֹ֥גּוּ אֶת חַג יְ-הֹוָ֖ה שִׁבְעַ֣ת יָמִ֑ים בַּיּ֤וֹם הָֽרִאשׁוֹן֙ שַׁבָּת֔וֹן וּבַיּ֥וֹם הַשְּׁמִינִ֖י שַׁבָּתֽוֹן: מ וּלְקַחְתֶּ֨ם לָכֶ֜ם בַּיּ֣וֹם הָרִאשׁ֗וֹן פְּרִ֨י עֵ֤ץ הָדָר֙ כַּפֹּ֣ת תְּמָרִ֔ים וַעֲנַ֥ף עֵץ עָבֹ֖ת וְעַרְבֵי נָ֑חַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּ֗ם לִפְנֵ֛י יְ-הֹוָ֥ה אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶ֖ם שִׁבְעַ֥ת יָמִֽים: מא וְחַגֹּתֶ֤ם אֹתוֹ֙ חַ֣ג לַֽי-הֹוָ֔ה שִׁבְעַ֥ת יָמִ֖ים בַּשָּׁנָ֑ה חֻקַּ֤ת עוֹלָם֙ לְדֹרֹ֣תֵיכֶ֔ם בַּחֹ֥דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֖י תָּחֹ֥גּוּ אֹתֽוֹ:

39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of YHWH, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before YHWH your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to YHWH seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations.

This first addendum makes mention only of taking fruits and branches; there is no reference to booths.

Maccabean Sukkot

This comports with how the holiday was celebrated in the time of the Maccabees according to Josephus, who reports that the law required,

[T]hat we should then carry in our hands a branch of myrtle, and willow, and a bough of the palm tree, with the addition of the citron (*Ant* 3:245).

Indeed at the festival of Booths at the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103  to 76 BCE), these branches and fruit were evidently carried and used to rejoice with at the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem:

At a festival which was then celebrated, when he (Alexander Jannaeus the High Priest) stood upon the altar, and was about to sacrifice, the nation rose upon him, and pelted him with citrons, because the law of the Judeans required that at the feast of Booths everyone should have branches of the palm tree and the fruit of the citron tree; which thing we have elsewhere related (*Ant* 13:372).

Thus we learn that at the time of Alexander Jannaeus, the people had gathered to Jerusalem to rejoice before YHWH bearing in their hands branches of leafy trees and the fruit of the citron, according to the laws of the Judeans, apparently as written in Leviticus 23:40.

*Leviticus – Addendum 2*

The text of Leviticus continues however with instructions to live in booths during the holiday in commemoration of the exodus from Egypt (Lev 23:42-43).

מב בַּסֻּכֹּ֥ת תֵּשְׁב֖וּ שִׁבְעַ֣ת יָמִ֑ים כָּל הָֽאֶזְרָח֙ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל יֵשְׁב֖וּ בַּסֻּכֹּֽת: מג לְמַעַן֘ יֵדְע֣וּ דֹרֹֽתֵיכֶם֒ כִּ֣י בַסֻּכּ֗וֹת הוֹשַׁ֙בְתִּי֙ אֶת בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בְּהוֹצִיאִ֥י אוֹתָ֖ם מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרָ֑יִם אֲנִ֖י יְ-הֹוָ֥ה אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶֽם:

42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am YHWH your God.

This is the only place in the Torah that commands living in booths.[2]

Comparing Leviticus with Nehemiah

The passage in Leviticus is similar to what we read in Nehemiah 8, but there are significant discrepancies.

Taking the Fruits and Branches or Making a Sukkah out of Them

Leviticus commands taking leafy trees and branches along with the fruit of the citron and rejoicing with them before YHWH seven days.  This is what was done in the time of the Maccabees. It does not command that booths be made out of the branches that are gathered. The author of Nehemiah 8:14-15 seems to have misinterpreted the original law and made their booths out of the branches.[3]

The Identification of the Four Species

The leafy trees selected in the two passages also differ. Leviticus mandates “branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook.” In Nehemiah they took “branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees (Neh 8:15). Perhaps they are all “leafy trees” and no difference is intended. Nevertheless, Nehemiah does not quote Leviticus:

**Nehemiah 8:14**

**Leviticus 23:40**

**עֲלֵי־זַ֙יִת֙**  
**וַעֲלֵי־עֵ֣ץ** **שֶׁ֔מֶן  
וַעֲלֵ֤י** **הֲדַס֙  
וַעֲלֵ֖י עֵ֣ץ עָבֹ֑ת  
וַעֲלֵ֣י תְמָרִ֔ים  
לַעֲשֹׂ֥ת סֻכֹּ֖ת**

פְּרִ֙י עֵ֤ץ הָדָר֙ **כַּפֹּ֣ת תְּמָרִ֔ים  
  
  
וַעֲנַ֥ף עֵץ־עָבֹ֖ת**  
**וְעַרְבֵי־נָ֑חַל**  
**וּשְׂמַחְתֶּ֗ם לִפְנֵ֛י יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵיכֶ֖ם שִׁבְעַ֥ת יָמִֽים**

Not only do the types of branches differ, but what one is to do with them differs significantly. Although Leviticus commands one to live in booths, there is no command that the branches collected were to be used for building them. They were to be used to rejoice before YHWH as indeed was done under the Maccabees.

Location of the Booths

Perhaps a more important difference between the celebration described in Nehemiah 8 and the laws of the holiday prescribed in the torah is the location of the booths. According to Deuteronomy 16:15, the holiday must be celebrated in the place that “YHWH will choose,” presumably, Jerusalem. We read in Nehemiah 8 (vv. 14-16), however, that the people built the booths in all their towns:

יד וַֽיִּמְצְא֖וּ כָּת֣וּב בַּתּוֹרָ֑ה אֲשֶׁ֨ר צִוָּ֤ה יְ-הֹוָה֙ בְּיַד מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֲשֶׁר֩ יֵשְׁב֨וּ בְנֵֽי יִשְׂרָאֵ֧ל בַּסֻּכּ֛וֹת בֶּחָ֖ג בַּחֹ֥דֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִֽי:

14 And they found it written in the law, which YHWH had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month,

טו וַאֲשֶׁ֣ר יַשְׁמִ֗יעוּ וְיַעֲבִ֨ירוּ ק֥וֹל בְּכָל עָרֵיהֶם֘ וּבִירוּשָׁלִַ֣ם לֵאמֹר֒

15 and that they should publish and proclaim *in all their towns* and in Jerusalem as follows:

צְא֣וּ הָהָ֗ר וְהָבִ֙יאוּ֙ עֲלֵי זַ֙יִת֙ וַעֲלֵי עֵ֣ץ שֶׁ֔מֶן וַעֲלֵ֤י הֲדַס֙ וַעֲלֵ֣י תְמָרִ֔ים וַעֲלֵ֖י עֵ֣ץ עָבֹ֑ת לַעֲשֹׂ֥ת סֻכֹּ֖ת כַּכָּתֽוּב:

“Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”

טז וַיֵּצְא֣וּ הָעָם֘ וַיָּבִיאוּ֒ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ֩ לָהֶ֨ם סֻכּ֜וֹת *אִ֤ישׁ עַל גַּגּוֹ֙ וּבְחַצְרֹ֣תֵיהֶ֔ם* וּבְחַצְר֖וֹת בֵּ֣ית הָאֱלֹהִ֑ים וּבִרְחוֹב֙ שַׁ֣עַר הַמַּ֔יִם וּבִרְח֖וֹב שַׁ֥עַר אֶפְרָֽיִם:

16So the people went out and brought them, and made booths for themselves, *each on the roofs of their houses and in their courtyards*, and in the courtyards of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

Contrary to what is prescribed in Deuteronomy, the people built booths on their rooftops and in the courtyards of their houses *in all their towns*. The author of this passage did not know the command in Deuteronomy that they were supposed to celebrate the holiday only in the “place that God will choose,” i.e., in Jerusalem.

Passages in the Bible that Cite the Torah Do Not Cite the Present Torah

It seems clear that Ezra 3 reflects the version of the holiday prescribed in the book of Numbers and perhaps Deuteronomy as well. There, the holiday is celebrated in Jerusalem, and the offerings for each day of the holiday are offered as prescribed. There is no suggestion of a command to either collect branches or to live in booths.

The description in Nehemiah 8, on the other hand, is entirely different. It reflects a version of the holiday that is prescribed in Leviticus. In both Leviticus and Nehemiah the holiday is called “Booths,” and in both the people are told that they must collect leafy boughs and must live in booths. Contrary to what was practiced by the Maccabees and what is written in Leviticus, the passage in Nehemiah does not describe the people using the collected branches to rejoice before YHWH, but rather it describes them using the branches to build booths and live in them. Moreover, there is no recognition in Nehemiah that the holiday had to be celebrated in Jerusalem. Rather, the people build their booths on the rooftops and courtyards of their own homes in all their towns as well as in Jerusalem.

The Torah was not Fixed by the time of Ezra-Nehemiah

It must be concluded that the customs of the holiday were not set, and that the torah itself was not set, even by the time of writing Ezra-Nehemiah.[4] This is quite startling, since the books of Ezra-Nehemiah is dated very late. Nehemiah 12.22 lists the last four priests of the Persian Empire, up to ‘Darius the Persian’, i.e., Darius III, as Eliashib, Yoiada (Yehoiada), Yoḥanan (Yehoḥanan), and Yaddua. This list of priests in Nehemiah 12.22 is complete to Darius III.[5] Ezra-Nehemiah therefore must have been finalized during the Hellenistic period, i.e., after the conquest of Alexander (330-323 BCE), perhaps in the early Ptolemaic period. Thus by the end of Persian rule, the Torah was still not fixed, and its sources not combined.

A Controversial View

This view is contrary to the view of many scholars today. Erhard Blum suggests that the Pentateuch is a combination of two independent epic works (each composed of smaller units), a priestly (PK or *Priestly Komposition*, which would include the Holiness Collection of Leviticus 23) and a Deuteronomic (DK or *Deuteronomic Komposition*).[6] These were combined under Persian influence because, according to Blum, when the Persian government decided to grant political autonomy to Judah it needed to establish a single “constitution” by which to govern it. Under Ezra and the Persians, the Pentateuch became the official law code for Jews, especially those Jews in Judah.

Joseph Blenkinsopp too asserts that it was Persian imperial policy to insist on “local self-definition inscribed primarily in a codified and standardized corpus of traditional law backed by the central [Persian] government and its regional representatives.”[7] To these scholars it was Persian insistence, with Ezra as their Judean representative, that led to the creation and the canonization of the Pentateuch as we have it today as law.

The discrepancies in Ezra-Nehemiah’s description of the holiday of Sukkot belie these assertions. The author of Nehemiah follows traditions similar to that expressed in Leviticus, but seems to have been unaware of the traditions of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The reverse is true for the author of Ezra 3. The final combination of all these traditions into the Torah as we have it now must have been after these passages in Ezra-Nehemiah were written, sometime in the early Hellenistic period.[8]

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/sukkot-in-ezra-nehemiah-and-the-date-of-the-torah)

Published

May 21, 2015

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Last Updated

September 5, 2021

1. J. H. Choi, *Traditions at Odds: The Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 518; New York: T. & T. Clark Ltd, 2010).
2. For another analysis of the Leviticus addenda in comparison with Nehemiah 8, see the TABS essay, [“The First Sukkah.”](http://thetorah.com/the-first-sukkah/)
3. The interpretation in Nehemiah is not the same as that of the Israelite-Samaritan community, who, to this day, make their Sukkah out of fruit. See Benyamim Tsedaka’s TABS essay, [“A Fruity Sukkah Made from the Four Species.”](http://thetorah.com/fruity-sukkah-made-from-the-four-species/)Also Karaite Jews: <http://www.karaites.org/sukkot.html>.  In Nehemiah, they make their sukkot out of the leafy branches that they gathered and decorate them with the fruit, as Rabbinic Jews do today.
4. So also A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Nehemia* (Kommentar Zum Alten Testament XIX 2; 1987), 187.
5. See: J. C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests After the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004); L. S. Fried, “A Silver Coin of Yohanan Hakkôhen,” *Transeuphratène* 26 (2003) 65-85, Pls. II-V.
6. E. Blum, “Esra, die Mosetora und die Persische Politik,” *Religion und Religionskontakte Im Zeitalter der Achämeniden* (ed.  Reinhard G. Kratz; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002) 231-77; “Die Komposition der Jüdischen Tora und die Persische Politik,” *Studien Zur Komposition Des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; ed.  Idem.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990) 333-60; *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien Zum Alten und Neuen Testament 57; Düsseldorf: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984).
7. J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library; ed.  David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992).
8. See Lisbeth S. Fried, “Did Ezra Create Judaism?” In Shamir Yonah, et. al. eds., *Marbeh Hokma: Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East in Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*(Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns); and*, Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition*. Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament, James Crenshaw, series editor. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press), 2014.