

Chapter Three – Nicodemus

Definitions

NICODEMUS - a Pharisee, a prominent sect of Judaism in biblical times. He was also a high ranking member of the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews. Nicodemus appears three times in the Gospel of John: the first is when he visits Jesus one night to listen to his teachings (John 3:1-21); the second is when he states the law concerning the arrest of Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:45-51); and the last follows the Crucifixion, when he assists Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the corpse of Jesus for burial (John 19:39-42).

FEAST OF TABERNACLES - Sukkot (Hebrew: תּוֹשָׁבִים אוֹ תּוֹכּוֹס, *sukkōt* ; "booths", also known as Succoth, Sukkos, Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles), is a Biblical pilgrimage festival that occurs in autumn on the 15th day of the month of Tishri (late September to late October). The holiday lasts 7 days. Outside the land of Israel, many people continue to sit in the Sukkah on the following day, Shemini Atzeret. In Judaism it is one of the three major holidays known collectively as the *Shalosh Regalim* (three pilgrim festivals), when historically the Jewish populace traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem.



The word Sukkot is derived from the Hebrew word *sukkah*, meaning booth or hut. During this holiday, Jews are instructed to build a temporary structure in which to eat their meals, entertain guests, relax, and even sleep. The *sukkah* is reminiscent of the type of huts in which the ancient Israelites dwelt during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt, and

is intended to reflect God's benevolence in providing for all the Jews' needs in the desert.

Sukkahs with different types of walls and roofing (*s'chach*): woven bamboo mats (far left and right); palm leaves (center). The sukka is a temporary structure used for meals throughout the holiday. Its walls can be made from any material, including wood, canvas, plaster or regular walls of glass or metal, but its roof must be of organic material that is detached from the ground. The decor of the interior of the sukka may range from totally unornamented to lavishly decorated.¹

¹ Sukkot, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sukkot&oldid=240251495> (last visited Sep. 22, 2008).

PHARISEE - comes from the Hebrew "perushim" from parush, meaning "separated". The Pharisees were, depending on the time, a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought among Jews that flourished during the Second Temple Era (536 BC–70 AD). After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Pharisaic sect was re-established as Rabbinic Judaism — which ultimately produced normative, traditional Judaism, the basis for all contemporary forms of Judaism and even the Karaites use the Rabbinic canon of the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh.

SANHEDRIN - (Hebrew: סנהדרין; Greek: συνέδριον, *synedrion*, "sitting together," hence "assembly" or "council") was an assembly of twenty-three judges appointed in every city in the Land of Israel. The Great Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of ancient Israel. In total there were 71 members. The Great Sanhedrin was made up of a Chief/Prince/Leader called Nasi (at some times this position may have been held by the Cohen Gadol or the High Priest), a vice chief justice (Av Beit Din), and sixty-nine general members. In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and Shabbat.