

Welcome students to the course on World Religions: Concepts and Practices - Part One.

The title of the unit is Judaism. The name of the module is the significance of important Festivals Part 2. In this unit, we will be looking at

Sukkot, Shavuot and Hanukkah as three important Jewish festivals. The learning outcomes. At the end of this module you will be able to acquaint yourself with important Jewish festivals. Explore the significance of Jewish festivals, and understand them in their context. Understand and appreciate festive and ritualistic practices and open one's horizons to foreign cultures and develop tolerance and respect for various religions and promote religious harmony. Sukkot is a weeklong Jewish holiday that comes five days after Yom Kippur.

God celebrates the gathering of the harvest and commemorates the miraculous protection God provided for the children of Israel when they left Egypt. The Jews celebrate Sukkot by dwelling in a foliage-covered booth (known as a sukkah) and by taking the "Four Kinds" (arba minim), four special species of vegetation.

The Jews refers to Sukkot by two names, the festival of Ingathering or Harvest Festival, and Festival of Booths, each expressing a reason for the holiday.

This is a sukkah or a tent that Jews would build on this festival.

The name Festival of Booths or tents commemorates the temporary dwellings God made to shelter our ancestors on their way out of Egypt. Some say this refers to the miraculous clouds of glory that shielded us from the desert sun, while others say it refers to the tents in which they dwelled for their 40 year journey through the Sinai

Desert. For seven days and nights the Jews eat all their meals in the sukkah otherwise regarded as home, located under the open Sky. The Sukkah is made up of at least three walls and a roof of unprocessed natural vegetation, typically bamboo pine bows or palm branches. The goal is to spend as much time as possible in the sukkah at the very minimum, eating all meals in the sukkah. The practice is not to eat or drink anything outside the sukkah. Some people even sleep in the sukkah.

Taking the four kinds, another such observance is the taking

of the four kinds. Another Sukkot observance is the taking of the

Four Kinds: an etrog (citron), a lulav (palm frond),

three hadassim (myrtle twigs) and two aravot (willow twigs).

On each day of the festival except Shabbat, the Jews take

the four kinds, recite a blessing over them, bring them

together, and wave them in all six directions, right, left,

forward, upward, down, and

backward. The four kinds represent the various

personalities that comprise the Community of Israel,

whose intrinsic unity they emphasize on Sukkot.

Sukkot in the Holy Temple.

In the days of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, there was a

special regiment of sacrifices that were to be brought on the

altar on the first day, no less than thirteen Bulls, two rams and fourteen

lambs were to be sacrificed every day. The number of the

Bulls were depleted by one.

All in all, seventy bulls were brought corresponding to the seventy

nations of the world.

Along with Passover and Shavuot, Sukkot is one of the three

annual pilgrimages when every male you was to be born in

Jerusalem. Every seven years on Sukkot, the King would read

aloud from the Torah to the entire nation. Men, women and children. This special gathering was known as Hekhel.

On Sukkot God determines how much rain will fall that winter.

The primary rainy season in Israel. Thus, while every sacrifice in the temple included wine libations poured over the altar on Sukkot, water was also poured over the altar in a special ceremony. This ritual engendered such joy that it was celebrated with music, dancing and singing all night long.

Let us look at the next Jewish festival that is Shavuot.

The word Shavuot (or Shavuos) means weeks. It celebrates the completion of the seven weeks counting period between Passover and Shavuot . The Torah was given by God to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai, on Shavuot more than 3300 years ago.

Every year on the holiday of Shavuot, the Jews renew our acceptance of God's gift and God really gives them the Torah.

The giving of the Torah was a far-reaching spiritual event, one that touched the essence of the Jewish soul for all times.

Our sages have compared it to a wedding between God and the Jewish people. Shavuot also means oaths for on those days God's eternal devotion to us, and they in turn pledged everlasting loyalty to him.

In ancient times two wheat loaves would be offered in the Holy Temple on Shavuot. It was also at this time that people would begin to bring Bikkurim their first choice fruits to thank God for Israel's bounty.

How is Shavuot celebrated? Women and girls light holiday candles to usher in the holiday on both the first and the second evenings of the holiday. All men, women and children should go to the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot to hear the readings of the 10 Commandments.

As on other Holidays, special meals are eaten and no work may be performed. It is customary to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Menus range from traditional cheese, casseroles and more. On the second day of Shavuot, the Yizkor memorial service is recited.

Some have the custom to decorate their homes and synagogues with Flowers and sweet smelling plants in advance of Shavuot.

Let us look at the next Jewish festival that is Hanukkah. What is Hanukkah? Hanukkah is the Jewish eight day winter time Festival of Lights celebrated with the nightly menorah Lighting with Special prayers and fried foods. The Hebrew word for Hanukkah means dedication and is named because it celebrates

the rededication of the Holy Temple.

In the 2nd century BCE, the Holy Land was ruled by the Syrian Greeks who tried to force the people of Israel to accept Greek culture and beliefs instead of Jewish observance and belief in God. Against all odds, a small band of faithful but poorly armed Jews led by Judah the Maccabee defeated one of the mightiest armies on Earth, drove the Greeks from the land, reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the service of God.

When they sought to light the temple's menorah, they found only a single cruse of oil or olive oil that had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, they lit the menorah and the one day supply of oil lasted for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity. The picture on the right shows us the menorah to commemorate and publicize these miracles. The Sages instituted the Festival of Hanukkah. At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah lighting. The Menorah holds 9 flames, one of which is the shamash i.e. attendant, which is used to kindle the other eight lights. On the first night, the Jews light just one flame. On the second night, an additional flame is

lit. By the 8th night of Hanukkah, all eight lights are kindled. Special blessings are recited. Often a traditional melody before the menorah is lit, and traditional songs are sung afterward. Special Blessings are recited often to a traditional melody before the menorah is lit, and traditional songs are sung afterward. A menorah is lit in every household or even by each individual within the household and placed in a doorway or window. The Menorah is also lit in synagogues and other public places. In recent years, thousands of jumbo menorahs have cropped up in front of City Halls and legislative.

Buildings and in malls and parks all over the world.

To the right you have an example of this.

These are my references.

Thank you.