

Tabernacling Among Us *Spiritual Renewal During the* **Upcomign Fall Feast Season**

with James Whitman and Rosalind Whitman Mishra

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James Whitman: Haverim! Shalom, Shalom. James Whitman here, and it is my privilege to welcome you to this September 2022 audio recording. It's meant to be a conversation, one that will edify you, encourage you, and really engage you in a subject that I'm passionate about. I want to introduce my conversation partner. This is our oldest daughter, Rosalind Mishra Whitman, and she's going to introduce our subject.

Rosalind Whitman: Hello, Haverim. Hello, dad. It's so wonderful to be here with all of you because we feel that you're really here with us in this conversation, and it's just so exciting to be discussing, like you said, a subject that is near and dear to your heart, and that was very evident even in our family, growing up. The fall feast cycle. Really, the biblical feast cycle in general, but here we are in September coming up on the fall feast specifically.

We are thrilled to be diving into that today and just talking a little bit about the rhythm, why it's important, why we still honor some of these things, not out of obligation, but really out of opportunity, because it's an invitation from the holy one, the creator of all things, for us to enter more intentionally into that relationship with Him and with others, and with ourself. Excited to be here today.

James: At the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, whether you have been with us for 20 years or more, whether you have just signed up to receive our weekly devotionals or our monthly messages this applies to all of us—the Bible, this story of God, this revelation of the Holy is chock-a-block full of spiritual invitations and opportunities. We want to be really careful with that language because often in Jewish roots conversations, it moves into obligation. If not stated directly, it's implied.

To be Haverim is to be engaged in ministry. You realize there's no hierarchy. At the same time, a large group of our constituents are missionaries, they're pastors, they're serving in high-level capacities, elders, they're Bible teachers, and this is one thing JC studies specializes in. We all know that there's a fine line between laying burdens on people or giving them opportunities to walk deeper into blessing. On this subject of the fall feast, we're talking blessing, aren't we?

Rosalind: Yes, yes, we are indeed. This was a time growing up that was met with a lot of anticipation for the Feast of Tabernacles in particular, which we'll get to. I know we're going to touch on all the points that lead up to that, but I just remember it being a time of a lot of celebration and, of course, dancing and worship, and song, and word, and a real community event. I love how the feast connects us to a greater community.

It's not just about this individual journey and relationship with me and Jesus, but it's also how to activate an entire community around the feast and around the rhythm of the story of God, and our place in it as a people, because of course that's what we're grafted into as Gentiles, into these greater people of God, the Israelite, and so we get their whole story becomes our story and history as well. Tell us a little bit more about why this is important for the everyday follower of Jesus who's just doing their best, day in and day out.

James: I'm captivated, Rosalind, by the whole idea of these three-Pilgrim feasts. You have Passover (Pesach) In the spring. 50 days later, you have Pentecost (Shavuot). Then about six months later, the cycle us replayed with some fresh dynamics, which we're going to hone in on. It centers around the Pilgrim feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot. Now, I've always been captivated. Once my template of Old Testament law versus new Testament grace was lifted, and I realized that God's a God of grace in both Testaments. And of course, with grace comes demands, laws.

It really captivated me that this whole feast thing was in there. [chuckles] What is this all about? As we prepare, and you mentioned to people, this is one of the hardest things, and I'm addressing you Haverim out there because I hear this from you regularly. Is there a congregation in my area that does these kinds of things? I know many of you are in weekly, maybe Torah studies. I'm sorry for those of you don't have a community expression like we do in Dayton, where there is a messianic Christian congregation that values and celebrates things like the feasts.

Stay tuned, because we're going to tell you how you can tap into that coming up in October. I'm sensitive to the fact that that's not there for you, and that's why we have the Haverim community online so we at least have a place we can touch base and we can feel these rhythms together. To your question, why, Rosalind, I was musing and I really believe the spirit of Jesus brought something to my mind and my heart in power. When He is with the woman at the well in John 4. Now, we are familiar with the language and that we are counseled to ask, knock, seek.

We talk a lot about our seeking God, but hearing this conversation, Jesus flips the script and He says to a seeker, "Do you know the Father is seeking?" I'm reminded that everything to do with the Father is a capital letter, and we're the little letter, we're the little s seekers. He's the capital S Seeker, and what is He seeking? Worshipers. Those that will receive his message, who will receive Him, who want to know Him, in humility with repentance, receive His presence, through the sacrifice and the life again of Jesus. Receive the Master with us, within us, and to walk out that truth.

He's looking for followers., He's looking for family. He's looking for coworkers. That really struck me. Here's why. He knows what we're up against. Rosalind, wouldn't you agree with this, there is nothing in the world outside of Christian people gathered that are going to encourage and equip you to worship the Father and spirit in truth.

Rosalind: We're in a world and culture that's anti-that at pretty much every level.

James: Hostile to grace. Brothers and sisters, that's our life. We're being buffeted. We're being beaten down. We're being tempted and challenged at every level. I see, Rosalind, in the feast, the festivals, I see a foretaste of incarnation. I see the Father saying, "Look at I am with you and I know what you're up against. Trust me, walk with me." These festivals become a time of spiritual seeking and intensity of course correction. I think this really comes to life in the fall feast.

Rosalind: Yes. I love that. I love the idea of course correction. That was something that really, the concept of repentance that had this image of you teaching us and guiding us as children, as kids, about the whole concept of repentance and it being a turning from something, and turning to something else. It's not just the turning from. A lot of times we stop there like, "Okay, well, I'm never going to do that again," [chuckles] but what is it that we're going to replace it with? What is it that we're going to turn to? What is it that's going to capture our attention instead of the sin or instead of missing the marked piece?

That's that course correction that you're saying, and of course, with the Day of Atonement and some of these, you're going to talk through the calendar of what that looks like in the days to come. They're just opportunity after opportunity to do that turning from and the connection of the turning to piece, and that course correction, like you're saying, it's a real-- You even had this image where we'd be facing one way and then, oof, we'd get a little, maybe a tap, and then we'd do the 180, and we'd be suddenly jumped around and now we're going the other direction. That's what the grace of the Father does. It takes us up from where we are standing and puts us on another path, a better path, a path of blessing and abundance, and grace.

James: Amazing. There's the little f father's lesson pointing to the capital F Father's lesson, because as a father, my wife and I included, we wanted so much more for you than you could imagine. How much more our Father in Heaven?

Rosalind: Right.

James: This turning to is actually the secret sauce in repentance. Oh, if only we could get this, what the Father has prepared for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. When we hear that language, we always think exclusively of the next facet of life—entering into the fullness of eternal life. But the Father is saying, "Let's do this here and now."

Rosalind: Right. We don't have to wait.

James: The things no eye has seen, no ear has heard. You can know more about that today, not in its coming fullness but as a foretaste.

Rosalind: Oh. That's exciting.

James: Haverim, we want to be super practical because God is super practical. We want to talk a little bit about the fall feast cycle and where we could possibly go together as a community.

Rosalind: Yes, so why don't you share a little rundown because I'm glad you didn't quiz me earlier. I think I get the three main pilgrimage feasts, but the time distance in between them and how the flow of all that, and of course, we're not legalistic here, so you're off a day or two, there's not going to be any lightning bolts that strike you down. Why don't you give us a roadmap of what the next month and a half looks like when it comes to the particularities of the fall feast that we're entering into?

James: Great. Yes, so guys get a calendar out, or just listen and think through this rhythm. Remember when we've been saying fall feasts, plural. You start with the build Pilgrim feast, Tabernacles. That's the goal. That's what we're aiming, the telos, the end. Then our good Father does something very interesting. He gives us means to that end which adds a plural to the idea of the big festival. It is known as The Feast because we're going to back in time and the feast of Tabernacles is heralded by with this mysterious day of blowing, called the feast of trumpets.

You've probably heard of it as Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year. There's much here to unpack. I'm going to do a fall feast workshop that you can come and you can attend on your own timeline, it'll be online. Hope you can attend live, but if you can't, you can always rewatch it later. We'll go into a little more detail, but the fall feast cycle begins with this day of blowing, and that's September 26th. Aren't you guys glad you're getting this early in September and you can get your schedule ready to tune into this.

By the way, that's where I recommend you start. If you're really new and you're going, "I'm just a little lost here." We're going to send an article out with our newsletter. It's a classic written by Dwight Pryor called *God's Got Rhythm*, and he gives a fall feast overview, like the score of a symphony. I love that. All we're asking is tune into it and we want to help give you ways to do that together in community. If you do, God will meet you which results in spiritual renewal.. Take that to heart. Do you want to worship in spirit and truth? Have mercy, give me a restart Lord.

Doesn't everybody want to start again? The Jewish community, through the years, was so wise. On this Day of Trumpets, they said, "This is going to be our spiritual new year." The Bible has several times to begin again, again.

Rosalind: I love that. I'm all about the new year resolutions, and the let's wipe slate clean and start afresh. The fact that there's multiple points in the calendar year that God gives us opportunities for that, let alone, of course, His mercies are new every morning. Every day we get to have that fresh start as well in the kingdom. I love that there's some of these really big points throughout the year that we can grab hold of and make them our own.

James: That is energy from the Spirit. It's wonderful to hear you reflect. September 26th is the Day of Trumpets. Now it inaugurates a 10-day countdown to the Day of Atonement. It's a different dynamic within the feast cycle. The Day of Atonement—which is on October 5th, are you with me? Trumpets, September 26th, 10-day countdown to the sobering Day of Atonement on October 5th. After the Day of Atonement, there's a five-day countdown or build-up while you prepare your little temporary dwelling, booth, and get ready to celebrate, with unbridled joy, a seven-day Feast of Tabernacles that begins on October 10th.

There's a mysterious eighth and final day of the feast. He adds a day as if to say, "I'm liking this so much. I'm going to add another day."

Rosalind: Encore.

James: Yes, and the Jewish community, again, in wisdom through the ages, picked up on this and said, "Oh, we are loving it like he loves it, so we're going to start the Torah Cycle all over on Simchat Torah, which is on the next day after the last and greatest day of the feast." One more time, we have September 26th, the blowing of the trumpet or the shofar. You have 10 high holy days or Days of Awe that culminate in the Day of Atonement. Then you have five days preparation for the Feast of Tabernacle, to which is a seventh day and eighth-day celebration. Then the whole Bible reading schedule resets.

Rosalind: Quick question here. This is a little off-script, but it popped into my mind when you were walking through those, because I think this is a question that I get sometimes from people who encounter this new rhythm-- well, not new. Ancient rhythm that some people are just discovering for the first time. What does the Day of Atonement look like for those of us who are under the blood of Jesus? What's that dynamic? What does it look like in the New Covenant?

James: Okay. I'm going to give you just a taster, because I want those of you who are listening to us. I want you to come into the Haverim community online, where we're going to do this entire cycle together. We'll have the blowing of the shofar. Come and have the priestly blessing said over you every day in Hebrew and in English. We're going to carefully count those 10 days with moments of reflection and repentance, all aiming at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Rosalind, what a great question. Let's just put these two things together. The Day of Atonement, the most sobering day in God's biblical calendar, followed by the Feast of Tabernacles, the most high and celebratory multi-day event. If we just put those things together, we get a feeling for what our Father's is saying directly to your point for Christians. I

think the 10 Days of Awe are a fresh opportunity to reflect, repent, and recalibrate on what the blood of Jesus has done, is doing and will do in our lives.

Remember, when we talk blood or death of Jesus, we're also talking resurrection. Crucifixion and resurrection are two sides of one coin. We humble ourselves because of what God has done and what it cost in order to be free of the things that encumber us, the things that are causing us trouble, and traumatizing us. When we get to the place the Day of Atonement, we can intercede for others. Now, watch this, this is a mystery. The Day of Atonement, biblically speaking, right there in the text, is to pray for the people of God. It's not an individual day.

If you look at this cycle, you'll realize you are ready for the Day of Atonement. You're not getting ready for it. You're ready to participate in it. Let me say this again, folks, this is important. You're not spending 10 days trying to get ready for some kind of judgment on the Day of Atonement. When you hear that shofar sound, you enter into judgment and you walk with God daily and let Him do His good work in us you in now.

Question, Wouldn't you rather be judged now than later?

Rosalind: Yes.

James: Wouldn't you rather be forgiven now than later?

Rosalind: Yes.

James: Again, we're so stuck in Christian theology, in our under-informed thinking of now and then, that we throw things in the then category of future that God wants in the category of now. The Day of Atonement is when we fast and we pray—I would say right in line with the Bible—for the historic people of God, our Jewish brothers and sisters, and we pray for the church. That God has mercy on the church, universal. Many lessons to grasp but that one I think is at the top of the list.

Rosalind: Yes, that was really helpful. Thank you, so much freedom. I'm just hearing freedom over and over again. I, personally, as far as grasping a hold of the feast cycle for myself and for my new family and household, the thing I love about it is that it often feels like as Christians, we don't have a guidebook, [chuckles] we don't have clear maybe points throughout the year, other than Easter and Christmas. There are liturgical expressions that follow the church calendar was established later, after Jesus.

I love getting to go back into our roots really, and that's what Hebrew roots are all about. Our Hebraic roots is getting to reconnect with some of those and realize that, "Oh, no, there's a gift in the way that God wired creation," literally from the created order, because of course, Sabbath is one of the first feast that's ordained. It's this weekly idea of rest and celebration, and calibration, and relationship. It's right there from the beginning, and again, like you said, in grace there's opportunity. This is not a have-to, but it's for sure a get-to, and why wouldn't you want to?

Once you get your mind wrapped around some of these things—of course, it's a little confusing at first and there's things to work through based on what we've been taught in the past, and unpacking some of that. Why wouldn't you want to enter into this invitation from our creator, our savior, our king, to more? To more blessing, to more abundance, to more forgiveness, to more of experiencing Him now, like you said, and not waiting until someday at the end of all things where we will get to see in fullness. We get to taste that and experience that now. That's freedom and that's really exciting.

As we continue on in this conversation, we are thinking through ways that we get to participate in the feast cycle. You mentioned some of them before with the Haverim community online, and some of the ways that we're going to walk through that and have some points that we get to gather together. Do you want to explain in any more detail about what the opportunities for Haverim to participate this year will be as one large community?

James: I like your words, opportunity, and I like that word, grace. Remember, brothers and sisters, we insert that into the Hebrew language. It's the word hesed, and it means the loving-kindness, the covenant loyalty, the steadfast love

of God. It's not a substance that is somehow extracted from Him. It comes with His presence. This is who He is at His holy, holy, holy core. You pointed out one of the disconnects for us as followers of Jesus is that we don't understand royal priesthood language, which inserts us right back into these ancient paths which Jewish roots help us tap into it.

We must always remember too, that we're now doing it in Jesus and by the work of His Spirit. Rosalind, I've really been thinking a lot lately about what I call spiritual minimalism. In my pastoral career, I've worked with so many people and faith gets so complex for them. Let's face it, we have 66 books that span thousands of years in multiple cultures and languages. The beauty of it is of course, it all tells one unified story, That story is told and highlighted by the Feasts of Israel.

He's the Creator, He's the God of the Exodus. He's the covenant maker. He sends His son to inaugurate a new Exodus. In him, He leads us into the first fruits of a new creation that is going to expand into the life eternal or the life everlasting. Even amidst all the confusion of living, there's a clear message from God. These feasts help us to understand, and that's what we want to emphasize.

Look at one thing, and I want to say this by way of being apologetic, but not really. One of the things that's hard about JC studies, is we offer so much stuff. It can be confusing and a little overwhelming. We have a wealth of Bible teaching that is connecting the Testaments for people. We are helping to articulate and anchor biblical faith for such a time as this. We're not only called to proclaim our faith, we're called to preserve it. We're handing our faith down to the next generation, and this is the foundation that everything is built on.

Rosalind, to make it spiritually minimalist, we've got a page called JCstudies.com/sukkot. Click on that link and it will give you the overview. It'll give you the link to click into the Haverim community online, which is our social network. It's completely private and secure. It's hosted by Mighty Networks, but we like this because this is the closest we can get to being together, though apart.

In Mighty Network, we're going to have the schedule for you to tune in to so you can feel that on September 26th, you're going to be able to jump into that community, hear the sounding of the shofar. Like I said, the priestly blessing will be there. We'll have simple reflections from the scriptures centered around the book of Hebrews that you're going to have one each day. But please remember opportunity, not obligation. Don't feel like, "Oh my, another thing in my life, I can't handle that." Please don't do that.

Rosalind: Yes. There's freedom.

James: There's freedom. This is an opportunity. The app makes it real easy for you to do, because you don't have to go through browsers and stuff. You just tap on the app, you're in, you're right in that area and it gives you a chance to participate. Maybe you have a thought, maybe you're being stirred. Maybe you want to open up and say, "Today, I'm giving up, I'm turning from." I'll be telling you about some of the things in the community that I'm turning from for those 10 days. It's turning from and turning towards. Some of it can be things that are neutral or things that are not even harmful, but you're just setting them aside because you want to be a worshiper. In fresh new ways, you want to listen to the One who's Seeking you. Who wants you to worship Him in Spirit and truth.

Again, I will have a fall feast workshop that you can watch that will go in detail and get you ready for these things. You'll have 10 days of exercises that you can participate in. We will pray together on Yom Kippur. Another beautiful thing about being virtual, although it's no substitute for being actual, is that haverim from all over the world can weigh take part. Whatever time is right for them, they can offer up their prayers on the Day of Atonement, or to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, or to pray for God to have mercy on his compromised church. We're going to pray that God will lift up true believers. We're going to pray for the world that she will know the greatness of their Creator and Covenant maker.

Then we've got some special things for Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, which are going to help you celebrate. I'm not going to go into detail now, we're going to wrap this up. Remember, jcstudies.com/sukkot will give you the

overview. Then we'll have something for the last and greatest day of the feast, and we will have something for the restart of the Torah Cycle.

Now, one thing more, Rosalind. Can I do one more thing?

Rosalind: Okay, great!

James: I want to tell you guys I'm so excited. Our good friend, Lois Tverberg is joining us here in Dayton for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Rosalind: Nice.

James: You're going to be able to live stream the Church of the Messiah event, as well as the lectures from Lois. Don't miss any of this again, go to jcstudies.com/sukkot.

Rosalind: Well, that all sounds amazing. [chuckles] I can't wait to participate. It's really helpful to have some of these rhythms that we can even engage with together. I love the idea of an online community. I will be there, so I hope to see you haverim there and hear some of your reflections as we go through this together, because we are God's people and that's the neat thing about a shared rhythm like this, is we all get to go through it together. It's a similar path that we're on. It's a celebratory season and I'm looking forward to it.

James: Rosalind, it's so nice to have you here today. Thank you for your time. I'm looking forward to more of these conversations.

Rosalind: Me too.

James: You shared with me a poem that I asked you to share with Haverim in closing, because it resonates with the text from Hebrews that I want to offer up as the official end of this conversation.

Haverim, thank you very much for being with us. Rosalind is going to read that poem, I'm going to read the text and we all will then speak Hebrew and say, Amen.

Rosalind: Amen. Yes, just a little context. This is a poem from Mary Oliver called *The Summer Day*. It's the second half of it and it struck me, I've been using it as part of my meditations in this season as we get closer to the Day of Atonement. I've experienced a lot of grief and loss, and been processing that, and just thinking about end of life realities, I think that that's a part of our journey here, is to consider these things. The question on my mind has really been one of; what's this all about? What's the purpose? What's the point? I want to read this to you and then I'll follow up, and then, like you said, we'll close with Hebrews.

"I don't know exactly what a prayer is. I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass, how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields, which is what I have been doing all day. Tell me, what else should I have done? Doesn't everything die at last and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

I love that. What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? She's, of course, talking about just paying attention to creation and being outdoors. I think that's a great thing to do in this time of year. I think the gift in Jesus that I keep coming back to, is that we get to ask that question in the first place that He has an answer for it, and that, like we mentioned before, we get to ask it now and not wait till the end of our life to say, "What did I do with my life?"

It's these times of periodic intentional reflection where we get to experience judgment now, we get to experience forgiveness and grace, and mercy now, and we get to have the door open to us of what a full purpose looks like when we're living with king Jesus in the kingdom and being his co-labor to see heaven here on earth right now, right here, today. I love that. There are these opportunities to evaluate the path that we're on and to make these course corrections as we go, rather than waiting till someday in the future. Thank you for letting me share that.

James: Me too. Thank you. Haverim, the writer of Hebrews has the last word here in chapter 10 starting with verse 21. "We have a high priest who is over God's house. Let us therefore come to worship with a true heart and complete assurance of faith, with our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold on tightly to our confession of hope without being diverted. The one who announced the message to us is trustworthy. Let us as well stir up one another's minds to energetic effort in love and good works."

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