

Oktoberfest ... Thou Shalt Not ...

by Mike Harris

Almost all agricultural entities since the beginning of time had some harvesting holiday. Harvesting the crops was a communal endeavor. The whole community turned out to help. When the first settlers in the New World harvested their first crops it was marked with much thanks and many prayers. The Pennsylvania Dutch, for example, made working less arduous by adding festivities to the chore of harvesting, so October festival was shortened to October Fest. This explanation was obtained from a Pennsylvania Dutch elder. In time the holiday came to be known as 'OKTOBERFEST.'

In the 'OLD TESTAMENT' there are lots of rules. The ten commandments for example, and holidays specific to certain times of the year. Harvest time being a specific time of the year also has a holiday. This holiday is called 'SUKKOT'. The name comes from the name for temporary shelters set up in the fields during harvest time. It lasts seven days and during these days the fields are harvested. Harvesting was a communal undertaking, the whole community turned to help. Just as most rules in the 'OLD TESTAMENT' start with a negative admonition "THOU SHALT NOT: KILL, HAVE OTHER GODS BEFORE ME," etc., so 'SUKKOT' is the same. The rule "THOU SHALT NOT HARVEST THE CORNERS OF YOUR FIELDS" is traditional. These are to be left for the poor and needy. It seems every society since the beginning of time always had needy people as a part of their population. And In this rule there is a concept that charity has to be anonymous, so that no one is demeaned by their condition of need. So let's celebrate, give thanks for the bounty and try to remember in our joy anonymously those less fortunate. Thank you.