

Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Terumah*

תרומה

“Heave Offering”

Speak to the Israelites and have them bring Me an offering¹. Take My offering from everyone whose heart impels him to give

Daber el-beney Yisra'el veyikchu-li **trumah me'et kol-ish
asher yidvenu libo tikchu et-trumati**

Scripture for study:

Shemot (Exodus) 25:1 – 27:19

In this week's Torah portion we are given an incredible gift. Let us return for a moment to the original encounter between the children of Israel and their Deliverer and Redeemer at Mount Sinai.

“And YHWH said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto YHWH. And YHWH said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day YHWH will come down in the sight of all the people unto Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.” (Exodus 19:9-13)

“And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with Elohim; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.” (Exodus 19:17)

“And YHWH said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto YHWH to gaze, and many of them perish.” (Exodus 19:21)

“And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not Elohim speak with us, lest we die. A Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for Elohim is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.” (Exodus 20:18-20)

While still in bondage in Egypt, YHWH promised to bring the children of Israel unto Himself.² But once at the base of the holy mountain, the Redeemer quickly established a boundary between Himself and the children of Israel, a boundary that the children of Israel quickly accepted once they witnessed the phenomenally fearful display of the Holy One’s presence upon the mountain. It was Moses alone who ascended into the canopy of cloud and smoke that concealed the glory of the Holy One from the sight of the people. Moses would later remind the children of Israel of this fact in a prohibition against trying to make an image of the Holy One.

“And YHWH spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice... Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that YHWH spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth.” (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15-17)

While the children of Israel kept their distance from the awesome presence of their Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior, Moses drew near at the invitation of YHWH.

“And YHWH came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and YHWH called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.” (Exodus 19:20)

“And YHWH spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” (Exodus 33:11)

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face.” (Deuteronomy 34:10)

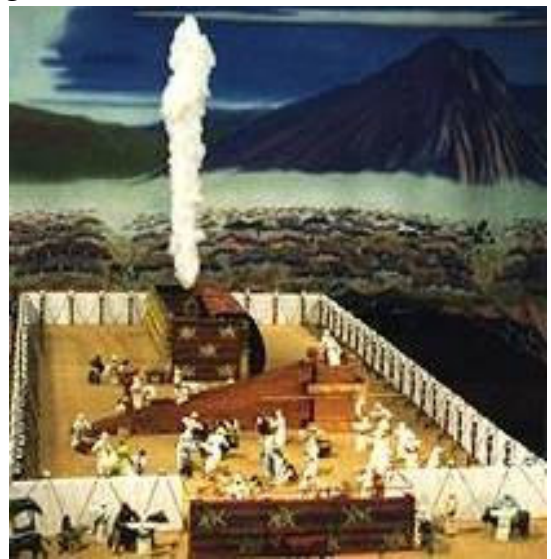
“And he (YHWH) said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I YHWH will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of YHWH shall he behold.” (Numbers 12:6-8)

What we receive in our Torah portion today is a glimpse into these most intimate moments when Moses stood alone and face to face with YHWH. It was at this time that Moses received revelation and saw the divine pattern for the *Mishkan*³ and all its furnishings. We are fortunate to be able to read of these events and to receive this revelation that took place amongst the

smoke and fire in the presence of the Holy One. We should never take reading these words lightly, but should approach this revelation with the same sense of fear and awe that the children of Israel expressed when they approached the mountain covered with the fearsome radiance of YHWH's holiness. In some manner we should tremble even more than this first generation, for they stood at a distance, whereas, through the Torah, we are able to pierce the cloud and smoke and experience what Moses heard and saw!

I fear that in many ways we have lost the fear of Elohim, reading and searching the Scriptures as coldly and objectively as a homicide detective goes over evidence (I do not mean to imply anything negative about homicide detectives). As the children of Israel, our hearts should race and our souls delight in reading, searching, and studying the Scriptures. It is here that we begin to get our first look at the many marvelous attributes of our Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, Savior and Messiah. In the revelation of Sinai the invisible Elohim begins to become visible to us. This is especially true of this particular portion which contains the revelation of the *Mishkan*. How incredible it should seem to us that the very same Elohim that set boundaries for the children of Israel around His mountain now calls them to make Him a sanctuary so that that He might dwell in the midst of them.

YHWH's desire for the children of Israel to build Him a sanctuary is indeed an awesome revelation, but it should not take anyone by surprise. From the very first letter of the Torah YHWH revealed His intent to build a habitation among His creation. The first letter of the Torah as it appears on a Torah Scroll is an enlarged letter Bet. Unlike the English alphabet, Hebrew does not use upper and lower case letters; all of its letters are fairly uniform in size. On occasion, however, the Torah enlarges or diminishes a letter in order to draw attention to it and to teach a lesson. This is the case with the very first letter of the Torah, which as has already been said, is an enlarged letter Bet. It may be difficult for some Western thinking people to imagine that one letter could reveal something about YHWH. But we must remember that in ancient Hebrew each letter is a picture, an ideograph; and a picture is worth a thousand words. The ancient Hebrew ideograph of Bet is a picture of a tent or house. We may here recall that the Hebrew word for "house" is *bayet*. The Torah begins with the word *bereshit*, which means "in the beginning." The enlarged Bet tells us that from the very beginning, YHWH ELOHIM was intending to build a house or habitation for Himself to dwell in. We may also recall here that in Hebraic thinking, when a man was going to build a house, it was not with brick and mortar, but with a bride. Given that we have just witnessed a phenomenal wedding on Mount Sinai where YHWH enters into a marriage covenant with the children of Israel, we should all the more expect that YHWH would now command a home for His bride.



There is, not surprisingly, great debate about the location of this particular portion. Just as we witnessed with the Torah portion "Jethro," there are occasions when the Torah is not in

chronological order. A very obvious example of this may be seen in the report of the setting up of the Tabernacle.

“On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.” (Exodus 40:2)

“And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.” (Exodus 40:17)

“And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof...That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered offered.” (Numbers 7:1-2)

The entire book of Leviticus with its many stories as well as the census of the children of Israel appear between the first two verses and the last two verses. Clearly these stories are not all in chronological order. Many of the sages say that this is the case with our current Torah portion. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and others would contend that the revelation concerning the *Mishkan* was not given until after the incident with the golden calf.⁴ The Midrash Rabbah romantically connects this story to the Song of Songs:

“Another explanation of THAT THEY MAY TAKE FOR ME AN OFFERING. It is written, I sleep, but my heart waketh (Song of Songs 5:2). The community of Israel said: ‘I have given up hope of the millennium, but God is awake, as it says, But God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever (Psalm 73:26).’ ‘I sleep’ when it comes to the fulfillment of commands, but the merit of my fathers stands me in good stead, and ‘My heart waketh.’ ‘I am asleep’ – because of the golden calf incident, ‘But my heart waketh’ when the Lord knocks thereat. Hence: THAT THEY TAKE FOR ME AN OFFERING. Open to me, my sister, my love (Song of Songs loc. Cit.). Until when shall I walk about homeless? – For my head is filled with dew (ib.). Therefore, make me a sanctuary, so that I be not obliged to be in the street.”⁵

Midrash Tanhuma, Rashi, and R. Bahya all likewise agree that this portion chronologically belongs after the incident of the golden calf.

“‘Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.’ When was this chapter concerning the Tabernacle stated? On the Day of Atonement itself, though it was placed before the story of the golden calf. Said R. Judah Ben R. Shalom: There is no chronological sequence in Scriptures, as it is stated (Proverbs 5:6) ‘Her ways wander, but she knoweth it not.’ The paths of the Torah and its chapters are displaced. Whence that it was on the Day of Atonement that Moses was commanded: ‘Let them make me a sanctuary,’ because Moses went up to Mount Sinai on the sixth of Sivan, staying there for forty days and forty nights, and then for another forty days and yet another, which makes one hundred and twenty. You will find that on the Day of Atonement their sin was expiated, and on the same day the Holy One, blessed be He, said unto him: ‘Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them,’ so that all the nations should know that the deed of the golden calf had been expiated by them. It is therefore called ‘The Tabernacle of the Testimony,’ a

testimony to all the inhabitants of the world that the Holy One, blessed be He, let the gold of the Tabernacle atone for the gold wherewith the calf was made.”⁶

“There is no chronological order in the Torah; the story of the golden calf took place many days before the command to make the Tabernacle, since the tablets of stone were broken on the seventeenth of Tammuz. On the Day of Atonement the Holy One, blessed be He, was reconciled with the Israelites, and on the morrow they began their voluntary offerings for the Tabernacle which was erected on the first of Nissan.”⁷

“Zedah LaDerech notes that what God is seeking is not entering into the sanctuary but into their hearts. The use of the plural noun ‘them’ instead of the singular ‘in it’ (referring to the sanctuary) is meant to teach that the divine presence does not rest in the sanctuary on account of the sanctuary, but on account of Israel, for they constitute the Temple of God.”⁸

“The Torah, whose ways are pleasant, deliberately proposed the making of the Tabernacle representing atonement to the narration of the iniquity itself. For such is the way of the Holy One, blessed be He, to have the antidote ready before the disease. Our sages referred to this when they expounded: The Holy One, blessed be He, first creates for Israel the antidote and only then delivers the blow as it is stated (Hosea 7:1) ‘When I have healing for Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim revealed.’”⁹

At the heart of these opinions is the idea that Israel was meant to be the sanctuary of YHWH ELOHIM on earth. For Rashi, Bachya and those who believe that the commandment to build a sanctuary came after the sin of the golden calf, the *Mishkan* was an afterthought, reaction to, or response to the sin of the Israelites. The idea being conveyed in these teachings is that Israel was at its spiritual zenith at Mount Sinai. By agreeing to accept the yoke of Torah, the children of Israel themselves would become a living tabernacle for a living Elohim. But when the Israelites sought an image to follow,¹⁰ they demonstrated their spiritual immaturity and unwillingness to be the barer of the image of Elohim. It was then, according to these sages, that the immaturity of Israel evoked the Holy One to command the creation of a *Mishkan* so that He might at least dwell among them. It is also taught that the commandment to build the *Mishkan* and the willingness of the Holy One to dwell in it was a testimony to the graciousness of YHWH ELOHIM to forgive the sin of Israel, allowing the gold of the *Mishkan* to atone for the gold used in building the calf. This school of thinking would have us rearrange the order of the Torah portions to be Ki Tissa (containing the story of the golden calf—Exodus 30:11-34:35), followed by Terumah (Exodus 25:1-27:19), Tezevah (Exodus 27:20-30:10), Vayak’hel (Exodus 35:1-38:20), and Pekudei (Exodus 38:21-40:38).

I agree that the heart of YHWH is to dwell within His people so that His countenance may be seen upon them. I also agree that the presence of the *Mishkan* is a sign of YHWH’s graciousness to dwell among His people. But this does not require that the commanding of the *Mishkan* be in response to any sin on the part of the Israelites. I do not believe that this story is out of place. I am not alone in this belief. Ramban also rejects the notion that the *Mishkan* is a response to Israel’s sins.

“Ramban rejects the idea that the Tabernacle was in any way an afterthought, a cure for their sickness, atonement for sin, or compromise between the ideal spirituality and the reality of man’s material conceptions, demanding a form of worship limited to a definite space-time dimension. On the contrary, the institution of the Tabernacle was there from the beginning, a deliberate act of divine grace and thoughtfulness designed to strengthen the immanence of His presence. Their worship of the calf jeopardized the intimacy of God’s relationship with His people. Only after Moses’ intercession and the peoples’ repentance did the Lord forgive them and the ‘status quo ante’ was restored. The scriptural portions are therefore arranged in their chronological sequence: Terumah; Tezaveh, unfolding the story of divine instructions to Moses in the first forty days; Ki Tissa, the sin of the calf; followed, after the expiration of a further forty days, by the second tablets being presented to Moses and his descent. Vayak’hel-Pekudei takes the story further and tells of Moses transmitting the instructions to the children of Israel to take the contributions they had brought and make the Tabernacle.”¹¹

I agree with Ramban that the *Mishkan* was not an afterthought or response, but a part of YHWH’s graciousness to His people. In the book of Ezekiel YHWH describes His relationship with Israel in very loving and even romantic terms. He speaks first of Israel’s humble birth and humiliating circumstances of childhood. The Holy One then describes her coming of age and blossoming into a time of love. Next comes the wedding and then the beautification of His wife.

“Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hititte. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith Adonai YHWH, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girdled thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith Adonai YHWH.” (Ezekiel 16:3-14)

Clearly one is able to follow the history of Israel in these verses. We should note that after YHWH enters into covenant with His bride Israel He then begins the process of washing, clothing, and beautifying her. YHWH washes Israel in the living water of the Torah, covers her beneath His wings, and glorifies her with the *Mishkan*! We should note the similarities of substance used to clothe the bride and those used in the construction of the *Mishkan*: gold, silver, jewels, badgers' skins, fine linens and embroidered work. Note also that YHWH concludes by saying that Israel's beauty was His doing. We are repeatedly reminded in the Torah and even in the Prophets that it is YHWH who sanctifies us.

"And the heathen shall know that I YHWH do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the mind of them for evermore." (Ezekiel 37:28)

"... that ye may know that I am YHWH that doth sanctify you." (Exodus 31:13)

"And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am YHWH which sanctify you." (Leviticus 20:8)

"Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I YHWH do sanctify him." (Leviticus 21:15)

"Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I YHWH do sanctify them." (Leviticus 21:23)

"They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I YHWH do sanctify them." (Leviticus 22:9)

"Or suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass, when they eat their holy things: for I YHWH do sanctify them." (Leviticus 22:16)

Clearly a part of the purpose of the *Mishkan* is simply to beautify, sanctify and elevate the children of Israel. If Israel is the bride of the King she should be dressed accordingly. Therefore the presence of the *Mishkan* in the midst of Israel sets Israel apart from every other nation, just as does the yoke of Torah in the following verse.

"He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye YHWH." (Psalm 147:19-20)

What sets the children of Israel apart from every other nation is the Torah and the *Mishkan* of the Creator of the Universe. It is among those who keep the Torah that YHWH has chosen to make His home. By living a Torah-observant life Israel bears the image of YHWH ELOHIM and manifests His many attributes in the world. By their service in the *Mishkan* Israel brings the Creator's holiness and sanctity to fruition in creation. But there is also another feature of the *Mishkan* that helps to explain its purpose. We should note that the *Mishkan* is made from elements of the mineral, vegetable, and animal realms. In other words, the whole material world is represented in the *Mishkan*. The Creator of the Universe has provided the raw material

of ore, trees, and animals, but it is the effort of man that brings forth the finished product. Just as YHWH creates wheat and grain, but man by his efforts turns it into flour, bread, and cakes, so too by spinning, dying, weaving, embroidering, smelting, smithing, and carpentering, man has taken the raw elements of this material creation and elevated them to become a fit habitation for the Holy One and to serve the Creator. In this laboring to elevate the material world to YHWH we witness Israel performing as a wife and helpmeet to YHWH ELOHIM. Thus the gift of the *Mishkan* is not in response to Israel's shortcomings, but is rather a tool and aid to them in fulfilling their calling to sanctify the world as YHWH has sanctified them.

Maimonides and other Chassidic masters recognized in the *Mishkan* a model of man, of the physical universe, and of creation as a whole. The Courtyard of the *Mishkan* represents the very body of man in contact with the world around it. The Holy Place represents the soul of man which stands between the body of man and the spirit of man as represented by the Holy of Holies. The very furnishings of the *Mishkan* are understood to represent the very organs and faculties of man. The Ark represents the mind, intellect and speech. The Menorah represents the sense of sight which brings light to the soul. The Table of Shewbread represents the sense of taste. The Inner Altar of Incense represents the sense of smell. The Outer Altar is the digestive system. In all, we are reminded by the presence of the *Mishkan* and its functioning that that we are to love and serve YHWH with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Maimonides sees several patterns of the universe present in the pattern of the *Mishkan*. There are three strata: unrefined matter (the earth and terrestrial creatures), refined matter (stars and heavenly bodies), and wholly spiritual beings (entities that are forms alone without matter, such as angels). Extending this to time, we see the six work days (unrefined matter), the Sabbath (refined matter), and Yom Kippur (consummate spirituality). Among the souls we see Israelites, Levites, and the *Cohen HaGadol*.¹² These three souls of Israelite, Levite, and the *Cohen HaGadol* coincide with the three domains of the *Mishkan* – the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The Courtyard is the place of the unrefined work of the *Mishkan*. It is in the Courtyard that the coarse work of slaughtering, burning fat, emptying ashes, and the washing of hands and feet take place. The Holy Place of the Levite and *cohen* is the scene of more refined activity – lighting the Menorah, burning incense, and displaying the bread. The most refined domain of the Holy of Holies, where only the *Cohen HaGadol* may enter but once a year on the most refined of days, Yom Kippur, represents the utter transcendence of the material world in YHWH's service.¹³ Thus again we are reminded by the very presence of the *Mishkan* that not only are we to serve YHWH with our whole body, mind, and soul, but also with all the material world.

Recognizing that since Adam and Eve had their eyes opened in the Garden of Eden¹⁴ man has been living by his senses, YHWH meets the children of Israel and teaches them in a manner they could receive. As the Apostle Shaul wrote,

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of Elohim; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of Elohim. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of Elohim: for they are foolishness unto

him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14)

In other words, the *Mishkan* serves in many ways as an object lesson for living the Torah and being the people of YHWH. The children of Israel did not have the opportunity to jump on their camels and run down to the local family Bible store; teaching was done not by books, but by example. For those with a heart to learn and a discerning spirit there are endless lessons to be taught from the various elements that make up the *Mishkan* and its furnishings as well as from the services performed there. In the remaining section of this study I will point out but a few of the many lessons that may be learned from the *Mishkan*.

We have already mentioned several lessons that may be drawn by connecting the very structure of the *Mishkan* to the human body. This illustrates how we are to serve YHWH with all of our being. We have also mentioned how the whole physical realm is represented in the *Mishkan*. This shows us that part of our calling is to restore creation by elevating the whole of the physical world in service to the Creator. But beyond this there are many more lessons.

By the placement of the elements of the whole of the *Mishkan* we may again teach our children about how YHWH delivered us from Egypt and brought us to Himself at Mount Sinai. The fiery, Brazen Altar could be the oppression and affliction of Egypt, while the *Mishkan* itself with its boards all pointing skyward and covered with skin looks like Mount Sinai, especially with the *Shechinah*¹⁵ resting upon it. Between Egypt (the Altar) and Mount Sinai (the *Mishkan*) is the Laver of the Red Sea, which we must pass through before we come to Sinai and enter into the presence of our Deliverer. Since the whole of the *Mishkan* is portable we may teach that just as YHWH knew our suffering in Egypt, so He lived in a Sukkah¹⁶ in the wilderness as the Israelites did.



Since YHWH began His revelation and commandment about the *Mishkan* with the instructions concerning the Ark of the Covenant, the Menorah, and the Table of Shewbread, we may teach that YHWH desires to reveal His inner essence to us. He wants us to know His mind and heart, and thus He begins the revelation with the innermost things and then works His way to the external things. So it is in our service to Him. He desires us to know Him first – His heart, mind, and will, and then manifest it in the external world. Just as all that the Eternal One commands comes from His heart, so too, all that we do in service to Him should be coming from our heart. This is why YHWH commands Moses,

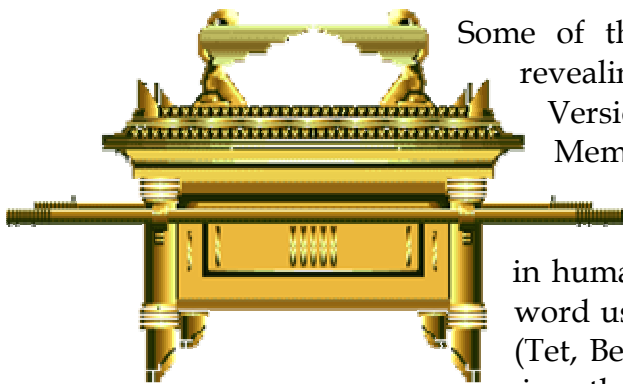


“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.” (Exodus 25:2)

Note that for an offering to be acceptable, regardless of what it is, it must be given willingly and should be accompanied by our hearts. This is true whether the offering be of our time, talent, possessions, or prayer. Truly the *Mishkan* is built with heart. Note at the end of this verse that Moses is commanded to receive such an offering. In other words, if a gift is given or a prayer is said, but it is not accompanied with the heart of the person giving it, it is not acceptable and is not received. Everything that we do for YHWH should be done out of love. If it is done for any other motive, such as escaping hell or gaining heaven, it is an unacceptable offering.

We should also note that much of what goes on inside the *Mishkan* is never seen by the eyes of men. Besides the *Cohen HaGadol*, only YHWH may enter into the deepest, most sacred parts of the *Mishkan*, and even then it is behind a veil and hidden behind a cloud of smoke. This is often how it is when YHWH comes to commune with us. What YHWH is doing within us is not always apparent to the eyes of the world. Sometimes His work and presence may even be cloudy and veiled to us as well. But when YHWH was in the Holy of Holies it was also apparent to those around the *Mishkan* by a pillar of light. Again, when YHWH is actively speaking in our lives, His presence becomes apparent as we become a light to the world.

The Ark of the Covenant has the same threefold nature as the *Mishkan* itself. Just as we have seen the Israelite, the Levite, and the *Cohen HaGadol*; the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies; so we see that the Ark of the Covenant is made up of three boxes. The first box is made of gold and represents Elohim; the second box represents Messiah embodied in the flesh; and the third box is also gold and represents the Spirit of the Holy One who fills the Messiah. Together these three boxes are surrounded by a crown to show their dominion as one over the whole of creation.



Some of the Hebrew words used to describe the Ark are quite revealing in themselves. The word translated in the King James Version as “corners” is the Hebrew word *pa’am* (Pey, Ayin, Mem), which can mean “foot.” The word “side” is the Hebrew word *tzela* (Tzade, Lamed, Ayin), which means rib. In many ways we see language that would describe the Ark in human terms. We have already mentioned the crown, but the word used for describing the rings for holding the staves is *taba’at* (Tet, Bet, Ayin, Tav), which is the word used to describe a signet ring, the sign of authority or kingship. We should note that the word translated as “staves” is the expression *baday eytz*, which means “divided trees.” Here I could not help but think of the prophecy of the two trees becoming one in the hand of the prophet.

“The word of YHWH came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick (EYTZ), and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick (EYTZ), and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick (EYTZ); and they shall become one (EYTZ) in thine hand.” (Ezekiel 37:15-17)

What a powerful image of restoration it is to see that by passing under/through the authority (Rings) of Messiah, the House of Israel and the House of Judah together bear His presence! It is also powerful to remember that once the staves (the divided trees, or the Two Houses), come under the authority of Messiah, they are never to be removed.

*“The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.”
(Exodus 25:1)*

There are so many other lessons to be gleaned from the *Mishkan*. Clearly the *Mishkan* is not an afterthought, but forethought on the part of a loving and gracious ELOHIM. It is a sign that YHWH is willing to meet us where we are and then to elevate us from this place to an even higher and more refined life in Him. It also demonstrates to us that YHWH does not call us to do something that He is not willing to equip us to do. So, through the *Mishkan* YHWH equips us for the task of restoring and sanctifying the rest of creation.

I encourage you all to give time to pondering each part of the *Mishkan* and its furnishings and see what lessons, encouragement, revelation, and equipment YHWH has for you to uplift and strengthen you in your life and walk in Him.

SHAVUA TOV!

¹ *Terumah* in Hebrew, literally, something that is uplifted or elevated (to a higher status).

² Exodus 6:7-8

³ *Mishkan* is the Hebrew name for the Sanctuary.

⁴ Exodus 32:1-24

⁵ Midrash Rabbah, Shemot, Vol. 3, The Soncino Press, Pg. 416

⁶ New Studies in Shemot, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Press, Pg. 460

⁷ Ibid. Pg 461

⁸ Ibid. Pg. 463

⁹ Ibid. Pg. 466

¹⁰ Exodus 32:1

¹¹ Leibowitz Pg. 467

¹² High Priest

¹³ The Anatomy of the Tabernacle, www.chabad.org

¹⁴ Genesis 3:5,7

¹⁵ The Hebrew word that means the “dwelling” or “settling,” and is used to denote the dwelling or settling presence of God, especially in the Temple in Jerusalem.

¹⁶ Booth, or Tabernacle