

## Parashah Seventy-Two

Exodus 37:1–38:20; 1Kings 8:8–22; 1Peter 2:4–10

notes by Tim Hegg

In our *parashah* this Shabbat we see the actual completion of the articles commanded by God to be in the Mishkan (מִשְׁכָּן, tabernacle) itself: וּמִזְבֵּחַ הַקֶּטֶר, וְהַאֲרוֹן, הַשֻּׁלְחָן, הַמְּנוֹרָה, וּמִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה the ark, table, menorah, and altar of incense, along with the articles to be placed in the courtyard (מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה) altar of whole burnt sacrifice, הַבַּיִת, the laver, הַיְצֵר, the courtyard with all of its screens, posts and sockets.)

The articles in the *Mishkan* itself were, first of all, the Ark which is considered the throne of HaShem, for the Scriptures speak of HaShem as “dwelling” (יָשַׁב, *yashav*) or enthroned between the cherubim (1Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2; Ps 80:1; 99:1; Is 37:16). The אֲשֵׁרֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה *shekinah* shone forth above the Ark, being a visible representation of the presence of the Almighty. The Ark was the focal point of atonement, that place at which sinful Israel and Adonai Most Holy met and were reconciled through the placement of the blood (כַּפֵּיר, *kip-eir*) upon the cover or top of the Ark. It is, at the same time, the very focal point of the covenant, for the Ten Words of the Torah made between Israel and HaShem are guarded safe within the Ark. So redemption and covenant are forever wed in the symbolism of the Ark and the atonement made there. The presence of God at the point of atonement shows that His desire to dwell among His people is the ultimate and final purpose of the covenant itself.

It is highly significant that Apostles chose the same Greek term used by the Lxx to translate כַּפֵּיר, the “mercy seat” or “cover” of the Ark (37:6) to describe the concept of “propitiation,” ἱλαστήριον, applying it to Yeshua Himself Who is “our propitiation” (Rom 3:25). Likewise, the writer to the Messianic Jews (Hebrews) uses this word to describe the “mercy seat” of the Ark (Heb 9:5). The point is obvious: Yeshua is the covering of the Ark, the place where the blood is put in the ritual atonement on Yom Kippur—a covenant dramatization of the eternal reality that would be secured in the death of Yeshua as the Lamb of God. Even as HaShem walked with Adam and Chavah in *Gan Eden* before they rebelled against Him, so He purposes to restore mankind to Himself in order that He might dwell with us. The three-times holy God has purposed to be Immanuel, “God with us.”

But it is not enough for just the generation of Israel who came forth from Egypt to experience this coming together with the Almighty in the renewal of friendship that the Mishkan afforded. Had the Tabernacle only contained the Ark, one might surmise that the whole concept of atonement was limited to the physical seed of Jacob—that they alone would be the recipients of God’s forgiving grace. But the articles of furniture that fill the Holy place paint a different picture. Here the cycle of life is seen, bespeaking a generational reality. Here there is need for constant maintenance and refurbishing, day-by-day, week by week, season to season and generation to generation. The bread of the Presence (לֶחֶם פָּנִים) has to be changed weekly; the wicks on the *menorah* must constantly be trimmed and the oil replenished; the fire of the altar of incense must constantly be renewed and new incense spread upon its coals. And year after year the *Cohen Gadol* enters on Yom Kippur to enact the sacred rituals. In other words, the eternality of the Ark with the eternal *Shekinah*, illumines the temporal, and defines the mission once again. The glory of HaShem is to be taken by Israel into her daily living and must shine forth upon a world that is in darkness and therefore does not enjoy the very purpose for which God created all peoples. We are to be, as it were, the bread of life to a dying and hungry world; we are to be the light shining forth to those who live in darkness; and we are to be that sweet-smelling savor of life to a world trapped in the stench of hatred and rebellion (cf. 2Cor 2:15). We, in the cycle of our temporal lives, are to show forth the reality of the eternal One, and shed the light of an eternal friendship with our Creator, a friendship made possible through the blood of the innocent victim—through the awful ordeal of sacrifice.

Here, then, is yet another major theme of our Pesach celebration which is soon upon us. If we have been freed from slavery, then we have a message for the whole world about the true God, namely, that He is not for slavery to sin, and that He intends men to live free. Paul takes this metaphor and fills it out beautifully in Rom 6 in which he reminds us that we were slaves to sin, but now we have become slaves to righteousness. He has the Pesach theme in mind, for our redemption from Egypt was not to render us autonomous to do whatever we wished, but to render us free so that we might serve HaShem. Freedom is not the unrestrained

ability of self-determination, but the divinely given ability to serve HaShem in ways we never could have while enslaved. We are redeemed to go and serve Him.

But while the inward, heart freedom is surely foundational and all-important, we miss something vital if we fail to realize that in the redemptive plan of HaShem, so beautifully displayed in the Pesach story, there is a call to freedom in our physical as well as spiritual world. It is surely true that apart from renewed hearts of faith no freedom is possible, but it is equally true that where salvation reigns in the hearts of people there will be a natural concern that freedom as God defines it reigns upon this earth. It seems that often this very issue is where the Christian and the Jewish communities are at odds. Greenberg writes:

“...in as much as the Exodus occurred in history, so will the messianic age also remain in history. This idea is in contrast to the development of Christian messianism. The early Christians experienced Jesus as the redeemer in their midst. Having experienced the Messiah’s ‘actual presence,’ the Christians were tormented by the contradictions between his coming, which should have brought the Exodus for all, and the reality of a world that was still unredeemed. One way to resolve this conflict was by denying that the Messiah had come. But for some, the experience of his coming was too strong to deny. Another interpretation was then explored. Somehow the nature of messianic redemption had been misunderstood; the true messiah was not in the external physical world but in the internal spiritual world. Driven by the dissonance of the continued existence of a suffering world in which abuse of power remained unchecked, Christians ended up changing the very notion of messianism. They translated the concept of messianic redemption into a state of personal salvation, thus removing it from the realm of history. In coming up with this solution, they were acting on the Jewish Exodus model but resolving its tensions in a manner that eventually turned them away from Judaism. (*The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, p. 37).

What should we make of this claim? Is Greenberg right? Did Yeshua and His disciples teach that redemption and freedom are entirely an internal reality within the scope of individual salvation? Is Pesach fulfilled in the redemption of the soul without consideration for the body?

When we listen to Greenberg’s assessment of Christianity, and then compare them with the words of Yeshua, we are struck by the obvious fact that how Christians live and talk often does not harmonize with the very admonitions of the One they confess as her Messiah. We hear Yeshua (Matt 25:31ff) describe the categories upon which He will judge the sheep and goats in the last day, and we are amazed at the utter lack of systematic dogma or church creeds! “For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in.”

It is clear that we have understood forgiveness of sins and right standing with God to be only through the shed blood of Yeshua, our Messiah. But having forsaken our ties with history—forgetting that we have been grafted into the olive tree and that Abraham is the father of us all—forgetting, then, that each of us, as it were, came out of Egypt. And, if we neglect to apply this personally, we have also forgotten that God’s intentions are to remake this world and society into a world where wickedness is banished and righteousness reigns—a world where the fatherless and widow are cared for as they ought to be, and where injustice is punished and righteousness exalted; a world where the truth of God and His actions in history are seen and experienced in the everyday events of eating (the Table), smelling (altar of Incense), and seeing (Menorah), so that freedom and shalom are a reality for both body and soul. Shabbat and the Festivals always speak to this duality, for they teach of the rest we enjoy from our sins, but they also require a rest of body—a cessation from work. God is vitally interested in both.

Our *Haftarah* portion today speaks to the same issue. Here, in the dedication prayer of Solomon for the Temple, he emphasizes the presence of God in connection with the Ark as it is placed into the Most Holy place. The Temple will be the focal point of prayer for the nation of Israel, as well as for the individual within Israel. But if the full context is read, (vv. 41ff), the Temple is also the focal point for the prayers and worship by the foreigner who is “not of your people.” From the very beginning, Israel is redeemed from her slavery in order that God’s great Name should be proclaimed among the nations, so that the nations themselves would experience true freedom, that is, freedom to join themselves to God’s chosen nation and to obey God, becoming therefore an appropriate place for His dwelling.

The same is true of our Apostolic section in which Peter, using the analogy of the Temple, teaches that

each believer is like a stone used to construct the dwelling place of HaShem. We might be tempted to read Peter as Greenberg suggests we have, i.e., discounting any physicality and concentrating entirely upon the non-physical, “spiritual” side of being “living stones” and built into a “spiritual house,” offering up “spiritual sacrifices.” But Peter does not have such a bifurcation of physical and non-physical in mind, for just a few verses later (2:12), he is urging his readers to live in such a way as to bring the Gentiles (here clearly unbelievers) to the point where they will glorify God in the final day of judgment. What is more, he admonishes us to follow in the footsteps of Yeshua, who suffered for righteousness sake yet committed Himself to HaShem who judges righteously (2:21ff). Yeshua constantly demonstrated in His earthly walk a concern for the outcast, a care for the needy, and one who sought justice for the oppressed.

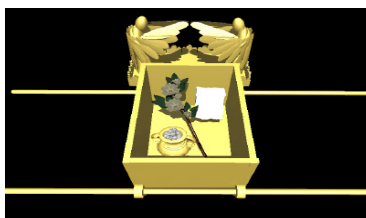
All too often we have been unsuccessful as believers in Yeshua in keeping these two realms in balance—the salvation of the soul and the salvation of the body. We have often slipped into an emphasis upon one to the exclusion of the other. Often evangelicals do well at telling the good news of sins forgiven in Yeshua, but fail to work for social justice and peace. Liberals, on the other hand, having forsaken the Scriptures as antique and therefore irrelevant for us in our modern world, fashioned the “social gospel,” and have tried to feed the hungry, aid the oppressed, etc., without recognizing that one’s soul constantly affects one’s body. Changing the social status of an individual without changing the heart never works. In fact, social injustice and oppression can inevitably be traced back to the influences of sin—a soul issue. How do we find the balance in all of this?

I would suggest that here the Messianic believers have a great contribution to give to the church at large, if only we can give it with the right heart and spirit. Namely, that our faith is tied to history. This we demonstrate through the continual celebration of the festivals, all rooted in history, and therefore anticipating the coming of Yeshua to restore in history what has been broken. Pesach, which is now upon us, is the beginning of our cycle of God’s appointed times. Pesach calls us back to earth, to the realities of history, and to the obvious longings of God’s heart regarding such things as oppression, slavery, freedom, justice, etc. In the wonderful rehearsal of our eternal salvation, we are brought back down to earth where we now live, and the responsibilities of showing God’s love and righteousness in a world enslaved by sin, and the poverty, injustice, and pain which that sin brings.

We must therefore resolve to live out the truth of who we are: covenant members with HaShem, displaying His righteousness in our words, deeds, and motives. But we must know that we will be able to do this only as we rely upon the leading of the Spirit as He conforms us more and more to be like Yeshua.



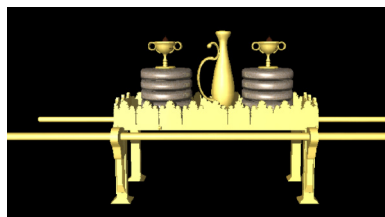
2.5 cubits long  
(3ft. 9 in.)



1.5 cubits wide  
(2 ft. 3 in.)

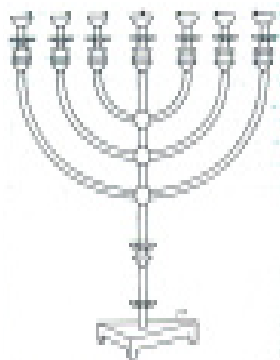
Ark: acacia wood overlaid with pure gold.

Acacia (*Acacia raddiana*) is native to the Mediterranean, with four basic varieties being attested. It is a particularly dense wood and very strong. It has been found in use for clamps on mummy coffins, and used for fuel, hand tools, and structural posts. Cf. Ex 26:15; Num 25:1; Josh 2:1; Is 41:19; Mic 6:5.

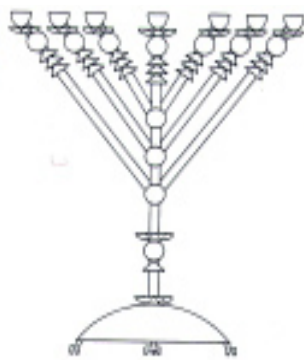


2 cu long x 1 cu wide x 1.5 cu high  
(3 ft long x 2ft, 3 in wide x 18 in high)

Ex 37:24 indicates that the menorah was made from a talent of gold. Talent measures of the Ancient Near East were consistently between 28.38 and 30.27 kg. (a kg. = 2.2 lbs., thus a talent would be between 62 1/2 lbs. and 66 1/2 lbs.) At \$1,558.95 a troy ounce of gold (as of 2/21/20), in today's standards the menorah would be worth approximately \$1,420,914.00.



Majority opinion of how the menorah looked



Maimonides understanding of the menorah



2 cu high; 1 cu square  
(3ft high x 18 in square)

The actual placement of the Altar of Incense has been disputed by scholars. The text could be read to mean that, in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple, it was placed in the Most Holy place, before the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 40:5; Lev 16:11-14). The writer to the Messianic Jews (Hebrews) seems to use similar language (Heb 9:3,4). In the 2nd Temple (built by Zerubbabel and enlarged by Herod), the Altar of Incense was apparently placed in the Holy place (Luke 1:9, 10). Josephus likewise describes the Altar of Incense as situated in the Holy place along with the Menorah and Table of Bread (*Antiq.* 3.6.8). Rabbinic sources also consider the Altar of Incense to be situated in the Holy place, opposite

the Ark but separated by the veil (Rashi on Ex 30:6; many places in the Mishnah, e.g., m.*Yoma* 2.3, Mid. Rab. *Num* 4.16, etc.). Since the Scriptures teach that no one was allowed into the Holy of Holies except the High Priest, a problem exists if the Altar of Incense is in the Holy of Holies—how can the common priests burn incense on it morning and evening? The resolution to this apparent difficulty is to understand that on Yom Kippur, for all practical purposes, the Altar of Incense was taken into the Most Holy Place by the High Priest, in the form of a golden censor containing coals from the Altar of Incense itself. It could therefore be spoken of as in the Holy of Holies when the Day of Atonement was in mind. Furthermore, since it was near the veil, it stood closest to the Ark of the Covenant, and no doubt filled the Holy of Holies with its fragrant aroma. In fact, when we look more closely at the language employed in the Tanach regarding the placement of the Altar of Incense, we discover that the author of Hebrews is very precise in his language.

Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; (Heb 9:3-4)

The key to understanding these words is to recognize that the golden altar of incense is always connected with the ark of the covenant, for it is said to be placed "in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 30:6, cf. 40:5). This vital connection between the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant is clearly stated in 1Ki 6:22—"... He (Solomon) also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary." The golden altar "belonged" to the Most Holy Place, because its placement in the Holy Place was directly in front of the ark, with the veil separating the two. The idea that the

golden altar belonged to the Most Holy Place emphasizes that its primary function was in relation to the ark of the covenant, which is particularly seen on Yom Kippur when its coals and incense were taken into the inner sanctuary by the High Priest. In fact, the author of Hebrews carefully reproduces the language of 1Ki 6:22 by writing: "...the Holy of Holies, *having* a golden altar of incense." Earlier, in v. 2, he utilized the preposition "in" (ἐν, *en*) to note the location of the menorah and the table of the bread of the Presence in the outer sanctuary. But in regard to the altar of incense, he utilizes the verb "to have," (rather than the preposition "in") when connecting the golden altar and ark of the covenant to the Most Holy Place. By doing so, he conveyed the language of the Tanach which consistently connects the altar of incense with the ark of the covenant: the altar of incense *belonged* to the Most Holy Place.

Furthermore, the Greek word our author used, which nearly all the English versions translate as "altar," is θυμιατήριον (*thumiaterion*), the same word used in the Lxx to denote a censer or pan used for burning incense (2Chronicles 26:19; Ezekiel 8:11; 4Maccabees 7:11). Some have argued that the censers were made of bronze, not gold, and that therefore a "golden censer" could not be what our author has in mind. However, though the Torah does indeed mention censers made of bronze (Ex 38:3; Num 16:39), these are specifically said to be the utensils of the altar of sacrifice (the brazen altar), not the altar of incense which was overlaid with gold. In fact, we do find that golden utensils connected with incense existed in the Tabernacle, for in the dedication of the altar, each tribe presents incense in golden dishes (Num 7:14ff). Moreover, in the historian's account of the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and his commander Nebuzaradan, we read: "The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers (הַמַּחֲתוֹת, *hamachtot*) and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver." So in Solomon's Temple there were censers made of gold.

What is more, our author's perspective, that a golden censer was used for taking the coals into the Most Holy Place on Yom Kippur accords with the rabbinic tradition:



5 cu square (7.5 ft sq)  
3 cu high (4.5 ft high)

Every day he [the High Priest] would scoop out the cinders with a silver fire pan and empty them into a golden one. But today [Yom Kippur] he would clear out the coals in a gold one, and in that same one he would bring the cinders into the inner sanctuary. (m.Yoma 4.4)

The author of Hebrews, rather than being "mixed up" about the Tabernacle and Temple service, is extremely accurate, utilizing language that directly corresponds to the wording of the Tanach when describing the golden altar of incense as belonging to the Most Holy Place. This vital connection between the altar of incense and the Most

Holy is seen by the fact that a golden censer is taken into the Most Holy on Yom Kippur, something corroborated by the Sages as well.



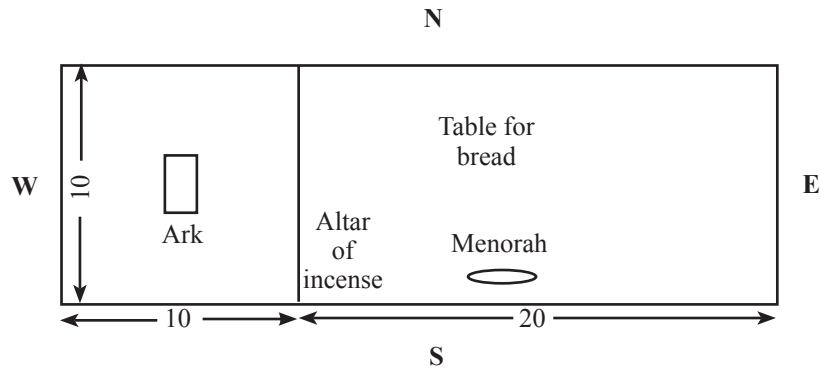
Copper, Bronze, or Brass? Various translations of the text which speak of the the Altar of Sacrifice utilize different words for the metal used in the altar. Which is correct? The Hebrew word is נְחֹשֶׁת, *necho-shet*, which can mean either copper or bronze. Bronze is an alloy of tin and copper, and is more suited for casting due to its greater fusibility. The use of bronze has been found from dwellings dated as early as 3700

BCE. Indeed, the vast use of bronze between 3200 and 1200 BCE has resulted in this era being labelled the "Bronze Age".

Brass, an alloy of tin, zinc, and copper, was not used by the ancients until 1500 BCE and after. The Altar of Sacrifice was no doubt made of bronze, since bronze's fusibility and higher melting point would make it suitable for a firebox, able to withstand the temperatures of an open fire.

The physical description of the laver: made of bronze, with a bronze base; No dimensions are given; the Hebrew word כִּיּוֹר, *kiyor*, suggests a "round" shape; there is no mention of poles and rings for carrying. It was made from the bronze mirrors of the women who ministered at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

The description of the Laver in the Tabernacle is not detailed at all. Such is not the case with the Laver which Solomon built in the First Temple. Like everything else in Solomon's Temple, the dimensions are increased! The Laver was 5 cubits high, 10 cubits in diameter, and 30 cubits in circumference (cf. 1 Ki 7:23-24). It rested upon four groups of three bronze oxen, each group facing one of the four compass points. Some have estimated that the weight of the entire Laver and stand was over 30 tons! Obviously, in a situation where the Tabernacle was portable, the Laver was a great deal smaller!



The Mishkan with its sacred articles