

### EXODUS

#### Lesson 26 - Chapter 25 Continued

As the beginning of the lesson, today, I want to play the video for you that I had hoped to play last week but had technical difficulties. It's only a 28-minute video about the Tabernacle, but it is well done. The resolution of the video isn't real good, so don't think you're having eye trouble.

#### PLAY VIDEO

Let's go back, now, and look more carefully at some of these sacred furnishings from the interior of the Wilderness Tabernacle.

#### Re-READ Exodus 25:10-22

We're going to read about all the gold, silver, and bronze used for the Tabernacle. We'll get into the precise amounts a little later in Exodus, but for now, just know that the total weight for all these metals approached 8 tons. Now, where did they get this huge quantity of precious metals, considering they were out there wandering around in a barren no-mans land? They brought it with them from Egypt. God told Israel to "strip Egypt" before they left; to ask the Egyptian people for gold and silver, and those Egyptians were MORE than happy to give it to them just to get rid of those Hebrews and their god who had nearly destroyed Egypt.

So we don't have to go forward with any amount of skepticism, let's get an idea of just how EASY it would have been for Israel to have this much precious metal handy: it would have taken LESS than 1/12th of an ounce from each Israelite to accumulate the 8 tons needed. That's the equivalent of about one small earring per person, and it's unimaginable that they didn't have several times more than that per person.

God's instructions begin in vs. 10 with the holiest furnishing of them all, the Ark of the Covenant, which is to be located in the holiest room of the Tabernacle.....appropriately called The Holy of Holies. The Ark symbolized God's presence and His throne.

The Ark structure was to be made of Acacia wood.... a very hard, very dense material found in ample supply in desert regions, particularly the Arabian Peninsula. The Hebrew word for the Acacia tree is Shittim. The Ark was slightly less than 4 feet long, and little over 2 feet deep, and it was as wide as it was deep.

Now most Bibles will express all the measurements of the Tabernacle and its furnishings in cubits. But scholars disagree on exactly how long a cubit is; their estimates range from just under 18 inches to almost 21 inches. So we don't know precisely, we only know the approximate measurements of the Tabernacle and its furnishings plus or minus about 10%.

Technically the Ark itself was just the rectangular chest, the storage compartment, because the lid was a separate item called the Mercy Seat (with the Cherubim on it) was considered somewhat separately. Yet in common terms (and even usually so in the Bible) when the Ark was referenced it included BOTH the storage chest **and** it's lid.

The Ark was covered in Gold, inside and out. The Mercy Seat, the lid to the Ark, was a solid slab of Gold with two Cherubim on the top. In Hebrew this lid is called the "Kapporet", which means **place of atonement**. That is because in vs.22 God says it is there that He will meet with Moses to give Moses instructions for Israel. It will also be the place where on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the High Priest will stand to atone for the sins of all Israel. The reason we call the lid the Mercy Seat is because the Ark is symbolic of God's throne, the place where the merciful God sits and accepts the yearly atonement for the sin of the people.

Now the Cherubim, which are the prominent feature of the Mercy Seat, are interesting creatures. We are told that God posted Cherubim at the Garden of Eden. And that the Living Creatures or Living Beings that we discussed as having faces that were identical to the symbols of the 4 dominant Israelite tribes (one located on each of the 4 sides of the Tabernacle) are considered by the Jewish Sages to also be Cherubim. So not surprisingly, we find them here in God's holiest place on earth. They are apparently another type of guardian or servant being for Yehoveh.

We must be clear that no one knows for sure what the Cherubim look like. The pictures we see of them today range from chubby little babies with short wings and an Afro hairdo, to mature man-like creatures with wings that stretch from their feet to above their heads. The various representations we have today of the Ark, and the Mercy Seat with it's Cherubim, are just best guesses as to what they looked like. If the Ark is ever found, I guess we'll know for sure then.

The Ark is so holy that once made and put into commission, it is not ever to be touched by human hands. Even on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and stood before the Ark, he stayed well back and from a distance of 6 or 7 feet sprayed the sacrificial blood on the Ark. Because the Ark was not to be touched rings were put onto the ark, with poles for carrying the Ark going through those rings; the poles were NEVER to be removed. Later in the Scriptures we read of an incident whereby the Ark, while being carried, is about to fall over and one of the Ark bearers instinctively puts his hands on the Ark to steady it; he dies instantly.

Notice something important here: in vs. 22 we're told tat God's spirit comes to rest **over** the Ark.....not ON the Ark.....but above and between the Cherubim attached to the **Kapporet**, the lid, when He wants to speak to Moses. Even the Ark is not holy and pure enough that Yehoveh's holiness can come into contact with it, because even though it is God's design, it is man made. Remember: at this point in history the Holy Spirit of God did NOT dwell in man;

He dwelled above man, or among men, but not IN man. Today, since Pentecost, the same Holy Spirit that hovered above the Mercy Seat dwells in US....Believers. I think we also need to realize that the concept of God's Holy Spirit dwelling in a man was as ludicrous to those wandering Israelites as it was to the Jews of Christ's day. Great pains were taken, both in ritual and in the design of the Tabernacle and the Temple, to make sure that God's Spirit was kept separate from men. Even on that one day each year when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, neither the people nor the current High Priest were sure he'd come out alive. This was no comfortable, peaceful ritual the High Priest went through.....he was afraid and so were the people. Sometime along the way, they even took to tying a rope around the High Priest's ankle so as to be able to pull him out if his stay took longer than normal; because if God killed him in the Holy of Holies (for whatever reason) they would have had no way to retrieve the body since ONLY the High Priest was allowed inside (even the replacement High Priest could not have pulled that body out because High Priests could never touch a dead body). So I suspect that had they even believed such a thing as having God's Spirit dwell inside a man was possible, they would have been terrified at the prospects. Once the Apostles finally understood this principle we see that they became different men....fearless, bold, uncompromising of the Gospel. Most of us take this for granted and don't consider as we should the mystery of this truth. I think maybe we need to be in awe, if not a little terrified, that the Holy Spirit of God lives inside of us.

Please also understand the idea of the Tabernacle as God's **dwelling place** is figurative. God was not confined to a cloth and animal skin house that needed to be carried about whenever He wanted to go somewhere. God is Spirit.....He can be everywhere at once, or absent from everyplace at once, and every possible condition in between. The Tabernacle was built so that mankind could understand certain aspects, present and future, of Yehoveh and so God could meet with Moses, and once a year the High Priest, at the appointed times. By our modern Western way of thinking the Tabernacle was not a house it was a conference room where people came together at specific times for specific purposes.

Today with the Holy Spirit dwelling in Yeshua's disciples we don't have to wait until appointed times to commune with God as did Moses; we don't have to go to a specific building or wait until Church or Synagogue is in session. Where we are meeting today is NOT God's house; neither, my friends, is a Church building or a Synagogue God's house; rather it is the house of God's **people**. WE, individually and collectively, are the house of God. Look at Hebrews 3:6. Paul says, ***"But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And WE are God's house....."***

The Ark was the means and the place by which God dwelled among men. This was symbolic and prophetic of Yeshua who would dwell among men.....God, physical, in the flesh, living among men. Even what went inside the Ark prefigured who Christ was: **the budding staff, the jar of manna, and the stone tablets of the 10 Commandments.**

A staff, also at times called a rod in the Bible, was the sign of authority. There was great unrest among the tribal leaders when Moses announced that Aaron would be the High Priest. The High Priest carried tremendous power and authority and in essence was the head of the government over all Israel; so the tribal leaders each wanted to become the High Priest. The

fact that Aaron was Moses' brother had much to do with the problem, because with Aaron and Moses both being Levites power would have rested ONLY within the Levite clan; which it did until Moses passed away and Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim, took over. So to settle the squabble God had the tribal leaders each give their staffs to Moses who placed them in front of the Ark. Aaron's staff sprouted and budded Almond blossoms to indicate that Aaron was God's choice for High Priest. So, the budding staff symbolized the office of High Priest AND the tribe from which all future High Priests were to come: the tribe of Levi. Christ, we are told, is our High Priest, even though He is NOT a Levite, He is from the tribe of Judah. We won't get into all the significance of that, just yet.

The jar of manna, the heavenly food sent from God during the Israelites entire time in the Wilderness, symbolized life.....the bread of life. The source of REAL sustenance of Godly life....not mere existence.....is Christ who called Himself the Bread of Life. This is important to understand: Yeshua called Himself manna.

And, of course, inside the Ark lay those stone tablets of the 10 Dabar, the 10 Words.....that were, and remain, the underlying principles behind all of God's Word to mankind. Those words are written on every Believer's heart. And, of course, John tells us that Christ IS the Word.

So we have Aaron's staff, which symbolizes Christ's authority as High Priest. The jar of manna.....Christ is the bread of life (our manna).....and the stone tablets of God's Word.....Christ IS the Word of God. The Ark symbolized Messiah who contained these 3 fundamental natures within Him. He became God's visible presence on earth. And after He was resurrected and ascended to Heaven, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in we Believers, the same way He dwelled in the Tabernacle all those years ago. That's why Paul says WE are God's Tabernacle, Yehoveh's dwelling place, in the current age.

### **RE-READ EX.25:23-30**

Beginning in verse 23, the blueprint for the Table of Showbread is described. The Table of Showbread was placed on the north wall of the Holy Place.....the room adjoining the Holy of Holies. Just as with the Ark of the Covenant, the table is to be fashioned from Acacia wood as a frame, and then covered in pure Gold. The table was to be 3 feet long, 1½ feet wide, and about 2 ½ feet high. Upon it was to be placed 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

The strange sounding word, Showbread, is just one attempt to translate the original Hebrew for these loaves; lechem panim. Lechem is an ordinary Hebrew word meaning bread. Panim is a strange word, difficult to translate, that means face. But "face" meant something a little different then than what we think of it today. In the Bible, when someone's (or God's face) is upon you it means His presence is with you. So sometimes the Showbread is called the Bread of His Presence.....that is, the bread of God's Presence....which is more literal.

Later an exact recipe will be given for this Holy Showbread. And upon each Sabbath the bread will be exchanged for 12 fresh loaves and the old loaves will be eaten by the priests, within the

holy precinct (in other words they could not take the bread out of the area of the Tabernacle). But do not confuse this with the special bread that the Israelites baked for their own use each Sabbath, Challah bread, which the Israelite families ate around their own table. The Showbread and the Challah bread were entirely different.

For one thing even though its not explicitly stated in the Bible, the Showbread was unleavened bread....it had to be because it was a meal offering and it was a requirement of all meal offerings that no leaven, no yeast, be used in it because leavening symbolizes sin. Challah bread, however, could be leavened bread.

The Bible really doesn't give, outright, much detail on the symbolic reason for this showbread. As a result we have many explanations and theories of what it may represent, most of them incorporating the idea that these loaves represent the bread of life and therefore represent that ministry of Christ as His being the bread of life for the Church. Perhaps. The problem is that that explanation eliminates the rather obvious: the 12 loaves represented the 12 tribes being in God's presence (hence the name bread of His presence) and that He would provide a sinless source of sustenance (that's the idea of using unleavened bread) for them. Of course this sinless source of sustenance we know understand is Christ; but this particular source in Exodus 25 was for the 12 tribes of Israel....represented by there being 12 loaves. This was not for non-Hebrews.

The covenant, the Tabernacle, everything was for, and with, the 12 tribes of Israel. So let's keep reminding ourselves that, just as St. Paul said, we (gentiles) have been joined, grafted in, to the covenants of Israel....they are NOT our covenants per se.

Interestingly wine was also placed on the table with the showbread. Wine and unleavened bread.....now what image does that conjure up? Of course....communion.

### **RE-READ EX. 25:30-39**

Next, we come to the Golden Lamp stand, which stood on the south side of the Holy Place opposite the Table of Showbread. The Hebrew word for lamp stand is "menorah". Now technically just as the Ark of the Covenant is ONLY the storage chest, NOT the lid (the Mercy Seat), so is the menorah a candelabra, or a lamp stand....that is it is a **holder** of candles or oil lamps; but the candles and oil lamps are separate pieces just as the Mercy Seat is separate from the Ark. A menorah doesn't provide light: it just provides a place for the sources of light to sit.

The original Menorah weighed around 70 lbs. as it was made from a talent of Gold. It was not melted and poured into a mold as most precious metal working was done then, and still done today; it was virtually sculpted from a large hunk of Gold. The Tabernacle's Menorah was the sole source of light for the 30-foot long, 15-foot wide, 15-foot high room, the Holy Place, it resided in. The menorah held 7 oil lamps that used a special olive oil as fuel.

The Menorah had a central stem, and then 3 branches on each side of the stem, giving it a total of seven arms or branches. So these 7 oil lamps had to be kept burning night AND

day....the lamps were never to go out.....and it fell to the priests to be certain of this.

The primary decoration on the Menorah is an almond at its various stages. Why an almond? Well notice the connection to the staff of Aaron that budded with Almond blossoms, and then produced Almonds. The Jewish sages say that the Almond tree was the first fruit to blossom in the spring. Some also say that because that dead stick that was Aaron's staff came to life and blossomed and produced fruit, Almonds, that the Almond is symbolic of resurrection. I'm inclined to go along with that; first fruits and resurrection couldn't be more prophetic and emblematic of Yeshua.

The Menorah is perhaps the Jewish people's most recognized symbol outside of the Star of David, and it is especially so today. Certainly, the Menorah is the OLDEST symbol of the Jewish people, dating at least 1000 years, and possibly more, **before** the Star of David came into existence. Rabbis and Hebrew Sages have made some interesting speculations about the Menorah, and one of the more intriguing is the obvious similarity that a menorah has to a tree with branches. Several Rabbis say that the Menorah may well represent the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden; I think that is entirely possible.

Now, despite what most gentiles might expect, the 7-branched Menorah, the Tabernacle or Temple Menorah is, in our time, NEVER lighted in an observant Jewish household. The reason? It was ONLY meant to be a special implement for use in conjunction with the Temple. In some ways, to the Jews, it is a reminder OF the Temple. So since there has been no Temple for over 1900 years, to light the 7 branched Menorah, to the Jew, is irrelevant; no Temple, no need for a Menorah. Most Jewish homes, today, don't even have a 7-branched Menorah.

However.....there is the 9-branched Menorah. You won't find it mentioned in the Bible. The 9 branched Menorah came about a little over a century BEFORE Yeshua was born. It was invented in celebration of Chanukah, also called the Feast of Dedication or the Festival of Lights. This is to commemorate the taking back and purifying of the Temple by Judas the Maccabee, who led the Jews in rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanies. Epiphanies, a vicious puppet governor for Rome who ruled over the Holy Land had occupied the Temple, removed many of the valuable items, and desecrated it by putting a statue of himself in the form of Zeus (the sun-god) in the Holy of Holies. He then sacrificed a pig to the statue, boiled the meat and poured its broth all over the Temple Torah Scrolls.

When the Jewish rebels finally took the Temple back, because the priests had been killed, there was not a sufficient supply of properly prepared and consecrated olive oil for the Menorah lamps to burn more than one day. But that one-day's supply that did remain miraculously burned for 8 days, until more could be made according to the Levitical law. Therefore the 8 branches of this special Menorah represent the 8-day miracle, and the 9th branch is used to light the others from; the observant Jewish home DOES have a 9 branch Menorah, a Chanukah Menorah, and they do light it during Chanukah. It should be noted that the time of year we have chosen to celebrate Christ's birth, coincidentally happens at the same time as Chanukah.

I'll tell you this: sometime in the not too distant future, when the Temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem just as the end-times prophecies say will happen, I'd sure like to have the 7 branch Menorah concession; because that Temple is suddenly going to become VERY relevant again, and a whole lot of Jews, and probably Christians, too, are going to want those 7 branched ones.

The Tabernacle Menorah, and its lamps, symbolize the light of the world.....Christ.....the true and pure light. This concept is especially noticeable in Revelation 2 and 3 where the church (the earthly extension of Jesus) is symbolized as a Menorah (a golden lamp stand). And we're warned that our menorahs will be taken away if we do not adhere to our first love, Yeshua. Our purpose, as Believers, is to be light to a dark world. If we're not that, then we're of no use. We're like menorahs without oil.....menorahs that are supposed to be lit day and night but our flames have died out.

Next week we'll beginning studying the Tent Sanctuary itself in Exodus chapter 26.