

EXODUS

Lesson 27 - Chapters 26, 27, and 28

In chapter 25, Yehoveh gave instructions on the 3 primary furnishings that are to be placed inside the Tabernacle's sanctuary: the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Showbread, and the Menorah (the Golden Lamp Stand). Beginning in chapter 26 we get the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle itself.

We're going to move rather rapidly tonight and will cover all of Exodus chapters 26 and 27 and the first part of chapter 28 as well as some New Testament writings that are pertinent to our subject; so keep your Bibles open and handy.

READ CHAPTER 26 all

We have already discussed that the Tabernacle was divided into 3 zones of varying degrees of holiness: the Holy of Holies being the greatest, the Holy Place with slightly less holiness, and the Outer Court the least. Also recall that the perimeter of the Tabernacle was basically a fence made out of cloth that enclosed an open courtyard. The Tent portion, which consisted ONLY of the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, was the only portion of the Tabernacle that had a roof.

Understanding that there is some disagreement over exactly how long, in modern measurement, a Biblical cubit was, the general consensus is that the perimeter of the Outer Court was about 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. The Tabernacle was always erected in an east-west orientation, with the tent portion more towards the western end. A large, 30 foot wide gateway was placed at the east end of the courtyard; and, the entrance into the tent also faced east.

Since the Tabernacle was meant to go wherever God directed Israel to move, it had to be mobile. And, it's design was quite ingenious to accomplish this; the specifications we're given, here, obviously meant for it to be assembled and disassembled, and then transported, multiple times. It would have to have been made to withstand the daunting conditions of the desert, with it's oven-like dryness and the fierce winds laden with fine sand that was an ever present bother. Yet, it was also **not** made of lightweight materials; it had to be rugged. So, it also must have been heavy. We'll not get into it today, but the book of Numbers tells us that the precious metals alone totaled 8 tons, and the wood used for construction also would have weighed several tons. Even the cloth and Rams skins would have been of considerable weight. Numbers also tells us that several covered wagons, pulled by teams of Oxen were used to transport the Tabernacle. However, all indications are that the furnishings of the Tabernacle, the Ark, the Menorah, the Tables of Showbread and Incense, were hand-carried. Various clans

that formed the tribe of Levi were given specific articles they were to carry; to handle any other was a trespass against the God of Israel.

The curtain that ringed the Outer Court was made of FINELY woven linen sheets, and they were held in place by acacia wood pillars covered with bronze. Bronze sockets were placed at the bottom of each pillar, and ropes were tied from the top of each pillar to the ground, and held in place with bronze stakes. Notice the use of bronze, here. Since this outer area was where humanity could enter, this non-precious metal was used in its construction. And, from a practical aspect, bronze was much harder and more useful for construction than either Gold or Silver. At the top of each pillar, however, was a silver cap, and some silver bars or hooks, from which the curtains were hung.

The yarn colors chosen to make the curtains, blue, purple, and scarlet, made the endeavor all the more expensive.....because these particular colors were hard to make. And, we're told, that apparently some or all of these linen sheets had pictures of Cherubim woven in. I can't really explain the significance of the mysterious Cherubim as much I wish I could, except to say that they were obviously an important element. Since this was Yehoveh giving this narrative on the details of His Tabernacle, and since it has been made clear numerous times that the Wilderness Tabernacle is a physical earthly representation of the heavenly, spiritual Tabernacle, it must be that God employs numerous Cherubim in service to Him, generally as guardians of His Holiness. And further that Cherubim have the unusual privilege of being near God, interacting with God, in His throne room.

Now, the tent, the sanctuary, was about 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high. It was divided into two rooms: the Holy Place was larger of the two rooms, about 30 feet by 15 feet, and the Holy of Holies was a 15 foot by 15 foot cube. As we might expect the acacia wood used in the sanctuary was covered in Gold, rather than the more common bronze as was used in the people's court area. The God would have reflected the light in a most useful and magnificent way. Can you imagine the warm color of amber that the room would have taken on with the light being reflected from the golden walls?

Acacia wood planks were used to help form the structure of the sanctuary, and these planks were completely encased in Gold.

The entire gold and wood structure of the tent was covered and protected with a covering that consisted of 4 layers. The innermost covering was of fine linen; next to it was woven goat hair. Goat hair was the most common material used for making tents; the vast bulk of the Israelites would have used woven goat hair tents for themselves, as it was plentiful, durable, strong and depending on the tightness of the weave, somewhat waterproof (although rain was hardly a problem where they were wandering). Covering the goat hair was a layer of Ram skins, which had been dyed red, and finally, the outermost layer, which had to face the harsh desert weather. This outer layer is a bit of a mystery, because the Hebrew word for it was "tachash". It referred to some type of animal skin. Many translators make this "tachash" to be simply a high grade of leather, but that defies logic as tanned leather, from cattle, was common and a commonly understand word was used to describe it. Tachash is an unusual, uncommon word, and is used ONLY in the context of the Wilderness Tabernacle; it has been claimed by Jewish

scholars for centuries that the outer covering was either Seal or Porpoise skins.....obviously because it would have been airtight, water repellent, and even offered protection from the superfine dust that was part of desert life. It should be no surprise that either Seal or Porpoise, perhaps BOTH, were used, as the Israelites were very near the Red Sea and those two creatures were plentiful there. I imagine they bartered for them from local seaside residents or else some of the more well to do Israelites might have brought some with them from Egypt.....but I doubt it, as it would not have been a common material used in Egypt.

The main entrance into the tent, which would take one into the Holy Place, was called the "door" (in Hebrew, *Masakh*). One had to walk through the Holy Place to get into the Holy of Holies. A veil, a curtain (called **parokhet** in Hebrew) separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In Hebrew the name of the Holy Place is "Kodesh".....the Holy of Holies is called "Kodesh ha-kodashim".

READ EXODUS CHAPTER 27 all

Just as the Ark was the most holy and important item inside the tent sanctuary, so is the Brazen Altar the most holy and important item OUTSIDE of the tent sanctuary. Therefore the design and placement of the great altar of sacrifice is all-important. This is where countless millions of innocent animals would have their lives taken from them....their blood spilled, their bodies burnt to ashes....all necessary to atone for mankind's sins in order to be at peace with God.

Often this altar is called the "Brazen Altar" (in Hebrew it was called *mizbah ha-'olah*). Brazen simply means it was made from the hardest metal they had to work with in those times, Bronze (a mixture of iron and copper). So, Altar, Altar of Sacrifice, Altar of Burnt Offering, Brazen Altar, all these refer to the same thing. For all practical purposes the Altar was a special fire pit, a box that was constructed with Acacia wood as a frame and then covered over with Bronze so it wouldn't catch fire. It was about 7 ½ feet long on each side and a little under 5 feet high. Four "horns" were molded into it, one on each corner. These horns were used to tie the sacrificial animals to during the sacrifice procedure. Whether there was spiritual significance to the horns, or whether they were there strictly for practical reasons is an open question. Altars of the Canaanites have been found and several of these had horns as well.

Many tools and implements for use with the Altar were required, and they too were to be fashioned from Bronze....shovels to deal with the spent ashes, pails and buckets to catch the animal blood, censers (sometimes called fire pans) to carry hot coals, and special shovel/pans to carry the ashes outside the camp to be disposed of. Just as with the Ark of the Covenant rings were attached to the sides of the Altar so that wooden poles could be inserted through the rings as a means to transport the Altar when the time came to move the Tabernacle at Yehoveh's instruction. The Altar was not moved by being placed onto a wagon; it was hand-carried from location to location, hence the use of the poles.

The Altar was placed just inside the gate of the Outer Court. Now as I had pointed out last week, when Moses had been told to build an Altar on which to sacrifice animals to seal the

covenant between Israel and Yehoveh, the covenant of Moses, God had him place it **outside** of the Holy area, Mt. Sinai; instead, it was to go to an area, the valley floor, beyond the stone fence that acted as a barrier; an area that could be accessed by the people, night and day. So, true to form, the Brazen Altar was placed outside of the Holy area of the Tabernacle, the sanctuary, and on to the Outer Court where the people had constant access to it. By the way this almost certainly means that the stone Altar where that covenant sealing sacrifice had occurred must have been decommissioned once the Brazen Altar was built and operational.

The placement of the Altar was most significant. It was between the Outer Court gate and the entrance to the Holy Place. One had to pass by the Altar to get to the sanctuary. In fact, each time before a priest could enter the sanctuary, he had to make a sacrifice. This is a prophetic and symbolic teaching of the purpose of Yeshua. We have to go through the sacrifice of Christ, in order to enter the sanctuary of God.

Probably the best symbol we could use to help us understand the connection between the Brazen Altar and Jesus would be the Cross. That is, the Cross was to Christ as the Brazen Altar was to those sacrificial animals. The animals had to be raised up to the Altar, bound to the horns of the Altar, and there have their blood spilled to atone for Israel's sins. Christ had to be raised up on that cross, to which He was bound, and there had His blood spilled to atone for Israel's sins. Certainly the plan also made provision for gentiles, non-Israelites, to be mysteriously joined to Israel in order that we might partake in their covenants with God. But, that's the **ONLY** way it could happen..... one had to be grafted into Israel and their covenants with Yehoveh in order to benefit by what Christ did. So that those of you who are newer to this class won't take this wrong, I do **NOT** mean one has to become a **PHYSICAL JEW** to become a Believer...nor does one need to convert and begin practicing Judaism. The term "grafting" or "grafted into" is a metaphor, and it is used from a spiritual point of view.....not physically; and it occurs when, **BY FAITH**, you trust Yeshua as your Savior and Lord.

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 2 and 3.

READ ROMANS 2:17 THROUGH ROMANS 3:1-4

Sometimes we Christians tend towards over generalizing and taking a scientific rational view of the Bible whereby all things must be either/or. Well, that's not how God operates. Here in Romans it is explained that just because many Jews didn't follow to its logical conclusion God's plan of Salvation for them, doesn't cancel God's plan or His faithfulness towards them! Further we need to begin to understand that long before Israel was created on earth, the heavenly **ideal** of Israel (which was God's principles being lived out among humans) existed. Israel was created on earth to serve God by recording these laws and principles and demonstrating them so that all mankind would witness, and under certain conditions benefit by, the heavenly ideal. Israel succeeded to some degree and failed to some degree. The Jew that kept to this heavenly ideal, according to Paul, is the one who accepted the Messiah that Yehoveh sent them, Yeshua. Paul further explains that Jews who kept to that heavenly ideal he labels as the "true Jew" from the heavenly perspective. Conversely, the Jew that simply did the rituals and observances apart from a true love and trust in God and rejects God's Messiah

remains physically a Jew but has failed in his purpose.

But, here, another concept is also introduced: that of a gentile who trusts in Israel's Messiah Yeshua and thus strives for the heavenly ideal. This gentile (what, today, we'd call a saved person or a Believer) is lumped into the category that Paul labels the "true Jew". Again: not that a gentile suddenly has Hebrew genes implanted in him, but rather that this gentile is viewed by God as a member of those who reflect the heavenly ideal of Israel.

This notion should be no more difficult for us to understand than the well-entrenched (and correct) Christian principle that when we are saved by the blood of Yeshua's sacrifice, God no longer sees us as sinful men and women but rather as pure and clean. The reality is that we still have evil in us; we will continue to sin even though we don't want to; and we will fight to our deaths the urge to do wrong against God. Our DNA hasn't changed; we're still completely human, old ways of thinking are still in there along with the knowledge of God, yet the Father chooses to see us free of sin; He sees us as justified regardless of the physical reality. Another way God chooses to see gentile Believers is as those who possess the attributes of the people that were intended to embody the heavenly ideal: Israel. We're not Jews, but in a certain sense He chooses to see us that way.

We are reminded again and again in the Bible of what a debt of gratitude we gentile Believers owe Israel. Not only a FEELING of gratitude but an action of EXPRESSING that gratitude in tangible ways. Tonight take a half-hour and read through Romans 9, 10, and 11. Read these chapters one right after the other....completely disregard the chapter markers, as Romans is just one long letter. Put aside all the allegorical teaching you have likely received about these chapters; instead take it all at face value, just as it was intended to be taken. It will make this spiritual grafting process of gentiles into Israel quite clear and unequivocal to you.

Let me state something else, here: an everlasting God principal is being made visible and plain by means of the Brazen Altar for all to see and it is this: without a blood sacrifice there is NO atonement for sin. The constant day-in day-out sacrificing at the Altar was a visible and awful reminder to the people of Israel of this principle. I suspect, though, that just as some of us can speak of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself in a kind of removed, matter-of-fact way, perhaps some of those Israelites were not choking back tears caused by the pitiful bleating of those countless, harmless, innocent cattle, sheep, and goats that were slaughtered on their behalf. Or the millions of birds that had their necks wrung, and those enormous bulls that had to be wrestled and tied up as they resisted having their throats slit and their lives ended. But to the average Israelite who regularly witnessed the sacrificial process, it must have resulted in a most bittersweet understanding of the truth of it all.....there is NO atonement for sin without a blood sacrifice. The bitterness was in the reality of the seemingly endless stream of blood that flowed from that Altar; the sweetness was in knowing that this was all arranged by a most merciful God so that THEIR own lives could be spared, and so that they could have an ongoing relationship with the Holy God of the Universe.....but what a great cost.

Perhaps that Mel Gibson film, the Passion, was the modern-day visual element we needed to help us to understand the horror of Yeshua's last hours of life. I know I winced and often turned my face away, tried not to see His blood, His sacrificial blood, splattered and smeared

all over the pavement. But, folks, that is the horrible truth about sacrifice; sacrifice is not lovely. Those animals' deaths on the Altar were not peaceful and easy and sterile, nor done in private. They were noisy, and messy, and foul smelling and often gut wrenching. Those who brought their animals to sacrifice either had to do the deed themselves, or in conjunction with, the Priest. There was no shrinking away from it, no separating themselves, no hiding from their duty. Their sin, OUR sin, brings a dreadful price with it. Thank God there is no further need for a Brazen Altar.

Beginning in vs. 20, the fuel for the Tabernacle's menorah is discussed. It is to be from pure olive oil, refined so as to be the very best. Here is the instruction that the lights of that Menorah are to burn day and night. And it is reiterated that the Menorah is to be placed OUTSIDE of the curtain, the veil, the parokhet that separates the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.....in other words, its to be placed in the Holy Place, and that Aaron and his sons are to tend to it. Let me just mention that Aaron does NOT represent the entire Levite tribe. He is but one of several clans within the tribe of Levi. Other Levite clans will be selected for certain kinds of service, duties, for the Tabernacle. For instance, ONLY from Aaron's direct descendants can the High Priest come. Just as much, those who tend the Menorah must ALSO come from Aaron's line. Other clans of Levites will be identified as responsible for other specific duties.

Notice in the last verse of chapter 27 that the use of the Menorah, and that specific clan of Levites who have been assigned to tend to it, are to be a permanent regulation. Obviously, however, there were at least two times in Israel's history when this regulation was simply undoable: the 1st was during their exile to Babylon, and the 2nd began with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and continues until today. The time is near when the Temple is going to be rebuilt, in Jerusalem, on the Temple Mount that today is occupied by a Muslim Mosque, and the Menorah will once again burn. But, the only reason for Believers to hope for this incredible event to happen is because it means that the return of Christ will be literally but weeks and months away, as will be the end of the world as we know it. That Temple is going to happen **because** of the disbelief of the Jewish people. Disbelief that Christ has atoned for our sins, once and for all, almost 2000 years ago. Disbelief that the spirit of the Living God, lives in us....not in some fancy building. Disbelief that the Temple, and before that the Tabernacle, were but copies, shadows, of the REAL thing.....and Yeshua Ha-Mashiach is the real thing.

READ CHAPTER 28:1-5

After much preparation, Yehoveh makes the somewhat anti-climactic pronouncement that Aaron, and his sons Nadav, Avihu, Eleazar, and Itamar have been chosen and set-apart to be "cohanim", priests.

At the same time, God instructs Moses that special garments are to be made for these priests, which also sets them apart from everyone else. We're told in vs. 2 that Aaron's clothing, in light of his exalted position as the first High Priest, are to be more than special; they are to reflect, as far as is possible, God's own glory, and dignity, and splendor.

Special clothing used for the priestly sect was nothing new to the various Middle Eastern cultures. But, it WAS new for Israel, because up to this point in their history....by now the line of

Israel, Jacob, was about 6 centuries old.....they HAD no official priests. Whatever their worship had been until the Exodus and Mt. Sinai, it must have been very simple, personal, and frankly, rather unfocused. The Hebrews were subjected to Egypt's gods and religious system for most of their history as a people, and therefore they adopted, somewhat subconsciously I suppose, the general understanding of how gods and religion worked. That is, the Egyptian religious system became the lens through which Israel viewed the spirit world. So it is no wonder that Yehoveh was so precise, definite, and uncompromising in His instructions to Israel of just what true worship was to consist of, and what it was NOT to consist of. Of what true justice is, and is not. And, who God is, that He is one, and that each people or nation did NOT have their own real and actual god, dedicated just to them. It took many years after Mt. Sinai for Israel to get all this reasonably straight. And, still, all throughout their history right on up to Christ, they had grievous lapses into idolatry.

Now that Yehoveh has designated that part of Israel, the tribe of Levi, that was to be set aside for service to Him, His priests, He left little detail of worship and service to be decided by men; even right down to what the priests were to wear. Now, let me be clear: these garments were to be worn ONLY during the Levites' time of service in the Tabernacle. When they were not on duty, they wore what everyone else wore.

We're going to look primarily at what the High Priest wore, because his garments were incredibly full of teaching and symbolism; and because all throughout the Old and New Testaments, we will hear of certain pieces of his uniform each of which carried very definite meanings. Let me tell you right upfront, that the High Priest's garments were very prophetic, as well.

Before we do that, though, let's just get a general understanding of what the regular Levite priests wore: it was a very simple white linen outfit. It consisted of a tunic, a turban hat called a mitre, a belt-like accessory called a girdle, and breeches (pants that often served like underwear). White symbolized righteousness and purity.

Next week we will look at what the High Priest was assigned to wear.