



**Arc of the Covenant**

Dear Mishpochah,

### **God in a Tent**

The season of traveling is upon us. Americans all across the USA load their suitcases, duffel bags, camping equipment, CDs, cooler chests and children into cars, SUVs, trains, trailers and planes and go on vacation. Their home is "on the road," sometimes even on top of their head as huge loads of baggage are strapped to the top of vehicles. We become a portable society two months a year.

Now think of the ancient Israelites in 1,500 B.C. Following their departure from Egypt, they embarked on an extended "camping " vacation of 40 years. During the entire time of their wandering in a desert wilderness, God's people carried **all** their belongings with them. They lived in tents, temporary dwellings, and so did God. The structure in which God chose to dwell was the Tabernacle. This is the topic of one of our newest **Jewish Jewels** TV programs, produced in May, and our subject to share with you this month.

### **The Tabernacle**

We were fascinated to discover that over 50 chapters of the Bible deal with the Tabernacle. More chapters are devoted to this subject than to any other single Biblical subject. (Exodus- 13 chapters, Leviticus - 18 chapters, Numbers- 13 chapters, Deuteronomy- 2 chapters, Hebrews- 4 chapters) That tells us that the Tabernacle is very important to God, and has some vital spiritual lessons for us.

After Moses had been on Mt. Sinai with God for 40 days and 40 nights, the Lord spoke to him about the Tabernacle. The children of Israel were to bring offerings to God for the construction of this portable sanctuary. These offerings, to be given willingly from the heart, included gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple and scarlet yarn, fine linen thread, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, badger skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, sweet incense and precious stones. The Lord explained the purpose of the Tabernacle as follows: *"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."* (Exodus 25:8) God's people would be dwelling in tents. So would He. He wanted to be with them. In fact, He placed Himself right in the center of their camp. The message here is

obvious: God desires to be at the center of our lives, to have intimacy with us, even when we're "on the road."

## A God of Details

If you begin reading in Exodus chapter 25, you will notice the incredibly detailed way in which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob specified that His people were to worship Him. We read in Exodus 25:9: "*According to all that I show you, that is the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.*" As Lawrence Duff-Forbes so eloquently states in his book **Moments with the Mishkan**: "Think of it! A Law which claimed God Himself as its Author, Authority and Announcer, followed by a structure which equally claimed God Himself as its Designer, Decorator and Director."

Before we look at the structure that God specified, we want to define a couple of Hebrew words that we will use instead of the English word Tabernacle. The first of these words is *mikdash* (pronounced mick-DAHSH) and is Hebrew for the English word "sanctuary" found in Exodus 25:8. It refers to a holy or sacred place. The next word is *mishkan* (pronounced mish-KAHN), the Hebrew for the English word "tabernacle" found in Exodus 25:9. The Hebrew root of *mishkan* means "dwelling." When we juxtapose these two Hebrew words, we see that the Tabernacle was to be a holy, sacred dwelling place for the eternal God. God wanted to dwell among His people in a holy place. His desire has never changed. This is still God's heart-cry today! As we mentioned in "The Tabernacle" TV program, the miracle is that a Holy God would want to dwell among unholy people like us! (Order a copy of the program. You'll be blessed!)

Now for the pattern: The *mishkan* was made up of a tent with a courtyard (like a house with a porch). It was oblong, 30 cubits long by 10 cubits wide, about 45' x 15'. Screens of white open-weaved linen surrounded the *mishkan* on all sides. There was a door (gate) on the eastern side. The children of Israel camped around the *mishkan*, three tribes on the north, three on the south, three on the east and three on the west. Above the tent of meeting, there was a supernatural manifestation of the presence of God in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. What a dramatic spectacle that must have been! What a reassurance and constant reminder to the Israelites that God was with them!

## The Outer Court

Inside the white linen screened enclosure, there was an outer court where the Israelites brought their offerings. This was the only part of the *mishkan* which the people were allowed to enter. The first structure inside the linen enclosure was the altar, in Hebrew *mizbeach* (pronounced miz-BAY-ock). Details of the altar are found in Exodus chapters 27 and 38. Made of wood, covered with copper, the *mizbeach* had four projections or horns at its four corners. The altar was used for animal sacrifices. The very word *mizbeach* comes from the Hebrew root *zabach* which means to "slaughter for sacrifice." There is deep symbolic meaning in this: the first step in approaching God has to do with a sacrifice, specifically a blood sacrifice. Even the ancient rabbis of Israel declared that the separate parts of the *mishkan* had symbolic significance. As Lawrence Duff-Forbes points out in his book (p. 27): "Because of a reference in the first chapter of Malachi to the altar as being also God's "table," as well as the place of worship and approach through blood sacrifice, our rabbis also regarded the altar as a symbol of mediation, and designated it by the term *Paraclete* which means "an intercessor, a mediator."

Another interesting thought concerning the *mizbeach*: the altar and the ramp going up to the altar had to be made of uncut stones. Why? No human effort or merit is acceptable when approaching

a holy God. Man's salvation and reconciliation with God is based solely on God's mercy and grace.

The next structure in the outer court was the laver, in Hebrew *kior* (pronounced kee-OR). This large copper basin filled with water was the place where the *cohanim*, the priests, washed their hands and feet before ministering to God. The *kior* was made entirely of the highly polished, beautifully ornamented metal which the women used as mirrors (Exodus 38:8). The mirror, in ancient Jewish tradition, was a symbol of regeneration and new life (connected with women, their attractiveness, their husbands' desires for them, and the children that would bless their union). The laver, then, is symbolic of regeneration associated with the washing of purification. First the blood, then the water. This same pattern was seen in Egypt, and later in the New Covenant with salvation through the acceptance of Yeshua's blood sacrifice, followed by immersion in the waters of the *mikveh*.

## The Holy Place

The next section of the *mishkan* was behind a beautiful veil of purple, blue and scarlet. This area was called the Holy Place, *Ha Kodesh*, in Hebrew (pronounced Ha KO-desh). Only the priests were allowed to enter this part of the *mishkan*! The Holy Place contained three pieces of furniture. The first was the Table of Shewbread, *shulchan lechem ha panim* (pronounced shool-CHAN LEY-chem ha pa-NEEM). This table, overlaid with gold, held 12 loaves of bread in two rows. The word used to describe this bread is *lechem panim*, literally bread of faces or bread of His Presence. This bread was to be continually in the Holy Place and thus is also labeled "continual bread" (Numbers 4:7). The symbolic meaning? Ancient Jewish tradition regarded the "Bread of the Faces" as the symbol of the Messiah. God did indeed reveal His presence, His "faces," to each of the twelve tribes of Israel in the person of Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel and the world.

The golden lampstand, *menorah*, in Hebrew (pronounced me-no-RAH) was opposite the Table of Shewbread. (See Exodus 25 & 37 for its description.) This seven-branched *menorah* is the emblem of the State of Israel today. It was fashioned of pure gold, ornamented with golden cups made like almond blossoms. It is believed by some that the central light was to burn continually and from it the other six were kindled each evening. Exodus 27:20 does make it clear that the lamp was to burn continually. Symbolism? God is light. Light gives revelation. Man must draw his light from the central shaft, God/Yeshua, the Light of the world.

Finally, the Golden Altar of Incense, *mizbeach ha zahav* (pronounced miz-BAY-ach ha za-HAV). This is where the priests or *cohanim* burned incense to the Lord as directed by God in Exodus 30:7-8. Once a year, on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the *Cohen Gadol*, the High Priest, sprinkled the horns of the *mizbeach ha zahav* with the blood of the sin-offering (Exodus 30:10). Symbolism? Ancient Jewish tradition identifies the Altar with the Messiah. The rabbis said that seven things were created before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Among the seven was the Altar in the Celestial Sanctuary directly in front of the Deity, having a jewel upon it engraved with the Name of the Messiah (Tehillim 90,391). We know that Yeshua, our High Priest, and Messiah offered His own blood on the altar for our sin (Hebrews 9:11,12). Like the high priests in the *mishkan*, He is also a divinely-ordained Mediator. The final one!

## The Holy of Holies

The Holy of Holies, *Kodesh ha Kodashim* (pronounce KO-desh ha ko-da-SHEEM), was divided from the Holy Place by a veil (Exodus 26:31-35). The Hebrew word *Parochet* (pa-RO-chet)

translated into English as "veil" comes from a Hebrew root which means to break apart or fracture. This reminds us of the fracture between God and man due to sin. We love how Mr. Duff-Forbes explains the veil: "But, my friends, be of good cheer, the veil was not the final wall. So close, so very close, just behind it, was the loving, living God of Israel dwelling in the midst of His people. There to protect, there to guide, there to encourage, there to sustain, there to commune. Then as always—even today!"

The High Priest went through the veil into the *Kodesh ha Kodashim* once a year, sprinkling blood eight times, (symbolic of a new beginning). He was the only one allowed into the *Kodesh ha Kodashim*. The room he entered was a perfect cube of 15 cubits. Inside it was the Holy Ark, the *Aron Ha Kodesh* (pronounced ah-RON ha KO-desh), a golden box that contained three things: the tablets of the Law (*Torah*), a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that had budded. The ark was overshadowed by two golden cherubim. The whole Tabernacle actually was wrapped around the ark. It was the first and most important furnishing described by the God of Israel to his servant Moses (Exodus 25). The *Aron Ha Kodesh* had seven different names: the Ark of Shittim Wood, the Ark of Testimony, the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark of the Eternal, the Ark of the Covenant of the Eternal, the Ark of God, and the Ark of the God of Israel. The lid of the *Aron Ha Kodesh*, the mercy seat, was called in Hebrew *kapporet*, (pronounced ka-POOR-et). The Torah tells us that God spoke to His people from above the *kapporet* from between the cherubim (Exodus 25:22). The actual Divine Presence of God, His *shekinah* (pronounced sh'chee-NAH), resided in this part of the *mishkan*. What about the contents of the *Aron Ha Kodesh*? In brief, their symbolism is as follows: The Ten Commandments symbolized the Law of God. The golden pot of manna symbolized the Love of God. Aaron's rod that budded symbolized the Life of God. To hear the "whole megillah (story)," order the **Jewish Jewels** video "The Tabernacle!" Space does not allow us to delve into all the details, but one point must be covered before we close. Access to the *Kodesh Ha Kodashim* and the presence of God has been made available to "whosoever will." Historical records show that at the moment Yeshua of Nazareth died on the cross, the huge veil in The Temple in Jerusalem that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies supernaturally split in two (Mark 15:37-38). God had made a way for all of us to experience His presence. No more veil. No more separation. Intimacy with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was now possible through Yeshua Ha Mashiach, our High Priest (Hebrews 6:19).

## Parallel Pattern in John

It is interesting to note that the pattern which God gave Moses at Mt. Sinai is the same pattern which He gave Yohanan (John) in his gospel:

**mizbeach:** "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

**kior:** "You must be born again." (John 3:7)

**lechem ha panim:** "I Am the Bread of Life." (John 4-6)

**menorah:** "I Am the Light of the World." (John 8-9)

**mizbeach ha zahav:** Yeshua our interceding High Priest (John 14-16)

**Kodesh ha Kodashim:** The promised Messiah in Whom was the perfect Law of God, Love of God, and resurrection Life of God (John 17)

**shekinah:** The presence of God—His Ruach Ha Kodesh, given to Yeshua's talmidim (John 20)

Isn't the Bible fascinating? Read it with fresh expectation this summer!

### **A Summer blessing for our partners:**

*As you travel, may the Lord be your shade by day,  
and light by night. May His Shekinah envelop you  
as He leads you to the destination of His choice.  
May the Law of God, the Love of God and Life of  
God be your portion this summer as never before.  
May **you** become the Aron ha Kodesh, an earthly  
box with a divine treasure on the inside!*

In Yeshua's Love,

Neil & Jamie

P.S. God bless you for giving willingly from the heart according to Exodus 25 so that the work of Jewish Jewels can continue in the hot summer harvest field!

### **SPECIAL OFFERS**

In addition to our brand new ***Jewish Jewels*** video entitled "**The Tabernacle**," we are also recommending **The Kregel Pictorial Guide to the Tabernacle**. This fully illustrated, four-color pictorial guide uncovers the significance, services, symbols and sacrifices of the tabernacle contained within 32 pages; clear, colorful illustrations—useful for individual or group study.

And to help you enter into the ark of His Presence, we highly recommend Paul Wilbur's album entitled "**Holy Fire**." Paul Wilbur himself says, "*These songs are the cries of the people of God for His presence and power...Lord, we're hungry for Your presence and we're thirsty for Your righteousness. Come visit us, fill us, and use us for Your glory.*" The songs "Draw Me Lord" and "He Binds the Broken Hearted" will especially minister as the Holy Spirit draws you closer and touches the deepest recesses of your heart.

And last but certainly not least, we are pleased to offer you a limited edition and exquisite sculpture of the **Ark of the Covenant** crafted in Israel in Sterling Silver and gold plate, standing on marble. This beautiful replica is priced especially for our one time offer for you. Available in 2 sizes: 7" L x 3.5"W x 5"H for \$110 and 13"L x 6"W x 10"H for \$215. **(See image on top of this page.)** Pricing includes shipping and handling. This lovely artifact is sold elsewhere for \$250-\$400.