

The Tabernacle

By

Roger W. Peak, PM

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Background

While in Midian, God told Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. However, first the Egyptians would have to suffer through ten plagues before they would allow the Hebrews to leave the country. Eventually, the Egyptians allowed the Hebrews to leave, they make their Exodus, and eventually arrive at Mt. Horeb. At this location, God gives Moses the laws by which the Israelites would govern themselves. While Moses is receiving the laws, the Israelites erect a Golden Calf.

Moses continued to beg God to forgive the children of Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf. Eventually, God effected a pardon; but that did not satisfy Moses. He asked, "How will it be apparent to the nations of the world that You have actually forgiven the Bnai Yisrael?" God replied that he would let the Jewish people construct a Tabernacle on which they will offer sacrifices that He would accept. "This will be public proof of My renewed love for My people!" God continued, "Let them make for Me a Sanctuary, so that I shall dwell in their midst." Moses queried, "How can You, Whose Glory fills heaven and earth, dwell in a humble abode which we erect for You?" God responded by saying that He did not need to reside in the entire tabernacle, that He would confine His Divine presence to one cubit, the rods between the holy Ark.¹

God told Moses to gather the following items from which they would construct His sanctuary. This is summarized from Exodus 25: 1-9.

¹ Weissman, Moshe, The Midrash Says: The Book of Sh'mos, Bnay Yakov Publications, New York, 1980, p. 237-8.

- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze
- Blue, purple, and scarlet material
- Fine linen
- Goat's hair
- Rams skin dyed red
- Porpoise skins
- Acacia wood
- Oil for lighting
- Spices for anointing oil and fragrant incense
- Onyz stones
- Setting stones for ephod and breastpiece

Architect

God told Moses how to construct the Tabernacle and showed him the diagram and structure of its components during his stay in Heaven. God also said, "Your task is to be a leader and not a craftsman!" When Moses asked who would be the builder, God told him that Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur has been assigned that task.² "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship." (Exodus 31:1-5)

Bezalel was the great-grandson of Moses' sister Miriam, who was rewarded with a descendant who knew how to build the Tabernacle as a reward for her fear of God that prompted her to disobey Pharaoh's order to murder the Jewish newborn in Egypt. As he was only thirteen years old, Moses wondered how someone so young could erect the Tabernacle. God showed Moses

² *Ibid.*, p. 308-9.

the book that he first showed to Adam. This book recorded the Jewish kings, leaders and prophets until the Messiah. Bezalel was recorded as the builder of the Tabernacle, and God told Moses that he was destined for this task since Creation.³

Moses introduced Bezalel to the people as the architect of the Tabernacle and asked them, "Do you agree to Bezalel's becoming the builder?" They responded, "If he is worthy in Hashem's eyes and in yours he is certainly good in ours." Moses commanded Bezalel, "First build the aron, then the other vessels, and finally the tent of the Mishkan." However, Bezalel explained that it would be better to build the Tabernacle, then the ark, and the other accessories. Moses agreed with the argument.

"And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you." (Exodus 31:6) Dan was the lowliest of the Tribes, and was selected by God to teach the Jews that both the great and the small are equal in His eyes.⁴

The scriptures appear to give Betzalel all the credit for building the Tabernacle. This is because Betzalel also studied the meaning behind each object, and God rewarded him as the spiritual maker of each implement.⁵

Materials

God instructed Moses to appoint fund-raisers to collect material for the Tabernacle. "Contributions will be accepted from any Jew whose heart prompts him to participate." However, the Egyptian proselytes who joined the Jewish people in the Exodus were excluded

³ Ibid., p. 309.

⁴ Ibid., p. 309-310.

⁵ Ibid., p. 353.

from donating anything because the Sin of the Golden Calf made them unworthy.⁶

Each item was selected to atone for a specific sin or to provide the children of Israel with a blessing for donating it. The following materials were collected:

- Gold would atone for the gold that was wrongly contributed for the Golden Calf.
- Silver would atone for the sale of Joseph who was exchanged for twenty silver pieces.
- Copper would atone for the dross and impurities in their hearts.
- Wool dyed sky blue with the blood of the chilazon would atone for the offense of omitting blue fringes on the headplate of priestly garments.
- Wool dyed crimson because the children of Israel would eventually merit the building of the holy Temple in Jerusalem that is described as having a crimson seat.
- Red purple would atone for their transgressions.
- Fine white linen indicates that the children of Israel would serve God like the Ministering Angels who are described as wearing linen.
- Goats' hair so that the chatas-offerings of goats on the altar would take effect and atone for their misdeeds.
- Rams' skins dyed red to merit experiencing the arrival of the Messiah who is alluded to appearing in red garments.
- Multi-colored unicorn skins because God promised to make unicorn shoes following the arrival of the Messiah.
- Cedar wood from the Shittim cedar to merit Yeshayahu's prophecy to convert the desert into a fruitful land growing Shittim trees.
- Oil for lighting so that their light would shine in the Messiah's time.
- Spices for incense so that the children of Israel would be worthy of experiencing the Messiah in which they are described as rising up from the wilderness like columns

⁶ Ibid., p. 239.

of smoke spiced with myrrh and frankincense.

- Shoham stones and stones for the setting in the apron and breastplate to merit the fulfillment of the Almighty's promise that He will rebuild Jerusalem with pearls and precious stones.⁷

The Israelites donated gold, silver, and also their personal jewelry. The women who refused to give any jewelry for the Golden Calf were eager to contribute all of their jewelry to the Tabernacle. Enough supplies were collected in only two days, and donations continued so overwhelmingly that the fundraisers had to tell the people to stop.⁸

Moses questioned God about whether there were sufficient materials to build the Tabernacle in the desert. God responded, "Not only do the *Bnai Yisrael* possess the necessary materials to build a *Mishkan*, but, in fact, every Jew could do so singlehandedly [sic]."⁹

God said to Moses, "Let every skillful man among you come, and make all that the LORD has commanded. (Exodus 35:10) In Exodus 35:11-19, God listed the items that he commanded the Israelites to build:

- Tabernacle with tent and covering, hooks, boards, bars, pillars, sockets, and pegs;
- Ark with poles, mercy seat, and curtain of the screen;
- Table with poles, utensils, and bread of the Presence;
- Lampstand with utensils, lamps, and oil;
- Altar of incense with poles, anointing oil, fragrant incense, and screen for doorway;
- Altar of burnt offering with bronze grating, poles, utensils, basin, and stand;
- Hangings with pillars, sockets, and screen for gate of the court; and

⁷ Ibid., p. 239-42.

⁸ Ibid., p. 351.

⁹ Ibid., p. 239.

- Woven garments for ministers, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

Moses assembled the Jewish people on the day following Yom Kippur and told them, "Work may be performed during the six weekdays. However, on the seventh, you must refrain from all labor." Moses taught the detailed Jewish law of the 39 principal Labors forbidden on the Sabbath. He warned, "One who violates the *Shabbas* in spite of having been warned and in the presence of two witnesses will incur capital punishment." God commanded Moses to keep the Sabbath before instructing them in the building of the Tabernacle. This was done to signify that the Sabbath was not to be neglected because of the building of the Tabernacle.¹⁰

The earthly tabernacle is a reflection of God's Heavenly tabernacle. The parallel between the Tabernacle and universe include the following:

- The upper and lower curtains resemble heaven and earth.
- The water of the laver corresponds to the water on earth.
- The mizbach haola represents the animals of the world.
- The mizbach hak'tores symbolizes all the spices.
- The menorah represents the sun and moon.
- The seven lamps of the menorah correspond to the constellations of the seven stars, which represent the course of all natural events in the universe.

The structure of the tabernacle also represents the human body. Note the following parallels:

- The ark corresponds to the heart.
- The angels that spread their wings over the ark correspond to the lungs.
- The table represents the stomach.
- The menorah represents the human mind.
- The incense corresponds to the sense of smell.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 347-8.

- The laver suggests the blood in the human body.
- The curtains of goat-skin correspond to a person's skin.
- The beams symbolize the ribs.

This teaches Jews that their sanctification becomes a dwelling place for the Divine presence.¹¹

The Torah gives five accounts of the building of the Tabernacle because God considers it important. They are noted as follows:

- The commandments are detailed in parsha Teruma
- The commandments are explained generally in Exodus 31:1-11
- The instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle are explained in parsha Vayakhel
- The construction of each vessel is mentioned separately in Exodus 39:33-43
- The vessels are enumerated after their completion and when they were brought to Moses

There is a reward for studying the layout of the Tabernacle and its vessels, and understanding the symbolic significance. Someone who studies the chapters about the Tabernacle is treated as though having assisted in the actual construction.¹²

Layout of Tabernacle and Courtyard

The Tabernacle was situated in the western part of a large courtyard and consisted of two parts; the Tent of Meeting and the Holy of Holies. The two parts were separated by a Dividing Curtain. The Table, menorah, and Golden Altar for Incense were located in the Tent of Meeting. The Ark was located in the Holy of Holies. The courtyard was enclosed by poles on which pieces of finely twined linen was suspended. A

¹¹ Ibid., p. 243-4.

¹² Ibid., p. 349-50.

beautiful curtain was hung next to the entrance of the courtyard.¹³

The major components of the tabernacle represent the components of the children of Israel:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Symbolism</u>
Ark	Torah scholar
Table	monarchs
Mizbach hazahav	Jewish priest officiating in the sanctuary
Menorah	wise Torah-leaders
Mizbach haolah	Jewish people, including the above groups ¹⁴

Holy of Holies

Ark

God described to Moses the structure of the holy Ark; however, Moses did not understand how the ark was to appear, so God caused a model ark of fire to descend from Heaven.¹⁵ The instructions of the ark are summarized below as stated in Exodus 25:10-16.

- Acacia wood
- Length – 2 ½ cubits
- Width – 1 ½ cubits
- Height – 1 ½ cubits
- Overlay with gold
- Put two rings on each side
- Insert poles through the rings
- Place the testimony into the ark

The ark was made of three chests. The innermost chest was made of gold. It fit into a slightly larger chest made of wood. The second box lay within the largest chest covered in gold. The upper edge of the outer golden chest was surrounded with a decorative golden rim. The

¹³ Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 269-70.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

ark symbolized the Torah, and the rim represented the Crown of Torah study.¹⁶

God continued with instructions for the mercy seat (Exodus 25:17):

- Pure gold
- Length – 2 ½ cubits
- Width – 1 ½ cubits

God also provided instructions for the cherubim (Exodus 25:18-20):

- Hammered work of gold at both ends of the mercy seat
- Place one cherubim at each end of one piece
- Spread the wings of the cherubim upward, and covering the mercy seat
- The cherubim should face each other and turned toward the mercy seat

God continued, “You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.” (Exodus 25:21-22)

God also commanded Moses to hew from a large chunk of gold the cover of the ark and the angels upon the ark. The cover should be the same length and width as the ark and about 4 inches thick. The angels were to emerge from the cover of the ark, face each other, and spread their wings over the ark. The gold cover of the ark symbolizes atonement for the Jewish people’s transgression of having donated gold to the angel. God specifically commanded the construction of the angels even though the law prohibits the making of statues.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 253.

The angels were placed on the ark on earth just as angels surround the Throne of Glory in Heaven. God told Moses that His Divine presence would reside between the angels, and that His voice would emanate from there.¹⁸

Tent of Meeting

Table

God also commanded Moses to make a table of cedar. It was to be forty-eight inches long, 24 inches wide and 40 inches high. It was to be overlaid with gold, and surrounded by a golden rim. It was to be carried by two bars slipped through four rings on its sides. Again, Moses could not visualize the table until God showed him a Heavenly vision of a table of fire.¹⁹ The instructions for building the table is summarized below from Exodus 25:23-29.

- Acacia wood
- Length – 2 cubits
- Width – 1 cubit
- Height – 1 ½ cubits
- Overlay with pure gold
- Add gold border
- Put gold rings on each corner
- Make poles of acacia wood, and overlay with gold, to carry the table
- Make dishes, pans, jars, and bowls of pure gold

“You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times. (Exodus 25:30) God commanded Moses to place twelve loaves of showbread on the table. God also commanded, “Let there be bread on the Table constantly!” New loaves were placed on the table as soon as the old ones had been removed because the table was never allowed to be empty. This was because the Table was the

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 253-4.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 255-6.

medium through which the blessing of nourishment flowed to the entire world.²⁰

Lampstand

God commanded Moses to make a menorah. “Fashion out of a single *kikar* of gold a *menora* which possesses seven branches. The central branch shall extend downward to meet the base. Each branch shall be adorned with three goblets, an ornamental knob and a flower, while on the middle branch four goblets, five knobs and three flowers shall appear.” God again showed Moses a Heavenly vision of a menorah, and explained to him its construction.²¹

The menorah represents Torah-wisdom that is compared to light. The Book of Proverbs says, “For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light.” (Proverbs 6:23a) A lamp will not shine unless it is lit. Similarly, one cannot observe the Divine precepts correctly unless he studies the Torah.²²

The symbolism of the menorah is further explained:

- It was hewn in one piece symbolizing that the Torah is one.
- It was made of pure gold to symbolize that God’s word is pure and unaccompanied by rubbish.
- The seven arms represent the seven Books of Torah. Others explain that the six arms represent the six tractates of the Mishna and the center branch stands for the fear of God that is the basis for studying the Torah.
- The twenty-two goblets correspond to the twenty-two letters that comprise the Torah.
- The menorah was placed in the south of the Tabernacle because the Sages said, “Wisdom is found in the south.” It was placed opposite the Table to indicate that

²⁰ Ibid., p. 256-9.

²¹ Ibid., p. 261-2.

²² Ibid., p. 262.

material support is needed for Torah-wisdom to flourish.²³

Curtains

The covering of the Tabernacle consisted of several layers of tapestries. In addition to forming the roof, they hung down over the sides to cover the boards.²⁴

Linen

A description of the linens God commanded the Israelites to make are explained in Exodus 26:1-6. They are summarized below.

- 10 curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material
- Length – 28 cubits
- Width – 4 cubits
- Join 5 curtains to each other to make 2 sets of five
- Put 50 loops of blue on the outermost edge of both sets
- Make 50 clasps of gold of each set to join the curtains together

This innermost layer of tapestry was made of sky-blue wool. Those looking up at the ceiling would seem to be looking at the blue sky. The golden buttons fastening the tapestries together even looked like stars.²⁵

Goats' Hair

God commanded that the sky-blue tapestries be covered by a layer of goats’ hair to teach people to treat their valuable objects with care to prevent ruining them.²⁶ His instructions for the curtains of goats hair are summarized as explained in Exodus 26:7-11:

²³ Ibid., p. 264.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 268.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 268.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 268.

- Make 11 curtains
- Length – 30 cubits
- Width – 4 cubits
- Join 5 curtains together
- Join 6 curtains together and double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent
- Make 50 loops on each outermost set of curtains
- Make 50 clasps of bronze and insert them in the loops

The Veil and Screen

God gave instructions for making the veil. It is summarized from Exodus 26:31-32:

- Make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen
- Make with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman
- Hang on 4 pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with gold hooks, and 4 sockets of silver

God also gave instructions for making the screen for the doorway of the tent. They are summarized from Exodus 26:36-37:

- Make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen
- Make with the work of a weaver
- Make 5 pillars of acacia for the screen and overlay with gold with gold hooks
- Cast five sockets of bronze

Frames

Jacob had planted cedar trees in Egypt. He instructed his sons to take the cedar wood when they leave Egypt because he knew that God would command the children of Israel to build Him a dwelling place of cedar wood. The boards symbolized the Messiah who would unite all the nations of the world.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid., p. 265.

God provided instructions for making the frames for the Tabernacle. They are summarized below from Exodus 26:15-15.

- Acacia wood
- Total of 54 boards; 20 for south, 20 for north, 6 for west, 8 for east
- Length – 10 cubits
- Width – 1 ½ cubits
- Fit two tenons for 48 boards
- Put two sockets on the boards for the tenons

Moses also received instructions for the boards of the Tabernacle. They are summarized from Exodus 26:26-29.

- Make 15 bars of acacia wood overlaid with gold
- Put 5 bars on each side, and 5 bars on the rear
- Make rings of gold to hold the bars

Copper Altar

God gave instructions to Moses for the copper altar. That information is summarized below from Exodus 27:1-8.

- Acacia wood
- Length – 5 cubits
- Width – 5 cubits
- Height – 3 cubits
- Put horns on four corners, and overlay them with bronze
- Make pails, shovels, basins, forks, firepans of bronze
- Make grating of network of bronze with four bronze rings at the four corners, and place under altar
- Make poles of acacia and overlay with bronze
- Insert poles into the rings for transporting the altar

A ramp led to the altar because God forbade anyone to ascend to the altar by steps.²⁸

This was called with Altar of Olah-Sacrifices because sacrifices were offered. It was also called:

- The Copper Altar because it was overlaid with copper;
- The Earthen Altar because it was built hollow inside and was filled with earth when the Israelites camped; and
- The Exterior Altar because it was placed in the courtyard of the Tabernacle.²⁹

The acacia-wood is a reminder that Abraham waited on guests under a tree. It also atoned for their sinning with the angel. Copper atoned for the transgression of brazenness as described by the prophet Isaiah when he said “your forehead was bronze.” (Isaiah 48:4)³⁰

The length and breadth of five amos each signified the merits of the Jewish people accepting the Ten Commandments on two tablets of five Commandments each. The height of three *amos* represents the three great leaders: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.³¹ One *ama* (plural *amo*) equals one cubit or approximately 24 inches.

God commanded Moses, “A fire shall constantly burn on the altar.” When Moses objected that the fire would melt the copper layer and burn the altar, God told him that those rules only applied in the physical world, and not in His realm. Two other miracles occurred regarding the altar. Even though it was placed in the courtyard of the Tabernacle under the open sky, rain never extinguished the fire, and the

smoke always rose straight toward Heaven and was unaffected by the wind.³²

The purpose of the Tabernacle is reflected by its initials. It grants the Jewish people:

- Mechila forgiveness
- Zechus merit
- Bracha blessing
- Chayim life³³

The Copper Altar was built on a very special place on *Har Hamoria*. It was built on the same spot from which God took earth with which to create Adam; where Cain and Abel offered their sacrifice, where Noah built an altar after the Flood, and where Abraham tied Isaac to sacrifice his son to God.³⁴

Courtyard

God described to Moses the materials to hang in the courtyard. These are summarized from Exodus 27:9-18.

- South and North sides
- Fine twisted linen
- Length – 100 cubits on each side
- 20 pillars with silver bands on each side
- 20 bronze sockets on each side
- Silver hooks for pillars and bands

God describes the hangings for the east and west sides:

- West and east sides – 50 cubits with 10 pillars and 10 sockets
- Hangings for each side of gate – 15 cubits with 3 pillars and 3 sockets

Moses received additional details of the courtyard:

²⁸ Ibid., p. 270.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 269.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 269.

³¹ Ibid., p. 269.

³² Ibid., p. 270-1.

³³ Ibid., p. 271.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 271.

- Screen of 20 cubits of blue, purple, and scarlet material of fine twisted linen with 4 pillars and 4 sockets for the gate
- All pillars with silver bands and silver hooks and bronze sockets
- Length of court – 100 cubits
- Wide of court – 50 cubits
- Height – 5 cubits of fine twisted linen with bronze sockets

Oil for Lampstand

"You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel. (Exodus 27:20-21)

Only oil obtained from the first pressing of an olive was acceptable for the menorah. These first drops were perfectly clear and without sediment. Oil extracted from later pressings could not be used in the menorah, but could be used for *mincha*-offerings.³⁵

God selected olive oil for lighting rather than other oils for the following reasons:

- Just as olive oil is the finest of all oils, the Jewish people are the holiest of nations.
- Olive oil is obtained by beating and pressing the olive; the children of Israel were beaten, tied, tortured, and banished from one place to the next by the gentiles, and purified their hearts by returning to God.
- All liquids except oil will be blended into a single concoction when mixed. Oil remains separate. The Jewish people are the only nation in history that has not been swallowed up among the nations, and will keep its distinct identity.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

- Just as oil floats to the top in a mixture of different liquids, the Jewish people rise above other nations when they fulfill God's will.
- As oil illuminates the world, so does the wisdom that radiates through the holy temple in Jerusalem illuminate the entire world.³⁶

The priests refilled the lamps of the menorah every evening. One of the seven lamps, The Western Light, did not receive any more oil than the rest of the lamps, yet it was always to be found burning. This miracle was an indication of the presence of the Divine presence in the Jewish people.³⁷

Basin for Washing

God gave instructions to Moses for the basin for washing. Those instructions are summarized from Exodus 30:17-21.

- Make laver and base of bronze
- Place between tent of meeting and altar
- Fill basin with water
- Aaron and sons will wash with water when entering the tent of meeting, or ministering, or offering a fire sacrifice

Anointing Oil

God gave Moses instructed for making anointing oil. This is summarized from Exodus 30:22-38.

- 500 shekels myrrh
- 250 shekels cinnamon
- 250 shekels cane
- 500 shekels cassia
- hin of olive oil

The anointing oil was to be used to anoint and consecrate the tent of meeting, ark of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274-5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

testimony, table and all its utensils, lampstand and all its utensils, altar of incense, altar of burnt offering all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. God also directed the anointing oil to be used to consecrate Aaron and his sons.

God directed Moses to crush each spice separately, then blend them and soak them in water to absorb the aroma. Olive oil was added to the water, and the mixture was boiled evaporating the water until only the spiced oil remained. The oil was preserved in a flask to be used to anoint the kings of the dynasty of David.³⁸

The quantity of twelve log of oil was enough for all the generations. The flask was hid when the Temple was destroyed, and will be restored with the Messiah.³⁹

Incense

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each. "With it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. "You shall beat some of it very fine, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you. "The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. "Whoever shall make any like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people." (Exodus 30:34-38)

Moses prepared incense by blending eleven spices named by God. One of the spices, galbanum, emitted an offensive odor. God was telling the Hebrew people to include the transgressors among the people.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., p. 305-6.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 306.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 306.

Priests

God told Moses, "I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God." (Exodus 29:44-46)

During the Seven Inauguration Days of the Tabernacle, the priests were consecrated. "Hashem commanded Moshe, "Call the *kohanim* with encouraging words to become My servants. Tell them 'fortunate are you to be elected for the Almighty's service!'" The priests were to be holy until Him for all eternity. During this time the priests are to be dressed in the priestly garments, and they shall be undressed at the end of the day. They were to offer a sacrifice of a bullock and two rams each day. In addition, God commanded that a lamb be offered each morning and another lamb each afternoon.⁴¹

The first-born performed the service of God until the Sin of the Golden Calf. Subsequently, God commanded Aaron and his sons to perform His service instead. He commanded Moses to complete the building of the Tabernacle, and then take Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar to become priests. Moses was grieved that his sons were not selected as priests and considered Aaron unworthy of becoming a high priest because of his participation in building the Golden Calf. However, God told Moses, "Your brother Aharon's children are like your own. He detained the Jews until you would return from the mountain." Aaron was selected as a high priest because he spent much time studying the Torah.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 299.

⁴² Ibid., p. 277-8.

Priestly Clothing

God informed Moses of the garments to be made for the priests.

"Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me--Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet material and the fine linen." (Exodus 18:1-5)

The garments worn by the priests atoned for a particular sin of the Jewish people.⁴³ The following garments were made of white linen:

- Shirt
- Breeches
- Belt
- Turban⁴⁴

The shirt atoned for murders that were not punishable by Jewish court of law because of the absence of two witnesses. It was chosen for this sin because Genesis 37:31 states, "So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood."⁴⁵ The shirt had a checkered design with sleeves woven

⁴³ Ibid., p. 280.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 280.

separately and sewn to it. It extended down to the priest's soles.⁴⁶

The breeches atoned for immorality.⁴⁷ They were short and covered by the shirt.⁴⁸

The turban atoned for the sin of holding the head too high and becoming arrogant.⁴⁹ It "consisted of a long ribbon of white linen that was wound around the *kohain's* head several times."⁵⁰

The belt was worn over the heart and atoned for improper thoughts of the heart.⁵¹ It was woven from four different kinds of material and wound around the waist over the shirt.⁵²

High priests wore an additional four golden garments:

- Apron
- Mantle
- Breastplate
- Headplate⁵³

Mantle

The mantle atoned for an evil tongue that was spoken in public.⁵⁴ It was sleeveless, and made of sky blue wool. Seventy-two hollow ornaments and seventy-two golden bells were attached to the hem of the bottom. The bells announced the arrival and departure of the high priest. This teaches us to knock or announce our arrival into our home or another person's home so as not to enter unexpectedly.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 297.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 280.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 298.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 280.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 298.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 280.

⁵² Ibid., p. 297-8.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 279-80.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 282.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 296.

Apron

God commanded that the apron be made before the other garments because it held the center piece of the high priest. The names of six of the Tribes were engraved on each of the two stones.⁵⁶ The apron atoned from the transgression of idol worship.⁵⁷ The instructions God gave to Moses are summarized from Exodus 28:6-14.

- Make ephod of gold; and blue, purple, and scarlet material of fine twisted linen
- Make band of gold; and blue, purple, and scarlet material of fine twisted linen
- Join the two shoulder pieces or bands at the ends
- Engrave two onyx stones with the names of the sons of Israel, six on each stone
- Set onyx stones in filigree settings of gold on the shoulder pieces of the ephod
- Make two corded gold chains and put on the filigree settings

The Breastplate

The breastplate atoned for the sin of perverted judgment.⁵⁸ The instructions Moses received from God are summarized from Exodus 28:15-30.

- Make a breastplate of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet material and fine twisted linen
- Make it square and folded double
- Length – a span
- Width – a span
- Mount four rows of stones set in a gold filigree
- First row of stones: ruby, topaz, and emerald
- Second row of stones: turquoise, sapphire, and diamond
- Third row of stones: Jacinth, agate, and amethyst
- Fourth row of beryl, onyx, and jasper

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 283-4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 280.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 280.

- Make rings of gold and put them on the breastplate
- Put two cords of gold on the two rings
- Aaron will wear the breastplate

Each square on the breastplate contained the name of the Tribe and the precious stone used for that Tribe. The words *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, *Yaakov*, and *shivtai Yeshurun* were distributed over all the gems so that each gem had a total of six letters. The names of the forefathers and the Tribes were engraved to serve as a reminder of the merits of these people. The four rows served as a reminder of the four mothers.⁵⁹ The four mothers are the wives of Jacob: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. The leaders of the Tribes donated the stones for the high priests breastplate. Each leader offered the stone representing his Tribe.⁶⁰

First Row of Gems

- *Odum* was selected for the Tribe of Reuben. It alluded to the reddening of his face when he admitted his sin in the incident with Bilha. This stone possessed a special power to prevent miscarriages and to promote pregnancy.⁶¹
- *Pit'da* was selected for the Tribe of Simeon. His face turned green with shame when Zimri rebelled against Moses. Their faces paled also when member of their Tribe were seduced by Moabite girls. The gem possesses the ability to aid a person in controlling his passionate nature.⁶²
- *Barekes* was given to the Tribe of Levi because the members of the Tribe illuminated the world with the light of Torah-study, thus enlightening a person's mind and instilling wisdom in him. This is

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 285.

⁶⁰ Weissman, Moshe, The Midrash Says: The Book of Bamidbar, Bnay Yakov Publications, New York, 1983., p. 89-90.

⁶¹ op.cit., Weissman, Sh'mos, p. 285-6.

⁶² Ibid., p. 286.

also the stone used by Noah to illuminate the ark.⁶³

Second Row of Gems

- *Nofech* is attributed to Judah because he was rewarded with this stone when his face paled when challenged by Tamar, and when he was suspected by his father Jacob of having killed Joseph. His face shone when his father cleared him of the suspicion. Those who wear this jewel possess the power to make the enemy retreat.⁶⁴
- *Sapir* was given to the Tribe of Issachar because he was noted for his study of the Torah. This made him worthy of receiving this stone from which the tablets were made. The sky-blue color was a sign of his humility, benefits a person's eyesight, and is believed to heal all types of physical pains.⁶⁵
- *Yahalom* represents a merchant's chair which was white. It is attributed to the Tribe of Zebulun because they were engaged in commerce to support Issachar.⁶⁶

Third Row of Gems

- *Leshem* reflects the image of an upside-down person. The Tribe of Dan reversed their goal of serving God when they erected the image of Micah.⁶⁷
- *Sh'vo* enabled a rider to remain seated on a horse without falling off. This is appropriate to Naftali which means "attachment."⁶⁸
- *Achlama* strengthens a person's courage in battle and is attributed to the Tribe of Gad because they were famous for their skill in warfare.⁶⁹

⁶³ Ibid., p. 286.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 286.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 286-7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 287.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 287-8.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 288.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 288.

Fourth Row of Gems

- *Tarshish* was a reminder of olive oil that was found in abundance in the Tribe of Asher.⁷⁰
- *Shoham* caused a person to find favor by others, including high officials. *Shoham* contains the same letters as Hashem because God granted Joseph grace in the eyes of his superiors. This gem is appropriate for the Tribe of Joseph.⁷¹
- *Yashpe* is attributed to the Tribe of Benjamin because Benjamin was uncertain whether to reveal to his father Jacob what had happened, and chose to remain silent.⁷²

God commanded that the gems be perfect and without blemish. The names of the Tribes were written on the stones in ink. Then, an animal called a *shamir* was guided over the gems and it cut into the stone and wrote with high precision. The *shamir* was an animal about the size of a barley corn that was created during the Six Days of Creation that could split hard rocks.⁷³

The stones actually used on the breastplate are nothing more than conjecture. Stones were mentioned in the Scripture to indicate value, beauty, and durability. In addition, there is some disagreement as to the gem associated with a particular Tribe.⁷⁴

The Headplate

The headplate atoned for brazenness or blasphemy.⁷⁵ The Divine Four-Letter-Name was engraved, in raised script, on the golden plate.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 288.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 289.

⁷² Ibid., p. 289.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 289.

⁷⁴ Samuel, Rabbi Dr., Michael, "Breastplate Stones and Tribal Affiliation,"

<http://jewish.com/askarabbi/askarabbi/askr2205.htm>.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 282.

Worn on the forehead, a high priest was required to conduct himself appropriately.⁷⁶

Consecration

The twelve leaders of the Tribes received permission from Moses to donate their sacrifices before anyone else, thus dedicating the altar for the offerings of individuals. Their enthusiasm in offering sacrifices stemmed from the initial invitation for every Jew to contribute materials for the building of the Tabernacle when the leaders chose to supplement the contributions of others. However, after two days Moses stopped the contributions because more gold and other valuables had been donated than could be used.⁷⁷

Now on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it with all its furnishings and the altar and all its utensils; he anointed them and consecrated them also. Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' households, made an offering (they were the leaders of the tribes; they were the ones who were over the numbered men). When they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two of the leaders and an ox for each one, then they presented them before the tabernacle. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Accept these things from them, that they may be used in the service of the tent of meeting, and you shall give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service." (Numbers 7:1-5)

Members of the Tribe of Issachar suggested that the Tribal leaders donate wagons and animals to transport the Tent and its components. Moses asked God whether he should accept these items, and God informed Moses that the wagons would be used by the Levite families of Gershon

and Merari to transport the Tabernacle and its accessories.⁷⁸

The leaders pleaded with Moses to donate initiation sacrifices for the altar. God permitted Moses to order one leader per day to offer his sacrifices beginning on the first day of the month of *Nissan*. Each leader wanted to go first. Moses asked God whether they should offer their gifts based on the order of birth of the Tribes or based on the order in which the *degalim* would travel in the desert. God instructed Moses that the leaders would offer their sacrifices in the order of their marching formation.⁷⁹

Now the one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah; and his offering was one silver dish whose weight was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense; one bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab. (Numbers 7:12-17)

Nahshon's gifts alluded to the monarchs that would descend from Judah. His silver alluded to King Solomon and the Messiah.⁸⁰

Each leader offered donations of the identical number, weight, and measurements. This is repeated in the Torah for several reasons:

- God loved each donation equally.
- The thoughts and intentions accompanying each gift differed.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 296-7.

⁷⁷ Op.cit., *Bamidbar*, p. 89.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 90-91.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

The leaders' donations each alluded to events in Jewish history:

- The silver bowl represented Adam, the mainstay of mankind. It was silver alluding to the six Torah commandments that Adam observed. Its weight of 130 shekel symbolizes that Adam was 130 years old when *Shais* was born.⁸²
- The silver basin symbolized Noah. Its numerical value of 520 alludes to his age of 500 years when he had children, and the flood God decreed 20 years before they were born. The basin also hints at people laughing when he built the ark. It was made of silver to represent the Torah, and symbolizes that Noah was righteous and that he was given the commandment not to eat the flesh of a living animal. Its weight of 70 shekel alludes to the 70 nations that descended from Noah.⁸³
- The spoon alludes to the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people by the hand of God. It weighed 10 shekel and represents the Ten Commandments.⁸⁴ It was filled with eleven kinds of spices; stacte, onycha, galbanum, frankincense, myrrh, cassia, spikenard, saffron, costus, aromatic bark, and cinnamon.⁸⁵
- The bullock was given in memory of Abraham's hospitality when he served his guest well with oxen.⁸⁶
- The ram reminds us that Isaac allowed himself to be tied to the altar, but later a ram was offered instead.⁸⁷
- The lamb alludes to Jacob separating his herd from that of Laban.⁸⁸
- The two oxen given as *shlamin* sacrifices represented Moses and Aaron who made

peace between the Jewish people and their God.⁸⁹

On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, leader of Issachar, presented an offering. (Numbers 7:18) Nethaniel's gifts alluded to different aspects of Torah study. For example, the basin weighed seventy *shekels* and symbolized the 70 ways that the verses of the Torah are expounded.⁹⁰

On the third day it was Eliab the son of Helon, leader of the sons of Zebulun. (Numbers 7:24)

Eliab's donations noted that Zebulun supported the Tribe of Issachar with commerce. This bowl represented the oceans because Zebulun imported and exported goods by sea.⁹¹

On the fourth day it was Elizur the son of Shedeur, leader of the sons of Reuben (Numbers 7:30) Elizur's gifts related to Reuben and how he persuaded his brothers' not to kill Joseph.⁹²

On the fifth day it was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, leader of the children of Simeon. (Numbers 7:36) Shelumiel's donations alluded to the Tabernacle. His bowl represented the Courtyard that surrounded the Tabernacle similar to oceans surrounding the land. Its weight of 130 shekels alluded to the length of the Courtyard, 100 *amos*, plus the length of the Tent, 30 *amos*.⁹³

On the sixth day it was Eliasaph the son of Deuel, leader of the sons of Gad. (Numbers 7:42)

Eliasaph's gifts referred to the events of the Egyptian exile until the Exodus. For example, he offered a golden spoon that weighed ten

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 91-2.

⁸² Ibid., p. 107-8.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁵ Ashkenaz, Nusach, The Complete Artscroll Siddur, Mesorah Publications, Inc., 1990., p. 37.

⁸⁶ Op.cit, Bamidbar, p. 109.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁹² Ibid., p. 97.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 98.

shekel to allude that the Egyptians were smitten by Moses' hand with ten plagues.⁹⁴

On the seventh day it was Elishama the son of Ammihud, leader of the sons of Ephraim. (Numbers 7:48) Elishama's gifts alluded to Ephraim and how Jacob elevated him above his older brother.⁹⁵

On the eighth day it was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, leader of the sons of Manasseh. (Numbers 7:54) Gamaliel's donations symbolized the history of Manasseh and Jacob's special love for Joseph. The basin alluded to Joseph being sold to Egypt and its weight of 70 shekel symbolized the 70 members of Jacob's family that went to Egypt to live.⁹⁶

On the ninth day it was Abidan the son of Gideoni, leader of the sons of Benjamin. (Numbers 7:60) Abidan's gifts that referred to Benjamin's past and future history. His gift of five rams, five goats and five lambs alluded to the three occasions that he received a special honor, and they all involved the number five:

- Joseph gave Benjamin servings of food that were five times larger than anyone else's (Genesis 43:34).
- Joseph gave Benjamin three hundred *shekel* of silver and five sets of clothing in preparation for moving from Canaan to Egypt (Genesis 45:22).
- Mordecai, Benjamin's descendant, wore five royal garments when he left the king (Esther 8:15).⁹⁷

On the tenth day it was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, leader of the sons of Dan. (Numbers 7:66) Ahiezer's gifts referred to the judge Samson and to the laws of *nezirus*

because he derived his strength from the holiness of his *nezirus*.⁹⁸

On the eleventh day it was Pagiel the son of Ochran, leader of the sons of Asher. (Numbers 7:72) Pagiel's gifts alluded to how the Jewish people were chosen to be a Torah-nation and a holy people. The weight of the silver bowl represented the seventy descendants of Noah plus the sixty descendants of *Aisav*, Ishmael, and *Ketura* who became rulers.⁹⁹

On the twelfth day it was Ahira the son of Enan, leader of the sons of Naphtali. (Numbers 7:78) Ahira's donations alluded to Jewish forefathers and mothers because Naftali was eager and swift to honor his parents. The bowl represented Sara because she was barren, kept house, and paved the way for all righteous women in the future.¹⁰⁰

The total offerings are described in Numbers 7:84-88 as follows:

This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel when it was anointed: twelve silver dishes, twelve silver bowls, twelve gold pans, each silver dish weighing one hundred and thirty shekels and each bowl seventy; all the silver of the utensils was 2,400 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; the twelve gold pans, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, all the gold of the pans 120 shekels; all the oxen for the burnt offering twelve bulls, all the rams twelve, the male lambs one year old with their grain offering twelve, and the male goats for a sin offering twelve; and all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings 24 bulls, all the rams 60, the male goats 60, the male lambs one year old 60. This was the dedication offering for the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 101-102.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 102-3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 103-4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 104-5.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 105-6.

altar after it was anointed. (Numbers 7:84-88)

The totals are recorded because of their spiritual connotations. Some examples are explained:

- The twelve silver spoons weighed 120 *shekel* to allude to the 120 Men of the Great Assembly who established the ordinances to safeguard the Torah laws.
- The sixty rams represent the sixty souls that constitute the foundation of the Jewish people.¹⁰¹

Inauguration of the Tabernacle

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting." (Leviticus 8:1-3)

Moses wondered how it was possible to assemble all the Jewish people in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. It measured 5,000 square *amos* (about 20,000 square feet) of which the Tabernacle occupied three hundred square *amos* (1,200 square feet). Additional space was taken by the altar and the laver. The remaining area would not accommodate 600,000 men. God told Moses, "Do not wonder how this feat shall be accomplished. I can fit into a small area contents which surpass its capacity."¹⁰²

God performed this type of miracle on several occasions:

- When God brought on Egypt the Plague of Boils, he commanded that both Moses and Aaron pick up two handfuls of soot. Aaron gave his soot to Moses, so Moses

miraculously held four handfuls in one hand before hurling them toward the sky.

- At Mai Meriva, the entire nation assembled in front of a rock from which God would bring forth water. Every Jew found himself standing in front of the rock.¹⁰³

Ordination of Aaron and Sons

Moses assembled Aaron, his sons and the children of Israel in the courtyard. He put on white garments and assumed the role of high priest even though he was not a priest. God commanded Moses to train Aaron to perform the Temple Service. Moses dressed Aaron in the eight garments of the high priest, dressed and undressed other priests, anointed the *kohanim* with oil of anointment, anointed all of the Tabernacles holy vessels, offered Inauguration Sacrifices daily, dismantled and erected the Tabernacle daily.¹⁰⁴

Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; and he said to Aaron, "Take for yourself a calf, a bull, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the LORD. Then to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both one year old, without defect, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the LORD will appear to you.'" (Leviticus 9:1-4)

On the eighth day of the inauguration, Moses told Aaron that he would serve as high priest in the Tabernacle for the first time, and that God withheld the permanent position from Moses because he had refused His request to go to Egypt and bring out the Jews.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 109-110.

¹⁰² Weissman, Moshe, The Midrash Says: The Book of Vayikra, Bnay Yakov Publications, New York, 1982, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 61-2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

Moses also told Aaron about his offerings on this day. They included:

- a calf would atone for his sin in the incident of the Golden Calf
- a kid goat would atone for the sin of selling Joseph
- a lamb as olos
- an ox and a ram as *shlamim*¹⁰⁶

Aaron hesitated to ascend to the altar and perform the sacrifices. Moses asked, “Why do you hesitate? You were chosen as the *kohain gadol!* Therefore, take courage and perform the service!” Moses reassured his brother that God had forgiven him for the Golden Calf. After a short time, the entire nation of Israelites witnessed the pillar of fire descend from Heaven, enter the Tent, go to the *azara*, consume the sacrifices, and rest on the altar.¹⁰⁷

The eighth day was the first of Nissan. It was distinguished by ten special events:

- It occurred on the first day of the week, Sunday, the same day as the beginning of the creation.
- The first of Nissan, 2,449, was distinguished by the Tribal leaders offering their sacrifices.
- The priests performed the service of God for the first time. Prior to this day the first-born had been in charge of offering sacrifices.
- Communal sacrifices were brought for the first time.
- The Heavenly fire descended and consumed the offerings.
- Sacrifices were prescribed by the Torah to be eaten within a specific area; previously they could be eaten anywhere.
- The Divine presence settled in the Tabernacle on this day.
- The priests blessed the people with the Priestly Blessing.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 63-64.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 65-66.

- Private altars were forbidden for the first time; all sacrifices had to be offered on the central altar of the Tabernacle.
- Nissan became the first of all the months.¹⁰⁸

Sacrifices

Offering a sacrifice was a major component of Jewish ritual in ancient times. Sacrifice, or “qorbanot” suggests a loss or giving up of something. The root of “qorbanot” means “to draw near,” and the primary reason for offering a sacrifice is to become closer to God.¹⁰⁹

Sacrifices may be offered by the following individuals:

- Every Jewish man or woman
- Those Jews who do not completely fulfill the Torah-laws because it is hoped they will better their ways
- A non-Jew may offer a burnt offering even if he is an idol worshiper. Eventually, he may accept God’s authority upon himself, fulfilling the Seven Noachide Laws that are incumbent on every human being.
- Those Jews who desecrate the Sabbath are not allowed to bring an offering.¹¹⁰

Wood for Altar

“What type of wood is suitable for kindling a fire on the *mizbayach?*” Moses inquired. “All kinds, except for branches from grape vines and olives,” the Almighty informed him.¹¹¹

Branches of the grape vine may not be used as fire wood because they supply wine for libations. Nor may olive wood be used because

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 67-68.

¹⁰⁹ Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/qorbanot.html>

¹¹⁰ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 16-19.

¹¹¹ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 43.

the olive yields oil for the menorah and the flour offerings.¹¹²

Mammals

God explained to Moses the procedure for offering a mammal as a sacrifice:

- The donor had to bring the animal to the courtyard of the Sanctuary himself.
- The owner propped both hands on the animal's head while standing in the Sanctuary.
- If atoning for a sin, he had to confess his wrongs and say, "I have transgressed in such-and-such manner, and I did teshuva. May this sacrifice atone for my sin."
- The animal is slaughtered in the courtyard.
- A priest caught the blood in a special pan designated for this purpose.
- The priest took the pan with blood to the altar.
- The priest sprinkled some of the blood on the upper or lower part of the altar, depending on the offering.
- The priest poured the remaining blood on the base of the altar.
- The animal was skinned and cut up.
- The pieces of the animal were washed.
- The priest took the parts of the animal to be offered to the ramp of the altar, salted them, then took them to the top of the ramp, removed the sciatic nerve, and threw pieces of the sacrifice into the fire.¹¹³

Only three domesticated animals are kosher as offerings; cow, sheep, and goat. The ox suggests Abraham's merit because he obtained oxen to serve his guests. The lamb reminds us of Isaac in whose stead a ram was sacrificed. The goat symbolizes Rebekah telling his son Jacob to take two good kid goats from the flock and bring them to his father. The Almighty said that their sins will be purged through the kid goats. Other animals chase all of these animals; the

¹¹² Weissman, Vayikra, p. 43-44.

¹¹³ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 5-7.

Almighty selected these animals to teach us that He always sides with the victim and not with the attacker. Seven wild mammals are also kosher; however, God did not want to impose upon the Jews the hunting of wild beasts.¹¹⁴

Each part of the sacrifice atoned for some aspect of the sin:

- ✓ Resting hands on the sacrifice atoned for the sinful deed.
- ✓ The verbal confession expiated the person's sinful speech.
- ✓ Burning of the kidneys and innards atoned for going astray in thoughts.
- ✓ Sprinkling the animal's blood on the altar symbolized the sinner should shed some blood because of his evil act.¹¹⁵

Birds

The procedure for offering a bird was slightly different from a mammal.

- The priest nipped the bird's head with his fingernail which severed its neck bone, windpipe and gullet.
- The priest squeezed the blood directly onto the altar allowing it to run down the altar wall.
- The head was salted and burned on the altar.
- The crop and intestines were discarded in a special place on the eastern side of the altar.
- The priest rent the bird nearly in two by hand, salted and burned it on the altar.¹¹⁶

Two birds may serve as sacrifices; mature turtledoves and young doves. God declared unfit those birds that are helpless and attacked by birds of prey.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 16-17.

¹¹⁵ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 7-8.

¹¹⁷ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 18.

Types of Offerings

Burnt and Grain Offerings

The burnt offering is a free-will offering brought by an individual. The sacrifice is dependent on the person's financial capabilities. Someone who cannot afford an animal such as a lamb or pigeon may offer flour instead. God judges the value of what is offered by the motives and spirit that prompted it and not by its size or monetary value. A man who voluntarily offers a sacrifice is termed "Adam." This great distinction alludes to the first man, Adam, because Adam offered to God his donation honestly. God rejects those offerings that are acquired by deceit.¹¹⁸

A person offering a burnt sacrifice is granted atonement for three transgressions:

- Pardon for neglecting to fulfill a positive Torah commandment;
- Expiates a negative command that can be rectified by obeying the positive command that is linked to it, such as returning a stolen item; and
- Mitigates having sinful thoughts.¹¹⁹

The burnt offering is mentioned first in the torah because it is superior to the others. This sacrifice is made voluntarily and desires to purify his thoughts to become closer to his God.¹²⁰

A person who is financially unable to donate a mammal or a bird may bring a flour offering instead. This offering is different from the others because the priest removed the dough to be burnt for God from the remaining raw dough prior to baking. In all other offerings, the

offering to God was removed after the offering was baked.¹²¹

Fellowship or Peace Offering

A fellowship offering is given freely by an individual who is in an elevated state of mind and desires to express his happiness. It signifies two things:

- The Almighty blesses the world with peace, and
- Those who participate in this offering — altar, priest, and owner — receive peace and harmony.¹²²

Sin Offerings

A Jewish man or woman was required to offer a *chatas* sacrifice if he inadvertently transgressed one of the forty-three negative Torah commands. This sin offering was required regardless of a person's financial status. The offender was required to offer a she-goat or a lamb that was slaughtered on the north side of the altar. The north side was not visible to onlookers and protected the person from public shame since an onlooker would not know whether the offering was a free-will or sin offering.¹²³

No sacrifice will atone for commitment of an intentional and malicious sin. Forgiveness can only be obtained by spiritual merits, penance, fasting, and good deeds.¹²⁴

Guilt Offering

A guilt offering is made for the commission of several specific sins. They are:

- Stealing or withholding another's money or property,

¹¹⁸ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 19-20.

¹¹⁹ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 22-23.

¹²⁰ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 23.

¹²¹ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 24-28.

¹²² Weissman, Vayikra, p. 29.

¹²³ Vayikra, p. 29-31.

¹²⁴ Vayikra, p. 31.

- Deriving personal benefit from food or property that belong to the holy Temple in Jerusalem,
- having adultery with a maid servant who was designated for someone else,
- nazir,
- leper, and
- Being uncertain if a sin was actually committed.¹²⁵

Pending Offering

If someone is uncertain he has committed a sin for which a sin sacrifice is required, the person was required to offer a sacrifice termed “The pending *asham* sacrifice.” If it was later determined that a sin was committed, the individual would have to make an additional sin offering. The Torah teaches Jews to avoid any situation that might lead to sin. If someone later determined that he had actually committed a sin, he would be required to offer an additional sacrifice.¹²⁶

Modern Practices

Sacrifices are no longer offered because there is not a proper place to offer them. Sacrifices were offered at the Temple in Jerusalem until it was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 C.E. The Torah commands Jews not to offer sacrifices wherever they want; but only in a place chosen by God for that purpose. Until God provides another place, Jews cannot offer sacrifices.¹²⁷

Until sacrifices can be resumed, several alternatives are suggested:

- ✓ Prayer
- ✓ Study of the laws of the sacrifices
- ✓ Repentance

¹²⁵ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 35-36.

¹²⁶ Weissman, Vayikra, p. 36-7.

¹²⁷ American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, “Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings,” <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/qorbanot.html>.

- ✓ Study of the Torah¹²⁸

Arrangement of Camps

God provided instructions to the Israelites for traveling with the Tabernacle.

God requested that four acts be done in the Sanctuary even though He does them in a superior manner:

- That the children of Kehas carry His Ark as He upholds the entire universe
- That the high priests and Levites guard the Tabernacle as He is Guardian of the world
- That a menorah be lit in the Sanctuary as He illuminates the world
- That sacrifices be brought to the altar as He feeds and sustains all creatures.¹²⁹

Levites

“They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.” (Numbers 3:8)

The Levites performed the following acts of service:

- Transported the Tabernacle and its components in the wilderness
- Guarded the vessels from damage or loss
- Sang in a choir in the Tabernacle and holy Temple in Jerusalem, accompanied by musical instruments
- Opened and closed the gates
- Prevented the holy vessels from being touched by non-priests
- Served as honor guards for the Tabernacle and holy Temple in Jerusalem
- Some were appointed as treasurers and assistant treasurers of the Sanctuary funds¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Op. cit., Vayikra, p. 14.

¹²⁹ Op. cit., *Bamidbar*, p. 43.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 37-38.

The Levite choir consisted of at least twelve singers. More singers could be added as desired. The choir was accompanied by musicians. Non-*levi'im* were permitted to be musicians. The people heard the beautiful music from the *azara*.¹³¹

The three Levite families were assigned the responsibilities of carrying the Tabernacle and its holy vessels while traveling in the desert.¹³²

The Tabernacle's holy vessels were wrapped in two coverings before a journey; a blue woolen cloth that represented the Divine presence and a protective layer of *tachash*-hide.¹³³ Several sources suggest that *tachash* refers to the giraffe.¹³⁴

Family of Gershon

“Now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting involved the tabernacle and the tent, its covering, and the screen for the doorway of the tent of meeting, and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the doorway of the court which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords, according to all the service concerning them.” (Numbers 3:25-26)

The family of Gershon transported the woven materials of the Tabernacle.¹³⁵ They were assigned the following tasks:

- Before each journey, a Dividing Curtain was placed over the Ark.
- A second blue cover was placed over the Dividing Curtain to draw attention to its sanctity.¹³⁶
- Preparing the woven materials, curtains, coverings and screens of *ohel moaid* and the

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 47.

¹³² Ibid., p. 38.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 39.

¹³⁴ Slifkin, Rabbi Nosson (Natan), “Identification,” <http://www.zootorah.com/Content/identification.html>.

¹³⁵ Op. cit., *Bamidbar*, p. 38.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

Courtyard for departure and transporting them.

Family of Kehas

“Now their duties involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all the service concerning them; and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was the chief of the leaders of Levi, and had the oversight of those who perform the duties of the sanctuary.” (Numbers 3:31-32)

The family of Kehas was appointed porters of the ark and the holy vessels of the Tabernacle.¹³⁷

They were given the responsibility of carrying the holy vessels on their shoulders and were not given wagons.¹³⁸ They carried the Ark, the Dividing Curtain, the menorah, the *shulcan*, the altars, and their accessories on their shoulders. Aaron's third son Eleazar was appointed overseer and determined who would carry each holy vessel during a journey. He assigned himself the task of carrying the oil, *ketores*, flour, and a flask of *shemen hamishcha*.¹³⁹

God warned the children of Kehas not to look at the holy vessels or touch them until they were properly covered, else they might perish, because they are less holy than the high priests.¹⁴⁰

Special requirements were established for transporting the Ark.

- The four carriers were required to face the Ark; this required the two front carriers to walk backwards.
- The sons of Kehas sang songs of praise to God.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 41.

When the bearers seized the poles, a miracle caused the Ark to become weightless. In addition, the carriers were also lifted and carried.¹⁴²

Family of Merari

“Now the appointed duties of the sons of Merari involved the frames of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its equipment, and the service concerning them, and the pillars around the court with their sockets and their pegs and their cords.” (Numbers 3:36-37)

The family of Merari carried the boards, bolts, and sockets of the Tabernacle.¹⁴³ Isamar, son of Aaron, supervised and assigned each *laivi* his job.¹⁴⁴

Layout of Camp

The Tabernacle was placed at the center of the nation because it was the innermost and holiest Camp. The second Camp consisted of the Levites; they surrounded the inner Camp on all four sides. The third Camp consisted of the twelve Tribes; three camped in each direction. The Clouds of Glory encircled and protected the children of Israel.¹⁴⁵

God gave detailed instructions to Moses on the encampment of the Levites. Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons were to camp near the entrance of the Tabernacle in the east. They disseminate the spiritual light of the Torah and Divine precepts just as the rising sun provides light. The children of Gershon camped west of the Tabernacle; they protected the Jewish people from snow, hail, frost, and heat. The children of Kehas camped to the south and they carried the Ark. God provided rain in proportion to the Jewish people in direct proportion to their study of the Torah. The children of Merari camped to

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 41-42.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

the north and carried the wooden boards of the Tabernacle. North is the direction from which darkness and other punishments emanate.¹⁴⁶

The Tabernacle and Freemasons

What does the building of the Tabernacle mean to us as Freemasons?

God commanded the Israelites to erect a Tabernacle to provide a place to worship Him. He directed the materials to be used, named the person who would be the chief architect, the dimensions of the items associated with the Tabernacle, clothing worn by the priests, the rules for the different sacrificial offerings, and the location of the Tabernacle while traveling.

In a similar manner, the Worshipful Master directs the activities of his Lodge. He prepares the designs for the trestleboard that become the blueprint for the year. This plan may include such things as the number of Master Masons to make, the presentations and other programs to be given during the year, the support for widows and orphans, programs that promote the families of Brethren, and many other aspects of the Lodge.

Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons camped near the entrance of the Tabernacle in the east because they disseminated the spiritual light of the Torah and its Divine precepts just as the rising sun provides light.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the Worshipful Master provides light to the members of his Lodge through the designs on the trestleboard.

As the structure of the tabernacle represents the human body, the Ark corresponds to the heart.¹⁴⁸ The Ark of the Covenant is central to the Jewish faith, and the heart is a major organ in the body. God directed the Israelites to put poles through the Ark to carry it. This allowed

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Op. cit, *Sh'mos*, p. 243-4.

the Israelites to transport the Ark to spread God's teachings to others. In a like manner, the heart carries blood and oxygen to all parts of the body. By extending this analogy further, we are encouraged to spread the tenets of Freemasonry to other good men and encourage them to petition a Lodge.

The menorah represents the light of studying the Torah. A lamp will not shine unless it is lit.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, we are taught that by studying the ritual and education we will receive additional light in masonry. In addition, Masonic scholars provide light through speeches, articles, and books to help us better understand the history, symbolism, and ritual of Freemasonry.

Bells on the mantle of the high priest announced his arrival and departure. It teaches us to knock or announce our arrival into our home or another person's home so as not to enter unexpectedly.¹⁵⁰ This is similar to a candidate knocking at the West Gate to announce his desire to the Worshipful Master to enter the Lodge Room to receive a degree. When the Master is ready to receive the candidate, he gives permission for him to enter the Lodge room.

One of the definitions of Freemasonry is that it is a system of morality veiled in allegory. One of the Tribes that camped east of the Tabernacle was Judah because those members were to guide the nation by the light of the Torah.¹⁵¹ Similarly, we as Masons should set an example of proper morality for others. If we set a good example and let others know about Freemasonry, our light will spread as others join this fraternity.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁵¹ Op. cit., Bamidbar, p. 15.

Glossary of Selected Hebrew Words

<u>Hebrew</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Ama</i>	Cubit, approximately 24 inches
<i>Amos</i>	Plural of <i>ama</i>
<i>Aron</i>	Ark
<i>Avraham</i>	Abraham
<i>Bnai Yisrael</i>	Children of Israel
<i>Chatas</i>	Sin Offering
<i>Chilazon</i>	Blue Dye
<i>Degalim</i>	banners
<i>Dishon</i>	Ancient kosher mammal
<i>Elul</i>	August 18-September 15 2004
<i>Ephod</i>	Apron
<i>Gerah</i>	Unit of Mass, 570 milligrams or 8.8 grains
Har Hamoria	Mt. Moriah
Hin	About 4 quarts
<i>Karais</i>	Excision
<i>Kedoshim</i>	Holy
<i>Kesuvim</i>	Divinely inspired writings
<i>Kikar</i>	Talent, a measure
<i>Kiyor</i>	Laver of Tabernacle and holy Temple in Jerusalem
<i>Kohain</i>	Jewish priest who officiated in the Sanctuary
<i>Kohanim</i>	Plural of <i>Kohain</i>
<i>Menora</i>	Candelabrum
<i>Mishkan</i>	Tabernacle, a portable tentlike Sanctuary
<i>Mitzva</i>	Commandment
<i>Mizbach haola</i>	Altar for animal sacrifices
<i>Mizbach hak'tores</i>	Altar for incense offerings
<i>Mizbaiach</i>	Altar
<i>Mizbayach</i>	Altar
<i>Nazir</i>	Nazirite
<i>Nevi'im</i>	Prophets
<i>Nissan</i>	First month of Jewish calendar
<i>Parsha</i>	Section of the Torah
<i>Pesach</i>	Passover
<i>Rivka</i>	To tie, to bind
<i>Rosh Chodesh</i>	First day of any month
<i>Shabbas</i>	Sabbath
<i>Shekel</i>	20 Gerahs
<i>Shittim</i>	Acacia tree
<i>Shulchan</i>	Table
<i>Teshuva</i>	Penance, return to God
<i>Yaakov</i>	Jacob
<i>Yackmur</i>	Ancient kosher mammal

Yetzias Mitzrayim

Exodus from Egypt

Yitchak

Isaac

Zemer

Ancient kosher mammal

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