

## TRUMAH { תְּרוּמָה } (Offering)

Exodus 25:1-27:19, 1 Kings 5:26-6:13, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

A Messianic Jewish Commentary by

Hannah Neshet [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering (trumah) תְּרוּמָה. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.” (Exodus 25:1)

This title of week’s Torah reading, Trumah, תְּרוּמָה is taken from a Hebrew word meaning ‘*offering, gift or contribution*’. The Lord commanded Moses to take up a free will offering from the people of Israel in order to build Him a sanctuary in the wilderness.



This sanctuary, called a ‘*mishkan*’ in Hebrew was meant to be a visible reminder for the people of God’s holy presence that dwelt amongst them. The offerings that the people were asked to bring included precious metals and stones, fine linens, animal skins, wood, oil for the lamps, and fragrant spices for the incense.

From where had they acquired all this gold, silver, bronze, precious stones and other symbols of wealth and abundance? Of course, it had all come from the Egyptians. The Israelites were well aware of their state of absolute destitution before God had rescued and redeemed them.

They knew that everything they possessed had come from God and belonged to Him; therefore they were happy to give some of it back for the construction of a Sanctuary where they could meet with God and commune with Him. Everything we have also comes from the hand of God and we should also be willing to give back to His work cheerfully and willingly.

## Levels of Giving Tzedakah

Immediately after the people declared their acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God asked them to open their hearts – to give towards the building of the Sanctuary. These voluntary acts of giving raised materialism to a level of holiness.

Whereas the word ‘*charity*’ comes from the Latin and indicates benevolence towards the needy, the corresponding Hebrew word, **tzedakah**, can mean either ‘*righteousness*’ or ‘*justice*’. The giving of tzedakah in the Hebraic sense, therefore, represents the building of a righteous and just society.

The Jewish people were ordered to give a *trumah* of produce (approximately 1/50<sup>th</sup>). This word appears three times, indicating the three types of giving:

1. The highest level of giving is the one who does so because God has commanded it. There are people who faithfully give the full tithe of everything they receive simply because it is ordered in the Word of God.
2. A lower level of giving is the one who does so for selfish reasons – because it makes him or her feel better to give toward someone in need or a worthy cause.
3. The lowest level of giving is that of doing so against our will - out of compulsion, shame or guilt. The Lord instructed Moses to take an offering only from those who gave ‘*willingly and from their heart*’. God does not want us to give reluctantly or under compulsion, but freely and with joy; for God loves a cheerful giver, as is written in this week’s New Testament Scripture reading.

**“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." (2 Corinthians 9:7)**

The tendency of our sinful nature is to be selfish and seek for what we can receive; but the Bible tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive.<sup>1</sup> We are also told in the New Testament that if we do not give materially to a brother in need then the love of God cannot be residing within us.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:35

## God Loves a Cheerful Giver

**“But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”** (1 John 3:17)

We must always remember, however, that it is not just the act of giving that matters but our motivation behind it; for even if we give all that we have to the poor but have not love, then we are nothing. (1 Corinthians 3:2b)

There is a rabbinic saying, *“If one gives his fellow all the good things in the world but with a sullen face, it is as if he has given nothing...”*

Since Jewish people are encouraged to give anonymously, with both the donor and the beneficiary being unaware of each others' identity, the Holy Temple had a special *“secret charity chamber”* where donations could be dropped off and picked up in secret.

It was likely this treasury box that Yeshua watched over when he saw rich people put in much money and a poor widow put in two widow's mites. “Now Yeshua sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites,” (Mark 12:41-42) Yeshua commended the widow.

This shows us that it is not necessarily the amount we give that counts with God, but our faith to give even out of our own needs - the sacrificial offering of our hearts. The truth of the matter is that when we give, especially towards the work of the Lord or to the needy, we receive back so much more than what we have given.

As we give generously, we will find ourselves receiving generously in return as well. In order to be blessed, we need to understand the spiritual law of sowing and reaping: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully (generously) will also reap bountifully (generously).<sup>2</sup>

**“The generous soul will be made rich and He who waters others will be watered himself.”** (Proverbs 11:25)

This applies not only to our financial giving; but rather is a spiritual law that applies to every area of our life. Whatever we are generous in dishing out, we are going to receive back in equal measure – whether that is anger, bitterness, judgment, criticism, and condemnation – or grace, mercy, kindness, encouragement and love.

**“Give and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full--pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap.”** (Luke 6:38)

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:6

With the same measure that we give, we will be sure to receive back upon ourselves in one way or another. So let's make sure that we are giving generous praise, encouragement, love, help, blessings, and all the good things that we would want to receive generously in return, including our material offerings (trumot).

## God With Us

Israel had been delivered from bondage in Egypt and had received God's laws (Torah) at Mt. Sinai; but now God wanted to ensure that His people would remain in communion with Him. Therefore, He commanded Moses to build a Sanctuary as a visible reminder that God dwelt among them.

God said to Moses:

**"They shall make me a sanctuary (mikdash מִקְדָּשׁ), and I will dwell (veshakan-ti וְשָׁכַנְתִּי) among them. You must make the tabernacle (mishkan מִשְׁכָּן) and all its furnishings following the plan that I am showing you."**  
(Exodus 25:8-9)



Model of the tabernacle in Timna Park, Israel

Two different Hebrew words are used here: Mikdash מִקְדָּשׁ (sanctuary) comes from the word 'kadosh' which means 'holy or set apart for sacred purpose'. Mishkan מִשְׁכָּן is the Hebrew word for the tabernacle. It means to 'dwell, rest, or live in'. This same root word is used for the **Shekhinah glory** – the 'indwelling presence of God'.

Why did God ask the people to build Him a Tabernacle (Mishkan)? He wanted a Tabernacle constructed in order that He could 'dwell among them'. It is amazing to realize that God, Creator of the entire Universe, wants to meet with us and commune with His people. God has created special times and places for us to meet with Him. An appointed meeting time is called a 'mo'ed' and the Sanctuary was also called an 'ohel mo'ed' (Tent of Meeting).

The question remains, "Why does a non-earthly, Omnipresent God require a physical 'earthly space'? Isaiah also puzzled over this question, knowing the impossibility of limiting God to time or space. Even God Himself said, "Heaven is My Throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where could you build a house for Me? What place could possibly serve as My abode?" (Isaiah 66:1)

This verse is sometimes studied in conjunction with Parasha Trumah in a special reading on those years it coincides with the Rosh Chodesh (the first of the new month).

King Solomon, the wisest man of earth, also questioned the value of constructing an earthly dwelling place for Adonai. In this week's haftarah (Prophetic portion), Solomon began to build the Second Holy Temple; and yet he realized that God is uncontainable.

**"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"** (1 Kings 8:27)

We know that God does not really live in man-made buildings, so why go to all the time, expense and effort to construct elaborate sanctuaries for Him?

**"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands."** (Acts 17:24)

The answer to this perplexing question is found in the title of the parashah: the root letters of Trumah means "*exalted, uplifted, fortified or encouraged*". These are the feelings we can receive from being in a sacred space such as a synagogue, temple or church where the atmosphere is more conducive to a close relationship with God.

When God says, "*I will dwell in their midst*", He is not speaking of the Sanctuary itself but that He will dwell in the midst of His people. God wanted Israel to build a structure to function as a dwelling place for His presence during their wilderness wanderings – so they would remember that God was '*with them*' wherever they went.

One of the names of Yeshua is Immanu-El **עִמָּנוּ אֵל** (With us – God) from the Prophet Isaiah:

**"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel {עִמָּנוּ אֵל}."** (Isaiah 7:14) Our God is always with us.

## The Challenge of Remembering

One day, my youngest son, Avi, moaned about how hard it is to remember everything. He seemed to be going through a forgetful phase which I truly hoped would be mercifully brief. :) I asked where he left his winter jacket? (On the bus – again), and his warm hoodies? (in the gym - maybe), and his ball? (at the basketball court), and his sister's cell phone? (Somewhere....). Avi's pitiful response was, "*Well...I just can't remember everything you know!*" Sigh...I know.

We all forget things - some more important than others. More and more I need to write things down so I don't forget. The shelf which holds my daytimer is considered '*sacred space*' in my home; everyone knows not to put their stuff on '*Mama's to-do lists*'. It has to remain visible at all times so that I know what I am supposed to be doing when, and for whom.

I was telling Avi how even God doesn't expect us to remember everything so he gives us visible reminders: the fringes (tzitzit) that the Israelite men wear on their garments with a thread of sky blue act as a daily visible reminder of God, Heaven, and the higher life of the Spirit.

Whereas before, almost all the religious Jewish men wore the tzitzit with only white threads, I now see more and more with a visible thread of blue. This, it seems to me, is a good sign.



*Tzitzit (fringes) on a tallit (prayer shawl)*

There are two Hebrew words for blue: 'kahol', which is dark blue, and 't'chelet' which is a light blue like the color of the sky. The color of the blue thread in the tzitzit is to be 'tchelet' (light blue) and not 'kahol' (dark blue).

Putting a mezuzah containing the word of God on the doorposts of our home is also a good reminder that God watches over our comings and our goings both now and forevermore.

**“Adonai will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”** (Psalm 121:8)

Religious Jews kiss the mezuzah as they go in and as they come out of every dwelling, as a visible reminder that God is always on our mind and in our hearts.



A mezuzah on a doorpost of a building in Jerusalem

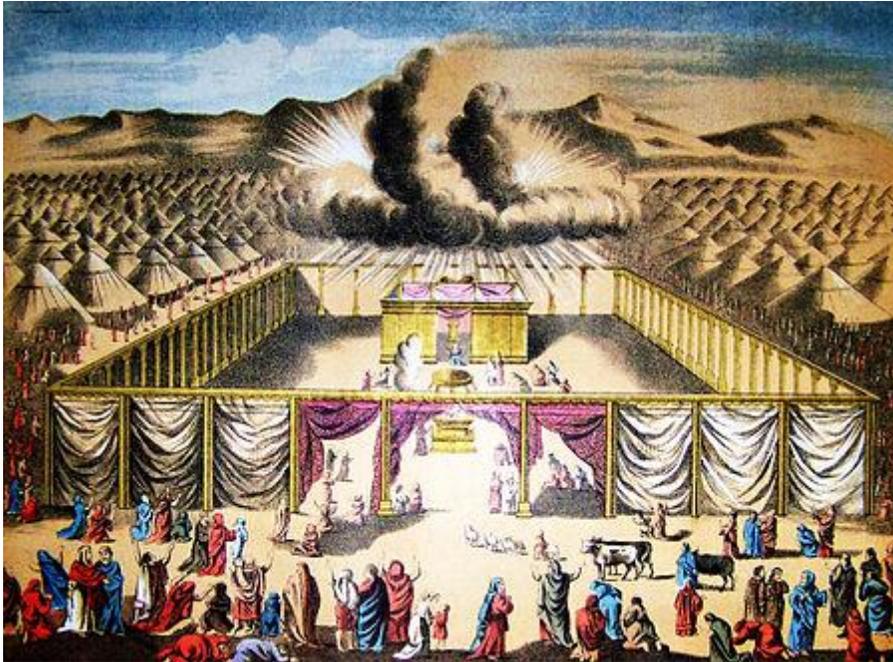
## Building a Sanctuary in our Homes

This is the reason God commanded Moses to build a Sanctuary – so the people would have a reminder of God's abiding presence. We know that under the New Covenant, however; the Spirit of God dwells within our hearts – we are the Temple (Holy Sanctuary) for His presence.<sup>3</sup>

The Hebrew language gives us insights into building a place where God can dwell with us – in our homes and in our hearts. The Hebrew word for 'build' is 'boneh' בונה. It starts with the letter 'bet' ב. This word for build also shares the same root as the Hebrew word for 'understanding' בינה 'binah'.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19

House (**bayit** **בית**) is another ‘bet’ word. So how do we build our bayit – our house – so that it stands? We must build on the rock! **“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding בינה it is established.” (Proverbs 24:3)**



The Tabernacle in the Wilderness (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The children of Israel could not build a Sanctuary for God any old way they wanted; they had to build it according to a specific pattern, *the pattern that was shown Moses on the mountain*:

**“And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” (Exodus 25:40)**

The Old Testament tabernacle was a copy and shadow of a heavenly reality <sup>4</sup>. So, too, do we need to build our homes after a heavenly pattern - the pattern that God has shown us in the Torah that He gave us on the Mountain of Sinai.

Everything we need to know- all the wisdom we need to build a home and all the understanding so that it may be established - is found in God’s word - our blueprint for life. The question is, however - will we follow the heavenly pattern (the biblical blueprint - or will we ‘*lean on our own understanding*’ - relying upon the pattern of our modern culture?

God speaks especially to women – who are often called ‘the heart of the home’ to use wisdom in building our homes lest we tear them down with our own two hands. **“A wise woman builds her house but a foolish one pulls it down with her own hands.” (Proverbs 14:1).**

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<sup>4</sup> Revelation 15:5 and Hebrews 8:5

Thank God the Holy Spirit is always at work in our lives to show us areas that need to be brought into a closer alignment with the heavenly pattern rather than our own faulty design.

Not only are we building our individual homes, but God is also using us as *‘living stones’* to build up a spiritual community for His honor and glory: “...**you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua the Messiah.**” (1 Peter 2:5)

Another Hebrew word used for Sanctuary is Mikdash, **מִקְדָּשׁ** from the root, Kadosh, **קָדֹשׁ** which means *‘holy, consecrated, or set apart for sacred purpose.’*

People in Israel tend to be a bit more informal about their homes than what I had been used to in Canada. For example, the general Canadian custom is to take our shoes or boots off at the entrance of a home. To walk in with one’s shoes or boots would be considered very rude indeed.

When I came to Israel, however, and tried to take my shoes off at the entrance of my former landlady’s home, she said, *“What are you doing? Leave your shoes on! What do you think? That this is the Beit Mikdash (Holy Temple)?”* ☺

Actually, our homes really are meant to be a mini-Beit Mikdash (a mini-Holy Temple) a place where God’s presence dwells with us. A serious question we need to ask ourselves is, *“Is my home a place where God can feel comfortable to dwell?”*

I can still remember with shame and regret, a time when a former volunteer who had become a dear friend, came to stay with us in our shabby townhouse in Canada when we had returned from Israel several years ago. At this time, our lives were a complete mess; we were broke and broken, sick in body and heart over being forcibly sent back into exile.

Strife between me and my then husband were our frequent ugly companions. After only two days, this precious woman approached us and confessed that she just couldn’t take the hostile atmosphere in our home anymore; and that she felt it necessary to leave.

This was a really hard but good lesson for me. If even a friend, who really wants to help us, is not able to tolerate a home filled with strife, how much more difficult for the presence of God to dwell with us in the absence of peace?

One night, our congregational leader, who was teaching a series on relationships, made a bold statement. He said, *“We must get our own house in order before we have something to say to the world.”* I think there is a lot of truth in that. We can bring shame on the name of the Lord if we are sharing the gospel but our home is in a shambles.

The Word says that an elder must be husband of one wife, a man who rules his own house well, and whose children are under control. **“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does**

**not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church)?”**

(1 Timothy 3:4-5)

This is a time when God is revealing to us the things that are out of order in our homes and families; and is in the process of helping us to restore order out of areas that have been in chaos, even for a very long time. Perhaps, with the end so near, He is asking us to put our affairs in order in preparation for His glorious return.

Who is my Neighbor?

The other Hebrew word for Tabernacle is ‘mishkan’ **משכן** which comes from a Hebrew root word ‘shokhen’ meaning ‘ **dwell** שכן’. It is from this root that the word, Shekhinah, **שכינה**, the feminine word for the Shechinah glory of God is derived. I find it so interesting that in the Hebrew, it is this same root word used for a ‘neighbor’ (**shokhen**) **שוכן**.

What does this tell us? A spark of the Divine, the Shechinah glory of God, resides in each and every person, since we have all been created by the Almighty God, Elohim. It is for this reason that Yeshua taught us that as important as it is to love God, it is equally important to love our ‘shochen’ (neighbor). When questioned, Yeshua said that these are the two most important commandments in all of the Torah.<sup>5</sup>

To illustrate his teaching and answer the question, “Who is my neighbor (shokhen)?”, Yeshua told the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>6</sup> A traveler had been beaten, robbed, stripped of his clothes and left for dead. Two religious men, a Cohen (priest) and a Levite, walked right on by – likely in a hurry to get to their ‘religious duties’; but a Samaritan man took the time to tend to the wounded man. He took him to an inn to recover – at his own expense!

Since every person is our ‘neighbor’ (shokhen) and contains a spark of the shekhinah glory of God within, we must treat each and every person with dignity and respect. In these end times when the love of many will grow cold, we must keep those fires of love burning brightly. We can no longer say we love God, attend all the prayer meetings and services, sing the songs and look super-spiritual, but fail to love people, especially the poor and needy.



Good Samaritan by [Aimé Morot](#) (1880)

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>6</sup> Luke 10:25-30

## Building an A.R.K.

God is love; and if we don't really love people, then I think we have totally missed His heart:

**“The one who does not love does not know God because God is love.”** (1 John 4:8)

**“No one has ever seen God. If we love one another God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.”** (1 John 4:12) **“And we have this command from Him; the one who loves God must also love his brother.”** (1 John 4:21)

The compassion of God is for the outcast and the downcast, those on the outside looking in, the *'have nots'* who are too discouraged to even cast a glance at all that the *'haves'* are enjoying.

James tells us that the *'religion'* that is acceptable and pleasing to God is to care for widows and orphans in their distress. **“Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”** (James 1:27)

If we are not caring for people in their distress (especially orphans and widows), then perhaps we need to re-think our concept of what it means to be spiritual or religious. God dwells with those who are lowly and contrite in heart and spirit:

**“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.”** (Isaiah 57:15)

Do we want to be closer to God? I'm starting to believe that I'm not going to experience the Shechinah glory of God in my own prayer closet or my jealously guarded *'devotional times'* as much as when I reach out with hope to the hopeless, with food to the famished and with a warm smile to those whose hearts have grown cold .

When we obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit to practice Acts of Random Kindness, we are constructing an A.R.K. - a safe shelter where people can find refuge from the storms of life. We become a walking mishkan, bringing the shechinah glory of God to the wilderness areas of our cities and nations.

There's a catch...

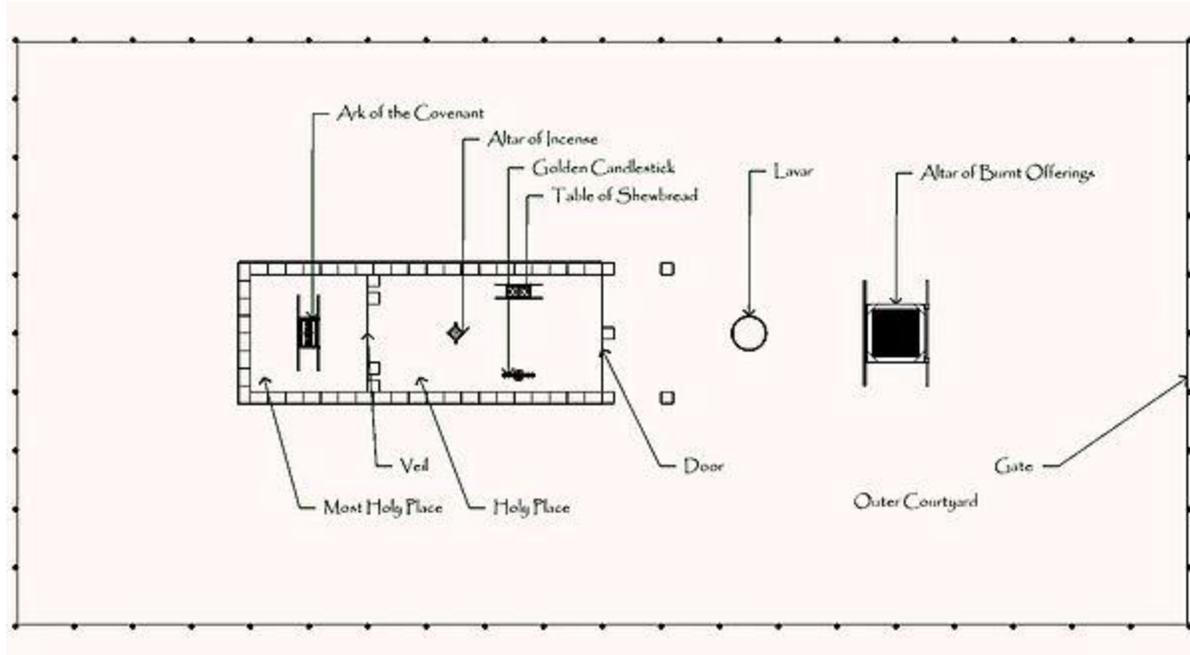
There is only one catch to this – we cannot give away what we do not possess. We cannot love others if we do not have a healthy love for ourselves. The commandment to love our neighbor is *“as you love yourself.”* (Mark 12:31) Too many people, even Believers, are trying to love others while deep in their hearts they despise and reject themselves.

If we are filled with self-hatred and self-rejection, then it can be nearly impossible to love others in a healthy, unselfish way. We need to give out of a full cup; and the only way to be truly filled is to receive the pure love, approval and acceptance of the Lord which is perfect, faithful, and true. Human love may often fail us; but God's love never fails.<sup>7</sup>

## Body, Mind and Spirit – Launching out into the Deep

The Sanctuary (mikdash) was a portable structure built to accompany the Israelites on their wanderings through the wilderness. It basically consisted of three parts: the outer court, the inner court (Holy Place) and the Most Holy Place (The Holy of Holies).

The three sections of the Mikdash also represents our humanity: we have an outer court – our physical bodies and all of its systems, an inner place where our mind, will and emotions function; and the most holy place - the most inner, secret place where our spirit dwells and communes with God.



Schematic of the Tabernacle (2009 drawing by Gabriel Fink)

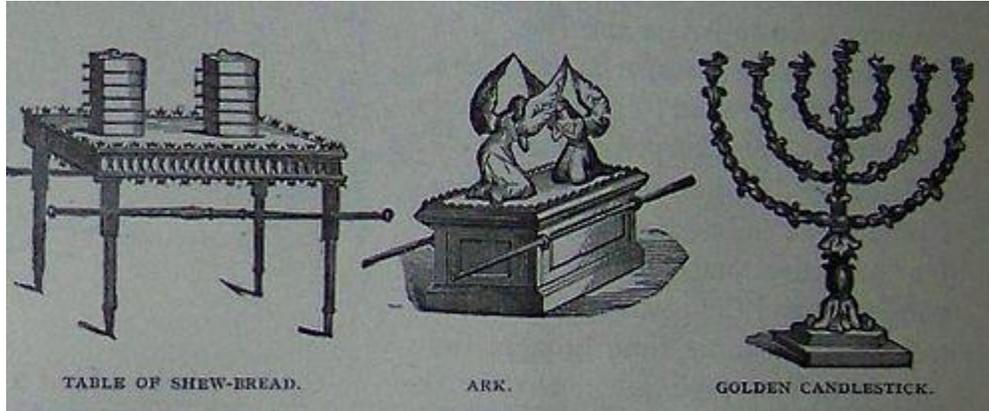
When Yeshua encountered a group of weary, frustrated fishermen who had caught nothing all night, He told them to go out again and this time to launch out into the deep; for it was there, in the deepest area, that they would catch a haul so abundant it almost broke their nets!

If we want to live a 'deeper life' with God, we need to get out of the shallow realm of catering to our flesh; and even out of the unstable realm of our fickle emotions and our ever changing

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:8a

moods; and instead launch into the deeper, inner secret place to discern what our spirit ‘knows’ is truth. Because we are not moved by ‘appearances’; those appearances will be moved!

## The Holy Place



The Table of Shew-Bread, Ark, and Golden Candlestick (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The holy place contained the golden lampstand, the showbread, and the altar of incense. Also within the first part of the sanctuary would be a table of showbread, a golden lampstand (menorah) and an altar of acacia wood overlaid with copper.

“Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.” (Hebrews 9:1-5)

## Going into the Most Holy Place – Intimacy with God

The inner Holy of Holies, containing the Ark of the Covenant, could only be entered once a year on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) by the High Priest (Cohen Hagadol).

Israel was instructed to make the Ark of the Covenant out of acacia wood covered with gold, in which the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were to be laid.

According to the New Testament (book of Hebrews), it also contained a golden pot with the manna and Aaron’s rod that budded.

The Holy place, and behind it the Holy of Holies (model circa 2007)



## Raiders of the Lost Ark

The ark was carried in a special manner with poles placed through four rings of gold throughout Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness. When they camped, the Ark was placed inside the tabernacle. The Ark was carried by the priests into the Jordan River when the Israelites, led by Joshua crossed over into the Promised Land. The Ark was also carried around the city of Jericho once a day for seven days. On the seventh day, seven priests blowing on seven shofarot (ram's horns), marched around with the ark seven times - then, with a great shout, the walls of Jericho fell and they went in and took the city.<sup>8</sup>



Sculpture of the Ark of the Covenant carried by the Cohanim on display at Mamilla Mall in Jerusalem

Whatever happened to the Ark of the Covenant (Aron Habrit) also called the Ark of the Testimony? The Ark was eventually captured by the Philistines until King David brought it back to its rightful place in the tabernacle in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

There are many theories about what eventually happened to the Ark of the Covenant but it is generally believed that the Babylonians carried away the vessels of the ark when they destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple in 587 BC (as written in the Greek 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Esdras).

*“And they took all the holy vessels of the Lord, both great and small, with the vessels of the ark of God, and the king's treasures, and carried them away into Babylon.” —1 Esdras 1:54*

There is, however, no mention of the Babylonians taking away the ark itself and there are those who maintain that it was hidden underground so that the Babylonians would not capture it. Some believe that it is under the very spot where Yeshua was crucified, and that his blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat below the earth.

Visitors and tourists can embark upon a tour of the underground Western Wall Tunnels and be shown the place that is believed to be the closest we can reach at this time to where the Ark of the Covenant may be buried.



Women praying in the tunnel at the closest physical point not under Islamic Waqf jurisdiction to the Holy of Holies

<sup>8</sup> Joshua 6:16-20

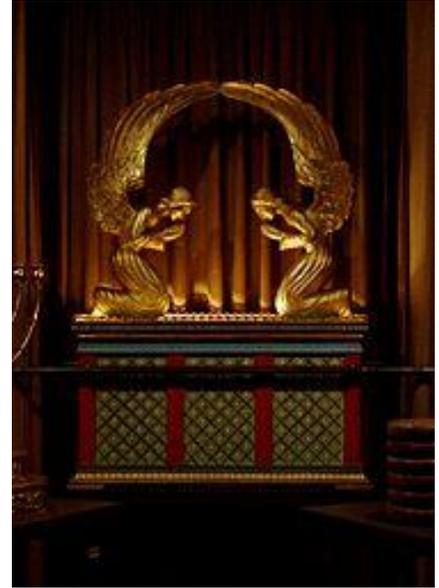
<sup>9</sup> 2 Sam. 6:17-20; 1 Chron. 16:1-3; 2 Chron. 1:4

## Who are the Cherubim?

Upon the ark's cover and over the mercy seat were to be placed two golden cherubim. What are cherubim and from where do they originate?

Although popular modern folklore represents them as chubby, naked babies who fly around with wings, the Bible shows them completely different. Cherubim are winged angelic beings who attend to God; represented in Middle Eastern art as a lion or bull with eagles' wings and a human face.

When King Hezekiah prayed, he addressed YHVH as the One enthroned above the cherubim (referring to the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant).



The Ark of the Covenant (replica in George Washington Masonic National Memorial)

**“O LORD of hosts (YHVH Tzeva’ot), God of Israel, *enthroned above the cherubim*, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.** (Isaiah 37:16)

The word ‘Cherubim’ (Hebrew כְּרֻבִים ) first appears in Genesis in reference to mighty angelic beings with flaming swords who guarded the entrance of the Garden of Eden and the way to the Tree of Life after Adam and Eve had been banished.<sup>10</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel described the images of cherubim that he saw in his visions.<sup>11</sup>

Most streams of Judaism (including traditional Rabbinic Judaism) believe in the existence of angels, including cherubim, although specific beliefs vary widely.

According to the Kaballah (the mystical sect of Judaism) cherubim and other angels have specific names and divine roles to perform in our lives.



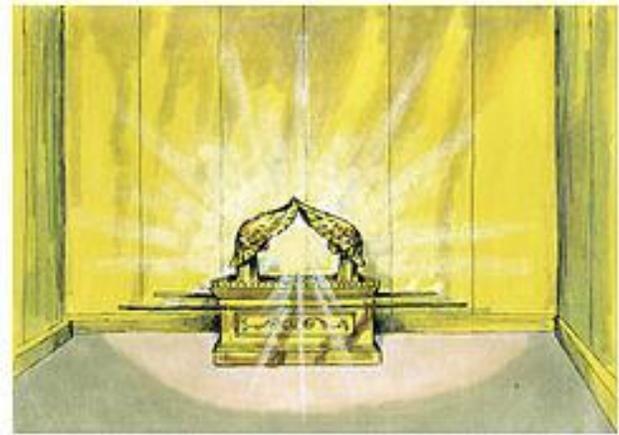
One traditional depiction of the cherubim and chariot vision, based on the description by Ezekiel

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:24

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10

## The Mercy Seat (Kapporet)

It would be from between the two cherubim on the mercy seat of the Ark that God would communicate His commandments to Moses. From this we may note that although the 'law' formed the foundation of the Ark; communication with God came forth from the mercy seat. Our relationship with God is always filtered through His attribute of mercy.



On top of the Covenant Box were two angels. (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Distant Shores Media/Sweet Publishing)

What exactly is the mercy seat? In Hebrew it is called the ,kapporet, כַּפֹּרֶת, from the word 'kapparah', which means 'atonement'. The root of this term is 'kaphar', כָּפַר meaning 'to cover'. The mercy seat was a golden cover to the Ark of the Covenant, but it represented our atonement that God gives us through His mercy.

The Holy of Holies (K'dosh Ha'doshim) was to be separated from the rest of the Sanctuary by a thick, heavy veil or drape made of fine linen plus blue, purple and scarlet yarn - embroidered with figures of golden cherubim. **“The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.”** (Exodus 26:33)

What was the Holy of Holies? It was the most sacred and innermost portion of the Sanctuary in the wilderness and the ancient Holy temple in Jerusalem. Only the Cohen Hagadol (Jewish high priest) could enter into this most Holy place, and even then only once a year on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

**“Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance;”** (Hebrews 9:6-7)

Before entering the Most Holy Place, the Cohen Hagadol would have to wash himself thoroughly, and put on special clean clothing. Once inside, he would burn incense so that the smoke would cover his eyes and form a barrier to seeing God directly. Then he would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant to atone for the sins of his people as well as his own personal sins.

Why the veil and elaborate precautions undertaken by the High Priest before entering the Holy of Holies? It is because God’s eyes are too pure to look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13). This shows us that we cannot take lightly God’s holiness or carelessly enter into His presence.

## The Veil has been Torn

Highly significant to us is the fact that when Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) died on the cross, the veil was torn in two: **“When Yeshua had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”** (Matthew 27:50-51a)

No man tore this veil in two; but it was a supernatural act of God based on a Jewish mourning custom. When a person grieves for a loved one who has died, the garment of the mourner would be torn from top to bottom. Therefore, our Heavenly Father publicly displayed His deep grief over the death of His Son.

What does this mean to us as followers of Yeshua? This amazing occurrence signified our free access to the very presence of God through Yeshua’s atoning sacrifice. Because of Yeshua’s death on the cross, man is no longer separated from God but can come boldly to the Throne of grace at any time to receive God’s grace, help and mercy.

**“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”** (Hebrews 4:16)

Whereas in the days of Moses, there was a formidable barrier to God in place, now we can have confidence to enter into even the Most Holy Place through the blood of Yeshua – by a new and living way that has been opened for us through the curtain – that is his body. Through His blood and broken body, a new and living way has been opened into the Holy of Holies; and we now have 24/7 access to the presence of God.

**“By his death, Yeshua opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.”** (Hebrews 10:20)

Yeshua came as the Cohen Hagadol (High Priest) of a greater and more perfect tabernacle than the one constructed by Moses and the people of Israel; it was not made with human hands but was supernaturally created. **“But Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.”** (Hebrews 9:11)

He did not enter into the Most Holy Place with the blood of bulls or goats or any other sacrificial animal since their blood could never completely remove sin; but would have to be repeated every year over and over again.

Yeshua entered into the K’dosh Hakdoshim with His very own blood – once and for all - to totally remove our sins from us – as far as the east is from the west!<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Psalm 103:12

**“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”** (Hebrews 9:12)

Let us praise His name forever and ever! Amen.

## Haftarat Trumah

In this prophetic portion of Scripture, King Solomon built a Temple for God in Jerusalem. It was his father, King David’s yearning desire to build this temple but God did not allow it because David had been a warrior, a man of war. David had too much blood on his hands; therefore it was his son, Solomon, whom God allowed to build the Temple.<sup>13</sup>

There is such a profound lesson in this for us today! The Hebrew name for Solomon is Shlomo, **שלמה** which comes from the root word Shalom, **שלום** which means peace.



Solomon and the Plan for the Temple (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

During Solomon’s reign, peace had been established. **“And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon....”** (1 Kings 5:12) It is only when we have been able to establish ‘shalom bayit’ (peace in our homes) and shalom lev (peace in our hearts) that we can really build a place where God can feel at home with us.

In the construction of the Holy Temple, neither a hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was to be heard in the house.<sup>14</sup> The Temple rose silently and peacefully. This contains a great moral truth – that the Temple of the Lord cannot be built where there is discord, or strife, but only where there is quietness and peace.

**“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”** (Isaiah 30:15)

We are now the Temple of God;<sup>15</sup> we are to be the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. But bitterness, anger, wrath, evil speaking and all malice grieves the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> How can the

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<sup>13</sup>1 Chronicles 22:8-10

<sup>14</sup> 1 Kings 6:7

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 4:30-31

Holy Spirit dwell within us right alongside such things as fear, anger, jealousy, envy, strife, unforgiveness, murmuring and complaining ?

We certainly don't want God to come in and visit for a couple days and then say (like my friend), *"You know what, guys, I really tried, but to be honest, I just can't stand it in here with you any longer! I need to leave just to have some peace!"*

OK, God is probably not going to actually say that to our face, but if we really want to make a comfortable 'home' or mishkan, for the Lord, where He will be pleased to dwell, then we need to examine our inner lives and make sure it really is a 'holy place' where God can make Himself comfortable.

### Fighting for True Peace (Shalom)

Sometimes we become so desperate for peace that we try to avoid all conflict. We run away from all confrontations, even those issues that really need to be confronted; we refuse to engage in anything controversial or even fail to speak the truth for fear of 'making waves'.

This is not true peace; this is compromise. There is a difference. This is the paradox – that sometimes peace is only achieved by going through a time of war or conflict. Shlomo (King Solomon) was able to enjoy a time of peace because his father, King David, fought a great many bloody battles. Sometimes it is only when we accept and even embrace conflict for a season that we are able to find the peace that we seek to build our own Temple.

The entire international community, in seems, wants Israel to give away more and more of our God-given Land to the 'Palestinians' in a deluded effort to have peace; however giving in to those whose sole aim is our destruction is not the answer. It will never bring true peace. That peace will only come once the Prince of Peace, Sar Shalom, comes in the form of Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah). **"Shalom" (in blue)** and **"Salām" (in green)** mean 'peace' in Hebrew and Arabic respectively



Until then we must fight for our right to live in this Land; and for the safety and security of our people. And may we find comfort in the knowledge that one day, the mishkan (Tabernacle) of God will be with us in the New Jerusalem, and God will dwell with us and will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

**"Look! God's dwelling place (mishkan) is now among the people, and he will dwell (shokhen) with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."** (Revelation 21:3-4)

### Closing Prayer:

Thank You, Adonai, for all You have given us; everything we have comes from You and so we willingly and cheerfully want to give back to Your work. Please show us where You want us to sow our offerings that You have so generously supplied. Make us cheerful and generous givers, not only in our finances but as a way of life. Help us to love people as You love them, Lord, and to have compassion on those who need a helping hand.

Thank You for showing us the pattern with which to build our lives – our homes and families – help us, Holy Spirit, to be obedient to build according to the Heavenly pattern and not the world or our own faulty thinking.

Help us to build a strong, peaceful and solid Temple for You, physically, emotionally and spiritually – a place where You will feel at home and comfortable. Thank you we can enjoy intimacy with You through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) and can come to you at any time.

Guide us through every area of conflict, to a place of peace (shalom).

In the name of Yeshua, Prince of Peace. Amen.

### Trumah Study Questions

1. What are the three levels of giving and where do you see yourself on this scale?
2. If God cannot be contained in an earthly structure, why did He ask them to build a Sanctuary? Do you feel closer to God in a place of worship?
3. What are the meanings of the two different Hebrew words, ‘mishkan’ and ‘mikdash’?
4. What are two Jewish customs that God has given to help us remember Him?
5. How are we to build our home as a place God can dwell?
6. With whom does God dwell? Who is He close to?
7. How do the three parts of the Tabernacle correspond to our humanity?
8. What was contained in the Holy Place? The Most Holy Place? What divided them?
9. What happened to this barrier when Yeshua died on the cross? What is the significance of this event?
10. What was inside the Ark of the Covenant? What do you think happened to it?
11. What are cherubim and what role do they play? Where are they mentioned in the Bible?
12. What was the relationship between peace (Shalom) and King Solomon’s building of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem?
13. Does peace always mean the absence of conflict? Discuss areas of your life that need ‘shalom’ to be restored.

About the Author:

Hannah Neshher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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