

Terumah**Offering**

Torah: Exodus 25:1-27:19

Haftarah: I Kings 5:12-6:13

Brit Chadashah: 2 Cor. 9:1-15

(Missionsfest) L-rd's Table Jewish Hero: Jack (King Ahasuerus)

This is Missionsfest weekend and we are going to have a little shorter service than usual so that people can take advantage of the activities which are occurring at Missionsfest. One of the features which is different than previous years is a scale model of the Tabernacle and lo and behold this week's Torah portion deals with the directions which were given to Moses about how to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

The Haftarah portion deals with the temple which Solomon built in the 480th year after the Exodus, in the second month of the fourth year of his reign. It took seven years and some change to build. When it was built, all of the ritual items from the Tabernacle were placed in the temple, and the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies between two massive cherubim. The golden box was put into a golden building and had come home to stay.

The New Testament portion deals with the gift which the Greek churches were putting together for the Jerusalem church and Paul speaks of our need to exercise voluntary generosity. All the materials for the Tabernacle were given voluntarily by the people from the goods they had "spoiled" from the Egyptians and all the materials used in the building of the temple came from the spoils which David had gathered from his "spoiling" of the nations around him. The difference in Corinth was that the spoils of the believing nations were to be given voluntarily to help the believing Jewish church which was suffering through an extended famine. How generous are you with the "spoils" (material goods) the L-rd brings your way?

The purpose of the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle was that the presence of the L-rd could dwell in the midst of the people as they travelled to the Promised Land. The purpose of the temple was that the presence of G-d could dwell in the midst of the people in the Holy Land. The purpose of us being His temple is that His presence can dwell in our midst too.

So, today, instead of giving you a Torah Meditation and a sermon, I would like to talk to you about building heavenly space into our lives, both as individual believers and as a community of believers, because we are G-d's building, being built on the foundation of our Messiah.

I hope that many of you will be able to go and see the scale model of the Tabernacle at Missionsfest, but to begin my meditation/sermon today, I want to introduce a word to you which appears in the French translation and which helped me to understand how the fabric perimeter of the Tabernacle courtyard was put together. Between the posts that formed the five cubit high fence, there were **tringles** connected to each post by hooks.

I wanted to know what this piece of equipment was and after much consulting, I determined that a **tringle** was a kind of curtain rod which was used to drape the cloth from between each column or post of the courtyard. The courtyard was massive - at least 100 metres long (100

cubits) and 50 meters wide (50 cubits) and the cloth which was to surround it was 5 meters high (5 cubits), or over twice the height of the average man or just under twice the height of guys like Mike Martindale. The tringles kept it from ripping as it was put up and taken down.

When the Tabernacle was set up, it would have been visible from anywhere in the camp and it was quite the operation to set up and take down, and to transport. It was moved 43 times on the way to the Promised Land and there was a provision made for an annual tax for its upkeep - which is remembered on Shabbat Shekalim which was last week.

Each piece of the Tabernacle and the courtyard fitted together like Lego and each family of the Levites were assigned which part to carry, but the Ark was carried by the children of Aaron and it was not light. Over all of this His mighty presence hovered and guided them.

Now I say all of this for several reasons. First of all, the most awesome feature of this highly colourful mobile sanctuary was the hovering presence which stood above the Holy of Holies throughout the wilderness wandering. Second of all, it was constructed by generous voluntary gifts from the people. And finally, it was heavenly space around which the people built their lives - it was the centre of their universe around which they all camped.

When they moved, the Ark was packed so that the priests did not see it, then all the fixtures and the tent, then the big stuff in front of the tent, then all the posts, tringles and fabric, each with a designated carrier. The people formed up behind the covered Ark as long as the presence lifted from it and they halted when the presence descended on the covered Ark.

Then the tent was set up and everything was unwrapped - again with no one seeing the Ark and the whole structure was reassembled. Then the people set up their tents and the constant sacrificial activity would resume. I would like to have taken Sydney Speakman's course where all of this was explained and illustrated in greater detail, but even with its incredible beauty, the most amazing thing about it was the hovering presence, which was visible night and day. It was more beautiful and terrifying than anything imaginable.

His presence in us needs to be a night and day feature of our lives and we have to make sure that we build heavenly space into our lives. We may not see the hovering presence in the same way as they did and we are not called to rebuild a Tabernacle according to biblical specs, in order to have access to this presence, but just as their camp and their lives revolved around the Ark and around the sacrificial cycle (daily, weekly, monthly and seven times annually), so our lives need to revolve around our devotion to Him, both individually and corporately. Heavenly space in our lives needs to be the hard drive which powers our lives.

Our prayers and our praise are the sacrifices He wants as we wander through the wilderness of this life on our way home to our Father's House. How much does your life revolve around prayer and praise (and study and fellowship)? He has to be the dead centre of our beings. Now a feature of the Tabernacle and of the temple which applies to us is the repairs and upkeep which it required as time went by. Things wear out and we encounter changes as we go through the various stages of our lives, but our walk with the L-rd needs to be kept in good shape so that it does not begin to look shabby and neglected - we should never neglect heavenly space in our lives or allow our lives to revolve around something less.

This heavenly space takes the shape of personal devotion and corporate devotion and it is

truly the most important part of who we are and what we do. This is because we are pilgrims and wanderers who are stewards of the presence and our bodies are His temple and our hearts are His sanctuary. How is your sanctuary doing? How is His presence doing in your life?

The Tabernacle and the Ark were built by voluntary, generous offerings of the people because even in times of famine and trial their needs were met and they never neglected the heavenly space over which they were made stewards. Now I do not want to make this message about tithing as much as I want to make it about heavenly priorities where we reserve the best of our time and our resources for G-d because we realize that everything we own is only temporarily in our stewardship and it ultimately belongs to Him. How is His stuff doing in you?

If you can, imagine the people going about their business with the Tabernacle at the centre of their lives in an endless, joyful series of sacrifices which they offered out of their increase and which kept this amazing structure intact. This same Ark which they built at the mountain was placed in the temple, 480 years later! When we learn to give our best for G-d, the rest of our lives fall into place and our journey makes sense and grants us more satisfaction and gratification than anything the world has to offer. Then we do not end our journey in tatters.

You see the pagan peoples around Israel had some pretty huge and amazing looking temples. They performed some pretty spectacular rituals, but their buildings were empty and their worship was just a hollow show because their gods were not real. Our amazing G-d is real and our incredible G-d is present, not in some fancy building and not in some spectacular rituals (sound, sight and smell), but in our praises, in our hearts and in our lives.

Praise takes practice and our spiritual lives need to be kept in good shape and we need to honour G-d with everything we own and everything that we do. How is your praise doing? Is your spiritual life in good shape? Does everything you own and everything which you do, bring glory to G-d? We are the stewards of His presence in the earthen vessels of our hearts and all the wonderful beauty of the Tabernacle and the Temple can be ours in the quality and quantity of worship and service which we offer to Him.

Making heavenly space in our lives is our calling and our privilege and when it diminishes or gets neglected, in terms of spiritual beauty and value our lives begin to look shabby and lacklustre - worn out and in need of repair and intensive care. It is true that we have to go about the business of living, but in a very true sense, our spirituality and our maintenance of heavenly space in our lives is our business and it is what our lives should all be about. We need to be good campers as we wander through this life and we need to be in constant, intimate contact with the Presence both individually and corporately.

We are going to be observing the L-rd's Table in this shorter service, and it can be seen as a time of repair and renewal - and as a time of intensive care, where we remember what He did for us and where we return Him to the central place in our hearts and lives. This does not have to involve great weeping and wailing or a great show of emotion and remorse, but we have to understand that the condition of the heavenly space in our lives is the single most important thing in our lives - without it nothing else matters.

How do we handle our observance of the L-rd's Table to make it meaningful? It is a time when we look at our spiritual lives and see if there is anything which is becoming neglected or shabby. We look to see that He and His Word are the centre around which our lives revolve - and that our spirituality has not been relegated to some obscure corner of our hearts and lives to be dealt with whenever we feel we have the time or the energy. Our spirituality - our heavenly space needs to be that part of our lives to which we give the best of our time and energy and the L-rd's Table should be seen as a regular (monthly for us) reality check and essential systems verification - where we check the **tringles** of our hearts.

I have talked to you about how awesome and intricate the Tabernacle was - and how it would have been visible to everyone in that large camp. I have spoken about it being the centre around which the camp revolved and its activities were the centre around which the lives of the people revolved. It was kept clean and in good repair until the people started moving G-d out of the centre of their lives and at one point they even lost the Ark to their enemies and even the two Holy Temples were burned to the ground through their spiritual neglect.

We are servants of the true celestial temple and as we travel through life towards this amazing destination, we are called to be stewards of the Presence around which we need to build our lives. We are servants and stewards and the L-rd's Table is a time for us to reconnect with the Presence and see how our service and stewardship are doing.

Is your life centred on Him? Do you give Him the best of your time and your resources? Is your spiritual life beginning to look a little shabby? Are there parts missing, broken or bent? Are the tringles of your heart in good repair? Is your life revolving around your spirituality?

May our heavenly space be the place where we draw our energy and our strength from so that our lives can be full of spiritual beauty which is just as spectacular as both the Tabernacle and the temple were, whether we are having a good time in our lives or whether we are encountering trials and storms. One last thought and I will close so that we can observe the L-rd's Table. The Tabernacle had a rain (storm) cover made from the skins of a tachash, which was a kind of antelope that is now extinct.

When storms struck the Tabernacle, the tachash covering kept it dry and safe. Let the L-rd provide you with a storm covering so that the Tabernacle of your heart - your heavenly space, is kept safe when things get rough and interesting. Let us pull it over us as we hunker down and observe the L-rd's Table so that our spirituality can remain unscathed, repaired, clean and in good shape and be the centre around which our lives revolve - daily, weekly, monthly and through every stage and event which our lives pass through on our journey home. Shalom.