

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Terumah:*** **Exodus 25:10-22**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 5:10-18**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Matthew 5:21-24**

There I will meet with you.

[Exodus 25:22]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:57-64;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *Sim Shalom*, the Prayer for Peace

V'asu aron atzei shitim – *And make/build /cause to take shape a special box-like receptacle out of shitim [wood] Exodus 25:10a.*

The Holy One's bold proposal of ***SHAKANTI BETOCHAM*** [I will reside/dwell/abide in the midst of them] has rocked our world. It sounds fantastic, of course. But what would it look like in real time – and how would it change the way we 'do life'? Is the level of familiarity between an Eternal, Invisible, Omniscient God and mortal, corporeal, and easily distracted and deceived human beings that '*shakanti betocham*' would entail a good idea? How can the Majesty, Holiness, and Glory of the One Whom even the vast Heavens cannot contain possibly find a fitting dwelling place in our dirty, smelly refugee camp? How can we - scarcely forty days removed from slaving in the slime pits of Pharaoh possibly share a campground with the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He? Understandably, we are struggling to take all this in. But this, too, is part of the Grand Plan. The 'great nation' calling of *B'nei Yisrael* requires us to understand things – and acclimate to realms – that other people do not even know exist. While the raging nations of fallen humanity obsess over *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas*, and seek first their own fleshly comfort and pleasure, our calling is to seek the Face, embrace the Majesty, Host the Presence, and steward the Wisdom of the Creator of the Universe. If we are to bring the grand redemptive plan of the Holy One our God into play upon the earth in the situations and circumstances we face, we must have a window through which to peer into our Bridegroom's Brilliant Mind and Beautiful Heart. Hence, our King has ordained for us, while encamped at Sinai, to experience a transformative download of revelation protocols that I call the '*Great Kedusha Reveal*'.

Welcome to the Great Kedusha Reveal

The Holy One has designed the *Great Kedusha Reveal* to begin with what is to

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become for us the center-of-gravity of and north star for our spiritual universe. That is, of course, the Glorious Throne upon which He Who Called us sits, and from which He rules and reigns over Creation. See **Exodus 25:22, Numbers 7:89, I Samuel 4:4, Psalm 99:1, and Isaiah 37:16**. Moshe's tour therefore starts with, and then emanates outward from, the *aron ha-kodesh* – i.e. the holy *ark*. In your mind's eye the Holy One wants you to see and marvel at the stark simplicity of the *shittim* wood frame at the base of it all. He wants you to gaze in awe at the intricacy of the hammered gold overlays, perfectly installed over the wood frame. He wants you to experience soaring, inexpressible joy – yet simultaneously tremble with deep humility – as you consider the awe-inspiring symmetry of the cherubim that face each other to form the receptacle's ornamental covering. He wants to acclimate you to majesty. He wants to so captivate you with His beauty, and the beauty of His Courts, that you will, like Yosef, forget the toil and suffering of your father's house. **Genesis 41:51**². Are you in awe of the ark and mercy seat's dazzling design? Are you delighting in the thought of its precious contents? Are you contemplating its glorious redemptive testimony? Do you sense an eternal connection to it? Do you feel something like unto a magnetic attraction drawing you to it? Are the thought, mention, and mental image of it energizing, empowering, and inspiring you? Is the attention you are focusing on the ark calming you, and displacing/eclipsing the negativity of the physical world around you? Good! If so, that means that you are beginning to experience the transformative, transcendent power the Holy One has infused in the Beauty Realm! That means that the Holy One is starting to awaken in you the creative energy – and the passion – that you will need to draw upon to become like a tree planted by the rivers of living water, bringing forth fruit in season each time you meditate on His Torah. See **Psalm 1:2-3**.

***The Primordial Creativity Infusion –
and How it is Programmed by the Holy One to Awaken in Us,
and Bear Its Intended Fruit, In Season***

The Holy One – Who is, after all, the Ultimate Creative Force in and behind the Universe – deliberately infused each of us with vast reservoirs of creative energy. That is the first way He marked us as His own. He carefully programmed creative energy potential into us that He could later, in His perfect timing, awaken, energize, and put to use simply by breathing upon us with His Ruach/Breath, and speaking over us Words of activation. He knows that every time we come close to Him something primordial happens deep in our inner being, and we start to feel *an urge to build* – an inner drive almost as strong as the *urge to push* experienced by a woman entering the final stages of labor. That urge is the reason we find ourselves

² Genesis 41:51 describes the 'naming' of Yosef's firstborn son, Menashe. The verse reads, in translation: Yosef called the name the firstborn 'Menashe', for God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.'

suddenly stirred to start planning, designing, and building our family *sukkah* immediately after we complete our Yom Kippur fast. With the Holy One's Manifest Presence so near to us at Sinai, He knows we are already feeling the urge to build. It has been expressed in our communal response to the things He has proclaimed over us. In chapter 19, after the Holy One declared His intentions to make us His *am segulah*, His kingdom ambassadors/diplomats, and His *goy kadosh* - i.e. a nation that exhibits and exudes His holiness – how did we respond? We didn't echo the verbiage that the Holy One used – i.e. *sh'ma* and *sh'mar*. We instead all proclaimed with one voice '*Na'aseh*' – i.e. we will build/make/do/cause to take shape! *Na'aseh* is, of course, a form of the verb *asah* – a term straight from the building trade that exudes creativity. Then again, in chapter 24, when Moshe read the book of the Covenant to us, we declared '*Na'aseh v'nish'ma*' – i.e. we will build/make/do/cause to take shape that which we *sh'ma* [referring to the words of the Book of the Covenant Moshe read]. The Egyptians FORCED us to build what they wanted for their own selfish purposes; the Holy One, on the other hand, INSPIRES us to build what He intends for us to enjoy together and delight in as Covenant Partners.

Our Invitation to Share, and Be Transformed By, Our King's Throne Room and Its Associated Beauty Realm

Torah presents the current revelation download – which I call the '*Mish'kan Discourse*' – entirely in *the actual Voice of our Beloved!* There is not a single syllable – much less a word – of interpretive narrative by Moshe anywhere in the text of *T'rumah*. There is no human input provided at all. What we are reading in this section of Torah is pure Throne-Room revelation. A Glorious Bridegroom King is speaking – and His chosen Bride People is being called to awaken from slumber, arise from shellshock, put on glorious garments, and walk nobly with the Bridegroom-King through all the mountains, valleys, forests, fields, seashores, deserts, villages, cities, and cultures of the world. Recently redeemed slaves are being invited to occupy positions of great honor and responsibility in His Kingdom and its Courts. The Holy One knows we have had quite enough bossing around – and that what we need instead of whip and stick, order and command, is hope, shared vision, communal purpose, aroused passion, and gentle inspiration. He has therefore set about to inspire us – to cause our passions to arise, our potential for greatness to awaken, and our creativity reservoirs to activate. He is dazzling us with grandeur. He is capturing our imaginations, not to mention our affections, with displays of color, and fragrance, sound, and splendor far too amazing for our finite human minds to comprehend. He is empowering us to ascend and acclimate to – and function gloriously in – His Presence. He is training us how to bring the beautiful pageantry of His Courts into our lives, families, communities, and interactions with the nations and peoples of the world - in real, tangible, real-time,

high impact ways.

Our King knows, you see, that if all we focus on as we interact with the people of the world is a list of *do's and don't's*, and talk of *sin and death, we will be doomed to failure*. He also knows that if the main messages we convey to the world consist of declaration of our flawed and short-sighted opinions about what/who is 'good' and what/who is 'evil', 'just' and 'unjust', 'moral' and 'immoral' - we will offer the world only one more useless form of cold, dead religion. If that happens, we will leave the world no better than we found it. He knows that if we are to co-labor effectively with Him in even explaining, much less implementing and modeling, His grand plan for the redemption of mankind as a species and for the restoration of Creation to its original intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom, we need to be turned into people of awestruck delight. We need to exude irrepressible joy. We need to evidence peace that passes understanding. We need to be *motivated by pure, selfless love*. We need to be known for awestruck wonder, not harsh interpretations and applications of a set of rules. We need to be masters of mercy. We need to walk calmly in gentle *shalom*, not overreact to everything we see, hear, or imagine with outrage. We need to model practical, real-time manifestations of selfless love, not sit in ivory towers shouting clichés at the common folk we see milling around beneath our pristine stained-glass windows. He knows that if the world is going to see anything in us that will inspire and empower them, we absolutely have to be breathlessly engaged in an ever-unfolding epic love story. Our heart needs to be overflowing with a noble theme. Our tongue needs to be the pen of a ready writer. Our eyes need to be open wide with the wonder of a grand and glorious vision. Our mouths need to be overflowing with thanksgiving and praise.

Throughout this Discourse, therefore, the Holy One is going to lay out detailed instructions He wants us to follow as we build on earth *a finite replica* of the infinite Heavenly Throne Room. I hope you *caught that*. The structure we are going to be talking about for the rest of Exodus and all through the book of Leviticus is just going to be a scale-model - a *replica*. It is just an edut - i.e. a *testimony*. It is a sign of the Covenant. It is the essence of the Messiah. Those things are all the *Mish'kan* [i.e. Tabernacle] was ever intended to be. The *Mish'kan* is *just designed to function as an earthly* representation - a mere *shadow* as it were - of *another*, much more magnificent and majestic, place that lies, and an even more glorious *Person Who waits, beyond the veil of ordinary human vision*. In the *Mish'kan's* courts we will be shown *what the Courts of our King are like*. In the *Mish'kan's* wonderfully peaceful chambers we will discover - and learn how to make sense of - what it looks like in real time for the Holy One's Kingdom to come - and for His Will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Of Scale-Models, Replicas, Testimonies, and Covenant Signs

In each of the *Mish'kan's* stunningly beautiful furnishings we are going to be introduced to one or more characteristics and attributes of the promised 'seed of woman' that we will one day come to know and relate to as Messiah. We are not just to be amazed by what we see. We are not just to be in awe of the Beauty Realm. We are to get acclimated to it. We are to embrace it - as *the epicenter of our world*; as the *command center of our nation*; as the embassy of the *kingdom we have been redeemed to represent, advance, and serve*; as our *only true place of belonging in this age*; and as our *model city-of-refuge, set-on-a-hill*, beckoning for all to come and meet our King. We are not supposed to focus on rites or sacraments in the *Mish'kan*; we are *to take delight in our Bridegroom-King there. We are to celebrate our deliverance. We are to treasure, and cherish, and bask in His Manifest Presence. We are to joyfully tell everyone we meet of its beauty, and the wonderful kingdom of shalom on earth and goodwill toward men that it represents. We are to zealously keep it 'clean', sparkling, and functioning in all its glory. And we are to jealously guard its holiness.*

This is surely what the writer of Hebrews means when he speaks of *the 'law of the service of Tabernacle'* being a 'shadow' [i.e. replica]³ of a better thing that is coming. **Hebrews 10:1**. See also Hebrews 8:5, which puts Hebrews 10:1 in context. Hebrews 8:5 refers to the *Mish'kan* as ... *a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of that which is in Heaven*. The writer of Hebrews goes on to explain that: *This is why Moshe was told when he was about to build the Mish'kan "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain."* There it is in black and white - the *Mish'kan* is a 'copy' and a 'shadow' of something – or is it Someone - in Heaven.

A Copy and a Shadow?

What is a copy as that term is used in Hebrews 8:5? The Greek word translated as 'copy' in this verse is *hypodeigma*. This word describes *a sign suggestive of something else, a representation, a figure, copy, or something given as an example for imitation*. The Hebrew word the writer would be drawing off of would probably be *ot*⁴. This is a *covenantal term* referring to *a symbolic item of value given by one Covenant partner to another as a 'down payment' or 'earnest' for the other to hold and use until the promised covenantal consideration is paid in full*. The idea is clearly that the *Mish'kan* is functioning as a *prefiguring image* – a

³ The Hebrew word which the writer of Hebrews most likely had in mind is *tzal, tzade, lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #6738, pronounced *tzehl*, and referring to an *area in which shade is provided as a refuge from intense sun and heat*. The essence of the idea is one of *overshadowing protection* – such as was given by the pillar of cloud in the wilderness - not of *remoteness* or *inferiority* [as many suppose to be the essence of the English word *shadow* in the context of Hebrews 8:5 and Colossian 2:17].

⁴ *Ot* is spelled *alef, vav, tav*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #226.

prophetic representation of something else. Of what is the Mish'kan a prophetic representation? It is a prefiguring image of something that has not yet been fully revealed. It is a prophetic image of something that will follow on its heels, will be far greater in value, and will be far more permanent in duration.

So what did the writer of Hebrews mean when he also described the *Mish'kan* as a *shadow*? The Greek word, *skia*, refers to *the darkened image one sees when some substantive form stands between the one viewing the shadow and the source of light. A shadow always assumes the shape and mirrors the movements of the person or object that intercepts the light rays.* So the question is *whose shadow does the Mish'kan represent? In Whose shade does the Holy One want His Betrothed Bride to sit? O come now, Beloved - you know the answer to that question, don't you?*

The Mish'kan As An Earthly Shadow of a Heavenly Reality

While the Holy One was alone with Moshe on the mountain He *opened the prophet's spiritual eyes* wide and showed Him something *real, substantive, and eternal.* Then the Divine Bridegroom gave Moshe the assignment to have us build an earthly replica of the Heavenly reality he had been privileged to see. The Holy One wants to make certain that what we are going to build will cast an accurate *earthly shadow* of the stunning *Heavenly Realities* of which He wants His Bride to be constantly reminded – and about which He wants her [*i.e. us*] to testify to the nations of the earth.

Much as an architect commissions the making of a “scale model” of a building he proposes to build in order that his client can conceptualize what he is getting, so the Holy One is commissioning us to build the earthly *Mish'kan*. The structure we will build will serve as a safe and beautiful place in which an immature but beloved *bride-in-training* could get a mental picture of the place the Holy One, Her Bridegroom, had prepared for her in the Heavens. The Ultimate Heavenly Reality the Holy One showed Moshe, of course, was the *‘place prepared for you’* the Divine Bridegroom has prepared for His Bride. In the wisdom of the Holy One, however, the initial earthly shadow of that Heavenly Reality is going to be merely a tent in the desert – a beautiful and mystical tent in which a young girl, dreaming of marriage and family, can practice by *“playing house”*. In the inner chambers of this earthly replica, surrounded by familiar finite materials of earth, the Holy One is going to commune with, and reveal His Covenant-Faithfulness and Worthiness to, His Betrothed-Bride.

Oh the visitations that will take place in the *Mish'kan's* courts! These will not be just be ordinary ‘get to know you’ visits. They will not be just tea and conversation

visits. The meetings that will be held there will serve as the highest expressions of *redemptive drama* mankind has ever seen. These meetings will serve as *testimonies* of the Bridegroom-King's mercy. They serve as brilliantly created *illustrations* of His exquisite and multi-layered majesty. They will serve as *signposts of His glorious redemptive plan for mankind and Creation*. They will serve as *evidences of His Abiding Presence, of His Great Delight in us, and of His absolutely tireless Covenant-nurturing activity on our behalf*. Within the chambers of the miniature replica of the Holy One's Throne Room the Holy One and His Betrothed Bride-People will play out on earth, in dramatic form, the spiritual truths of the Heavenly Throne Room after which the earthly one was patterned. Daily, weekly, monthly, and according to an annual cycle designed by the Holy One from the foundation of the world, costumed characters appointed and trained by the Holy One will portray for the Bride-in-training - and for the entire world - facet-by-facet, the eternal reality of *tikkun olam* (repair/restoration of the world) that was accomplished in Heaven long before the Holy One rested on Creation's Seventh Day.

All quiet on the set! Lights. Camera. ACTION! Enter MESSIAH - stage right.

The Mish'kan as the Theatre for the Original "Passion Play"

The *Mish'kan* will thus provide the stage for the first and longest-running "Passion Play" the world has ever known. Every furnishing, every person, every movement, every material, every color - even every fragrance - is consummately designed to tell a different part of the great redemption story. Every stage prop is a portal of revelation and a remembrance of Divine Mercy. Every entrance and exit by a priest, a king, a prophet, a worshipper, or even an enemy will be strategically timed. Every actor's mark will be strategically placed. And yet all will be intimately connected. Every component is an essential part of a much greater whole. And the whole will be far greater than the sum of the parts.

The events the Holy One and the Redeemed Community stage - first at the *Mish'kan* and later at the Temple in Jerusalem - will provide an *earthly shadow* of the redemptive events and processes of Heaven to which they are designed to call the world's attention. Much as some groups today stage annual recreations of historic battles, in full dress and regalia, so the sons and daughters of Avraham are about to be called upon to "act out" - in the chambers of the *Mish'kan* - in priestly garb, with props, and *on cue* - the details of eternal salvation and forgiveness of sin wrought and completed by the Holy One long before the first tidbit of forbidden fruit crossed the Adam's lips.

A Finite Representation of an Infinite Reality

It should be stressed that this replica and all its materials and furnishings were *finite*. Its earthly dimensions of height, width, and depth are specifically given,

while we know that the Heavenly Original after which they were modeled could have *no dimensions or limitations* whatever. If we understand these truths we can begin to fathom the fact that Messiah is a Lamb slain *before the foundation of the world*. The focus of our studies, our meditations, and our conversations was never intended to be tedious details of construction, fanciful allegories, or bloody ‘sacrifices’. The focus of our studies, meditations and conversations was always to be the completed, eternal, infinite redemptive work of the Lamb in Whom we trust and rest – and live, and move, and have our being. That is because what is going to happen inside the *Mish’kan* was never intended to accomplish salvation or even remission of sins. Salvation and remission of sins are *infinite* and *divine* concepts, whose source and essence must be *infinite* and *divine*. No *avodah* [*i.e. service*] ever performed in the earthly structure that we are going to build will ever accomplish one ounce of *tikkun olam*. Nothing that will ever happen in this finite little replica will – or was ever supposed to - effectuate salvation for even the participants in the drama, much less for the whole world. No blood spilled or offering consumed by fire in this finite little replica, however holy, will *atone for* – much less *accomplish remission of* – even a single little white lie, much less the sin of mankind. It is not supposed to. It does not have to. The point is that *the Holy One has, before directing that this structure be built, already made full provision for every single thing that was going to be played out on the earth in the Mish’kan*. Before the foundation of the world, long before Creation was declared “complete”, a perfect, holy, unblemished Lamb was slain. That was the Heavenly Reality. The *Mish’kan* is just a reminder – and a testimony – of that well-established fact.

Every single drama that will play itself out on the altars of the replica is designed to serve merely as an *earthly shadow* of the Heavenly Reality of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The actors involved in the scripted dramas that will be acted out here will not making redemption or atonement happen through their efforts. They will merely testify through their actions on earth about what has already been finalized and affirmed forever in Heaven. The blood of bulls and goats and the ministry of sinful men dressed up in costumes of righteousness will merely constitute a Brilliantly-conceived multi-act play commemorating the eternal events in which the redeemed sons and daughters of the Holy One have always been – and will always be - called to trust and rest.

Likewise the flesh of animals that will be burnt on the altar of the finite replica on earth will never effectuate forgiveness of even so much as a single sin. Nor will the goat blood sprinkled on the mercy seat constitute the means of any true and lasting atonement. What these things were designed to accomplish was merely to point us to, portray for us in vivid pictorial form, and make us long for, the “real thing” which is our Bridegroom-King’s work alone. The ‘stuff’ of the *mish’kan* was, after

all, a *t'rumah* – something lifted up, and separated out, to inspire us, and call us toward the higher ground which the Holy One created us to inherit.

Imagine American actor Charlton Heston playing Moshe. On cue, Heston held up his staff-prop and it appeared that the Sea parted. But it was *just a picture* artfully drawn to burn an image of the true event in the viewer's mind. What we see when we watch the movie the 'Ten Commandments' is not the 'real thing' – it is just a dramatic recreation meant to make the events depicted more 'real' in our minds. Just as Charlton Heston was not Moshe, but was chosen to make us think of Moshe, so Aharon and his sons are not going to be the Holy One's priests of atonement in anything other than a pictorial way. Aharon and his sons were just the ones the Holy One chose to make us think of and long for the True and Eternal High Priest.

Introducing the Furnishings/Stations of the Heavenly Throne Room

Over the course of the *Mish'kan Discourse* the Holy One will commission the construction of seven furnishings – a gold-encased ark of shittim wood; a special covering to go on top of that ark, all of gold, looking like two cherubim facing one another; a brazen altar, a bronze laver, a gold-plated table, a solid gold menorah, and a golden altar for burning incense. Other than to build these furnishings, according to their precise specifications, and commission them for the uses the Holy One ordains in the avodah of the Mish'kan, what are we supposed to make of them? What do they represent? What inspiration are we to draw from them. What empowerment do they offer us?

With regard to every furnishing, try to *look for, consider, and meditate upon*:

1. **The Operative Hebrew vocabulary the Holy One employs to describe the Furnishing** – i.e. the specific Hebrew verbs and nouns the Holy One employs to describe the furnishing in question;
2. **The Redemptive/Restorative Function served by the Furnishing**
3. **The 'Sacred Writing Root' Out of Which the Redemptive Function Represented by the Furnishing in Question Grows** – i.e. the source of that redemptive function in the Torah or other sacred Hebrew writing;
4. **The nature and substance of the Avodah [i.e. service/work] Which Will Be Required with Regard to the Furnishing** [how it is to be serviced, maintained, operated, and transported, etc.];

5. **Which *Mo'ed* [i.e. Divine Appointment] on our King's Redemptive Calendar is this Furnishing Most Closely Associated;** and
6. **Which Kingdom Priority(ies) From the *Aseret HaDibrot* is the Holy One is Trying to Establish in Us** through having us meditate on, or engage our spirit with, the furnishing in question.

The Centerpiece of it All: the Throne of the Holy One-Sitting Upon the Aron Ha-Kodesh – Holy Ark

As mentioned at the outset of this study, the Holy One's instructions for the building of the *Mish'kan* begin with the ark of the Covenant. Why is this box-like/treasure chest-like/hope chest-like furnishing the most important part of the structure? Because [a] it is what is to hold the tablets inscribed by the Finger of the Holy One, and [b] it is the base of *the Throne Upon Which the Holy One's Presence will rest*. The ark is thus the epicenter for the entire structure. It is 'ground zero' – the pinpoint of the beachhead of a great invasion of earth by Heaven.

Every part of the *Mish'kan* – the ark included - is going to correspond directly to something John the Revelator will later describe in Revelation 4 and 5. What the Holy One showed John and what the Holy One showed Moshe were the same thing. John and Moshe just saw these things from different perspectives, and used different words of human language to describe them. What was the first thing John saw when he passed through the open door into Heaven? He described it as '*a throne, and someone sitting upon it*'. **Revelation 4:2**. What was the first thing Moshe was shown in his season of visitation? It was *the ark*. Why the ark? Because it is in that ark that *the tablets of the Torah will reside and be preserved for future generations*⁵, and it is *atop the ark that the mercy seat will rest*⁶. Why are those two things important? Because in I Samuel 4:4, I Chronicles 13:6, and II Samuel 6:2 we are told that the Holy One sits 'enthroned between the cherubim' – *i.e. atop the ark's mercy seat*. See also **Psalm 80:1, Psalm 99:1, and Isaiah 37:16**. And in Psalm 89:14 we are told that ***righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne, while Mercy and truth go before His face***. The ark of the covenant is nothing short of the earthly image of the Great Throne from which the Holy One issues the decrees and judgments that affect His People and govern His Creation. If, as, and to the extent you want to truly understand the message of the *Mish'kan* therefore you have to understand that it is at its heart the earthly image of the place where the Holy One *sits eternally enthroned* – the place from which He dispenses favor, mercy, and wisdom to the inhabitants of the earth. The ark is thus *the center of*

⁵ In Exodus 25:16, the Holy One tells Moshe: ***And you are to put into the ark the Testimony that I will give you.***

⁶ In Exodus 25:21[a], the Holy One tells Moshe: ***You are to put the mercy seat on top of the ark.***

gravity of the Kingdom of God.

How are we to build a realistic replica of the Throne of the King of the Universe on earth? How are we to capture the essence of that something that majestic in earthly substance and space? The Holy One instructs us to start with two substances - a special kind of wood called *shittim*, and the purest of the pure gold of earth. With these two substances we are to *asah* – *i.e.* make/build, craft – the most special of all the ‘stage props’ that will be used in the *Mish’kan*’s Divine Passion Play.

Here are the Divine Bridegroom’s specific instructions concerning the ark:

... *asah* [build/craft] *an ark/chest of etzei shitim* [*shittim* wood];

And overlay it with zahav tahor [pure gold], *overlay it inside and out,*
and make all around it a zer zahav [crown molding of gold].

And put into the ark the edut [Testimony/Truth] *that I will give you*⁷.

[Exodus 25:11-12, 16]

To what part of the revelation of John does the *edut* [*i.e.* testimony] referenced in Exodus 25:16 correspond to? It corresponds to *the Great Scroll*. In Revelation 5:1 the Revelator describes seeing in the Right Hand of Him Who sat upon the throne ‘*a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.*’ Do you now understand that the ark was not just a piece of religious artwork designed by Moshe or some human craftsman? Do you now understand that the Tablets of the Torah were, like the Great Scroll of John’s vision, to bear no man’s signature other than Messiah’s?

The ark is the *down payment* on the promise that the Holy One Himself will sit upon the Throne of all nations and all peoples of earth, and will, from that exalted vantage point, reconcile all things to Himself. The ark is the center-of-gravity for the kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. It is the source of all revelation. It testifies of the beauty and holiness the King of Heaven will bring forth from His chosen Bride. It connects the essential revelation that *mankind is created in the image of the Holy One* [see **Genesis 1:26-27**] to the equally essential revelation that no matter what it may look like right now, at the end of days the Holy One will have a Bride who has *made herself ready* [*i.e.*, who has conformed her life and testimony to the prophetic words of Bridal description forever engraved on tablets of stone inside the Ark – see **Revelation 19:7-8**] and who will be *clothed in white linen, clean and bright* [*i.e.* the *mitzvot* of Torah]. This is the passionate and undistracted Bride who will stun and shame the powers of this world by crying out in unchecked Bridal passion, in absolute unity with the *Ruach HaQodesh*, “*Bo Yeshua!*” See **Revelation 22:17**.

⁷ Deuteronomy 10:2 describes the placement in the *aron* of the second set of stone tablets containing the Torah.

Taking A Moment to Gaze Into the Hebrew Word Picture

The word our English Bibles translate as ‘ark’ in Exodus 25:10 is *aron*⁸. It is derived from the verb root *arah*⁹, meaning *to gather*, or *to harvest*. An *aron* is thus, in its purest Hebrew form, a box in which the seeds of harvested grain are stored. The seed, as Messiah would later teach in parable form, is the ‘*Word of God*’. **Luke 8:11**. That is exactly what the ark was built to contain – the Word of the Holy One, in the form of the tablets of the testimony.

The Hebrew pictograph underlying the word *aron* is a stunning illustration of the ark’s purpose. The word is made up of four Hebrew letters - *alef*, *resh*, *vav*, *nun sofit*. *Alef* is the first letter of the Hebrew *alef-beit*, and represents the source of all things – the Holy One, the Creator. *Resh* is a pictograph of a chief, or leader – the head of the household - in action, taking control. *Vav* is a pictograph of a peg or tack, connecting what came before with what comes after. *Nun sofit* is a pictograph representing the ultimate son or heir, Messiah Himself. The mural presented by these letters in combination is that of the Holy One (*alef*) establishing Himself as the Head (*resh*) of a household [the nation of Israel] from which He will bring forth (*vav*) the Messiah (*nun sofit*).

The *aron ha-kodesh* is thus a promise of a Messianic kingdom that will come to earth in two stages. First will come *a time of planting* - *i.e.* Messiah’s first advent, foreshadowed in the Holy One’s calendar by the ‘Former Day Festivals’ of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Shavuot [Pentecost]. Then ultimately will come *a time of harvest* - *i.e.* Messiah’s second advent, foreshadowed in the Holy One’s calendar by the ‘Latter Day Festivals’ of *Yom T’ruah* [Coronation Day], *Yom Kippur* [Day of Atonement], and *Sukkot* [Tabernacles]. The seed will be sown, and then the harvest will be gathered. The plowman will overtake the reaper. It will happen just as the Holy One has said.

A Very Special Kind of Wood Is To Be Used

The Holy One *made every tree*. He designed thousands of species, and He personally *instilled each species and genus with special characteristics*. He created many kinds of trees to contain wood suitable for making furniture. We in America, for instance, are partial to oak, mahogany, walnut, cherry, pine, cedar, maple and cypress. But the Holy One created only one species and genus of tree to use in making the frame for the *aron*. Out of all the species and genres at his disposal, He specifically directed Moshe to have us make the *aron’s frame* out of *etzei shittim* [*shittim* wood]. Some English Bibles translate *shittim* as *acacia*. That,

⁸ Aron is *alef, resh, vav, nun sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word #727, it is pronounced *aw-rone*’.

⁹ Arah is *alef, resh, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #717, it is pronounced *aw-raw*’.

however, is only an attempt to substitute a term that English readers, with Western mindsets, can readily comprehend. The Hebrew word used by the Holy One in Exodus 25:10 to describe the wood He wants Moshe to use in making the *aron* is *shittim*¹⁰. This word is derived from a Hebrew verb root meaning to *scourge*, and/or to *pierce*¹¹. The wood called *shittim* is therefore wood that has been *twisted*, *tortured* by multiple scourgings and piercings.

The *aron* is to be that which gives the Mish'kan purpose and meaning. It is the aron to which everything else in the *mish'kan* points. And underneath the shimmering gold of the *aron* is to be a special kind of wood – wood that has known scourging, piercing, and torture. One can thus see even in the wood selected for the **aron** the presaging of Messiah's scourging, piercing, and suffering.

Some associate *shittim* wood with the pulp of the *acacia nilotica* – a twisted, thorny, thick-trunked, umbrella-shaped tree that grows in Egypt and the Sinai peninsula. These trees yield an extremely hard, tightly grained timber that insects find difficult to penetrate.

There is a Hebrew legend, recorded by the famous sage called 'Rashi', that one of the first things that Ya'akov did upon entering Egypt was to plant *Shittim* trees. He knew, the legend goes, that the wood of these trees would be needed by subsequent generations in the building of the Tabernacle.

Other Instructions Concerning the Aron

Additional instructions the Holy One gave Moshe concerning the *aron* include its *shape* and *critical dimensions* – i.e. length, breadth, and height; its *material specifications*; its decorative *crown molding*; its *apparatus of transport*; its *intended contents*, and its very special 'mercy seat' *covering*.

1. The Shape and Critical Dimensions of the Ark Itself

The ark we are told to build is to be rectangular in shape – two and a half times longer than it is wide or high. Its measurements are in cubits [Hebrew, *amatim*] - the length between the builder's wrist and the inside of his elbow¹². The length of the ark was to be two and a half cubits – i.e. approximately three feet, nine inches. The breadth and height of the ark was to be a cubit and a half – i.e. approximately two

¹⁰ *Shittim* is the plural form of *shittah*. *Shittah* is *shin, tet, hey*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #7848.

¹¹ The verb root is *shatat, shin, tet, tet*. This is Strong's Hebrew word #7850.

¹² The word our English Bibles translates as *cubit* is *ammah, alef, mem, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #520, pronounced *aw-maw'*. The Bible references two types of cubits – the cubit of a man [i.e. the *common cubit*] and the cubit of the sanctuary [i.e. the *legal cubit*]. The *common cubit* is a variable measurement equivalent to the length of a given man's forearm [wrist to elbow]. The *legal cubit* is a standard length, believed to be about 18 inches. As the reader will recall from Genesis 6, the dimensions of the teivah the Holy One had Noah build were also given in *amatim* – 300 *amatim* [length] x 50 *amatim* [width] x 30 *amatim* [height].

feet, three inches.

2. The Ark's Exterior and Interior Lining

The Holy One instructed Moshe to have the people build the ark out of two materials. The first was *etzei shittim* [*shittim* wood] – *i.e.* the same kind of very durable and rot-resistant wood that was used by Noach in the construction of the ark that that survived the Great Flood – and gold. After the sides and floor of the box was made, it was to be overlaid inside and out with the second material – *i.e.* sheets of fine hammered gold.

3. The Ark's Crown Molding

There was not supposed to be anything plain about the ark. The Holy One instructed us to make it special by adding a *zer zahav* – *i.e. molding of pure gold patterned after a crown* – all around it.

4. The Ark's Apparatus of Transport

The ark was designed for mobility. The Holy One instructed Moshe to affix a *taba'at zahav* – *i.e.* a ring of gold - at each bottom corner. The ark was not to be carried by direct contact with human hands, however. We were to make two *badei etzim shittim* – *i.e.* poles made from the branches of shittim trees, overlaid by gold, which were to remain in the gold rings at all times. The ark was to be transported not by touching the ark or the rings themselves, but by lifting and carrying the poles.

5. The Ark's contents

The Holy One does not want the ark to be empty. A couple of other things of great Kingdom Community importance will be added in the future, but for now we are just told to put into the hollow chamber of the ark *et-ha-edut* – *i.e.* testimony/witness/*revelation download* that He would give Moshe. **Exodus 25:16.** Almost forty years later, in Deuteronomy 10:1-2, when discussing the aftermath of the calf-sin, Moshe will record that the Holy One told him: ***'Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.'*** A few verses later in the Deuteronomy narrative, Moshe records: ***Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark that I had made; and there they are, just as the Holy One instructed.*** Deuteronomy 10:5.

Just as Moshe, the beloved child of Yocheved, was laid in an ark for preservation unto his mission of deliverance, so were the words of the Torah, the precious offspring of the Holy One, laid in an ark for preservation unto the great redemptive mission for which it was conceived.

6. The Kaporet [Cover]

The Holy One instructed Moshe that the ark that would house the Torah was to have a very special lid or cover – called a ‘*kaporet zahav*’, or lid/covering of gold. English translators have chosen to give this special covering the poetic label ‘mercy seat’. The label can be made to fit, of course, but alas, ‘mercy seat’ is not anything close to what the Hebrew phrase *kaporet zahav* means.

There is far more this box top, however, than just a functional lid. On either side of it the Holy One told Moshe to put the image of a heavenly *keruv* – *i.e.* ‘cherub’ - made out of the same large piece of hammered gold from which the lid was formed. The two *keruvim* were to face each other, with wings outspread and reaching upward.

The Primary Function of the Ark

The ark the Holy One told us to build is not a “magic box”. Neither is it a weapon of warfare. It is designed to portray *the spiritual treasure chest that opens when one experiences interaction with the Holy One His Way*. After all, what must one go through to get to *the Testimony* [Divine Truth of Torah] that was to be inside the ark? One had to have an encounter with the Holy One under the wings of the *cherubim*, in the course of which encounter he or she is declared cleansed, and made whole, through the Blood on the *kaporet* [*i.e.* covering/mercy seat].

What is ultimately going to be put inside the treasure chest beside the Torah¹³? [1] a jar of *Manna* – representing all the provision we will ever need, and [2] *the rod of Aharon* – *i.e.* the symbol of fruitfulness for all those who live in the Holy One’s Presence. See Psalms 1 and 112 for a clear picture of this fruitfulness.

The Holy One tells us what the primary purpose of the aron was. He says:

Veno'adeiti lecha sham

And there I will meet with you,

vedibarti itcha me'al ha-kaporet

and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat.

Mibeyn shnei ha-k'ruvim asher al-Aron ha-Edut

from between the two Keruvim which are on the ark of the testimony,

et-kol asher atzaveh otcha el-b'nei Yisra'el

I will give you all the instructions I have for the children of Yisra'el.

[Exodus 25:10-22]

What the ark is about is *meetings between God and man*. It is about providing a *place from which Divine Communication and Decree can be expected to emanate*.

¹³ In Deuteronomy 31:26, Moshe says to the Levi'im who bore the ark: *Take this Sefer Torah and put it inside the ark of the covenant of the Holy One your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.*”

It is about providing *a starting point for all revelation to come*.

Every aspect of the *Mish'kan* pointed to the ark, the tablets of Torah therein, and the designated place above it, under the wings of the cherubim, above the Seat of Mercy, where the Holy One promised to 'meet with' the people, and 'speak intimately' with them of all of which He was to give as Torah. **Exodus 25:22**. The wings of the cherubim touched together and intertwined, making a *chuppah* – to remind us of our betrothal at Sinai and the *nissuin* [wedding ceremony] which is yet to come. And that is *good news*.

The picture the Holy One gave to us in the ark is a promise, an assurance that *the Divine Bridegroom has provided a Way for us to come into intimacy with Him* - just as a Bridegroom prepares a way for His Bride to come into His bridal chamber. May He take each of us into His Arms and carry us over the threshold to dwell with Him forever.

Come to the Light

Because the ceremonies prescribed for the Tabernacle structure were intended as teaching tools and inspirational dramas rather than actual acts of redemption does *not* mean they can be cast aside as useless, or forsaken. To the contrary, they were and are considered by the Holy One to be the key to the redemption of the world through reconciliation with its Creator. The "light to the nations" cannot shine the way it was intended without them. And we whom Yeshua called the 'Light of the World' cannot shine the way we are called to do without them either.

Do you want to make disciples of all nations/ethnicities? You can try to do it "man's" way, of course. You can try to do it the way of organized religion. But I wonder what would happen if a people arose in our day that actually decided and committed to do it *the Bridegroom-King's way* – *i.e.* by building the ark of His testimony in our hearts, by filling that ark with Torah wisdom and remembrance of His Mercy, by becoming a living *mish'kan*, and by co-laboring with the Holy One to act out in real time, in humility and passionate love, all the parts and ministrations our Covenant-Partner in Heaven so wisely designed in order to bring *tikkun* to the world.

Do you remember what brought the people to Jerusalem for the "day of Pentecost" when 3,000 people chose to *sh'ma* Yeshua and become His talmidim [disciples]? It was the temple ritual for the Torah-prescribed feast of *Shavuot*. *Hmmm*. Is it possible the Holy One's original plan for calling people to their Covenant calling is better than all our best laid plans? Is it possible that without the Holy One's original plan of redemption, all our best-laid plans are mere wood, hay, and

stubble?

But What Happens When There Is No Physical Mish'kan On Earth?

There is no physical *Mish'kan* structure on earth today. There has not been one for a long, long time. No *Mish'kan*. No altar. No menorah. No table of showbread. No ark of the testimony. The Torah now has a new home. Its new home is not in a building – or a box – anywhere. The Torah's dwelling is now in the hearts of people like you and me¹⁴.

The tablets of testimony are now kept, and the blood of the innocent Lamb is now applied, in imperfect vessels. *We have this treasure in jars of clay, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.* I Corinthians 4:7. That is exactly how it is supposed to be. That is where the Torah was designed to dwell from the beginning.

In the absence of the *Mish'kan* and the *aron* from the temporal realm, may each of us become for the world a microcosm of the Heavenly *Mish'kan*: a living, breathing bastion of the holiness that comes with appropriation of the blood of the perfect surrogate, with communion with the Holy One, and with the abiding presence of the Testimony of God – the true testimony set forth in the tablets of the Torah.

Questions For Today's Study

1. It is to be expected that the most important part of the Tabernacle would be what the Holy One would describe first.

[A] What piece of “furniture” in the *Mish'kan* is the first one the Holy One tells Moshe to build?

[B] Why is this the most important part of the Tabernacle?

[C] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the name for this piece of furniture. Write the Hebrew word (in Hebrew letters, with vowel marks, and in its English transliteration), and describe the picture or concept this Hebrew word portrays.

2. Concerning this piece of “furniture”,

[A] Of which of the 14 donated materials was it to be built?

[B] With which of the 14 donated materials was it to be “overlaid”?

[C] What instructions did the Holy One give as to how it was to be

¹⁴ This should not be misinterpreted. Our physical bodies are not now to be regarded as the geographical location where He has *chosen to place His Name – hence the place to which pilgrimage is to be made and/or at which an altar is to be built* to the Holy One. The Holy Mount of Moriyah is still the only such geographical place, for it is there that Yeshua will rebuild the Temple in the Messianic era.

“overlaid”?

[D] What provisions were made for this piece of “furniture” to be moved from place to place?

3. What did the Holy One tell Moshe to put inside this piece of “furniture”? According to Hebrews 9:4, what else did the descendants of Israel put inside it?

4. With regard to the construction and meaning of this piece of furniture:

[A] What was to constitute the top of and means of entrance into this piece of furniture?

[B] Look up the Hebrew word for this “cover” in Strong’s and Gesenius. Write the Hebrew word (in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings, as well as in its English transliteration) and describe the concept this Hebrew word pictures.

[C] Look up this piece of furniture in the Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols or some other reference book and write a summary of what that source says about it.

5. Today’s haftarah aliyah comes from I Kings 5, and states in some detail the “trade agreement” entered into between Hiram of Tyre, the Phoenician king, and Shlomo, king of Israel.

So Hiram gave Shlomo timber of cedar and timber of fir according to all his desire. Shlomo gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Shlomo to Hiram year by year.

*The Holy One gave Shlomo wisdom, as he promised him;
and there was shalom between Hiram and Shlomo;
vayichreitu b’rit sh’neyhem [and they two made a league together].*

*King Shlomo raised **mas** [a levy] out of all Yisra'el;
and the **mas** [levy] was **shloshim elef ish** [thirty thousand men].
He sent them to Levanon, ten thousand a month by courses;
a month they were in Levanon, and two months at home;
and Adoniram was over the men subject to forced labor.
Shlomo had seventy thousand who bore burdens,
and eighty thousand who were stonecutters in the mountains;
besides Shlomo's chief officers who were over the work,
3,300 who bore rule over the people who labored in the work.*

*The king commanded, and they hewed out great stones, costly stones,
to lay **l'yased ha-bayit** [the foundation of the house] with worked stone.
Shlomo's builders and Hiram's builders and the Givli did fashion them,
and prepared **ha-etzim v’ha-avanim** [the timber and the stones] to build the house.*

[I Kings 5:10-18]

[A] Why do you think Shlomo made a treaty with the gentile king Hiram?

[B] What products did Israel export to Phoenicia according to the trade agreement Shlomo made with Hiram?

[C] What products did Israel import from Phoenicia according to this trade agreement?

[D] Does Shlomo use the kind of wood in the Temple that the Holy One directed Moshe and Israel to use in the *Mish'kan*? Explain what you think is the significance of your answer.

[E] Where did Shlomo get the laborers who built the *Mik'dash* [temple]? Did this means of obtaining labor violate Torah [see especially Deuteronomy 24:7]? Explain your answer.

[F] How many people did Shlomo assign to work on the Temple project.

[G] Where did the stones which were used for the foundation of the temple [part of which are still visible at *Ha-kotel* [i.e. the Western Wall] come from?

[H] What three ethnic groups worked together to “fashion” the foundation stones of the Temple?

6. In today's reading from the *Sermon on the Mount* Yeshua applies the Torah to relationships between people the way the Holy One intended it to be applied - with *infinite depth* sufficient to reach *beyond outward behavior to the thoughts and intents of the heart*.

*You have heard that it was said to the ancient ones, **Lo tirtzach** ['You are not to murder];' and 'Whoever commits murder will be subject to the Bet Din.'*

*But I tell you, that everyone who harbors **kaas** [holds anger] toward his **ach** [brother] without a cause will be in danger of the judgment; and whoever will say of his brother, '**Reyka!** ["He is good for nothing!"] shall be subject to the Sanhedrin; and whoever shall say, '**Shoteh!** ["You are a fool"] will be in danger of the fire of Gehinnom.*

"If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

[Matthew 5:21-24]

[A] Note the formula that Yeshua uses to introduce His teaching concerning specific subject matter within the Torah. ***You have heard that it was said to the ancient ones ...***” The question in everyone's mind when Yeshua uttered these words was whether He was going to somehow *disagree with* what “was said to the ancient ones” or whether He was going to *teach the essence* of what the words spoken to the ancient ones. Which do you think Yeshua did?

[B] The Master quotes two statements before offering His insights. The first quoted statement is directly from the Torah – from the *Aseret HaDibrot* (Ten Commandments). From what source does Yeshua quote the second statement [*Whoever commits murder will be subject to the Bet Din.*]?

[C] Messiah's Torah teaching applies the words of the Holy One [***Lo tirtzach*** – you are not to tear in pieces] in such a way as to make them applicable to each

individual at some level of their experience. *Tirtzach* [murder] is not just the physical act of running someone through with a sword [although that certainly is *tirtzach*, under Yeshua's teaching as well as the teaching of the ancients] – *tirtzach* is like the fruit of a tree of bitterness that someone planted in thought, attitude, and opinion, a long time ago, and watered regularly with *l'shon ha ra* [negative speech]. What does Messiah say will be the result (sin in seed form maturing and bearing fruit) of being angry with a person who is close to you?

[D] What does Messiah say will be the result (sin in seed form maturing and bearing fruit) of speaking *l'shon ha ra* [negative speech] about a person who is close to you?

[E] What does Messiah say will be the result (sin in seed form maturing and bearing fruit) of verbally attacking, with “cut downs”, one who is close to you?

[F] How are the three sinful actions described in verse 22 like *tirtzach* [murder] in the Holy One's eyes?

[G] Before engaging in *tzedakah* [the *mitzvot* of giving] (or in any other *mitzvot* or “spiritual” activity, for that matter) what does Messiah say a person who has engaged in any of the three actions alluded to in verse 22 should do?

[H] What does Messiah say will be the result if one does not do what He directed in verses 23-24?

[I] What do these statements of Messiah tell us about what the Holy One considers valuable and/or important? What interests of a human being does the Holy One consider “inalienable rights”?

*May each of our hearts be for Him an **aron ha-kodesh**.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:57-64 [CHET]

Cheleq'i [my portion] *is the Holy One.*

I promised to sh'ma your words.

I sought your favor with my whole heart.

Be merciful to me according to your word.

I considered my ways and turned my steps to your statutes.

I will hurry, and not delay, to sh'ma your mitzvot.

The ropes of the wicked bind me, but I won't forget your Torah.

At midnight I will rise to give thanks to you,

because of your righteous mishpatim.

*I am a friend of all those who fear you, of those who observe your precepts.
The eretz is full of your lovingkindness, Oh Holy One. Teach me your chukot.*