

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Terumah:*** **Exodus 26:1-30**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 6:7**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Matthew 5:31-32**

Erect the Tabernacle after the plan of it shown you on the mountain.

[Exodus 26:30]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:73-80;

The Amidah Prayer Focus is *Sim Shalom*, The Prayer for Peace

V'et ha-Mishkan ta'aseh eser yeri'ot shesh moshezar – *And you are construct into the Mish'kan ten continuously flowing curtains made of twined linen threads Exodus 26:1a.*

So this is Sinai – where the springtime of our deliverance from bondage is about to give way to a summer of awakening to freedom's challenges. This is our first summer in a 'high desert' environment, and we are having to acclimate. The air is thinner than we are used to. Daytime temperatures are getting warmer and warmer – while at night the temps drop dramatically. Rain is virtually nonexistent. Dew is almost as rare. The rugged conditions here are testing our mettle for sure - but don't worry your heads about us! We will be just fine.

We are anything but alone, you see. We lift up our eyes, and look to the hills, from whence our help seems always to come – and THERE HE IS! The Holy One, Maker of the Heavens and the Earth, is with us. He Who watches over Israel never slumbers nor sleeps. He has dispatched hosts of angels to engage in overwatch duty. Through their agency, and through His bending the time-space continuum, He makes sure we have absolutely everything we need – not only abundant supplies to assure our survival of all the challenges the desert in summertime, but also the healing energy to help us recover from our long, traumatic season of Egyptian enslavement in general and our recent close brushes with the genocide-mania of the raging nations in particular. Those nations sent the full force of their armies and armaments after us, but to no avail. We are still very much alive - walking earth-turf, breathing earth-air, and doing whatever it takes every day to care for our families. Those who chose to curse, oppress, and attack us did not fare near so well! Some of those folks are forever entombed in the churning depths of the sea of Reeds; the corpses of others are feeding jackals and vultures on the desert sands around Refidim. Alas, choices have consequences; and really, really bad choices - choices fueled by hate, tend to have really, really bad consequences.

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We did not do anything to them. Neither did the Holy One. They did it to themselves – by playing the game of sowing and reaping in the most dangerous way possible – cursing the seed of Avraham.

So pity the raging nations and vain imagination obsessed peoples if you wish, but do not pity us. We are catching our collective breaths – and finding our best selves. We are bathing daily in living water of the Holy One’s Words. We are getting freed-up from generations of Egyptian mind control. We are detox-ing from ‘raging nations’ mindsets. We are shedding the slime of raging nations perversions. We are tuning our ears, hearts, and souls to the Voice of our Bridegroom-King. Having seen His Handiwork and heard His Grand Plan, we have embraced His more excellent ways of thought, speech, and behavior. As a consequence, we are being supremely blessed.

It seems that the offsetting realms of *ha-shamayim* [KJV ‘the Heavens’] and *ha-aretz* [KJV ‘the earth’] for which the Holy One choreographed an orbital dance around each on Day 1 of Creation other have come into a level of alignment at a level not experienced since the Garden of Eden. The Holy One is using a remote mountain in this desert as a ‘portal’ of sorts – a great staircase that connects the two primary realms of Creation. He has caused an emanation of His Majestic Persona to descend in full view of the masses. He has spoken wonderful things – things far too marvelous for our *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas*-infected human ears to process or for our vanity, folly, and/or our pseudo-intellectual perversion-poisoned minds to comprehend! He has called Moshe, our duly appointed delegate, to ascend into the Great Fiery Cloud atop the mountain. Leaving Aharon and Chur in charge of the camp, the prophet has girded up his loins, taken staff in hand, and disappeared into the swirling vortex of fire and cloud that covers the mountain. Now he is being given a virtual tour of the heretofore unseen realm that human beings like to call ‘Heaven’ – and *oh*, the things the prophet of the Exodus is seeing! Exquisite Courts. Elegant Chambers. Eons of time. Endless Layers of holiness. Ever-expanding Dimensions and Realms. Enthralling Colors. Infinite ecosystems. In every direction, as far as the prophet’s eyes can see, Moshe is confronted with breathtaking Brilliance and Beauty and mind-numbing Majesty and Magnificence. Oh, the wisdom that is emanating from this heretofore unseen realm! Oh, the intelligence of the creatures that faithfully serve the King here! Oh, the revelatory power of the scrolls that are constantly being written here and the songs that are endlessly being sung! Oh, the order, the structure – and yet the free-flowing creativity! Moshe is silent – indeed mute. He is not there to talk, or give his two cents worth on theology – he is there to listen, to learn, to absorb Divine Light, and to experience Divine Love.

Why is the Holy One showing Moshe – and through Moshe, US – all these things? Because a big part of our ‘B’nei Yisrael’ mission on earth is going to be to bring the holiness of this realm to earth. It will all start with us building a scale model of all that Moshe is experiencing. That scale model structure is then be taken with us everywhere we go, and operated as a house of prayer for all nations! Moshe is receiving blueprints and specifications; those among us with willing hearts will then start to build it – courts, chambers, furnishings and worship-stations and all - exactly after the pattern Moshe saw on the Mountain.

Ten Words of Covenant Identity, Ten Panels of Fine Linen for Definition

As the glorious exterior elevation page of the great blueprint unfolds before Moshe’s eyes he cannot help but remember all the fine linen cloths and precious metals the Egyptian populace showered on the Redeemed between the awesome sign of darkness and the stunning sign of choreographed firstborn mortality. He will have to tell the people to pull those precious things – which had seemed strangely useless in the desert - out of mothballs! There are multiple sets of long, flowing linen curtains, partitions, and veils, to be sown, then dyed with precious ink apothecations that will turn them sky-blue, red, and crimson! There are inspiring images of cherubim in various stages of royal service to be designed, then woven/embroidered throughout the length of the draperies. And that is just the beginning!

Moshe’s mind was blown. The scope of the work being outlined to him – not to mention the skill required – was beyond anything he had ever seen in Egypt. This was not a project of sheer brute labor as the building of Pharaoh’s store cities had been. This project required no brickmakers, straw-gatherers, or slime-shovelers – it required masters of exquisite luxury-crafts. Where would he find carpenters having the required level of skill to make a moveable yet durable, seemingly ephereal frame? Where would he find metal smiths capable of the delicate finish-work? Where would he find dye-makers able to bring truly Heavenly Hues to earthly fabrics? Where would he find top-of-the-line seamstresses? Where would he find artists willing and able to follow the Divine Patterns and consistently replicate the images of Heavenly creatures that they had never seen? It began to dawn on Moshe that this project was going to require the cooperation – and the elbow grease/sweat equity – of every person in the camp. He would need all the men, all the women, and even all the children in the camp – whether they were part of natural Israel or of the great mixed-race-and-ethnicity multitude that had accompanied the Hebrews out of Egypt – to *buy in* and to *pitch in*. Every hand will be required; every inspired heart needed. So he will call all who are willing – this is going to be a season of putting aside our cultural and racial differences – as well as all our differences of

ideology and opinion – and actually working together, hand-in-hand, to do the will of, and reveal the manifest wisdom of, our King. He will call them to lay aside every other agenda, bond over the King’s ‘Tentmaker’s Dream’, and cause the Kingdom of Heaven that they loved to talk about in the abstract to start to take on real-time shape, form, and substance in the real world.

The nations who walk in darkness, and all the people who walk in the shadow of death are waiting. All of Heaven is watching. Who will answer the call? Who will participate? Who will actually surrender his/her own agenda, and actually start to do what is necessary to bring the Beauty of Heaven and the Majesty of our King to the earth?

If We Build It ...

Today the focus of the Beauty Realm tour turns to the exterior elevations. The structure we are to build is to look NOTHING like anything we built for Pharaoh. Not one brick will have to be made. There will be stone walls. There will be no marble flooring. Nothing will be made of granite, concrete, or limestone. The perimeters of the Mish’kan are instead to be shaped by FABRIC, FABRIC, and more FABRIC – CLOTHS that will look like they are floating on air. This ephemeral effect will be accomplished by hanging the fabric carefully upon an ingenious moveable frame that allows the fabric to flutter and flow, and cause the flaming swords of the cherub images embossed on the fabric seem to be in a constant state of movement to and fro – just as portrayed in Genesis 3:24: ***and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.***

As we turn our attention to the structural components, foundation, and exterior fabrics of the *Mish’kan* project, keep in mind what Yeshayahu [Isaiah] said would happen in the ‘latter days’:

***We will have a strong city;
The Holy One will establish ‘Yeshuah’ for walls and fortification.***

***You will call your walls ‘Yeshuah’
and your gates ‘Tehillah’.***

[Isaiah 26:1, 60:18]

May this happen quickly, in our day! In the meantime, however, back at Sinai, the Holy One instructs Moshe to construct the Mish’kan’s walls out of something else – *shesh moshezar* - *fine twined linen*. Around the Mish’kan’s perimeter the Holy One wants us to hang ten panels of intertwined blue, purple, and scarlet linen thread. Artistic images of *keruvim* [cherubim] are to be intricately interwoven into each panel. So ... what do you think of **שש** - *shesh* – fine, bright linen? In the days we are talking about, this strong, smooth, durable, lustrous cloth made of fibers

from the stalk of flax plants was so hard to produce and costly to acquire that it was almost exclusively found in royal households. The first time the fabric is mentioned in Torah is indicative – it - **שש** - *shesh* – fine, bright linen – was the luxurious material from which the special robe that Pharaoh made for Yosef/Tzafanat Paneach was made. **Genesis 41:42.**

Fine linen? With all due respect, that stuff doesn't exactly grow on trees. *Blue, purple, and scarlet?* Uh - where are we supposed to get the exotic creatures necessary to make those dyes out here in the middle of nowhere? *Cherubim*, eh – what exactly do those look like, anyway?

How can we – a bunch of former slaves who have never known anything but government work - handle this level of assignment? Are we cut out for this kind of project? And even if we can somehow transcend our limitations of skill and experience and build the structure, well ... can we be good stewards of the kind of intimacy with the Creator of the Universe that His plan to abide in our midst will entail? And even more importantly in the long run, will we allow Him to turn the tables on us, so to speak, and reshape and reinvent us to the point that we actually *become* the *Mish'kan*? Will we embrace the *seven essential kingdom-of-priests functions*² integral to the *Mish'kan* as part of our identity and our mission? Some of us will. Some of us won't. In which camp are you?

If We Build It, Who Will Serve – and Who Will Be Served?

We are, of course, no strangers to the construction trade. Up until a few weeks ago our entire lives revolved around raising up store cities for Pharaoh. But ... a *Mish'kan*? A place of abode for the Creator of the Universe? This definitely *ups the ante*. What the Creator of Heaven and Earth wants us to build for Him is, after all, nothing whatsoever like Pharaoh's store cities. Pharaoh's cities were made of bricks built with mud and straw from the Nile. And they were designed for earthly stuff – for storage, for shipping and receiving, and for commerce. The project our Bridegroom-King has in mind for us is something else entirely. What the Holy One's Heavenly-Courts inspired design calls for is a far more demanding than pulling reeds, mixing mud, making bricks, and moving stones.

What we are being asked by our Bridegroom-King to build for Him here on the desert floor of Sinai will be the holiest place the earth has ever seen. The plan for this structure involves the Creator of the Universe actually residing in it. It involves Him receiving – and commissioning - mortal men as diplomatic envoys in its courts. It involves Him hosting both private and public meetings in its

² These functions are discussed in some detail in the Rabbi's son's study for Yom Revi'i [i.e. Tuesday evening and Wednesday daylight hours] of the week parsha *Terumah*.

chambers. This place has to befit the glory of the Holiest Being that has ever existed.

The Creator wants us to build an earthly dwelling to use as a strategic command and communication center out of which to conduct Kingdom operations. But He does not want men to design that operations center for him. He knows that the kind of structures men tend to design and build are either too gaudy or too uninspiringly plain. He therefore is designing His Earthly Command Center Himself - with specifications that reflect His Beauty, Majesty, Splendor, Magnificence, Wonder and Glory. Ergo - the *Mish'kan* Discourse! The Holy One is not just speaking to Moshe; He is simultaneously giving Moshe a guided tour through the secret chambers of His Heavenly Beauty Realm. He wants us to reproduce replicas of everything Moshe is being shown.

The blueprint the Holy One has given us for this structure is *otherworldly*. The materials He wants the Holy One wants us to use are *costly beyond imagination*. The spec sheet on the structure is vastly different from that we worked with in Egypt. The Holy One's plan does not call for a single brick. We will not use an ounce of mud. We will not need a stick of straw. Moreover, the specifications the Holy One is giving us are so precise that they do not even leave room for individual expression. He has a pattern in mind – we are to follow it *to the letter*. And with good reason. It is, after all, HIS House – not ours!

What we built in Egypt were mere *mundane edifices of an earthly kingdom*. What our Divine Bridegroom wants us to build here at this mountain is *an earthly embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven*. Building this structure – this '*Mish'kan*' – will require *great artistry* – and extremely meticulous *attention to detail*. A shared vision, unselfish cooperation, and sometimes uncomfortably close collaboration between our entire community will be essential. And most importantly passion for the work, love of the Bridegroom, and steadfast loyalty to the vision will be critical. This will not be one man's project, or one tribe's project. This will involve every man, woman, and child. There will be no spectators, no critics, no judges. This will require *all-hands on deck*. And it will require this level of intensity, passion, and cooperation until the project is done.

The task set before us is daunting to say the least. Our Divine Bridegroom has prepared a place for us to dwell with Him in His Heavenly Courts; now He wants us to reciprocate and prepare a place for Him in the midst of our camp where He can *sh'kan* – *dwell, reside, and abide* – with us. Wow! This is going to be *quite a challenge*!

You Fill Up My Senses!

The language the Holy One is using to describe the structure He wants us to build here on the desert floor at the base of this mountain absolutely overwhelms the human senses. The structure He wants us to build is *alive* – literally flowing with *colors* and *textures* and *geometric shapes* and *fragrances* and *stunning 3-dimensional imagery*.

We have learned already this week that everything we will be asked to build as a part of the Holy One's *Mish'kan* project will be a scale model of something eternal and infinite that exists in Heaven. We learned that the centerpiece of the structure the Holy One wants us to build – i.e. *the ark of the testimony, replete with its 'mercy seat'* – is designed to replicate on earth the Throne upon which the Holy One sits in the courts of Heaven. We further learned that the *table of showbread* the Holy One wants us to build for the *Mish'kan* is designed to replicate on earth the beautiful *river of life* which Yochanan described in Revelation as proceeding from the Holy One's Throne and *on either side of which was a tree of life which bears twelve kinds of fruit and yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations.* Revelation 21:2.

We also learned that the *menorah* the Holy One wants us to build on earth is designed to be the earthly replica of the *seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God* as described by Yochanan the Revelator in Revelation 4:5(b). As the Revelator would later explain, *the glory of God illumines it, and the Lamb [is] the light thereof, and the nations of them which are saved walk in the light of it.* Revelation 21:23-24.

Did you think the *Mish'kan* was just a religious shrine conceived by the mind of Moshe? Oh no Beloved - that was not it at all. The *Mish'kan* was designed by the Holy One to introduce His Bride-in-training to the stunning spiritual realities of the courts of Heaven itself. Our theme in connection with this building project will be nothing short of '*on earth as it is in Heaven*'. So let us continue to explore the magical mystery of it all, shall we?

Accepting Divinely Ordained Boundaries; Fashioning and Hanging Curtains in Our Special Place

Approximately two-thirds of the structure that the Holy One wants us to build will be like an *open-air amphitheater* open to the Heavens. But one particular area of the structure – containing the two innermost chambers - is to be marked off by a continuous-flowing network of curtains. And when I say the Divine Bridegroom wants curtains, I mean *lots of them*. Indeed the Holy One's architectural design calls for us to cover the inner chamber with *four separate layers of exquisitely tailored curtains*. Viewed from the inside-out these layers are to consist of an inner

set of *fine linen*³ curtains embossed with images of *cherubim* in flight. A second set of curtains is to be made of *goat's hair*. A third set of curtains is to be made of *rams' skins dyed red*. And an outer set of curtains is to be made of *orot tachashim* – a mysterious term guessed by some to mean *badger skins* and guessed by others as meaning *the skins of sea cows*.

The various layers of curtains are all to be different *colors*, are all to consist of different *textures*, and are all to come from different *source materials*. They will provide cover the holy furnishings of the inner sanctuary protecting them from wind, rain, fowls of the air, and the *prying eyes* of our enemies.

The Innermost Layer of Royal Curtains - Yeri'ot Shesh Moshezar

The innermost set of curtains or draperies that the Holy One instructs Moshe to make for the *Mish'kan*'s inner chambers are to be made of ***yeri'ot shesh moshezar*** – *i.e.* intricately woven linen. These dazzling draperies, which will be visible only to the *kohanim* [priests] who minister inside the inner sanctuary, are to be embossed with images of Heavenly beings Torah calls *keruvim*. As Torah puts it:

... [Y]ou are to make the tent with ten ***yeri'ot*** [curtains/draperies];
of fine twined ***shesh*** [linen], and ***techelet*** [bluish violet],
and ***argaman*** [reddish purple], and ***shani tola*** [crimson⁴], with ***Keruvim*** [cherubim]
The work of the skillful workman you are to make them.
[Exodus 26:1]

The Length and Breadth of the Curtains

*Each curtain is to be 28 cubits (i.e. 42 feet) in length;
and each curtain is to be 4 cubits (i.e. 6 feet) in breadth;
all the curtains shall have one measure.*
[Exodus 26:2]

The Hardware for the Curtains

*Five curtains are to be coupled together one to another;
and the other five curtains are to be coupled one to another.
You are to make ***lule'ot techelet*** [loops of bluish violet] on the edge . . .

*You are to make fifty ***karsei zahav*** [clasps of gold],
and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps . . .*
[Exodus 26:3-6]*

³ The linen curtains are to consist of four separate colors of linen yarn [white, blue, purple, and scarlet] interwoven together.

⁴ The sequence of colors presented is *white*, then *blue* [*techelet*], then *purple* [*argaman*], and finally *scarlet* [sometimes translated crimson] [*sheni tola'at*]. The color *blue* is the color that the Holy One will instruct us to dye at least one string or cord the *tzitzit* fringes on the end of their garments. to remind us of His perfect Torah. **Numbers 15:37-41**. The color scarlet was a dye obtained from a worm-like creature, which seems symbolic of the sinful nature of man. **Isaiah 1:18**. Between these colors is purple, a color that is a combination of blue and red.

Our Divine Bridegroom Wants Us To Cultivate A Holy Affection For Fine Linen

Why are the innermost curtains to be woven of *fine linen*? As Yochanan the Revelator tells us one day a great multitude will proclaim ... *the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And to her it is granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the Holy Ones.* Revelation 19:8. What exactly are the ‘righteous acts of the Holy Ones’ that are to adorn the innermost chambers of the Holy One’s Throne Room? The righteous acts of the Holy Ones are not ‘random deeds of kindness’. Neither are they mighty acts of heroism, the performance of signs and wonders, or great deeds of philanthropy. What the ‘righteous acts of the Holy Ones’ are, Dear Reader, are the walking out of the *mitzvot* of Torah by the Redeemed of the Holy One, in *sh’ma* response to Divine call and directive.

By the way, do you remember which of the patriarchs is described in Torah as wearing fine *shesh* [linen]? It was *Yosef*. Genesis 41:42. I wonder if we just might find a reference to other generations of the patriarchal family in the remaining layers of curtains?

The Reassuring Testimony of the Linen Curtains

The Holy One instructed Moshe that the ten linen curtains that were to line the inner sanctuary of the *Mish’kan* were to be embossed with images of angelic beings. Our English Bibles call them ‘*cherubim*’. In the original Hebrew text the term used is *keruvim*. These are the same creatures whose images the Holy One directed be built into the cover of the ark of the testimony.

On the ark cover the *keruvim* were stationary, staring in wonder at the Holy One. The *keruvim* embossed in the linen curtains, on the other hand, will be set in motion with every breeze. In the earthly replica we are to build at Sinai angelic beings are merely to be embossed images. But the holy prophets make it clear that in the Heavenly Throne Room after which the *Mish’kan* was modeled angelic beings are very, very real. See Psalm 80:1, Psalm 99:1

Yeshayahu [Isaiah] will see and describe for us six angelic beings that hover around the Holy One’s Throne. He will describe them in functional terms, as *serafim* [burning ones]. Isaiah 6:1-7. Yechezkiel [Ezekiel] will see and describe the *keruvim* for us as well. Ezekiel 9:3, 10:1-20. Yochanan [John] the Revelator will see and describe the angelic creatures that surround the Throne in Heaven and move at the Holy One’s command as well. Revelation 5:2, 7:2, 8:3-13, 9:1, 13-15, 10:1-9, 11:1, 15, 14:6-19, etc. Yochanan even gave us an idea of the number of angelic beings he saw, telling

us that around the Throne of the Holy One there were ‘*ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*’ of such creatures.

The Holy One is not only the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya’akov. He is *Adonai Tzava’ot* – the *Lord of Hosts*. See for instance **I Samuel 1:3; II Samuel 6:2, 18; I King 18:15, II King 3:14, Psalm 24:10, and Isaiah 6:3**. The Holy One wants us to know – and rest in the assuring truth - that He has a vast army of angelic beings at His beck and call. They live only to serve Him - and are ready, willing, and able to pass through the ‘thin veil’ that exists between Heaven and Earth whenever He directs to minister to us on earth. See, for instance, **Genesis 16:7-11; Numbers 22:22, Judges 6:11-22; II Samuel 26:13-14; I Kings 19:5-7; Psalm 34:7; Zechariah 1:9-19; Luke 1:11-19; Hebrews 1:13-14**. The Psalmist said regarding this: “*He will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*” Psalm 91:11-12. It is *the Testimony of the Linen Curtains*.

The Second Layer of Royal Curtains - A Covering Made of Ezim⁵

Over the delicate linen draperies interwoven with images of *Keruvim*, The Holy One told Moshe to hang a second layer of curtains – a layer made of something called *ezim*.

You are to make curtains of ezim for a covering over the tent.
[Exodus 26:7]

What are *ezim*? Literally *ezim* means *goats*. Most translators interpret the term to mean *goat’s hair*.

The Number of Ezim Curtains

... eleven curtains are you to make.

The Length and Breadth of the Ezim Curtains

*The length of each curtain is to be thirty cubits,
and the breadth of each curtain four cubits:
the eleven curtains are to have one measure.*

The Arrangement of the Ezim Curtains

*Couple five curtains by themselves,
and six curtains by themselves,
and double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent.*
[Exodus 26:7-9]

Why *ezim*? What is it about goats, of all creatures, that the Holy One chose them – or their *hair*, at least – to be forever recognized as an important part of His betrothal-period interactions with His Redeemed People? Perhaps it was intended

⁵ We will later discover that the *ez*, or goat, is the animal most frequently employed as a surrogate for a sinful man in connection with the making of *korbanot chatatat* [sin offerings].

as a perpetual reminder of the dramatic series of events that transpired in the life of our forefather Ya'akov, many of which seemed to have goats at their essence. When Ya'akov acquired his father's blessing, what was he wearing? It was *goat's hair*. When Ya'akov began to be blessed by the Holy One with wealth in the household of Lavan, how was it accomplished? It was primarily accomplished through supernaturally aided multiplication of *ezim* [goats]. When the sons of Ya'akov showed to their father the blood-stained coat of their brother Yosef, which animal's blood stood in substitution for the blood of Yosef? It was the blood of an *ez* [goat].

Or perhaps the patriarch being recalled is not Ya'akov at all, but another of his generation – namely Y'hudah, from whom the Messiah would be descended. Do you recall what animal was agreed by Y'hudah and Tamar to serve as the price for a time of intimacy between them? It was an *ez* [goat]. **Genesis 38:17**. Yosef wore *shesh*. Ya'akov and Y'hudah were closely associated with *ezim*. I wonder if a pattern might be emerging. Are we perhaps going to see the stories of all of the *avot* [patriarchs] played out in the curtains of the *Mish'kan*?

The Third Layer of Coverings – Orot Ayilim

Over the goat's hair curtains the Holy One told Moshe to stretch a covering made of rams' skins, which were to be dyed red.

You are to make a covering for the tent of orot ayilim [rams' skins] dyed red . . .
[Exodus 26:14(a)]

Let's see, was there a patriarch who was associated in any way with an *ayil* [i.e. a ram]? Oh yes, I believe a young man named Yitzchak once received his life in substitution for that of an *ayil* [ram]. **Genesis 22:13**. His father Avraham slew the ram in place of Yitzchak, and thereby received his son back from the realm of the dead.

The Outer Covering – Orot Tachashim

Finally, over the rams' skins the Holy One told Moshe to stretch *one final covering* – an outer covering made of something Torah calls *orot tachashim*. For the Holy One told Moshe that, around the perimeter of the sanctuary . . . *a covering of orot tachashim* [is to be placed] **above**⁶. **Exodus 26:14(b)**. What meaneth this, you ask?

The word *orot* means skins. The phrase *orot tachashim* therefore means the skins of *tachashim* - the plural form of the noun *tachash*, *tav*, *chet*, *shin*. But what on earth is a *tachash*? The term has simply never come up in Torah before. It is clothed in mystery. It is not even believed by the authors of Strong's Concordance to be Hebrew in origin. Some translators a long time ago decided to take a wild

⁶ This covering would be the only set of curtains visible to anyone other than a *kohen* (priest) or Levi (Levite).

guess and render the phrase *orot tachashim* as ‘badger skins’. That is what some translations of the Torah still say. Other translators have speculated that since historical rumor has it the Sea of Reeds was filled with *sea cows* [aquatic creatures something like dolphins or manatees], and since Bedouin’s living in the middle east have long worn sandals made of the hide of those aquatic creatures, what the Holy One must have meant by the phrase *orot tachashim* was ‘sea cow hides’ like the Bedouin’s use for sandals.

One Talmudic author actually opined that the Holy One created a special creature - a one horned beast - just for this purpose. The truth, however, is that the real meaning of the word *tachash* is undisclosed. No one alive today – including the author, of course - really knows exactly what species of animal the Holy One meant when he used the plural form of *tachash*.

Keeping with the theme of the curtains being representative of the participants in the narrative of Genesis, however, can I offer my own theory? Think back with me to the Garden. As you will recall, the Serpent [in Hebrew, *nachash*, *nun*, *chet*, *shin*] convinced Adam and Chava to *lo sh’ma* the instructions of the Holy One and ingest the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Chava were then called to account by the Holy One. He was not angry – but He was resolute. They could no longer stay in His Garden of Delight. Their presence there, even after ingesting the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was not good for them or for the Garden. He was going to have to cast them out of the beautiful place He had designed and spoken into existence just so they could live in the Light of His Presence. Before casting them out from the Garden of intimacy into the world to toil for their own food, however, the Holy One did something absolutely wonderful for them – do you remember what it was? He clothed them with ‘*garments of skin*’.

What kind of skin, you ask? What species? What genus? We are not told. The identity of the animal whose skin was used for these special coverings of grace is left a mystery. I wonder if the animal in question what Torah was refers to as a *tachash*. After all, it was the work of the *nachash* [Serpent] that led to the downfall of man. *Nachash* is a Hebrew word picture showing a *son/heir* [*nun*], coming to a *chuppah* [*chet*], and experiencing a *manifestation of the Divine Presence* [*shin*]. As we know, in Adam and Chava’s situation, this encounter with the Divine Presence resulted in judgment. But we trust in Messiah that the situation will be different for us – and that when we encounter the Divine Presence we will bask in His goodness, and glory and blessing.

What does this have to do with the outer covering of the *Mish’kan* – the covering

our Divine Bridegroom told Moshe we were to *asah* out of *orot tachashim*? Well, what better picture of Messiah's redemptive work could there possibly be than the substitution, in the Hebrew word picture I just described in connection with the word *nachash* [serpent], for the *son/heir*, of the covenant sign of the execution stake (cross)? That is exactly what you see if you substitute the Hebrew letter *tav* ['t sound] for the Hebrew letter *nun* ['n' sound] at the beginning of the word *nachash*, thereby transforming the word into *tachash*.

In other words, the Hebrew word picture that the Hebrew word *tachash* draws for us is the approaching of the chuppah of God through the covering of the sign of the execution stake (KJV 'cross'). The Messiah is the *Mish'kan*. Everything in the *Mish'kan* was designed to point us to Him. And when we become the *Mish'kan*, everything about our lives is designed to point others to Him. See **Romans 8:29**, **Ephesians 4:22-24**, **II Corinthians 3:18**, and **I John 2:6**

But Why Do We Need To Study and Meditate Upon All These Tedious Details?

The narrative portions of Torah – stories of Creation, the Flood, the call of Avraham, the interaction between the Holy One and our ancestors, and our ancestors and the world's leaders, the Exodus, the *Matan Ha-Torah* [giving of the Torah] on *Har Sineh* – these all fascinate us, at times even holding us on the edge of our seats. But detailed, technical passages like today's aliyah? Well, most of us tend to *struggle with them*.

The only other place in Torah where meticulous building/design specifications like this are given is the account of the ark [Hebrew *teivah*] that the Holy One told Noach to build. Interestingly Torah does not just tell us that the detailed instructions for the ark were given and received – it proceeds to list those instructions very meticulously, one by one. Do you remember how the Holy One told Noach exactly what kind of wood to use, exactly how he was to waterproof it, exactly how many cubits every single part of the ark was to be, exactly how many stories the ark was to have and exactly how each story was to be arranged and used, etc. **Genesis 6:14 ff.**

Oy vey! Detail That Would Cross A Rabbi's Eyes!

But why did the Holy One have all this detail *recorded* for posterity? Wouldn't it have been enough just to say: "*The Holy One told Noach to build an ark, and gave him its specifications, and Noach built it exactly to those specifications*", and leave it at that. Why do we need to know what kind of wood, how wide, tall, etc.?

Turning our attention back to parsha *Terumah*, and particularly to today's aliyah, wouldn't it have been enough for the Holy One to say: "*The Holy One told Moshe to have the Redeemed Community build a three-chambered structure for*

*chaperoned betrothal interactions and the acting out of His Divine passion play, and gave him the specifications for it, and the Redeemed Community built it exactly to those specifications”? I think not. The Holy One did not, I do not believe, include these lengthy passages in Torah just to “weed out” casual readers or give those of His people with insomnia something to read at bedtime as an alternative to counting sheep. While I am not quite the wide-eyed “mystic” I was early in life, I still cling to the belief that not a single letter or pen stroke of Torah is superfluous or unnecessary. As Yeshua said, not a *yod* or “tittle” shall pass away from the Torah [Matthew 5:18]; hence not even a letter or pen stroke, much less an entire passage, should be ignored or considered unimportant. While I am leery therefore of “super-spiritualizing” every word describing the *Mish’kan* as some authors have done, I do believe that hidden in the midst of the intricate details of passages like the one we read today lie extremely profound, semi-secret meanings and messages.*

This Is A Test

More importantly however I believe that the details and specifications the Holy One gives regarding the *Mish’kan* are intended to serve as a “test”. Will the Redeemed Community just “flow with the Spirit”, and design her own *Mish’kan*, according to her own desires, doctrines, and tastes? Will she appoint a committee and choose from among design plans purchased from professional architects? Will she build a *religious shrine* like her pagan neighbors to impress the world and make her comfortable when she does her “religious stuff”? Or did she really mean it when she said “*na’aseh ... v’nish’ma*” [i.e. we will do/build exactly what the Holy One says, and we will respond to the Holy One’s Voice the way a lamb responds to the voice of his shepherd].

We are given the same basic test today. Voices around us say “throw out all those detailed instructions of the Torah” – details like:

- *what aspects of the Holy One’s creation He intended for us to eat and not eat;*
- *what day we rest from work and focus entirely upon our relationship with the Holy One;*
- *what days we celebrate (and do not celebrate);*
- *how we educate and train our children;*
- *how we conduct our business relationships; and*
- *how we relate to the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the sojourner in our midst.*

Our own flesh says “whatever feels good (or draws a crowd) DO IT” – and of course, if anyone questions what we are doing or why, we can just say we are *following the Spirit*. Who can argue with that? Most people would not think of arguing with it.

English mistranslations of the writings of Shaul of Tarsus are quoted to caution us against – or condemn us for - “going back under the LAW”. But the very message of parsha *Terumah* – and indeed the entire Bible – is that *the Holy One is a God of detail*. Part of the wonder and beauty of the Holy One is that *He does not leave us to our own devices*. He instructs us, and teaches us, in great detail – like a caring and wise master craftsman teaches an apprentice. In Torah, with all its *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukot*, the Holy One gives a Divinely designed framework within which He who knows what is best for us and what is harmful to us instructs us to live out our lives. In Torah, the Holy One also gives us a Divine *measuring rod* against which to measure and constantly monitor the quality of our relationship with Him. In Torah the Holy One gives us a *Constitution*, a blueprint, and a full-length mirror to look into.

Who Is REALLY Hiding In The Details?

Folk wisdom of the day says, “*The Devil is in the details*”. I see it differently. At least when it comes to Torah, it is not the Devil but *the Holy One Who is in the details*. I have found that the Devil shuns details, preferring instead to lurk in the dark, shady nether regions of vague generality.

The *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukot* of Torah are like the dimensions and specifications of the Holy One gave concerning the *Mish'kan*. We are to take them seriously, and build our lives according to the detailed specifications they contain – not just how we “feel led” or think – or are told by religious leaders - is right. Because never forget, just as Messiah is the *Mish'kan*, *we who are united with Messiah are the Mish'kan as well!* We are finely crafted architecture. It is in *the details* that we reflect the majesty and creativity of the Architect.

At the beginning of parsha *Terumah* the Holy One’s instructions to us were:

make/build Me a Mish'kan so that I may dwell in/inside/within/in the innermost part of them.
[Exodus 25:8]

The goal of building the *Mish'kan* is not to create a “House of God”, but to set apart a place for Him *within* each of His people. Each individual who walks in the way of Torah becomes *a microcosm of the Mish'kan*: a living, breathing bastion of holiness. So let us take a deep breath, get our focus – and proceed. Get a cup of caffeine if you need one, and splash a little living water on your face, and then let’s plod on. After all, we are in the midst of a God-encounter. *The Holy One our God is speaking!* He is telling Moshe things that *angels long to understand*. And if we are really going to be privileged to build on earth an accurate scale model of the Heavenly reality our Divine Bridegroom wants the world to see, well ... we are *going to have to get the details right*. And remember, Beloved, despite all the voices that scream at you to be like everyone else and just do whatever you feel

“the Spirit” lead you to do, the closing words of the Holy One in today’s aliyah still call us to something more substantial. For our Divine Bridegroom Himself has instructed us:

Set up the Mish’kan according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain.

[Exodus 26:30]

Questions For Today’s Study

1. In Exodus 26:1-14 the directions are given for the curtains that are to enclose the *Mish’kan*.

[A] How many layers of curtains are there to be?

[B] List the materials to be used in the first layer of curtains.

[C] List the four colors to be included in the first layer.

[D] List the materials that are to be used in each subsequent layer of curtains.

[E] Of which material was the front entrance to the Tabernacle to be made?

2. How many curtains make up the first layer of curtains? How many make up the second layer? Why is there a difference?

3. Verses 15-29 of Exodus 26 give the specifications for the framework of the *Mish’kan*. Try to draw the framework as it would look if you were looking down on it from above. Imagine one inch = Ten cubits.

4. In today’s next-to-last Haftarah reading for parsha *Terumah* [I Kings 6:7] we are told of the special precautions that were taken regarding the stones with which the *Bayit Ha-Mik’dash* [the Temple] was built.

*The house, when it was in building, was built of eben [stone] made ready at the quarry;
and there was neither makabah [hammer] nor garzen [axe]
nor any tool of barzel [iron] heard in the house, while it was in building.*

[A] What was it that was not heard on the Temple mount while the Temple was being built?

[B] How were the stones made to fit together?

[C] Why was this not done at the Temple?

5. In today’s Brit Chadasha reading the Master challenges us with the true meaning of the provisions of the Torah regarding divorce.

*It was also said, 'Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce,'
but I tell you that whoever puts away his wife,
except for the cause of sexual immorality, makes her an adulteress;
and whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.*

[Matthew 5:31-32]

[A] What does the Master quote as the traditional rule regarding divorce as

stated by the Pharisees?

[B] Go back to the Torah, and see what the Torah itself says about divorce. What book, chapter, and verse(s) give the *mishpatim* concerning divorce?

[C] Does what Yeshua teaches in today's aliyah contradict the Torah? Explain your answer.

[D] How does the giving of a bill of divorcement to a woman "cause" that woman to commit adultery?

[E] Read Matthew 19:3-12. How does Yeshua explain – and give full meaning to – the Torah's statements about divorce?

[F] From reading the Torah's statements about divorce, as interpreted and explained by Yeshua, what have you learned about what The Holy One considers valuable and important?

[G] From reading the Torah's statements about divorce, as interpreted and explained by Yeshua, what have you learned about the effect the vows and covenant of marriage have in the spiritual realm?

[H] Does anything Yeshua taught in this passage contradict or differ from Torah as revealed at Sineh? Explain your answer.

*May Yeshua reveal to us the heart of the Divine Bridegroom
(and the hardness of our own hearts) as He teaches us the Torah.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:73-80 [YOD]

Your hands have made me and formed me.

*Give me understanding, that I may learn your **mitzvot**.*

*Those who fear you will see me and be glad,
because I have put my hope in your word.*

*Holy One, I know that your judgments [mishpateicha] are righteous,
That in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*

*Please let your lovingkindness [chesed] be for my comfort [nacham],
According to your word to your servant.*

Let your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for your Torah is my delight.

*Let the proud [zedim] be disappointed, for they have overthrown me wrongfully;
I will meditate on your precepts.*

*Let those who fear you turn to me; they will know your statutes.
Let my heart be blameless toward your decrees; I will not be disappointed.*