

# *Shiur L'Yom Shishi*<sup>1</sup>

[Friday's Study]

**READINGS:**     ***Torah Vayakhel:***           **Exodus 38:1-20**  
                  ***Haftarah:***                       **I Kings 7:23-26**  
                  ***B'rit Chadasha:***           **II Corinthians 9:10-11**

*He made the basin of brass, and its base of brass,  
out of the mirrors of the ministering women.*

[Exodus 38:8]

Today's Meditation is Haggai 2:20-23;  
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Gevurot*, Part I

*Vaya'as et-mizbach ha-olah atzei shitim* – And he formed the altar of ascendance out of *shittim* wood .... Exodus 38:1a.

Whatever chaos may be going on in the cosmos; whatever real or imagined injustice or inequity may be making the nations rage; whatever vain-imaginings-run-amok may be causing strife among the talking heads of political theory, ideology, entertainment, education, pseudo-science, cult-medicine, pop psychology, and organized religion; whatever scandal-of-the-month, crisis-of-the-day, or social-justice-outrage-of-the-moment has the ethnic-hate spewers, class-envy inciters, virtue-signalers, and culture-cancelers of 'civilized society' chanting profane slogans, burning flags, blocking traffic, blowing up buildings, looting stores, tearing down monuments, and bludgeoning to death anyone who gets in their way in the name of 'social justice', 'cease-fire', and/or 'world peace'; it is not so in the Camp of the Redeemed – at least for a little while. What's up with us? Sinai is up with us. The beautiful letters, syllables, and words inscribed by the Finger of God on the Tablets of Testimony Moshe recently brought back down the mountain – letters, syllables, and words pulsing with the kedusha energy of Heaven's rarified air -are up with us. The '*Tentmaker's Dream*' of Heaven's command & control center coming to earth in the form of a moveable tent-like structure is up with us. What a season! We have no time or energy for, much less inclination toward, division, argument, offense, or complaint. We are alive! We are forgiven! We are beloved by – and betrothed forever to – the Creator of the Universe. Mercy has triumphed over judgment – and extravagant gratitude in the air. Who knew - forgiveness motivates; revelation empowers; vision unifies! Now we are finding shalom in service. Joy has replaced mourning. Laughter has replaced tears. Delight has replaced despair. Blessing has replaced blame. It is as if Messiah has come to dwell among us; for in the form of the beautiful images that

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make up the components of the *Mish'kan*, that is exactly what He has done. The first project to which the inspired craftsmen will set their hands will be the construction of the great brazen altar in the *Mish'kan*'s outer court. **Exodus 38:1-7**. The second project addressed in today's aliyah will be the glimmering laver of washing which will be molded from the copper mirrors donated by the women in the camp. **Exodus 38:8**. The third project attacked will be the linen draperies that will line exterior of the structure. **Exodus 38:9-16**. Finally, the anointed workmen will turn their attention to the *Mish'kan*'s fasteners, supports, and veils – sockets and pegs of bronze; hooks, ties, capitals, and pillars of silver; and the structure's ornate 30' x 7.5' fabric 'door' with its bronze support pillars. **Exodus 38:17-20**.

As Yochanan [John] would later write of Messiah in the flesh: *And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us – and we beheld His Glory ....* John 1:14a.

### ***Creativity Unleashed to Bring the Wonders of the Beauty Realm Into the Consciousness of Fallen Men***

All week long the focus of Torah's narrative has been on the enthusiastic cooperation of the Redeemed Community in fulfilling the glorious mission of constructing an earthly dwelling place for the Creator of the Universe at the base of Mount Sinai. We have thrown ourselves into greatest project ever attempted with abandonment. We are actually doing it! We are building a Throne Room and Courtyard for our King exactly like the model He showed Moshe in the Heavens.

Every element of this project is both beautiful and strategic. When joined together as a unit, and made functional, what we are building will become the beachhead from which the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov will launch a full-scale invasion of earth by the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Camp of the Redeemed has become a construction zone. All over the camp hammers are pounding, saws and planes and chisels are making noise, fires in kilns are crackling, and looms are spinning. Children are helping their fathers and mothers. Even the animals are busy, serving as beasts of burden for carrying men and materials.

Perspiration is beading up on foreheads. Sprinkles of blood are falling from needle-pricked fingers. Simple songs of spontaneous praise are bubbling forth from the lips of laborers as they work together in rhythm. And overarching it all is a powerful sense of shared mission and calling that makes this the most joyous time we have experienced since we have been redeemed from bondage.

It is not just our faces that are shining with the glory of the Holy One - our very souls have burst into flame.

***Preparing the Outer Courts  
for Significant Times and Seasons To Come***

In today's aliyah everything about which 'Moshe's construction journal' tells us will pertain to the Mish'kan's 'outer court'. The outer court will be busiest and most joyful area of the *mish'kan*. This will be where millions of worshippers of the Holy One, of all tribes, of all ages, and of all genders will come together to pour out their hearts to the Glorious King. This is where joyful celebrations – and tearful surrenders to the Will of the Bridegroom-King – will occur on a daily basis. This is where blood will be shed, and where forgiveness poured out from on High.

This will be where we will celebrate prodigals coming home, and where broken lives and relationships will be lovingly restored. It will be here that the Holy One will meet with us as - both as individuals and as a people. This is where our Bridegroom-King will affectionately greet us, lovingly affirm us, gently yet firmly discipline us, and passionately call us into the deeper thoughts and counsel and conversations and deeds of Covenant. This is where He will turn our gaze away from the past to the future, and away from the distractions and obsessions of the temporal, material world in which we spend most of our time, toward the beauty and eternal realities of Heaven.

It will be here, in these outer courts, that He will, through protocols of approach He has lovingly designed for us, perpetually remind us of, and call us to appropriate for ourselves, the glorious atonement He accomplished for us before the foundation of the world. It is here where we will become familiar with, and learn to apply, the blood of the Lamb. And that brings us to our first topic of study today – the altar of surrender, cast in bronze, which sits at the center of it all.

***The Mizbeach Ha-Olah [Exodus 38:1-7]***

At the center of the outer court *Betzalel*, *Aholiav*, and their enthusiastic crew of Divinely inspired craftsmen are engrossed in the task of building an altar made of shittim wood and bronze. This will be the *mizbeach ha-olah*, or altar of ascending. Oh, what a delight! This is the furnishing that will serve as the focal point of the entire camp – as the mirror image, in the visible realm of the outer court, of the ark and mercy seat which constitute the epicenter of the invisible realm of the holy of holies. It will be the substance of all the things we most hope for; and the evidence of the glorious Heavenly realities that we know exist, but which we cannot see.

***1. The Components of the Structure***

The altar is constructed of only two components: *shittim wood* and *bronze* [Hebrew *nechoshet*]. An altar – a place of burning – made OF WOOD? Wait a minute ... what is wrong with this picture? Even if encased in thin sheets of metal, if the altar is primarily made of wood, when the wood it is made of begins to dry out, will not the constant, intense heat coming from the altar eventually reach the combustion point of 451 degrees Fahrenheit? Is this wood going to be like the fibrous material of Moshe's thorn bush – which will be surrounded by fire but not be consumed?

Perhaps. Or perhaps the Holy One chose bronze as the metal with which the wood frame of this constantly burning altar will be covered because of the alloy's extremely low level of thermal conductivity. Bronze, you see, is far less heat conductive than gold, silver, copper - or for that matter, even steel.

So, where does one get bronze? Unlike gold and silver, bronze is not a natural element. It is not present in what men know as 'nature'. It is an alloy made from blending two distinct natural elements - copper and tin – over intense heat. To make bronze one must first find, then mine both high quality/purity copper and high quality/purity tin. Both of these then have to be transported to a smelting site and heated to extreme temperatures<sup>2</sup> and create just enough carbon monoxide that will remove Sulphur and copper oxides from the metals.

As we have discussed previously in these studies the Hebrew adjective used by the Holy One to describe the wood which is to go into this furnishing is *shittim*, *shin*, *tet*, *yod*, *mem*. This word is derived from the Hebrew verb root *shatat*, *shin*, *tet*, *tet*, meaning to *scourge*, and/or to *pierce*. The wood called *shittim* is therefore a very special type of wood – a kind of wood that is *twisted*, *tortured* by multiple scourgings and piercings.

One can thus see even in the wood employed for this altar the pre-saging of Messiah's scourging, piercing, and suffering.

The *shittim* wood was in this case overlaid with a solid sheet of bronze. In Hebrew, the word our English Bibles translate as 'bronze' is *nechoshet*. This can refer to bronze, to brass, or to copper. It is an alloy, consisting of copper and tin and/or zinc. These metals are melted together in cauldrons, hardened and tempered with fire, then hammered into sheets. Even stronger than iron, the *nechoshet* covering will be strong enough to endure the intense heat of the fires that will burn on this

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<sup>2</sup> The smelting requires far more than an ordinary bonfire. Most wood-based fires never max out at 1300 degrees Fahrenheit. It takes about 2000 degrees F. to bring copper to a fully liquid state in which it can be cast into ingots or molds. In order to reach the required heat for smelting, the fire must be forced, by a human being blowing through a leather tube right into the base of the flame.

altar day after day and night after night for as long as the Mish'kan is in operation.

So, how about you, Beloved? At the base of who you are is there a foundation of *shittim wood* that testifies to your soul and to the world of the scourgings and piercings the Atoning Substitute endured on your behalf? And on the outside, where you meet the world, and where most people are most vulnerable, is there a *nechoshet* fortress encasing you which has been forged in the fiery trials of earthly life, and which has by reason of those very trial become strong enough to withstand the heat of every flame the world may generate?

### 2. *The Dimensions of the Structure*

The altar at which the all-inclusive *avodah* of the outer court will be conducted will have a square base. It will be five cubits [approximately 7 ½ feet] in both length and breadth. It will rise from the earth a distance of 3 cubits [approximately 4 ½ feet]. That means there will have to be steps leading up to its grates.

The numbers five and three in these dimensions are significant. Five is the number associated with the Hebrew letter *hey*, which is a pictograph of revelation. It is also the number of books in the Torah, and hence represents the full revelation of mission and calling which the Torah as a whole embodies.

Three is the number associated with the Hebrew letter *gimel*, which is a pictograph of a man or a beast of burden walking. It is also the number of divisions of the TaNaKh [the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings], and hence represents the walking out of the ways of the Holy One in all seasons of life.

### 3. *The Horns of the Brazen Altar*

Betzalel affixed a horn-shaped appendage of pure bronze at each corner of the altar. It would be these horns that anyone in need of forgiveness and mercy would be permitted to grab ahold, and through which they would be infused with the *contagion of holiness*. As the altar is holy, whatever – or whoever – touches the altar is holy.

### 4. *The Vessels for the Avodah of the Brazen Altar*

Betzalel did not build the altar for appearances – he built it for *function*. The altar was not just to be a beautiful symbol of atonement and covenant-consistent meetings with the Holy One – it was to administrate those realities in *real time*.

Hence Betzalel made the vessels of the *avodah* of the brazen altar at the same time he made the altar. He made pots for the placement of the various components of the offerings. He made shovels for removing the ashes. He made basins to hold the blood of the surrogate animals which would die there.

Betzalel also made flesh-hooks for the separation of hide from carcass, offal from flesh, fat from organs, and limbs from torso, as the protocols of the particular avodah would require. He made fire-pans to rearrange and replenish the wood which would serve as fuel for the Holy Fire that would remain constantly ablaze upon this altar.

So how about you, Beloved? Are you equipped and prepared for the tender, intimate service of the altar of the Holy One? Have you developed the characteristics and implements of life that allow you to go beyond mere ‘believe’ in the eternal Heavenly realities underlying the brazen altar and actually experience those realities – for yourself and for others to whom you minister – in real time?

### ***The Bronze Laver [Exodus 38:8]***

After completing the brazen altar Betzalel and his crew turned their attention to the bronze laver at which Aharon and his sons were to wash their hands and feet before ministering either in the courtyard or in the sanctuary.

This basin was made from a very special source. For Torah tells us it was made:

*... out of the mirrors [KJV looking glasses] of the ministering women  
who ministered at the door of the tent of meeting.  
[Exodus 38:8]*

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as *mirrors* in this passage is *marahot*, feminine plural of *marah*<sup>3</sup>. This word literally means *visions* or *visual revelations*. The Hebrew word *marah* is first used in Scripture in Genesis 46:2, where we are told that at Be’ersheva the Holy One appeared to Ya’akov *b’marahot* [in visions] in the night. See also Ezekiel 1:1 where we are told by the prophet of the exile:

*the heavens were opened, and I saw visions [merahot] of God.*

It is very fitting that the bronze laver was fashioned from mirrors. Its surface would always reflect the face and image of the priests who were washing in it. They would be able to see their own facial expressions – and tell if their hearts were growing cold toward the people or toward the Holy One or if their attitudes were growing hard. Any *kohen* [kingdom emissary] must, you see, reflect only the facial expressions, emotions, attitudes, and heart of the King on whose behalf He who ministers. And every time the sons of Aharon stood before this laver, the mirror-like surface of the basin would provide them a glimpse into their own soul.

### ***Questions For Today’s Study***

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<sup>3</sup> Marah is *mem, resh, alef, hey*, Strong’s Hebrew word #4759. It is pronounced *maw-RAW*’

1. The first seven verses of today's aliyah describe the construction of the brazen altar. Verse 2 of our aliyah mentions something on the four corners of this altar our English Bibles call 'horns'.

- i. What is the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'horns'?
- ii. What were these 'horns' for?
- iii. What story involving the patriarchs of Israel prominently featured the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'horns' in its narrative?
- iv. What do you think is the connection between the bronze altar of the *Mish'kan* and the patriarchal story which features 'horns' in its narrative?

2. Verse 8 of today's aliyah begins Torah's discussion of the construction of the bronze laver which would also stand in the courtyard of the *Mish'kan*. What was the purpose of the laver?

3. In today's haftarah [I Kings 7:23-26] reading:

- [A] what furnishing of Solomon's Temple is being built?
- [B] To which of the furnishings of the *Mish'kan* was this furnishing of the Temple supposed to correspond?
- [C] How was this furnishing of the Temple alike, and how was it different from, the furnishing of the *Mish'kan* to which it was supposed to correspond?

4. In today's reading from the Apostolic Scriptures [II Corinthians 9:10-11] Shaul of Tarsus says:

*Now may He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food  
supply and multiply the seed you have sown  
and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything  
for all liberality, that causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

[A] What does Yeshua teach in Matthew 13:19-22 is the meaning in prophetic parable of 'seed'?

[B] Does Scripture ever refer to money or donations as 'seed'?

### ***Meditation for Today's Study*** **Haggai 2:20-23**

*The Word of the Holy One came the second time to Haggai  
in the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying,  
"Speak to Zerubbavel, governor of Yehudah, saying,*

*'I will shake the heavens and the eretz. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.  
I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.  
I will overthrow the chariots, and those who ride in them.  
The horses and their riders will come down, everyone by the sword of his brother.  
In that day, says the Holy One of Hosts,  
will I take you, Zerubbavel, my servant, the son of She'alti'el,'  
says the Holy One,  
'and will make you as a signet, for I have chosen you,'  
says the Holy One of Hosts.*