

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

March 10th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"

12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Discussion

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.

Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119



VaYakhel - Exodus 35:1

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-אֲדָת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם

Va-yakhel Mosheh et-kol-adat b'nei Yisra'el va-yomer alehem

And assembled Moses (and) all the congregation of (the) sons of Israel and said unto them

And Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them,

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲתֶם:

eleh ha-d'varim asher-tzivah Adonai la'asot otam.

These (are) the words that commanded the lord to do them.

"These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do."

Looking Back

In Parsha Yitro, five weeks ago, we read from Exodus, Chapters 19 & 20. God's people, Israel, had arrived on the plain of Sinai and heard the voice of God through Moses, "...if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples.... and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." When the people heard God's words through Moses, they replied, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do" (We will do, and we will hear) (Ex.19:5,6,8). Yet when God called Moses to climb Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten commandments and kept him there for forty days, the people took their focus away from the visible and audible

manifestations of God on top of the mountain. Instead, much like today, the peoples' focus was on their own "predicament." With Moses gone, they were leaderless. **Their concept of worship, again much like today, changed from what they were willing to do for God to what they would receive for themselves.** They wanted to worship like the other peoples of their area, so they had an idol made for themselves and worshiped it. Their concomitant immoral activities paralleled that of the surrounding Canaanite nations. When Moses returned and saw their idolatry and unbridled immoral activity, he was enraged. He was carrying two tablets of God's law representing God's written covenant with his people. **The covenantal basis of God's law was the fidelity of the people to God exclusively. God's people had already broken their covenant with God before even having seen the written Commandments!** As the people repented with great mourning, **it took the intercession of Moses with God to prevent the destruction of the people and for God's continued presence to remain among them.** Even so, the 3,000 who took part in the immorality of the idolatry were killed. We remember **the intercession of Messiah, Yeshua** for us as stated in **Romans 5:8**: "**But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us.**"

God spoke to Moses about building a tabernacle, where He desired to dwell among His people and be their God. In **Exodus, Chapters 25-30**, God gave Moses very specific and detailed instructions for the construction of His tabernacle, giving Moses a vision of the heavenly tabernacle, its furniture, and the clothing of the priests "as a pattern" to follow (**Exodus 25:9,40**); (**Acts 7:44, Heb.8:2,5**). **God's people today should take special note of the construction of God's tabernacle because one day, all those who have apprehended for themselves the sacrificial atonement of Messiah, will worship with Messiah in the heavenly tabernacle!!**



Building God's Tabernacle

This week's Torah portion begins with **vaYakhel**, "**and he assembled.**" Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says, "The episode of the Golden Calf began with these words: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered themselves [*vayikahel*] around Aaron ..." (Ex. 32:1). At the beginning of this week's parsha, having won God's forgiveness and brought down a second set of tablets, Moses began the work of rededicating the people: "Moses assembled [*vayakheh*] the entire Israelite congregation ..." (Ex. 35:1). They had sinned as a community. Now they were about to be reconstituted as a community. Jewish spirituality is a communal spirituality." **Moses assembled** all the people together to instruct them **to obey all God's commandments** concerning the keeping of God's Sabbath and the construction of God's tabernacle. Moses made it clear to the people that **even while construction of the tabernacle was in progress, God's Sabbath of complete rest on the seventh day would be observed.** **No "work"** was to be done on the Sabbath; not even **cooking or heating one's shelter** (**35:2-3**). There has been much Rabbinic commentary on what constitutes "work." It seems that in every generation exceptions are made, as technology advances. For example, old texts of Rabbinic commentary suggest how many paces one may walk before walking was considered "work." Today some congregations close their parking lots on the Sabbath, so that congregants cannot drive the whole way for services but must walk at least a minimal distance. It is generally agreed that "work" constitutes anything that is one's regular job or anything that might be considered laborious. For example, **a housewife should not be making meals and cleaning the house on the Sabbath.** The principle is that for this one day of the week, God gives His people a day for physical and spiritual refreshment. **Even labor that would be**

considered "God's work" like constructing the tabernacle, was prohibited on the Sabbath. Mark 2:27 states that "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." This Shabbat we will discuss contemporary customs of Sabbath observance among Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed, and Messianic Jews with those of various denominations of the Church. We will also compare Biblical admonitions for Sabbath observance with contemporary customs.

In Chapters 35 through 40, the people implement God's instructions to Moses from Chapters 25-30 in the fabrication of clothing and materials for the construction of the tabernacle. In these last Chapters in Exodus, we find greater detail given about tabernacle construction. For example, in **Chapter 35** there is greater detail given about the "free-will" contribution that was received from the people. Gold, silver, and bronze as well as precious stones and fine material were given by those "whose hearts moved them" to contribute towards the materials necessary to build the tabernacle. There was repeated use of the words "whoever," "everyone," "every man," "men," "all the men," "women," "all the skilled women," "all the men and women," and "rulers." It is obvious that God moved the hearts of all of His people to make a contribution. How different from our worship today, where we ask **whether** we should contribute to God's work, rather than **how much** we should contribute. These former slaves possessed the necessities to build the tabernacle only because God had given His people the wealth of Egypt (11:2-3), before leading them out of Egypt. Therefore the people were simply returning for God's use a portion of the wealth God had given them. **The same principle applies today!** God provides us more than the necessary financial resources for His ministry, and we willingly return a portion to Him. In fact, in **Chapter 36** we read that the people willingly contributed more than was needed. Moses had to issue an order for the people to stop their contributions!

Beth Tephila had a special fund for the purchase of a kosher Torah Scroll, for which many contributed more than enough. Now we have and are using our very own Torah!



A Bezalel Terracota Plaque - Early 20th Century

In Chapter 35:30, Bezalel was "called by name" by God to be filled with the Spirit of God, so that he could lead in the construction and fabrication of the tabernacle and its furniture. In 1906 in the spirit of Bezalel the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem was opened and now exists within the Hebrew University campus on Mt. Scopus. Oholiab was also chosen by God to work as an engraver, designer, embroiderer, and a weaver. These men served as the master craftsmen, who instructed others who worked with them. They were given supernatural skill, so that they were capable of performing their work **exactly as required by God.** Today, as well, God's people, who have been given His **Ruach** (Spirit), are capable of performing God's work to His standards. **All that is necessary is for us to be willing to do so.**

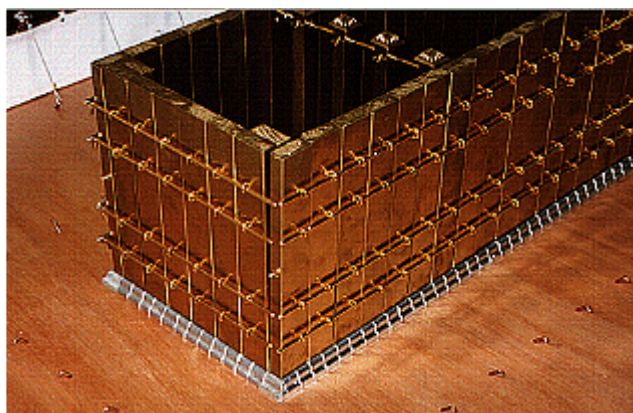
President Kennedy's memorable statement was, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." Because God has called every believer in Him

by name and implanted into us His Ruach, we should say, "Ask not what God and your congregation can do for you. Ask what your and your congregation can do for God." Are we willing to ask this of God?

Finished Products for the Tabernacle



Inner Curtains with Cherubim



Tabernacle Upright Boards & Securing Bars



Veil between Holy of Holies & Holy Place



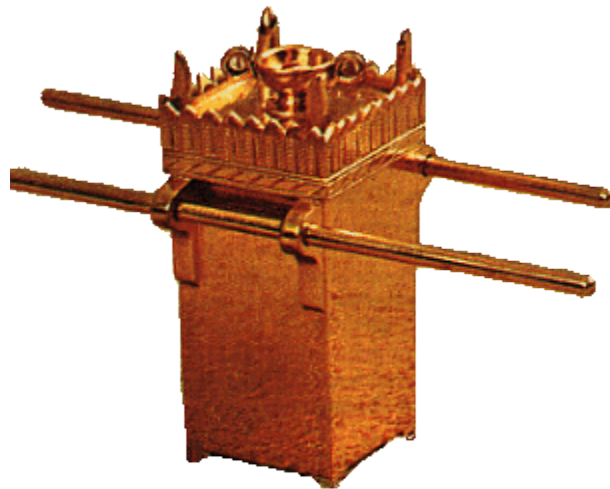
Ark of the Covenant & Mercy Seat



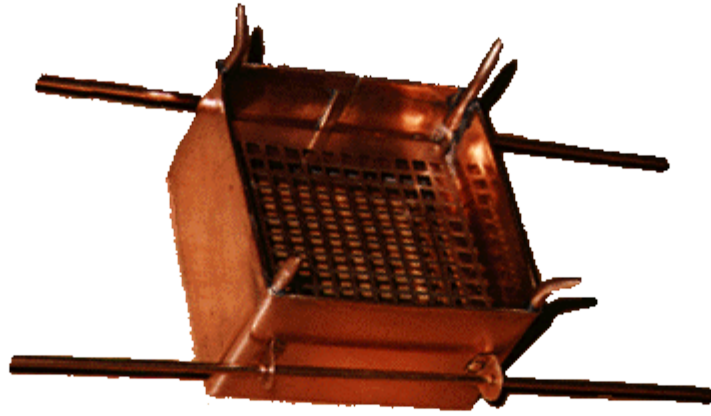
Showbread Table



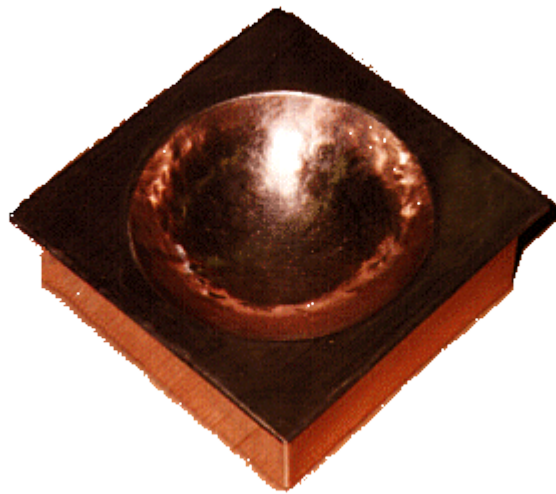
Lampstand



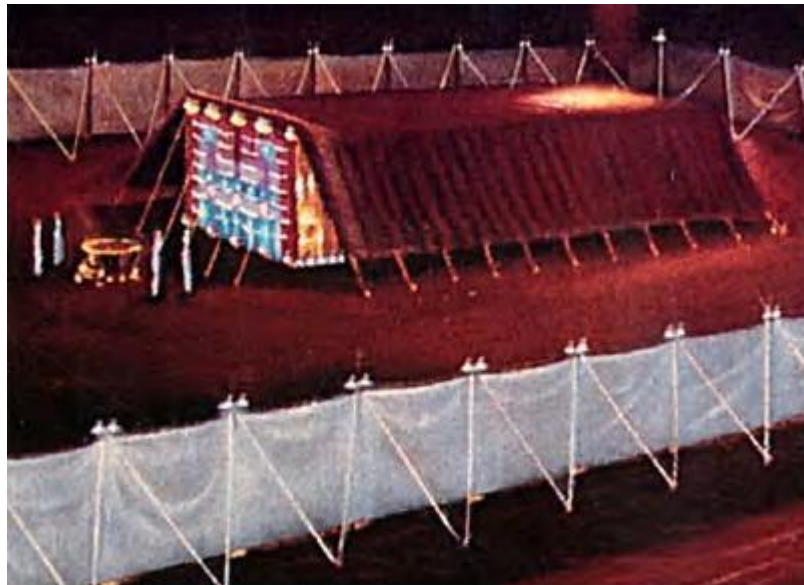
Altar of Incense



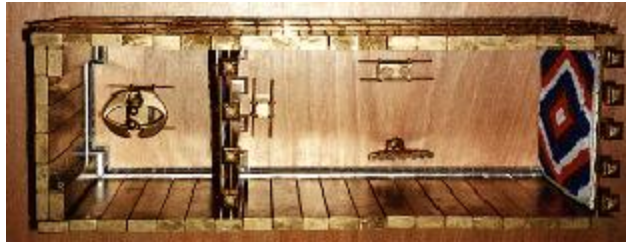
Bronze Altar of Sacrifice



Bronze Laver



Tabernacle & Outer Court



View from Above (curtains removed)

And now a word from the Rabbi to the Stars

Vayakhel

by Rabbi Stuart Dauermann, PhD

If we believe that congregations of God's people are the divinely ordained means of God accomplishing His will in the world, and that these congregations constitute a witness to His majesty, then what question should we be asking about ourselves and our congregation?

One of the usual questions people reflexively ask is "**What am I getting out of my congregation?**" But if our congregations are meant to be the means of glorifying God and accomplishing His will, shouldn't our question rather be "**What is my congregation getting out of me?**"

This is quite a paradigm shift, quite a change in perspective. Can this change in perspective be demonstrated from our Scriptures and tradition? Let's see.

If we take a close look at today's Torah reading, we will see how very much the community was occupied with serving God and seeing that He got the glory He deserved. We see nothing here of what is axiomatic and automatic in our generation. . . "What's in it for me?"

Instead, we find the people investing their time, talents, and treasures in building something for God. They bring various building materials, of various kinds, from very expensive to less so. Then people of various skill levels came together to make all that the Lord had commanded. The participants included young and old, male and female, rich and poor. Also involved were those who were especially skilled, the craftspeople. At the head of the project were the especially talented Bezalel and Oholiab. And **Bezalel was skilled not only in doing the work, but in teaching others** to do so.

There is not a syllable here of the kind of "What's in it for me?" mentality so prevalent in our day. Neither was there coercion. Rather, there was widespread communal "buy in." People rose to the occasion, and the occasion was splendid. So much so, that we read in chapter 36:4

all the artisans who were engaged in the tasks of the sanctuary came, each from the task upon which he was engaged, 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks entailed in the work that the Lord has commanded to be done." 6 Moses thereupon had this proclamation made throughout the camp: "Let no man or woman make further effort toward gifts for the sanctuary!" So the people stopped bringing: 7 their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.

What an unambiguous model for community building: community building is a community effort.

Our Haftarah bears this out as well. In the first verse of the Haftarah, Ezekiel 45:16, speaking of the idealized vision of the eschatological Temple, we read:

16 In this contribution, the entire population must join with the prince in Israel.

Notice-the entire population, the entire people of God, must join with the prince in His offerings. We are all to be involved. This is not something to be left up to the leaders and the professionals. As the leaders serve God,

so must the people. That is why leaders are leaders-they lead the people in doing as they do.

I think we will agree that nowadays people evaluate congregations from a consumer mentality-"What is the best congregation to meet my needs with the least cost or inconvenience to myself?" "Where can I get the most bang for my buck?"

If we trust the Bible as our guide for right living, if we find we cannot entirely divest ourselves of this self-centered mentality, we would at least do well to make repeated efforts at reorienting ourselves, deciding to counterbalance this native narcissistic perspective with a different one, as modeled in these Scriptures.

As we think about our relationship God, we should develop the habit of asking ourselves, "Is my congregation getting enough out of me?"

Our Newer Covenant reading bears this out. Notice how the assumption is that **everyone has a part to play-just as our Torah passage put it**, just as our Haftarah passage put it. Many people imagine that now that the New Covenant has come, we are all off the hook as far as defined responsibilities are concerned, we only have to do what we feel like doing when we feel like it. Try harmonizing that with this Newer Covenant passage.

Romans 12:1-8

1 I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you. 2 In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the 'olam hazeh. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed. 3 For I am telling every single one of you, through the grace that has been given to me, not to have exaggerated ideas about your own importance. Instead, develop a sober estimate of yourself based on the standard which God has given to each of you, namely, trust. 4 For just as there are many parts that compose one body, but the parts don't all have the same function; 5 so there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah we comprise one body, with each of us belonging to the others. 6 But we have gifts that differ and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, use it to the extent of your trust; 7 if it is serving, use it to serve; if you are a teacher, use your gift in teaching; 8 if you are a counselor, use your gift to comfort and exhort; if you are someone who gives, do it simply and generously; if you are in a position of leadership, lead with diligence and zeal; if you are one who does acts of mercy, do them cheerfully.

Notice this is addressed to "**every single one of you.**" Notice, "so there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah we comprise one body, with each of us belonging to the others." Each of us-that means every single one of us-belongs to the other.

This language should remind you of something. In what other interpersonal relationship are people told that they now belong to each other Yes, membership in a congregation is like a marriage-it is a covenant relationship in the sight of God, one which entails responsibilities for each other. And "every single one of us. . . each of us". . .belongs to one another.

Community building 101 dictates that we not only ask ourselves "What is my congregation getting out of me?" We must also remind ourselves that we do not belong only to ourselves. We belong to God: "You were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, which are God's" [1 Cor 6:17], and we belong to each other [Romans 12:5].

This is quite a distance from the "What's in it for me Gospel," isn't it?

In my congregation, we use something called the G.R.A.C.E. Criteria to gauge if people are appropriate for our congregation and appropriately related to it. It is easy to see that the lessons of today's readings are echoed in

these criteria. Persons measure up to the G.R.A.C.E. Criteria if they are:

- **G**rowing in relationship with God because of their involvement with us.
- **R**esponsive to and respectful of our vision and our leadership.
- **A**ppropriate to our congregation.
- **C**ontributing to the life of the congregation.
- **E**ngaged in healthy relationships with others in the congregation.

Actually, today's readings strongly illumine the fourth of our G.R.A.C.E. Criteria-"Contributing to the life of the congregation". And there is another verse a little later in Romans 12, that also illumines this: *11 Don't be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor.*

What then does all of this mean?

1. First, it means that the gimme gospel is a product of the spirit of the age-and not the Spirit of God.
2. Second, it means that, if the Bible is true at all, then we should be asking ourselves, "What is my congregation getting out of me?"

Now, I know what some of you are saying inside. "I'd like to be more involved, but I am too busy." And you are right, you are too busy. If you cannot be genuinely and consistently involved in contributing to the life our your congregation, by a combination of your treasures, your talents, and your time, then, if the Bible is true at all, your life is spiritually dysfunctional, and you need to cut back somewhere so that you might get it in better balance. I realize as well, that it is possible to be too involved in congregational life. In such cases, the balance needs to be restored on the other side of the scale. But, except for a handful of people here, that is not a danger.

If you would fulfill your God given relationship with your congregation, if you would honor your covenant with the others in this body, you will ask yourself, "What is my congregation getting out of me?" and you will make sure that you can honestly say, "I contribute to the life of my congregation with a combination of my treasures, my talents, and my time."

There are a wide variety of ways people demonstrate involvement, just as our Newer Covenant reading reminded us-

"4 For just as there are many parts that compose one body, but the parts don't all have the same function; 5 so there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah we comprise one body, with each of us belonging to the others. 6 But we have gifts that differ and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us."

And all these ways are good, right and proper.

Some of you are very already heavily engaged with the life of your congregation, through giving of you treasures, your talents, and your time. God bless you. You make your congregation live.

But for others the message of today's lesson is this: Membership in a community of God's people is anything but a spectator sport. Get involved. As yourself this question and answer it: "What is my congregation getting out of me?" Are you contributing to the life of your congregation? This is not to be the occupation of the professionals and the superstars. As in our Torah reading, our Haftarah reading, and our Newer Covenant reading, it is all the people giving as their hearts move them, it is all of the people joining themselves with the priests offering. Every one of us belongs to the others, and these imperatives are addressed to every single one of us.

If someone asks you to help with something, your first impulse should be to make yourself available, not to beg off every time. Sometimes we must excuse ourselves, but if we do it as a habit of life, then something is out of balance. And if not, make some changes.

If you see that something needs doing, or someone needs help, volunteer. I did not say "overcommit." This

would be wrong; but volunteer, at least once in a while.

Let's restore spiritual balance to our lives. Let's ask ourselves, **"Is my congregation getting enough out of me?"** **For in giving of yourself to your congregation, you are giving to God.** And if you withhold yourself from engagement with your congregation you need to ask yourself, "Why?"

SHABBAT SHALOM

