

Deut. 9:9. Moses also fasted during his second stay on the mount (Deut. 9:18; Ex. 34:28). Elijah fasted forty days at this same place (I Kings 19:8). And Christ fasted forty days in the desert (Matt. 4:2). Assuredly Moses could not have survived forty days without water if he had not been miraculously sustained.

The spectacle of Moses amidst the cloud and the fire of God's glory is awesome. But it is typical of the events connected with the giving of the law. "Thou heardest his words out of the midst of the *fire*" (Deut. 4:36). The Israelites came to a mount that "burned with *fire*, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest" (Heb. 12:18).

As Christians, we have come to a very different spiritual starting place. We have come, not to Sinai, but to Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We have come to "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12:18, 24).

Israel's representatives briefly came into the presence of God after the covenant was ratified. As Christians we have a constant and eternal access to the father through the new covenant ratified by Christ through His death upon the cross.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

25 And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they take for me an offering: of every man whose heart maketh him willing ye shall take my offering. (3) And this is the offering which ye shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass, (4) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, (5) and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, (6) oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (7) onyx

stones, and stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breast-plate. (8) And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. (9) According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it.

(10) And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. (11) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. (12) And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four feet thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. (13) And thou shalt make staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (14) And thou shalt put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, wherewith to bear the ark. (15) The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. (16) And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. (17) And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (18) And thou shalt make two cher-u-bim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. (19) And make one cher-ub at the one end, and one cher-ub at the other end: of one piece with the mercy-seat shall ye make the cher-u-bim on the two ends thereof. (20) And the cher-u-bim shall spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cher-u-bim be. (21) And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. (22) And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cher-u-bim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Is-ra-el.

(23) And thou shalt make a table of acacia wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and

a cubit and a half the height thereof. (24) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. (25) And thou shalt make unto it a border of a handbreadth round about; and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. (26) And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. (27) Close by the border shall the rings be, for places for the staves to bear the table. (28) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. (29) And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the flagons thereof, and the bowls thereof, wherewith to pour out: of pure gold shalt thou make them. (30) And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before me alway.

(31) And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it: (32) and there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof: (33) three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the candlestick: (34) and in the candlestick four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof; (35) and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the candlestick. (36) Their knops and their branches shall be of one piece with it; the whole of it one beaten work of pure gold. (37) And thou shalt make the lamps thereof, seven: and they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it. (38) And the snuffers thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. (39) Of a talent of pure gold shall it be made, with all these vessels. (40) And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount.

**EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE**

1. What were the Israelites to bring to Jehovah? (25:2)
2. With what feeling were the offerings to be brought? (25:2)
3. What metals were to be offered? (25:3)
4. What colors of cloth were to be brought? (25:4)
5. What types of animal skins were to be brought? (25:4-5)
6. What type of wood was to be brought? (25:5)
7. What were the Israelites to build for God? (25:8)
8. Where would God dwell? (25:8; 29:45; II Cor. 6:16)
9. According to what was God's tabernacle to be made? (25:9, 40)
10. What were the dimensions of the ark? (25:10)
11. With what was the ark to be overlaid? (25:11)
12. By what means was the ark to be carried? (25:12-13)
13. Where were the staves of the ark kept? (25:15)
14. What is the testimony? (25:16; 32:15; 34:29)
15. What is the mercy-seat? (25:17)
16. What was at the top of the mercy-seat? (25:18; Compare Ezekiel 10:14, 20; Rev. 4:6-8)
17. How were the cherubim positioned? (25:19-20)
18. From where did God meet and commune with Israel? (25:22)
19. Of what was the tabernacle a type? (Heb. 9:9, 11-12)
20. Of what was the ark of the covenant a type? (Psalm 99:1; 80:1; 97:2; 89:14)
21. Of what was the tabernacle a copy? (Heb. 9:23; 8:5; Compare Rev. 11:19)
22. What happened when men looked into the ark without the mercy-seat covering its contents? (I Samuel 6:19)
23. Suggest ways in which Christ compares to the mercy-seat. (Compare I John 2:2; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 12:24)
24. Describe the table of showbread. (25:23)
25. Of what materials was the table to be constructed? (25:23-24)
26. How was the table decorated? (25:25)

27. What equipment was made to be used with the table? (25:29)
 28. When was showbread kept upon the table? (25:30; Compare Lev. 24:5-9)
 - 29-40. From Leviticus 24:5-9 answer these questions about the showbread:
 29. What was the showbread made of?
 30. How many loaves of showbread were to be set on the table?
 31. How much flour went into each loaf? Would this make the loaves large or small?
 32. What was to be poured on each row (or pile) of loaves?
 33. True or false? The showbread is called a type of (sacrificial) offering. (Lev. 24:7, 9)
 34. How often was the showbread to be set in order?
 35. From whom was the showbread to be taken?
 36. By whom was the showbread eaten?
 37. What would the number of loaves of showbread possibly indicate that they symbolized?
 38. What does the name showbread (or "bread of the presence") indicate about the significance of the showbread?
 39. What would the use of frankincense on the bread suggest about it? (Compare Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8)
 40. Is the showbread a type or symbol of the Lord's supper?
 41. Describe the candlestick (lampstand). (25:31-36)
 42. How much gold was in the lampstand? (25:39; 37:24)
 43. Who was to bring olive oil for the lamp? (Ex. 27:20)
 44. When was the lamp kept burning? (Lev. 24:3; I Sam. 3:3)
 45. Who tended to the lamp to keep it burning? (Ex. 27:21)
 46. Of what may the lampstand be a type or symbol? (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:5; Philippians 2:15; Psalm 119:105; John 8:12; II Cor. 4:3-6).
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EXODUS TWENTY-FIVE: SANCTUARY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take an offering; 25:1-8.
 2. Make it according to the pattern; 25:9, 40.
 3. Make an ark and mercy seat; 25:10-22.
 4. Make a table; 25:23-30.
 5. Make a lampstand; 25:31-39.
-

AN OFFERING FOR GOD! (25:1-7)

1. Comes from willing people; 25:1-2.
 2. Consists of valuable possessions; 25:3-7.
-

A SANCTUARY FOR GOD! (25:8)

1. Made by MEN.
 2. Dwelt in by GOD.
-

MAKE IT LIKE THE PATTERN! (25:9, 40)

1. A divinely revealed pattern.
 2. A pattern of the heavenly tabernacle; (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23)
 3. A pattern of the Christian religion; (Hebrews 9:8-9)
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MESSAGES FROM GOLDEN FURNITURE (25:10-39)

1. The ark (25:10-16): God dwells among men!
2. The mercy-seat (25:17-22): God communes (talks) with men!
3. The table (25:23-30): God desires his people in his presence!
God sets an offering in his presence!
4. The Lampstand (25:31-39): God gives light to men!

THE ARK — THE FOOTSTOOL
OF GOD'S THRONE!
(Ex. 25:10-16)

1. Contained the ten commandments. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne." (Ps. 89:14a)
2. Had the pot of manna (Ex. 16:33). "Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14b)
3. Had Aaron's staff that budded. "No man taketh the honor (priesthood) unto himself, unless he is called by God" (Heb. 5:4).

THE MERCY-SEAT
(Ex. 25:17-22)

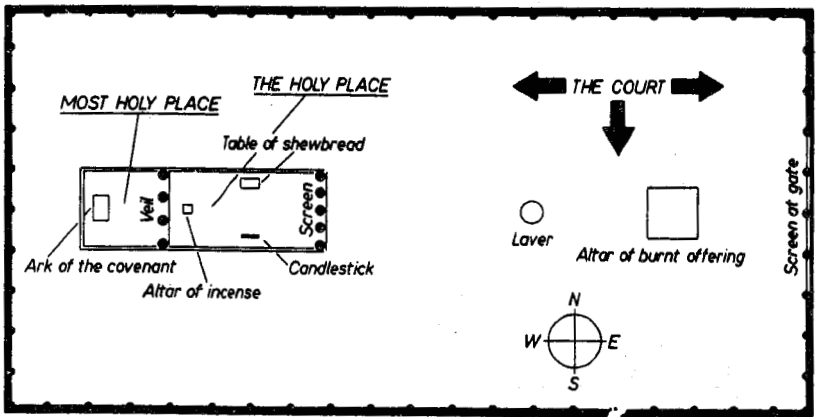
1. A precious golden covering.
2. A worship-centered covering (cherubim).
3. A blood-sprinkled covering; Lev. 16:14.

THE LAMPSTAND (Menorah)!

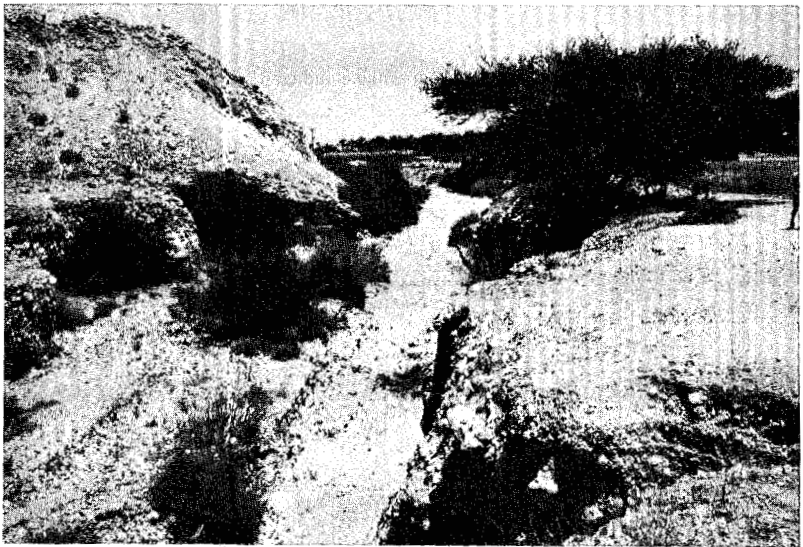
1. A precious light (golden).
2. A united light (all of one piece).
3. A perfect light (seven-fold).
4. A spiritual light (fueled by oil, symbolic of the Spirit).

SHOWBREAD
(Presence-bread)!
(Ex. 25:23-30)

1. Twelve loaves (symbolizing the twelve tribes) always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:5-8).
2. An offering made by fire always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:9)



Ground plan of the Tabernacle and court



Acacia tree beside a wadi running into the Dead Sea. Acacia (or shittim) wood was used in the tabernacle. (Photo by author.)

SPECIAL STUDY: THE TABERNACLE

1. *What was the tabernacle?*

- (1) The tabernacle was that beautiful place of worship made by the children of Israel in the days of Moses. It was a sanctuary, a holy place set apart for God. God showed His presence at the tabernacle, and there received the worship of the people. Exodus 29:43-46.
- (2) It was a portable house of worship. When we go on camping trips, we carry with us a "house" that we can move about, a tent. Out in the desert the Israelites were constantly moving about. Therefore they had to have a house of worship that could easily be moved with them. The very word "tabernacle" means a "tent," and the word "tent" certainly suggests a portable dwelling. God gave instructions about how to transport the tabernacle in Numbers 4:5-15.
 - a. Some pieces of furniture in the tabernacle had staves on each side, so men could carry them on their shoulders.
 - b. The heavier parts of the tabernacle were carried by six wagons pulled by oxen. Numbers 7:1-7.
- (3) It was the meeting place of God and Israel.

God dwelt among his people, Israel. Exodus 25:8. God particularly revealed His presence around the tabernacle, and especially in that part of it called the Most Holy Place. Exodus 25:22.

The fact that God dwelt in the midst of Israel was the central fact of their life. To Israel God's presence meant plan, protection, and provision. If God had not manifested His presence in the tabernacle, the tribes of Israel would have been scattered about helter-skelter, with no one to protect or provide for them.

This was an appeal to the senses of a people whose spiritual discernment was underdeveloped. God's presence among them was plainly indicated by the daily manna, the pillar of cloud, and the miracles that occurred during

their journeyings. But to a people brought up amidst the idolatry of Egypt, a centralized shrine was more readily comprehended than an omnipresent spiritual God.

Today God dwells in the midst of his *church*, just as He dwelt among the Israelites. II Corinthians 6:16. The presence and worship of God give order, protection, and purpose to our lives. The worship of God should be as central to us as the tabernacle was central in the camp of Israel.

2. *Where is the information given about the tabernacle?*

- (1) The instructions about how it was to be built are given in Ex. 25-31.
- (2) The account of its construction and erection are in Ex. 35-40. Most of the information in this section is a repetition of that in Ex. 25-31.
- (3) The book of Hebrews, chs. 9-10, discusses the significance of the tabernacle at length.
- (4) Many other references throughout the Bible refer to it. The legislation in Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy was primarily to be carried out in the tabernacle rituals.

3. *What was the importance of the tabernacle?*

The importance of this tabernacle can be seen in several ways:

- (1) The details of its construction are described *twice* in Exodus, and much information is found about it throughout the rest of the Bible.

Arthur Pink reminds us that God only used two chapters to tell of the creation and furnishing of heaven and earth. But he used at least thirteen chapters (and really many more) to discuss the tabernacle!

- (2) The tabernacle is presented as a *type* of the Christian religion now operative (Heb. 9:8-9). (See Question No. 14 in this special study of the Tabernacle.)
- (3) The tabernacle was an earthly illustration and counterpart of God's heavenly dwelling and tabernacle. The tabernacle was a copy of things in the heavens (Heb. 8:5;

9:23-29). Rev. 11:19: "There was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant." Both the earthly and heavenly tabernacles therefore had covenant *arks*. Both had an altar for incense (Rev. 8:3). Both had seven lamps (Rev. 4:5). Christ entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (Heb. 9:11). Christ with his blood entered the true holy place (holy of holies) in heaven (Heb. 9:24). These facts made the earthly tabernacle very important.

- (4) God's insistence that it be made according to the precise pattern he had showed in the mount stresses the importance of each detail of it.

4. *Who were camped around the tabernacle?*

- (1) The Israelites camped all around the tabernacle. Each tribe camped by itself in its designated place. Although each tribe camped separately, the three on each of the four sides of the tabernacle were grouped together into larger encampments, called the Camp of Dan, the Camp of Judah, the Camp of Reuben, and the Camp of Ephraim. See Numbers 2:1—3:39. See page 550A.
- (2) Moses and the priestly families of Gershon, Merari, and Kohath were camped around the tabernacle up close to it.

5. *What were the names which were given to the tabernacle?*

God not only ordains things to exist, but He gives them their names as well. Let us use "Bible names for Bible things." Here are the names for the tabernacle:

- (1) "Tabernacle." Exodus 26:1. This word is the translation of several Hebrew words (2 main ones). One (*ohel*) means "tent." The other (*mishkan*) means "dwelling place."
- (2) "Tent." Exodus 26:36.
- (3) "Sanctuary." Exodus 25:8. This word means "a place set apart," or "a holy place."
- (4) "Tabernacle of the congregation." Exodus 29:42, 44; 30:36; etc. This name is rendered "tent of meeting" in the Revised Version. The name "tabernacle of the congregation" is applied to that room in the tabernacle called

“the holy place.” Exodus 27:21.

(5) “House of the Lord.” Deuteronomy 23:18. (The church is now the house of the Lord, and God dwells in it through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:22.)

(6) “Temple of the Lord.” I Samuel 1:9. This name suggests the magnificence of the tabernacle, as if it were a palace or temple. The church is now the temple of God.

6. *How were materials obtained for the tabernacle?*

Free-will offerings provided the materials. See Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-29; 36:5-7.

7. *Who actually constructed the tabernacle?*

It was constructed by men specially called and filled and guided by the Spirit of God to have wisdom and skill. God called them by name. Among these builders were Bezaleel and Oholiab. (Ex. 36:1; Ex. 35:30—36:1.)

These builders of the tabernacle correspond to the apostles of Christ in the church. Christ specifically called His apostles, and filled them with the Holy Spirit so that they could establish the church without error. Acts 1:8; John 16:13.

8. *How many tabernacles did all the parts of the tabernacle combine to form?*

Just one. It was ONE tabernacle. Exodus 26:6. All its parts formed one harmonious whole.

Accordingly we find a unity prevailing the whole church of Christ. There are many different members of it, but all produce one body. I Corinthians 12:2.

9. *How was the tabernacle maintained?*

It was maintained by an offering of “atonement money.” Every person over twenty had to give a half-shekel. Exodus 30:11-16. This was an annual offering. Matthew 17:24. The fact that God provided through the tabernacle a means of atonement (or covering) for sins made the people indebted to God and to His tabernacle.

10. *By what act was the tabernacle “sanctified” or set apart for holy use?*

It was set apart by anointing with holy oil. The tabernacle, all its pieces of furniture, and its priests were

anointed with a holy oil, so that it was sanctified and became "most holy." Exodus 30:22-33; 40:9-16.

Anointing oil, as used in the Old Testament, was symbolic of the Holy Spirit. See Luke 4:18; Psalm 133:2; Hebrews 1:9; Acts 10:38.

As every part of the tabernacle was anointed with the holy oil, so every feature of the Christian faith is anointed with the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 1:22; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:17. Our religion is therefore divine, holy, precious, anointed of God.

11. *What covered over, or lodged above, the tabernacle?*

The cloud of God's glory covered over or lodged above the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-39; Numbers 9:15-23. This glory cloud is called the SHECHINAH. (This word, however, is not actually found in the Bible.)

God's presence has frequently been associated with a cloud, or a shining light, or smoke, or fire. Exodus 16:10; 24:16-17; Numbers 20:6; Isaiah 6:4; Luke 2:9. This creates a great sense of God's presence and majesty.

This cloud also guided and led the Israelites. When the cloud lifted up, this was a sign for the Israelites to pack up for moving on. When the cloud moved, they followed. When the cloud stopped, they camped.

The Scripture indicates that God intends to glorify His people today with a glory like that which crowned the tabernacle. Isaiah 60:2; 4:5.

12. *What was the value of the material in the tabernacle?*

The value was tremendous. See Exodus 38:24-29. The exact value is impossible to determine, but a million and a half dollars has been suggested as a conservative figure. The worship of God is not a cheap, trifling, and inconsequential thing.

13. *Layout and furniture of the Tabernacle.*

A. The Layout of the tabernacle.

- (1) The *Court of the Tabernacle*, in which the Tabernacle itself stood, was an oblong space, 100 cubits by 50 (*i.e.*, 150 feet by 75), having its longer axis east

and west, with its front to the *east*. It was surrounded by linen cloth hangings 5 cubits in height, and supported by pillars of brass 5 cubits apart, to which the curtains were attached by hooks and fillets of silver (thin rods or rails between the pillars). This enclosure was only broken on the eastern side by the entrance, which was 20 cubits wide, and closed by curtains of fine twined linen, wrought with needle-work, and of the most gorgeous colors. (Ex. 27:9-19; 38:9-20.)

- In the outer or eastern half of the court was placed the altar of burnt-offering, and between it and the Tabernacle itself, the laver at which the priests washed their hands and feet on entering the Temple.
- (2) The *Tabernacle itself* was placed toward the western end of this enclosure. It was an oblong rectangular structure, 30 cubits in length by 10 in width (45 feet by 15), and 10 in height; the interior being divided into two chambers, the first or outer of 20 cubits in length, the inner of 10 cubits, and consequently an exact cube. The former was the *Holy Place*, or *First Tabernacle* (Heb. 9:2), containing the golden candlestick on one side, the table of show-bread opposite, and between them in the center the altar of incense. The latter was the *Most Holy Place*, or the *Holy of Holies*, containing the ark, surmounted by the cherubim, with the two stone tablets inside.

The two sides, and the further, or western, end, were enclosed by boards of shittim-wood overlaid with gold. (Ex. 26:15-26; 36:20-70).

Four successive coverings of curtains looped together were placed over the open top, and fell down over the sides. The first, or inmost, was a splendid fabric of linen, embroidered with figures of cherubim, in blue, purple, and scarlet, and joined together by golden fastenings. The next was a woollen covering of goats' hair; the third, of rams' skins dyed red; and the outermost, of porpoise skins (Ex.

26:1-14; 36:8-19).

The front of the Sanctuary was closed by a hanging of fine linen, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, and supported by golden hooks, on *five* pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold, and standing in brass sockets. The covering of goats' hair was so made as to hang down over this if desired. A more sumptuous curtain of the same kind, embroidered with cherubim and hung on *four* pillars with silver sockets, divided the Holy from the Most Holy Place. It was called the VEIL, as it hid from the eyes of all but the high-priest the inmost sanctuary, where Jehovah dwelt on his mercy-seat, between the cherubim above the ark.

B. Furniture of the tabernacle.

(1) In the Outer Court.

- a. *The Altar of Burnt-offering.* See notes on Ex. 27:1-8; 38:1-7.
- b. *The Brazen Laver.* See notes on Ex. 29:4; 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:7, 11. See also Lev. 8:10-11.

(2) In the Holy Place.

The furniture of the court was connected with *sacrifice*, that of the sanctuary itself with the deeper mysteries of mediation and access to God. The *Holy Place* contained three objects: the *altar of incense* in the center, so as to be directly in front of the ark of the covenant, the *table of show-bread* on its right or north side, and the *golden candlestick* on the left or south side.

- a. *The Altar of Incense.* (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38; 37:25-29; Lev. 10:1-2.)
- b. *The Table of Showbread.* (Ex. 25:23-30; 37:10-16; Lev. 24:5-9.)
- c. *The Golden Lampstand.* (Ex. 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 37:17-24; Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1-4)

(3) In the Holy of Holies.

In the *Holy of Holies*, within the veil and shrouded

in darkness, there was but one object, the most sacred of the whole. The *Ark of the Covenant*, or the *Testimony*, was a sacred chest, containing the two tables of stone, inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

The cover of the ark (called the *mercy-seat*) was a place of pure gold, overshadowed by two cherubim, with their faces bent down and their wings meeting. This was the very *throne* of Jehovah, who was therefore said to "dwell between the cherubim."

14. *Typology of the Tabernacle.*

A *type* is some person, thing, or event in the Old Testament age which foreshadowed some person, thing, or event in the New Testament age. The *antitype* is that person, thing, or event in the New Testament age which was foreshadowed by the Old Testament type. We are expressly told in Heb. 9:8-9 that the first tabernacle is a figure, or type, for the time present. The typology is given for many parts of the tabernacle.

In the list of the tabernacle types that follows we have placed question marks alongside our statements if the antitypes are not specifically stated in the scripture. In most such cases reasonable inferences may be drawn from scripture that should enable us to determine the antitypes with some certainty.

- a. The entire tabernacle—A type of the Christian religion that has now come into reality (Heb. 9:8)
- b. The Holy of Holies—A type of heaven (Heb. 9:24).
 - (1) The ark of the covenant—A type of the footstool of God's throne (I Chron. 28:2; Psalm 132:7-8). (?)
 - (2) The mercy-seat—A type of God's throne, which is a place of mercy because Christ our priest is there. See Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10. The term *propitiation* in these verses is the same word used in the Greek Bible for *mercy-seat*.
 - (3) The veil between the Holy and Most Holy places—A type of Christ's flesh, which was broken on the cross

(Heb. 10:19-20; Luke 23:44-45).

c. The Holy Place—A type of the church (?). (As the Holy of Holies was entered only from the Holy Place, so heaven is entered only from the church. As the Holy Place was for priests only, so the church is for priests (Christians) only.)

(1) Altar of incense—A type of prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4; Ps. 141:2).

(2) Table of showbread—A type of the fellowship of saints in the presence of God (?). (The twelve loaves seem to have represented Israel. Show-bread means *presence-bread*. Thus the showbread symbolized Israel's being in God's presence, and foreshadowed our fellowship in God's presence [I John 1:3]).

Also as an "offering made by fire" (Lev. 24:9) it was a type of Christ our offering (Eph. 5:2), who is always in God's presence for us.

(3) Lampstand—A type of the light of the Gospel (?). We walk in the light (Eph. 5:7-8). God is light (I Jn. 1:5). Christ is the light (John 8:12). The scriptures are a light (Ps. 119:105; II Pet. 1:19). Churches are lights (Rev. 1:12, 20). Christians are lights (Phil. 2:15).

d. The court—A type of the world, or God's outreach into the world (?). (As God placed in the court, within the reach of all Israelites, the means for forgiveness, so God has placed in the world the means for forgiveness to all who will draw near seeking God.)

(1) Altar of burnt offering—A type of Christ's death (Heb. 13:10; John 1:29).

(2) Laver—A type of baptism (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). (?) The word "washing" in Greek means "laver."

Also the laver appears to have been a type of the daily cleansing available to all priests (Christians!) (I John 1:9). This seems to be a necessary conclusion because the priests washed at the laver each time they entered and went out of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:19-21).

e. The priesthood.

(1) Aaron, the high priest—A type of Christ our high priest (Heb. 4:14).

(2) Aaron's sons (lesser priests)—A type of Christians; all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6; I Peter 2:9).

15. *What are the views of many critics about the tabernacle?*

Generally the critical view is that the information about the tabernacle in Exodus was written by priestly writers who lived nearly a thousand years after the time of Moses. These priestly writers lived during or after the Babylonian captivity (about 550 B.C.), and wrote their description of the tabernacle from their memories of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem, or possibly even from their acquaintance with the temple of Zerubbabel built AFTER the Babylonian captivity. They projected back into the distant past an idealized description, based on later temple features. Their writings are usually referred to as the P (for Priestly) document. The P document was supposedly inserted into the older narratives comprising the remainder of Exodus. (Examples of these views may be seen in Noth's *Exodus*, p. 201, and *Broadman Bible Commentary* Vol. I (1969), p. 431.)

The critics hold that the ark was the imaginary creation of one who knew no more about it than that it once stood in the innermost part of Solomon's temple before the Babylonian exile. (Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

The lampstand is said to have been an innovation (!) presumably introduced into the temple of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.). (Noth *op. cit.*, p. 203.) Since it had features resembling those of a tree, some have thought that it reflects an ancient reverence for trees.

The general conclusion drawn from such theories is that nothing in the Biblical stories is true or edifying. Such theories are often asserted as certain truth when there is not a shred of solid evidence to back them up. Archaeological discoveries have frequently shown that the critics have been in error. For example, we now know that

moveable shrines (such as the tabernacle) existed in several nations - Egypt, Canaan (at Ugarit), Syria (at Palmyra). Many of these go back as far as the time of Moses, and some in Egypt back as far as 2600 B.C. (John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 241, 243). Why then should critics assume that the Israelites in Moses' times simply could not have produced a moveable place of worship like the tabernacle?

In this commentary we have occasionally discussed the critics' views on certain passages. In most cases we have found ourselves in strong disagreement with their opinions.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-five?*

The chapter contains (1) God's instructions to Moses about taking an offering from the people to obtain materials to build the tabernacle (25:1-9); (2) instructions about how to make the ark (25:10-15) and the mercy-seat (25:16-22); (3) instructions about the table of presence-bread (25:23-30); (4) instructions about the lampstand (25:31-39).

2. *Who was to make an offering for tabernacle materials (25:1-2)*

Everyone whose heart made him willing was to give. Giving to God should be voluntary, not forced. See II Cor. 8:4-5; 9:6-7. Those who are willing do give freely. The Israelites gave more materials than were needed for the tabernacle. See Ex. 35:21-29; 36:5-7. In a similar way many years later they gave very much for the temple (I Chron. 29:1-5).

The word translated *offering* (Heb. *terumah*) means a heave-offering, one that is lifted up or separated unto God. The same word is used in Ex. 29:27, Lev. 7:14, Num, 15:19 to refer to various types of sacrifices. This use of this word

indicates that a sacredness comes upon all things presented to the LORD.

3. *What materials were given for the tabernacle? (25:3-7)*

(1) *Blue*. This was wool cloth dyed with deep violet color made from glands of the murex shell-fish found in the sea by Phoenicia and Palestine.

(2) *Purple*. Wool dyed dark red or reddish-purple by the shell-fish dye.

(3) *Scarlet*. Literally this says "worm of scarlet." The cloth was colored a brilliant red by color from the cochineal (or coccus) worm (or insect). In the Arabic language the word translated *scarlet* is *kirmiz*, from which we get our word *crimson*.

(4) *Gold*. All of the items in the Holy Place room or the Holy of Holies were of pure gold or gold-plated. The gold was probably obtained in Egypt (12:35), or possibly by spoil from the Amalekites or by inheritance from their forefathers. Gold was also used to overlay the boards of the tabernacle (38:24).

(5) *Silver*. This was obtained in part by a levy of half a shekel from each adult man (38:26-28). It was used for casting bases (pedestals or sockets) for the boards and pillars (36:24-26).

(6) *Brass*. This is more correctly translated "copper" or "bronze" (the alloy of copper and tin). Certainly it was not brass (copper and zinc). See 38:28-31. Copper was mined even before Moses' time in the rocky hills north of the Red Sea Gulf of Akabah, and still is.

(7) *Fine linen*. Egypt was famous for this material. See Ezek. 27:7. The Hebrew word for linen (*shesh*) is a borrowed Egyptian term. Joseph in Egypt was arrayed in linen (41:42). It was used for the innermost tabernacle covering (26:1), for the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36), and the priests' garments (28:6, 8, 42).

(8) *Goats' hair*. Literally, just *goats!* The goats usually had black hair (Song of Sol. 4:1). The women spun the goats' hair, twisting it into yarn (35:26), which was woven into

cloth. It was used for the second covering of the tabernacle (26:7).

(9) *Rams' skins dyed red.* These red rams' skins were used for the third covering over the tabernacle (26:14). R.S.V. reads "tanned rams' skins." This does not appear to be the best translation because the verb means "to be made red."

(10) *Sealskins.* (R.S.V. "goatskins," a conjectural translation; K.J.V., "badger skins," a faulty translation.) The *New English Bible* gives "porpoise skins," which seems to be a good rendering. The Hebrew word *tahash* refers possibly to the sea cow (dugong, or manatee), which is found in the Red Sea. It is ten to twelve feet long, with a rounded head. It has a hide admirably suited for making sandals (See Ezek. 16:10). Its upper skin is thicker and coarse, but the lower belly skin is thin yet tough.¹ An Arabic word related to the Hebrew *tahash* refers to several kinds of sea animals - seals, dolphins, sharks, dogfish. Perhaps the Hebrew word is equally applicable to several marine creatures.²

The "sealskins" were used for the outermost covering of the tabernacle (26:14), and for a covering over the ark and other furniture of the tabernacle (Num. 4:6, 8, 10, 11).

(11) *Acacia wood.* (King James, "shittim"). The acacia trees are the only trees in Sinai or Arabia from which planks might be cut. They are very tough, thorny, rather flat-topped trees, not usually over twenty feet high at present. The author has seen many of them in the Negev, the Arabah, and around the Dead Sea. The wood is indestructible by insects. The thorns (very numerous!) are up to two inches long. Most of the acacia trees now surviving are too small to have been cut into planks one and a half cubits broad (26:15-16). The Arab charcoal business has depleted the larger trees. However, S. C. Bartlett in the nineteenth century reported finding a great many large acacia trees in Wady

¹Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 164.

²Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-253.

Sa'al (which leads into Wady Sheikh).³ Many of these were very large, twenty inches to two feet in diameter. Bartlett tells that Mr. Holland, another Sinai traveller, found one nine feet in circumference. It is incorrect to assert that there have been no trees in Sinai from which boards the size of the tabernacle boards might have been cut. (In Ex. 26:15 R.S.V. renders "boards" as "frames.") (The boards might have been made by splicing wood from several trees together.)

(12) *Oil for the light.*⁴ This was a pure (or clear) olive oil beaten from the olives (Lev. 24:2). See Ex. 25:6; 27:20-21.

(13) *Spices* for anointing oil (30:23-33) and for sweet incense (30:34-38; 35:28).

(14) *Onyx stones and other gemstones* (25:7). See 28:9, 17-20. The onyx was probably a banded agate with straight bands. Others consider it to be a beryl. (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, article "Minerals.") These stones were used in the high priest's garments. The onyx stones and other gems were presented by the rulers of the congregation (35:27). Ex. 25:7 mentions the ephod and breastplate. See Ex. 28:6-14; 39:2-7 on the ephod, and 28:15-30; 39:8-21 on the breastplate.

The absence of mention of *iron* in the list of materials to be donated is possibly an indication of the very early date of the book of Exodus.

4. *What was God's purpose for the sanctuary?* (25:8)

God's purpose was that He might dwell among the Israelites. God desired to live among his people. See Ex. 29:45; I Kings 6:13; Lev. 26:11-12; II Cor. 6:16; Heb. 3:6; Rev. 21:3. It is certainly true that God inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), and fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24). Heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isa. 66:1). Spiritually-minded

³Bartlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301.

⁴The Greek LXX omits 25:6, possibly because of a skip by the eye of the translator between words with similar endings, *shittim* in vs. 5, and *sammim* in vs. 6. But the verse is needed to provide a full list of the materials for the tabernacle. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

Israelites realized this. See I Kings 8:27.

Nonetheless, God condescends to meet his children in limited places where they can reach Him.

The word *sanctuary* (25:8) means a holy place, one set apart for God. See Jer. 17:12.

God did not ask for a tabernacle; he asked for a sanctuary. God needs no tabernacle in which to dwell. The word "tabernacle" in 25:8 simply means a "dwelling." Do not read into 25:8 the meaning "Make me a sanctuary to provide a place where I may dwell among them." The text does not say that God dwelt in *it* (the tabernacle), but rather that he dwelt in *them* (the people)!

5. *What was the guide used in constructing the tabernacle?* (25:9)

The guide was the pattern which God showed Moses in the mount. See 25:40; 26:30; 27:8. Making the tabernacle exactly like this pattern was absolutely required. See Heb. 8:5.

God seems to have shown Moses a model or form of the tabernacle made in the way He wanted Moses to make it. This model was actually a model of the very tabernacle of God in heaven, and the earthly tabernacle was thus to be itself a model (pattern) of the heavenly tabernacle. To have digressed from the pattern shown to him would have caused Moses to misrepresent the design of God's tabernacle in heaven. Further, it would have produced a faulty type (or advance representation) of the religion which Jesus Christ has brought to us.

Some Jewish commentators have held that Moses saw a prophetic vision of the actual divine dwelling place in heaven, and that it therefore became necessary for Moses to erect in the middle of the camp of Israel a tabernacle designed like that seen in his vision, corresponding to the heavenly sanctuary.⁵ Hertz (also Jewish) disagrees, saying

⁵Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

that the tabernacle was only an educational tool to wean Israel from idolatrous worship, and that it did not correspond to any tabernacle on a universe-wide scale.⁶

Keil⁷ argues (correctly we feel) that God showed Moses not the heavenly original, but only a model of the heavenly original. The word translated *pattern* (Heb. *tabenith*) seems to have this meaning in Deut. 4:17 ("the *likeness* of any beast"), II Kings 16:10 ("the *fashion* of the altar"), and II Kings 16:10 (David's *pattern* of the temple, which he gave to Solomon).

Observe that the pattern of the tabernacle shown to Moses extended to the pattern of ALL the vessels (furniture, instruments) of it. There is an opinion that God has given men no definite pattern for His worship. God does indeed allow much freedom of expression in worship, but the command to conform exactly to the tabernacle pattern suggests that the pattern is a very real thing for us to recognize and accept.

6. *What was the first item of tabernacle furniture to be described? (25:10-11)*

The ark of the testimony (or covenant). For further information about the ark, see 37:1-9; Deut. 10:2-5; Heb. 9:3-5.

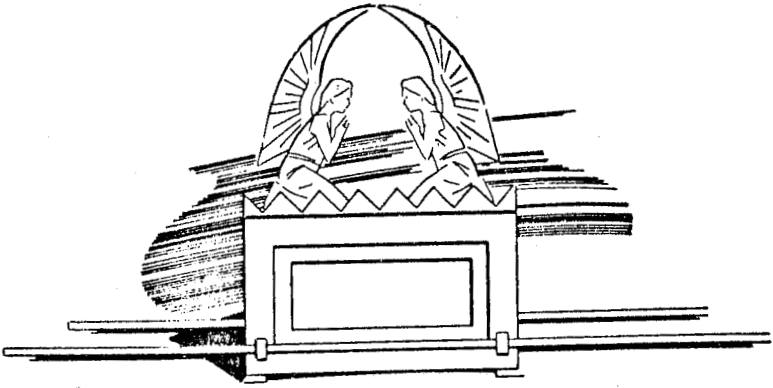
The ark was a wooden chest overlaid "within and without"⁸ with gold. It was 1½ x 1½ x 2½ cubits⁹ (about 27 x 27 x 45 inches). The ark (Heb. *'aron*) of the covenant should certainly not be confused with the ark (Heb. *tebah*) of Noah or the ark-basket (*tebah*) of the baby Moses (Ex. 2:3).

⁶J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London, Soncino Press, 1969), p. 325.

⁷Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.* II, pp. 165-167.

⁸The Hebrew expression in 25:11 meaning "inside and outside" could quite literally be rendered "in (the) house and in (the) street." This same idiom is used to describe how Noah's ark was pitched with pitch "within and without" (Gen. 6:14). Probably the ark was overlaid with gold by the Egyptian method of attaching thin hammered plates of gold to the wood by means of small nails. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁹Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 246, discusses the length of a cubit, and settles upon a length of eighteen inches. We adopt his conclusion.



The ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat with cherubim

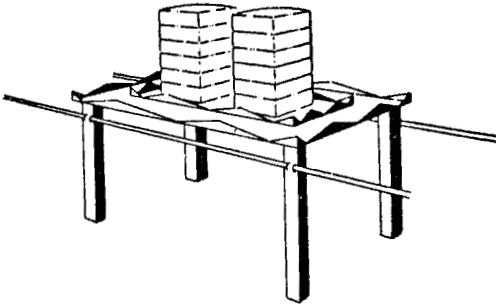
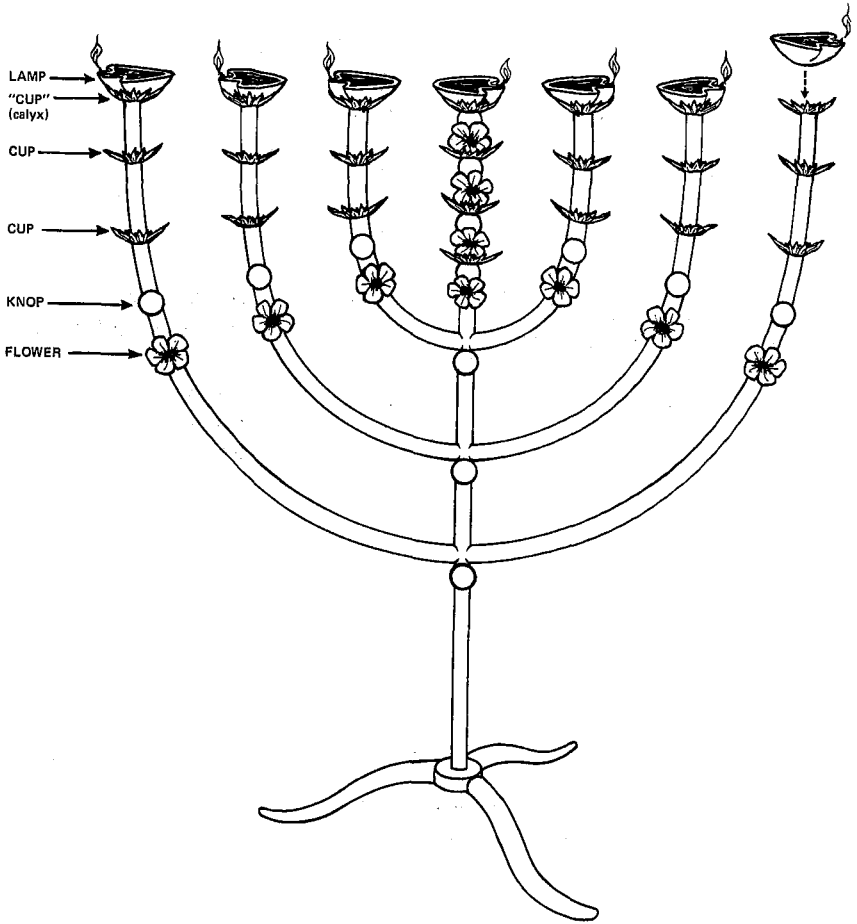


Table of showbread with its double crown and loaves.



The golden MENORAH (lampstand, or candlestick). The drawing shows that the lamps could be lifted off the lampstand for cleaning or refueling. Decorations on the lampstand include "cups" (resembling the calyx, or false petals, of flowers), knops (spherical ornaments), and flowers. The three-legged stand is adapted from a crude ancient sketch of the lampstand found in the Sinai peninsula. (Drawing by James Sherrod)

The ark is called by several names: (1) "ark of God" (I Sam. 3:3); (2) "ark of the covenant" (Num. 10:33; Deut. 10:8); (3) "holy ark" (II Chron. 35:3); (4) "ark of the LORD" (Josh. 6:7, 13; I Kings 2:26); (5) "ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22; 39:35); (6) "ark of thy strength" (Ps. 132:8). In Exodus it is uniformly called the ark of the testimony.

The ark and all the articles of furniture within the tabernacle building were of gold or overlaid with gold. Anything closely associated with God's presence was made of gold. God's heaven is golden. Rev. 21:10.

The ark and its covering (the mercy-seat) were the only items in the innermost tabernacle room, the holy of holies. Thus the ark was the central focus of the sanctuary, and the instructions concerning it were given first. It seems to have been a representation of God's throne and His footstool, and therefore it was befitting that first attention should have been given to it.

Likewise we need to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-2). Our heavenly home should be our primary focus of interest and our life goal. Set your home perfectly (completely) on the grace (the favor) that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:13).

Although the ark was the first thing described, it appears that it was not constructed until after the tabernacle building was made (37:1-9).

We observe the pronouns in 25:10ff. First, "*they* shall make an ark." But then many times after that, Moses himself is told, "*Thou* shalt. . . ." This points out Moses' leadership in making it. The workman Bezalel actually constructed it. See Ex. 37:1.

It appears from Deut. 10:2-5 that Moses himself had made a previous ark right after coming down from the mount the second time with the tablets of the ten commandments. He put the commandments in this ark, and declared many years later "There they are." It appears therefore that Moses considered the ark of the covenant to be in some way

a continuation of the simpler ark he himself had built for the stone tablets. Perhaps Bezalel only gold-plated and decorated the chest Moses prepared.

The top edge of the ark had a "crown" (moulding, rim, border, edge) round about it. This crown served to keep mercy-seat (covering) upon the top of the ark. Also it was decorative. A similar crown was upon the table of showbread and the golden altar of incense (30:3; 37:26).

7. *How was the ark carried about?* (25:12-15)

Staves of acacia wood overlaid with gold were inserted into rings of solid gold attached to the four "feet" of the ark. These staves were used to carry the ark on the shoulders of the Levites (Numbers 4:15). The "feet" of the ark seem to have been short legs or low blocks attached to the corners under the ark to keep it from sitting directly upon the ground. If the rings were in feet on the bottom, the ark would have stuck well up above the heads of the Levites as it was being carried by the staves. The rendering "feet" in 25:12 is preferable to "corners" (King James version).

The staves were not to be taken from the ark at any time. See I Kings 8:8. For information about how the ark was covered over before being carried about, see Numbers 4:5-6, 15.¹⁰

8. *What was placed in the ark?* (25:16, 21)

The ark was to contain the "testimony." This "testimony" was the two tablets of the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 40:20.

The word *testimony* means a precept or law. The Hebrew word translated "testimony" comes from a verb meaning "to turn, return, repeat, say repeatedly, testify, affirm." We might therefore say that the "testimony" was a constantly

¹⁰Numbers 4:6 says, "shall put in the staves thereof." This does not contradict the statement of Ex. 25:15 that the staves were not removed from the ark. The Hebrew verb (*sim*) of Num. 4:6 means to "set, put, place," but does not mean to put something *into* something unless it is used with the preposition *in*. Since this is not in Num. 4:6, the verse probably simply means that the staves were to be properly adjusted for use in carrying.

repeated communication to the people. That is worth pondering.

Although the original stone tablets were concealed in the ark, copies of their text were certainly available for the people to see and read.

The ark also had with it two other items: Aaron's wood staff which budded (Numbers 17:10); and a pot of manna (Ex. 16:3. See Hebrews 9:4-5.)¹¹

Only the stone tablets were actually put into the ark. The rod of Aaron was "before the testimony" (Num. 17:10) and so was the pot of manna (Ex. 16:34). The ark contained only the stone tablets in Solomon's day (I Kings 8:9).

Cassuto¹² refers to the fact that ancient kings would sometimes deposit deeds (writings) of a covenant into boxes at the footstools of their idols. The Egyptian king Rameses II placed the documents pledging peace between himself and the Hittites under the feet of his god Re. Similarly the Hittite king placed the documents under the feet of his idol called Teshub. It therefore appears that God used human covenant customs to impress the Israelites with the meaning and seriousness of His covenant with Israel.

9. *What did the ark represent? What was it a type of?*

The Bible does not give a direct statement saying that the ark represented one specific thing. Nonetheless, there

¹¹According to Heb. 9:3-4, the Holy of Holies contained a golden altar (K.J.V., censer) of incense. No such article is mentioned by Moses in Exodus. A censer for incense was indeed taken into the Holy of Holies by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and this may be what Hebrews 9:3 refers to. Another view is that the passage refers simply to the altar of incense in the Holy place, but speaks of it as being associated with the Holy of Holies because it was so close to the veil and the Holy of Holies. I Kings 6:22 says that in the construction of Solomon's temple "the whole altar that belonged to the oracle (the Holy of Holies) he overlaid with gold." It does not appear from the text that Solomon's temple actually had an altar inside the oracle, and that the altar referred to was probably only the altar of incense in the House (Holy Place). All of these facts seem to support the conclusion that the altar of incense was in some ways not fully explained to us associated both with the Holy Place and to the Holy of Holies.

¹²*Op. cit.*, p. 331.

are some statements that help us to understand what it symbolized.

It appears to us that the ark was a sort of footstool of God's throne and the mercy-seat upon it was a representation of the throne itself.

Psalm 99:1: "Jehovah reigneth; . . . He sitteth (or, is enthroned) above the cherubim." Similar statements are made in Ps. 80:1; I Sam. 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; Isa. 37:16; 25:22. (The cherubim referred to are the gold angel figures on the mercy-seat, the covering of the ark. See below, section 11.)

King David said in I Chron. 28:2, "It was in my heart to build a house of rest for the *ark* of the covenant of Jehovah, and for the *footstool* of our God." The "and" of this verse could be translated "*even* for the footstool. . . ."

Psalm 132:7-8: "We will go into his tabernacle. We will worship at his FOOTSTOOL. Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting place; Thou, and the *ark* of thy strength."

These passages seem to confirm the idea that the mercy-seat with its cherubim was a symbol of God's throne, and the ark a symbol of the footstool of God's throne.

Consider the rich significance of the ark and the mercy-seat as a symbol of God's throne! The ark contained the ten commandments. This would indicate that God's throne rests upon divine LAW and truth. The ark had with it the pot of manna, symbolizing that God's throne is a place of loving-care for His people. The ark had Aaron's staff with it, symbolizing God's sovereignty in choosing who shall minister unto Him, and how men shall approach Him.

Perhaps the greatest teaching of the ark as a visual symbol was that it was covered by a seat (or throne) of mercy! "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, . . ." (Heb. 4:16)

"Mercy and truth are met together" (Psalm 85:10).
 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy

throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14). All of these things - righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, truth - are presented to us by the ARK, God's throne!!!

10. *What covered the ark?* (25:17)

A mercy-seat of pure gold covered the ark. The mercy-seat had no wood in its composition. It had the same dimensions as the top of the ark and was held in position by the crown around the top of the ark (25:12).

The mercy-seat was so significant that in I Chron. 28:11 the whole room called the Holy of Holies is called "the house of the mercy-seat." The mercy-seat was the major spot of significance in the ritual on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:2, 14-15).

The term *mercy-seat* was first used by Wm. Tyndale. It is an apt translation of the Hebrew *kapporeth*. Martin Luther rendered it Gnadenstuhl, meaning throne of mercy. *Kapporeth* has both the ideas of *covering* and of *atonement* for sins. The Latin *propitiatorium* is a good rendering, meaning "a place of propitiation."¹³

The Greek rendering of *kapporeth* is *hilasterion*, meaning a place to please (or propitiate) and be reconciled to God, a *propitiatory*. The Greek word *hilasterion* is found in Romans 3:25 referring to Christ ("whom God set forth as a *propitiation*") and in Heb. 9:5 to refer to the mercy-seat itself. A related word, *hilasmos*, is used in I John 2:2 and 4:10 to refer to Christ as our propitiation. These usages of words show that Christ has for us the same functions as the mercy-seat had for Israel. Christ is our mercy-seat!

The word *kapporeth* (mercy-seat) is not used in the O.T. with the limited meaning of lid or cover, as over a box. It is derived from the verb *kaphar* (found 113 times in the O.T.), which by far most frequently (70 times) means "to make atonement." (In some places it simply means

¹³Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

“to cover.”)

What is it that is *covered* by the functions of the mercy-seat? Your *souls* are covered (Ex. 30:16). *You* are covered (Lev. 23:28). Your sin is covered (Ex. 32:30; Compare Ps. 32:1). Thus the atonement provided by the mercy-seat was a very comprehensive covering. (Atonement is a manufactured word in English, from *at-one-ment*, suggesting harmony.)

Consider the importance of the mercy-seat! When the Israelites in the days of the judges looked into the ark of the covenant (I Samuel 6:19), thousands of them died. They dared to look upon the tablets of ten commandments, God’s law which they had broken.

It seems that men cannot confront God’s law that they have broken and not perish, unless there is a mercy-seat sprinkled with blood between them and God’s law.

On the day of judgment, when the books are opened (Rev. 20:12), and we all stand face to face with God, confronting His law, which we have broken, we shall yet be safe, IF we have accepted Christ as our savior. He is our mercy-seat, our propitiation!

But if we have not received Christ as our propitiation (mercy-seat), we shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15).

11. *What was made to project from the ends of the mercy-seat? (25:18-20)*

Two cherubim, made of gold, all of one piece with the mercy-seat, and made of beaten (hammered-out) work, projected upwards from the mercy-seat. (The word *cherubim* is the Hebrew plural form of cherub.) The cherubim were not added upon the mercy-seat, but rose from its top at the ends.

Cherubim are one type of angelic creature. They are frequently mentioned in connection with God’s throne. See Ezekiel 1:22, 26, 28; 10:20-21. We are reasonably certain that the “living creatures” (or “beasts”) of Rev. 4:6ff are cherubim. The golden cherubim of the mercy-seat

were earthly representatives of the real heavenly beings. They seem to be outstanding for their rapid activity and their reverent worship.

Ezekiel describes the cherubim that he saw as creatures with bodies like men (1:6), but having four faces (of an ox, man, lion, and eagle) and four wings (Ezek. 1:5-11). Because their faces looked toward one another and also downward toward the mercy-seat, we assume that the cherubim on the mercy-seat had only one face each.

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the cherubim were of ONE piece with the mercy-seat, literally "out of the mercy-seat." Perhaps this is to emphasize that adoring angels are always present at God's throne. Compare Rev. 4:6-8; 5:11; Isaiah 6:1-2.

The wings of the cherubim spread out upwards above the mercy-seat so as to cover it. But certainly their wings did not cover it so completely that it became impossible for the priest to sprinkle blood upon it (Lev. 16:14).

The faces of the cherubim were directed (1) towards (facing) one another. and (2) towards the mercy-seat. In other words, they were bowing. The downward look of the cherubim suggests the reverence due to God, who promised to commune (or speak) with Moses from a position above the mercy-seat (Ex. 25:22). The cherubim did not gaze upon God's presence above their wings. Compare Isaiah 6:2.

Some Bible references picture God as "riding" upon the cherubim. II Sam. 22:11: "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; Yea, he was seen upon the wings of the wind." (Compare Ps. 18:10. It surely seems reasonable to us that this is merely a figurative description of the rapidity of God's actions. Nonetheless, the expression is Biblical, and we certainly approve of it! I Chronicles 28:18 actually refers to the mercy-seat as "the chariot." This brings back to our minds the fact that our God is a God of life and activity, unlike the dead idols that must be moved about by men.

Ancient peoples, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, and

Phoenicians drew and sculptured composite creatures that many people associate with the Biblical cherubim.¹⁴ These had bodies of lions or oxen, and head of humans or birds. The Egyptian sphinx is such a figure. They were usually winged. The Assyrians even called their winged, human-headed bull statues *karibu*, a word related to the Hebrew *cherubim*.¹⁵

We surely think that these pagan cherubim(?) were nothing more than feeble, distorted attempts to reproduce the appearance of real cherubim. People had known of cherubim ever since man was expelled from Eden (Gen. 3:24). Their superhuman speed and power probably stimulated attempts to make idolatrous representations of them. Certainly Israel did not need to borrow the idea and designs of cherubim from pagans to form their concept of cherubim as given in the scriptures.

We suppose that the cherubs of the mercy-seat had the basic body forms of men, rather than of oxen or lions. Such four-legged forms would have required too much space on the mercy-seat. This view is strengthened by the fact that cherubim with human forms were placed in Solomon's temple (I Kings 6:23-28). The Jewish Talmud says that the tabernacle cherubim resembled youths.¹⁶ We have mentally pictured the cherubim on the mercy-seat as kneeling, although the cherubim in Solomon's temple were standing upon their feet. (II Chron. 3:13)

Cherubim were embroidered upon the veil in the tabernacle (Ex. 26:31) and upon its inner linen curtains (26:1). They were not regarded as "graven images," probably because no worship was directed toward them. See Ex. 20:1.

12. *Where would God commune with Israel?* (25:22)

God promised to meet Moses (and Moses alone is referred to) and to speak (or commune) with him from the area

¹⁴M. F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), pp. 39, 42.

¹⁵Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

¹⁶B. Hagiga, 13b. Referred to in Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

above the mercy-seat, between the two cherubim. God would speak to Moses all the words which he wished to command unto the children of Israel.

Ex. 25:22 points out vividly the position of Moses as a mediator between God and Israel.

Observe that God was not in the box, the ark! The presence of God was indicated by the glory-cloud (Shekinah) above the mercy-seat. See Lev. 16:2.

13. *What was the second article of furniture to be described? (25:23)*

The table of showbread (presence-bread). We find it surprising to us that the table should be given this priority in listing. But our surprise probably only shows our lack of ability to see things from God's point of view.

14. *Describe the table of showbread. (25:23-25; 37:10-16)*

It was one cubit (18 in.) broad, one and a half cubits high, and two cubits (three feet) long. It was really a very small table. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Like the ark and the altar of incense it had a crown (rim) of gold around its top edge. This prevented items on the table from falling off.

The table had a "border" round about it, and the border was a handbreadth (about three inches) wide. The term translated "border" is also rendered as margin, moulding, ledge. The text does not clearly state where the border was placed. Some feel that the border was on the flat table top, so that the table had both an outer and inner crown on its top, causing the top to have a picture-frame appearance. This arrangement would have severely decreased the already limited space available on top of the table for the bread and the vessels. Also, the carved representation of the temple table shown on the Arch of Titus in Rome seems to show a "border" placed around the legs of the table, about halfway down the legs. The Arch of Titus relief shows two segments of such a frame around the legs of the table near the middle of the legs. Such a "border" attached to the legs would strengthen the table, like rungs on a chair.

15. *How was the table carried about?* (25:26-28)

It was carried by gold-plated wood staves thrust into rings of gold, which were placed in the four corners of the table that were on the four "feet" (or legs) of the table. The rings were placed "close by" the border. ("Close by" here means "against" or joined to it.) Therefore, if the border were on the table top, the rings must have been located near the upper ends of the legs. If the border were positioned about halfway down the legs, the rings would have been there. We favor this view. It would have been much easier to cover and carry the table with the rings down lower on the legs than with the rings and staves near the top of the table. See Num. 4:7-8. The staves in the table were removed except when the table was being carried about.

16. *What vessels were used with the table?* (25:29)

The text mentions (1) dishes, (2) spoons, (3) flagons, and (4) bowls. The "dishes" (R.S.V. "plates") may have been flat receptacles to carry the bread on, or upon which were stacked the loaves on the table. The "spoons" were probably small cups or dishes used for holding and pouring incense. The same word is used in Numbers 7:14, 20 to refer to small containers for incense. The "flagons" (K.J.V., "covers") seem to have been small beakers (drinking cups) used for pouring out drink-offerings (Num. 28:7-8). The "bowls," like the flagons, were vessels for pouring out. See Ex. 37:16, where the bowls and flagons are mentioned again, but in reverse order from that in 25:29. Ex. 37:16 says that these vessels were made to pour from. Possibly the bowls were goblets or chalices, having cup-like tops with slim stems beneath for convenience of handling. Such vessels are known to have been used in Moses' time.¹⁷

17. *What was the weekly ritual involving the showbread?* (25:30; Lev. 24:5-9)

¹⁷Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 129-131. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

Twelve loaves were made of fine flour, each having "two tenth parts" of flour in it. If the "tenth parts" were tenths of an ephah (about three-fifths of a bushel), then each loaf would have had about a gallon of flour in it! The loaves would have been of enormous size. Lev. 24:7 says the loaves were placed on the table in two rows (or piles). The Hebrew word simply means "arrangement" and could refer to either loaves or piles. We do not think there was room enough on the table for two rows of such loaves, with six loaves in each row. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 6) says that the twelve loaves were placed six upon each heap, one above another.

Lev. 24:5-6 speaks as if ONE man (the high priest presumably) set up the table each weekly Sabbath day. Then all the priests ("Aaron and his sons") ate the old bread in a holy place. The new loaves were set in place and pure frankincense placed on each row.

18. *What was the significance of the showbread?*

The exact theological significance of the bread is not systematically set forth in the scripture. The more we study about the showbread, the more we realize it was a symbol with many facets of meaning, and cannot be fully comprehended under one brief tidy heading.

Firstly, it seems to have been a symbol of *God's people in God's presence*. The very name *showbread* literally means "bread of the face(s)," or *presence-bread*. Ex. 25:30 says rather literally, "Thou (singular) shalt set (or give) upon the table bread of (the) *presence* before my *presence* continually." The showbread therefore did not symbolize God's presence, but the presence of someone (or something) else in God's presence.

The fact that there were TWELVE loaves set out seems to suggest that the bread symbolized the twelve tribes, the people. The showbread surely reminded the Israelites that they were always in God's presence. Note that the bread is called the "continual bread" in Numbers 4:7, and "holy bread" in I Sam. 21:4. What a marvelous symbol

the bread was, representing as it did a holy people continually in God's presence!

Secondly, the showbread was an "offering made by FIRE unto Jehovah" (Lev. 24:7). As such it was a type of Christ Jesus, who is man's ONLY effective offering unto God (Eph. 5:2). The term "fire-offering" in Lev. 24:7 is applied to several types of offerings - the burnt-offering in Ex. 29:18, 41-42, and Lev. 1:9; the meal-offering in Lev. 2:3; to the peace-offering in Lev. 3:11; to the sin-offering in Lev. 5:12. From this fact we may be reminded that in Christ's ONE offering are summed up all the numerous types of offerings prescribed in the O.T. law. It would appear that the showbread was basically one form of the meal-offering (Lev. 2:1-16).

The idea that in the very sanctuary of God there is constantly displayed before God's presence an "offering made by fire" is very comforting to those who know the horrible realities about sin!

Thirdly, the showbread was to be a "memorial" (Lev. 24:7). The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the worshipper into favorable remembrance before God. See its use in Acts 10:4; Lev. 2:2; 5:12; 6:15. The showbread is said to have become a "memorial" when the frankincense was applied to it (Lev. 24:7). Frankincense appears to be a symbol of prayer. See Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8. All of these facts cause us to understand that when we pray, trusting in the Lord Jesus, who is always in God's presence as was the showbread, we are brought into good remembrance before God.

Fourthly, setting forth the showbread was a *covenant requirement* for the children of Israel (Lev. 24:8). Such acts of obedience are frequently required by God as conditions of continued covenant relationship with Him.

In pagan religions food was sometimes placed on a sacred table as food for the god. For an example see the apocryphal book *Bel and the Dragon*, vs. 13. The showbread presented a different picture of God - of a God who did

not eat men's food; of a God who wanted his people to be in his presence more than he wanted gifts from them; of a God who ministered unto His people, rather than the people ministering unto Him.

The showbread has been regarded by some as a type or symbol of the Lord's supper. There are a few resemblances, such as the *weekly* eating of bread by the priests, the offering of frankincense (symbolic of prayers) on the bread, and the fact that both are expressions of a *covenant* (Lev. 24:8; Luke 22:20). On the other hand, the fact that the twelve loaves were a symbol of the PEOPLE before God is quite different from the symbolism of the Lord's supper, in which the bread is the LORD'S body. Also the fact that the showbread was a sacrificial offering made by fire is quite in contrast to the Lord's supper, which is certainly not a repeated sacrifice of Christ. (Roman Catholic theology does view the communion [mass] as a sacrifice.) We doubt that the showbread was a specific type of the Lord's supper.

19. *What was made to give light in the holy place?* (25:31-35. Compare 37:17-24; 27:20-21; 30:7-8; Lev. 24:2-4; Numbers 8:1-4.)

A *lampstand* (K.J.V., candlestick) of pure gold was made, and oil-burning lamps were placed on the branches of the lampstand. The Hebrew word for lampstand is MENORAH (a beautiful word, derived from the verb *nor* ["to shine"] and the noun *or*, meaning "light"). The seven-branched lampstand has become the great symbol of the Jewish religion. A relief carving on the Arch of Titus in Rome shows the menorah taken from Herod's temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The lampstand in that carving is not the same one that was in the tabernacle, but it probably resembled it in many ways. It must have been very heavy, judging by the number of men pictured as carrying it. The lampstand in Herod's temple is described in Josephus, *Ant.* III, vi, 7.

The lampstand was made of "beaten" (or hammered)

work, like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. It had a base, the form of which is not described, but the base was almost certainly NOT like the decorated two-stage pedestal shown in the arch of Titus. The Hebrew word translated "base" means literally "hip" or "thigh," but this does not reveal much about its form. Cassuto¹⁸ suggests that the base resembled those on lampstands found at Megiddo and Bethshan, which had three feet projecting from the central shaft. A rough sketch of a menorah with a three-legged base is shown in Beno Rothenberg's *God's Wilderness*.¹⁹ This was scratched onto a rock in the Sinai desert.

The lampstand had a central shaft projecting upwards from the base. We do not know its height. We suppose it was about the same height as the table (1½ cubits, or 27 inches) or the altar of incense (2 cubits, or 36 inches). The word translated "shaft" is *kaneh*, meaning reed, stem, or cane.

Three branches went out of the central shaft on one side and three went from the opposite side, making seven supports for lamps. Because of the use of the number seven to indicate the *complete* number of seals, trumpets, etc. in Revelation, *seven* is usually thought to indicate *completeness*. The lampstand with its lamps was perfectly adequate, and it furnished all the light that was provided. (25:32)

Decorations on the central shaft and branches consisted of (1) cups (K.J.V., bowls), (2) knops (R.S.V., capitals), and (3) flowers. The "cups" probably were like the cup (or calyx) of a flower, consisting of the green false petals directly under the true flower. The "knops" (Heb., *caphtor*) were probably spherical (or egg-shaped) designs, perhaps resembling the ovaries (seed-chambers) of flowers. The "flowers" were like the blossoms of flowers, perhaps like almond-tree blossoms. (25:33)

¹⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 341.

¹⁹Published in London by Thames and Hudson, 1969, p. 179.

The whole menorah had the general shape of a natural plant, with a stalk (or stem) and paired branches, turned upwards. The ornamentation was also of floral design.²⁰

Three cups were in each branch, each almond-shaped (that is, the cups were like the calyxes of almond blossoms). Also on each branch was a knop and a flower blossom design. It appears that the top cup (calyx) was the support for the lamp on each branch. In the center shaft (which is by itself called the "lampstand" in 25:33b, 34) were four cups (calyxes) shaped like almonds (or almond-flowers), and a knop and a flower with each. (25:34)

In the central shaft just below the levels where the pairs of branches issued forth from both sides were knops. The text says that the knops were both *under* each pair of two branches and also "out of the same." We understand this to say that the knops actually touched each pair of branches, but were actually just below them.

20. *How was the entire lampstand made of one piece? (25:36)*

All of the connecting points where the branches came forth from the central shaft were to be constructed of one piece with the rest. The branches were not to be made separately and then attached by couplings to the central shaft.

Admittedly Ex. 25:36 is a difficult verse. Noth (*Op. cit.*, p. 208) says it is "not fully comprehensible." (Such an attitude is typical for Noth.) The plural possessive endings in "*their* knops and *their* branches" appear to refer to the six branches mentioned in vs. 35. But we cannot imagine that the six branches themselves had branches.

Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 343) feels that the "branches" of 25:36 (Hebrew, *qenoth*, having a feminine ending) and the "branches" of 25:35 (Hebrew *qanim*, having a masculine ending) refer to different things. The feminine word is used in Job 31:22, where it refers to the joint, or socket

²⁰Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.

("Let my arm be broken from the joint"). If "joint" be the meaning in 25:36, then the verse would mean "The knobs of the six branches and their connecting points (joints) out of the central shaft shall all be of one piece of hammered work of pure (unalloyed) gold."

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the lampstand was all made of ONE piece of gold (25:31, 35, 36). Whatever the lamp symbolized should therefore be regarded as a unity, even if it has several parts.

21. *What was to be placed on top of the lampstand? (25:37)*

Seven lamps, one on each branch. These were made separately from the lampstand. The material used in making the lamps is not stated. It may have been gold, as in Solomon's temple (I Kings 7:49). We definitely prefer this view. Or they may have been made of ordinary clay (terracotta), as were most of the lamps of those times. The clay lamps of the period were like saucers having one place on the rim pinched into a spout or hole for holding the wick up out of the olive oil in the lamp.

The lamps were to be so positioned that they would give light "over against it," that is, in front of it, toward the area across the room from the lamp. The spouts of the lamps were pointed toward the north, the opposite side of the room, so that no lamp shadows would block the light. The lampstand itself stood on the south side of the room. See Ex. 36:35.

22. *What implements were prepared for use with the lampstand? (25:38)*

(1) *Snuffers*. These were a type of tweezers to remove old wicks and install new ones. (2) *Snuffdishes*. These were trays or bowls to hold charred remains of old wicks and soot, which would then be thrown out.

23. *How much gold was used in the lampstand? (25:39)*

A talent, about seventy-five pounds. At a price of \$150 an ounce, the lampstand would be worth about \$180,000. The vessels and implements with the lampstand were included in this total weight of gold.

24. *What final direction was given about the making of the lampstand and its implements? (25:39)*

Make all of them according to their pattern which you were shown on the mount! Compare Ex. 25:9. The verb "was shown" does not imply that Moses had already left the mount and had returned to camp. Rather it indicates that God had already shown Moses the vision of the pattern (or model) of the tabernacle, and then gave the description required to construct it.

25. *What was the ritual connected with the lampstand? (Lev. 24:2-4; Ex. 27:20, 21)*

Pure (or clear) olive oil was obtained by beating olives to extract their oil. (These the Israelites must have obtained from nomadic caravans.) In the mornings the high priest came in to the holy place to light the lamp (literally "to cause it to go up"). He was to keep (or arrange) it "from evening to morning" before the face of the LORD continually.

26. *What was the significance of the menorah? Of what was it a type?*

As with the table of showbread, the scripture does not give a systematic exposition of the significance of the lampstand. Nevertheless, certain conclusions seem rather evident.

(1) The lampstand signified that the covenant of the Lord was essentially a covenant of LIGHT. There were no dark spooky chambers where priests might carry on secret esoteric rites. See Isa. 60:1-3.

In the same way the gospel of Christ is a religion of light. (a) God is light (I John 1:5). (b) Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). (c) Christians are children of light (Eph. 5:8). They are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) and "lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). (d) The Bible is a light (II Pet. 1:19; Psalm 119:105). (e) The gospel (good news) of Christ Jesus is a light (II Cor. 4:4). Christians are to cast off the works of darkness (Romans 13:12).

(2) God's light is complete and perfect. This is indicated by the seven-fold nature of the lampstand. See notes on

section No. 19 above. Similarly in the gospel of Christ we have been granted all things that pertain unto life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

(3) The lamp was fueled by olive oil, which is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; Lev. 8:12; Zech. 4:2-6. Thus the light was the light of the Spirit. Compare Rev. 4:5 (which tells of a vision of God's throne): "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God."

The fact that the scriptures were written by men moved by the SPIRIT (II Pet. 1:21) confirms a correspondence between the tabernacle lampstand and the scriptures. The lampstand was fueled by oil; the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, which the oil symbolized.

To say that the lampstand was a type of just one thing (as, for example, the Bible alone) is to give an incomplete interpretation of it. Perhaps we could sum it up in a broad way by saying that it symbolized the light of the gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:4).

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

26 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cher-u-bim the work of the skilful workman shalt thou make them. (2) The length of each curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure. (3) Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and *the other* five curtains shall be coupled one to another. (4) And thou shalt make loops