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# Bridges for Peace

## Israel

## Teaching Letter

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### A LIVING SANCTUARY

The Scriptures about the tabernacle and feasts of the Lord given to Israel are often considered tedious to read. Christians wrongly believe that these are things of the past and have little to do with Christianity. Of course, these passages reflect much about the nature and character of our eternal God, who is *“the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* All Scripture tells us something about God that, once learned, will help us to become better disciples of our Lord.

Paul says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (II Timothy 3:16). He is not talking about the New Testament only but, more accurately, the Hebrew Scriptures. You see, the New Testament as we have it today was not codified until about A.D. 350, meaning that it was the Hebrew Scriptures that were the Scriptures of the New Testament Church of the Book of Acts and for several hundred years thereafter. The Epistles, or letters to various churches explaining how to fulfill the Word of God and often answering specific questions sent to Paul, were not necessarily circulated until much later. What this means is that there is much more value in the instructions, precepts, and history of the Hebrew Scriptures to the Church than most Christians realize.

Often, I invite guest authors to contribute to my *Israel Teaching Letter* series. This month, I am excited to introduce Keren Hannah Pryor who, with her husband, Dwight Pryor, direct the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies.

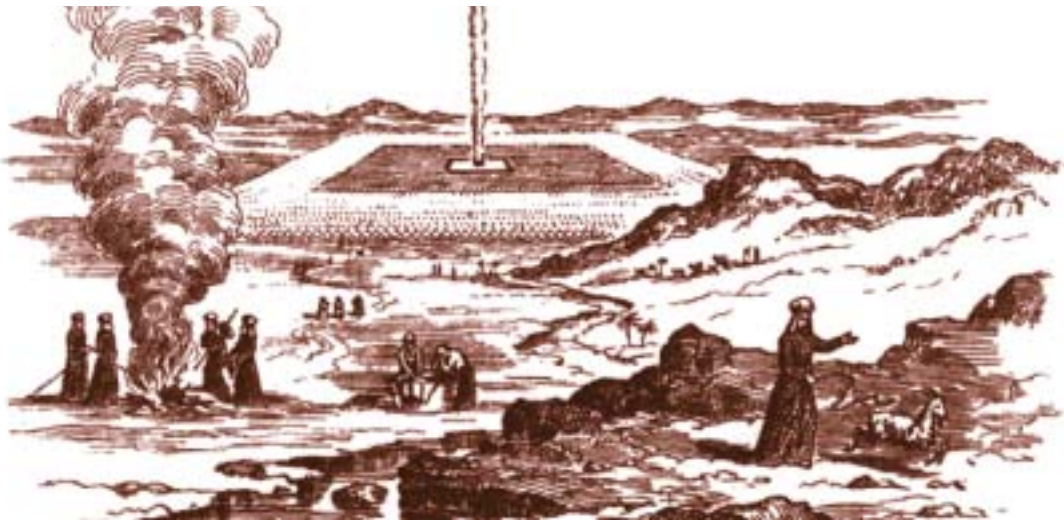
Let's see what Keren Pryor has to teach about the Tabernacle:



*“Heaven must receive Him until the time for the complete restoration of all that God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets . . . from ancient times” (Acts 3:21, Amplified).*

One of God’s highest purposes in the earth is the restoration and establishment of His house, the dwelling place of the Lord, in order that He might come to that house and fill it with His glory. His first earthly dwelling was the moveable Tabernacle, the Mishkan, in the wilderness. In Jerusalem, King David erected a lowly tent to house the Ark of the Covenant. Then, King Solomon built the first Temple according to a design and plans given to him by his father David, and it stood in majestic splendor on Har Ha-Bayit, literally “Mount of the House.” At its dedication, a cloud suddenly filled the Temple and *“the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God”* (2 Chronicles 5:14). The magnificent Second Temple was ultimately completed by King Herod and was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Yeshua (Jesus), however, foresaw its destruction and proclaimed: *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2:19).

In Yeshua our Messiah, the “chief cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22) from which the whole building is fit together, we now are the moveable temple—the dwelling place of God’s Spirit in the earth. Therefore, all we can learn from the previous places of His earthly dwelling informs us as to our identity as new creations in Him and clarifies our purposes as “living stones” in the “Temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16b).



*The tabernacle in the wilderness was surrounded by the tents of Jacob. Here, the fire outside the camp and the release of the scapegoat into the wilderness denote the holiness of the Day of Atonement, known to Jews as Yom Kippur.*

## GOD SPEAKS IN THE DETAILS

Between *Pesach* (Passover), the season of our Redemption, and *Shavuot* (Pentecost) we count the *Omer*—the fifty days between the two festivals. It is a time of preparation, of anticipation for that special time of meeting with the Lord at the mountain—the place of revelation and empowerment by His Spirit. As we walk with Him through the Torah cycle each year [the Jewish system of reading through the first five books of the Bible], and meet with Him at the *Mo’adim*, or His appointed times, there are special lessons to be learned at each festival and a corresponding work of sanctification to be done in our hearts by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, Holy Spirit. This year, I was challenged especially as to what the Lord requires of us when He exhorts us to “be holy” as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2). “*K’dushim tih’yu, ki kadosh ani.*”

When reliving the Exodus from Egypt at *Pesach*, my attention was drawn to the Mishkan [the tabernacle] in the wilderness, which God instructed in fine detail to be built as His dwelling place among His people. What particularly caught my eye were the white linen curtains that separated the Mishkan from the surrounding camp and the *chol* (sand) of the desert. The Holy Place of God’s dwelling was not to be camouflaged, to blend in with the surroundings! God meant for it to be a shining beacon in the wasteland. A white fence clearly demarcated the area set apart as the holy dwelling place of God. It separated the sacred from the secular, the profound from the profane—the *kodesh* (holy) from the *chol* (unholy)!

*“You are to be holy [kadosh] to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own”* (Leviticus 20:26). As His redeemed, we are “set apart” in order that we can abide and grow in holy covenant relationship with Him. Fine, bright linen garments are prepared for the adorn-

ing of the Bride of the Lamb. And what are these white, radiant garments that set her apart? They are the “righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8). The Psalmist asks in 15:1, “Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?” He answers in verse 2 and following: “He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous.” In other words, He who is holy, as Adonai [the Lord] is holy.

The linen fence of the Tabernacle sanctuary resembles an unfurled Torah scroll. It is God’s Word that surrounds and protects His dwelling place! Through His Word, He makes Himself known, His righteousness is revealed, His promises are given, and His covenants established. The pure, clear light of His instruction and guidance is given to His redeemed people as to how to walk blamelessly and to do what is righteous—to the end that we can draw closer to Him in love, and also to one another.

Human striving alone cannot achieve holiness. As new creations in Messiah, we are reconciled to God our Father so that in Him, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, *chol* (the secular, profane) is transformed into *kodesh* (the holy, profound). Our every endeavor is ennobled for the sake of His Name. Abundant life in Yeshua begins in our everyday world when we walk in the light of His Word. Holiness comes through aspiring to live every moment of life according to His will, outlined for us in the instruction of His holy Scriptures. As we do so, we shine with His righteousness, and like the shining linen curtains of the Mishkan, we indicate the Presence of God to the glory of His Holy Name.

Verses 3 and 8 of the first chapter of the book of Hebrews proclaim: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word . . . and righteousness is the scepter of His Kingdom.” How blessed we are as the redeemed of the Lord, that in Yeshua, the Living Word, the incarnate Torah, we are enfolded and sustained by the power of His Spirit. As He fills our hearts and renews our minds with His Word, and clothes us with the priestly garments of His righteousness, we are indeed set apart as the Living Temple—a sacred sanctuary for His holy Presence.

## THE THREAD THAT JOINS

At Shavuot (Pentecost), I waited expectantly to see if the Lord would have further revelation to impart regarding His Body, the living sanctuary being built and fitted together by the power of His Holy Spirit. My attention was drawn to another set of curtains! This time it was the ten thickly woven curtains that form the actual tent of the Mishkan, and particularly to the *t’cheilet* (blue) loops that joined the two sets of five curtains.

*T’cheilet* is the distinctive biblical blue color found in the *tzitzit* (fringes) of the *tallit* (prayer shawl) as well as on the garments of the priests who served in the Mishkan and, later, the Temples. Also, when-



*Artist’s cut-away view of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The thickly woven curtains (seen at far end) covered the framework and joined at the juncture between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.*

ever the Israelites needed to pack up and move camp during their sojourn in the wilderness, every item of the furniture in the Mishkan was covered with a cloth of *t’cheilet*. Along with the scarlet thread, representing the life that is in the blood, this radiantly blue thread of *t’cheilet* is woven throughout biblical his-



tory. *T'cheilet* represents the gracious righteousness of God. Just as the clear blue of the sky overarches all His creation and is reflected in clear water on the earth, so His righteousness is over all and is reflected to us in the pure water of His Word, flowing as a river of life from the Garden of Eden throughout history. It was opened to us as a fountain in His Son, Jesus our Messiah—Yeshua, *Adonai Tzidkeinu*, the Lord our Righteousness. It is the gentle “*dew of Mount Hermon falling on Mount Zion.*” It is the “*river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city*”—the New Jerusalem! On its banks stands the “*tree of life . . . and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations*” (Revelation 22:1,2).

Just as the two sets of curtains could only be joined by their loops of *t'cheilet*, so too are we truly joined in the unity for which Yeshua prayed (John 17:11, 21) only at the place of His righteousness in us. True unity—the *echad* (oneness) we seek between Jew and Gentile, husband and wife, man and neighbor can only be achieved at the place where the Spirit of holiness renews our minds and transforms our lives into the people our Father created us to be. That is the place where we reflect His image and from which life-giving water flows. That is the peaceful place of the “still waters,” where healing and true *shalom* or wholeness are to be found.

One Saturday evening at a Church of Messiah service, my husband Dwight and I shared a message on “One New Man,” during which I presented these thoughts on *t'cheilet*. A dear brother and elder of the congregation, Rob Wilson, who is an engineer, presented me with a model he had sketched of the curtains while I was talking. He wanted to see how it worked—how they were folded and hung in order to form the tent of the Tabernacle. His face shone with excitement as he showed me how. When he had done this, the row of blue loops that enabled the two sets of curtains to be joined fell exactly at the place where the veil was hung that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies—the very place where the High Priest could enter into the glorious Presence of the holy God. Yes! It is only in union with Yeshua, our great High Priest, and as we are covered by the robe of His righteousness, that we are able to enter the Presence of God unafraid and, by His Spirit, call Him “Abba, Father”!

## THE CHALLENGE

It is a challenge to us, as children of the most high God, the Beginning and the End, to “drink from the spring of the water of life,” to have hearts filled with His Word and lives filled and empowered by His Spirit. Then, in the resulting place of His righteousness in us, the center of our true “new creation” selves, we can reach out to one another and be joined in love and authentic unity. There, as the living sanctuary of His Body is built together, “*Adonai will command His blessing, even life forevermore*” (Psalm 133:3). As we walk in His “paths of righteousness”—the annual cycle of His appointed times—and build with Him, in our own lives, in our relationships, and in our congregations and communities, we participate in the restoration and establishing of His living sanctuary. We can thus look forward with increasing hope and joyful anticipation to the glorious day when all can cry out with one united voice, “Blessed is the One who comes in the Name of Adonai!” Amen.

I hope you were blessed by this article. Dwight and Keren Pryor have many teachings available in cassette and booklet format. To order a catalogue of other materials and/or the tape, “One New Man” (Item H0000) by Keren and Dwight, call The Center for Judaic-Christian Studies at 1-800-308-6506, or write to: P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429.