

Beauties of the Truth

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless riches of Gods Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 S.W. 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial Board: Bros. Jerry Leslie (Editor-in-Chief), Carl Hagensick , Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Stephen Suraci.

The Memorial Supper – When is it Properly Observed?

Among Bible Student groups, there is general agreement that the celebration of the Lord's Supper should be carried out on an annual basis, as a remembrance of the fulfillment of the Paschal sacrifice. The term "Memorial" Supper has been adopted as a reminder that the primary emphasis of the occasion is to commemorate the death of Christ as the atoning sacrifice on behalf of all mankind. There is also general agreement that the proper date for holding this very special ceremony is on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which occurs in the spring time. It was on this date that the Passover lambs were slain in the type and it was on this day, according to John's Gospel, that our Lord Jesus died as the antitypical "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

BASIS OF DATE DETERMINATION

But a problem that arises in this connection is the correct determination of the date on which Nisan 14 falls in our own era. Differing methods of calculation yield dates which can vary by as much as a month from each other, resulting in Memorial celebrations that are held at different times by various groups of the brethren, instead of upon one uniformly established date. It is to address this perplexing question that this aspect of the study is now directed.

There are three approaches that commend themselves in considering how to properly ascertain the dates for Nisan 14. The first is to determine if the Bible itself spells out such a procedure. The second, to discover if there are reliable, non-biblical sources that indicate how the date was established in ancient times. And the third, to determine whether the authority for setting such dates should be considered to rest in Jewish hands, whereby the standard Jewish calendar settings could simply be accepted as being conclusive.

Pursuing these approaches, we find first that the Bible itself is silent as to the exact procedure used in ancient times to establish the date of Nisan 14. The Bible, of course, highlights the special significance that was attached to the month of Nisan: it was the first month of the religious year and it marked the occurrence of the Passover celebration, the most important of all the annual feasts of the Israelites. Nevertheless, since the Scriptures do not detail how the beginning of the Hebrew year was reckoned, it is necessary to consult other historical sources for this information. Subsequently we shall see how the Bible provides related insights that can be correlated with these sources to give an overall perspective of this subject.

THE ANCIENT CUSTOM

Going on to non-biblical sources, we find the Hebrew Mishna much concerned with matters of the calendar and its reckoning. It specifies that the earliest custom was to begin the month Nisan with the first appearance of the new moon nearest the spring equinox. This was determined by visual sighting or, in the event of a cloud cover, by calculation. The responsibility for announcing the beginning of Nisan eventually fell upon three members of the Sanhedrin, the seventy-man ruling council of the Jews, in Jerusalem. These three members were the president of the council (who was the high priest) and two others to assist him. Sometimes witnesses were used to confirm the exact time of the sightings. For most years in the calendar cycle, this method sufficed and would have been simple enough, were it not for one major complication.

Starting with the first harvest in the land of Canaan, God instructed the Israelites to offer the firstfruits of the grain in a special wave offering before the Lord. This was to be carried out, according to Leviticus 23:9-11, on the "morrow after the sabbath. This sabbath day was interpreted by the Pharisees and orthodox Jews to be the one occasioned by the 15th day of Nisan, the feast day of the Passover, rather than the regular weekly sabbath. The "morrow after the sabbath" therefore would become the 16th day of Nisan. Thus the Passover festival became inseparably linked together with the wave offering of the firstfruits - a seasonal agricultural ceremony. (just in passing, it may be mentioned here that Bible students recognize in this ceremony a very exacting type of the

resurrection of our Lord, which also took place on the 16th day of Nisan many years later in 33 AD. See R5191.)

The grain used for this ceremony was the barley crop, since it was the first to appear and began to ripen toward the end of March and the early part of April. This was the normal harvesting schedule, which fit in nicely with the requirement that the firstfruits of the crop be waved before the Lord on the 16th day of Nisan. But occasionally there was a problem if the warm weather of spring was delayed and the Passover season fell before the barley crops were ripe. In such years, unless an adjustment could be made to delay the Passover, there would not be any ripe grain with which to offer the firstfruits.

To eliminate such a possibility, the Jewish authorities rendered a preliminary judgment regarding the state of the spring season. If necessary, a 13th month called V-Adar would be interposed immediately before Nisan, which had the effect of postponing the Passover for a month, and ensuring that the crops would be ripe. Obviously, without such a ruling body to render this judgment, the smooth functioning of the Passover and related wave offering ceremony could not have been carried out successfully.

In contrast to this, a practice in current use by some of the brethren is the attempt to establish the Nisan 14 date by a straight astronomical calculation, based solely on the new moon nearest the spring equinox. This is featured as the “true biblical” method, as opposed to the “Jewish” method just enumerated. Since there is no provision for adjusting the date if it falls early in the season, such a practice obviously does not coincide with the ancient custom. Further, it can hardly be considered as the true biblical method, since the appearance of the new moon in relation to the spring equinox is nowhere mentioned in the sacred records, as already shown.

On the other hand, the Scriptures do specifically mention the waving of the firstfruits of the crops in connection with the Passover ceremony. This tie-in is actually the only direct scriptural basis for confirming the season of the year, since the spring equinox is not referenced. To ignore the tie-in with the first grain harvest would seem to do violence with the original requirement, which, as previously stated, becomes significant as a type of Christ's resurrection. Its omission would seem to seriously undermine the scriptural support for the timing of the Passover celebration.

VALUE OF JEWISH CALENDAR

Here is where the Jewish calendar makes a notable contribution. It is so constructed that on those years when the Passover would have fallen sufficiently early in the season to necessitate rendering a judgment as to the state of the crops, the festival is automatically delayed by the intercalation of the month of V-Adar. Thus, the calendar does away with the need for human judgment on the lateness of the season, and standardizes all the dates according to fixed rules.

The Jewish calendar in use today is termed “modern” to distinguish it from the “ancient” calendar which goes back to early Old Testament times. But the “modern” Jewish calendar was already in use in early centuries of the Christian era. Originally the rules governing its calculation were kept secret to maintain the dependency of scattered tribes upon the ruling hierarchy. But in 359 AD the rules were finally published by Rabbi Hillel II and made available to all Jews in the dispersion.

This made it possible for the calendar to be calculated centuries in advance and eliminated all confusion regarding occurrences of the holy days.

This is precisely why we believe it is still useful for Bible students today to base the calculation of the Memorial date upon the Jewish calendar. It comes closest to approximating the ancient Jewish custom. Its use is certainly advantageous in arriving at a uniform date and eliminates the need for independent calculations. And it is universally available. But all this leads to one final question, which is really the focal point of the present discussion: Would it be proper for us as Christians to accept the Jewish calendar in fixing our Memorial dates?

In seeking guidance in any matter, it is always well to look to the example and teaching of our Lord. In this instance, we believe his words and actions provide a direct answer to our inquiry. Jesus made it quite clear that he was willing to accept the interpretations of those who sat in Moses' seat when such did not conflict with truth or principle. Of the Scribes and Pharisees he specifically said, "Whatsoever therefore they bid you observe, that observe and do."¹ (Matt. 23:2,3)

The arrangements and adjustments of the Jewish calendar, particularly as they governed the religious festivities of the people, properly fell under the jurisdiction of these leaders. Jesus was quite content to accept their rulings on such matters. Hence it would seem reasonable that an acceptance of the dates produced by the Jewish calendar for the Passover-Memorial service in our day would be expressing an attitude similar to that of our Lord: not one of subservience, but of recognition of the convenience and utility of the arrangement, all under the providences of our God.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It seems fitting here to be reminded of the scriptural admonition, "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." How desirable and advantageous it would be if all who appreciate the Memorial could agree on a single date for its proper observance. Nevertheless, in those years when it is difficult for the brethren to do so, we believe that the heart attitude for those partaking of the emblems is by far the most important consideration. The oneness of spirit of all the members of the body, their entering into the Memorial season by a thorough searching of their own hearts and evaluating their relationship with the Lord, and the feeding by faith upon the spiritual truths represented in this most solemn ritual, surely supersede the choosing of the date.

- *Charles Redeker*

¹They were not, however, to follow their example in hypocrisy and religious show.

OBSERVING THE MEMORIAL – WHEN?

“Our Lord, of course, was equally particular respecting the fourteenth day of the month as the proper time for the celebration--that all Israel might celebrate appropriately on the same day. But as for the proper beginning of the dating there was evidently less particularity. The Jewish method of reckoning, based upon the phases of the moon, was necessarily different from ours, and it was therefore very much less easy to determine an exact beginning for their month. Especially was this the case when the spring equinox had a bearing upon the matter, and when, as was the case with the Jews, another type demands that the Passover should come at the time of the harvest.

“All who have knowledge on the subject will admit that it would be practically impossible to fix dates for the beginning of the Jewish year by lunar time, in harmony with the harvest season, without there being room for dispute and difference of opinion. From our Lord's standpoint all that was settled for the people by the decision of the Scribes, whose business it was to fix a date as the beginning of the new year, and the fourteenth day of that year became the established date for the Memorial. In other words, whether the Scribes fixed a date earlier or a date later would not have particularly mattered; the object was to have a uniform date and to recognize the fourteenth day of the first month at even.

“So the matter remains today. We do not understand that any stress or hair-splitting is necessary in the ascertainment of the particular counting of the first day of the first month, Jewish time, but that there is appropriateness associated with a general commemoration upon the same day after sundown, a consensus of judgment as to which day shall be observed as the fourteenth of Nisan being all that is necessary and proper.

“. . . We have pointed out that this is one of the years in which the definite fixing of the first day of Nisan, the first day of the new moon after the spring equinox, seems to be difficult. We attach no importance to this, however, and have recommended the keeping of the Memorial on Sunday night, April 8. This is in harmony with the Jewish observance, and tallies with the fact that the full of the moon occurs on April 9, corresponding to Nisan 15. The important features to be remembered are: (1) that it be in the spring of the year, approximately at the Passover season; (2) that the date be uniformly observed; (3) that it be observed in the evening, to correspond with the original institution in Egypt and with our Lord's subsequent Memorial institution.”

- *Charles T. Russell (R3750)*

A FEW CONTEMPORARY MEMORIAL DATES¹ (Based on Nisan 13)²

1979	April	10	Tuesday	1998	April	9	Thursday	¹ Individual dates were taken from J. Parkinson's Christian Memorial Dates, in turn derived from tables in G. Zinberg's Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled and later confirmed by listings in Greenberg Publisher's One hundred Fifty Year Calendar. ² Nisan 13 is shown because it is the calendar day on which the Memorial is held. At 6 PM on this calendar day, Nisan 14 begins. Because of calendar regulations governing days on which the Passover Feast (Nisan 15) may not fall, Nisan 13 (our Memorial date) never falls on Monday, Wednesday or Saturday. ³ Stopping at the year 2016 is not to be interpreted as our belief that the Memorial will cease to be celebrated after that date.
1980	March	30	Sunday	1999	March	30	Tuesday	
1981	April	17	Friday	2000	April	18	Tuesday	
1982	April	6	Tuesday	2001	April	6	Friday	
1983	March	27	Sunday	2002	March	26	Tuesday	
1984	April	15	Sunday	2003	April	15	Tuesday	
1985	April	4	Thursday	2004	April	4	Sunday	
1986	April	22	Tuesday	2005	April	22	Friday	
1987	April	12	Sunday	2006	April	11	Tuesday	
1988	March	31	Thursday	2007	April	1	Sunday	
1989	April	18	Tuesday	2008	April	18	Friday	
1990	April	8	Sunday	2009	April	7	Tuesday	
1991	March	28	Thursday	2010	March	28	Sunday	
1992	April	16	Thursday	2011	April	17	Sunday	
1993	April	4	Sunday	2012	April	5	Thursday	
1994	March	25	Friday	2013	March	24	Sunday	
1995	April	13	Thursday	2014	April	13	Sunday	
1996	April	2	Tuesday	2015	April	2	Thursday	
1997	April	20	Sunday	2016	April	21	Thursday ³	

Contrasting the Two Gardens

When our Lord entered the garden outside of Jerusalem, the Garden called Gethsemane, one's mind is immediately reminded of another garden, the Garden of Eden. The contrasts between the two are most striking, indeed.

In Eden, all was delightful and perfect.

In Gethsemane, all was dark and foreboding.

In Eden, Adam and Eve spoke with an enemy.

In Gethsemane, Jesus sought his Father in prayer.

In Eden, Adam sinned.

In Gethsemane, our Savior suffered.

In Eden, Adam fell.

In Gethsemane, our Lord stood forth.

The conflict of Eden took place in the day.

The conflict in Gethsemane took place at night.

In the one, Adam fell before Satan.

In the other, the soldiers fell before Christ.

In Eden, the race was lost that was to be in Adam.

In Gethsemane, Christ lost none which God gave him (John 18:9).

In Eden, Adam took the proffered fruit from Eve.

In Gethsemane, our Lord received the cup from his Father's hand.

In Eden, Adam hid himself.

In Gethsemane, Christ boldly showed himself.

In Eden, God sought Adam.

In Gethsemane, Jesus sought God.

From Eden, Adam was driven.

From Gethsemane, Christ was led.

In Eden, the sword was drawn (Genesis 3:24).

In Gethsemane, the sword was sheathed (John 18:11).

These contrasts are so wonderfully shown in scripture, and are a picture of the first and the last Adam, purposefully to show us failure and triumph. We were dead in Adam and are now alive in Christ!

- *George Eldridge*



Agony in the Garden

The Burden of Dumah

“The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.” Isaiah 21:11, 12

The burden of Dumah comes near the end of a series of “burdens” or “woes” on the nations surrounding Israel. As in the book of Amos, where a similar litany of woes introduces the book, the object is not to exalt Israel but to show that God's justice is aware of the unrighteousness of Israel's enemies just as it is of Israel's own sins.

IDENTIFYING DUMAH

There is confusion as to who or what Dumah referred to literally. Most expositors take it for a variation of Edom or Idumea, while a sizeable number of others apply it to a tribe fathered by Dumah, the sixth of the twelve sons of Ishmael (Genesis 25:14, 1 Chronicles 1:30). The main argument for the identification being Edom is the reference to Seir, a city in the land of Edom. However, since the Ishmaelites were mainly nomadic traders (Genesis 37:25) and since the area of Seir (particularly its main city, Petra) was founded as a stop on the spice routes from India to Egypt, it would not be unusual for an Ishmaelite to be in Seir.

In fact the question “What of the night?” is one likely to be asked by a traveling merchantman as he considers the day's journey ahead of him. On balance, we prefer the identification of Dumah with the Ishmaelite tribe of that name, especially since this spelling is not elsewhere used of Edom. Additional to this is the etymology of the word. Dumah, according to Strong's, is related to the root meaning “to be dumb” or “silent,” while Edom comes from a root meaning red” Since the two words are so different etymologically, it is unlikely that they refer to a common location.

If this be so, then Dumah is not an alien nation, but a nomadic child of Abraham through Ishmael. Today we would call him a Bedouin. They may even have founded a settlement in what was to become the land of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:52). The name Dumah (Strong's #1745) is the same as the Hebrew word for “silence” (Strong's #1746; compare #1820). It is from this root that we have the word “silent” in Jeremiah 8:14: “Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.” This is the class that later calls out: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (vs. 20). This “silent” class, those who “heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace” we identify as representing the Great Company. We suggest that this is the identification we should also make of Dumah in the Isaiah text under consideration.

OUT OF SEIR

In our prophecy Dumah is found in Seir. As traveling merchants they may be found in a different place every night, but now they are in Seir. There is no question as to the location of Seir. It is the mountainous region of central Edom, centering around Wadi Musa and the rose red city of Petra,

the Sela of the Bible (Judges 1:36 NAS, 2 Kings 14:7, Isaiah 16:1). Most Bible students concur that Edom represents mainline Christianity, Babylon. This fits so well with the story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage, as well as with the prophecy of the doom of Edom in the book of Obadiah.

The scenario of our prophecy becomes more evident. We have the voice of the Great Company making an inquiry while passing through the streets of Christendom.

THE WATCHMAN

The cry is directed to the watchman. Since the call comes from Seir it is presumed that the watchman is employed in Edom, probably by the city of Petra. The word here translated watchman, as distinct from that in verse six of the same chapter, is more properly translated guard or keeper. The duties of this office were not only to keep lookout but also to provide protection from any invading forces. Putting the picture together, we have an inquiry made by those passing through spiritual Babylon of those put in charge of protecting that city.

In another picture the watchmen of Christendom are pictured as foul villains: “The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls [same Hebrew word as 'watchman earlier in this same verse] took away my vail from me” (Song of Solomon 5:7, see also 3:3).

How are we to reconcile the evil watchmen of Christendom with the watchman found here in Seir with the correct answer to the traveler's question? The answer is in the timing of the prophecy's fulfillment. From the watchman's answer we gather that this question is asked before the dawning hours, during the night time. In a familiar prophecy of the resurrection of the sleeping saints, Psalm 46:5, we read these words: “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early [‘just at the break of dawn' (NKJ)].”

This “break of dawn” we customarily apply to 1878, just after the Lord's return in 1874. Up to that time Babylon had not yet been cast off and her watchmen, or keepers, were a spiritual class. For the details of the transition from the spiritual class to a non-spiritual one, read Jeremiah 8:7-13 and compare with comments on C158.

Thus far, then, we have an inquiry from a class traveling through Christendom to the truly spiritual watchers of Christendom at a time near the break of day, the time of the return of the Lord himself.

AN ENIGMATIC QUESTION

The question, twice-repeated, seems to be more than simply “what time is it?” Some translations read: “What from the night?” “What are the tidings from your watch? How is the weather? What are the anticipated conditions for traveling? All of these would be on the mind of the nomadic merchant as he prepares to ply his journey. The repetitiveness of the question may be for emphasis, implying the importance of the answer to the enquirer, or it may refer to the two senses of the words, what time is it and what news do you have of conditions.

A MORE ENIGMATIC ANSWER

“The morning cometh, and also the night” Not, as many commentators suggest, the brightness of morning will be followed by the storm clouds of night; but, in contrast, the morning will be **preceded** by the darkest part of night. It is a common expression, “it is darkest just before dawn:’ and that is one of the thoughts conveyed in the watchman’s answer.

Today's fruitless cries of “Peace! Peace!” (Jeremiah 8:11) followed by increasing troubles are but troubled nighttime howls before the ushering in of the glorious Kingdom under the reign of the Prince of Peace. The deepest scenes of the time of trouble such as earth has ever seen, the darkness of worldwide anarchy, are predicted just before the rising of the “son of righteousness, with healing in his beams” (Malachi 4:1). “For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, **that maketh the morning darkness**, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name” (Amos 4:13).

MORNING IN THE MOUNTAINS

There is yet another sense in which this answer can be comprehended. Note the poetic expression of another of God's prophets: “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, **as the morning spread upon the mountains**: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations” (Joel 2:2).

In the mountainous Alps of Switzerland trumpeters patrol the heights. As the light of rising sun reaches their elevation they blow a blast to announce the event to the waiting populace below. Layer upon layer the daylight filters slowly into the deepest valleys. Nowhere is this phenomena better observable than at the capital of Seir, Petra. Situated in a deep narrow basin the town is accessible only through a mile-long Siq, or canyon, just wide enough for one animal at a time between rose red walls towering hundreds of feet straight up. Even fairly late in the day the steep canyon walls keep the road in deep shadows. Watchmen were situated in early days along the top of the canyon. When the question would be called up from below, “Watchman, what of the night?” their observation might well be, “It's already morning up here, but you still have a considerable period of night to go through down there where you are.”

For the traveler at the base the answer is puzzling. How can it be morning while it is yet so dark. It takes faith to believe the watchman’s words. The picture is fitting for the spiritual seeker of the Millennial morn. High on the mountain tops of prophecy the signs of the times indicate that it is already morning, even while our immediate surroundings seem to belie the evidence.

Is it not reminiscent of the words of the young Allegheny haberdasher to the assembled ministers of his city in 1877, presenting evidence that the Lord had returned, only to have it rejected because their immediate surroundings did not seem to support it? They lacked the faith needed by the faithful nomad passing through the streets of Christendom, antitypical Edom and Seir.

PERSISTANCE REQUIRED

“If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come” Further investigation is encouraged. The basic thought in the word “inquire” is to have an earnest desire to know, not just a passing curiosity. The watchman has a deeper message than his simple: “the morning cometh, but night also” It is almost as though he worded his first response as a riddle in order to provoke greater curiosity on the part of the inquirer.

Likewise, the word “return,” while being the basic Hebrew word for the usual concept of going back to a prior point in one's journey, does also carry a metaphoric meaning. Vine's Dictionary of Biblical Words has this to say: “The word can mean “turn away from,” as in Psalm 9:3: “When mine enemies are turned back...,” or “reverse a direction” as in 2 Kings 20:10: let the shadow return backward ten degrees’ “ This may include the thought of repenting from a former life style and making a renewed consecration to press even harder toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11).

The final word then, “come:’ completes the picture. Having “returned” in his mind through repentance, the sincere seeker for truth “comes” through conversion with a renewed depth of inquiry as to what the impending dispensational changes mean to him in a practical way; how they affect his onward journey.

DAYS OF WAITING

In the “Burden of Dumah” we see a pen picture of the dramatic turn of events in the religious world in the 19th century with the onset of Adventism and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary. Isaiah’s mini-prophecy anticipates the more depthful inquiries of “The Days of Waiting” and “The Cleansing of the Sanctuary” chapters in Volume Three of Scripture Studies, “The Time is it Hand.”

- Carl Hagensick

Weights and Years

In the November, 1994 issue of *Beauties of the Truth* appeared an article titled “Two Secret Numbers.” One suggestion of the article was that the cryptic message of Babylon’s judgment, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,” carried a veiled testimony of the 2,520 years which would pass until Divine Judgment fell on the last of the four world empires. I think that suggestion is correct. The weights of monetary value implied in this message are mina (1000 gerahs), mina (1000 gerahs), shekel (20 gerahs), and divided mina (500 gerahs). Thus 2,520 gerahs symbolize 2,520 years.

The purpose of this article is to suggest a second and a third witness from the Scriptures for the use of monetary weights to represent years of duration. The second witness is from Genesis 23. This chapter records Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah as a burial plot for Sarah. Evidently the owner of the plot, Ephron the Hittite, was willing to give the site to Abraham free of charge

(verses 11, 15). But Abraham, who had once refused the spoils of war from the king of Sodom, “lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich” (Genesis 14:21-24), kindly refused the charitable offer of Ephron also. He would wait for God's due time, and receive the land through God's promise. His payment for the field served as public testimony of this decision.

Ephron cited the value of the land as **400 shekels**. I think it is not a coincidence that this number of shekels is the same as the number of years God told Abraham his seed would be afflicted before their release from Egypt, to journey to the promised land (Genesis 15:13). Abraham's wish to pay the 400 shekels was token of his wish to wait on God for the inheritance of the land, after the **400 years** of the affliction of his seed.

The third witness is from Numbers 7. This chapter records in repetitive detail an offering by the 12 tribes of Israel for the support of the Tabernacle. This is not the same as the voluntary gifts by the Israelites of materials for the Tabernacle and its paraphernalia. That offering was generously given, each according to their ability, and so freely that Moses at last had to restrain them from further donations. (Exodus 35:5 through 36:7)

The spirit of giving was perhaps no less genuine and gracious in Number 7. However, the giving was a fixed and established amount, a tax as it were, upon each tribe. The occasion was “on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them” (Numbers 7:1). It was tendered for “dedicating the altar in the day that it was anointed” (Numbers 7:10). The purpose of this charge was for the support and maintenance of the Levites who cared for the Tabernacle and its services (Numbers 7:3-6).

Therefore this gift from each tribe was token of their support for the services instituted by Divine command. It was token of their pledge of fidelity to the Law and its ordinances. Leviticus 26 affirmed that if they remained faithful to the Law God would bless them abundantly. If not, they would receive seven times of punishment. In its fullest application, that punishment fell as the 2,520 years frequently termed the Times of the Gentiles.

What was the offering of Numbers 7? Each tribe offered “one silver charger, the weight thereof was 130 shekels, one silver bowl of 70 shekels ... one spoon of 10 shekels of gold..., and assorted valuables as flour, oil, incense and animals (Numbers 7:12-17). The monetary weights offered were therefore $210 \times 12 = 2,520$ shekels weight. Why this specific weight? I think it is because this value represented the obligation of 2,520 years of punishment which would come for infidelity to the new arrangement.

- *David Rice*

Holy Anointing Oil

“Take... principal spices ... pure myrrh 500 shekels ... sweet cinnamon ... 250 shekels sweet calamus 250 shekels ... cassia 500 shekels ... and of oil olive an hin ... make it an oil of holy anointment” (Exodus 30.-23-25)

The precious oil used to anoint both high priests and kings consisted of five ingredients: olive oil, myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia. It was neither to be made nor used for any purpose other than specified by Jehovah, under penalty of death (Exodus 30:31-33).

Chief Spices: Represent the component parts of the holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 refers to them as “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

Flowing Myrrh: A symbol of wisdom -knowing what to do. There are two kinds of myrrh, one yielded only after the bark is punctured, the other yielded freely. It is the latter that was used in the holy anointing oil. The wisdom so typified is yielded freely, like the myrrh-stacte.

Myrrh is a substance fragrant to the smell but bitter to the taste. This suggests submission and a willingness to serve (fragrance), even to the extent of difficult suffering (bitterness). Like the “wise men from the East,” we bring our gifts in loving adoration of our Savior (R4534:6, R3703:4,5). Myrrh could be used as an astringent, a stimulant, a medicine, and even an antiseptic. The holy Spirit stimulates us similarly to do good to all (Galatians 6:10), to heal the brokenhearted, and comfort the mourners. (Isaiah 61:1,3).

500 Shekels: The amount of myrrh was equal to the amounts of cinnamon and calamus combined, so God in our anointing gives us wisdom equal to our understanding and knowledge combined.

Sweet Cinnamon: A symbol of understanding, the Godly knowledge. The sweet cinnamon is very fragrant, and comes from the bark of an evergreen native to Ceylon. It may grow to a height of 30 feet. The tree belongs to the laurel family, which is a symbol of distinction. A crown of laurel indicated academic or other honors.

The constancy of our loyalty to Jesus and of our friendship toward the brethren is indicated by cinnamon. Who will deny that the holy Spirit binds this grace to us?

Sweet Calamus: A symbol of knowledge which we receive from God's word. The sweet calamus was also very fragrant. It came from a reed plant known as the sweet flag. It is easily bruised or broken, but it will perfume the instrument that bruises or breaks it. This is a wonderful picture of those whose sense of justice, of right and wrong, has been made very keen through the word of truth. They may therefore be unusually sensitive to unkindness from those who should know better. But instead of retaliating or reviling, they shower kindness upon the offender. This is another grace bound to us by the holy Spirit. Do you find kind things to say about those who hurt you? Can you bless those who speak evil against you? If so, it is an indication that the anointing which came upon Jesus has come upon you also (I Cor. 4:12).

250 Shekels: The amounts of cinnamon and calamus were equal, showing that God by his holy Spirit gives us understanding of whatever knowledge we obtain from his word.

Cassia: This symbolizes counsel and might. God gives us knowledge to give us understanding, then gives us wisdom to know what is expected of us (full consecration), and finally blesses us with the advice and ability (counsel or might) necessary to accomplish his purposes. From God we receive knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel and might. With more than this he cannot anoint us.

Cassia was used as an unguent, and as a perfume at funerals. Two beautiful thoughts are suggested here. (1) We seek to allay suffering, to ease the sting of every “burn” to which humankind is heir. (2) The fragrance of our new creature's life should veil, as a perfume, the foulness of the “old man” and his evil ways. Seeing how much we need this perfume to cover our own shortcomings, how kindly we should be disposed toward others similarly afflicted. We should know our brethren no longer according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). Let us breathe the “fragrance” of their lives rather than expose their little weaknesses and frailties which sometimes may annoy us.

Olive Oil: A symbol of light through the holy Spirit. Olive oil was used for light, food, medicine, and as a balm.

The holy anointing was very, very fragrant. One did not have to see the high priest to know he was present, nor ask him if he had been anointed. The fragrance could be detected by all those nearby. So it should be with us who have been anointed of God's holy Spirit. The fragrance of that anointing should be discernible by all who come in contact with us.

The oil represents the holy Spirit of God, by which Jesus and his Church have been anointed as the great antitypical High Priest. The fragrance represents those sweet and benign spiritual influences which flow from the hearts and lives of those anointed (2 Cor. 1:21, Psalms 45:7, Hebrews 1:9, Psalms 133:1,2). These fragrant spices are:

2 units myrrh: submission to God's will (consecration)
1 unit cinnamon: constancy, steadfastness (loyalty)
1 unit calamus: long-suffering kindness
2 units cassia: self-denial
 all suspended in:
1 unit olive oil: the holy Spirit

This totals seven units, a symbol of divine perfection.

The oil which held these aromatic spices in suspension was obtained by crushing the olive. Though the whole olive might be used for food, it was the crushed olive which yielded oil for light, food, and medicine as a healing and protecting balm.

We cannot help but think of Jesus as the choicest, ripest, richest olive. He had to be crushed, that there might flow from him the holy Spirit which so richly benefits us. This crushing began at Gethsemane, so named because it was the place of an olive press.

But the olive oil was not itself the precious ointment. It was the base, but the aromatic spices were necessary ingredients also. How beautifully this reflects the function of the holy Spirit binding to us those sweet, benevolent elements of character that also graced our Lord.

The proportions of the spices may be significant, but in a qualitative rather than quantitative sense. At first it might appear that submissiveness (myrrh) and self-denial (cassia) are more important than constancy (cinnamon) and longsuffering kindness (calamus) because of their proportions. But this does not take into account that the potency of the ingredients used in lesser amount may exceed the potency of the others. It is the fragrance of the compound, and not the preponderance of any one or two ingredients, that is sought after.

Submissiveness to the will of God (myrrh) and self-denial (cassia) are important. In fact, there is no acceptable consecration to God without them (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23). Yet who is able to be perfectly submissive? Because of the imperfections inherent in the fallen flesh, we waver, sometimes doing quite well and at other times not nearly so. The element most often lacking- is it not constancy, steadfastness (cinnamon)?

Essentially, the fragrance of this “holy anointing oil” is love -the love of God and of our fellow man (Matthew 22:37, 39, Romans 13:10). The former is manifested in our submission to God, the latter in an unfeigned love for the brethren, and the desire to do good to all as we have opportunity (1 Peter 1:22, Galatians 6:10).

Sometimes our submission wavers, for we lack constancy. Sometimes our self-denial does not have all the longsuffering kindness it should. But because we have a willing heart (2 Corinthians 8:12), we have imputed to us what we lack. The “fragrance” can always be the same, though the measure of it be less.

The will of God is that we be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3). But it is the doing of God's will that sanctifies us (Leviticus 20:7,8, T41). The life that is lived in obedience will breathe out upon others a sweet fragrance. Thus does the anointing of the holy Spirit bind to the antitypical High Priest (Jesus the head, the church his body) the sweetness of the surrendered life. In self-denial, long-suffering kindness, etc., it blesses even now those with whom he comes in contact.

- Adapted from the notes of Anton Frey