

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

November / December, 2002 No. 6

In the Beginning

The Tabernacle

I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. -- Revelation 21:3

Bible Students have long been fascinated by ancient Israel's Tabernacle with its rites and ceremonies. And well they might be. The Tabernacle's detailed plans came from God himself.

Christians today see lessons for themselves in even the minutiae of the description given to us in the Scriptures. Yet serious students differ on some aspects of that ancient arrangement because many details are missing. In a few instances in this issue, one author's idea about a detail may not agree with that advanced by another. Our readers should consider the evidence and decide for themselves what constitutes the correct viewpoint.

In spite of the need to guess about such things as the actual size of the laver, say, or whether hangings are to be suspended on the front or back side of pillars, full-sized Tabernacle models can be seen in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Israel, and a number of other places.

The first article covers the time of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and the need to cleanse the nation so God could dwell among them. Subsequent articles treat the design of the Court, the Holy and the Most Holy in the Tabernacle proper, the priesthood, and the Levites who were devoted to the nation's religious service. We conclude with a verse-by-verse study of Hebrews chapter 9. Of the New Testament books Hebrews has the most to say about the Tabernacle.

All things recorded in the biblical history of ancient Israel are for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:11). A careful student can learn much about living a Christian life today as he examines these "types and shadows." We all look forward with anticipation to the future time described by John the Revelator when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them . . . and be their God!"

Three Days' Journey

The Camp

And they set forward from the mount of the LORD three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting-place for them.
-- Numbers 10:33¹

Daniel Kaleta

In the twenty-sixth generation from the creation of Adam, God revealed his name to mankind. Moses, a descendant of Eber the Semite, was to carry this holy name to a nation especially prepared for this purpose in the land of Egypt. God's name needed a body of a nation "betrothed" (Ezekiel 16:8) to become his earthly tabernacle: "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). A sanctuary worthy to be God's dwelling place could not be set up in the land of Egypt. Because there was first the need to separate the nation that was to serve the Creator, Moses conveyed God's command to Pharaoh by saying, "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God" (Exodus 5:3).

The Pillar of Cloud

Israel's first stop on the way to freedom from Egyptian bondage was at Succoth (Exodus 12:37; Numbers 33:5). It was likely a gathering point of the Israelites and hence its name, which means "tents." There, for the first time, the Israelites saw a "pillar of cloud" that from then on would accompany them in their journey to the promised land (Exodus 13:20-22). God accompanied the nation of Israel by either going ahead of them or placing himself in the rear of their group (Exodus 14:19,20). The pillar of cloud, or pillar of fire, was "a sign of redemption"; it divided Israel from the Egyptians and the rest of the world. Similarly at Mount Sinai, God commanded a strict adherence to the separation of the Israelite camp from his holy and terrifying glory. Crossing that line meant death (Exodus 19:12). On the sixth day of the month of Sivan on the day of the Pentecost, God's glory appeared on the mount: "The LORD came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount" (Exodus 19:20). "The glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai" (Exodus 24:16). Later, Moses set up for himself a tent of meeting on the side of the mount so that he could talk with God. "Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought the LORD went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp" (Exodus 33:7).

Despite the appearing of God's glory (Exodus 19:18), despite the announcement of the ten Words (Commandments, see Exodus 20:1), despite the establishing of the covenant (Exodus 24:8), the camp of Israel was still not ready to become God's dwelling place. A new tent of meeting was to be consecrated for that purpose, together with its altar and priesthood: "And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and [the tent] shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar; Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God" (Exodus 29:43-46). This was the ultimate purpose of leading Israel out of Egypt by the way of their "three days' journey" -- so God could dwell within the camp of Israel.

The long awaited moment of God's glory "moving in" to the newly built and consecrated Tent of

Meeting took place on the first day of the month Nisan (Exodus 40:17), almost one year after the exodus from Egypt: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys” (Exodus 40:34,38). From that point on, God dwelt in Israel’s camp, which had fully become his dwelling place, holy and separated from the world [Egypt] by the “three days’ journey.”

The visible sign of God’s presence over the Tent of Meeting gave the Israelites the sense of God’s closeness, but its main function was to continue to lead the nation through the wilderness on its way to the Promised Land: “[I] went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in: in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in the cloud by day” (Deuteronomy 1:33). From the first day of the month Nisan, the Israelites would set up their camp around the pillar of the cloud of God’s glory. The cloud was in the center of the camp; it was not as it had been before, at the border between the camp and the outside world. The sacrifices offered to God were now killed in the midst of the camp; they were not, as at Mount Sinai, offered in the space between the glory of the Lord and Israel’s camp to seal the establishment of the covenant.

The Camp

The organization of the camp is described in the first ten chapters of Numbers. Aaron, Moses and all Levitical families camped close to the Tent of Meeting and encircled it. At a considerable distance from them were all the other tribes.

A few observations can be drawn from this arrangement of the camp:

1. The tent entrance was on the east side, the side where the priests and Moses camped (Numbers 3:38). Further east were Judah’s tents whose camp included three tribes and was the most numerous.
2. The firstborn had their camp on the West side of the Tent. Jacob considered Ephraim and Manasseh as his “first born” rather than Reuben and Simeon (Genesis 48:5). Gershon was most likely the firstborn of Levi since he is mentioned first.
3. The Ephraimite camp was the closest to the Most Holy but its distance to the gate of the tent was the farthest.
4. The largest camp is in the east; the camp of Reuben in the south and that of Dan in the north are slightly smaller and almost the same size. The smallest camp was that of Ephraim in the west.
5. The sequence of the arrangement of the camps given in the Bible starts in the east and progresses clockwise to the south, the west, and then north.
6. The camps of the Levites are set up similarly: the most important, the priestly camp, is found on the east side. On the south were the Kohathites who carried the furniture of the tent and the Court; then Gershon in the west, who was in charge of the covers, veils, and cords, and finally Merari, who had the responsibility for the wooden boards, was on the north.

7. The Levite camps were directly adjacent to the tent while those of the other Israelites were to be “far off” (Numbers 2:2). Based on Joshua 3:4 it is thought that the distance was 2,000 cubits, about a half mile.

Outside the Camp

Tied directly to the instructions about setting up the camp were the regulations concerning the removal of unclean people: “Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is unclean by the dead; both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camp, in the midst whereof I dwell” (Numbers 5:2,3). The camp, the dwelling place of God, throughout which he would “walk” just as in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8), was to be holy. Its holiness was to be achieved by the keeping of the ordinances of cleanliness, by the cleansing received from sacrifices, and by removing those who threatened its cleanliness. It was outside the camp that offenders were stoned (Leviticus 24:14). The remains of the offenders who died inside the camp were taken outside (Leviticus 10:4); by inference a burial ground was located outside the camp.

In the unclean zone that likely surrounded the entire camp, there was one clean area where the remnants of the sacrifices whose blood was carried into the sanctuary were burned (Leviticus 4:12). Probably it was in that place that the red heifer sacrifice was offered; her ashes served for the cleansing of the people and places contaminated by contact with the dead (Numbers 19:3).

Israel’s camp, while removed by three days’ journey from Egypt, was also separated from it by this belt of unclean ground.

The Camp on the Move

On the twentieth day of the second month (Ijar) or on the fiftieth day of the year, the Israelites moved from mount Sinai (Numbers 10:11,12).² From that day forward their march was to be in the order designated by God’s ordinance (Numbers 2:17,18). At the sound of an alarm from two silver trumpets, the first to move was the eastern camp of Judah. Then the Tent of Meeting was to be disassembled for travel and the Gershonites and Merarites were to move next transporting the structure of the Tabernacle on six wagons pulled by twelve oxen (Numbers 7:3-9). Then at another sound of the trumpets, the southern camp of Reuben moved. It was followed by the Kohathites carrying the furnishings of the sanctuary. It appears that they walked side by side with the priests, because in Numbers 10 there is no indication of further signals given by the priestly trumpets calling the two last camps of Ephraim and Dan to march.

From the descriptions of Numbers 10:33 and Deuteronomy 1:33 it appears that the ark of the covenant was not transported together with the other five furniture items of the sanctuary and Court. More likely it accompanied Aaron and Moses and was carried by the chosen Kohathites in front of the marching Israelites and indicated the new place where the camp should be set up. The leading camp of Judah had to set up its tents to the east of the Tabernacle. That means the new location for the Tent of Meeting had to be determined before the first tribe arrived.

A Few Symbolic Implications

It appears that the organization of Israel’s camp was only superficially dictated by practical constraints. The Israelites were good travelers before the camp was first organized at Mount Sinai. Most likely it was the symbolic aspects and the matter of ritual purity of the camp in which

the Name of God would dwell that dictated the rules for camp setup and the movement of God's chosen people. That is why Israel could not be God's dwelling place in Egypt but had to journey a long and tiring way through the desert to Mount Sinai. From the distance of the "three days' journey" from the world they could become an eternal pattern of the holiness of God's people.

1. East of Eden

The entrance to the Tabernacle was on its east side and guarded by the cherubs woven onto the cloth gate (Exodus 26:1). It was to remind the Israelites of the first pair expelled from the garden of Eden looking with longing back to paradise lost where, on its eastern border, two cherubim stood guarding the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). God symbolically opens the way to the tree of life which is beyond three "gates," guarded constantly by the fiery cherubim who kill those daring to approach in an unauthorized manner (Leviticus 10:2; Numbers 3:38).

2. The glory of the Invisible God

The sanctuary of the Tent of Meeting is a compelling illustration of the idea of an invisible God. The objects of worship in other cultures and temples were at least periodically exposed to the public eye to testify to the greatness of the god being represented. The Tent of Meeting hid from the eyes of the people everything that was to prove the glory of God. An ordinary Israelite only saw the gate kept by the cherubim, the pillar of cloud of God's presence, and the smoke of the perpetual offering rising from the altar in the Court. Only the Levites saw the equipment in the Court and the ceremonies that took place in it. The entrance to the first chamber of the sanctuary was only for priests authorized to serve, while only the high priest could ever enter the second, where the ark of the covenant was located. The entire worship carried out behind the three veils had to be experienced internally, spiritually, without the support of one's usual senses. Since an average Israelite had to camp at least a half mile away, his religiousness had to be internal, spiritual, directed toward heaven where God really dwells, and who, in the Tent of Meeting only chose to express the truth of his eternal existence, which is invisible to man.

3. God's Body

The apostle Paul calls a human body a tabernacle, a tent (2 Corinthians 5:1). So if the Tent of Meeting was God's dwelling place, then in some respects it was his "body." The most important element, the heart of this body so to speak, was the ark of the covenant. But it also had other internal organs. It was those pieces that constituted the essence of the term "sanctuary." We know that the portable frame of the Tent of Meeting was transported by the Gershonites and Merarites in between the camps of Judah and Reuben, and yet it is said of the Kohathites that it was they who were the "bearers of the sanctuary" (Numbers 10:21). On the west were the Gershonites who transported the covers, veils, and cords, the skin and muscles as it were. Then on the north side were the Merarites who carried the "bones" of the Tabernacle. Looking at the Tabernacle from the outside, one saw only the covers, veils, and cords, i.e., the skin and perhaps clothing. That is how we human beings perceive others and sometimes even God himself. Yet the Lord teaches Samuel the prophet and us, "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). It was the "heart" of the Tabernacle -- the ark of the covenant -- that went ahead and determined the next camp site. It is the heart that dictates the place where God's holiness abides, and only afterward around that place indicated by the heart, the external and material aspects of service develop.

When Moses received the building instructions for the Tent of Meeting, the description always

started with the ark of the covenant, progressing to the other furniture, then to the Court; only in the end was the camp's organization given with its rules regarding cleanliness and the unclean place outside the camp. The Tabernacle and the camp were organized in that order. Thus uncleanness is eventually determined by first starting with holiness, not the other way round. How often we human beings of flesh and bones, deceived by worldly wisdom, begin the construction of our holiness by arranging a place for the unclean, outside the camp. That's what the Pharisees did (Matthew 23:23,25,26). Many Christians appear to follow this pattern as well instead of following the example of the camp of the "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6).

The example of holiness shown in the type of the Tent of Meeting is inexhaustible, as inexhaustible as the width, length, depth, and height of divine wisdom. If a thousand scholars wrote a thousand books, they still could not cover all the aspects of the glory revealed in the Tabernacle. Yet it would be good if each spiritual Israelite brought at least a half of the required shekel (Exodus 30:13; 38:25,26) of the silver of wisdom. That silver was required in addition to the voluntary offerings (Exodus 25:2-7) of the fruits of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7); so that from the distance of "three days' journey" from Egypt, a Tabernacle could be raised, a dwelling place for the Lord.

¹ Old Testament quotations are from the *Hebrew Bible in English* by the Jewish Publication Society, 1917.

² : On the first day of the first month (Nisan), the tent was set up (Exodus 40:17). Since Nisan has 30 days, the 20th day of Ijar was exactly 50 days into the year.

Approaching God

The Court

A tabernacle was set up. -- Hebrews 9:2 (NIV)

Régis Liberda

Because there is so much in the ninth chapter of Hebrews about the Tabernacle, Christians realize there is much more to the religious arrangements God ordained for his people after they left Egypt than meets the eye.

If we consider why God wanted his people to build this Tabernacle, we first think of the need for a special meeting place for the people, where leaders such as Moses and Aaron could convey the instructions of the law. But if the need were only for a meeting place, it could have been in front of Moses' tent. The people needed something more than just a place to meet: they needed a "house" for their God in the middle of the encampment, a kind of temple as it were.

The Tabernacle was a kind of temple. During the captivity in Egypt, the Israelites had seen temples devoted to the Egyptian gods. So a temple, even if made of wood and cloth, provided a tangible representation for the presence of a God the people knew as "YHWH," the God of their fathers, whose worship and will was not known until the law was given to them.

The description of the Tabernacle is to be found in Exodus chapters 25 to 27. Its building, organization, and the sacrifices offered appeared to be new and complicated compared to the clear messages and promises given by God to Abraham and his posterity.

Actually the Tabernacle was necessary as a way to define Israel's obedience to God, to unify them as a nation, and to bring organization to their daily life.

But the apostle tells us in the epistle to the Hebrews that it was more than this: the death of our Lord gave the Tabernacle a higher meaning for each Christian who wants to draw closer to God. So this Old Testament structure becomes a way to him and provides an interesting study to better understand how we can follow our Master.

The Way to Holiness

The temples we see in ancient civilizations have different areas, courts, and chambers where access was gradually restricted. For example, Egyptian temples generally had a first court where people could offer sacrifices, see idols of their gods, and give money.

In a restricted chamber inside or beside the court only priests could enter; generally in a small room was a statue of the most important god; just the high priest or the king could enter to offer perfume which they did only once a year. Everyone knew the way to the holy place was gradually restricted and depended on the personal status of each person in the society. The Tabernacle God designed for Israel had a similar organization. It was the Almighty himself who decided each feature of the religious life of his chosen people.

The usual approach to study the symbols suggested by the apostle in Hebrews is to describe the Court, its furniture, and the different events which took place there. This is generally called the type; the significance of these things is the antitype.

Instead of that approach let us look at how someone approaches from outside the curtained Court until he enters under the veil or door of the Holy.

From the Camp to the Court

The Tabernacle was in the middle of the camp in the desert. How much could be seen from the outside? One could only see a white curtain around the Court which was five cubits high (about 7½ feet) made of fine twined linen. It was 100 cubits long (150 feet) on the two longest sides and 50 cubits long (75 feet) on the two shortest sides. From a distance a person could see this white curtain and above it, the top of the Tabernacle, which was twice the curtain's height. This Tabernacle was dark since it was made of the skin of dolphins. Because this gray skin was not colored, it was not attractive to the eye. <FOOTNOTE: Editors' note: Scholars are not in agreement on the animal providing the skins for the outer covering of the Tabernacle. Badgers and seals are among other suggested animals.> A foreigner could never imagine that this was the house of the Creator of the Universe. Who would imagine there was so much gold inside? A stranger would consider this a sad house for the God of Israel compared to the magnificent temples of pagan gods.

No, the Tabernacle as seen from outside was not attractive. But God knew it had to be this way. The lessons are obvious:

The camp in the desert where the Tabernacle is set is the world.

God does not attract anyone by apparent riches. We do not come to God because of the majesty and beauty of some building. Our reasons are not visible.

Many think that the truth is as unattractive and "gray" as a dolphin skin. Many think a Christian life is sad and dark; they do not know that for Christians the exterior has no value. Inside there is light, joy, richness, and peace.

Some are interested to know more. They suppose that this tent contains something more, and they draw closer. The closer they get, the greater appears the building, but they cannot see what is inside the Court since the linen hanging is too high. They can only see the top of the Tabernacle or tent.

When they are very close, they can only see a "white wall"; the Tabernacle itself has "disappeared." They know there is something beyond the wall but they cannot enter into the Court because of that "wall." It is the white linen. Linen represents the justice of God; white represents purity and holiness: "Fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8, KJV).

In front of that white wall, one understands he is a sinner. If he circles the wall trying to enter the Court, he continues to be stopped by this justice. When he finally recognizes his situation as a sinner, a unique door appears on the eastern side.

The sun arises in the east at the beginning of a new day. Likewise when someone reaches the door of the Court, a new day or a new life starts for him. He is now walking in the light.

The entrance to the Court is in the middle of the east side. God said to Moses, "For the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen" (Exodus 27:16).

The hanging of the door to the Court was distinctively different from the pure white curtains surrounding the other sides. The Hebrew word *macak* (Strong's #4539) is used exclusively for the four-colored, embroidered linen used at the three entrances: the Court, the Holy and the Most Holy. The Hebrew word for the plain white hanging of the Court is *qela* (Strong's #7050).

This door represents our Lord Jesus who said of himself, "I am the door. Whoever enters through me, will be saved" (John 10:9, NIV). "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6, NIV).

The door is of fine linen because Jesus has completely satisfied the justice of God. It is white to express the holiness and the purity of the Son of God. As Paul writes, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15, KJV). This door is a type of the Lord and was embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet.

Blue is the color of the sky without clouds and is a symbol of what is heavenly. It is also the color of nobility. We recognize those qualities in our Lord. He came from heaven, he then returned there as a divine creature. Can we find a greater nobility than that of our Lord?

Scarlet is the color of blood. It symbolizes his sufferings and death on the cross. It is his blood which gives life and purifies.

Purple is a precious color, reserved for kings. It applies to our Lord Jesus who became King of kings and Lord of lords since Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18, NIV).

So long before our Lord appeared, a door symbolized him as Savior and King. This door was 20 cubits wide by five cubits high and was supported by four posts. A door 30 feet wide like this one shows that the way to salvation excludes no one. To enter the Court one must recognize Jesus as his Savior and King.

Inside the Court

The Court was the first area where ordinary people could not enter. Although it was outside, it was not covered by a roof. It was separated from the camp by a white curtain high enough to keep people from seeing what happened inside.

A special class of people was responsible for the work in the Court: the Levites. All were descendants of Levi, a tribe which had no inheritance in the land but lived off the tithes paid by their brethren.

The service of the Levites put them in a special relationship between the people and God, in a certain sense higher than others, so that to know, to see, or to serve things that others could not see was something accepted, and even respected.

What does a Christian see when getting into the Court? Having recognized Jesus as his Savior, he is, of course, interested in everything in the Court. He sees the tent, whose top he saw from the outside, but this time he also sees the entrance to the tent, similar to the court's but twice as high. It appears to him that he is now in a position like that preceding: in front of a door hiding something else.

He is probably intrigued by this situation and starts to walk to the tent. But before he reaches it, he must pass near two pieces of furniture new for him: an altar and a laver.

The altar, the first piece of furniture, was made of wood covered with copper, and was used to burn up sacrifices placed upon it such as during the consecration of the priesthood and the Day of Atonement.

The Christian sees the altar with an offering burning upon it. He understands that here in the middle of the Court, Jesus has been sacrificed for him. He starts to recognize that a similar sacrifice is needed from him if he is to enter beyond the next door!

Yes, Jesus allowed himself to be sacrificed for the entire world of mankind. He was perfect and became flesh to do the will of his father. The wood of the altar, typifying humanity, reminds us that Christ became a man for the express purpose of experiencing our infirmities and “to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

A Christian understands this altar is not an ornament of the Court, but a place where bulls and goats were killed and sacrificed, a place many times covered with blood and ashes, with the smell of burning meat, and much smoke. The grate of this altar was not on the top like a modern barbecue. It was placed half way between the bottom and the top of the altar: “Thou shalt put it [the grate] under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst [Strong’s #2677: half or middle] of the altar” (Exodus 27:5). This placed the grate at the 1½ cubit mark, the same height as the mercy seat in the Most Holy. Both are considered in the design to be at the same “level”; neither towers above the other.

Continuing to the entrance to the Holy, there is one more article of furniture: the laver. Exodus 30:18 says it was “a laver of brass” (Strong’s #5178 -- copper or something made of copper). The translators of the King James Bible usually used the word brass which is an alloy of copper and zinc. (The Hebrew word is translated copper by the KJV translators only in Ezra 8:27.) Copper is a material which symbolizes perfect human nature.

The laver was the last piece in the way to the Holy: “thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar” (Exodus 30:18). It was used to wash the hands and feet of Aaron and his sons when they went into the Tabernacle. They did not wash directly in the laver but ladled out water for washing so the precious water remained unpolluted.

As water typifies the word of God, the Christian getting close now to the Holy sees the importance of being purified “by the washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:26, NIV).

At this step an approaching Christian accepts this purification as did all the followers of Jesus. Even if the Master did not need any purification, since he was perfect and without sin, by washing the feet of his disciples Jesus showed another important element of that washing: humility.

Now the Christian is at the door of the Tabernacle. After his journey through the Court, he is ready to follow his Master into the “greater and more perfect tabernacle” (Hebrews 9:11, KJV).

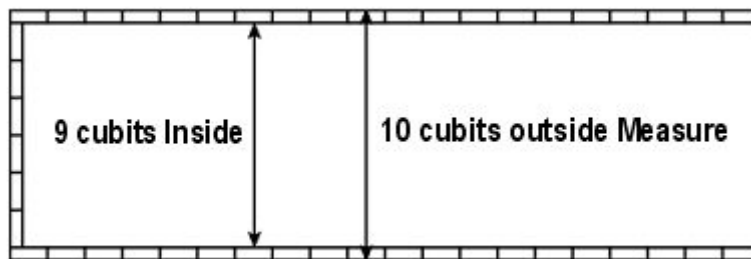
The Holy

And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. -- Exodus 26:33

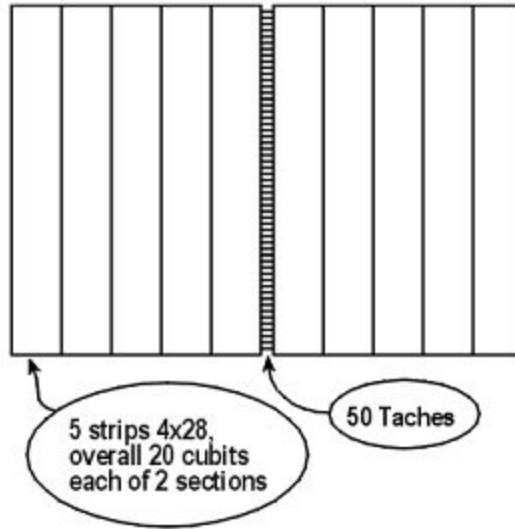
David Rice

The Holy was the first and larger of the two compartments of Israel's Tabernacle. It is commonly considered to have outside dimensions of 10 - 20 cubits. This is evidently correct, but this information is given only indirectly in the scriptures.

The outside length of the structure is calculated from the figures respecting the side boards in Exodus 26:16-18 which says each side contained 20 boards, each $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits wide, yielding 30 cubits overall. The inside width was 9 cubits, judging by verse 22 which says the back end of the Tabernacle contained 6 boards, presumably spanning the interior width between the two side walls. But as the Temple measures are given as 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide in 1 Kings 6:2 (presumably exterior measurements), the inference from the proportions is that the Tabernacle would have been 10 cubits wide (exterior measurement). In this case the boards were evidently $\frac{1}{2}$ cubit thick.



We therefore know the width of the structure, but what of its length? Exodus 26:33 tells us the interior was divided by a veil hung under the golden taches connecting the two parts of the white linen tapestry forming the ceiling of the "tabernacle" proper (Exodus 26:1). As verses 2 and 3 of the same chapter explain, each of the two parts of that tapestry was composed of five strips measuring 4 - 28 cubits. Five strips would be 20 cubits wide, and when they were joined together with golden taches, the length would be 40 cubits. This covering began at the front of the Tabernacle structure, which means the taches had to fall 20 cubits from the entrance of the structure. Under these taches the veil was hung. Thus do we reason that the Holy was 20 cubits long.



The Gospel age is often represented by the number 2, or its greater magnitudes 20, 200, 2,000. A 20-cubit length for the Holy fits the symbolism. Perhaps two is used because the fruits of this age of the spirit are nourished by the two sources of instruction, the Old and New Testaments. The two fishes (Matthew 14:17), two pence (Luke 10:35), 20 years oppression by Jabin (Judges 4:3), 20 years of Samson (Judges 15:20), 20 years of the ark at Kirjath-Jearim (1 Samuel 7:2), 200 pennyworth of bread (Mark 6:37), 200 cubits to shore (John 21:8), 2,000 cubits from the ark to the Israelites (Joshua 3:4) -- all relate in one way or another to the span of the Gospel age, or to the nourishment and care of the saints during it.

Furnishings of the Holy

The Holy contained three main items of furniture: the lampstand, the table of shewbread, and the incense altar. Each represents something concerning the development of the saints during the Gospel age. The lampstand, which produced light for the room, shows how our enlightenment comes as a result of using (burning) the holy spirit (oil), throughout the seven stages of the church (seven branches of the lampstand). The lampstand was made of a single talent of gold, perhaps 75 to 90 pounds (Exodus 25:39). Today the gold alone would be worth about a half million dollars. Such a precious piece of furniture represents the infinitely more precious class of saints who are fashioned with the hammer of experience for their divine service. (In contrast the apostate church, the wicked woman of Zechariah 5:7, is associated with a talent of lead, a much inferior metal.)

The description of the lampstand in Exodus 25:31-40 specifies three branches on either side, plus a central stem, allowing seven extremities each containing a lamp for burning. Each of the six branches was adorned with three sets of cups shaped like almond blossoms, with a knop (bud or bulb) and a flower; the center stem was adorned with four of these. (The NASB and NIV versions are helpful here.) Thus there is a total of 22 such sets. These might represent the original 22 books of the Old Testament writings which graced the early church. The Hebrews venerated these 22 books and associated the number of them with the 22 patriarchs from Adam through Jacob, and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119, which is a tribute to the word of God, enhances this identification by containing 22 segments of eight verses each. The first letter of the eight verses in each octuplet is the same Hebrew letter; the psalm runs through the Hebrew alphabet from aleph to tau in the 22 sections.

However, our Bible contains also the New Testament, and in later times the books have been divided into a total of 66. If the three identified elements -- bowls, knops, flowers -- are numbered separately, this would total 66 in the entire lampstand. The three branches on one side, together with the center stem, would contain 39, and three remaining branches 27, which is the division of books in our Old and New Testaments. These correlations are sufficiently engaging to hold our attention, and should another, second, Scriptural testimony of these numbers some day come to our attention, it would increase our enthusiasm for the application. Until then we note these features with interest, even if with some reserve.

The flowers were stipulated to be almond flowers. The five petals of the almond blossoms are a fitting number to represent the new creation later represented by the five wise virgins of Matthew 25. Almonds, it is said, produce flowers before leaves, and the Hebrew word for almond means "hasten," probably in observation of this early seasonal produce of the almond flowers. So with the church; they produce the lovely graces of the spirit before their leaves of profession and teaching will be observed by the world in the kingdom.

This meaning of the name "almond" explains Jeremiah 1:11,12, where the appearance of an almond rod, or branch, is a token from the Lord that "I will **hasten** my word to perform it." In this passage it may refer prophetically to the raising of the saints early in the harvest as the work preliminary to the judgments of the Lord which follow shortly thereafter. Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17) to establish his divine appointment to the priesthood was also of the almond tree.

The Table of Shewbread (Exodus 25:23-30)

The Table of Shewbread, like the Holy itself, was twice as long as it was wide, 2 cubits - 1 cubit. It held two stacks of bread, just as we have the written Word of God in two parts, the Old and New Testaments. There is a parallel in the divine word between Jesus, the living Word of God, and the Scriptures, the written Word of God. Both had a difficult ministry of 3½ years. In Jesus' case they were literal years; with the two witnesses (of Revelation 11) they were figurative years, 3½ - 360 = 1260 years from 539 to 1799.

Comparing Jesus' experiences with Revelation 11:7-13 one finds a variety of parallels and contrasts between the two. Both were slain at the end of 3½ years (their enemies rejoiced in both cases), Revelation 11:8 specifically connects the death of the witnesses to "where also our Lord was crucified," both were raised three days later and ascended to heaven, and an earthquake was associated with both events. Jesus is God's "faithful and true witness" (Revelation 3:14), the Scriptures are his "two witnesses" (Revelation 11:3). Jesus was identified by Moses and Elijah in the mount of Transfiguration; Moses and Elijah qualify as the two witnesses of Revelation 11:6 based on what they did.

In the shewbread we have a picture of both the living word (Jesus) and the written word (the Scriptures), similar to the manna in the wilderness. As regards Jesus, whose flesh was broken for our justification, notice that he is depicted at the same "level" in the Court, the Holy, and the Most Holy. In the Court the brazen altar was 3 cubits high, but the grating "in the midst" of it was halfway up, or 1½ cubits high, where the sacrifices were placed. In the Most Holy the blood of redemption was placed on the ark which was 1½ cubits high. In the Holy the bread was placed on the table whose height was 1½ cubits. The consistent level depicts our Lord's sacrifice for us in a uniform way. (Notice, too, in Hosea 3:2, the price of redemption for Israel is 1½ homers of barley, the crop which specially represents Jesus.)

Specifics for the shewbread are not found in Exodus, but do appear in Leviticus 24:4-6. There were 12 cakes in two “rows.” The word row is Strong’s #4634, *maarakah*, “an arrangement; concr. a pile,” and we presume the meaning in this case is there were two stacks of shewbread, though the KJV, NASB, and NIV all use the word “row.” Topping each was frankincense, as though to emphasize the sweet perfume to God which the offering of Jesus was. The meal offering (Leviticus 2:1) was also accompanied with frankincense, and the shewbread was evidently a kind of meal offering. The shewbread was refreshed each sabbath day so that it was always fresh and wholesome, as a good type of our spiritual nourishment. The 12 loaves probably show that this is a figure of the spiritual nourishment for the 12 tribes of Israel, which would represent spiritual Israel during the Gospel age.

The Incense Altar (Exodus 30:1-10)

The measure of this altar was 2 cubits high - 1 cubit square, again a 2 to 1 ratio as with the Holy itself. Oddly, this piece of furniture is not described where one would suppose. The account of specifics regarding the Tabernacle begins in Exodus 25. The materials are itemized; in verse 10 the ark of the covenant is described, then the table of shewbread (verse 23), and the candlestick (verse 31). But the incense altar does not appear until five chapters later. This may have something to do with Paul’s account of the furnishings in Hebrews 9:1-5 where the lampstand and table are mentioned but not the incense altar.

This altar was used for offering incense twice daily, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, as though to show that the ever-efficacious offering of Christ, once for all, is a sweet incense to God. Revelation 8:3,4 refers to this, indicating that by this means the prayers of the saints during the Gospel age are acceptable to God.

On this altar atonement was made once a year, “upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements” (Exodus 30:10). This process is described following the blood offering of the atonement sacrifices in the Most Holy: “He [Aaron] shall go out [from the Most Holy] unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel” (Leviticus 16:18,19).

The “children of Israel” included both the priesthood and the remainder of the people, and for this reason probably a mixture of blood from the bullock (for the priests) and the goat (for the people) was used. Thus is represented an atonement for both ages of redemption, the Gospel age and the Millennium.

Evidently the incense offering customarily involved the use of a censer of coals, as Leviticus 16:12 refers to a “censer full of burning coals of fire” on the incense altar. If the incense was sprinkled on the coals within a censer, and this slightly waved to circulate the aroma, it would explain why Revelation 8:4 depicts the incense as ascending “up before God out of the angel’s hand.” It may also explain why Paul said the golden censer was in the Most Holy where it was used on the Day of Atonement to ensure the cloud of incense would cover the ark of the covenant (Hebrews 9:4).

Aaron was to burn incense in the morning “when he dresseth the lamps” and at even (between the two evenings) when he lighted the lamps (Exodus 30:7,8). 1 Samuel 3:3 speaks of a time in the late evening “ere the lamp of God went out.” Perhaps these texts indicate that though the lamps burned daily, they did not necessarily burn through all 24 hours. In this case the daily (continual)

lighting of the lamps would suffice to carry the picture of our constant enlightenment by the holy spirit.

The Two Hangings

In Hebrews 9:3 reference is made to the “second veil,” evidently considering both hangings as veils. However, in the Old Testament, the “veil” is exclusively the entrance into the Most Holy, and the “door” is exclusively the entrance into the Holy.

The Holy shows the present spirit-enlightened condition of the sons of God while we are still in bodies of flesh, and thus the five pillars on which the door was hung were set in sockets of copper (or perhaps brass or bronze if an alloy for strength and corrosion resistance was used). Copper represents perfect or justified humanity, so this fits. The sockets of the four posts supporting the veil were of silver, representing the spirit nature, as the Most Holy represents the actual spirit conditions of the new creature after passing to its heavenly reward. In both cases, however, the hooks and covering of the pillars were of gold, as our hopes, aspirations, and calling are all concerned with things divine (Exodus 25:32-37).

Both hangings were of the same material and design: white linen interwoven with threads of blue (faithfulness), purple (royalty) and scarlet (redemption), embellished with cherubim, perhaps representing the character attributes of God which we are called to develop. All of these are fitting symbols respecting the glorious call of the New Creation.

Technical Specifics

Because both interior compartments of the Tabernacle were nine cubits across, and the back and all other boards were evidently $\frac{1}{2}$ cubit thick, the interior floor of the Most Holy would be 9 - $9\frac{1}{2}$ cubits. Because of this lack of regularity, one wonders if perhaps the interior length of the Most Holy should be reduced to 9 cubits by hanging the veil on the backside of $\frac{1}{2}$ cubit posts. Both the boards of the Tabernacle and the posts of the veil were supported by silver sockets of the same weight (one talent) and presumably the same shape, which would be consistent with the posts and boards being of the same thickness, namely $\frac{1}{2}$ cubit.

If this was so, the interior volume of the Most Holy would be 9 wide - 9 long - 10 high, 810 cubic cubits altogether. If the volume of the ark of the covenant ($1\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits = 5.625 cubic cubits, not counting the lid with its golden cherubim) were divided into the volume of the Most Holy, the result would be 144.

If this positioning of the veil is correct, the length of the Holy is increased by $\frac{1}{2}$ cubit, measuring from the entrance at the edge of the golden side boards. The volume of the Holy would thus be $20\frac{1}{2}$ cubits long - 9 cubits wide - 10 cubits high, or 1845 cubic cubits. This is precisely the number of years between the first advent and the second advent of Christ, which is one measurable “length” of the Gospel age. (See Matthew 6:27, NASB, for a connection between cubits and years.) If we are reasoning correctly upon the Scriptural descriptions, this would be a second witness in the Old Testament for the many 1845-year parallels, from the end of Daniel’s various time prophecies backward in time.

The Sockets

The boards of the Tabernacle, which gave the structure rigidity and form, were 20 on the north and south sides, 6 in the back, and 2 additional corner boards in the rear whose placement is not clear. This totals 48 boards, each of which had two tenons, each set in one socket made from a talent of silver. These 96 sockets plus four more for the four posts supporting the veil make a total of 100. The number 100 is a connecting thread which joins various pictures of our Lord. For example, the gate was 20 - 5 cubits, the door and veil were evidently about 10 - 10 cubits; thus all three hangings were 100 square cubits, and each represents Christ's sacrifice in a different aspect, as the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

The number 100 for the sockets is a fitting number to represent the foundation of God's plan of atonement, namely the ransom sacrifice of our Lord. This silver was not a contribution, but the result of a necessary price of redemption for the soul of each adult male in the congregation (Exodus 30:12-16; 38:21-27; compare 1 Kings 20:39).

It is our great privilege and honor to antitypically dwell in this sacred place of the Most High, the Holy of the Tabernacle. To us belong the wondrous beauties of things divine, the expensive furnishings to provide us spiritual enlightenment, the Word of God for nourishment, and the opportunity daily to offer our praise, thanks, obedience, and adoration on the golden altar, after the pattern of our Lord. All of these provisions are very costly, but they have been given to us freely, as it is God's grace and kindness to do. But we behold these treasures with spiritual eyes. Let us always value and treasure them, and appreciate better their true worth by applying ourselves to things spiritual, and thus fulfill our consecration to God.

The Sanctuary **The Most Holy**

*Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place.
-- Hebrews 9:3, NIV*

David Stein

The Most Holy is appropriately associated with the ark of the testimony, for the ark was the holiest object of the nation and the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy.

The expression “the Most Holy” is not a precise translation of the three Hebrew words, *qodesh haq-qodashim*, which literally means the “holy of holies.” This interesting expression occurs some 39 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and does not always refer to the Tabernacle. It does always refer to something that was very holy, something the Israelites had to treat most reverentially. There were many holy things in ancient Israel!

The “holy of holies” of the Tabernacle was the second chamber of this portable temple, accessible only by going through the Holy. The external dimension of the “Holy of Holies” is 10 cubits¹ wide by 10 cubits long by 10 cubits high -- a perfect cube. The actual space inside the holy of holies was less because of the thickness of the walls.

The Most Holy was separated from the Holy by the veil (Exodus 26:31-35). Exodus 26:33 says the veil was to be located directly under the taches of the linen curtain. The veil was made of linen and embroidered with the same colors -- blue, purple and scarlet -- as the linen curtain which covered the “tent” or Tabernacle structure. The veil was hung upon four pillars by means of golden hooks.

In the mind of the ancient Israelite, the paramount feature of the Tabernacle was the presence of the ark of the covenant. This holiest object of the nation in its most holy place showed the presence of God among them, a token of the national relationship and covenant with him. In fact, Moses is plainly told that it was here that he would commune with God: “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel”(Exodus 25:22).

The ark itself was basically a wooden chest made from acacia or shittim wood. It is the first item for which Moses received building instructions (Exodus 25:10-22). It was 2½ cubits long, 1½ cubits wide, and 1½ cubits high. It was overlaid with gold “within and without.” The King James version, a less exact translation in this instance, says it had a “crown.” This “crown” should be considered more of an ornamental molding of pure gold about the top of the ark. In addition, the ark had four golden rings at its corners. Two rings on each side permitted staves or poles to be inserted through them, and provided the means by which the ark could be carried from one camp to the next.

The mercy seat was the lid of the ark. It was made entirely of beaten gold. Two cherubim were sculpted upon it with their wings oversweeping the top of this precious lid (see Exodus 25:19,20).

Moses was commanded to place three items into the ark: 1) Aaron’s rod that budded (Numbers 17:10), 2) a golden pot of manna (Exodus 16:33, 34), and 3) the tables of the law (Deuteronomy

31:26). “The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:4).

The only illumination in the Most Holy was evidently provided by the Shekinah glory. This term does not appear in Scripture though it is mentioned in Jewish writings, notably the Targums and Talmud, which originated in the centuries after Jesus’ death.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat” (Leviticus 16:2).

This text suggests that the Shekinah glory, representing the presence of God in a brilliant cloud, was located between the two cherubim above the mercy seat. The association here of light with the “cloud” may well have been reflected in the fact that Israel was led by a cloud pillar during the day which became a fire pillar at night. It was centered directly over the Tabernacle, undoubtedly over the ark.

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth” (Psalm 80:1).

The Meaning of These Things

The two compartments of the Tabernacle represent the two conditions of believers in their service to God. The Holy represents the condition of spirit-begetting while an individual is still in the flesh. The Most Holy represents the condition of being “born again,” that is actually dying as a human being and being reborn on the spirit plane, the divine plane, and being ushered into the presence of God.

Paul gives us the interpretive clue we need when he writes, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19,20).

The church has the hope of entering the antitypical Most Holy through the antitypical “veil” representing the flesh of Jesus. Jesus is for us a portal to all the blessings we have or can have. He is our entry into justification (the gate into the Court), sanctification (the door into the Holy) and glorification (the veil into the Most Holy). Interestingly, it was Jesus himself who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). This might well be another reference to the three portals of the Tabernacle.

Like Jesus, we must put away our flesh and die as human beings to enter the heavenly Most Holy. As members of Jesus’ body, of his flesh so to speak, we see the veil as representing our actual death as it represented the death of his flesh.

There were five pillars at the door of the Holy and four pillars at the veil of the Most Holy. All were constructed of shittim wood overlaid with gold. The pillars at the door to the Holy were set in sockets of copper whereas the pillars holding the veil were set in sockets of silver. Copper represents perfect (or justified) human nature, silver represents truth. This difference seems to say that a pillar in the Holy (gold in sockets of copper) represents the spirit-begotten condition of the church. They have the “treasure” of the spirit (gold) in “earthen vessels” (copper -- see 2 Corinthians 4:7). The pillars in the Most Holy represent the spirit-birth (gold) condition as an actuality (silver).

Of course, the means for obtaining this treasure in its fullness is the carrying out of a sacrifice unto death. The colors embroidered on the white linen of the veil boldly testify to this in symbol. Scarlet represents sacrificial death, blue represents faithfulness, and purple represents royalty. The presence of these three colors on the white linen veil is echoed in Revelation: “Be thou faithful (blue) unto death (scarlet) and I will give thee a crown (purple) of life” (Revelation 2:10). The design of the veil includes the representation of angels, specifically cherubim (Exodus 26:31). This may be suggestive of a portal into the abode of angels, heaven itself.

The Most Holy was a perfect cube measuring 10 cubits on a side. This suggests the perfection of the condition it represents, the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)³ However, the actual inside dimensions of the Most Holy were 9 cubits wide by 9 cubits long by 10 cubits high. This difference produces an interesting mathematical observation.

The volume of the ark of the covenant was 5.625 cubic cubits ($1\frac{1}{2} - 1\frac{1}{2} - 2\frac{1}{2}$). The volume of the Most Holy was 810 cubic cubits (9-9-10). Dividing the volume of the Most Holy by the volume of the ark of the covenant produces a significant number: 144,² a number relating to the church. Revelation 14:1 describes a group standing upon symbolic “Mount Sion” with the symbolic “Lamb.” The group numbers 144,000 and is clearly a reference to the overcoming church. Since the ark represents the church which will gain the prize of the high calling in the condition that the Most Holy represents (the presence of God, the divine nature), the appearance of 144 does not seem accidental. Although 144 is not 144,000, clearly the scale of the Tabernacle could never permit the building of a Most Holy containing 144,000 arks. The factor of 1,000 is contained in the picture we do have. The exterior dimensions of the Most Holy were 10 cubits - 10 cubits - 10 cubits or 1,000 cubic cubits.

When we remember that God told Moses to make the Tabernacle exactly according to the pattern given to him in Sinai (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5), we begin to understand that the dimensions God selected were not arbitrary; they contain spiritual lessons. The blessing these numerical lessons provide depend upon faith.

The Day of Atonement

One of the vital national functions of the Most Holy and its ark of the covenant occurred each year on a national Day of Atonement. This was always the 10th day of the month of Tishri, around our October. The key element in this yearly ritual is the bringing of the blood from the sin-offering sacrifices into the Most Holy by the High Priest and sprinkling it on the mercy seat. Blood shed from a sacrifice represents the value of the life of that sacrifice. The first sin-offering sacrifice, the bullock, represented Jesus in the flesh. He gave his perfect human life as a ransom sacrifice. In the Tabernacle type, the high priest, representing the spirit-begotten new nature of Jesus and later the spirit-born divine nature of Jesus, takes the blood, representing the value of Jesus' sacrificed human life, into the Most Holy -- heaven itself. Jesus ascended into heaven after finishing his earthly sacrifice, and although no longer human in any respect, brought with him the ransom value of that human life ultimately to be used to redeem mankind.

The entry into divine conditions, as a divine creature entering the heaven itself, is symbolized by the entry of the high priest into the Most Holy: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

As the high priest entered the Most Holy with the blood of the sin-offering, so too Jesus enters

with the value of his sacrifice: “But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people” (Hebrews 9:7). The sin-offering of the Day of Atonement was comprised of two sacrifices, the bullock and the goat. The blood of each sacrifice was brought into the Most Holy. The church composite is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). Jesus reckons the sacrifice of the church, justified or accepted as perfect (see Romans 12:1) by his blood, as his sacrifice!

In both cases the blood was brought within the veil into the Most Holy and sprinkled upon the mercy seat, a place representing divine justice, and particularly divine justice satisfied by the sacrifice represented in that blood. The sequence of atonement given by Hebrews 9:7 is first “for himself” and then “for the errors of the people.” This suggests how divine providence provided salvation. The first beneficiaries are the church -- “for himself,” that is, his body. Then comes the atonement for the world, “for the errors of the people.” All of this takes place in the Most Holy and requires the blood of the sin offering sacrifice -- both animals.

As the Most Holy represents the divine nature in heaven which is the ultimate reward for the faithfulness of the church, so too it encompasses the completion and fullness of atonement, the bringing of the entire race of mankind back into at-one-ment with God. This will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Millennial age. This may be reflected in the linen curtain which covers the entire Tabernacle. The 28 cubit width of the linen curtain is one cubit short of the ground on the north and south sides of the Tabernacle. This curtain seems to suggest the separation between God and mankind due to sin. Yet how remarkable it is that the linen curtain does touch the ground on the back wall of the Most Holy! So too, in the ultimate working out of atonement, God and men will be reconciled: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

A problem exists with the Hebrews 9 description of the Most Holy: “And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:3,4). This seems to say that the incense altar was located in the Most Holy with the ark. This clearly is at odds with the clear description given in Exodus and elsewhere. So how are we to understand the phrase, “the Holiest of all which had the golden censer”?

There are two possible explanations. First, the problem may be one of translation. Consider this alternative rendering: “For a Tabernacle was prepared -- the first -- in which were both the lampstand and the table, and the loaves of the presence, and the golden altar of incense: this is named ‘The holy place.’ And behind the second veil, that Tabernacle which is named, ‘The holy of the holies;’ having the ark of the covenant, covered on all sides with Gold, in which was a golden Vase containing the manna, and the rod of Aaron which blossomed, and the tablets of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:2-4, *Diaglott*).

This reading is clearly in line with the testimony of the Old Testament. But what basis did the translator Benjamin Wilson have for this rendering? He writes in a footnote: “The reading of the Vatican MS. has been adopted as giving a solution of an acknowledged difficulty, and as perfectly harmonizing with the Mosaic account.”

There is a second explanation that bears consideration. It comes partly from a parallel passage in 1 Kings in which there seems to be an unusual ownership of the altar of incense by the Most Holy: “And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until all the house was finished: also the whole altar that belonged to the oracle he overlaid with gold” (1 Kings 6:22, *American Standard Version*). The reference to “oracle” is a reference to the Most Holy of Solomon’s temple. The

altar of incense belonged to the “oracle” because it was in front of the veil (Exodus 30:6)⁴.

The position of the altar of incense in front of the veil (Exodus 30:6) made it the piece of furniture closest to the Most Holy and the ark. It was a location of particular sanctity. Incense had to be burned at this altar, the smoke from which had to precede the high priest into the Most Holy. Perhaps the thought is that the prayers of Jesus and the saints, which is at least one symbolic meaning of the incense (see Revelation 5:8, *American Standard Version*), mark the closest approach we have on this side of the veil and such intimate spiritual communication in fact links the Most Holy with the typical altar of incense.

¹ There are many opinions regarding the exact length of the cubit used in the time of Moses ranging from 16 inches (Conder) to 25.20 inches (Petrie). This variability may be due in part to the fact that the cubit is supposed to be the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow. Since this would vary from man to man, or more historically, from ruler to ruler, an ancient standard did not exist. For purposes of visualizing the scale of the Tabernacle, one may use 18 inches, a foot and a half. Since God gave the dimensions in cubits, it is only in cubits that many of the numerical lessons and connections may be observed.

² Note that in Revelation 21:17 the wall of New Jerusalem measures 144 cubits.

³ We notice a similar cube in the symbols of Revelation. “New Jerusalem,” a symbol of the glorified bride of Christ, is depicted in Revelation 21:16 as a perfect cube 12,000 furlongs on a side.

⁴ Editors’ note: A third possibility is that the writer of Hebrews is referring to a censer and not the golden incense altar. (See pages 13 and 31 in this issue.)

A Priestly Calling **The Priesthood**

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. -- Hebrews 2:17

Homer Montague

Many heathen nations established priesthoods for the purpose of approaching their gods. This practice has been maintained through the centuries and continues to this very day, resulting in countless throngs of humanity being kept in ignorance and blinded by superstition (2 Corinthians 4:4). Those whose eyes have been enlightened acknowledge Jehovah as the all-powerful, one true God, whose grandeur and plan for mankind have been revealed in the Scriptures. The appointment of a true priest or priesthood comes from the Creator, who provided such a mechanism for the removal of sin and the blessing of all the families of the earth (Hebrews 5:1-4; Genesis 12:1-3). Thus seen, the Jewish or Aaronic priesthood's validity was based upon God's ordination of this arrangement by giving Moses specific instructions as to who could serve in this capacity (Exodus 28:1).

The regulations and functions pertaining to Israel's Tabernacle and priesthood were symbolic of a much grander application than appeared on the surface (Hebrews 8:1-6). This assertion is also commented upon by Brother Russell: "In a word, Israel, as well as the Tabernacle, Priests, Levites and sacrifices, was a type. And what was there done in symbol with and for Israel is, since the first advent of Christ, being carried out on a higher plane, and on a larger scale, the latter being the reality, of which that was the type or shadow" (*Tabernacle Shadows*, p. 26).

During this Gospel age, the antitypical priesthood or Church is being developed in accordance with God's will under her head, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9,10). Two matters of particular interest in this regard are priestly qualifications and the installation of the priesthood into office.

Concerning priestly qualifications we read, "Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them" (Leviticus 21:17-21).

Although various physical deformities apparently debarred one from service at the altar in the Aaronic priesthood (verses 17 and 21), antitypically these seem to relate only to the underpriests as they sojourn in the flesh. When the body of Christ is completed, the Church will be fully qualified to be a part of the Melchisedec priesthood in glory.

The following twelve physical blemishes that would prevent someone from performing service in the typical sanctuary suggest spiritual deficiencies that need to be overcome by those who have received the heavenly calling.

1. **BLIND:** This implies that the spiritual vision is greatly impaired and instead of being able to see things from God's standpoint, matters are viewed from a fleshly and distorted perspective. New creatures are expected to consider fellow members of Christ's body, not according to their imperfections but, instead, according to the new will or mind (2 Corinthians 5:16,17). It is stated of those not making such progress, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9).

2. **LAME:** One so handicapped limps and is apt to stumble along the way. The action word "walk" as indicated in the following texts points to the developmental process necessary through the holy spirit that will ultimately remove the lameness evident at the start of one's Christian journey: "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2); "walk in the spirit" (Galatians 5:16); "walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15).

3. **FLAT-NOSED:** A life of devotion and fidelity to the principles of consecrated living is a sweet savor to the heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 2:14,15). A failure to appreciate the efforts of others toward righteousness and sacrifice may evidence a flat-nosed condition, where the emission of such fragrance is not perceived by one so afflicted.

4. **SUPERFLUITY:** No member of the Levitical priesthood could have any excess members such as an extra finger. The spirit begotten will gradually rid themselves of earthly encumbrances as much as possible so that they will have truly forsaken all to be followers of Christ (Colossians 3:1-6).

5. **BROKEN-FOOTED:** This impediment seems to imply difficulty moving from place to place. The communion of saints is a special privilege that should not be neglected (Hebrews 10:24,25). If excuses are found for failure to meet regularly with the brethren such as the length of time it takes to travel for worship, a feeling that the studies are not sufficiently stimulating, or making earthly concerns a higher priority, these things might well illustrate this condition.

6. **BROKEN-HANDED:** The hand is used to provide service and if it is broken or otherwise immobilized, it cannot perform. All of the Lord's people have one or more talents that should be used for the glory of God to assist his children, his cause or in promulgating the truth (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Galatians 5:13). Failure to take advantage of such opportunities would give evidence of this marked spiritual deficiency.

7. **CROOKBACKED (HUNCHBACK):** This condition seems to speak of an inability to stand upright and perform functions that one could do who was perfectly erect. Through the power of the holy spirit and by focusing upon the needs of others rather than self, believers can mutually strengthen and comfort each other (Galatians 6:2). Praying together, listening sympathetically, pointing to the precious promises, and other forms of direct involvement can do much to help others to overcome the various difficulties associated with this spiritual malady.

8. **DWARFED:** One whose growth has been stunted might readily fit this description. Progress along the narrow way is expected to be manifested in the lives of all the underpriests until they finish their course. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Although milk is necessary for growth in babes, attaining spiritual maturity requires partaking of strong meat associated with a sanctified lifestyle (Hebrews 5:12-14). One effective means of preventing dwarfism is a determined attitude of consecration (Philippians 3:13,14).

9. **EYE BLEMISHES:** Unlike blindness, those who are afflicted with this condition have some sight regarding spiritual matters but sometimes impediments cause their vision to be distorted in certain respects. One possible cause of this condition is pride. This attitude of condemning others for their weaknesses is indicative of a blemished eye, and was roundly censured as the Master spoke about someone attempting to remove the mote in his brother's eye while having a beam in his own (Luke 6:41,42).

10. **SCURVY:** Spiritual scurvy indicates something is lacking in the believer's diet. To have balance, the Christian should engage in a variety of activities that promote a knowledge of doctrine, the spirit of sacrifice, service for others, and character development. Those who never have a desire to engage in personal study of God's word, or to render assistance to those in need, would be hindered in their spiritual development even if they did other commendable things.

11. **SCABBED:** This relates to having an itch. The apostle Paul warned, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). Speculations regarding things not supported by Scripture may have a pleasant sound but may also lead to error (Isaiah 8:20).

12. **BROKEN STONES:** The Amplified Bible renders this expression as damaged testicles. It was necessary for the Logos to become the man Christ Jesus to give his life for father Adam and his progeny since all were sinners (Psalm 49:7). Although all the antitypical underpriests have received the imputed robe of righteousness, they will only be able to aid mankind in attaining life in the next age as part of Christ's body. Everything was dependent upon the faithfulness of the Master in laying down his life in sacrifice and providing a ransom for all to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

The Consecration of the Priesthood

The consecration of the priesthood is described in Leviticus 8. In this chapter we find Moses, representing God, Aaron, as high priest symbolizing Jesus the antitypical high priest, and Aaron's sons, the underpriests depicting the Gospel age Church or body of Christ as antitypical underpriests.

The calling to the Levitical priesthood occurred when Aaron and his sons were separated from the people of Israel and taken into the Court of the Tabernacle (Leviticus 8:1,2). Similarly, Jesus at the age of 30 responded to his calling when he presented himself in consecration at the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13; Hebrews 10:9). The call of the Church began at Pentecost after Christ appeared in the presence of God for those who would be his joint heirs (Romans 8:29,30; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 9:24).

Moses washed, clothed, and anointed Aaron during the consecration ritual to typify the righteousness and perfection of the Master (Leviticus 8:6-12). The anointing oil was a precious ointment used on both the high priests and the kings of Israel. This seems to indicate divine appointment into office (Exodus 30:31-33). Jesus, the undefiled one, needed no washing (Hebrews 7:26) and was anointed with the holy spirit, the oil of gladness above his fellows, at the time of his baptism (Hebrews 1:9).

The following words suggest the glorious nature and power of the Lord exercised in his glorious kingdom reign: "As Aaron stood there clothed in those beautiful robes so typically significant, and was anointed with the holy oil, his head represented Jesus, the Head of the Priesthood, while his body represented the Church, complete in Christ. How impressive and significant a type of the

world's High Priest, undefiled, and clothed with power and authority to fulfill Jehovah's covenants" (*Tabernacle Shadows*, p. 36).

Moses also washed and clothed Aaron's sons (Leviticus 8:6,13). They needed to be cleansed before putting on the garments. They wore bonnets that identified them as underpriests who were set apart for holy service. The church is justified and inducted into the priesthood, wearing Christ's imputed robes of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

Three animals are featured in the Leviticus 8 ceremony. The first was the bullock for the sin-offering provided by Moses. After Aaron and his sons laid their hands on it -- showing in this picture that the bullock represented all of them -- Moses slew it. The blood of the bullock, picturing a sacrificed life, was put on the horns of the altar and poured around its base to sanctify that altar (Leviticus 8:14,15).

In the type Moses took the choice inner parts of the bullock and burned them on the brazen altar, but the hide, flesh, and dung were burned outside the camp (Leviticus 8:16,17). The burning of the fat, caul, and kidneys suggests the manner in which the antitypical priesthood's best powers are yielded and consumed in its sacrificial walk. This occurred with Jesus and it must occur with the church. The burning of the hide, flesh, and dung that occurred outside the camp shows that the world sees the sacrifice of the Christ with disesteem, as a stench.

The second animal was the ram of burnt offering (Leviticus 8:20,21). Burnt offerings indicate God's acceptance of sacrifices by fire. There is no record of the head being washed; it thus represents the perfection of Jesus. But the other parts of the animal were cut and washed. The entire offering was burnt and suggests that God totally accepted the sacrifice of Jesus with his body.

The third animal was the ram of consecration (Leviticus 8:22-32). It appears to be a peace offering for the church because after Christ appeared in the presence of God, the begetting of the holy spirit came to the church at Pentecost, manifesting divine acceptance of that sacrifice.

Leviticus 8:23 shows the blood from this ram was placed on the right ear, the right thumb, and the right toe of Aaron and his sons. As the church emulates the Master this represents a hearing ear of faith and appreciation of the precious promises, the hand symbolizes activity in God's service, and the right toe represented a walk in newness of life.

"And out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before the LORD, he took one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, and put them on the fat, and upon the right shoulder" (Leviticus 8:26). Consecrated spirit-begotten believers should be extremely thankful for the unleavened cake which represents the righteousness and purity of Christ covering their fleshly imperfections. There was taken from this same basket a cake of oiled bread symbolizing the indwelling spirit of God, or sanctification, that separates believers from the world (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The wafer represents hope and faith in the precious promises that believers might be glorified, will receive the divine nature, and share with the Lord in the blessed work of restoring mankind (1 John 3:3).

In verses 27-29 the concept of a wave offering is introduced in connection with the peace offering. The consecrated are to be engaged in a daily, continual presentation of themselves in a life of sacrifice. Here Moses is a picture of God who assists with the believers' sacrifice. Sacrificers must not end their vow of consecration until God says "it is enough, come up higher." None should grow weary in well doing because it is God's will that the church should be faithful;

he will provide all the assistance needed.

The calling to the priesthood during this Gospel age provides the consecrated a unique opportunity to assist in the grand work of restoring all that was lost to mankind through Adam's sin. The regimen for this vocation is demanding, but divine assistance is provided by the heavenly Father and his faithful son, Christ Jesus. As this priestly class is now being developed, all who have been accepted as members of the body of Christ can attest to the Lord's strengthening influence in their lives as he waits for the completion of his bride. May all believers be spurred on to greater fervency in their sacrificial walk by the glorious promise, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

The Lord's Side **The Levites**

I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.
-- Numbers 8:18

Michael Nekora

Before there was a Tabernacle, the tribe of Levi distinguished itself in a special way. When Moses was communing unseen with God in the mount, the people grew restless because he had been away so long. Eventually they pressured Aaron to make them a god they could see and the golden calf was the result. God in his displeasure sent Moses down from the mount to deal with the rebellion. Moses, astounded when he saw what they had done, issued this call: "Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him" (Exodus 32:26). They became the "Lord's army" and went through the nation slaying 3,000 of the worst offenders.

Although the first-born of Israel did not die the night the avenging angel went through the land of Egypt, God considered them to be his special possession. But rather than taking all the first-borns from all the tribes, he exchanged them for the entire tribe of Levi. Levi was the smallest tribe. It had exactly 22,000 males who were at least one month old. There was a total of 22,273 first-born males from all the tribes. The formula of substitution required that five shekels for each of the 273 "unredeemed" be paid (Numbers 3:42-47). This became the standard redemption price for every subsequent first-born after this exchange took place (Numbers 18:16).

Israel did not become God's special people because they were good. The opposite was true. "The LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Deuteronomy 9:6). Likewise Levi and his descendants were not selected for special honor because of an innate goodness. Levi and his brother Simeon deceived Shechem when they told him they would allow their sister Dinah to become his wife if he and all the other males were circumcised. The men agreed. "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. . . . And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites" (Genesis 34:25,30). Later when Jacob prophesied about each of his sons, he said, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:5-7).

"As we examine ourselves in the light of God's holiness, do we find ourselves any better qualified for God's service than was Levi of old? Why even today, who is there among us that does not still find within himself traces of that basic cruelty? -- and were it not for the grace of God (who by way of the indwelling spirit, the holy spirit, has sharpened our consciences and tenderized our hearts) to what depth of iniquity towards our fellowman would not our selfishness (our selfish nature) lead us!" -- Anton Frey, *Notes on the Tabernacle*, p. 348.

The Levitical Service

The males from the age of 30 to 50 disassembled and transported the Tabernacle whenever the cloud covering it moved from one place to another.

“From fifty years old the Levite retires from the labour of the service, and shall serve no more; but he shall minister with his brethren in the tent of meeting, and keep the charge (Numbers 8:25,26). Three different thoughts come before the mind in this connection. First, it seems to indicate that Levitical service is to be marked by full competence, and that no feature of decline or decrepitude is to appear in it. It suggests the maintenance of a high standard of efficiency, in a spiritual sense, as being the only thing suitable in the service of God. Second, it conveys an impression of a time limit to active service. We should labour in the sense of this all the time. Even the Lord said, ‘I must work the works of him that has sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no man can work’ (John 9:4). Each of us has his ‘day’ of service; it will soon be over; how important to fill it up rightly! The Levite had the sense all the time that he had a measured period in which to serve, and that the time was coming when it would close . . . Our allotted period of service here in the tent of meeting will soon be over, and we shall never have another opportunity for that service. . . . But a third thought seems to be also suggested in this Scripture: namely, that when arduous labour is no longer permitted to the Levite, he retains an honorable place in the ministry with his brethren, and keeps the charge. He is not degraded but rather dignified . . . there comes a time when strenuous toil is no longer possible; it has to be left to younger servants. But how precious is the grace that still permits an aged, and perhaps invalid, Levite -- brother or sister -- to ‘minister with his brethren in the tent of meeting, and keep the charge.’ ” -- Coates, *An Outline of Numbers*, p. 110.

Although a Levite had to be at least 30 years old to have an active part in the service of the Tabernacle, in fact the Levites began to serve when they turned 25.

“Though the Levites might come to labor in the work of the service of the tent of meeting from twenty-five years old (Numbers 8:24), they did not serve in carrying the Tabernacle and its furniture until thirty years old. They had, if we may so say, to serve a five years’ apprenticeship in relation to holy things before they were qualified to render the service of which [Numbers] chapter 4 speaks. We must not suppose that a desire or readiness to serve on our part will give spiritual competency. This must be divinely given, and it will be normally in keeping with the spiritual maturity of the servant. A babe in Christ might be fresh in his affections, and fervent in spirit, but something more than this is needed for service of a high order spiritually. The more spiritual any service is the more does it require spiritual maturity in the one who renders it.” -- Coates, *An Outline of Numbers*, p. 32.

No Inheritance in the Land

Because they were considered as the Lord’s, the Levites received 48 cities scattered throughout Canaan but no territory when the land was divided up (Numbers 35:7). They were considered to be so devoted to the Lord that when Moses numbered the Israelites to determine how many were able to go forth to war (Numbers 1:3), the Levites were explicitly excluded (see verse 47).

“[The Levites] were consecrated to the priestly office, which in all countries has been exempted customarily, and in Israel by the express authority of God, from military service. The custody of the things devoted to Divine service was assigned to them so exclusively, that ‘no stranger’ -- i. e., no person, not even an Israelite of any other tribe, was allowed, under penalty of death, to approach these, and hence they encamped around the tabernacle, that there should be no

manifestation of Divine displeasure among the people.” -- Jamieson, Faussett & Brown, *A Commentary* [on Numbers 1:47-54].

The Levites were exempt from military service. It is likely they also escaped the death penalty that fell on Israel soon after the people left Egypt. In Numbers 13 Moses selects 12 representatives and sends them on a spying expedition. Upon their return, ten say they can't go in because the people “that dwell in the land” are too strong; Joshua and Caleb say, with God's help, they can. The people agree with the ten and want to stone Joshua and Caleb. For this gross violation of faith and trust in God, a terrible judgment falls: “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun” (Numbers 14:29,30).

When we take a careful look at the listing of the 12 spies, we find the tribe of Levi was not represented. Each spy is named in Numbers 13:4-15. Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's two sons, plus Jacob's other ten sons, but not Levi, make the number 12. Levi stands apart from what happens. Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons, had to have been at least 30 years old to “minister in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father” (Numbers 3:4). Eleazar succeeded his father as high priest and worked with Joshua after the nation entered Caanan. So Eleazar, like Joshua, Caleb, and probably a great many other older Levites, did not die during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The Levites had not participated in the spying, in the evil report, and it is likely they were also exempt from the judgment of death on those 20 years old and older.

Six of the Levitical cities had a special function: “And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge” (Numbers 35:6). “And they appointed [as cities of refuge] Kedesh . . . Shechem . . . and Kirjatharba [known as Hebron today] . . . And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer . . . Ramoth . . . and Golan” (Joshua 20:7,8). By selecting Levitical cities God arranged that all tribal prejudice or bias would be eliminated when someone being pursued should enter asking for asylum.

The procedure was that if anyone should accidentally be responsible for the death of another, he would flee to a city of refuge and ask for protection from those who might kill him to avenge the death. If the authorities hearing the circumstances of the case agreed that it was accidental, the person could safely dwell in the city of refuge. In a sense it was a kind of house arrest. If the person strayed from the city, he lost the protection it afforded. However, when the high priest died, those in the cities of refuge were emancipated. They could go forth and no longer be in danger of death.

These cities of refuge picture what is available to the one condemned by the strict justice of God. Where might a sinner obtain refuge? “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). We “have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:18). Pastor Russell writes:

“From the moment, therefore, that we recognize that we are sinners -- that we could not stand approved in the divine presence -- from that moment we realize that the avenger, Justice, is upon our trail, and that it is only a question of time when we will be overtaken and destroyed unless we reach some place of refuge. . . . Christ is the only place of refuge, and to him we have to flee. . . . If we leave the city of refuge, if we abandon our trust in the precious blood which cleanseth us from all sin, we become liable again to the demands of Justice and that without mercy. Divine justice is represented in the avenger, as divine mercy is represented in the city of refuge, and he

who would leave the city of refuge necessarily falls into the hands of Justice. . . . We must thus abide ‘until the death of the high priest.’ . . . Soon the entire high priest, its every member, will have died. Then the new dispensation will be ushered in and no longer will we be obliged to own our own imperfection and the need of a covering before justice; from thenceforth having been made perfect by a share in the First Resurrection, having been made like our Lord and Master, we shall be presented before the Father blameless, unprovable, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, without any vengeance against us on the part of divine justice. The entire arrangement is of God -- Justice is the avenger of sin, and Christ is the refuge and deliverance.” -- *Reprints*, p. 3093.

Typical Significance of the Tribe of Levi

The tribe of Levi consisted of two groups: a small number of priests and underpriests, and a great number of non-priests. Only the priests saw the glory and beauty of the inner chambers of the Tabernacle. In fact the priests had to cover all the articles of furniture before the Kohathite Levites carried them from one place to another (Numbers 4:5-15). Yet both priests and ordinary Levites were treated the same in one respect: none of them received land. Paul writes, “These things occurred to [Israel] typically, and were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11, *Diaglott*). What might this tribe and its service typify?

“In order to have a full and complete picture of what is typified by the tribe of Levi, we must remember how they came into their position of either being priests or of serving the priests. They were all a part of Israel, but God separated them unto himself; he gave them no inheritance in the land. All their rights were withheld from them and they were made dependent upon the other tribes. Why was this? The answer is that they were taken by the Lord as instead of the ‘firstborn’ of all the tribes of Israel. Thus the tribe of Levi became the typical ‘church of the first-born.’ Then out of this typical ‘church of the first-born’ the Lord selected a priestly family, Aaron and his sons, who typified the royal priesthood, Christ and his church. All of the tribe of Levi represented the church of the first-born and the family of Aaron represented the ‘very elect.’ ” -- *Reprints*, p. 4745.

Paul writes, “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). The first-born in typical Israel were the Levites because they were substituted for the literal first-borns. Here in Hebrews we are told they are “written in heaven.” And that is what we should expect since they literally did not inherit the land. So it is in the reality: a small number of priests and underpriests (the church with her head Jesus Christ) has a special role, and a Great Company have a secondary role to play in the plan of God. Yet both have no inheritance in the land. Both groups are in heaven: the church is seated on the throne, the great multitude is before the throne (Revelation 7:9; 19:6).

Under King David the Levites are described as “officers and judges” responsible for all the “business of the LORD, and in the service of the king” (1 Chronicles 26:29,30). In the days of Hezekiah the Levites “taught the good knowledge of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 30:22). In Josiah’s time the teaching function had become a title: “The Levites that taught all Israel” (2 Chronicles 35:3). When Nehemiah reestablished the broken walls of Jerusalem, the Levites “taught the people” (Nehemiah 8:9). Thus in the kingdom those who are part of the “church of the first born,” antitypical Levites, will be used by God to teach the people his righteous laws so all may worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24).

A Picture of the Kingdom

The three major families of Levites had responsibility for different parts of the Tabernacle. The Gershonite Levites were given two wagons and four oxen to transport the curtains, hangings, etc. (Numbers 3:25,26; 4:24-26; 7:7). The Merari Levites were given four wagons and eight oxen to transport the boards, pillars, sockets, cords and pins, etc. (Numbers 3:36,37; 4:31,32; 7:8). The Kohathite Levites were given no wagons. They carried the sacred articles of the Tabernacle upon their shoulders (Numbers 3:31; 4:34-36; 7:9).

The clear status difference among these three families could picture the state of the completed work of God's great plan of the ages. Looking at the groups camped on the four sides of the Tabernacle (and ignoring all the other tribes camped some distance away), we can see four distinct classes after the world of mankind reaches perfection in the kingdom:

1. Jesus Christ and his church on the east side (where we find Moses, Aaron, and the priestly family). It is from the east that the sun comes forth each day to shed its healing beams upon the earth beneath (see Malachi 4:2).
2. The Great Company on the north side (Merari, a name meaning bitter, perhaps indicating it is through bitter experiences that they reach their goal [see Revelation 7:14]). Isaiah 14:12,13 implies that God's throne is in the "north" making that direction synonymous with heaven.
3. The faithful patriarchs and prophets who lived and died before Christ on the south side (Kohath, a name meaning allied, perhaps indicating they are allied with the church in heart and mind, though separated in time).
4. The entire rescued world of mankind on the west side (Gershon, a name meaning refugees or rescued).

NOTE: Much of this article was taken from *Notes on the Tabernacle* by Anton Frey.

From Shadow to Reality

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. -- Hebrews 10:1

A verse-by-verse study in Hebrews 9

Israel's Tabernacle in the wilderness was an essential part of the teachings of the early church. An exposition of this Old Testament picture is central to the theme of the book of Hebrews. Chapter 9 contrasts the Tabernacle and the typical Law Covenant with the arrangements of the New Covenant and the blessings it holds for Israel and all people who shall eventually avail themselves of its privileges.

A Better Tabernacle -- verses 1-5

“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.”

It may be noted that the King James Version, quoted above, has the word “covenant” in italics, showing that there is no supporting word in the Greek texts. Other translations insert the word “tabernacle,” which is probably more appropriate. However it is true that all the services of the ancient Tabernacle were dictated by the Law Covenant given at Mt. Sinai.

The writer of Hebrews proceeds with a straightforward description of the furniture in the Tabernacle. Noteworthy is the omission of the golden altar and the placement, instead, of the golden censer in the Most Holy. A number of translations, including the American Revised and several modern paraphrases, render the word “altar” instead of “censer,” assuming the placement in the Holy of Holies to be a copyist error. Barclay's translation renders this section thus: “It [the Holy of Holies] was approached by the golden altar of incense.” This is supported by the fact that if the censer was meant rather than the golden altar, the latter would be the only item of furniture omitted.

However there is much to be said in favor of the Authorized Version. The Greek word for altar is *thusiasterion*, while the word here is the closely related *thumiasterion*. The latter word is found in the Septuagint of 2 Chronicles 26:19 and Ezekiel 8:11 where censer is clearly meant. *Thumiasterion* is derived from *thumao*, burning, while *thusiasterion* is a derivative of *thusiaso*, to sacrifice (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

Additional evidence can be derived from Leviticus 16:12, which reads, “And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil.”

The obvious reading here is that the censer was brought within the second veil. The Hebrew word rendered “veil” in this passage always refers to the entrance to the Most Holy, the other two

Tabernacle entrances being consistently referred to by Hebrew words translated “gate” and “door.”

The incense was to cover the mercy seat before the blood was sprinkled. While some incense could have penetrated beyond the veil, it is difficult to imagine how the high priest would know when enough had done so to cover the mercy seat.

Spiritually the sprinkling of the incense apparently represents the intercession of Jesus on behalf of the church (and ultimately the world). This intercession is described in Hebrews 9:24 as being “in heaven itself,” a condition pictured by the Holy of Holies.

William Crawford, in a letter published in the *Reprints*, comments on a footnote in the *Emphatic Diaglott*. He writes: “Apparently from the reading of this verse, the censer, full of burning coals of fire, as well as the incense, were both taken by the priest beyond the second veil” (*Reprints*, p. 5961). He then proceeds to suggest that the incense was “brought in” by penetration from the golden altar. He does note, however, that there is no doubt that the veil referred to is the one separating the holy from the most holy.

A Better Priesthood -- verses 6-11

“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.”

The scene now turns from the furniture to the actors. The major role in the sacrificial drama of Old Testament worship was played by the high priest. His usual domain was the Holy (here called the “first tabernacle”). Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, he went into the second compartment, the Most Holy, with blood for his own sins and for the people’s transgressions.

The author of Hebrews indicates the lesson is that the way to the Most Holy was not available until the blood was brought to the mercy seat. The blood of bulls and goats, he points out, was only a picture of a higher reality. This greater reality was the sacrifice of Christ, an offering which needed no repetition, but was given once, efficacious for all time.

To this agree the words in chapter ten: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19,20). Further confirmation comes from the apostle Paul: “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

Better Blood -- verses 12-14

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

The comparison now turns from the actor in the typical drama of redemption to the blood as the means of atonement. Later the body of the animal will be emphasized: “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:11,12).

In both references the blood refers to the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus. The bodies, however, being plural, suggest a wider picture than Jesus alone; it includes those who lay down their lives as a “living sacrifice” with him (Romans 12:1).

Some are inclined to take the references to “the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer” as signifying that the reality pictured by each of these sacrifices is Jesus. We suggest that this is a generic reference to the sacrifices of ancient times and not a specific designation of the individual animals involved. The metaphor might be idiomatically translated “for if ancient sacrifices sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, how much more valuable is the blood of atonement offered by Jesus alone.”

The effect of Jesus’ sacrifice is to remove the consciousness of sin from those wishing to serve God acceptably. It is to the same effect that the apostle Paul writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (Romans 8:1).

A Better Covenant -- verses 15-20

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.”

The word “testament” in this passage would be better rendered “covenant,” as it is in many respected translations. The subject is obviously the bringing in of a “new” covenant to replace a former one. The stated object of such an exchange is that “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” The former covenant is undoubtedly the Law Covenant, under which the Jewish people were striving unsuccessfully for eternal life.

The question then remains as to whether “they which are called” refers to the entire nation of Israel or only those who were called with the high calling opened up by the sacrifice of Christ and initiated at Pentecost. To answer this question we need to proceed to the method by which this

new covenant comes into force -- "the death of the testator."

If the testator is understood to be the maker of a will, we are faced with the problem of the identity of the testator. Christians are spoken of as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:17). Obviously God does not die and Jesus is not the giver of the inheritance: he is a "joint-heir."

In fact the illustration is based on the Old Testament method of making a covenant. Commenting on this verse, Professor W. E. Vine writes: "We may render somewhat literally thus: 'For where a covenant (is), a death (is) necessary to be brought in of the one covenanting; for a covenant over dead ones (victims) is sure,' . . . The writer is speaking from a Jewish point of view, not from that of the Greeks."

The dead animals by which the Law Covenant was ratified are listed as "calves and goats," the blood of which, with the ceremonial usage of water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, was used to sprinkle "the book and all the people." The reference is to the inauguration of the Law Covenant recorded in Exodus 24:3-8. The multiplicity of the animals used suggests that they represent not only the sacrifice of Jesus, but of his footstep followers as well.

If this be the case, then the covenant is not completely in force until the death of all the ratifying animals, the members of Christ's body. In this case the phrase "those which are called" refers not only to those transferred at Jesus' first advent but of "all the people," the nation of Israel prefiguring the entire human race. Since this applies both to the church and to mankind, the covenant referred to may be thought of as the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31.

Purifying the Heavens -- verses 21-23

"Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

While the account of the inauguration of the covenant mentions the sprinkling of the altar (Exodus 24:6), it does not mention the sprinkling of the vessels of ministry. The instruments of the Tabernacle were sprinkled with the anointing oil in the service for the consecration of the priesthood (Leviticus 8). There was a sprinkling of the golden altar mentioned in Leviticus 16:20 which carried out the command of Exodus 30:10.

This would indicate that this sprinkling of blood related to the work of the entire Aaronic priesthood and was not accomplished until they and the Tabernacle were purified for service. These animal sacrifices, our text explains, prefigure far greater sacrifices (plural) than those used to cleanse Israel's ancient Tabernacle.

Entering the Holiest -- verses 24-28

‘For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.’

The Tabernacle drama is brought to a close in this final section. In contrast to the typical high priest needing to enter the Most Holy with the blood of atonement, Christ the greater high priest needed but to enter the reality (heaven) once with the blood sufficient for all time. The entrance beyond the veil into the holiest compartment represented the death of the one entering. So Jesus entered heaven by means of his sacrificial death on Calvary's cross.

If the high priest did not carry out the typical ritual to the last detail, he was subject to the penalty of death by the Lord. Not only did this affect his own future, it was of deep concern to the entire nation as well since the atonement for their sins would not have been made. It is claimed that the nation waited in the vicinity of the Tabernacle for the high priest to return unscathed. They would all then cheer for the atonement of their sins had successfully taken place.

The reality is that Jesus Christ entered heaven to make intercession for the world through his death. All mankind awaits the outcome of this judgment, for it portends their own release from death.

Thus, it was after the men of ancient times died symbolically before sprinkling the blood of atonement that the judgment of the successfulness of that atonement was rendered. In the reality the success of that judgment is assured. "So," concludes the writer, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." How the welcome Hallelujah shouts of the entire human race will resound through all eternity for such a salvation as this.

Poems and Short Features

The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle too makes known
God's mighty plan, so vast, so real;
The bullock and the goat are shown;
What sacrifice these types reveal!

The altar and the laver stand
Within the Court, by sacred Word,
Then Altar, Table, Lamps so grand,
Within the Holy of the Lord.

Oh wondrous thought! We here can dwell!
To holiest place we can draw nigh;
And these great things so sacred, tell
Of heavenly joys we'll have on high.

So while the Harvest still is here,
And ere descends the pall of night,
We have the peace that knows not fear,
And praises God for Truth's glorious light.

-- *Poems of the Way* (p. 108)

Building the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle of old was . . . built by Moses according to a pattern shown him in the mount (Hebrews 8:5; Exodus 25:40). We like to think of that ancient edifice as a symbol or picture of Christ Jesus who, while on this earth, was virtually a tabernacle or sanctuary in which God dwelt by his Spirit. As Moses was required to leave behind him his people -- the nation of Israel -- and ascend into the mountain (Exodus 24:18) to obtain this vision, i.e., to “see” the pattern according to which he was to build the dwelling-place of God, the Tabernacle among the people, so too must we respond to the invitation of God . . . by consecration to separate ourselves from the “people of the land,” and climb the “mountain of spirituality” in order to obtain from God that vision of Christ Jesus, according to which we too are to build our “tabernacles” to be the dwelling-places of God among the people.

-- Anton Frey, *Notes on the Tabernacle*, p. 3

Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. -- Ephesians 2:20-22

Let us, as day after day rolls by, remember our three-fold relationship to this Temple: 1. We are still in process of preparation as living stones. 2. As members of the Royal Priesthood carrying the Ark we are marching from the Tabernacle into the Temple condition; some of our number have already entered in and some are still on the way. 3. As the Lord's people the time has come for us to know, to sing with the spirit and understanding, the new song of divine mercy, justice, love and truth. Let us be faithful in each of these respects, fulfilling our parts, and ere long our course will be ended and the glory of the Lord will fill the Temple.

-- Manna, *September 26*

News and Views

Pastoral Bible Institute News

World News

Religious

For the first time, North Korea has replaced Saudi Arabia as the country where Christians are most severely persecuted, according to the "World Watch List" released on Aug. 12 by Open Doors. The semi-annual World Watch List ranks countries according to the level of persecution Christians face for following Jesus Christ. Growing evidence of severe oppression in North Korea has confirmed what many observers have believed for years, that the communist dictatorship of Kim Jong Il stops at nothing to eradicate all belief systems other than the worship of Kim himself and his deceased father, Kim Il Sung. Both father and son have made every attempt to purge the land of Christians. Ranked third on the list is the Southeast Asian nation of Laos, where government authorities accuse Christians of causing religious division. Vietnam, Turkmenistan, Maldives, Bhutan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia round out the top ten, listed respectively in order of their ranking. Six of the top ten countries are governed by Islamic regimes. One -- Bhutan -- is predominately Buddhist, and three -- Laos, Vietnam and Turkmenistan -- are communist-ruled.

-- Christian News Service, 8/26/2002

A joint parliamentary committee has been formed of members of the House of Commons, an elected body, and the House of Lords, an appointed body. Its task is to determine the future of the House of Lords. Because the Church of England is the official church of Britain, some of the peers who serve in the House of Lords are bishops of the church. In the selection of the seats on the joint committee, none of the 26 bishops who serve in the House were chosen. The bishops are outraged. The Bishop of Guildford told his peers: "Composition of this house touches on two crucial aspects of our constitution -- the nature of our parliamentary democracy and the establishment of the church." There is speculation that the ruling labor (socialist) party is planning to disestablish the Church.

-- Guardian Newspaper, 7/5/2002

Dr. Rowan Williams, a former theological professor, was named as the next Archbishop of Canterbury -- head of the Anglican Church worldwide -- signaling the potential for a shift in the relationship between Church and state. Tony Blair, UK prime minister approved the appointment. Dr. Williams is the first Archbishop of Canterbury in modern times to be chosen from outside the Church of England to be Primate of All England and head of the Anglican Communion. Dr. Williams has said he favors cutting the links between Church and State, and the relaxation of the rules on divorcees who remarry. His biggest challenge is to reverse the decline in church going that has made baptized Anglicans a minority in England for the first time since the Reformation.

-- Financial Times, 7/24/2002

In Nukus, Uzbekistan on August 9, police without a search warrant searched an apartment, seized religious literature including a Bible, and claimed that Uzbek citizens were not allowed to have Bibles. The 13 Protestants present were subsequently fined between five and 10 per cent of the minimum wage. The Karakalpakstan authorities have adopted a harsh attitude toward Christians in the Protestant churches. According to Keston, it is all but impossible for communities to register, and many Protestant leaders have been subjected to fines.

-- Crosswalk.com, 8/25/2002

Less than a third of seminary students intend to minister in congregations, according to a study by Auburn Theological Seminary in New York. It's common to hear people confess to being afraid that if they answer a call to ministry, God might send them to Africa as a missionary. But, as jarring as it sounds, more and more spiritually sensitive and creative young Christians are now more frightened that God will ask them to be pastor of the church on the suburban corner. The result, say researchers and seminary leaders, is an impending pastor shortage. The impact is already being felt. For all denominations surveyed by the Alban Institute, the number of ministers under 35 has fallen precipitously since the 1970s -- dropping by at least half and for some two thirds. Seminaries and other organizations concerned for the future of the church are studying and discussing these trends. They cite a litany of negatives -- the prospect of low pay, exhausting job demands and dwindling social respect -- that make the pastorate so unattractive to young adults. Some highly publicized scandals involving ministers only make matters worse.

-- Associated Baptist Press, 8/25/2002

Social

The AIDS epidemic, which experts thought had begun to level off, seems to be accelerating. According to the latest estimates from the U.N., AIDS will claim 68 million lives by 2020 -- roughly the number of people killed in all the wars of the 20th century combined. In the hardest-hit countries, the public health systems have utterly failed. In the first survey of how widely anti-HIV treatments are used, researchers found that less than 4% of those infected have access to appropriate medications.

-- TIME, 7/15/2002

Air pollutants trapped inside homes from stoves that burn coal, wood or cow dung have been linked to the premature deaths of 2.1 million women and children each year. Officials at the international [World Health] summit readily agreed that indoor air pollution is a global threat. More than half of the world's households cook or heat using unprocessed solid fuels such as wood and agricultural waste. In India about 75% of households use these fuels. Half a million children and women die each year from indoor air pollution in India. China accounts for another heavy concentration of smoke-related illness and death. But such cooking practices also are widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and in many poor and rural areas of Latin America.

-- Los Angeles Times, 8/29/2002

One in every 32 adults in the United States was behind bars or on probation or parole by the end of last year, according to a government report that found a record 6.6 million people in the nation's correctional system. The number of adults under supervision by the criminal justice system rose by 147,700, or 2.3 percent, between 2000 and 2001, the Justice Department reported. In 1990, almost 4.4 million adults were incarcerated or being supervised. "The overall figures suggest that we've come to rely on the criminal justice system as a way of responding to social problems in a way that's unprecedented," said Marc Mauer, assistant director of the Sentencing Project, an advocacy and research group that favors alternatives to incarceration. "We're setting a new record every day."

-- Associated Press, 8/26/2002

There are 1.1 billion people without reliable access to fresh water. There are 10 million people who die of water-borne diseases, such as cholera and dysentery, every year. Others have good reason to worry about the future, as country after country around the world becomes water stressed. In every corner of the globe, the indications of the impending crisis become more obvious: Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Cyprus, Malta, and the Arabian Peninsula currently use all of their fresh-water resources; Saudi Arabia faces depletion of its fresh water within 50 years; in the Gaza Strip, seawater is leaking into underground aquifers, which are being depleted three times faster than they can be replenished; Egypt's population is expected to increase by one million people per year until 2010 -- now it gets barely enough water from the Nile to meet demand. Egypt has announced that it will go to war if any of the eight countries to the south diverts more than its share of the Nile. The Aral Sea in Central Asia, once the world's largest lake, has lost 80 percent of its volume since the Soviet union decided to divert the rivers that fed it in order to irrigate the cotton crop. Groundwater in India and Bangladesh is contaminated with arsenic. Eighty percent of China's rivers are too polluted for fish to survive. Mexico City could go completely dry in the next decade as it uses groundwater 50 to 80 percent faster than it can be regenerated, sinking the city by about 20 inches per year.

-- Across The Board magazine, July/August 2002

The newspapers and television call it Jahrhundertflut -- the once-in-a-century flood. It has cost at least 16 German lives, swept away houses and cars, torn up roads, buckled railway lines and forced more than 100,000 to leave their homes, the biggest such evacuation of Germans since the second world war. The damage it has wrought in the former East Germany, still struggling to its feet a dozen years after the end of communism, has caused talk about a "second rebuilding" of the east and how to pay for it. In the state capital, Dresden, the Elbe reached a record high on August 17th. People battled to save the baroque city center. As the Elbe's floodwaters headed north, they left a terrible mess. More than 530km of railway lines in Saxony and 740km of roads were rendered useless and 180 bridges destroyed. The main rail lines connecting Dresden with Berlin, Leipzig and Prague were broken. Swiss Re, a reinsurer, has estimated euro15 billion (\$14.7 billion) for the total damage done by the floods in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. Vladimir Spidla, the Czech prime minister, says the cost of cleaning up his country may exceed \$2 billion. In Germany, the finance minister of Saxony on August 21st estimated the damage in his state alone would cost up to euro16 billion (\$15.7 billion) to put right.

-- The Economist, 8/22/2002

Civil

During the 1990s, the UN reports, 2.4 percent of the world's forests were destroyed, almost all in tropical regions in Africa and Latin America. The estimated total area destroyed -- 220 million acres -- is larger than the size of Venezuela. Nearly one-third of coral reefs were seriously degraded and 60 percent of the world's oceans have been overfished. Fresh water demand is doubling worldwide every 21 years, and agriculture represents 70 percent of this consumption. By 2025, half the world's projected 8 billion population is expected to be thirsty. But 60 million people have been infected with AIDS, with 20 million deaths. An additional 45 million infections are predicted in the next 8 years, largely in Africa. According to the World Health Organization, 2.7 million people die from malaria each year. Most of the victims are young and live in sub-Saharan Africa, but the mosquito-borne disease is surging again in South America and parts of Asia, too. More than 3 million people die every year from the effects of air pollution, and 2.2 million people die from contaminated water, the United Nations found. According to the World Bank, 2.8 billion people live on less than \$2 per day. Most of them are the same people who do not have access to clean water, sanitation or adequate food. The environmental group Worldwatch calculates the richest 1 billion people on Earth receive 78 percent of the annual income, while child mortality is 19 times greater in low-income nations.

-- Associated Press, 8/25/2002

A new report on immigration from the Middle East finds that the Mideast immigrant population in the US has grown nearly eightfold from 1970 to 2000. The report projects the same population will almost double again by 2010. With children born in the US, the Mideast immigrant community will grow to 3.4 million by 2010 from 2 million in 2000. Such growth could make securing the homeland a whole lot harder, says the report's author, Steven Camarota of the Center for Immigration Studies. It could also alter US support for Israel, he says. The immigration system "has a logic and a momentum all its own, creating social forces and trends that really would have been entirely unexpected a generation ago," Camarota said. "One of the consequences is that we're likely to see increased political pressure for changes in US foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict," he said. With the growth has come a dramatic shift in the religious makeup of Mideast immigrants. In 1970 just 15% of Mideast immigrants were Muslim. In 2000, 73% were. Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum is concerned about the possible threat the increase in Muslim population poses. "Militant Islam is a threat, is a challenge to the United States. Its ambitions are very great. They're not limited to foreign policy, but seek also to change the very nature of the United States."

-- Investors Business Daily, 8/21/2002

Israel and the United States are said to have detected a significant acceleration in Russia's effort to build a nuclear reactor in Iran. An Egyptian report said that Russia and Iran have increased the number of personnel working on the Bushehr nuclear reactor. So far, the report said, more than 20,000 people are at the site. The report, published in the monthly journal by the United Arab Emirates military, said Israel and the United States have determined that the number of personnel at Bushehr has significantly increased over the last few months. The increase consists of scientists and technicians, and the activity in the area has been described as 'unusual.'

-- Middle East Newline, 8/21/2002

Financial

Disgruntled Saudis have pulled tens of billions of dollars out of the US, signaling a growing disenchantment with America. One analyst said the total funds withdrawn by individual investors amounted to \$200 billion. Accusations that Saudi Arabia's austere brand of Islam breeds terrorism have been perceived in the kingdom as attacks on Saudi society and its religion. Details of Saudi investments in the US are sketchy but financial analysts believe they range from \$400 billion to \$600 billion. The Saudi money shifts may have contributed to the recent downward pressure on the dollar. Despite statements by both the US and Saudi governments that ties remain strong, tensions are also exacerbated by the apparent US determination to seek regime change in Iraq through possible military action, a policy opposed by the oil-rich kingdom.

-- Financial Times, 8/21/2002

The latest sign of a shifting balance of oil power came when Russia's largest petroleum company, Lukoil, got government permission to ship up to 12 million metric tons of oil and oil products yearly through a new Baltic terminal. Earlier, the number two Russian oil company, Yukos, sent its first shipment of crude to the U.S. Another Russian firm, Transneft is planning to build an oil pipeline across the Bering Strait into North America. Russia has already been able to increase production by about a million barrels a day in the past two years. With an average output of 7.1 million barrels per day for the first four months of 2002, it is close to passing Saudi Arabia (7.3 million barrels) as the world's largest oil producer. Saudi Arabia still has much larger reserves than Russia and it can produce oil more cheaply than Russia can. However, Russia may be largely immune to the Saudis' chief weapon: its ability to arrange oil gluts and sink prices. With a diversified industrial economy, Russia is not solely dependent on oil exports to prop up its economy, and can profit from cheap oil if prices drop, just as it can profit from oil exports if prices rise. The Saudis however, are as dependent on oil money as anyone. So their own weapon is looking more and more like a suicide bomb.

-- Investors' Business Daily, 7/25/2002

The early 21st century may be turning into one of those periods in American history, like the populist and progressive eras at the turn of the last century, where the exposure of excesses creates a political consensus for new government control over business. Political indignation against big business seems to be spilling out in various directions, even where fraud isn't an issue. Just how far the reforms go will depend on how badly financial markets and the economy perform.

-- Wall Street Journal, 7/10/2002

Israel

On August 5 some 500 new immigrants from the Ukraine arrived at Haifa Harbor. In all some 620 immigrants are expected to arrive in one day, making August 5th the largest Aliyah day of the current year. In addition to the 500 immigrants from the Ukraine, 60 immigrants are expected to arrive from France, 30 from the southern Caucasus, 10 from the UK, 6 from the USA and 7 from Canada, and individual immigrants from other countries. Over 1,150 immigrants are expected to arrive this week, which will be the week with the largest number of immigrants to arrive this year. Some 18,000 immigrants have come to Israel from January 1, 2002, to July 31, 2002.

-- The Jewish Agency For Israel, 8/4/2002

“It’s Not as Bad as It Looks -- It’s Worse,” read a front-page headline for a story on joblessness in Israel’s Haaretz newspaper. Nagging security fears are scaring away foreign and domestic investors, overseas business partners, sports teams, even arts groups, adding to the country’s sense of isolation. Per capita gross domestic product, a measure of economic growth, shrank 3.2% last year and is slated to contract 3% more this year, unprecedented slippage in the nation’s history. Unemployment rests stubbornly above 10%, exports are down 11.7%, the fiscal deficit is widening, and annual inflation is pegged at about 8%.

-- Los Angeles Times, 8/25/2002

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative private research group, is urging the European Union leaders to stop funding the Palestinian Authority in light of its “overwhelming anti-Israel bias,” and allegations that the EU-aid funds Palestinian terror. In a report, the foundation asked the Bush administration, which circumvents the Palestinian Authority in its assistance program, to press for an independent investigation into whether European Union funds are misused. Direct aid to the Authority, which is headed by Yasser Arafat, should be halted until elections are held and the leadership changed, said a Heritage report. The European Union gave the Palestinian Authority an estimated \$3.36 billion between 1994 and 2000. They continue to give the Authority about \$10 million a month.

-- Ha’Aretz, AP, 8/21/2002

Russian President Vladimir Putin has invited Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to visit Moscow for the second time, but no date has yet been set for a meeting, Sharon’s spokesman Ra’anan Gissin said on Wednesday (21st). A visit could take place as early as next month, but much depends on developments in the region including the security situation in Israel and a possible U.S. offensive against Iraq. Sharon and Putin have forged warm personal ties despite Russia’s continued support for Iran’s nuclear program and Moscow’s announcement this week that it will sign a \$40 billion trade deal with Iraq.

-- Jerusalem Post, 8/22/2002

U.S. Capitol Police Chief Terrance W. Gainer announced this week that a delegation from his division plan to travel to Israel in October to learn how to prevent and respond to suicide bombings, Israel Radio reported. Gainer said he and other officers plan to meet Israeli police officials and try to gauge how the public reacted to various security measures. Gainer is concerned about the potential for such a bombing, because “we see what a powerful, destructive tool it can be” in Israel and other countries.

-- Israel Radio, JP, 8/23/2002