



Shaqah

שפאקאָה

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

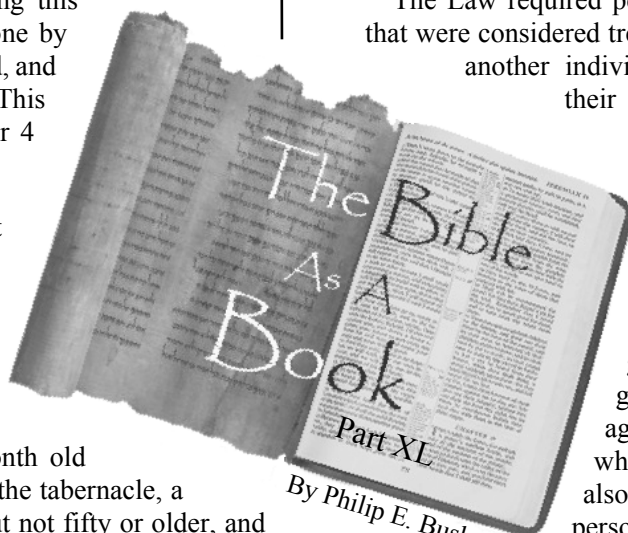
Last time, we started our overview of the book of Numbers, and came through the explanation about how the tribes of Israel were numbered, and organized. This included the organization of how they would setup camp and move forward as they traveled on to the promised land. We ended our last segment by covering the work that belonged specifically to the tribe of Levi in carrying and transporting the tabernacle. The organization of this tribe showed us the breakdown of families within the tribe, each of which had a specific responsibility in doing this work. The actual work would be done by the males from thirty to fifty years old, and be supervised by Aaron and his sons. This brought us through Numbers chapter 4 verse 33.

Continuing to take a look at the responsibilities of the families in the tribe of Levi, we next see the numbering of the men who would do the work of carrying the tabernacle. In order to count the number of the tribe overall, all the males were numbered from one month old and up. However, to do the work of the tabernacle, a male was to be thirty years of age but not fifty or older, and the number of men in each family belonging to this age group is given. Out of the family of the Kohathites there were 2,750. Out of the family of Gershon there were 2,630. Out of the family of Merari there were 3,200. In all, the number of men in the age category eligible to do the work of the tabernacle was 8,580.

Next, we move to organizational facts that had already been laid out in the Law about people with certain diseases being able to make others unclean by being around them. For the sake of not being in constant daily contact with the other people of the nation, these individuals, whether male or female, would have to be removed from among all the tribes' camps in order to camp in places of their own, which did not adjoin with any of the rest of Israel. In general, these were those with long-term illnesses that made one

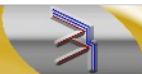
unclean, such as leprosy; those with what could sometimes end up being somewhat short-term conditions, such as those things that caused a person to have drainage of bodily fluids from sores, boils, or the like; as well as those with very short-term issues that made them unclean, such as touching a dead body. Using the Law as their guide on this matter, these individuals were identified, and they set up camps of their own.

The Law required people who had committed sins that were considered trespasses, in which they harmed another individual, to make repayment for their sin to the individual they harmed. They were also to add interest to this repayment in the amount equal to a fifth of the initial value they were to pay. The normal procedure for this was that once a person was found guilty of such a sin, they would go to the one they trespassed against to admit and apologize for what they had done. They would also repay what they owed to that person. After this, they were to bring



be sacrificed at the tabernacle for their sin, and bring a monetary offering to God as well. Now, in some cases the individual one was trying to repay might no longer be alive, and then the payment would go to their next of kin. In the case of there being no clear family member to receive the repayment, the amount was to be brought to the tabernacle along with the ram and other money one would normally bring. The repayment amount would then be given directly to the priest; and just like with any individual one would normally have repaid, this money would belong to the priest whom you presented it to. All offerings required to be given to the priest for many differing reasons would be for the priest's personal use.

The next matter God would deal with would be termed jealousy. This would be what to do when a husband



believed his wife might have had a physical relationship with another man. It might be the case that the woman had indeed committed such a sin but was not caught in the act, there was no one willing to witness against her, and she never was willing to confess she had done it; or it might be that the husband was wrong and she was innocent. In any case, if the husband thinks that it's at least a possibility, he is not to deal with it on his own, but bring the matter before God. To do this, he was to bring his wife to the priest at the tabernacle, along with a very different grain offering than for other matters, in that it was to be a specific amount of barley meal with no oil or frankincense placed on it. This because it was not an offering for sin but to reveal possible sin. The priest would then set the woman before The Lord and put some of the water that was considered holy in a container made of clay, or the like. The priest was to mix into this water dust from the floor inside the tabernacle, which is very holy ground. Placing the woman before The Lord, the priest would remove any head covering she might be wearing, and put the barley offering in her hands. While holding the container with the water and dust mixture in his hand, the priest would proclaim a specific curse about what the mixture was to do once the woman drank it.

If she was innocent of what her husband suspected, then the water would be nothing more than an unpleasant drink; and in being nothing more, prove her to be innocent. However, if she was guilty, she was drinking it with the knowledge it would do damage to her body, which specifically had to do with physical relationships and childbearing ability. This would prove her guilt in the matter, and she would be publicly shamed. After the priest proclaimed these facts, the woman was to acknowledge she was in agreement with these terms, showing she either had nothing to fear or would pay the price God placed on her. The priest would write the curse in a book and then wash the words away using the water to symbolize the water would finish the matter one way or the other. Next, the priest would take the barley offering out of the woman's hands and present it to The Lord by wave offering it, then take a handful of it to burn on the altar of burnt offering. After this, he would have the woman drink the water and dust mixture. Any sin the woman had committed would then be on her head alone, not her husband's, and she would pay the price. If she was innocent, she would go on to have relationships with her husband and the continued ability to bear children.

Next, God wanted Israel to have instructions from Him about how a person could specifically show they wanted to be separated unto The Lord. Thus, we see such instructions for what is called a Nazarite vow. This vow could be taken by either a man or a woman, and the stipulations for the vow would be the same. The stipulations laid out for this vow were to be observed at all times and under all circumstances during the time period the person had committed to the vow, no matter how long or short that time period was. The first stipulation of following this vow would be abstaining from anything fermented. In this way, it has relationship to the no leaven of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For a

Nazarite, this was to be done by the individual ceasing to drink or eat things that were known to ferment. This was mostly those products made from the usual fruits used to eat and make drinks from, which predominately came from vining plants. God made it clear such a person was to even take the extra step of avoiding these fruits/plants no matter what stage of development or decomposition they were in, and even those parts that might normally be considered to have little to no value and/or danger of fermentation.

In symbolizing the individual's desire to be part of the bride of Christ, the hair of ones head was also to be allowed to grow without being cut. This was likely a more obvious outward symbol of the vow in men than it was for women, but, again, applied to both the same. A Nazarite was also to make no exception for touching a dead body. There was no family member close enough who could die and whose body needed to be taken care of that a Nazarite was to break their vow in order to take care of. They were to remain holy before The Lord in such things all the days of their vow. If for unexpected reasons a Nazarite was to come in contact with a dead person, they were to make atonement for it, because this would be breaking their vow in the same way a conscious choice to do so would. To do this, a Nazarite was to shave their head completely and begin to count the days. On the seventh day, they were to shave again, which would ensure all hair that had grown as part of the vow had been removed. After accomplishing this seven day cleansing process, which is not completely unlike other cleaning processes for things, such as leprosy, they were to bring an offering to The Lord very much as is prescribed by the Law for other sins. First, they were to bring two turtledoves or young pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. This was in order to deal with the general fact the person was considered unclean. To deal with the fact they did not complete their Nazarite vow, they would also need to bring a trespass offering to God, which was to be a lamb of the first year. Any days lived under the Nazarite vow up to that point would be considered lost as if those days had not been lived as a Nazarite.

When a Nazarite had successfully completed their vow, they were to bring specific offerings to the tabernacle; and these offerings were one of those rare times when a set of offerings were presented that covered a full range of the major offerings laid out in the Law. A male lamb in its first year was to be brought for a burnt offering, a female lamb in its first year for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering. A basket of both unleavened cakes and wafers, all anointed with oil, were to be brought, and it is specified the Nazarite not forget the required plant-based offerings the Law prescribed to go along with the animal sacrifices. The ceremony would begin with the priest performing the sacrifice of the sin offering and burnt offering lambs. The ram for a peace offering and the offering of the basket of bread would follow.

The next part would be specific to the Nazarite vow, and speak to why the hair must be shaved if at any time this

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

As we continued our study of the conversation God had with Abraham where God laid out much of the beginning information of the covenant including the changing of Abram's name to Abraham, we came to the symbol of circumcision. In our last segment, we talked about this symbol that God said was to be placed upon the males of Abraham's house, and passed on to future generations, as a remembrance of the covenant God was giving to Abraham and his seed. We talked about why this symbol was used in that it was something very personal and physical as well as directly related to the human process of procreation. This had great meaning to the fact this covenant was about what this family would mean in this physical world in representing and preserving the ways of God on this earth. This brought us through Genesis chapter 17 verse 14, and we are ready to start, this time, with verse 15.

Verse 15 brings us to the part of the conversation that had to do with changing not just Abraham's name, but Sarai as well. In an earlier segment, we talked about how Sarai's name was originally Iscah, which basically means "foresight." This name was likely given by her father Haran, but after Haran died and Iscah became the responsibility of her grandfather Terah, it is most likely that it was Terah who changed her name to Sarai, which means "noblewoman," or something right along those lines. We talked about how this was probably due to the fact she would be given to Abraham to be his wife, and Abraham was headed out to be a man greatly used of God. Terah seemed to fully understand that this special covenant would not begin with him, but specifically with his son Abraham as something separated from even Terah's house. Thus, Terah wanted Iscah to have a name denoting the fact that as Abraham's wife she would be the mother of something great. This made her royalty or, at the very least, worthy of it!

Now, there are those who argue it was not Terah but Iscah herself who was responsible for the name change to Sarai. However, there is one fact about this that I believe doesn't really line up. Sarai does not seem to be the person who would elevate herself by changing her own name to something basically saying she was of such great importance. It is also not common for women of this time and culture to take it upon themselves to change something as important as the name they were given by those who gave them birth or raised them. I know some will also question my continual respect for Terah as a man who was really in tune with God and what He wanted to do. Many believe and teach that the total corruption of the whole family is why God separated Abraham out. However, two things on this. First, it's true there was much corruption in the family and the traditions that pervaded this region. Abraham did need to be out of this - shall we call it - peer pressure. At the same time, there was corruption all over the world, and God was separating

Abraham out for the sake of wanting His chosen nation to be made of a people as separated, as anyone could be, from the strong ties all cultures had back to one of the three sons of Noah. Abraham's connection back to Shem is inescapable, but God really did set Abraham up to be something very autonomous in the world. The chosen nation, from the time they came out of Egypt, up to this very day, have been quite disconnected from any roots other than the truth they are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The second point about Terah is just the fact that the more one meditates on his actions, the more one has to think he truly believed in God's promises for his son! His actions are just too calculated and exactly what Abraham needed in order to obtain that autonomy I just talked about. Terah shows no anger as to Abraham not being willing to follow the family traditions; and due to this, he never does anything to hold Abraham back. In truth, as we have discussed, Terah does much to make it happen. At the same time, Terah never does anything that would leave his name on Abraham's future life. This is one of the hardest things for a parent to do! So much of the time parents look at their children as their immortality. If there was any understanding in Terah's mind that Abraham was going to be something great, the urge to project into the future, especially through this son, would have been strong. However, not only does Terah help Abraham follow the path of God's will, he seems to be very careful to leave no fingerprints on anything Abraham would become!

What is fascinating about the name change issue for Iscah to Sarai and the thought that this was Terah's doing is that it lines up with the idea Terah actually believed in what God had promised his son, and he was following that pattern I just described in changing her name. Terah did not take the path of fully renaming Iscah something such as "Queen." Now, as we talked about when originally discussing this name change, this may have had a lot to do with the fact Sarai's sister already had the name which held this meaning. However, it's interesting to think that Terah not just restrained himself from giving Iscah that high royal title, but he gave her a name that was not a title at all. In naming her "Sarai," he only put her in the line of becoming royalty - so to speak - because he was saying she was at the very least a noblewoman. It's as if he knew it would ultimately be up to God, as the King of all humanity, to bestow on Sarai her true royal title!

Well, here in verse 15 of Genesis chapter 17 that moment had arrived! God told Abraham that Sarai's name would be changed to Sarah. What is interesting about this is that it is only a slight shift in the name Terah most likely had given her. Now this all has much deeper meaning when you stop and once again bring your mindset into the correct path of understanding man was not, as evolution tries to tell us,

evolving from simple minded creatures. We are not more “evolved” than those of the past! We are not more “enlightened.” Man has been going downhill since his fall into sin at the Garden of Eden. Forget our technology, we still have a hard time seeing how people of the past did some of the most amazing things without seeming to have even a hint of our “advanced” technology. Today, we may “accomplish” a great deal of things we think are pretty ingenious. However, we do much of what we do needing to lean heavily on tools and supplies many of us take for granted and could not begin to provide or build for ourselves. We also seem to be so unable to see the bigger picture of all we want to do. Even those who claim to be radical about “saving” our planet, heavily use, and never would give up, modern technology; but lip service will not stop us from drowning in our own garbage!

We should think about the fact people of the past seemed to come and go without leaving much behind except those things that are some of the most amazing accomplishments of all times. Most of the major items we find were also meant to provide solutions to long-term problems or were things religious beliefs dictated should last “forever.” Our modern “advancements” have filled the world with garbage in a relatively short time period, and it's literally killing us. It will also be left for generations far into the future to not just find but deal with, and for what? Almost everything we build and “accomplish” in our day are things that have no long-term value to them, and so much of it is even intended to be disposed of in a relatively short time period, if not even just a one time use! If The Lord was to tarry and future generations could even survive our destruction, in the distant future they will look back on us and not say, “How did they accomplish so much of the wonders we still see today?” They would say, “How could people living on this planet for one small time period use up so much of its valuable resources, leave behind so much toxic garbage, and accomplish so very little?”

One of the greatest things I like to point to in talking about our downgrade as humans is the indisputable fact we speak such primitive languages compared to the past, and I believe this is to a greater extent than any of us can even begin to appreciate. If people of the long ago past could come forward in time, we would not see a people whom we would say, “Look at how far we have come from being primates!” Instead, they would see a people that caused them to ask, “Is it possible the human race is becoming just another species of primates?” I know all this sounds harsh, but it is a truth we need to think about. The language thing is my favorite example, because we can look back on languages just of the not so ancient past and see the degrading of our modern speech. When we go back into ancient times, we find languages that are so expressive we can't even comprehend most of what is really being said, and we're not even getting to hear what it would be like to have a face to face verbal conversation in such a language. If our linguistic downgrade goes on for much longer, we will lack a language with high enough mechanics to even grasp the fundamentals of God's Word, and along with that, everything about how we were created to live!

I fear the signs of the times are showing us we have all but reached that point at this moment. Now, don't think I personally am looking down my nose at anyone else in saying all this, because this is not something any of us can truly escape. We are all pulled down by sins degradation, but that does not mean we shouldn't fight it all we can. This is why we cannot afford to just keep “translating” the Bible into a more and more modern writing that is “better understood” by those of our day. The mind God gave us is still able to do far more than we allow it to do, and it is in each of our hands to search for education, not just take what can be spoon fed to us! What I'm getting at here is the point: if we as individuals are not willing to put forth effort, take our lives into our own hands, and with God's guidance pull ourselves up on a mental level enough to study and eventually begin to grasp languages of the past and/or the writings already brought down to us in the forms they are, there is little hope for mankind to continue his existence on any kind of true human level.

When we let go of our mental existence, our spirit can do nothing but become dormant; and because we live in a physical world, the flesh will be all that is animated. Living a life that pleases the flesh is all about succumbing to our most basic instincts, and this makes us little more than animals! It is no wonder that around two thousand years back from where we are now, God brought the understanding for His plan of salvation down to a simple truth. If we could/can only seek and accept Jesus, Who is God come in human flesh to dwell among us for a time, as the vehicle to a relationship with God, properly known as “faith,” we will be saved. If we can just get on that simple train and not just believe we have somehow bought a ticket to heaven that will get us in, we can grow and learn in ways that will allow us to stay on the train in spite of it constantly putting us at odds with an ever increasing world of sin. If we will stay on that train, it will eventually take us into the station where we will obtain an existence free from the degradation of this life and world!

Getting back to the issue at hand, which is the name God changed Sarai's name to, we again need to understand that this slight change in the name actually brings quite a bit of meaning, and as I've been driving at, probably more than we can know! While Terah had called her a noblewoman, God would call her Sarah; and the best we can do in grasping this is to say this means, “princess.” I emphasize the best we can do again because of all I just talked about above. Our modern language continually fails us. However, we think of a princess as a lady in waiting. She is royalty with high expectations for the future; nonetheless, she is one who has not yet been given the position she will have once she is married to her prince. This concept is, in fact, a piece of the whole, and that's why the name gets translated for us as meaning “princess.” Sarah would have to wait to bring forth the child of promise who would be the line of the chosen nation. In this way, while she was already married to the father of many nations, she, in a sense, was still waiting for her prince!

Isaac would be Sarah's only son and heir. This means, without him, her life, in relationship to all that God was doing and building through Abraham, would not really have meant

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XIV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

The end of our last segment brought us to the point where we have covered many aspects of the why and exactly what was going on at the time the Greek empire truly took power over the region of Judah and Israel as a whole. Now, it is time to try and weave all these thoughts into one cloth, which will hopefully take us forward in our historical look of following the facts that help us see the Jews we know today really did come from the ancient and original chosen nation God established through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It is of great importance to our understanding of how the history, at the time of the Greeks, unfolded that we keep in mind one fact, and that is the truth there were two distinct struggles going on! There was a secular struggle, which had to do with the Greeks and those who were controlled, as well as threatened, by them; and there was a Jewish struggle, which was internal to the chosen nation. The Jewish struggle was an internal one in spite of what we see in the history, and have covered in this series, which is that most of the struggles had to do with outside influences seeping in to corrupt the true ways God had established the nation to follow. Regardless of the thought pattern many may have had at times, the Jews' struggle was not really about just defending a territory or how to become the dominant power in a certain region. Their true struggle was about who they were as a people and if they would continue to strive to be what God designed them to be or not!

No matter how much there may have been a desire to have control over the land of Israel, that was really only one piece of the true issue at hand, which - for lack of a better way to state it - was how do they remain Jews? This thought pattern was something God had emphasized to the nation, and how conscious they were of that is not clear. However, by the time of the Greeks it had become a very driving force, and it was important it be there! Even if the Jews were to live under the secular rule of an outside government, there was always a core who realized their struggle was not with the question of, if we can't beat them, should we join them? It was really more about how much to bend to, go along with, etc. the outside influences that were putting external pressure on them.

While on this thought, let me direct our attention, once again, back to the wording of the question this series is attempting to answer, because, again, it talks about a Christian making the argument those we know as Jews today are not the chosen nation. The struggle I just framed, which the chosen

nation was going through very predominantly during the Greek era, is really a good view of what all true believers had, would, and will always go through. Those who call themselves Christians should relate to this in a way no others can (besides the Jews themselves), as this has from the time of the apostles been an issue Christians and the organizations they form have faced. While there is a lot of arguing in Christian churches about how much we can or need to be able to "relate" to those who are not Christians, there is at times a great loss of the truth that if the church represents nothing better than the world, why would anyone who truly desires to turn from the things of the world find Christianity of any value?

We can claim to be the light in this world, but what are we offering? We can claim to offer a relationship with God, but if that seems to be no different than what someone in the world can have in general, what value does it have? We can "relate" to people of the world in every way possible, but another fleshly minded "friend" is not what the lost need. They need a true light, and what Christians should really be thinking about, in spite of how much we may get accused of believing we are better than others at times, is not, how do we better relate to the world, but how can we be a better light so others see our good works - which are not the things of this world - and glorify our Father which art in heaven! (Matt. 5:13-16)

For the chosen nation this fact is glaringly clear in that bringing many others into their fold was obviously not the setup God gave them. In truth, eliminating from the nation those who showed they did not desire to follow the Laws of God is emphasized in the Law far more than any instructions about how to accept others into it. This is important to understand because it helps us see more clearly what true evangelizing is. Evangelism is not about who can collect the most converts. It's not about who can fill the biggest church. If that is our strategy, which I fear it has far too often been, it is clear we will get off track. Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be that find it. Thus, the best way to build the biggest church is to offer the broad way. Because narrow is the way that leads to life everlasting and few there be that find it, or, in other words, desire it over the temptations of the broad easy to follow way; teaching the truth is obviously not the best strategy for simply filling the most seats in one's church! (Matt. 7:13-14)

The fact God shows us in not just the setup of the chosen nation, but also through its continual history, is that having the largest or most accepted nation of people was never the goal! In many ways, this is why Abraham would end up being the father of literally many nations of people instead

of the father of just one chosen nation. This should speak volumes to what the Christian life, as it relates to evangelism, is. Jesus simply told us this, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32 It's not up to us to change or try to determine what we should look or be like in order to best reach the lost, because it isn't about drawing people unto ourselves. Our daily work is to yield and allow God to shape us into what He wants us to look and be like, because only He knows how to use our lives to allow The Messiah to draw unto Him those who do not believe! Again, we see this exemplified in that the chosen nation was/is to be so focused on this, they are setup to be something very difficult to be a part of unless you are born into it.

As I keep saying, showing us such things was really the whole point of building a chosen nation. They would serve as an anchor for finding and following the true things of God so we would not have to, as Jesus warned about His return, go off into the desert or wilderness looking for the truth! (Matt. 24:23-28) God setup a chosen nation, and as true believers, not only can we not afford to reject them or try to replace them, we should be watching them with great anticipation for God's promises to be fulfilled, the ultimate of which is the return of The Messiah! This is another fact that remains true in spite of the arguments many wrongly presume are important. Jesus is not coming to the Jews because they necessarily (and I really mean the "necessarily" part of this statement) are the most righteous group of people currently living on the earth. Jesus is coming to the chosen nation because that is what God said He would do, and we should believe it!

This idea that God would setup such a system, frame all the prophecy He gave us around it, only to abandon it because the specific group He chose was/is not "perfect," is one of the most unbelievable thoughts I've ever encountered! To seriously believe that some specific group claiming to be "the church" could replace something as defined as the God established chosen nation in order to work through is to believe there was no real reason to setup such a system to begin with. Abraham was not Noah. He was not the only person on the earth who served God in his day, nor would it be a truth that all his biological descendants would be righteous people and/or care to even try. This point is proven very early on in the story of Jacob and Esau. One son didn't care about the promise, and the one who did, certainly had his flaws, yet God moved forward using the son who cared. Never forget this fact! The true church of God is not identifiable as people in one location, of one family, of one organization, and the list goes on. The true church, whether before or after the establishment of the chosen nation, has always been defined only by knowing those who truly seek God. This is not only a very personal choice made by each person on a daily basis, it is something only God can truly know, for only He is able to judge us all by knowing each heart. (I Sam. 16:7)

To seriously believe God would allow a system like having a chosen nation to simply fade away or become unrecognizable is just as ridiculous as believing Christians

could replace it! Again, there would be no reason for God to have setup the system and wrap prophecy around it. God knew what such a nation would be up against. If it was going to be dependent on just certain things going a certain way in order to succeed, on just the basis of what people of the nation, generation after generation, chose to do by their own free will, any individual who has studied human behavior would be able to tell you that wasn't going to work. Thus, what we are seeing in the nation of Israel, and the survival of the Jews as a people, is not the work or success of men, it is a miracle to say the least, and one any thoughtful person should be able to see was going to be necessary in order to make such a system work, especially throughout the time period it needed to in order to carry out its intended task!

Again, I repeat, it is very important we understand the Jews were having an internal struggle as a nation of specific people, but individuals making their individual choices were going to shape that struggle. This is why in the last couple parts of this study I have tried to separate our look at the why and how Hellenization came about, as well as its effectiveness in accomplishing human cohesion, versus our look at the divisions that were taking place inside the chosen nation. The Jews were not sailing along with everything in perfect order according to God's Law and one day the Greeks came along with their attractive culture and derailed everything. By the time the Greeks arrived on the scene, the Jews were already in a deep struggle with how much to set aside traditions. Some of these traditions started as far back as the time of the kings of the northern kingdom's attempts to discourage and downright block some of the nation's ability to go to the temple in Jerusalem. Others were newer in that they developed during the time of the Babylonian captivity. It was all being looked at!

As we talked about last time, no small part of this struggle had to do with the desire for power, but there were those with good and bad intentions in most all groups involved in the debate. The reason we came down to talking about the Pharisees and Sadducees specifically is that they are the two definitive groups who became the main forces in this constant debate. They will also take us all the way up to the time of The Messiah and are crucial to what develops beyond that. Now, what we have more specifically been leading up to is that fact there were those among the chosen nation who found the Greek way of doing things as attractive as anyone in the world at large. This, again, only shows us how much the chosen nation was intended to be a reflection of the world's population as a whole. The base arguments here apply not just to those who at the time of the Greeks wanted to, versus those who did not want to, follow the Greek path; it applies to cultures all over the world, some of which never heard of the Greeks, but could have been faced with the very same temptation, or did face one very much like it that history does not preserve for us or, at least, we are not as aware of. We are also talking about something that reflects throughout time, because human nature never changes. The more "enlightened" humans think they are, more often than not, that's when they are the furthest from the truth!

The Jews' struggle at the time of the Greek era can be hard to see as very internal to the chosen nation because it involved, on a large scale, the admitted turning by some in the nation to the ideas of the outside influence that ruled in that day. This, even more so than the "corruption" picked up in Babylon, which many argue was/is the biggest reason to believe the chosen nation was lost or is wrong in what it is today, was very threatening to the survival of the nation as a distinct people. This is because of two specific things we have already covered in detail. First, there is the fact the world around them was becoming Hellenistic, the effects of which we still feel across the world today whether we recognize it or not. Second, the Greek rulers eventually began to recognize this as a source of power. In truth, it is very hard to determine which of these was the more threatening factor at the time. Many would point to the second because of the literal war it brought about. However, I believe the first was the one that had more potential for long-term damage; and that is why we see the wars, and victories during them that God gave the Jews!

The first point about the world around them becoming Hellenistic is also important to look at, because, again, this did not happen with the previous empires. Sure there were always those cultures that quickly or eventually gave up their uniqueness on the basis of everything from a desire to be part of what was, "the in thing" (as we might say today), to those who believed things such as, "if you can't beat them, join them." However, the fact many people found it, at least, distasteful to give up their way of life to be part of a vaster empire is what ultimately brought down each empire. Now, I understand that in saying this I'm balking against the classical teaching that internal corruption was their downfall, but understand that internal corruption is what affected the empire's ability to hold, with force if necessary, those things it was necessary to use force in order to take in the first place. You could say that internal corruption was only the key to others being able to eventually prevail against empires whose very design was to hold power by force when and in ways it was necessary.

That being said, the simple understanding of the fact people had uniqueness created by God within them, which God preserved by confounding man's language at the tower, is the reason there were always people ready and waiting to take down an empire rather than step in to preserve one. This dynamic was under threat during the Greek era due to people's attraction to Greek culture. Ironically, our second point about the Greek kings wanting to use this fact as a source to feed their own greed was likely the Greek empire's undoing, and this has direct relationship to what they attempted to do to the chosen nation! However, as I already eluded to, even today we find ourselves affected by the Hellenization that took place during the Greek era. This means if the Jews had fully embraced the Greek way, even as a vehicle to interpret God's Law, the chosen nation's uniqueness would not have survived. Never forget that with Israel we are talking about an ancient culture that has survived to be around in our modern world. This is no small thing for a culture that was directly involved with the events these empires created!

I could go deeper into this, but without getting into a specific side study about it, I don't think most of the world understands just how much the cultures many of us may point to as "originally" coming from, have actually disappeared into the bright light of what Hellenization led to. You can argue that the "progress" it has caused is good or bad. We certainly can and do argue about who, on what side of each argument is in the right or in the wrong. However, the inescapable truth is, much of what this world still fights over has a lot to do with those who only stand on one side or another about how to administer plans that originated at the Tower of Babel, and was resurrected by man through the string of empires that started with Assyria and ended with Rome. If not for the more - shall we say - micro arguments God's confounding of language still brings to exactly how to administer the overall idea, man would have already achieved a fully functioning one world government!

As we have been discussing, the Greek culture has a lot to do with why we are as close as we are. This is shown in the fact even the Romans came in and simply put a new facade on much of what the Greeks believed and "accomplished," as apposed to attempting to shift to a new direction. This is especially true on a religious level, and that has ramifications which are clear in our day by simply looking at an even newer facade on the same ideas in what calls itself the "Universal Church" (and by church, they are saying a Christian church which was intended to be an all encompassing religion but one way or another still believes it is, at the very least, the true authority of all Christians). Simple fact - to this day that organization has its seat of power in Rome. Now, I'm in no way trying to pin the blame on this one organization for all the evil in the world. I'm just stating facts that are no happenstance.

As it is shown to us in prophecy, the beast is one that really is and yet is not after the fall of Rome. (Rev. 17:8) However, the beast not needing to be resurrected after the fall of Rome due to it continuing to be alive in a slightly less definable form is greatly due to the Hellenization of many cultures! There is not just one organization and/or culture that represents what the beast is or has morphed into. That fact should be understood by all students of the Bible. However, without the binding success of the Greek influence, the beast would have been as dead post-Rome's fall as it was after the confounding at the tower. For all the empires, and their long influence on the world, they too would have been lost in a wash of human culture over the centuries. Does this mean we would not know of them? Of course not, but like so many other "empires" that have come and gone, before, during, and after this string of empires Biblical prophecy focuses on, they would only be ancient history, not a part of what lives and breathes among us today!

This is my point in how this would have caused the Jews to be lost if they had really embraced the Greek way. Those of the Middle East who reject the Jews because of who they are, argue that the Jews today are nothing more than a Western, European, etc. colonization sent to the Middle East in an attempt to "displace" them. However, the Jews'

uniqueness, even among European and/or Western cultures (which one must remember has been greatly influenced by Jews because they have lived in and among those cultures), is emphasized in things such as the recognition by the likes of the Nazis as being something “outside,” and needing to be destroyed. Their holding onto the history of where they came from, who they have been, and most importantly the books most of us know as “The Old Testament” is what has provided physical and empirical proof that they have an historic connection to the land of Israel that supersedes even those who argue they are its more indigenous people. The Books they, and only they, can be credited with preserving, are the ones which tell of them as a people coming into a specific spot, we know as Israel, in very ancient times no one else can even come close to tracing their roots to. There the Jews lived, ruled, were even returned to the land by one of the empires after being removed from it by another. We even have historical evidence outside those books of how they were forcefully driven away from and marginalized in the land, again by the last of these empires before they returned to begin, just as prophecy told us they would, to reclaim it in our modern time.

Go ahead and argue the church is as responsible as the Jews for preserving what even Christians should properly know as the Hebrew Bible, and I will ask you why Christians call these “The Old Testament?” I will also go back to the well documented fact that the Vatican was responsible for attempting to hide these books from the general population of the world and even the people within the church specifically. This was done so only certain men could “interpret” what they said, instead of allowing us all to know for ourselves what they actually say. Before anyone goes off on the argument that this had nothing to do with their fear the Jews might weaken, if not totally destroy, their strangle hold over the official administration of the church and make Jerusalem a threat to replace the Vatican as the physical location to be revered, look at the historic anti-Semitism of this organization, which is also well documented. Again, one of the best examples of this is shown in their turning a blind eye, at the very least, to the Holocaust. The attempts to simply free these books from their clutches in order to make the books more universally available, is a history soaked in the blood of very brave individuals. In spite of the opinion one may hold about the efforts of such individuals, understand this history has direct connection to the reason all non-Catholic Christians are generically referred to as Protestants, even today!

Go ahead and argue the Jews we know today are only a people who adopted the history told in these books or that the books themselves are made up only to support the narrative that they are, at the very least, the most ancient heirs to the land of Israel, and I will point again to many of the same facts we have already covered above as well as others already covered in this study, along with many more historical facts one can find with little effort. You can go along with the propaganda, but be aware this puts you alongside those who

try to deny things as recent as the Holocaust ever happening. You can choose to be oblivious to the historical facts in order to be more comfortable in being such a one. However, as one who claims to generally be a Christian, much less a true believer in God, this would mean you care nothing for studying the Bible Itself, and/or you don't believe It, and/or you are a person who still believes God's authority belongs in the hands of certain people who directly descend from those who tried to strangle hold the Hebrew Bible!

It is my great hope and prayer that is the exact kind of deficiency in a believer's walk that we are helping correct in this study. With that in mind, we should remember when we are confronted by others who claim the Jews are not and/or never were the chosen nation, this is what we are being confronted with. They either lack knowledge, which all true believers should study in order to have, or they have chosen to be/act ignorant on purpose, which is a condition only they can choose to reverse! In either case, we must always approach such a one with the fruits of the spirit. (Gal. 5:21-22) Temperance being the first to keep in mind. Why? Because if you are dealing with a person who wants to know the truth, joy for their desire should guide our response. If we are dealing with a person who is reachable but not easily convinced, it will take longsuffering to get through. If they are not reachable then we must in love pray for them because nothing is impossible with God, and that's why He told us to do such a thing. (Rom. 12:19-21, Mark 10:25-27) Will they ever change? We may never know, but what we know for sure is that anger and hatred is useless! While a toughness and even sternness at times might be required, no matter our internal feeling, outward anger will turn off those who are reachable and only serve to more solidify the position of those who have chosen to have the position they have, putting us in direct opposition to God's desire to save us all from ourselves!

All of this relates directly back to the point of why, no matter what any individuals in the chosen nation might choose, God was not going to reject and/or replace the nation. He also was not going to allow them to be replaced by impostors who looked so much like them that a true believer might mistake the impostors for the true chosen nation. You see, the calling of God is without repentance. (Rom. 11:25-32) This does not mean that even those called to the work of ministry are saved, because each individual should stand in the fear of being found a castaway. (I Cor. 9:19-27) However, if God says it will be so, it will be so; and that is why for all the threat of disappearing as a people the Jews faced at the time of the Greeks, God would bring them through even that!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

much beyond her lifetime. I realize it seems that I'm talking in those terms I mentioned above about a parent wanting to leave their signature on their children's lives as a way to have a bit of immortality, but understand this was not about pride on Sarah's part. At issue here was the truth God had given Abraham this wife for the purpose of bearing this one special son, and in no way was it a mistake, misfortune, etc. that she would only have this one son! As we talked about in discussing the circumcision symbol, Abraham was told to circumcise all the males of his house. This was not just for Isaac, nor was it just for those of blood relation to him, such as Ishmael. This symbol was to be taken on even by the male servants of Abraham's house. We appropriately talk about circumcision as being the symbol for the chosen nation, because that was what it was intended for. However, God began the practice as a way of saying all the males in Abraham's house were a part of the covenant. This has very interesting ramifications to the fact only one son, the only child through Abraham's original wife, would go on to develop the specific nation God was wanting to develop through Abraham.

One might ask, isn't this one chosen nation thing what God intended all along? Yes, but look at the depth of the symbolism and also how much this shows us God knows humans and the choices we will make, far better than we know ourselves, and this is a very good reason to listen to God no matter what we might think! Just as God's design for humanity was that all people simply be His people, God originally gave the symbol of circumcision to all the men who lived in Abraham's house, no matter their origin or bloodline. Would it continue to have deep meaning to those other men and their descendants? There's no evidence of it. Would it continue to be important to Ishmael's line? Again, no evidence that it was. However, Isaac would carry it forward in his family; and Jacob, rather than Esau, would find it meaningful. Might it get lost to a degree and at times even in the chosen nation's direct family line? In ways, yes. God had to come down pretty hard on Moses to get him to pass it on to his sons. However, all other facts aside, the real point is that to the chosen nation of Israel, and only for them, would it be made a law to be followed just as it was given to Abraham. All males in the nation were/are to be circumcised at eight days old. (Lev. 12:1-3, Luke 2:21)

While not every male in the nation would necessarily choose to have this symbol, when they had the chance to make the choice for themselves, or care about it even when they didn't, it was commanded that they have it in order to be a part of the chosen nation. Again, this is just as Abraham was told during this conversation with God when the symbol was originally given. The nation is not the reality of who will make it to heaven (to be clear, this does not mean we should believe many in the nation will not be saved), but they represent the truth that while salvation is offered in order to return us to God's original intent for all humans, there will only be a few who take hold of, and never let go of, that faith God is offering in order to obtain the crown of life! (John 19:1-5, I Cor. 9:19-27, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10, 22:1-15)

Again, we circle back to Sarah's name being "princess," and the aspects we don't have a word to really cover the name's full meaning. Maybe the best way to understand it is to say, Abraham's name was changed to denote the fact he would be the father of many nations, because that is what he truly would be. This would be on a literal level of being the progenitor of more than just the chosen nation, and/or even just one or two more, but multiple nationalities. It would also be on the symbolic level in that while not all who will be saved are of the bloodline of Abraham, we are welcomed into being part of the eternal chosen if we are willing to trade who we are, or might be, for a life of walking in faith with God, which is what Abraham and his house was simply being asked to do. (Rom. 8:12-17) In contrast to Abraham's name, Sarah's name would denote that she would only give birth to the royal line! As I said, we are not all literally of the bloodline of Abraham, at the same time many are, yet among non-Jews and Jews there are both those who do and do not accept true faith in God. So how do we in reality enter into the eternal promise? That's what a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus was asking Jesus one night, and "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

Many people misinterpret Jesus' words here and believe He is only talking in spiritual terms, but He is not. Jesus is speaking in literal physical terms. In order to be saved, this flesh we were born with must someday be shed, so that we may put on an incorruptible body where sin cannot reside! (I Cor. 15:51-55) In reality, Sarah's name change shows us a direct connection from what God was talking about in making this covenant with Abraham, to the later illustration Jesus so prominently used in describing those who will be saved as a group. Jesus illustrates the true church as being the "bride" of God Himself, and that goes on through the New Testament! (Matt. 9:14-15, 25:1-13, Rev. 21:9) Sarah was the princess, which is to say, much more than one of many noblewomen in the world who could possibly be married to a prince, but a princess intended to be married to a prince who was heir to his house's actual throne!

The chosen nation would only be one nation through Abraham, but would represent the truth that there is a real "bride of Christ," as we now call it, due to Jesus explaining what has always been in front of us; because God gave the world the Torah, the entire Hebrew Bible, and the chosen nation itself. The chosen nation and the chosen nation alone would go forward in this world to carry this symbolism of the truth, and this would mean we could say Sarah's name was giving the entire nation the title of "princess!" Organizations of men love to go around claiming to be the church, and thus the real bride of Christ, but no individual's determination as to who is and who isn't part of the true church means anything when it comes to anyone outside that individual. Even as an individual, all of us must strive every day to remain in our walk with God in order to be chosen in the end! This truth is why the "princess," or "bride," who waits for her King in order to be joined with Him to finally become a real queen, can only be symbolized on this earth!

Even the truth that not all those born through the line of Sarah's one son would become that chosen nation, exists in order to show us how real it is that many are called but few are chosen. (Matt. 22:1-14) This is why we later see Isaac's wife Rebekah asking her husband what use her life would be if Jacob went on to do things that would disqualify him from becoming the chosen nation once Esau had taken that path? (Gen. 26:34, 27:46-28:2) Rebekah only had these two sons, and she understood her marriage to Isaac carried on the specific purpose Sarah's life held, and it could not be replaced by anyone else. On that subject, let me quickly say, it was no accident that Rebekah is brought to Isaac after his mother Sarah's death; and it is specified that Rebekah brought comfort to Isaac on this matter! (Gen. 24:64-67) What God had worked to specifically establish through Abraham and Sarah was still very much dependent on not even a handful of individuals at the time of Isaac and Rebekah. This is why the chosen nation is not just the descendants of Abraham and Isaac, but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

While on the subject of Sarah's name change, we could expand on this and say they are the nation of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. The fact it was not until Jacob brought forth twelve sons through the four women of his house that we begin to see an expansion. Even these twelve sons being the foundation of what would grow into the chosen nation specifically, is why God, and thus we, continue to refer to the twelve tribes of Israel in order to describe the chosen nation! Again, they are the ones who symbolize, and as long as the earth remains will continue to symbolize, the truth there is a real "princess" bought with the shed blood of Jesus Christ!

This fact is also why it's important we not lose the power of understanding more expressive languages can help us communicate when teaching about the truth. Another fact I seem to always hit on in the language issue is that English has thrown out all meaningfulness to the masculine feminine expression. Even now we fight over whether the masculine and feminine grammar that remain for totally logical reasons of being able to say, that person or thing is physically a male or a female, can or should remain. For years there has even been much controversy among certain churches as to if they would continue using Bibles and song books that refer to God as masculine instead of just something gender neutral. All this madness is based on a downgrade sin has brought to humanity about trying to kick against even established physical facts. Once we cross that line, there's nothing but a sheer drop-off folks! All understanding of any depth is lost, and in a way we can only imagine. People like to say God won't send "good" people to hell. I must say, what we see illustrated to us today is that He doesn't really have to. People of the world are running headlong off the cliff that falls right into the pit in spite of all God has done to try and stop them!

We must fight the tide so we can still talk in at least logical terms and understand at least some basic facts, such as

the princess title God was giving Sarah. This will help us properly see things like the fact the chosen nation, and only they, could and do carry on the symbolism of being this princess. As individuals, whether male or female, we should all hope to be part of the true bride of Christ. We should all desire to be the true princess Jesus is returning to receive unto Himself, but to understand this we must lift our heads up out of the dust caused by the herd and strive to see what God is actually telling us this means! The symbolism of the entire chosen nation being a princess is why the nation does things that carry the feminine aspect. One great example of this, along with being an example of how much we lose in translation, is when Paul speaks in I Corinthians 11:1-16, about how males should not pray with their head covered, yet Jewish males specifically cover their heads. Paul tells us the reason males should not cover their head during prayer is the fact the power of God rests above the male, and this same fact is exactly why the Jews do it!

As God created the world, He made the female for the male; and thus, the male stands directly under God in responsibility and the female under the male. Today many are offended by this because they want "equality!" Well, there is no "equality." We are all nothing but children who need guidance and protection that only God can provide! Be offended if you want, but God is our provider and we must yield to Him. He stands above us, and He will take responsibility for us - if we will let Him. In our natural world, God created man to be the one standing in the place of responsibility over his family, and this is why the covenant was made with Abraham and the symbol to represent the covenant placed upon the males of the house. That being true, the beauty of it all is that the women of it, all were nested under this great umbrella of protection, consisting of both God and then the males of their family as well. This is because they and the children they would bear were of the utmost importance. Why? Because God's plan is about development and growth. It's an eternal future we must all survive this life in order to obtain!

The chosen nation's males properly cover their heads because they symbolize, as a nation, the truth God is the masculine. The combined way Paul is speaking about all this is what we lose in having only a weak language to translate his words into! Call it metaphor if it helps, but Jesus is not returning for something incapable of producing a future. He is the masculine, He needs a feminine mate. Thus, Jesus is coming back for a bride (His princess) in order to create a future where sin will never be, and can never again separate us from God in any way! Who of us is willing to cast aside our pride, humble ourselves before our mighty Creator so we might one day be joined with Him and obtain the crown of life which will only be bestowed upon the head of His Queen?

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

vow was broken. During this ending ceremony, the Nazarite, while there at the tabernacle, was to shave off the hair from their head, and that hair would then be burnt, not on top of the sacrifices already on the altar, but more directly on the fire under the sacrifices. This was a profound representation of a person willing to sacrifice their existence in order to be separated unto God. While many other offerings represent the giving of one's life through an animal's death, this ceremony had an individual use a portion of their physical body to fuel the fire upon which, specifically, the peace offering burned.

The next thing would be to complete the process for the peace offering ram. To do this, the priest would take the shoulder of the ram and put with it one of the unleavened cakes and one of the unleavened wafers out of the basket the Nazarite had brought. Much like a consecration offering, these items would be placed on the hands of the Nazarite to connect them with the fact the priest would then wave offer these items to present them to The Lord as dedicated to sustaining the ministry, in that this portion of the ram and remaining bread belonged to the priests. As long as the individual had also accomplished any other promises they had made to God, such as bringing other items and/or sacrifices as part of their Nazarite vow, this would complete the Nazarite vow. The individual was free to return to life according to all the regular stipulations of the Law without the specifics of being a Nazarite.

In keeping with there being specifics, given directly by God, for just about everything the nation was to do, God even gives a specific blessing for the priests to use when blessing the people. The wording of this blessing was, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Numbers 6:24-25 In doing this they were not giving a general blessing of good fortune as some religions might look at it, but specifically placing The One True God upon the people so as to be known as God's people, and God would bless them accordingly!

The next words are intended to make it clear the following events did, in fact, take place at a time after the tabernacle was fully dedicated and put into service. It would also seem clear they are after the princes of the tribes had been named by God, because we are told it was the princes of Israel who now brought specific offerings consisting of six wagons and twelve oxen. Each wagon was offered by two of the tribe's princes, and one oxen by each prince, which gave two oxen to pull each wagon. These were very valuable items to give to the service of God. While God did not specify wagons of any kind in His instructions for building the tabernacle, this was a great example of the people truly thinking about what they could do, not to shape or remake in anyway what God had instructed Moses to build, but contribute something of value to it. There is no reason to doubt that with all the spirit of giving and recognition at the time of how holy all they were building was, these wagons

were brand-new, built by the best craftsmen in Israel, out of the best materials Israel had available, and all identical to each other. It is also safe to presume the oxen were of the very best stock!

The fact these items must have been of top quality is found in that God tells Moses to accept them for use with the tabernacle. Moses would give these to two of the family groups in the tribe of Levi who were tasked with the carrying of the tabernacle and its elements. To the family of Gershon, Moses gave two of these wagons along with four oxen (two for each wagon) to use in carrying their pieces of the tabernacle as Israel traveled. For that same purpose, Moses would give the remaining four wagons along with their eight oxen, to the the family of Merari. Merari was given more of the wagons, because they were responsible for the bigger and heavier parts of the tabernacle structure and its courtyard. The Kohathites were given none of these wagons, because they carried elements of the tabernacle that were built and/or were instructed to be carried by hand using bars and racks so as not to actually touch the items.

Another offering the princes would bring were offerings to specifically dedicate the altar of burnt offering. God would instruct Moses that these offerings were not to be offered all at once, but each of the twelve princes was to come on their own day to offer their tribe's offering. All twelve tribes' princes brought the exact same offering so as to acknowledge all the tribes were taking equal part in God's covenant with the nation. Each of their offerings would consist of: one silver charger, 130 shekels in weight (which we would likely describe as a large very deep plate); and one large silver bowl, 70 shekels in weight (which would be more of a rounded vessel as we think of a bowl today). Both of these were filled with fine flour mingled with oil, of the quality to be and would be offered as such a plant-based offering should be. Along with these they brought one gold spoon, ten shekels in weight, filled with incense (these spoons would likely have been what we might describe as a small cup without a handle, and the incense would have been of a quality and composition for use in the tabernacle).

They would also each bring one young bull, one ram, one lamb in its first year to be offered as burnt offerings, and one young goat to be offered as a sin offering. For peace offerings they would bring two young bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs of the first year. This would cover both the major categories of offerings that could be brought, and the animals required for all types of people ranging from leaders to the common man. Both the plant-based as well as animal offerings were mostly given in multiple measures and numbers required for such offerings. The valuable, physical containers were of the most precious metals; the shekel weights of each item, of course, being according to the shekel as defined at the tabernacle.

Of the twelve tribes, the tribe to offer on the first day of this sequence would be Judah. The next day the leader of the tribe of Issachar would present his tribe's offering. On the

third day the leader of the tribe of Zebulun would present his tribe's offering. On the fourth day the leader of the tribe of Reuben would present his tribe's offering. On the fifth day the leader of the tribe of Simeon would present his tribe's offering. On the sixth day the leader of the tribe of Gad would present his tribe's offering. On the seventh day the leader of the tribe of Ephraim would present his tribe's offering. On the eighth day the leader of the tribe of Manasseh would present his tribe's offering. On the ninth day the leader of the tribe of Benjamin would present his tribe's offering. On the tenth day the leader of the tribe of Dan would present his tribe's offering. On the eleventh day the leader of the tribe of Asher would present his tribe's offering. On the twelfth, and last day of these offering days, the leader of the tribe of Naphtali would present his tribe's offering. An interesting note is that this order would be the same order that the twelve tribes would travel in as the camp moved, with, of course, the exception that the Levites and tabernacle would travel in the middle of the first six and last six tribes in the line.

The total number of all the offerings were twelve silver chargers, each 130 shekels in weight; and twelve silver bowls, each 70 shekels in weight; making the overall weight of the silver items 2,400 shekels. There were twelve gold spoons, each 10 shekels in weight, making the total of the gold 120 shekels. In all, the burnt offerings brought were twelve young bulls, twelve rams, twelve lambs in their first year, and all these were brought with the plant-based offerings required by the Law. Of the sin offerings there were twelve young goats. In all, the peace offerings brought were twenty-four young bulls, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty lambs in their first year. These were the offerings to dedicate the altar of burnt offering by the tribes' princes.

After this, when Moses went into the tabernacle to speak to God he would hear an audible voice as if someone was speaking to him which sat on the Mercy Seat that was on top of the Ark of the Covenant, and between the two cherubims which stretched out their wings to provide a covering over the Mercy Seat. God points this out to emphasize that the Mercy Seat was more than symbolic; it was the actual throne of the direct presence of God on this earth among men. Another detail God points out here concerns the menorah which had been built according to the design God showed Moses, and which was inside the Holy Place. It consisted of seven lamps on seven branches that came to an equal height with each other. In spite of the fact there were branches, this entire candlestick was not put together with pieces of gold. The base, stem, branches, and lamps were all beaten into shape, decorative elements and all, starting with what had to be a very large, yet single piece of gold. Along with this truth about its construction, it was to be understood, in spite of the fact there were seven lamps they were not meant to be used individually. This was not about lighting another one before the first one you lit earlier had burned out. Aaron was to light all seven of these lamps at

once and keep them burning in order to give the light inside the tabernacle! This is what God instructed, and this is what was done.

The tribe of Levi obviously did not bring an offering with the other tribes to dedicate the altar, because it had already been made clear they were to belong directly to God. Thus, the next thing we are told is how Moses was instructed to dedicate and cleanse the Levites to do their service. For this Moses was to sprinkle them with water to symbolize purification. Then they were to shave the hair of their entire body and wash their clothes in order to symbolize the start of a new life for them. After this, the Levites were to choose a young bull to bring as a burnt offering, along with the required plant-based elements that went with it. They were also to bring another young bull for a sin offering. Moses was to bring the Levites, with these offerings, to the tabernacle, and gather all the rest of Israel around. The Levites were to be presented to The Lord, as all the nation placed hands on them in much the same way one would an animal sacrifice as it was being offered. This symbolized the willingness of the nation to give this tribe fully unto the service of God, meaning they would ensure the Levites were taken care of, and expect nothing of them but to do God's service. As the nation took this action, Aaron was to specifically offer the Levites, as a tribe, unto God!

Next, the Levites themselves were to lay their hands upon the heads of the two young bulls brought for offerings; the one was to be sacrificed as a burnt offering for them, and the other as a sin offering. This ceremony would serve as recognition they as a tribe were giving themselves completely to God. Again, this is in place of the fact all the first-born in Israel belonged to God, because it was the first-born God saved from the Passover angel during the curse that finally caused Pharaoh to not just let Israel go but throw them out of Egypt. After this ceremony, to solidify the point the tribe belonged to God, the Levites were given to Aaron and his sons to do the general work at the tabernacle which the priests themselves could not and/or should not do. Having an entire tribe dedicated to doing the work of maintaining the tabernacle allowed Aaron and his sons to stay focused on the work of God that was most holy. It allowed this one tribe to be focused on staying as clean from the rest of the world as possible, while still accomplishing the more everyday kinds of work needed to maintain the facilities and ceremonies of the tabernacle. All of this was necessary to ensure the nation as a whole was able to have the direct presence of God among them, while still going about the daily affairs of this life and world!

After Moses received these instructions, we are told that he and Aaron followed them, gathering the Levites and the nation to each carry out their parts, which they did. Once this had been done, we are told the Levites immediately went to work under the direct supervision of Aaron and his sons, all of this being just as God had instructed it to be!

Let's stay in God's Word!

