

June 10, 2018 - Ex. 39:33 – 40:38 - Tabernacle completed, Broken Tablets
Torah Reading: Exodus 39:33 – 40:38 - Tabernacle completed, Broken Tablets
Psalm 72
Haftarah: Isaiah 33:20 – 34:4, 8
Isaiah 60:13-21 + 61:9

The Tabernacle Dedicated

Exodus 39:33 - "And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses..."

Rashi - Because they could not erect it. Since Moses had done no work in the Mishkan, the Holy One, blessed is He, left for him the task of erecting it [the Mishkan], since no human being could erect it [by himself] because of the heaviness of the planks; and no human was strong enough to put them up, but Moses [was able to] put it up. Moses said before the Holy One, blessed is He, "How is it possible for a human being to erect it [the Mishkan]?" He [God] replied, "You work with your hand." He [Moses] appeared to be erecting it, and it arose by itself. This is [the meaning of] what it says: "the Mishkan was set up" (Exod. 40:17). It was set up by itself. [This is found in] the midrash of Rabbi Tanchuma. -[from Midrash Tanchuma]

Exodus 40:17 - "And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up."

An ancient Jewish saying held that on that day when the Israelites dedicated the Tabernacle there was joy before God as on the day when God created heaven and earth.

Moses had seen the pattern, so he was the only one who could erect it.

- **Philo of Alexandria** - He (Moses) saw with the soul's eye the immaterial forms of the material objects about to be made, and these forms had to be reproduced in copies, perceived by the senses, taken from the original draught, so to speak, and from patterns comprehended in the mind.. So the shape of the model was stamped upon the mind of the prophet, a secretly painted or moulded prototype, produced by immaterial and invisible forms; and then the resulting work was built in accordance with that shape by the artist impressing the stampings upon the material substances required in each case." (Mos. 2.74-76 [LCL; 6:485-87])

- **Josephus** interpreted the Tabernacle and its furnishings to represent the universe.

- **The Zohar** - "... the structure of the Tabernacle corresponds to the structure of heaven and earth."

"the Holy of Holies below is aligned opposite the Holy of Holies above"

"Now, the Tabernacle below was likewise made after the pattern of the supernal

Tabernacle in all its details. For the Tabernacle in all its works embraced all the works and achievements of the upper world and the lower, whereby the Shekinah was made to abide in the world, both in the higher spheres and the lower. Similarly, the Lower Paradise is made after the pattern of the Upper Paradise, and the latter contains all the varieties of forms and images to be found in the former. Hence the work of the Tabernacle, and that of heaven and earth, come under one and the same mystery.”

With the erection of the lower Tabernacle there was erected another Tabernacle on high. This is indicated in the words “the tabernacle was reared up (hukam)” (Ex. XL, 17), reared up, that is, by the hand of no man, but as out of the supernal undisclosed mystery in response to the mystical force indwelling in Moses that it might be perfected with him.”

The completion of the Tabernacle is described in words similar to God’s completion of creation:

- **Genesis 2:1-2** - "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

Exodus 39:32 - "Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they."

Exodus 39:42 - “According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work.”

Exodus 39:43 - "And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them."

- **Genesis 1:31** - "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

Bezaleel is described as making the Tabernacle, yet it says the "children of Israel made all the work.” How can this be?

The late-medieval Spanish Jewish philosopher commentator Or Ha-hayyim gave an explanation:

There are 248 verbs describing the "making" of the Tabernacle, beginning in **Exodus 25**. This is analogous to the 248 limbs or bones of the human body, and implying the 365 sinews, which total 613 - the total number of the commandments, which are impossible for one man to observe.

But the Torah *can* be observed collectively, by the people as a whole, each individual deriving benefit from the observance of his neighbor and each individual's performance complementing that of the other.

This is further seen by the admonition, "And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Your neighbor is not someone else, but you yourself, and like a part of you.

This is similar to Paul's theology of the Body:

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-31** - "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."

The observance of the Law is experienced by Christ's body on earth allowing His life to animate and move through them.

Tablets of Stone

(See <http://etzion.org.il/en/what-rests-alongside-ark-and-inside-it-tablets-covenant>)

Of what type of stone were the Tablets of the Testimony made?

"Hew for yourself" – R. Huna said: The [first] tablets were not created from an earthly material, but from a heavenly material, the handiwork of the Holy One, blessed be He. And when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone," a sapphire quarry was created for Moshe in his tent and he hewed them, as it is stated: "And he hewed two tablets of stone like the first ones." (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 46)

R. Levi and R. Yochanan said: From where were they hewn? One said: He hewed them from under the Throne of Glory, and one said: A quarry was created for him in his tent and from there he quarried two tablets of stone, and he took the chips, and from there he became rich, as they were sapphires. (Tanchuma, Parashat Ekev 9)

Tablets of stone – Our Rabbis of blessed memory said: They were cut from the Throne of Glory, and they were of sapphire. And so too it says: "And there was under His feet a kind of paved work of sapphire stone [livnat sapir]" (Exodus 24:10), and it says: "The likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone" (Ezekiel 1:26). (Midrash Lekach Tov, Exodus 31:18)

Exodus 24:10 Septuagint - "and they saw the place where the God of Israel stood, and what were under his feet, as the work of a sapphire brick and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness."

The sapphire stones were as broad as bricks, and being like a brick, was a memorial, as the Targum of Jonathan says, of the servitude the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with in clay and bricks; but being a sapphire, bright and glorious, it denote the liberty they now enjoyed in exchange for their bondage.

Other rabbis insist the stones were white because of their great purity, or even red.

The midrashim and the commentators who draw a connection between the stone of

which the tablets were formed and the "paved work of sapphire stone" wish to connect the tablets to God's throne and presence. The tablets, as it were, were taken from the seat of the Shekhinah, the throne of God, and the very material of which they are formed expresses more than anything else God's appearance in the world.

This explanation is connected to the intimate relationship between God and His Torah, from which, as it were, He is unable to separate Himself (according to Midrash Exodus Rabba, the beginning of Parashat Teruma). He therefore asks Israel to make a room for Him so that He can dwell among them, a room containing the Torah and, as it were, God's presence owing to the Torah.

Why Were They Made of Stone?

- Because most of the punishments in the Torah involve stoning. Therefore, it says: "Tablets of stone." (Exodus Rabba 41:8)

- So that they should overpower our hearts, which is like stone, as it is stated: "And I shall remove the heart of stone." (Midrash Ha-Gadol, ad loc. The Torah is called a stone, as it is stated: "And I shall give you the tablets of stone," and the evil impulse is called a stone, as it is stated: "And I shall remove the heart of stone from your flesh." The Holy One, blessed be He, said: The Torah is called a stone and the evil impulse is called a stone. Let the stone watch over the stone. (Midrash Song of Solomon Rabba 6:17)

- By the merit of Jacob, about whom it is written: "From thence from the shepherd, the Stone of Israel." (Tanchuma Yashan 12) See Jacob's blessing of Joseph: **Genesis 49:24** - "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)" Jacob is therefore called a stone, because a stone is not effected, since it is very strong, and it acts upon others. Therefore, the Torah was not written on a tablet of gold or silver, but only on stone - Maharal of Prague

- Tablets of stone are not subject to rot. (Exodus 31:18)

Whereas the ark that was to receive it was made from "tree" material, the tablet of the law is of stone. The given law is unchangeable; we, its receivers and observers, are to develop ourselves on it, and about it and through it in constant progress. (Exodus 31:18)

The Torah is given complete, concluded; the tablets are stone ones. The two together form a complete cube of stone. Each tablet is six handbreadths long, six handbreadths wide, and three handbreadths thick, so that together they form a solid cube of six cubic handbreadths, a cubic cubit, the largest unit in cubes (see Sanhedrin 14a).

We are the tree [the shittim wood]; we can, and we should develop and ennoble ourselves in unending progress through the Torah. Israel receives the Torah to become thereupon: "And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water" (Psalm 1:3).

(Exodus 25:10)

Correspondence between the Commandments

Like the two cherubim over the mercy seat, the faces of the two tables of the Testimony "looked upon each other."

It is written: "I am the Lord your God," and corresponding to it: "You shall not murder." Scripture teaches that whoever sheds blood, Scripture ascribes to him as if he has diminished the image of the king. [Because man is created in the image of God]

It is written: "You shall not have..." and it is written corresponding to it: "You shall not commit adultery." Scripture teaches that whoever serves idols, Scripture ascribes to him as if he committed adultery against God.

It is written: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." And it is written corresponding to it: "You shall not steal." This teaches that whoever steals will come to an oath taken in vain. As it is stated: "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery" (Jeremiah 7:9), and it is written: "There is swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery" (Hosea 4:2).

It is written: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and corresponding to it, it is written: "You shall not bear false witness." Scripture teaches that whoever desecrates Shabbat testifies before He who spoke and the world came into being that He did not create His world in six days and He did rest on the seventh day [which is a lie].

It is written: "Honor your father and your mother." And corresponding to it, it is written: "You shall not covet." Scripture teaches that whoever covets will in the end sire a son who curses his father and honors someone who is not his father.

The first four commandments are concerned with what is due to God. The last five concern what is due to our fellow man. The fifth commandment concerning parents is in-between both - God is the Father, and parents, because they create us, share in his respect.

Therefore the Ten Commandments were given five on one tablet and five on the other; these are the words of R. Chanina ben Gamliel. But the Sages say: There were ten on the one tablet and ten on the other tablet, as it is stated: "Which He commanded you to perform, the ten words: and He wrote them upon two tablets of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:13). And it says: "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle" (Song of Solomon 4:5). And it says: "His hands are like rods of gold set with emeralds" (ibid. 5:14). (Yitro, parasha 8)

Two Copies?

According to some of the Sages, all ten commandments were written on each of the

tablets. Why was this doubling necessary? The Ten Commandments were given as part of the making of the covenant between God and Israel. With every covenant and contract between two parties, it is accepted that each party receive a copy of the contract. Here too, then, there are two copies of the covenant, one for God and one for the people of Israel.

It was customary in the Ancient Near East that when a covenant was made between two parties, the junior party (the vassal) had to deposit the copy of the covenant that he had received from the great kings in his god's temple. The vassal had to take the oath of the covenant in the name of his god to the great king. Depositing the vassal's copy of the covenant in a holy place emphasized his obligation toward the king. Therefore, it was necessary to add the element of holiness that was attributed to the covenant itself regarding which the gods were seen as partners. Since the people of Israel were vassals, junior partners in their covenant with God, two tablets of stone rested in the ark of the Mishkan, and afterwards in the First Temple.

Were the Broken Tablets in the Ark?

See Text & Texture - <https://buff.ly/2M0i8H5>

The tablets containing the original Ten Commandments were holy objects of inestimable value, being "written with the finger of God" (**Deuteronomy 9:10**). According to long Jewish custom (Shabbat 116a and RaMBaM, Mishna Tora, Hilchot Yesodei HaTora 6:8.), worn out or damaged Torah scrolls had to be buried, and it is assumed the same thing happened to the fragments of the broken tablets. Nothing more is said about them in the biblical narrative. Although **Deuteronomy 12:3-4** states that artifacts dedicated to God should not be destroyed, it does not specifically apply this principle to objects like holy books or writings.

R. Yosef, in Bava Batra 14b, by means of a creative reading of a particular biblical phrase, comes up with a different solution to account for what was done with the broken pieces.

- **Deuteronomy 10:1-2** - "At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark."

It is possible to read the pronoun "them" as representing the shattered pieces of the first tablets as well as the new ones. The "ark" mentioned would be a wooden ark different from the one made by Bezaleel, to act as receptacle for the pieces of the broken tablets while Moses ascended the mountain. This wooden ark with the broken tablet was the one that traveled three days in advance of the people in their wanderings, and went before Israel to their battles.

From one perspective, the Ark containing the remains of the original broken tablets was holier than the one in the center of the encampment, since the covenant was made in

connection with the original tablets. The positioning of such an ark containing this specific content at the forefront of the Jews when they are on the march, subtly may have suggested to them to look forward with hope to a time of reconciliation and complete atonement rather than constantly revisiting the difficult and sinful events of the golden calf.

i.e. repentance preceded them in their walk. David was a man after God's own heart, but who also declared, "my sin is ever before me." This is the mystery of repentance.

- **Exodus 32:19** - "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount."

As long as the writing remained on the stones, the holiness of the objects essentially made them weightless, and they carried themselves. However, upon being confronted with the people worshipping the calf, the letters detached themselves from the stones, resulting in Moshe's having to bear their entire weight, which he found impossible to do, and consequently dropped and shattered them. (Exodus Rabba 46:1)

Another view - **Ecclesiastes 3:1** - "...a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together." The verb used in Ecclesiastes for "cast away" is identical to the verb used in Exodus for "he cast the tables out."

- **Exodus 34:1** - "And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest."

Exodus 40:20-21 - "And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark: And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the LORD commanded Moses."

- **1 Kings 8:9** - "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt."

The Rabbis of the Talmud note that the word for tablets is in the plural. If the word is already plural, then two of them must mean that Moses placed in two additional tablets beyond the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments!

The Talmud teaches: "Rabbi Judah bar Ilai said - Two arks journeyed with Israel in the wilderness — one where the Torah was kept, and one where the tablets broken by Moses were kept. The one containing the Torah was kept in the Tent of Meeting; the other, containing the broken tablets, would come and go everywhere with them" (Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim, 1:1).

Another Talmudic teaching goes one step further: "Both the new tablets of the law and the broken pieces of the first tablets were kept in the same Ark of the Covenant" (Talmud Bavli, Berakhot, 8b).

Both the whole and the broken are considered sacred in the Jewish tradition. They are both "Devar Hashem – the word of God."

Exodus 40:38 - "For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

The Zohar considered the Ark is the heart of the Tabernacle and a picture of the human heart. If it contains the broken fragments representing Israel's sin as well as the whole ones representing the Law fulfilled then it also becomes a picture of Christ's human and divine nature. "For the Shekinah only dwells in broken vessels, which are the poor, whose heart is a broken and beaten heart. And whoever has a haughty heart propels the Shekinah from him, as it says, 'God detests those of haughty hearts.'"

For the Hasidic Reb Natan of Nemirov, the broken tablets are a necessary part of the process: "Through broken tablets, i.e. broken faith, by means of that brokenness itself the faith returns and amends itself, which is the second tablets."

One way of looking at the idea of the survival of the broken tablets is to recall the prophesy about Messiah:

- **Isaiah 42:3** - "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

Quoted in **Matthew 12:10-21** concerning Jesus healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. The meaning is that something that normally would be considered useless, flawed or irreparably broken will be retained and restored by Messiah. Perhaps the broken tablets of the Law show the same idea.

“Finished”

Exodus 40:33 - "...So Moses finished the work."

finished = *kalah* - to make an end, to cease, be finished

- **Genesis 2:1** - "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished (*kalah*), and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended (*kalah*) his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

Also in the Messianic psalms:

- **Psalms 39:10** - "Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed (*kalah*) by the blow of thine hand."

- **Psalm 143:7** - "Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth (*kalah*): hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit."

This points the cross where Jesus finished the work:

- **John 19:30** - "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

The Greek word translated "it is finished" is *tetelestai*. One meaning is as an accounting term that means "paid in full." Another meaning is to fulfill, to consummate, to accomplish, fill up, make an end.

Like Paul - **2 Timothy 4:7** - "I have fought a good fight, I have finished (*τετέλεκα*) my course, I have kept the faith"

It comes from *teleo* - perfect, or perfectly fulfilling your destiny or goal, one's end-point.

In His last public prayer Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him, just as Jesus had glorified the Father on earth, having "finished (*teleioō*) the work you have given me to do" (**John 17:4**). The work Jesus was sent to do was to "seek and save that which is lost" (**Luke 19:10**), to provide atonement for the sins of all who would ever believe in Him (**Romans 3:23-25**), and to reconcile sinful men to a holy God (**2 Corinthians 5:18-19**)

Jesus also fulfilled the Law:

- **Romans 10:4** - "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

"end" = *telos* - a noun form of *teleo*, meaning termination, end point, goal, last in succession, conclusion

The Messiah was to be a prophet "like" Moses.

- **Deuteronomy 18:15** - "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken"

- **Deuteronomy 18:18** - "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."

Jesus "finished" the work, like Moses did.

When the Tabernacle was "finished," it pointed to its ultimate consummation, toward the "finishedness" of the Cross.

Keep this always in mind, as we "finish" the Book of Exodus!