

The Temple Gates - The Five Senses Transformed

Last week we saw how Israel's enemies were subdued, and then became of value to David's kingdom by giving taxes and tribute. Specifically, this is best revealed in the five cities of the Philistines, which we related to the five human senses, and which must submit to Christ.

This idea of a transformation Paul calls *metamorphoō* -

- **Romans 12:2** - "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (*metamorphoō*) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

This transformation is seen throughout the Bible. Haggai urged the Jews to take the wood from the mountains, which previously had been worshipped as idolatrous groves on the high places, and use it to rebuild the Temple.

- **Haggai 1:8** - "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD."

The five cities of the Philistines correlate to our five senses. Once these are "subdued" they are transformed into the five gates of the Temple - i.e. they become spiritual gateways to know Christ.

Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch,

Saadia, a 9th century rabbi, took Aristotle's concept of the five senses and showed how they were mentioned in the Bible.

Judæo-Arabic philosophy established a parallel between the five senses and the "faculties of the soul;" and for this reason the former were called "external senses" and the latter the "internal senses."

Each of the five priestly prohibitions (**Leviticus 21**) corresponds, according to Solomon ha-Levi, to one of the five senses

Nathan ben Solomon finds in the "Shema" ten elements, the first five of them corresponding to the five internal senses, by which man arrives at the knowledge of God, and the last five to the five external senses, which serve him to carry out God's commandments

The three bowls on each branch of the candlestick in the Temple represented, according to Levi ben Gershon, the three coarser senses; then the knop represents the sense of hearing and the flower the sense of sight

Moses Isserles, a Polish rabbi of the 16th century, sees in the five gates of the Temple a symbol of the five senses: the western gate typifies the sense of hearing, which is the

symbol of night; the eastern, the sense of sight, which is the symbol of day; the northern, the sense of touch, which is considered to be the author of mischief among the senses; while the two southern gates are symbols of the sun, which ripens the fruits and flowers whence smell and taste draw their nourishment ("Torat ha-'Olah," i. 7). The five food-offerings are another symbol of the five senses (**Leviticus 2**).

(I've got a slightly different interpretation, see below)

The quorum of ten (Minyan), which is required for the holding of public worship, is, according to Abraham ben Shalom, a symbol of the five internal and the five external senses.

The correspondence between the five external senses and the five spiritual senses, are seen in scriptures like: "My heart has seen much wisdom", (**Ecclesiastes 1:17**) "You have given to Your servant a listening heart" (**I Kings 3:9**), "And he shall smell with the fear of God" (**Isaiah 11:3**).

The Example of Balaam

- **Numbers 22:31** - "Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way..."

- **Numbers 24:3** - "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:"

The Targum Onkelos translates "the man whose eyes are open" as "...the man with the blinded eye." This reveals that Balaam was blinded in one eye by God. Because he could not sin with that eye, holiness and prophecy rested upon it, and his eyes were opened to prophesy.

When a person purifies and sanctifies his external [physical] senses, holiness rests upon his spiritual ones, and the spirit of prophecy descends upon him (Midrash Raba, Eccl. 1:36).

The Temple Gates

Access to the temple was guarded. Nothing unclean could enter.

- **Psalms 24:3-4, 7** - "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. ...Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Thus, in reality, only the sinless Messiah would be worthy to enter.

- **Psalms 118:19-21** - "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will

praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation."

In Jesus' day, a market-like atmosphere surrounded some of the Temple gates, which Jesus judged to be unclean, leading to Him "cleansing the Temple":

- **Matthew 21:13** - "My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers"

Entering the gates is related to thanksgiving and praise:

- **Psalms 100:4** - "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."

While Hannah is offering her prayer in the Tabernacle, Eli the priest is sitting by the doorpost observing her (**1 Samuel 1:9**). This was the one gate leading into the Tabernacle.

The five gates of the Temple were really expansions on the one gate of the Tabernacle, but which was made of curtains of five colors - red, scarlet, blue and white, with designs etched (possibly with gold thread). At any rate, the entry to the Holy Place was a curtain hanging from five pillars.

- **Exodus 26:36** - "And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework." (The needlework was probably of the color gold, which makes five colors)

The same colors made up the rainbow, the sign of God's grace and promise not to destroy the earth again with a flood, and Joseph's "coat of many colors."

When Jacob sees the vision of a ladder whose top was in heaven, he cried, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17).

Jesus explained that the gate was Himself:

- **John 1:51** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

- **John 10:9** - "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

The gates of the Temple had to be opened before the morning sacrifice (or any sacrifice) could take place:

- **Leviticus 3:2** - "... and he shall slaughter it [the peace offering] opposite the door of the Tent of Meeting." The sages derived that the same applies to every offering: it must take place while the doors are open, and not while they are closed, in order to fulfill the requirement of "opposite the door."

The Mishna (Tamid 3,8) relates that the sound of the Sanctuary gates opening could be heard in Jericho - a distance of about 25 kilometers from Jerusalem! But it is not taught that this is because the sound was particularly clamorous or deafening. On a mystical level, they are connected, for they are the two cities in which the Israelites' conquest of the Land of Israel began and ended.

Thus, with the transformation of the five senses to represent the five gates of the Temple, the full meaning of Christ's sacrifice is realized by us. All of the offerings and sacrifices were contingent on the opening of the gates.

What might these individual gates symbolize?

SIGHT - The Eastern Golden Gate is linked directly to the Messiah's entrance, and is the pathway for us to worship and adore Him in all His glory. **Psalm 24:7** - "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." "Lift up your heads" points to believers seeing Him. Also, "Through this the High Priest that burned the [Red] Heifer, and the heifer, and all that aided him went forth to the Mount of Olives." (Mishnah, Middot, 1:3) The scapegoat was also taken out through this gate on Yom Kippur.

SMELL - The West Gate is called the Kiphonus or Garden Gate because a garden (supposedly planted by Joshua) was located just outside planted with all kinds of roses. This was the only garden permitted inside Jerusalem (the Garden of Gethsemane was outside the city), and its rose petals and other herbs were used in compounding the Temple incense (Baba Metzia 72b). This gate implies the smell of the Bridegroom's fragrance. It was the closest gate to the Holy of Holies and led directly toward it, rising upward underneath the Temple Mount to open into the inner Temple precincts.

- **Song of Solomon 1:3** - "The fragrance of your perfume is pleasing; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens adore you."

The Talmud says: "Smell is that [sense] which the soul benefits from, and the body does not."

- **John 12:3** - "Then Mary took about a pint of expensive perfume, made of pure nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

The sweet savor offerings as well as the "sweet incense" taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest, indicated acceptance by God. In that respect, Christ's sacrifice was a "sweet savor" offering to the Father:

- **2 Corinthians 2:14-16** - "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the

savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

John Gill, an 18th century commentator, explains that the doctrine of the cross “strikes with death all a man's wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, and declares that life and salvation are only by Christ and his righteousness; and besides, is attended with persecution and death, and therefore is foolishness to them that perish.”

The rabbis had a similar expression, which Paul was probably quoting:

“If a man is worthy or righteous, to him the law becomes "the savour of life"; but if he is not righteous, it becomes to him "the savour of death" (Yoma, fol 72. 2.)

Also: “The words of the law are "the savour of life" to the Israelites; and "the savour of death" to the nations of the world.” (Vajikra Rabba, fol. 147. 1, Debarim Rabba, fol. 233. 3, and Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 9. 4.)

More on the Sense of Smell

<https://www.betemunah.org/body.html>

Genesis 2:7 - “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The nose was the portal through which life was given by the eternal breath of the Creator, so too was the smell of the incense the conveyer of spiritual energy into the world. And the incense formed the fulcrum point of the Temple both in service and position.

Genesis 3:6 - "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

The rabbis believed that the sense of smell was the only one of the five senses that was not involved in the sin that took place in Gan Eden. It is the sense which saved the Jewish people in the time of Mordechai and Esther, who are called *Mor veHadas* (“myrrh and myrtle”, the two primary sources of fragrance).

Raba said of the Messiah: He smells [a man] and judges, as it is written, **Isaiah 11:4** - “and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, yet with righteousness shall he judge the poor.” (Sanhedrin 93b)

The word for “delight” (*v'haricho*) has the same root as the word “smell”, (*rayach*). The Sages interpreted this to mean that the Messiah will be able to judge through the sense of smell.

Relatively, smell is the sense of the soul, the others of the body. The sense of smell

was, therefore, not blemished in the primordial sin. The common expressions “something doesn’t smell right,” and “this stinks” used to illustrate situations that feel intuitively wrong, allude to the association between smell and judgment. Smell is connected to intuition and inspiration, both of which emanate from a superconscious level above logic and reason. Messiah represents the consummate state of ongoing inspiration from God; therefore he will be able to judge through his rectified sense of smell.

Lamentations 4:20 - "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of HaShem, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." The “sense” of Messiah (**Isaiah 11:3; Sanhedrin 93b.**) is the sense of smell. “And he shall smell with the awe of God.”

The Tabernacle’s furnishings or “vessels” are seen as representations of the various organs and faculties of man: The Tabernacle is laid out corresponding to the body of Messiah. The incense altar in the Holy Place on which the Ketoret (incense) was burned, corresponds to the sense of smell.

TOUCH - The North Gate or the Tadi Gate means "hiddenness" or "obscurity" and relates to the covering of shame. This gate was used by mourners, or by those under a ban, or possibly when someone was forced to leave the Temple, but he did not want to publicize the circumstances (perhaps when uncleanness was discovered.) Other sources say it was used by priests who had become impure during their time of service within the Temple. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (**2 Corinthians 6:17**) Thus, this gate relates to touch, and served as a way out, to immerse in one of the many mikvah baths located near the Temple, and then to return fully cleansed, with shame covered.

How did the priests deal with uncleanness? North of the Altar was a large, domed building called the Hearth (Beit Hamokad). This was the only heated building in the Temple and served as sleeping quarters for the priests who were on duty. Under the Hearth was a tunnel. Access to the tunnel was by way of a spiraling staircase which had niches carved into it to hold oil lamps to illuminate the dark cavern. From this tunnel the priests could reach an underground mikvah. The tunnel continued due north and led out to the Tadi Gate, the northern gate of the Temple Mount, which the newly cleansed priests would use to re-enter the Temple precincts.

Instead of an arch, the Tadi gate was formed by two large lintels leaning against each other, touching each other at the top, to form a kind of triangle.

"Touch" can make one impure, but also it can also *cleanse*. For those touched by uncleanness, Jesus' touch becomes a healing action:

- **Matthew 8:2-3** - "When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. Suddenly a leper came and knelt before Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You

can make me clean." Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

It can even work in reverse, when we touch Him:

- **Luke 6:19** - "The entire crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them all."

- **Matthew 9:20-21** - And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: She said to herself, "If only I touch His cloak, I will be healed." Jesus turned and saw her. "Take courage, daughter," He said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was cured from that very hour."

In fact it was just outside this Tadi gate at the pool of Bethesda that Jesus healed a lame man (**John 5:1-10**)

[One view is that this gate is synonymous or aligned with the Sheep Gate in the city wall, since (Tadi can mean "sheep" in Hebrew) and it was how the twin goats on Yom Kippur and the red heifer were brought in to the Temple.]

HEARING and **TASTE** -The two south gates or Huldah Gates relate to hearing - specifically hearing the prophetess Huldah's cry for Israel to repent. Huldah the prophetess lived in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah (**2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:14-33**). She was said to sit by the Temple and call Israel to repent of their idolatry.

- **Romans 10:17** - "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

One of the Huldah gates was an entrance and the other an exit. Through these gates the people brought their offerings to the Temple, entering through a tunnel that surfaced inside, and leaving through the other gate with their offerings accepted.

As a dual gate, the Huldah Gates also related to taste - **Psalms 34:8** - "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." After repentance, the next step is to come to the Lord, which is what "taste" implies. Christ is the manna, the bread that came down from heaven (**John 6:51**). The manna in the wilderness conformed to each person's taste. but it was bitter if eaten with the mind of a Gentile.

Each of these Temple gates reflect an aspect of what faith in Christ involves.

Once we are "subdued" by going to the cross, our senses are transformed to be of service to God and as spiritual entryways allowing us to know Him and worship Him and serve Him.

Resources

Map - One depiction of the location of the Temple gates in Jesus' time

<https://i0.wp.com/www.joeledmundanderson.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Temple-Map.png>

The Five Senses according to the Rabbis

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13428-senses-the-five>

Description of the Temple Gates in the Mishnah

https://www.sefaria.org/English_Explanation_of_Mishnah_Middot.1.3