

Do you believe we are Grafted into Israel?

This weeks reading is from Parashat Pekudei (*Shemot / Exodus 38:21-40:38*), the Scriptures detail the materials for the construction of the Tabernacle (*38:21-31*) and lists the construction of the priestly garments (*39:1-43*). *Shemot / Exodus 40:1-33* describes how the tabernacle was Erected after the various parts were constructed. The last paragraph of the book of Exodus, and of the Torah portion describes the glory of the Lord descending upon the Tabernacle (*40:34-38*). What an awesome moment in history this had to have been to personally witness the glory of God descending upon the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The Scriptures for this week describe the Tabernacle as the “*Mishkhan Ha’edut*” (מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת) saying literally, this is the “*Tabernacle of the Testimony.*” The NASB translates this verse adhering closely to the MT rendition. The NIV translation however translates this Scripture in a slightly different way. The construction of the Tabernacle is a very significant point in Israel’s history. In addition, the translation of the Tabernacle of the testimony is also very significant for our understanding of what is taking place between man and God. How significant can the translation into English effect our understanding of the Scriptures?

ספר שמות פרק לח

כא אלה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן
מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד
עַל-פִּי מֹשֶׁה עֲבַדְתָּ הַלְוִיִּם
בְּיַד אִיתָמָר בֶּן-אֶהֱרֹן
הַכֹּהֵן:

Shemot / Exodus 38:21

38:21 This is the number of the things for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were numbered according to the command of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. (NASB)

38:21 These are the amounts of the materials used for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the covenant law, which were recorded at Moses’ command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. (NIV)

For those who study the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew text in most places is very clear and concise. We find here at the end of the book of Exodus the point and purpose of God’s delivering Israel; the purpose was so that He would be their God and they could be His people. The description of the Tabernacle as the “*Mishkhan Ha’edut*” (מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת) the “*Tabernacle of the Testimony,*” as opposed to the NIV translation of “*the Tabernacle of the Covenant Law*” has significant implications on the interpretation of the Scriptures. Can you think of what that might be? The Rabbis according to Midrash Rabbah Shemot provide us with some insights into the translation of these important words of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (*Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 51, Part 4*, מדרש רבה שמות 51, פרשה נא סימן ד).

Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 51, Part 4

What is the meaning of testimony? Said rabbi Simeon, son of rabbi Ishmael, It is a testimony to the whole world that there is forgiveness for Israel. Another explanation, It is a testimony to the whole world

that he (Moshe) was appointed by God (to erect) the Tabernacle. Rabbi Isaac said, It can be compared to a king who took a wife whom he loved very dearly. In the course of time he became angry with her and deserted her, and her neighbors taunted her saying, He will no longer return to you. Subsequently, the king sent her a message, Prepare my palace and make the beds therein, for I am coming back to you on such and such a day; and when that day arrived, the king returned unto her and became reconciled to her, entering her chamber and eating and drinking with her. Her neighbors at first would not believe all this; but when they scented the fragrant spices, they at once knew that the king had become reconciled unto her. In like manner did God love Israel, bringing them before Mount Sinai, giving them the Torah and calling them kings as it says, And you will be unto Me a kingdom of priests (Shemot / Exodus 19:6), but after only forty days they sinned. The heathen nations then said, Bot will no longer be reconciled unto them, as it is said, Men said among the nations, They will no more sojourn here (Lamentations 4:15). But as soon as Moshe pleaded for mercy on their behalf, God forgave them, for it is says, And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to your word (Bamidbar 14:20). Moshe then said, Master of the World, I personally am quite satisfied because You have forgiven Israel, but do You please announce the fact to all the nations that You have no more resentment against Israel in Your heart. The Divine reply was, As you live, I will cause My Shechinah to dwell in their midst, for it says, And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (Shemot / Exodus 25:8). By this will all nations know that I have forgiven them. This is why it says, The Tabernacle of the testimony, because the Tabernacle was a testimony to the Israelites that God had pardoned their sins.

The rabbis open in Part 4 of Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 51 asking the question “*what is the meaning of testimony?*” The answer is that “*it is a testimony to the whole world that there is forgiveness for Israel.*” Another rabbi says that this is a testimony to the whole world that Moshe was appointed by God to erect the Tabernacle. Another says it is compared to a king who took a wife whom he dearly loved. Finally, the Lord’s response to the question on the meaning of testimony is “*As you live, I will cause My Shechinah to dwell in their midst, for it says, And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (Shemot / Exodus 25:8).*” The “*Tabernacle of the Testimony*” describes the “*dwelling place of the Testimony of God.*” If we consider these words for a moment, from an Apostolic Writings (NT) perspective, keeping His word hidden in our hearts and abiding in the Word and in Yeshua the Messiah, we have a Torah based understanding that the Lord, His glory, will dwell in our midst. This is a very rabbinic concept that is described in the Apostolic Writings. The Testimony of the Tabernacle, according to the rabbis, is paralleled to all the world (all of creation) knowing of the forgiveness that God has given to Israel. The idea of forgiveness being found in Israel

is a very significant concept.

According to the *Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 2b* and *Midrash Rabba Bamidbar Parashat 1, Part 7*, the rabbis state that our Father in Heaven offered the Torah to all the nations of the earth, and the Jews were the only ones who accepted it. Note also that, according to the rabbis, this was the purpose of the wilderness revelation of Torah, that the nations would come to seek the Lord God Almighty at His holy hill. The nations of non-Jewish peoples would seek the God of Israel, and Israel's Messiah for His Salvation and for the forgiveness of sins. Within the Rabbinic literature is contained the idea that God intended His Torah for all men (both Jew and non-Jew). In similar fashion, within the Apostolic Writings, we see the Apostles teaching Torah by exhorting the believers (ekklesia) to live in righteousness, holiness, and truth. These are very important concepts in light of what the Apostle Paul says to the Romans in *Romans 11*, and the way in which we enter into a covenant relationship with God, and the modern concept of the church and the individualized salvation. The Apostle Paul said the following in *Romans 11* regarding salvation, Israel, and the non-Jewish believer.

Romans 11:1-26

11:1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 11:3 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.' 11:4 But what is the divine response to him? 'I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' 11:5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 11:8 just as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.' 11:9 And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. 11:10 'Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.' 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. 11:12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 11:13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 11:14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 11:15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 11:16

If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. 11:19 You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' 11:20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 11:21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.' (NASB)

Paul begins asking if God has rejected His people? His response is “NO.” He goes on to argue that the Lord God has always preserved a remnant of people for Himself from among the unbelieving Israel. He says it is by the transgression of Israel that salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous (11:14). He goes on to say that by the rejection of the Messiah comes the reconciliation of the world (11:15). He continues saying those who reject Yeshua as the Messiah, they are like a branch broken off, and those who believe and receive the Messiah, they are like branches who are grafted in (11:17). Paul speaks of being arrogant towards the natural branches, the non-Jewish believer is not to be arrogant towards the branches because it is not the grafted in branches that supports the root (11:18). Notice how the replacement theologies teach the church supports the root in opposition to these Scriptures. Paul however concludes that the root supports the branches and not the other way around. Salvation is found in Israel, in the Lord God of Israel, and in His Messiah. By faith in the Messiah, we are grafted into a cultivated tree (Israel), and we stand as a grafted in people by faith, we are not to be conceited, and we are to fear the Lord (11:20). Paul concludes saying his comments are to keep the grafted in one's humble, and to understand the mystery, that a partial hardening of Israel is for the purpose of bringing in the Gentiles. He says that 11:26 ... *all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.'* (NASB) Paul is making a rabbinic argument on the fulfillment of Scripture, where the purpose of the wilderness revelation of Torah, was so the nations

would come to seek the Lord God Almighty at His holy hill, and this has been achieved by the nations in Yeshua the Messiah one may enter into a covenant relationship with God in His Messiah.

The Scriptures for this week describe the Tabernacle as the “*Mishkhan Ha’edut*” (מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת) saying literally, this is the “*Tabernacle of the Testimony.*” This is a very important concept by reason that the New Covenant in Christ is based upon the promises of God that are found throughout all of Scripture. More specifically, the promises of the New Covenant are found within the Torah. Therefore, the previous covenants are intimately connected to the New Covenant that we have in the Messiah Yeshua. The Torah describes the eternity of God, of His Holiness, His Righteousness, and His Truth, these are eternal aspects of God and who He is and so they will never pass away. As His people, we are commanded to live in holiness, righteousness, and truth, and to show mercy and love towards one another. A careful examination of the Torah will reveal these things are in the commandments, and as His people in Christ, we are to live by them, and in them, all for the glory of God. The Tabernacle of the Testimony as it is written in Scripture stands as a testimony for all of time. The Torah stands as a testimony of the mercy, forgiveness, and glory of God. In addition, this is why over and over again we find Scripture in the Apostolic Writings, the Apostles telling us to obey his commands and that those who love the Lord and His Messiah Yeshua will obey God’s commands. If you want the glory and presence of God to shine forth in your midst, take the first steps to believe by faith in the Messiah Yeshua, and then proceed to seek the Lord God in heaven to help in changing your life to walk in His ways all for His glory. Amen and Amen!