

An Attempt To Listen To God
The Gathering of Materials
For The Tabernacle

By

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Measurements And Weights

In reading about the Tabernacle, there is constant reference to measurements which we do not use today, consequently, they just become pieces of data without any impact of the amount actually given. Our first observation is to try to relate what the measurements were, and how they relate to today's market place. Those four measurements or weights were: a cubit, talent, shekel and a hin. These measurements and weights have come from the Jewish Encyclopedia and The Companion Bible.

Please take note that when the equivalent monetary value is given, it is an approximation of the market value today, October 2011.

- 1) The Cubit: Ex. 25:33
 - a) There are two words for cubit in Hebrew:
 - i) "Ammah": This Hebrew word meant "mother of the arm" and was derived from the Latin "cubitus". It was the length between the tip of the middle finger to the elbow of a man's outstretched arm. The difficulty is that distance varies with different individuals and race. Therefore, Hellenistic cubit was 18, the sacred one was 22.88 inches and a Jewish was 21.6 inches. (Gen. 6:16)
 - ii) "Gomed": Only used for Ehud's small sword. (Jud. 3:16)
- 2) A Talent: (Ex. 25:39)
 - a) This was not a coin, but a unit of weight, with the Hebrew word being "kikkar", and weighed 3,000 shekels of the sanctuary. (Ex. 38:25-26)
 - b) The talent of gold, which was 131 pounds. (1 Chron. 20:2)
 - c) The talent of silver, which was 117 pounds. (1 Kgs. 20:39)
- 3) The Shekel: (Ex. 30:13)
 - a) It weighted approximately "twenty gerahs" (Ex. 30:13)
 - b) There was the shekel of the sanctuary. (Ex. 30:13)
 - c) There was the shekel of the King. (2 Sam. 14:26)
- 4) A Hin: (Ex. 29:40)
 - a) A "hin" was the equivalent to 3 cabs, and one cab was 2.024 liters. (Jewish Encyclopedia)

The Different Gatherings From The People and What Was Gathered

There were two gatherings from the children of Israel at this time:

- 1) Compulsory Gatherings
- 2) Voluntary Gatherings

The Compulsory Offering

The compulsory offering was to be taken from all who were numbered, from twenty years and up (Ex. 30:12-16); the total number being 603,550 individuals (Ex. 38:26). It was all inclusive (Ex. 30:13) and it was irrelevant if one was rich or poor, the same was to be taken from each, and none could pay for another (Ex. 30:15).

The amount taken was a half shekel (Ex. 30:13) and it had two names: the "offering of the Lord" (Ex. 30:13) and an "atonement for your souls" (Ex. 30:15). In my studies I have found it was never called "redemption", for that term seems to be restricted to the liberation from Egypt (Psa. 111:9). We in this age have been blessed by a much richer redemption, that which is found in Christ Jesus. In infinite grace God has given us: "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14), and the assurance it is an "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12).

This was set in contrast to the redemption from Egypt by its descriptive names and by being something they could do as an offering to God (Ex. 30:15), whereas the redemption from Egypt was totally a work of God.

The question then comes to mind: "Since they were redeemed, why was there a need for the atonement of their souls?" (Ex. 30:15). One answer is, it was for the prevention of the plague. (Ex. 30:12)

The total amount of silver gathered by this means was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels (Ex. 38:25-27). One talent had a weight measurement equaling 3000 shekels. The one hundred talents of silver was a vast amount of money, and when it is understood that one talent equalled 117 pounds in today's value of approximately \$1,922,055 US. The total, including the shekels, was the equivalent of approximately 1,931,815 US dollars!

The Voluntary Offering

Then there were the free will offerings or voluntary offerings, a point emphasized in (Ex. 25:2; 35:5; 21-29; 36:3). These were gold, silver, copper, blue, purple, scarlet, linen, wood, rams skins dyed red, badger skins, goats hair, onyx stones, and other specific stones for the breastplate and ephod, oil, and spices. (Ex. 25:3-7; 35:5-9)

- 1) The silver, gathered by the redemption money, was divided two ways:
 - a) From the 100 talents were made:
 - ii) The 96 sockets for the 48 boards were called the sockets of the sanctuary, all 100 talents each. (Ex. 38:27)
 - iii) The sockets for the vail (Ex. 26:32), (but not the sockets for the door which were made of brass. (Ex. 36:38)
 - iv) Each board standing on two sockets was worth approximately 35,000 US dollars.
 - v) Each socket holding the vail was worth approximately 17,755 US dollars.
 - b) From the 1,775 shekels were made:
 - i) Hooks and fillets for the pillars. (Ex. 38:28)
 - ii) Overlaid the chapiters. (Ex. 38:27)
- 2) The total amount of the gold was 29 talents and 730 shekels (Ex. 38:24). With a talent of gold weighing 131 pounds, the value today would be approximately 104,426,912 US dollars.
From the gold was made:
 - a) The overlaying of the boards. (Ex. 36:34)
 - b) The overlaying of the altar of incense. (Ex. 30:3)
 - c) The overlaying of the table of shewbread. (Ex. 37:11)
 - d) The overlaying of the ark of the covenant. (Ex. 37:2)
 - e) The overlaying of the staves. (Ex. 37:15)
 - f) The overlaying of the bars for the tabernacle boards. (Ex. 36:34)
 - g) The overlaying of the pillars for the vail. (Ex. 26:32)
 - h) The overlaying of the pillars for the door. (Ex. 26:37)
 - i) The overlaying of the chapiters and fillets for the door. (Ex. 36:38)
 - j) The hooks for the door. (Ex. 26:37)
 - k) The entire mercy seat. (Ex. 37:6)
 - l) The candlestick. (Ex. 37:17)
 - m) The hooks for the vail. (Ex. 26:32)
- 3) The total amount of copper (brass) was 70 talents, 2400 shekels (Ex. 38:28-31) or in today's market it is the approximate equivalent to 17,080 US dollars.
From the copper was made:
 - a) The sockets for the door of the Tabernacle. (Ex. 38:30)
 - b) The brazen altar. (Ex. 38:30)
 - c) The brazen grate. (Ex. 38:30)
 - d) All the copper vessels. (Ex. 38:30)
 - e) The sockets for the court. (Ex. 38:31)
 - f) The sockets for the court gate. (Ex. 38:31)
 - g) The pins of the court. (Ex. 38:31)
 - h) The pins for the Tabernacle. (Ex. 38:20)
 - i) The sockets for the door. (Ex. 26:37)

The Need For Care In The Weights And Measurements Significance

Throughout the instructions for the Tabernacle there are constant references to weights and measurements. A careful reading will result in the recognition that the curtains, court, boards, pillars, altar, table, ark, Mercy seat, incense altar, and space between the court pillars are all measured in cubits. The sockets and candlestick are measured by weight.

Remember that the Tabernacle is a parable, and not the very image, therefore not every iota of detail in a parable has a deep significance. For instance:

I see a danger in teaching that the half cubit (Ex. 25:10) indicates that there is so much more to be learnt, and making it teach the words of the Queen of Sheba, "the half was not told me" (1 Kgs. 10:7; 2 Chron. 9:6). It sounds very profound and spiritual, but leaves me with a question: "How are we to interpret single and multiple cubits?" Clearly, they must be interpreted in the same way. Does this mean that there are areas where we can know all about God and Christ, as indicated by one cubit and twice as much as would be indicated by two cubits? Where do we stop, for we have reference made to three cubits (Ex. 38:1); four cubits (Ex. 26:2), five cubits (Ex. 27:1)? I find such an interpretation cannot hold the evidence of scripture. Like the gold, frankincense and myrrh given to Mary at the birth of our Lord, it was primarily for practical reasons. God is practical, and He is the God of beauty, therefore, things are practical from the human perspective and beautiful in their proportion and construction. Each piece of furniture or equipment was designed by God and perfectly fitted for its purpose.

When dealing with the Tabernacle, etc., care must be taken not to try to interpret the divinely given data beyond that which the Scriptures allow. For instance, the Tabernacle consisted of forty-eight boards, and the question has been raised: "Why forty-eight"? Here we need carefulness, for God made a definite distinction between the boards and the two corner boards, and if they are left out of the equation, we are left with forty-six. How are we then to interpret it? The emphasis is not on the number but on what they stood on, their covering, and the fact that they were spoken of repeatedly as "standing up" (Ex. 26:15; 36:20).

Regarding weights, there does not seem to be a system peculiar to the Jewish people, except in a few cases. For a time the standards of Egypt were the rule, then later Babylonians, the Grecian, and the Roman. Thus, the weights and measurements we would need to know would be that of ancient Egypt, and even that is conjecture.

To atone means "to appease or pacify". Some illustrations of this are:

- 1) Jacob sent a present to (atone) appease his brother Esau. (Gen. 32:20)
- 2) "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will (atone or) pacify it." (Prov. 16:14)

Notes On Atonement

In the New Testament the word "Atonement" is only found once, and it is not the right word, nor contextually correct (Rom. 5:11), and the context is reconciliation. We do not appease God. Through the work of the Lord His righteous judgment against us was fully met, and God appeased His own anger in grace. God is righteously "angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11), but man could never appease that by works. That righteous anger and judgment for sins has been appeased in Christ through the shedding of His precious blood (1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). The word is connected with "forgiveness" (Deut. 21:8); "reconciliation" (Lev. 6:30); and "pardon" (2 Chron. 30:18).

May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.

John 16:13

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