

Candlelight time 6:08 Sabbath ends 7:02

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, March 10:

PEKUDE: Exodus 38:21-40:38

HAFTARAH: I Kings 7:40-50

**Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

*THE USE OF WEALTH: The Torah's economic policy for the building and maintenance of the Temple is based on two complementary guidelines (Menahot 89a): "Poverty is not befitting an abode of richness," and "Torah spares the people's money." The first calls for generous expenditure; the second, for moderation. The balance between these seemingly contradictory rules maintained splendor without extravagance and simplicity without deprivation. Exemplifying beneficent spending coupled with prudent saving, the Temple conveyed a lesson in the art of living: how to enjoy wealth and avoid waste. Wealth, "mammon," in Judaism, is neither worshiped nor despised. It is appreciated as a product of human effort, a means for man's enjoyment and service, and an expression of Divine blessing to be used and shared constructively and gratefully.*

## Thought of the Week

---

By **RABBI ZVI YEHUDA**

**GOLD CAN BE** corruptive but also constructive. Gold was used for the Golden Calf, but also for the Mishkan. Gold in itself is not a dirty word in Judaism. Torah declares (Ex. 38:24): “All the gold was used in the creative work – to complete the sacred task!” The Sages say: This means that all the gold was put in this world so that it might be used for good and holy purposes.

Wealth is a positive instrument for improving the quality of human life – physically and spiritually. It offers opportunities. In itself it is neither good nor evil. We, however, have the choice to render it either a curse or a blessing.

## **Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

**TWO KINDS OF SHEKELS:** The Shabbat preceding or coinciding with Rosh Hodesh (New Moon) Adar, is called Shekalim (lit., shekels). Its additional Torah reading deals with the annual half-shekel tax collected to maintain the Temple and its services. A special tractate of Mishna and Jerusalem Talmud dealing with this topic is also called Shekalim. What is the connection between the idea of Shekalim and the theme of Purim, the festival of the month of Adar? On Purim we read about the shekels Haman promised the king he would plunder from the Jews for the Persian treasury. Now, before we read of Purim's shekels—those extracted forcibly from the Jews—shekels donated in a spirit of love and devotion.

**Candlelight time 6:04 Sabbath ends 6:59**

**Scriptural reading for Saturday, March 7:**

**PEKUDE: Exodus 38:21-40:38; Numbers 28:9-15;**

**EXODUS 30: 11-16**

**HAFTARAH: II KINGS 12:1-17**

**Shabbat Shekalim**

**Rosh Hodesh Adar II: Friday, March 6**

Candlelight time 7:22 Sabbath ends 8:17

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, March 23:

**PEKUDE:** Exodus 38:21-40:38; 12:1-20

**HAFTARAH:** Ezekiel 45:16-46:18

**SHABBAT HAHODESH**

### *Thought of the Week*

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

TWO LEVELS OF LABOR are expressed by the words, "avoda" and "melacha" (Ex. 39:42-43). "Avoda" describes the effort of labor: the exertion, toil and servitude of work. Its root, "eved," means slave, servant. "Melacha" points to the result of labor: the task and accomplishment, the craftsmanship, artistry and perfection of work. Its root – "mal'ach" (angel) means agent, messenger. The ongoing aim of technological civilization, one might say, is to get the maximum of "melacha" with the minimum of "avoda." "Avoda," in that sense, is never praised as a value in rabbinic literature. "Melacha," however, is extolled as a lofty moral attainment. "Melacha," human creativity, indicates man's sense of duty and purpose, his ability to work as a master, not slave, with a preconceived design and goal. "When Moses saw all the accomplishments ("melacha") the People of Israel had completed – as the Lord had ordained so had they done – Moses blessed them" (Ex. 39:43): "Would that the Divine presence ("Shechina") permeate the work of our hands!" (cf., Ps. 90:17). Working to perfect the world, man acts as "mal'ach," an agent of God, his partner in Creation.

## Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

**FIRE:** The Book of Exodus begins with fire and ends with fire, preceding from the Burning Bush to the burning flame which appeared during the nights of the people's wandering in the desert. Both fires symbolize the wondrous indestructibility and survivability of the Jewish people. The Burning Bush illustrates that no fire of destruction will ever consume the people. The burning flame shows that in moments of darkness, the fire of Divine Providence will ignite the people's hopes and bring light to direct their ways.

*"For the cloud of the Lord was seen over the Tabernacle in the daytime: whereas at night, fire was seen in the clouds by the entire people of Israel, throughout all their journey."*

(Exodus 40—Col. 38)

## ***Thought of the Week***

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

THE TEMPLE'S ETERNITY ("olamim") – perceived by Solomon who dedicated it to God (I Kings 8:13) "as a foundation for Your Presence forever" – applies only to its metaphysical essence. Its physical structure failed. While the chosen site on Mount Moriah stays sacred forever, two Temple edifices were built there and destroyed: the First, c. 1000-586 BCE; the Second, 516 BCE-70 CE. Since the last destruction, for almost two millennia, long after its perishable elements crumbled, the Temple's spiritual impact still endures. Imbued with its memory and vision, Jews persist to live creatively and heroically, with or without the Temple. The physical loss of its building and ritual, lamentable as it is, did not render the Jews obsolete, nor make them feel defeated, rejected, "replaced" or dethroned as the elect people of God. To be uprootedly "un-Templed" and yet alive and viable – an outrage for historians and scandal for theologians – is the secret of the Jewish people. Jews vigorously have continued to maintain and cherish spiritual sanctity even without a material Sanctuary, and national identity even without political sovereignty. Despite its destruction, the Temple, like the people, is eternal.

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, March 6:  
PEKUDE: 38:21-40  
HAFTARAH: I Kings 7:40-50

## *Thought of the Week*

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

THE MISHCAN (Tabernacle), the portable sanctuary, accompanied the Israelites in their wanderings in the Sinai desert. Entering the Promised land, it was first set up at Gilgal (Josh. 4:19); then, before Joshua's death, at Shiloh (18:1), where it became a more fixed construction. The Shiloh temple served as a central place of worship for the people during the period of the Judges (Jud. 18:31; I Sam. 4:3). After its tragic destruction (c. 10th cent. BCE), and the death of its last priest, Eli, it was moved to Nob (21:1-9) and to Gibeon (I Kings 3:4). With the building of the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon, this became eternally the only place of centralized worship for Judaism. Despite its two devastating destructions (in 586 BCE and 70 CE), Judaism keeps alive its earnest belief that once again the Temple will be rebuilt on its holy spot as a center of enlightenment for all mankind.

## RABBI ZVI YEHUI

TABLE AND ALTAR were among the holy vessels in the ancient Temple. The Table is a symbol of wealth and success; the Altar, of sacrifice and giving. After the Temple's Destruction in 70 C.E., however, its ritual was abolished but its symbolism endured, molding Jewish thought and values.

Equating the common table at home which is used for food with the holy Altar of the Temple, the Talmud (TB Berkahot 55a) says that both have the power to affect atonement. When the table at home is used in sanctity and equity; when the food is *kasher* ("fit" ritually and morally; prepared by dietary rules and obtained by honest means); prayers are recited and words of Torah are exchanged around the table; and, most importantly, when the needy are invited to partake and enjoy, then the table is sacred and atones as the Altar. So remarks Targum Yerushalmi (on Exodus 40:6):

*When the prosperous spread a table for the poor, it becomes an Altar and brings appeasement and forgiveness.*

Thus, the Table, which symbolizes wealth and success, is linked with the Altar, which symbolizes sacrifice and giving.

---

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

### RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

TABLE AND ALTAR were among the holy vessels in the ancient Temple. The table is a symbol of wealth and success; the altar, of sacrifice and giving. After the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), the symbolism of its ritual continued to mold Jewish thought and values. The Talmud (Berakhot 55a) equates the mundane table at home with the holy altar in the ancient Temple. In antiquity, the altar would atone; nowadays, the plain table at home atones.

But how can a simple table, where human nourishment is taken, function as an altar for sacred sacrifices? The rabbinic conception is that if a table for food is used in compliance with the divine will – if it is kosher, obtained by moral means, proper prayers were recited and words of Torah were exchanged around the table – then it is, indeed, a sacred table. If the table is used for inviting the poor and providing them with joy and nourishment – it is, indeed, as sacred and atoning as the altar. So remarks Targum Yerushalmi on Exodus 40:6: “When the rich spread a table for the needy, it becomes an altar, bringing appeasement and forgiveness.”

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

### **RABBI ZVI YEHUDA**

TABLE AND ALTAR were among the holy vessels in the ancient Temple. The table is a symbol of wealth and success; the altar, of sacrifice and giving. After the Temple's destruction (70 C.E.), however, its sacrificial ritual was abolished but its symbolism continued to endure.

Equating the common table at home used for food with the holy altar of the Temple, the Talmud (TB Berakhot 55a) says that both have the power to affect atonement. When the table at home is used in sanctity and equity – when the food is kosher (“fit” ritually and morally; prepared by Torah dietary rules and obtained by honest means), prayers are recited, and words of Torah exchanged around the table and, most importantly, the needy are invited to partake – then the table is sacred and “atones” as the altar. So remarks Targum

48 CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS / MARCH 10, 2000

Yerushalmi in Exodus 40:6): “When the prosperous spread a table for the poor, it becomes an altar and brings appeasement and forgiveness.”

Symbolism of fire embraces the Book of Exodus from start to end – from the devouring fire in Moses' Burning Bush vision, to the shielding flame above the tabernacle during the nights of the people's wanderings in the desert. Both fires symbolize the survivability and indestructibility of the Jewish people.

The Burning Bush illustrates that no destructive fire will ever consume the people. The rising flame above the tabernacle shows that even in moments of darkness, the protective fire of Divine providence will warm the people's hopes and provide illumination to their ways.

# THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

## RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

TABLE AND ALTAR were among the holy vessels in the ancient Temple. The table is a symbol of wealth and success; the altar, of sacrifice and giving. After the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), the symbolism continued to mold Jewish thought and values. The Talmud (*Berakhot* 55a) equates the mundane table at home, used for daily meals, with the holy altar in the ancient temple. When the table is used in sanctity – the food is kosher and obtained by ethical means, proper prayers are recited and words of Torah are exchanged around the table – then it is, indeed, sacred as the altar. It is particularly so when the table is open to the needy (*Targum Yerushalmi* to Ex. 40:6).

Gold can be both corrupting and constructive. It was used for both the Golden Calf and the *mishkan* (holy ark). In itself, gold is neither good nor evil. We, however, have the choice to render it either a curse or a blessing.

The Book of Exodus begins and ends with fire. It starts with Moses' burning-bush vision and concludes with the shielding fire above the *mishkan* ("the Divine dwelling tabernacle"), glowing nights during the people's wanderings in the desert. Both fires symbolize the wondrous survivability and indestructibility of the Jewish people.

The burning bush illustrates that no fire of destruction will ever consume the people. The blazing flame above the tabernacle shows that even in moments of darkness, the protective fire of Divine providence will warm the people's hopes and provide illumination to direct their ways (Exodus 40:38).

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

TABLE AND ALTAR were among the holy vessels in the ancient temple. The table is a symbol of wealth and success; the altar, of sacrifice and giving. After the destruction of the temple (70 CE), the symbolism of its ritual continued to endure and mold Jewish thought and values. The Talmud (*Berakhot 55a*) equates the mundane table at home, used for everyday meals, with the holy altar in the ancient temple.

How can a mundane table be like a sacred altar? The rabbis teach that when the table is used in sanctity -- the food is *kasher* and obtained by ethical means; proper prayers are recited and words of Torah are exchanged around the table -- then it is indeed sacred as the altar. It is particularly so, when the table is open to the needy to partake in joy. (*Targum Yerushalmi* to Ex. 40:6).