

תְּצַוֶּה

T'tzaveh

(you shall command)

Shemot [Exodus] 27:20-30:10

The Power of the Altar

Shemot (Exodus) 29:37

“Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and the altar shall be most holy; whatsoever touches the altar shall be holy.”

YHWH not only gave Israel specific instructions on how to build the mishkan and all its furnishings, but He also gave them specific instructions on how to sanctify the mishkan, and specifically the altar. It would take seven days to make atonement for the altar. It is interesting to note that when making atonement for a person, one sacrifice is sufficient. However, when making atonement for the altar, where the work of atonement was to be done, then it takes seven days. It takes more to make atonement for an inanimate object as opposed to making atonement for a person.

One of the ways in which this is significant, is that after a person has been atoned for, if he touches another person that person is not made holy. However, concerning the altar, once it has been cleansed and sanctified and some object touches the altar, whatever touches the sanctified altar is made holy. It is also sanctified. Yeshua Himself even speaks to this.

Matithyah (Matthew) 23:19

“You blind, for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift?”

Yeshua, in speaking to the Pharisees and scribes, chastises them for thinking and teaching that the gift that was given was greater than the altar which sanctified the gift. It is completely illogical to think that the altar which makes the gift holy would have the ability to make the gift greater than itself.

What is really sad is that Yeshua prefaced this teaching with the following words.

Matithyah (Matthew) 23:15

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one convert; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehinnom as yourselves.”

The scribes and the Pharisees had turned the proper order of things upside down. They had taken their own rulings and elevated them above the Torah of YHWH. In doing this they made our heavenly Father's Torah of no effect. They thought that they had the right and the authority to do this. It is still the same today. Rabbinic Judaism still teaches today that the rabbis have the right and the authority to change and alter Torah. This is simply not true. No man has the right to change, alter, add to, or take away from, the Torah of YHWH. Not even Mashiach changed the Torah in any way.

When it comes to understanding the power that YHWH instilled in the altar of the mishkan, we first need to understand its function. The function of the altar in the mishkan was to offer up to YHWH all the sacrifices from Israel. It was to be a direct link between YHWH and His people. It is this truth that then opens up to us a direct link to YHWH.

While this altar is not now in operation because there is no functioning mishkan or temple, we still can use the altar of the heavenly mishkan as our link to YHWH. It is upon this altar that Mashiach did part of the work of the atonement before He carried His Blood into the inner sanctuary of the heavenly mishkan. While Yeshua is our link to our heavenly Father, we must not forget the altar in all this process, for the altar has a very significant role to play in our own set-apartness or sanctification. Let us prayerfully consider some additional verses.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Elohim, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Elohim, which is your spiritual service.

If we are to present our bodies to YHWH as a living sacrifice, then it follows that we need to have an altar upon which to present ourselves. And if we present ourselves as a living sacrifice upon an altar, then it also follows that we do this: we also become sanctified and holy to YHWH. Does Scripture bear this out? Yes it does.

Kepha Aleph (1st Peter) 2:5

you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Elohim through Yeshua Mashiach.

Kepha Aleph (1st Peter) 2:9

But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for Elohim's own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

In both of the verses above we see that the people of YHWH are considered holy or set-apart. But what is this altar which sanctifies us and who is it that is the One who is doing the sanctifying or setting apart?

Ivrim (Hebrews) 2:11

For both He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Yeshua our Mashiach is the One who sanctifies us and sets us apart. In doing so He calls us His brothers and sisters. We should be careful to call each other this even if we do not agree on doctrine. As long as a person is working to walk with Yeshua in the very best of the understanding that He gives to each person, then he is in fact our brother or sister in Mashiach. Furthermore, each one is holy and set-apart in Him. What He has set apart, we should not call unclean or unholy.

Please notice this next passage concerning what it is that sanctifies us.

Yochanan (John) 17:17

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

The truth of YHWH, His word, is also known as Mashiach Yeshua as He is the word made flesh and truth incarnate. It is upon this altar that we are set-apart and sanctified. It is in His truth that we are set-apart.

Yochanan (John) 17:18-19

18 “As You did send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”

When one is sanctified and set-apart in the truth of YHWH, then Mashiach Yeshua sends them out into the world. But what are we to do in the world? Are we to become a part of the world? No. We are to witness to the world His truth. In being a faithful witness, we bring the Ruach Qodesh (Holy Spirit) with us wherever we go; thus the following also transpires.

Yochanan (John) 16:8

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world in respect to sin, and righteousness, and judgment;”

I have witnessed the truth of this passage many times. Perhaps the most sobering aspect of the above passage is concerning judgment. Many times I have seen YHWH bring judgment upon those whom I have witnessed to because they rejected the righteousness of Yeshua and their own sinfulness.

It is upon this altar, the altar of truth of Mashiach Yeshua that we are set apart. We are then to live our lives for Him rather than living our lives for ourselves. The power of this altar is that He is fully capable of keeping that which we entrust to Him. He is able to keep us set-apart as long as we stay upon the altar of truth. Where men go astray from this altar of truth is when men, as the Pharisees and the scribes of old, elevate their manmade traditions above His truth.

Likewise, even today many are actually following the traditions of manmade religions rather than following the workings and leadings of His Spirit. It is when we follow His Spirit that we can fully realize the power of the altar in our lives.

Let us keep in the forefront of our minds that He has set us apart for Himself and act and live accordingly.

ABBA YHWH, we place ourselves upon Your altar of truth and ask that You please sanctify us in the name of Yeshua Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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