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MINISTRIES

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The Tabernacle: The Menorah

The tabernacle in the wilderness was God’s dwelling place among the Israelites after he freed them from slavery in Egypt. It can be a chore to read through the passages that describe the tabernacle, but it turns out that the tabernacle is full of symbolism and spiritual lessons that teach us about our relationship with God. For a quick introduction to what the tabernacle was, we recommend watching our teaching, [The Tabernacle: An Introduction](#). In this teaching, we’re going to take a close look at the menorah. *Menorah* is a Hebrew word that means “lampstand.” We’re going to look at how the lampstand in the tabernacle was used, and what it represents. Let’s get started.

The tabernacle building was completely enclosed. The roof was made of a layer of goat’s hair and two layers of animal skins, and the sides were made of wood overlaid with gold, covered by thick curtains. Without a light source, it would have been dark inside, even during the day. So, the menorah’s practical function was to light up the tabernacle. We find the menorah described in Exodus 25:

Exodus 25:31-40

You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

The menorah was designed to look like a blossoming almond tree with seven branches. Attached to the branches were bowls that held olive oil (Exodus 27:20-21), which was the fuel used to provide the light. The menorah was made out of a single piece of gold that weighed “one talent.” A talent was a unit of weight equal to 3,000 shekels (Exodus 38:25-26). It’s not clear exactly how much an ancient shekel weighed, but many estimates place it between 11 and 12 grams. This would make a talent between 33 and 36 kilograms, or roughly 70 to 80 pounds. In modern money, just this quantity of raw gold would be worth well over two million dollars.

So, that’s what the menorah was: a 70-80 pound piece of solid gold shaped like an almond tree with seven branches. Attached to those branches were seven lamps, which held olive oil. This oil was burned to provide the light for the inside of the tabernacle.

So, that’s what the menorah was, and how it was used. But what was its spiritual significance? To find out, we can look at a few places where the menorah is referenced in prophecy. Here is one from Revelation:

Revelation 1:12-16

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Here we have Jesus, or Yeshua as he was called in Hebrew, standing in the midst of “seven golden lampstands,” with his eyes like a flame of fire, and his face shining brightly. This is a clear reference to the menorah in the tabernacle. Another prophecy where the menorah is found is in Zechariah:

Zechariah 4:1-3

And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.”

Zechariah describes a gold lampstand with seven lamps, and next to it are olive trees. We would presume that these trees supplied the olive oil that was burned in the lampstand.

So, the menorah is clearly being referenced in both of these visions, but why is it referenced? What is the symbolic significance of the menorah here? If we continue reading in Zechariah, we find out:

Zechariah 4:10

...These seven [lamps] are the eyes of the LORD [YHWH], which range through the whole earth.

So, in Zechariah the menorah represents God’s eyes. What does that mean? Well, we know that the purpose of eyes is to see, but what are God’s eyes looking for? Other scriptures tell us: God’s eyes are looking for righteousness:

1 Peter 3:12

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD [YHWH] are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

Proverbs 5:21

For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD [YHWH], and he ponders all his paths.

Psalms 11:4-7

The LORD [YHWH] is in his holy temple; the LORD's [YHWH] throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man. The LORD [YHWH] tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD [YHWH] is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

So, God's eyes look out over the earth to see who is righteous and who is wicked. Why? So that he can respond to the prayers of the righteous, and pour out judgment upon the wicked. As a symbol of the eyes of God, the menorah reminds us that God's eyes are always watching. Just like there was nowhere in the tabernacle to escape from the menorah's light, there is nowhere on earth to escape God's sight either. If we are doing wrong, we cannot hide that from God, so we will face judgment. But if we are righteous, God sees that too. He also sees our trials and hardships, and he will respond to our prayers. He is watching because he is looking for righteous people to bring into his dwelling place:

Jeremiah 24:4-7

Then the word of the LORD [YHWH] came to me: "Thus says the LORD [YHWH], the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD [YHWH], and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

This idea of drawing people in is another aspect to the menorah. The light of the menorah is not just indicating that God can see us, but it is also a beacon that the world can see so they can come near to him. After Zechariah describes the lamps in chapter 4, that is what ends up happening: God's people return to him.

Zechariah 8:7-8

Thus says the LORD [YHWH] of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

Of course, there is another significant symbology here. We know about another light in the world that separated between the righteous and the wicked, and drew men to God. That light, which is symbolized by the menorah, was Messiah:

Revelation 21:23-24

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its

lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

John 1:9-13

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 8:12

Again Jesus [Yeshua] spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 3:19-21

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

So, Messiah is clearly pictured in the menorah. He is the "lamp" that will light up the city in the New Jerusalem. He is the light of the world. He exposes both wickedness and righteousness, just like the eyes of God. And, he is a beacon that the righteous come to in order to draw near to God.

However, this is not where the symbology ends. Isaiah also speaks of a light that draws people to God. But he mentions something very interesting:

Isaiah 60:1-5

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD [YHWH] has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD [YHWH] will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

Isaiah says that this light that is shining out to the world is not only shining through Messiah, but also through God's people as a whole. So, how do God's people shine this light? The answer is, they shine when they are righteous. They shine when they do good works.

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

When we are righteous, we act as a menorah. We act like the one who was perfectly righteous, Yeshua. The Messiah did what was pleasing to God, and he was light. We, too, are light when we follow in Messiah's footsteps:

Ephesians 5:8-14

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Like Messiah, when we are righteous, when we act like the menorah and give light, it accomplishes several things. It exposes the wickedness in the world around us, and compels people to make a choice: will they turn away from their wickedness and toward God, or will they reject God and walk their own way? For those who choose God, our light also serves as a beacon to draw them into fellowship with him. That is the goal. The menorah’s purpose was not to shine light on itself, but to give light to the whole tabernacle. That is our purpose as well—to light the way to God’s dwelling place. This symbolism of us being part of the menorah comes full circle in the seven golden lamps in Revelation. Let’s read that passage once again:

Revelation 1:12-13

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

What do the golden lampstands represent in this vision? We find out in verse 20:

Revelation 1:20

As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The seven lampstands are the churches of God. They are God’s people who follow Messiah and do what is right. They continue Messiah’s mission of bringing light to the world, and bringing others into fellowship with him. This matches the symbolism of the menorah that we’ve seen throughout the rest of the scriptures.

So, to recap, the menorah gave light to the tabernacle. It represents the eyes of God, which see what is wicked and what is righteous. It represents the Messiah, the light of the world who draws us into fellowship with God. And, it represents God’s people when they turn away from wickedness and do good works. The light of the menorah represents the light of God to the world.

To learn more about the tabernacle, we invite you to watch the other parts of this teaching series. But more importantly, we invite you to come to the Messiah and help shine his light; to become part of God’s menorah.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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