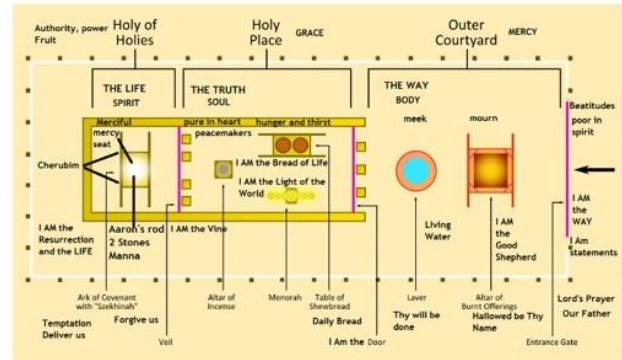


In this fifth study about the priest in the order of Melchizedek, **life in the Holy Place** of the tabernacle and the symbolism contained in the **lampstand** is discussed.

Review of the plan of the tabernacle:



The Holy Place of the tabernacle:

The **Holy Place** of the tabernacle was a closed space without windows, where everything was made of gold. It contained the **lampstand**, the **table of the bread of the Presence** with the loaves and the **altar of incense**.

In this seclusion, a **symbol of an intimate life with God as a trinity**, the priest in the order of Melchizedek meets Jesus Christ as the **Word**.

With the symbols of **Light** on the lampstand and **Bread** on the table of the bread of the Presence, the priest/disciple learns to understand **who Jesus really is** and what it means to him/her when He said:

- *Whoever has my **commands** and **keeps (pays careful attention to, lives up to)** them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and **show myself to them.** (John 14:21)*

Jesus phrased this elsewhere as follows:

- *Anyone who loves me will **obey (pays careful attention to, lives up to)** my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and **make our home** with them. (John 14:23)*
- *If you **remain in me and I in you**, you will bear much fruit; ... (John 15:5)*

Because that is what Jesus wants, as Paul writes:

- *... so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith. (Ephesians 3:17)*

In **this** study we will first consider what the significance of Jesus, as the **Light** on the lampstand, is in this respect.

The lampstand:

God gave Moses the commandment:

- *Make a **lampstand (menorah)** of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft, and make its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms of one piece with them. **Six branches** are to extend from the **sides** of the lampstand - three on one side and three on the other.*

- Then make its **seven lamps** and set them up on it so that they **light the space in front of it**. (Exodus 25:31-32 and 37)



The Hebrew word for lampstand, menorah, is used both for the one-armed lampstand, also called a lampstand, and for a lampstand with extra arms.

The **only source of light** in the **Holy Place** was a lampstand/ menorah with a total of **seven arms**.

Made of pure gold:

The lampstand was made of **refined gold**. Refined, pure, because the gold of the lampstand should not be defiled. As a picture of **holiness**, it had to be perfectly pure.

The lampstand did not consist of several separate parts that were attached to each other, but it had **to be made as a whole**, from one talent of pure gold (about 30 kilograms).

Seven arms:

The **lampstand** in the Holy Place consisted of the shank, or shaft in the centre, with six arms projecting from its side, three times two each, one on the right and one on the left.

There was one lamp on the shaft and on each arm.

There were therefore **seven lamps** in total.

Seven lamps borne by the lampstand as the sole source of light for the Holy Place.

In a manner of speaking, **one light for each day of the week**.

Jesus is the Light:

A lampstand served to bear the lamps, so that the light would be better diffused, as Jesus said:

- *Neither do people light a **lamp** and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its **stand**, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matthew 5:15)*

In the tabernacle, the lampstand served as a **stand** to lift the **oil lamps** up, so that the light would be diffused and the Holy Place better lit.

The **lampstand** itself is **not** the image of Jesus.

The **light**, diffused through the lamps, held up by the lampstand, is the **symbol** of who **Jesus is**, as He said:

- ***I am the light** of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)*

Jesus as high priest and as **Light**, illuminates the life of the priest/disciple every moment of the day, seven days a week.



Almond blossom:

The arms of the lampstand were decorated with almond blossoms, according to God's command:



- *Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all **six branches** extending from the lampstand. (Exodus 25:33)*

The almond tree is the fruit tree that blooms first in Israel, at the beginning of spring.

The almond blossom has 5 **petals**.

In the Bible 5 refers to the books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, the **Torah**, also called **law** or **teaching**.

Almond blossom is the translation of the Hebrew word 'שקד'.

This is a word with different meanings depending on the usage:

- **Almond tree, almond** - 'שקד' as a **noun** (pronounce: shaqed).
- **Almond blossom** - 'שקד' as a **verb** (pronounce: shaqad), conjugated as a **participle** according to Pual (a form of conjugation in Hebrew grammar)
- **To watch**, to pay attention, to keep watch - 'שקד' as a **verb** (pronounce: shaqad), conjugated as a **participle** according to Qal. (also a form of conjugation in Hebrew grammar)

The fact that **almond blossom** (shaqad) is a verb in Hebrew, conjugated as a participle, indicates that the **law** as education is not static, but **dynamic**, not bound by time.

'**Shaqad**' could therefore be understood as: **flowering almond (tree)**, not a rapidly fading blossom on an almond sprig in a vase therefore.

However, whenever someone sees almond blossoms, **he/she imagines a blooming almond tree**.

It is remarkable that the Hebrew for **almond blossom (shaqad)** has the meaning of **keeping watch** in another conjugation of the verb.

That sheds light on a statement made by God to the prophet Jeremiah, when He asked him: What do you see Jeremiah? To which he replied:

- *I see the **branch** of an **almond tree**, ... (Jeremiah 1:11)*

To which God answered:

- *"You have seen correctly, for I am **watching (shaqad)** to see that **my word** is fulfilled."* (Jeremiah 1:12)

The **almond blossom** with **five petals** is thus a picture of **keeping watch** and the **Torah**. When God watches over His **Word**, this will refer primarily to the **teaching** of the **Torah**.



The fact that He does not mention the Torah gives the impression that God is interpreting the almond blossom more broadly here than just as the five books of Moses.

This is like when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He mentioned and remarked upon love for God and our neighbour:

- *All the **Law and the Prophets** hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:40)*

This means the teaching of the entire Tanakh, the entire Old Testament.

The fact that three almond blossoms were incorporated into **each arm** of the lampstand indicates that not only **God**, but the **divine Trinity** watches over the Word

Three times two arms:

Three times two arms emerged from the shaft

Three again refers to the divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Two arms, one arm on the right and one on the left, signifies that the testimony of the Father **and** the testimony of the Son **and** the testimony of the Holy Ghost are **true**, because:

- *A **matter** (the Hebrew **dabar: word**) must be **established** by the testimony of **two or three** witnesses. (Deuteronomy 19:15) ¹*

Established, the Hebrew word '**quwm**' is translated by the OLB as:

- stand, stand up
- to maintain oneself, to be established, be confirmed
- with the meaning of: to be valid
- to be proven, to be fulfilled
- to persist, to be set, be fixed

The lampstand that bears the light bears witness to the fact that God's Word stands firm, proves and affirms itself, endures and is powerful.

The lampstand, an image of the divine Trinity, is made from one talent of gold.

That signifies that God is one and that His Word is also one. It is not a collection of separate texts that are linked together.

The **Bible is a whole**², despite being written by some 40 authors over a span of 1,500 years. Each passage can therefore only be understood from the perspective of the Bible as a whole.

It is not just words that were written as education.

The Bible is the **revelation of the character of the three persons of the Divine Trinity**.

Summary:

Jesus is the Light for every day and guarantees that His Light is always available.

Jesus, as the Light, is **borne** by the **lampstand**, the menorah, whose six arms, one on the left and one on the right each time, speak of the **divine Trinity** that is **trustworthy**.

¹ Study: 2 or 3 witnesses.

² Study: Matthew 5:17 - Jesus has fulfilled the law.



The divine Trinity bears, supports and confirms Jesus as the Light.

This means that He does not speak of Himself, as He Himself said:

- *For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. (John 12:49)*

The priest/disciple in the order of Melchizedek lives in the Holy Place with this one Truth.

Without the Light, without Jesus, he lives in darkness.

Living in the Light is a choice, whereby Jesus promised:

- **Whoever follows me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)

The lamps had to stay alight all the time, according to the commandment:

- The **lamps** on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord must be tended **continually**. (Leviticus 24:4)

Since there was only one source of light in the sanctuary, **which always had to remain lit**, the priest in the order of Melchizedek lives by the light on the lampstand, which **reveals Jesus** as the living Word

The psalmist said:

- *Send me your **light** and your **faithful care**, let them lead me; ... (Palms 43:3)*
- ***Your word** is a **lamp** for my feet, a **light** on my path. (Palms 119:105)*

Jesus, as the **Living Word** is:

- the **lamp**, which should light up the way for the feet with every **succeeding step** and with **every decision** made in life
- the **light**, which teaches and shows the **direction** of the way of life.

What this means in practice is illustrated clearly in the book of Proverbs:

- *For this **command is a lamp**, this **teaching is a light**, and correction and instruction are the way to life, ... (Proverbs 6:23)*

The oil:

God also gave a rule for the oil for the lamps, and said:

- *Command the Israelites to bring you **clear oil of pressed olives** for the light so that the lamps **may be kept burning**. (Exodus 27:20)*

Oil from pressed olives was pure and probably pressed in an olive press, as seen in the kibbutz Revadim in Israel. (see illustration)



Olive oil was not only used as lamp oil in ancient times, but also in the care of wounds. Think of the man who was attacked on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Good Samaritan came by, ...

- *He went to him and bandaged his wounds, **pouring on oil** (from the olive) and wine. (Luke 10:34)*

Olive oil is still used today for soothing wounds, because of its analgesic and anti-inflammatory effect.

In the Bible, olive oil is the symbol of the **Holy Spirit**.

The **light** and the **oil** in the **lamps** together form a beautiful image of **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit**:

- **The pure Word** of God, as the **Light**, kindled by the fire of the **Holy Spirit**, which **soothes pain and heals wounds**.

The priest/disciple as the shaft:

The **shaft** is the central part of the lampstand, one whole with the arms that emerge from it. God also gave specific instructions for the **shaft** that ensures that the lampstand stands firm:

- *And on (the shaft of) the lampstand there are to be **four cups** shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. **One bud** shall be under the **first** pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the **second** pair, and a third bud under the **third** pair - six branches in all. (Exodus 25:34-35)*

An almond blossom in bud was to be placed on the shaft **under each pair of arms** of the lampstand.

Probably the image of the **Torah**, which is still **in bud** and is only fully revealed and gets its full meaning **in the Light** (Jesus), which is supported by each arm.

Exceptionally, the **shaft itself** contained four almond blossoms at the top.
The divine Trinity **plus 1**.

This **fourth almond blossom** in the shaft can hardly represent anything other than the **priest/disciple**.

Living with Jesus in the intimacy of the Holy Place signifies that the priest in the order of Melchizedek embraces Jesus as the Light in his/her heart

The **seventh lamp** on the shaft is supported in part by the **priest/disciple, as the fourth blossom**, in unity with the three other almond blossoms, the divine Trinity.



This is the image of the priest/disciple who is thereby the only one physically present in the world and who carries Jesus Christ as the Light, the Word, out into the world, supported by the divine Trinity.

Jesus said:

- **While** I am in the world, **I am** the light of the world. (John 9:5)

However, before He left the world to go back to His Father, He said to His disciples:

- **You are** the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:14)

A great responsibility, given that the seventh light is not active in itself, but is supported and surrounded by the other six arms by the divine Trinity, watching over the Word.

The incidence of the light:

God said:

- *Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the **space in front of it**.* (Exodus 25:37)

The light from the lamps on the stand had to shine **towards the front**.

Since the lampstand was set up against the left side wall of the Holy Place, the light was directed towards the opposite wall on the right, where the **table with the bread of the Presence** stood.

Jesus, as the Light on the lampstand, illuminates the Holy Place, but sheds light in the first instance on the **loaves** on the table of the bread of the Presence, which are also an **image of Him**.

He said:

- **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. *Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (John 6:51)

The significance of this is explained in the sixth part of this series of studies.³

³ Study: The priest in the order of Melchisedek (6).