



The previous study in this series described the life of the priest/disciple who entered through the **second** curtain into the **Holy Place** of the tabernacle, where he/she lives with Jesus as the Light on the **lampstand**.

In this **sixth** part the **table with the bread of the Presence** is discussed, the second object that the priest/disciple encounters in the **Holy Place**, along the new and living way through the tabernacle

The table with the bread of the Presence.

The table:

When the tabernacle was built God commanded Moses:

- *Make a table of acacia wood - two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with **pure gold** and make a gold molding around it. Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. (Exodus 25:23-25)*



The table measured 90 x 45 x 67.5 cm with a molding of a handbreadth, i.e. 7.6 cm, around it, and molding on the rim, so that the loaves would not slide off the table during transport. Gold rings were provided under the rim for the staves (verses 26-28) to carry the table.

Everything was made of acacia wood, overlaid with **pure (sterling) gold**, an image of **holiness**.

The bread:

The holy **table** served to **place loaves of bread** in the Holy Place **within Gods sight**, as God had commanded:

- *Put the **bread (לֶחֶם lechem)** of the Presence (**פָּנִים panim**) on this table to be **before me** at all times. (Exodus 25:30)*

The OLB translates:

- **לֶחֶם lechem** as: bread, food.
- **פָּנִים panim**: face, presence (among other things)

The bread in the Holy Place was placed on the display table, so that it might **be presented** before the face of God, in His presence, as food for the priests (see below).

God also gave special directions for the preparation of the loaves and for the arrangement on the table:

- *Take the finest flour and bake **twelve loaves of bread**, using **two-tenths of an ephah** for each loaf. Arrange them in **two stacks, six in each stack**, on the table of pure gold **before the Lord**. (Leviticus 24:5-6)*



The loaves that were placed in the Holy Place before God were to be baked using two tenths of an ephah, which is equivalent to **4.4 litres** of fine flour.

(The **ephah** was a unit of capacity equivalent to **22 litres**, used for dry matter.)

One litre of fine flour weighs about 600 grams, so the bread was baked with 2.6 kg of flour.

A loaf for the table of the bread of the Presence probably weighed nearly 4 kg when baked.

Symbolism of the loaves:

On the table were **twelve large loaves of bread** arranged in two stacks of six.

There may be some symbolism in the image 2 stacks of 6, or 2x2x3.

Whatever the case may be, twelve symbolises **the twelve tribes of the people of Israel** and, in the light of the New Testament, **the whole world**.

The care of the loaves was entrusted to the high priest:

- *This bread is to be set out before the Lord regularly, **Sabbath after Sabbath, ...as a lasting covenant.***

*It belongs to Aaron (**the high priest**) and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a **most holy** part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the Lord. (Leviticus 24:8-9)*

The loaves refer to the **manna** that the Israelites ate in the wilderness and which symbolises the Word of God, as Moses said:

- *He ... feeding you with **manna**, ... to teach you that man **does not live on bread alone** but on **every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.** (Deuteronomy 8:3)*

In times gone by the high priest had to put fresh loaves on the table every Sabbath.

Jesus, as the high priest who is eternal, is himself the **Living Bread**, which does not age and is always new.

He said:

- *... it is **not Moses** who has given you **the bread from heaven** (manna), but it is **my Father** who gives you the **true bread from heaven** ... and **gives life to the world.** (John 6:32-33)*
- ***I am the living bread** that came down from heaven ... This bread is **my flesh**, which I will give ... (John 6:51)*

The bread of the Presence was **most holy** (literally: **holy holy**) and is a symbol of who **Jesus** is as the **living Bread**, the **living Word**. Not only as a teaching, but also as a revelation of who Jesus is as a **Person**, holy and blameless.

For the priest/disciple too this bread is most holy or holy, holy. This implies a **commission**, as Peter writes, with a reference to Leviticus 11:44 and 45:

- *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But **just as he** who called you is **holy**, so **be holy** in all you do; for it is written: "**Be holy, because I am holy**". (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

Jesus said of this living Bread:

- *Whoever eats my **flesh and drinks my blood** has **eternal life**, ... (John 6:54)*
- *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood **remains in me, and I in them.** (John 6:56)*
- *... **whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.** (John 6:58)*



Jesus gave the bread a deeper meaning during the Last Supper, because:

- *While they were eating, Jesus took **bread**, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “**Take and eat; this is my body.**” (Matthew 26:26)*

The Levitical priests were to eat the bread of the Presence that had been **replaced in a holy place**.

The priest in the order of Melchizedek **does not eat stale bread**.

In the Holy Place he/she eats the fresh bread on the table of the bread of the Presence, **the body of Jesus, the living Jesus**.

(In this respect see the study about the worm – based on Psalm 22)¹

This is the **only spiritual food** of the priest/disciple who lives in the Holy Place. He/she will have to ‘eat’ the **Word** daily, as the Israelites in the wilderness had to collect the manna daily.

Because the curtain was torn when Jesus died, the priest/disciple eats the bread in full view of God, who is enthroned on the atonement covering of the ark, between the cherubim.

Paul writes:

- ***Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** (Colossians 3:16-17)*

Everything written in the Bible serves not only as teaching, but it shows above all who God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are.

Jesus explained to the disciples on the road to Emmaus that whatever is written in the Scriptures (the Old Testament) pertains **to Him**. (Luke 24)

Likewise, the Gospels show **who Jesus is** and are not simply a record of His life and teaching.

The priest in the order of Melchizedek, who eats the Living Bread daily, receives Jesus **into his soul**.

As a result, his/her character will be shaped by the working of the Holy Spirit.

He/she will thus take Jesus as the Living Bread out into this world, in word and deed.

The bread of the Presence is one of the fire offerings:

The bread of the Presence had to be eaten by the priests in a holy place:

- *... because it is a **most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings (Hebrew: fire offering) presented to the Lord.** (Leviticus 24:9)*

The bread of the Presence was one of the **fire offerings** of God. These were brought on the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard.

At the time when only Aaron and his two sons served in the tabernacle, twelve loaves of four kilograms a week were certainly too much for them to eat.

The bread that was not eaten was presumably burnt on the altar of burnt offering.

Jesus also brought **His body to the altar of burnt offering**, as **the bread for the world**, as a fragrant offering made by fire to God.

¹ Study: Psalm 22:6 - I am a worm.



Light and truth.

The table with the **loaves of bread of the Presence** stood in the Holy Place, opposite the **lampstand**, the light of which shone towards the front.

Jesus as the living **Bread**, the Word, the Truth, is **enlightened** by Jesus as **the Light**. Borne by the lampstand, He enlightens the Word, in the sight of God, who is:

- ... *watching to see that my word is fulfilled. (see the almond branch of Jeremiah 1:12)²*

John writes:

- ... **your word is truth.** (John 17:17)

Light and **truth** stand opposite each other as a tight unity.

Jesus, as the Light, cannot be understood without **Jesus as the Bread**, the **Word**, which is the Truth.

Jesus as the Bread cannot be understood without **Jesus as the Light**, as the Psalmist wrote:

- *Send me your **light** and your **faithful care**, let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. **Then I will go to the altar of God**, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. (Psalms 43:3-4)*

And further, in Psalm 119:

- *Your **word** is a **lamp** for my **feet**, a **light** on my **path**. (Psalms 119: 105)*

For my feet:

Jesus as the **Bread**, the **Word**, is the **lamp** that the priest/disciple needs to enlighten every successive step, every successive decision in life.

At the time the psalm was written, the lamp was an little oil lamp that did not give a very strong light.

It had to be held close to the feet to enlighten the next step.

The lamp had thereby to be kept burning with enough olive oil.

The priest/disciple will take **each step** in life in consultation with **Jesus** as the living **Word**, Jesus as the **Light** of the world, the **Lamp** lit by the fire of the Holy Spirit, which **enlightens** every step.

On my path:

Jesus Himself is the **Light** on the priest/disciple's path of life.

Jesus enlightens the direction and final destination along the way, where the abundant life is received and experienced.

Plates, dishes, pitchers and bowls.

The table contained not only the twelve loaves of the bread of the Presence, but also, as God had commanded:

- *And make its plates and dishes of **pure gold**, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. (Exodus 25:29)*
- *And they made from pure gold **the articles for the table** - its plates and dishes and bowls and its pitchers for the pouring out of drink offerings. (Exodus 37:16)*

The Bible does not state what these dishes, dishes, pitchers, and bowls were for.

Pitchers or bowls may have been used to place the incense on the loaves (see below).

² Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (5).



The use of the **water-jugs** is not explained anywhere, so it remains unclear what they were to be used for.

To emphasize the sacredness of the loaves, all these objects had to be made of **pure gold**.

The table was not very big and with two stacks of heavy loaves on it, it can be questioned whether there was enough space to actually put these objects **on** the table.

The Hebrew word for 'on' also means: for the benefit of, regarding, ...

It is therefore also possible that these utensils belonged only to the table and were intended for the preparation of the dough.

Incense.

God also commanded:

- *By each stack put some **pure incense** as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a **food offering (Hebrew: fire offering)** presented to the Lord. (Leviticus 24:7)*

Incense is a **white resin**. The incense on the bread of the Presence had therefore to be **pure white**. As the loaves were among the offerings made to the Lord by fire, so also the incense, which was to be placed on the loaves as a memorial, was an offering made to the Lord by fire.

But here too it is not clear what had to be done with the incense.

Pause for a moment.

It is good to reflect for a moment on what has happened so far in the life of the priest in the order of Melchizedek, along the new and living way through the tabernacle, and **how that has changed his/her life**.

As far as the Levitical priests were concerned, their ministry in the courtyard, in the Holy Place, and in the Most Holy Place was clearly separated, thanks to the curtains that closed them off.

Because the priest/disciple lives near the symbolism of the objects in the tabernacle, the experience thereof in his/her life may be less compartmented, and thus not always in the correct order of the tabernacle.

However if the believer, as a priest/disciple, wants to experience the superlative life in Jesus Christ, these symbolic objects will nevertheless still have a place and significance in his/her life.

1. Ordination to the priesthood:

One comes to repentance outside the tabernacle, at the first curtain, the entrance to the courtyard. Acts 11:21 describes how some believers came to Antioch, where they preached the Lord Jesus Christ.

- *The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people **believed and turned** to the Lord. (Acts 11:21)*

These are the **first two steps** that must take place in a human life, in order to be able to receive the abundant life in Jesus Christ.

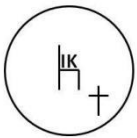
To come to faith: is longing for, or being convinced of new life through Jesus Christ.

To repent: is willingness **to turn around** and take the teachings of Jesus to heart.

Ordination as a priest in the order of Melchizedek is the next step that the convert takes along the new and living way.³

2. In the courtyard:

After the new priest/disciple has entered the courtyard through the first curtain, he/she lives by what he/she **receives from Jesus** at the **altar of burnt offering** and makes choices for sanctification of his/her life at the **laver**.



Life in the **courtyard**, is **converted** life,⁴ as is illustrated schematically here.⁵

This is living with Jesus Christ, in the remission of sins, with the desire to do good in life, in accordance with the testimony of the Bible.

The **ego** largely retains authority over life however.

3. In the Holy Place:

To enter the **Holy Place**, according to the teaching of Jesus, is to enter the Kingdom of heaven.⁶



Entering the Holy Place through the **second** curtain means renouncing self and thereby relinquishing control over one's own life.

As shown here schematically, this means accepting Jesus as the highest authority in every facet of life.

I then sit at the feet of Jesus, which means recognizing Him as the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

This is living in a **relationship** with Jesus Christ as **Light** and **Bread** and thereby receiving **Him as a personality in the soul**, as He said:

- ***If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***
(John 15:5)

This is true **discipleship**⁷ as a priest in the order Melchizedek, **living** the **abundant life**, as Jesus had promised.

This series of studies concludes with a study of the **altar of incense in the Holy Place** and the significance of the **ark in the Most Holy Place**, where God is enthroned above the cherubim on the atonement cover.⁸

3 Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (2).

4 Study: Conversion.

5 Study: A different schematic presentation.

6 Study: John 3.3-5 Conversion and discipleship.

7 Study: Discipleship (1) and (2).

8 Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (7).