

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 23, Number 2, May 2012

Two Readings of the Law

“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel” (Nehemiah 8:1).

Ezra and Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem from Babylon and Persia respectively. Their object was the same: to revive the work of God in Israel's capital city. Ezra returned in the seventh year of the Persian king Artaxerxes, and Nehemiah returned in the 20th year of the same king (Ezra 7:7, Nehemiah 2:1).

Their combined work represents the work of the Harvest, reviving the work of God in the Church, the class destined to become “New Jerusalem” that will descend out of heaven to become the new heavenly government for the world during Christ's Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 21:2). Ezra seems to represent the work of the early harvest, and Nehemiah the work closing the harvest.

The beginning of Ezra's work in the 7th year of the King perhaps represents that the harvest work opens in the seventh “year,” or stage, of Christ's Gospel Age work — the Laodicean stage of the Church. Ezra, the leader of the work at this time, perhaps represents the leader of the work of the Laodicean harvest period, that is, the same as the seventh messenger to the Church.

Ezra's commission was to “inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God” (Ezra 7:14) — representing the service of the seventh messenger to attend to the welfare of spiritual Israel, New Jerusalem. For this purpose Ezra was given “silver and gold, which the king ... freely offered ... with the freewill offering of the people and of the priests” (Ezra 7:15, 16), representing the spiritual bounties of Truth and providence from Jesus, together with the freewilling cooperation of all the Lord's people who joined in the harvest work by one means or another.

Ezra 7:22 lists other things the King provided, and the number associated with these gifts is always 100. “Unto 100 talents of silver, and to 100 measures of wheat, and to 100 baths of wine, and to 100 baths of oil, and salt without

prescribing how much.” The number 100 recurs in the Tabernacle frequently where Christ is pictured. For example, the tabernacle was founded upon 100 sockets, each of a talent of silver, from the ransom money accumulated from the Israelite men — a symbol of Christ's ransom sacrifice that is the foundation of God's Plan of Atonement.

The other listed ingredients all pertain to spiritual things — wheat, the church class; wine, atonement; oil, holy Spirit. All of this was for the purpose of reinvigorating the temple sacrifices. “That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meal offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:17). Likewise during the present harvest period, the intent is to promote the sacrificial services of the consecrated, in order to complete the Church class.

It was widely supposed early in the harvest that the Church would be complete during the days of the seventh messenger. The 1916 Foreword to Volume Three reflects this expectation. “We anticipate that before a very long time — perhaps a year or two or three — the full number of the elect will be completed, and all will have gone beyond the Veil and the door will be shut” (pages i, ii). However, it was not to be. All segments of the Truth Movement recognize that this did not occur, and most recognize that the Church even yet, nearly a century later, has not been completed.

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all requestors. Address: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), O. B. Elbert, Adam Kopczyk, David Rice, Tom Ruggirello, and David Stein. Online at www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org

This delay in expectations may be reflected in Ezra 4:11-13. Those verses show that Ezra endeavored to complete the walls of Jerusalem — symbolizing completing the Church — but the work was stopped and would wait for the days of Nehemiah.

NEHEMIAH'S WORK

Nehemiah was intent on completing the walls of Jerusalem — representing the closing work of the harvest, namely, completing the Church. Nehemiah received permission of the King for this work in year 20 of Artaxerxes, and as year seven for Ezra was significant, so year 20 for Nehemiah is significant. Two is the number in scripture that represents the holy Spirit, for the Spirit comes to us in two reservoirs, the Old and New Testaments — represented for example by two olives trees, two witnesses, two lampstands, and two swords (Zechariah 4:3, Revelation 11:3,4, Luke 22:38).

That number appears in different orders of magnitude to express the length of the Gospel Age, the age of the holy Spirit's work of developing the Church. For example, the 2000 cubits in Joshua 3:4, the distance between the priest and the rest of Israel, passing into the divided river Jordan, may represent the present age which stretches from the time the Church is redeemed until the world receives redemption in the kingdom. Something similar may be indicated by the 200 cubits of John 21:8, the 20 fathoms of Acts 27:28, and the 20th year in which Nehemiah's work began.

If Ezra represents a messenger from our King Jesus to conduct a spiritual revival, who might Nehemiah represent, sent to represent the work of completing the Church? Probably Jesus himself, sent by his superior, Jehovah. Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the king. Another time a cup-bearer is mentioned in scripture is in the dream related to Joseph by a cup-bearer (butler) while in prison. That cup-bearer would be restored to his post on the third day, representing Jesus raised from death on the third day to bear the wine of redemption "which cheereth God and man" (Judges 9:13). The builder of the Temple, Zerubbabel, is commonly recognized as a picture of Jesus who builds the Church, the spiritual temple of God. So the builder of Jerusalem is likely a picture of Jesus who builds the Church, New Jerusalem.

Nehemiah supervised building the walls of Jerusalem. In Revelation the measure of the wall of New Jerusalem is "144 cubits" (probably the height of the wall, Revelation 21:17), which identifies the wall as representing the Church. Nehemiah chapter three itemizes more than 40 different parts of the rebuilding work, perhaps suggesting that the work of completing the Church, though under the unified command of our Lord Jesus, involves the work of many different activities among the Lord's people, working for the same ultimate purpose.

There are enemies of this building work. Nehemiah 2:19 lists Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. Chapters four and six speak of their efforts to stop the work and Nehemiah's response to their threats and ploys. Perhaps those three enemies relate to the three enemies of the Church in Revelation, namely, the

Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet. Nevertheless, the walls were completed on the 25th day, near the close of month six, Elul (Nehemiah 6:15). Likewise, the Church will be completed in God's due time, all the efforts of our enemies notwithstanding.¹

AS THE KINGDOM BEGINS

Then the city was complete. But it was largely empty, just as New Jerusalem when complete will be largely empty of humanity. "Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded" (Nehemiah 7:4). It is the work of the Millennial Kingdom to escort the world into the blessings of God's Kingdom, so that by the close of the Kingdom only the ungodly will still remain without (Revelation 21:14, 15).

Nehemiah 7:3 says that the gates of the city were not opened until the sun was fully risen — as the gates of New Jerusalem will not be open to admit the world until the Sun of Righteousness has risen to bless the world. Thus in the present dawning period, before the sunrise, the world still does not have access to the blessings of the Kingdom.

Nehemiah 7:1 speaks of setting up the doors, and appointing the porters (door keepers), singers, and Levites for their respective services. All is now ready for the Kingdom. Then "I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God" (Nehemiah 7:2). Perhaps Nehemiah's brother Hanani represents the Church, who will rule the world from above, and Hananiah, "a faithful man," the Ancient Worthies who will administer the Kingdom on earth.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Then, from Nehemiah 7:5-73, we have a throwback — a list of the original returnees from Babylon after the decree of Cyrus. Notice in verse 66 the number of returnees, 42,360. That matches the number of returnees recorded in Ezra 2:64, that refers to the original return from exile under Zerubbabel in the first year of Cyrus. That return from Babylon represents the harvest of those coming out of Babylon in the opening year of our great Cyrus, Jesus, commencing his reign at the time of his second advent (Daniel 12:1, where "stand up" refers four times in Daniel 11 to a king coming to the throne).

It seems that the book of Nehemiah, after showing us a glimpse of the completion of the Church, now returns to show us an overview of the whole process of the harvest which leads to the completion of the Church. The first step was coming out of Babylon — the beginning of the Harvest — and that is the context at the opening of chapter eight.

Nehemiah gathered the people on the opening day of month seven. For the first time in this book, Ezra is mentioned — as though to suggest that the opening work of the Harvest is again the focus. This day is appropriate for a public gathering, for the first day of month seven in the Jewish Law was not only a day of new moon, customarily inaugurated with the blowing of silver trumpets (Numbers 10:2, 7, 10), but a climax of such occasions. "In the seventh month,



Ezra Reading the Law

in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation” (Leviticus 23:24). The trumpets announcing the opening of month seven connect in symbol to the seventh trumpet of Revelation, which sounded at the opening of the harvest — when the harvest messenger was still among us.

Nehemiah 8:1 shows that the people gathered at the water gate, appropriate to represent the Truths brought to the Lord’s people during the harvest. “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month” (verse 2). “And he read therein ... from the morning until midday ... all the people were attentive unto the book of the law” (verse 3).

We suggest that this reading of the law represents the opening up of the Divine Plan of the Ages, the Harvest Truths which have been our blessed portion. Verse four lists the people who were with Ezra on the podium, and gives 13 names. Verse seven gives another list, also with 13 names. This reminds us of the 13 years between Ezra’s return and Nehemiah’s return, and suggests again that the work of the harvest is referred to by this first reading of the Law.

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8). Likewise we have had the Divine Plan of the Ages explained in detail, with understanding, through our ears and eyes. The people were grieved at all the things they had formerly neglected — but they were encouraged not to grieve, but to give thanks for the clarity they had now received (Nehemiah 8:9-12).

On the next day they “found written in the law which Jehovah had commanded ... that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month” (Nehemiah

8:14). The feast of booths, or feast of tabernacles, is a picture of the Millennial Kingdom blessings for the world (Zechariah 14:16). This is the key to the Plan of God, that there is to follow the present Gospel Age, another age of blessing, for the world. There are two separate and distinct ages of Redemption. This is something the denominations overlook, but we now appreciate as the center of Present Truth during the harvest.

The verses following describe the keeping of that feast, which takes us in symbol into the Kingdom. “And on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner” (Nehemiah 8:18). In the spring time, the seventh day of the feast of unleavened bread was a day of special observance, picturing for the Gospel Age Church that their special rejoicing comes during the seventh stage of the Church, for that is the time during which the Church goes to their reward. The blessing of the world comes in the time following that, thus the “eighth” day — the Kingdom. (Compare Leviticus 8:33, 9:1, where the priesthood is ready to serve on day eight, following seven days of consecration.)

Subsequently, Nehemiah chapter nine describes a second reading of the Law to the Israelites. This second reading of the Law represents the instruction the world will receive during the Millennium. Ezra was mentioned seven times in chapter eight, in connection with the first reading of the Law, representing the harvest. Ezra is not mentioned at all in this second reading of the Law, consistent with the fact that during the Kingdom, the seventh messenger for the Church is not the prominent vehicle for the explanation of the Truth to the world.

Moses stipulated that the Law be read to the people each Sabbath year during the feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10, 11). If this year that Nehemiah read the law was the opening of a Sabbath year, then the year in which Ezra returned earlier would also have been a Sabbath year — perhaps that is one reason Ezra was stimulated to engage in his work at that time.²

The day given for this second reading of the Law is day 24 (Nehemiah 9:1). That is a day number used conspicuously in prophecies about the completion of the Church (Haggai 1:15, 2:10, 18, 20, Zechariah 1:7, Daniel 10:4). Probably this number is used because it is the 8th multiple of three, a number associated with atonement. The church of seven stages is atoned for during the present Gospel Age (7 x 3); the world will receive atonement in the Kingdom (the 8th period of three). In other words, it is another way of expressing the blessing of the world on the eighth day, the time following the seven “days” of the Gospel Age.

Nehemiah 9:4 gives a list of names of those associated with this reading of the Law, and gives eight names. Verse 5 gives another list of eight names. So whereas the previous

Ezra reading, picturing the harvest, twice listed 13 names, here for the Kingdom reading we have twice listed 8 names.

This reading of the law will have its desired impact upon the people of the world. Nehemiah 9:3 shows that for three hours they learned, and for another three hours they confessed, repented, and worshipped God.

A COVENANT TO IMPLANT THE LAW

The remainder of Nehemiah chapter nine expresses Israel's appreciation for the past leading of God, representing that during the Millennium the world will appreciate how God has prepared for their blessing through 6000 years of experience past. The closing verse, 38, tells us that the leaders of Israel then made "a sure covenant, and [wrote] it, and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal[ed] unto it" — to instill the Law in the hearts and minds of the Israelites thereafter. So during the Kingdom, the leaders of that time will be fully committed to writing the Law of God in the hearts and minds of the world during the Millennial Kingdom.

Chapter 10 specifies those who signed that agreement. First mentioned is Nehemiah, representing our Lord Jesus. Then are listed all the priests, representing the Church class. From verse nine forward are listed all the Levites, representing the Great Company, and from verse 14 the "chief(s) of the people." Nehemiah 9:38 referred to this group as "princes," and these evidently represent the Ancient Worthies, made "princes in all the earth" (Psalms 45:16). These are the same groups that appear in the vision of Ezekiel's Temple: Priests (Church), Levites (Great Company) and Prince (Ancient Worthies) (Ezekiel 44:15, 10, 3).

Nehemiah 10:28 to the close of the chapter lists the commitments made by the Israelites, picturing the commitments the world will make to God during the Millennium. They would not intermarry with the ungodly (verse 30), they would observe sabbath days and years (verse 31), render their obligation to the temple (verse 32), provide for the wood offering (verse 34), and faithfully tithe their produce (verses 35 forward). The world of mankind will be fully committed to Jehovah, and freely render their due unto Him.

— *Br. David Rice*

(1) Editor note — Elul 25 is six days before the New Year.

(2) The sabbath years Israel observed after their return from Babylon were not commensurate with the sabbath years Israel observed before their captivity in Babylon. When and under what circumstances the sabbath system was renewed has long been a question. If the years referred to above were sabbath years, it would be consistent with suggesting that the Sabbath years were resumed when the Temple was completed by Zerubbabel, noted in Ezra 6:15.

Ezra returned in year 7 of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah returned in year 20. The Sabbath year in Ezra's time would have commenced in the autumn preceding Ezra's return. The Sabbath year in Nehemiah's time would have commenced in the autumn following Nehemiah's return. Thus, though years 7 and 20 are only 13 years apart, the Sabbath years in question would be 14 years apart.

Ezra's return on a sabbath year may suggest the harvest work opening in period seven of the Gospel Age. Nehemiah's reading of the law on a sabbath year may suggest the blessing of the world during their Millennial Sabbath.

The Seven Spirits, What and Where?

"There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 4:5).

The Book of Revelation gives us the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1). God gave this revelation to him, but it is Jesus who testifies it to John, through an angel. "He which testifies these things saith, Surely I come quickly ... even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Revelation opens with three verses of introductory remarks. Then, in verse four, John presents greetings "to the seven churches" from the self-existing one, the Almighty, "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" — and then adds — "and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (Revelation 1:4).

This description of the Almighty draws from a vision recorded in chapter four, that depicts the Almighty upon His throne, and says "there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (Revelation 4:5). John had seen that vision before writing the words of greetings in chapter one. That is the source for John's description in Revelation 1:4, that was written down later, as John put his visions into a cohesive written form for distribution.

In Revelation 1:5, John continues with greetings from Jesus: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead." The remainder of that verse, through and including verse seven, continues to refer to Jesus. "He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him."

SEVEN CANDLESTICKS

Revelation 1:12, 13, 16 records that John saw "seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man ... and he had in his right hand seven stars." The word "candlesticks" is better rendered "lampstands," as in the Wilson Diaglott. The Greek word is *luchnia*, which Strong's Concordance defines as "a lampstand."

These lampstands, and also the seven stars in the right hand of Jesus, are explained in verse 20. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (NIV). Jesus is in the midst, or center, of these. It is a picture of Jesus' close association, attentiveness, and supervision for the churches, as their caretaker.

The lampstand in the tabernacle, mentioned in Exodus 25, was different, but symbolized essentially the same thing. There the lampstand is one piece, but it had seven branches. It was designed with six branches off the main center stem, three on each side. Each of those branches had three sets of ornamentation, and the center stem had four sets. The three ornaments on each side branch, added to the four sets on the center stem, summed to seven, a complete number.



Lampstand from the Tabernacle

If we compare this arrangement to the symbolism of the vine and branches in John chapter 15, perhaps the center stem relates to Jesus in a particular way, the “vine” with branches. In this case Jesus is in the center. This would be compatible with the Jesus in the “midst” of the lampstands in Revelation.

The ornaments that adorned the branches and center stem contained three elements — a bowl, a knop, and a flower. Perhaps this suggests the result of overcoming the three major foes of the church, namely, the world, the flesh, and the adversary. Perhaps the beauty of the adornments represents the development of faith (in the ransom), hope (of glory), and agape love. “I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit” (John 15:5).

SEVEN LAMPS

The lampstand in the tabernacle was made without lamps (Exodus 25:31-36, 39:37). The seven burning lamps were added to the lampstand, one for each branch and stem (Exodus 25:37-39). The fact that the lamps were removable facilitated the care of the lamps by the high priest. Each could be taken down filled, trimmed, dressed, relit, and put back in place, morning and evening, regularly.

In Revelation 4:5, the seven lamps of fire burned “before the throne.” This compares well with Exodus 40:25, that refers to the lamps in the tabernacle: “He lighted the lamps before Jehovah.” Revelation 4:5 tells us that these seven lamps are “the seven Spirits of God.” Probably the point is that the holy Spirit of God will be used for the seven stages of the church during the Gospel Age, in order to give enlightenment, instruction, and discipline.

SENT OUT

In Revelation 4:5, those lamps, those “seven spirits of God,” are stationary “before the throne.” In chapter five the vision introduces Jesus as a lamb slain, which refers to Jesus death as our ransom. Thereafter, the seven spirits of God are represented as being “sent out” to accomplish their mission. The verse is Revelation 5:6, cited here from the Diaglott. “And I saw in the midst of the throne, and of the four living ones [the four attributes of God], and in the midst of the elders, a little lamb standing, as if killed, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God **sent forth** into all the earth.”

Eyes indicate wisdom, and horns indicate power. Thus, in these symbols, the seven spirits of God express wisdom and power when “sent forth” to accomplish the will of God.

The seven lampstands (without lamps) are the seven churches. The seven lamps represent the holy Spirit. But how does the holy Spirit of God guide, direct, and influence the church during the Gospel Age? It is through the messages given to each church.

There are seven wise and productive messages, identified with the Lamb, sent forth to the seven churches. These seven messages to the seven churches are explicitly linked with the Spirit of God, within the closing expression of each message — “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” The seven spirits are seven **messages**, as distinguished from the seven **messengers**. The messengers are the seven stars, or angels. The messages are the voice of God’s Spirit. They act as seven lamps to enlighten, encourage, warn, and counsel each and all of the seven churches with heavenly wisdom.

OIL AND WICKS

What burns in the lamps is oil, which is a common symbol of the holy Spirit. As we use or “burn” this oil, it brings enlightenment. The wicks used in the process represent the Lord’s people, in whom the Spirit of God dwells. “The Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16). As “wicks” in this process, we must be trimmed so that oil will flow better and faster and burn brighter.

If we faithful let our light shine, conduct the oil of the holy Spirit well, and attend to the instruction of the holy Spirit, then we will have a place beyond “the veil” leading to the most holy, and enter into the direct presence of God.

Jesus, whose life force was expended during his service and ministry, was transferred from the court, into the holy, and into the most holy. Now he has been “set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Likewise the life force of the faithful ones are expended during their present service, transferred from the court, into the holy, and into the most holy. If faithful, we will sit with Jesus in his throne, as he has in his Father’s throne.

— Br. Tom Adams

Kittel, on Lutron

“*Lutron* (Strong 3083) is formed from *luo* (Strong 3089; to loosen) with the ending “tron.” ... In post-Homeric constructs ... *lutron* is “money paid as a ransom.” The word is not found in Homer, but it occurs in Herodotus and the tragedians, as well as various inscriptions and papyri.

“*Lutron* is especially the money paid to ransom prisoners of war, but it is then used for slaves, or for release from a bond. The usage of the Septuagint translation is much the same as secular usage. Philo’s usage follows that of the Septuagint. In Josephus, *lutron* is often used in the sense of ransom for prisoners of war or booty seized in war ... hence, it will be seen that this was a current practice in the time of Josephus.”

— Edited Excerpts, Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (German 1942), Eerdmans (translated 1967)

Bible Words for “Ransom”

“The Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom” (Matthew 20:28).

There are three Hebrew root words and two Greek words that are translated “ransom” in the KJV. They are listed in the following chart. Included are the three Greek words used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, and some examples of texts in which these words appear.

Gaal, Hebrew, Strong 1350

Lytroo,¹ Greek Septuagint, to ransom, Strong 2084

“Thou ... hath made the depths of the sea a way for the **ransomed** to pass over” (Isaiah 51:10).

“After that he is sold he may be **redeemed** again, one of his brethren may **redeem** him: Either his uncle, or his uncle’s son, may **redeem** him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may **redeem** him; or if he be able, he may **redeem** himself” (Leviticus 25:48-49).

Kopher, Hebrew, Strong 3724

Kaphar, Hebrew, Strong 3722

Exhilasmos, Greek Septuagint, atonement, Strong 2434

“Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a **ransom**” (Job 33:24).

“And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation [meeting] when he goeth in to make an **atonement** in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an **atonement** for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel” (Leviticus 16:17).

Padah, Hebrew, Strong 6299

(6306 is a variant of 6299)

Rhyomai, Greek Septuagint, to loose, Strong 4506

“And the **ransomed** of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

“None ... can by any means **redeem** his brother, nor give to God a ransom [*kopher*] for him (Psalm 49:7).

Antilytron, Greek, Strong 487

“[Christ Jesus] gave himself a **ransom** for all [over all], to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:6).

Lytron, Greek, Strong 3083

“The Son of man came ... to minister, and to give his life a **ransom** for many” (Mark 10:45).

The translations of the three Hebrew words into the Greek Septuagint are inconsistent, even as in English they are inconsistent with both the Hebrew Massoretic and Greek Septuagint texts. The word *gaal* means primarily to “redeem by paying value for” (Hebrew Students Manual).

The word *padah* means “to loose (primarily by cutting); hence (1) to redeem by paying a price ... (2) to let go, as a priest (a firstling) ... (3) to set free, e.g. from servitude ...” (Gesenius).

The word *kopher* (cognate “cover”) means primarily “price of expiation or redemption ... or, atonement” (New Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies). In the plural, *kopher* becomes *kippurim*, from which is derived “Yom Kippur,” or “Day of Atonement” (literally, “Day of Atonements” in the Hebrew Old Testament).

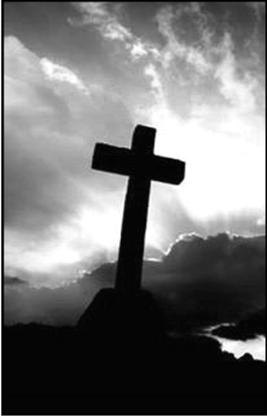
NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, *lytron* means “literally, a means of loosing (from *luo*, to loose), occurs frequently in the Septuagint, where it is always used to signify equivalence” (W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Hence, “ransom” is a good translation of it.

Of the other word, *antilytron*, Vine says, “The change of preposition in 1 Timothy 2:6, where the word *antilytron*, a substitutionary ransom, is used, is significant. There the preposition is *huper*, on behalf of, and the statement is made that he “gave himself a ransom for all,” indicating that the ransom was provisionally universal, while being of a vicarious character.”

All scriptures using *lytron*, *lytroo*, and related forms of the word can well be translated by the word “ransom.” Specifically:

- “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his soul a **ransom** for many” (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45).
- “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath looked upon and made a **ransom** for his people” (Luke 1:68).
- “[Anna] gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were awaiting the **ransom** in [or, of] Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).
- “We hoped that it is to be he who should **ransom** Israel” (Luke 24:21).
- “Moses ... hath God sent to be both a ruler and a **ransomer** with the hand of the angel” (Acts 7:35). (Only here is *lytrotees* used; “redeemer” might be substituted.)
- “[Jesus] gave himself for us, that he might **ransom** us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14).
- “Nor yet through the blood of goats and of calves, but through his own blood entered in once for all into the Holies, having obtained an eternal **ransom**” (Hebrews 9:12).
- “Ye were **ransomed**, not with ... silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:17-19).



The Cross of Christ

- “There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself *having been* a man, Christ Jesus, the one having given himself a **ransom** for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times” (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

OLD TESTAMENT

Following are selected texts from the Old Testament, using *gaal*, *kopher*, *kaphar*, or *padah* (or its variant), properly translated.

• “If there be laid on him an **atonement** [*kopher*], then he shall give for the **loosing** [6306, *padah* variant] of his soul whatsoever is laid upon him” (Exodus 21:30).

• “If the man have no **kinsman** [*gaal*, literally ransom, or equivalent] to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, the restitution for guilt ... made unto Jehovah shall be the priest’s; besides the ram of the **atonements** [*kippurim*], whereby it shall **atone** [*kapher*] for him” (Numbers 5:8).

• “God is gracious unto him, and saith, **Loose** him from going down to the pit, I have found a **ransom** ... He hath **loosed** my soul from going into the pit” (Job 33:24, 28).

• “None of them can by any means **loose** his brother, nor give to God an **atonement** for him; (For the **loosing** of their life is costly, and it faileth for ever)” (Psalm 49:7, 8).

• “Draw nigh unto my soul, and **ransom** it: **loose** me because of mine enemies” (Psalm 69:18).

• “Jehovah hath **loosed** Jacob and **ransomed** him from the hand of him that was stronger than he” (Jeremiah 31:11).

• “The **ransomed** shall walk there: and the **loosed** of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads” (Isaiah 35:9-10).

• “Thou ... madest the depth of the sea a way for the **ransomed** to pass over ... And the **loosed** of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion” (Isaiah 51:10, 11).

• “I will **loose** them from the power of Sheol; I will **ransom** them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14).

In these scriptures “loose” could be replaced with “redeem,” because the loosing is associated with payment of a price. However, “redeem” would not be appropriate in several other scriptures, including several of those below:

• “And I will set a sign of **loosing** between my people and thy people: by tomorrow shall this sign be” (Exodus 8:23).

• “Jehovah hath ... **loosed** you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh” (Deuteronomy 7:8; see 13:5, 15:15, 24:18).

• “So the people **loosed** Jonathan, that he died not” (1 Samuel 14:45).

• “He hath **loosed** my soul in peace from the battle that was against me” (Psalm 55:18).

• “Thus saith Jehovah, who **loosed** Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob” (Isaiah 29:22).

CONCLUSIONS

As a tentative conclusion, the word “ransom” in the Hebrew Old Testament is properly translated only from the word *gaal*, which should be so translated everywhere feasible.

Kaphar, *kopher* and *kippurim* should consistently be translated “atone” and “atonement(s).”

Padah should be translated “loose” or “redeem” (where shown by context with payment of a price), or equivalent.

OLD TESTAMENT RANSOM TEXTS

Old Testament “ransom” texts (that is, texts using the Hebrew word *gaal*), include:

• “Bless Jehovah ... who **ransometh** thy life from the pit” (Psalm 103:2, 4).

• “**Ransom** me: quicken me according to thy word” (Psalm 119:154).

• “I have **ransomed** thee ... thou art mine” (Isaiah 43:1)..

• “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have **ransomed** thee” (Isaiah 44:22).

• “Go ye forth from Babylon ... Jehovah hath **ransomed** his servant Jacob” (Isaiah 48:20).

• “The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my **ransomed** is come” (Isaiah 63:4, 9).

• “Jehovah hath loosed Jacob, and **ransomed** him from the hand of him that was stronger than he” (Jeremiah 31:11).

• “Hanamel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of **ransom** is thine to buy it” (Jeremiah 32:7-8).

In Leviticus chapters 25 and 27 the various forms of “redeem” should be the corresponding forms of “ransom” (except only “shall redeem” in 27:27, and “shall be redeemed” in 27:29).

MEANING OF “RANSOM” FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

The correspondence, or equivalence, implied in the Hebrew word for “ransom” is seen in Numbers 5:8, where “kinsman” is the translation — the only one to whom restitution can be made for the person slain. Similarly, it is so at least a dozen times in Ruth 2:20-4:14.

The prophecy, “I will ransom them from death” (Hosea 13:14), shows that being freed from the grave is to be a result of “ransom.”

When Elihu instructs Job, “Loose him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24), this suggests the ransom is a lawful foundation for not physically dying (at the end of the Adamic age).

ELABORATION ON “RANSOM” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 say that Jesus was to give his soul a ransom for many, not just for the few. How many? Paul says Jesus has “given himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:4-6). How can one man die for all? Paul elaborates in Romans 5:18-19. “As through one trespass condemnation *cometh* unto all men; even so through one act of righteousness justification of life *cometh* unto all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.”

1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, reads “By a man *cometh* death, by a man *cometh* also a resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive [or, quickened].” “Quickened” need not imply that all cooperate. But it does suggest that all will have a full opportunity.)

If all were condemned to death through the first man, then Jesus’ sacrifice of his human life for Adam can ultimately release Adam, and hence all who had been condemned under Adam.

The testimony of Jesus Christ’s ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race is testified now in the Gospel Age for the benefit of his faithful church. During Christ’s thousand-year Kingdom, it will be testified for the benefit of the entire rest of the world.

— Br. James Parkinson

(1) Many reference works transliterate this word Lutroo, where the letter “u” is used for the Greek letter upsilon. (Vines Expository Dictionary is one example.) However, some works use the letter “y” for the Greek upsilon. (The Kingdom Interlinear Translation is one example.) The latter form is preferred by the present author and is used in this article for this word and related words.

153 Fishes

“Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken” (John 21:11).

After the death of Jesus, a number of disciples returned to their fishing business. After a night of casting their net, they caught nothing. Standing on the shore, Jesus instructed them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They immediately made such a catch that they were not able to draw in the net. John 21:11 says the catch totaled 153 fish.

What is mathematically special about the number 153?

Ponder this, $153 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17$. In other words, it is equal to the sum of all the integers from 1 to 17. Seventeen was the age of Joseph when sold by his brothers. Joseph was a picture of Jesus. He was the perfect one (seven) who came to earth (10) to redeem us. Perhaps these 153 fish represent those redeemed from earth by Jesus during the first age of redemption.



153 Great Fishes

The sum shown above makes 153 what the Pythagoreans called a triangular number. The Pythagoreans promoted the idea of representing numbers by dots arranged in pat-

terns. For a triangular number the pattern of dots forms a triangle all of whose sides have an equal number of dots. The first triangular number is 3: two dots below a single dot. Put a row of three dots below the two dots and you have 6, the second triangular number. The **sixteenth** triangular number is 153. Is this meaningful?

In King David’s division of the priesthood, there are two groups: the heads of families descending from Eleazar (16) and the heads of the families descending from Ithamar (8). Those from Eleazar may represent the elect who will reign with Christ, and those from Ithamar those who comprise the Great Company. In this case, the 16 families from Eleazar relate to the faithful Church class, as the 16th triangular number relates to the elect pictured in the 153 great fish.

Maybe there is a further echo of the church class in the form of cubes. The number 153 is the sum of the cubes of its digits ($1 \times 1 \times 1$, plus $5 \times 5 \times 5$, plus $3 \times 3 \times 3$). New Jerusalem is a picture of the Bride class in Revelation 21:16, and its dimensions suggest a cube. “The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

There is still more of interest in the number 153. It can be expressed in another fundamental way. For $153 = 1 + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 2 \times 3) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5)$. Contemporary mathematicians would write this equation more economically: $153 = 1! + 2! + 3! + 4! + 5!$ (The exclamation mark represents the factorial function. That means multiply all integers up to that number).

Above, we mentioned that 153 is the sum of the cubes of its digits. In 1961, according to paradoxologist Martin Gardner, Phil Kohn of Yoqneam, Israel, informed the British weekly New Scientist that 153 lies dormant in every **third** number. We leave it to you to figure out what Kohn told New Scientist, but here is a hint: Take any multiple of three. Sum the cubes of its digits. Take the result and sum the cube of its digits. Keep doing this indefinitely.

The question that comes to mind regarding the miraculous catch of fish is, why 153? Was this just a random number of fish or is there a hidden message in this interesting number? If the Lord had some intention here in causing 153 fish to be caught, it shows that he conveys a message in many different ways.

There is one additional item of interest in the number 153. Gematria is a system of assigning numerical values to a word or phrase. The Hebrew phrase “Beni Ha-Elohim,” or “Sons of God,” equals 153. That is, $2 + 50 + 10 + 5 + 1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40$.

— Adapted from *Science Digest*, May 1985
Supplemented from material by Bullinger,
“Number in Scripture,” and other suggestions.