

The Skin of Messiah
Parashah Terumah Message
by Kevin Phipps

If we were to enter the camp of Isra'el, as it was in the wilderness, we first find the people encamped in their respective tribes, clans, and families. The twelve tribes are grouped like the numbers of a clock around a central point. At that center is the encampment of Adonai, The Tabernacle. The concept of Emmanuel, **God with us**, is unique to Isra'el. No other people group in the world has their God physically living in their midst as their King. At the center of the camp, however, is the true King of Isra'el, God Himself.

There is a separation between the people and their God. The Hebrew word “chatser”, comes from a root word which means, “to separate”, and is the word that is translated, “courtyard”. The courtyard is surrounded by a fence with the tabernacle sitting off-center, to the western side of the courtyard. The entrance to the courtyard is on the eastern side of the courtyard, so as we enter the courtyard and proceed closer and closer to the Holy of Holies, within the tabernacle, we are traveling west.

“...ADONAI, God, sent him out of the Garden of 'Eden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So he drove the man out, and he placed at the east of the garden of 'Eden the k'ruvim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” - B'resheet/Genesis 3:23-24

One of the results of the sin of Adam and Havah (Eve) was their being cast out of the garden. They were cast out to the east of the garden, so the way of redemption is westward. In order to come in the courtyard of Adonai, we first pass by an ornately decorated fence. The Hebrew word for fence is “**suwr**” which implies something which surrounds, shuts in, and provides protection for that which is inside.

***“You clothed me with skin and flesh you knit me together with bones and sinews.”
- Iyov/Job 10:11***

The phrase, “knit me together”, can also be stated, “fenced me in”. The outermost organ in the body is the skin. It fences in the rest of the body. It provides protection for the internal organs against bacteria, dirt, virus, and infection. The inner body that skin protects in turn provides healing and stability to the skin. In the same way, the courtyard provided a protection to the tabernacle of God, who likewise was the protection of the people who surrounded it.

The fence provided a distinction between the people and their God. Adonai was the God of the people, and lived in their midst, but the people were not God, nor equal to Him. He was their King, and they His loyal servants, whom he loved before the foundations of the earth. The tabernacle provided a way to God, but there was a process, which began by recognizing the separation between God and man caused by sin. In the same way, the skin of the body gives a wall of protection between the corruption of the world and the purity of the organs inside.

Skin also provides beauty to the body. The tabernacle was possibly the most beautiful mobile

structure ever built. The riches Isra'el left Egypt with were used to build the house of God. The true beauty and value of the tabernacle came from the God who dwelt within, however, it was important for the tabernacle and the fence to be an object of beauty to attract attention to God. Our culture makes beauty an idol and one of the most lucrative industries in the world today. Such attention to body image is vanity, but this does not mean that beauty is of no importance to God. The difference is beauty, which points to God as opposed to beauty which only points to itself or something else, which is not of God. Beauty ought not be merely visual. It ought to be functional as well. What good is a sleek looking sports car with no engine inside it? As beautiful as the tabernacle was, it also had a purpose. It housed the God of Isra'el, and provided a means by which God could have an intimate relationship with His people, and dwell in their midst.

There was to be no doubt that the One who lived in the tabernacle was the King of Isra'el. Kings do not live in common houses. When we look across the camp of Isra'el, we see the people living in tents of unattractive animal skins and ordinary wood posts. In the center is a tent of gold, silver, white linen, carved acacia wood, and embroidered keruvs of purple, blue, and crimson. This is no ordinary house. This was the house of the God of the Universe, the King of Isra'el. When people look at you, whose house do they see? The people of Isra'el were ordinary people who served an extraordinary God, who made them a peculiar treasure in the world, one that was as valuable, holy, and beautiful as the God that dwelled in their midst.

Our skin provides an intricate system of nerves, which give us the sense of touch. With our skin we sense hot, cold, pleasure and pain. Without these senses, we would not be able to live very easily in our world. Injuries would be a constant part of life. We would grab a hot pan and without pain, we would continue to hold on to it causing a severe burn, rather than a mild one. We would suffer from frostbite in the winter without knowing how cold it is. The comfort that comes from the touch of another person would be unknown to us.

Nobody can stand before God and live. There has to be a mediator between God and Man, to in a sense, make an infinite God understandable and acceptable to a finite people. This is represented by the courtyard. This was also represented by Yeshua who was both God and Man. He was God in human flesh. He taught people of the kingdom of God, but did so with human terms and understanding. He was the example of God's perfect love, by using it every day, as He taught, healed, and fed common ordinary people. He then showed all humanity the extent of God's love by dying on the execution stake on their behalf in order to save them from their sins. Yeshua was the skin between an infinite, holy God and a finite, sinful people. Today, this is represented by God's people, both individually and corporately as the body of Messiah. We are God's skin which has the ability to discern between good and evil. Without this, Ha Satan would have his way in the world with no one to know the truth of God, to stop the pain he inflicts. No one can touch God, but by exercising His love, we allow people to come in contact with Adonai Himself through us. When people interact with those who are God's people, do they run into a wall of stone or a body of warm, soft, skin?

Though the majority of the organs and systems of the body lie within the body and are therefore unseen, there are indications as to their functioning and health, which can be discerned by looking at the skin. An improperly functioning liver will cause a yellow color on the skin, known as jaundice. Poor circulation can result in a bluish or purple look. Swollen or red skin can indicate broken bones or other injury. Even some emotions can be revealed as

we have all experienced when we blush. Fear can make our skin turn white. Finally, cold, gray skin indicates severe ill health or death.

In the same way, there is much people can know of God by looking at His people, who are His skin in the world. Is the God people see in you warm, loving, forgiving, peaceful, joyful, and interested in them as a person, or do they see a God who is cold, judgmental, critical, uninterested in them and their problems, or perhaps even non existent?

When you look at yourself in a mirror, what do you see? Is it something that does not measure up to the standards of the world? Do you feel you need to change that tent to measure up to those standards? As we read about the instruction for the tabernacle construction in this week's parashah, it is important to understand that the tabernacle and all its furnishings still exist today. Your body is a tabernacle of the Ruach HaKodesh. The courtyard is just one part of the tabernacle structure, just as your skin is just one part of you. The whole structure has been designed by God for a purpose and has beauty and value because of the One who dwells inside it, not because of the worldly standards it may or may not exemplify. As you accept the tent God gave you and decorate it with the beautiful robes of righteousness, you become a sanctuary for the very King of Isra'el.