

I AM the Light of the World

John 8: 12-20

DIG: Where did the idea of the **light** in the Court of the Women come from? What is Jesus really claiming in John 8:12? What is the promise? What does Messiah mean by **light** and **darkness**? With what does the Lord bolster His claim (see John 5:31-40)? What does it matter that Christ know where He comes from (John 8:14, 21-23 see John 7:41-42)? What does the Pharisees' misunderstanding in Yochanan 8:19 reveal about their relationship with **the Father**?

REFLECT: How has following Yeshua been like following someone with a **light** through the **darkness** for you? How do people you know misunderstand Christ? How does their life exemplify **darkness**? How can you be a living example of the **light** shining in the **darkness** to them? Without using the exact same words, can you explain to an unbeliever how the Lord **lights** up your life?

After the interruption by **the Pharisees** who brought the woman caught in adultery to Him, **Jesus** continued to teach the multitudes that morning. The words of **Christ** in this section clearly refers to the scene in **John 8:1-11**. This continued **the eighth day** of the **festival of Booths**, which is mentioned in the Torah (**Leviticus 23:36, 39; Numbers 29:35**). It was actually considered to be a separate feast day. The feast is called *shemini 'atzeret* in rabbinic Hebrew, which approximately means *festal assembly of the eighth day*. It was celebrated on **the Temple Mount** with a Sabbath rest with **no regular work**.

At the close of the first day of **the festival of Sukkot** the worshippers were drawn to **the Court of the Women** to see the four huge **lampstands** (see Nc2 - **The Court of the Women**), each standing seventy feet high. Each **lampstand** contained four bowls for **lamps**, for a total of sixteen bowls each filled with nine liters of olive oil, and against them rested four ladders. Toward dusk four junior priests would climb the ladders, each holding a pitcher of oil containing thirty-six liters of olive oil, and **light the lampstands**. The old, worn-out clothes of the priests served as wicks for **the lamps**. We can conclude from this that these **lamps** also burned at Hanukkah, or **the festival of Lights**, during the eight consecutive, cold, winter nights in December. As an institution of late Judaism, Hanukkah, in various respects, had been deliberately based upon **the festival of Booths**, the last of the seven festivals of **ADONAI (Leviticus 23:33-43)**.

Where did the idea of **the light** in the **Court of the Women** come from? There is no mention in the Torah of this instruction. It comes from the fact that the First Temple (Solomon's Temple) on the occasion of its dedication at the **festival of Booths**, was filled with the Shechinah glory (see my commentary on **Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**). At night this cloud could be perceived as a column of fire (**Exodus 13:21-22; Numbers 14:14**). When the First Temple period began with a **festival of Booths**, **the light** of **the Shechinah** illuminated the nights. In the Second Temple, however, there was no **Shechinah** glory. As a result of worshipping foreign idols within the Temple itself, **the Shechinah** had departed (**Ezekiel 10:3-5, 18-19 and 11:22-23**). As a result, **the lights** in the **Court of the Women** were instituted as a replacement for it.

The lamps of the Temple gave off a celebratory **light** in the **darkness** of Jerusalem's autumn nights. Each night during **Sukkot**, the Hasidim, or *the pious ones*, danced and sang psalms of joy before the LORD with flaming torches in their hands. And the Levites, with harps, lutes, cymbals, trumpets and musical instruments without number, stood upon the fifteen steps in front of the Nicanor Gate (see **Nb - The Nicanor Gate**), and sang the songs of Ascent in the **Psalms**.⁹⁵⁰ Then all night long until dawn, **the rabbis teach that there was not a single household in Jerusalem that would not receive the benefit of the light from the Temple Mount**.

It seems clear that this illumination of the Temple was regarded as having the same symbolic meaning as, the pouring out of the water (see **Gp - On the Last and Greatest Day of the Feast**). **The light** shining out of the Temple into **the darkness** around, and lighting up every part of Jerusalem, must have been intended as a symbol not only of the Shechinah glory that once filled the Temple, but of the **great Light**, which the people that walked in **darkness** were to see (**Isaiah 9:2 and 60:1-3**), and which was to shine upon them that dwell in the Land of the shadow of death (**Psalm 23:4 NASB**).⁹⁵¹ The problem, however, was that during **the life of Christ the rabbis, especially the rabbis of the Jewish Supreme Court - the Sanhedrin, taught that the light of the world was their title since they had the task of spreading divine light on earth through judicial decisions based on the Torah**.⁹⁵²

But leaving no doubt as to its meaning, when Jesus spoke to the people again and said: **I AM the light of the world (John 8:12a)**. In this sentence the pronoun **I** is emphasized. This is the second of Christ's seven **I AM's** (**John 6:35, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1**). This expression can be used to express a contrast. It was as if the Lord was saying, "**I, the Meshiach, AM the Light of the world**, and not the Pharisees who have turned away from truth and justice, who were quite prepared to stone a woman to death by not following the Torah, and this with an attitude that rejected Israel's Messiah."

Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Such a sweeping claim could not go unanswered. Enraged by **their** last failure to entrap **Yeshua**, the **Pharisees** challenged Him. They did not address themselves to the main question. Indeed, they don't speak of **light** and **darkness** at all. And here they said: **Here You are, appearing as Your own witness; Your testimony is not true (Yochanan 8:12b-13).** In view of His own self-testimony, the Lord referred to the principle from the Torah. **One witness alone will not be sufficient to convict a person of any offense or sin of any kind; the matter will be established only if there are two or three witnesses testifying against him (Deuteronomy 19:15 CJB).** His second witness was the testimony of His Father in heaven (see **Bi - The Baptism of Jesus**). **The rabbis taught that when God speaks in heaven, "the daughter of His voice" the *bat-kol*, or an echo, is an audible voice heard on earth. After the last of the prophets, it was thought that God provided the *bat-kol* to continue to give guidance to the people (Tractate Yoma 9b).** It's interesting that the *bat-kol* **testified**, after the last of the prophets and before the B'rit Chadashah was established, that **Jesus is indeed His Son and thus, the Christ.**⁹⁵³

His own witness was reliable, however, because **Yeshua** was not just any Jew - **He was the King of the Jews.** **Yeshua answered: Even if I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going (John 8:14a).** According to **Micah 5:2** the **Messiah** would not only be born as a man in **Bethlehem**, but **His origins are from old, from ancient of days (Daniel 7:9-22).** He will not only come from heaven, which ultimately is evidence of His divinity, but in addition, **He will return there.** He said more than once, and in different ways: **I will go and return to My place, till they admit their guilt and search for Me, seeking Me eagerly in their distress (see my commentary on Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ).** **But you have no idea where I come from or where I AM going (Yochanan 8:14b).** So in spite of what the **Pharisees** thought they knew about **Jesus**, they were ignorant of His heavenly origin and destiny, and thus were incapable of judging Him.

You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one (John 8:15). Here, **Christ** refers back to the scandalous double standards in the matter of the woman caught in adultery (see **Gq - The Woman Caught in the Act of Adultery**). To the adulteress the Lord had shown that **He** had not come *at that time* to pass **judgment**. In His First Coming, **He** came as the **Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (Yochanan 1:29);** however, in His Second Coming, **He** will come as the **Lion of the Tribe of Judah** to **pass judgment** on a sinful world.

But if I do judge, or better yet, when I judge, My decisions are true, because I AM not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent Me. This was a full claim of deity. It affirmed the absolute oneness of the Son with the Father. This statement parallels the one He made later: The Father and I are one (John 10:30). He speaks here in John 8 of the divine wisdom that is common to the Father and the Son. That being so, how could His judgment be anything but true (Yochanan 8:16)?

In your own Torah it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I AM one who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the Father, who sent Me (John 8:17-18). Here Christ repeats in another way what He had just affirmed. Then the religious leaders provoked Him by saying: Where is your father (John 8:19a)? They knew the apparent circumstances of His birth, and they were aware that Joseph was dead. But Jesus ignored the insult and responded with a rebuke. Anyone who believed that Joseph had fathered Yeshua clearly didn't know the identity of the Lord's real Father. Therefore, He said: You do not know Me or My Father. Though they were scrupulous observers of the Oral Law (see Ei - The Oral Law), the Pharisees had not related to ADONAI on a personal level. And because they did not know Him, they did not recognize His Son. Jesus replied. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also (Yochanan 8:19b), because Jesus was the perfect representation of the Father.

Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the Court of the Women, near the place where the offerings were put (John 8:20a). It obtained its name, not because it was exclusively for women, but because they were not allowed to proceed further, except for sacrificial purposes. Indeed, this was probably the common place for worship, the females occupying, according to Jewish tradition, only a raised gallery along three sides of the court. This court covered an area of 200 square feet. All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or "trumpets," for offerings were placed. The thirteen chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets, hence the name. They were marked for specific offerings. Nine were for tithes, and three for voluntary offerings up and above the tithe. Surely, the Temple treasury would be a busy place, with a constant flow of worshipers coming and going. There would be no better place to collect an audience of devout people to teach than there.

Trumpet number three was for those women who had to bring young pigeons for a burnt and sin offering. They would drop their equivalent in money, which was daily taken out and a corresponding number of young pigeons offered. This not only saved the labor of so many separate sacrifices, but also spared the modesty of those who might not wish to have the reason for their offering made public. Into this trumpet Mary, the mother of Jesus, must have made her offering (see Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple).⁹⁵⁴

Yet no one seized Him, because, as John repeatedly pointed out, His hour had not yet come (Yochanan 8:20b). This clearly intimates that the Pharisees were incensed at what Messiah had said, and had it been possible they would have killed Him right then and there. But He was working on the Father's timetable to accomplish His will in His time (John 2:4, 7:6 and 30, 12:23 and 27, 13:1, and 17:1).

This exchange between Yeshua and the Pharisees can lead us to ask ourselves how well we know the Savior of Sinners and, through Him, the Father. Is the Lord the light of our lives? Are we open to His light? We are all tempted to wall off certain parts of our lives from His light - to let His light shine in one area, such a Shabbat or Sunday worship, while closing off the rest of our week to His radiance. Living in the world gets old very quickly for a true believer. But more than that, we run the risk of missing out on all that God can do in our daily lives. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, ADONAI is with us every moment of every day. El Gibbor, Mighty God, who has redeemed us, wants to break the chains that bind us - chains of fear, anxiety, and addiction. His dazzling light will drive darkness away wherever it shines. Lets open our hearts to Him.

Jesus, I want my life to reflect Your light. Shine Your light in every corner of my life. Fill me with Your peace and joy, so that others may see Your light and give God the glory.⁹⁵⁵