

The Widow's Offering

Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4

Wednesday the thirteenth of Nisan

DIG: How many trumpets were there in the Court of the Women? What was their purpose? What was "the chamber of the silent?" How does the poor widow differ from the rich who gave out of their wealth? What is Messiah's point in making this contrast? When is "more" actually "less?" When is a "little" a "lot?"

REFLECT: Why do you give your money to God's work? What do you give besides money? Have you ever given to a ministry or to a needy person without them knowing who donated the money? How did it make you feel? How do you think the Lord feels about your giving? For seven principles of scriptural giving see Do - When You Give to the Needy Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others.

It was Wednesday, the thirteenth of Nisan (see Ix - The Examination of the Lamb) during Pesach and Christ's teaching in the Court of the Gentiles had ended. He and His talmidim walked through the Eastern Gate into the Court of the Women (see Nc2 - The Court of the Women). This inner area of the Temple compound was open to both men and women. Certainly, it was the common place for worship for everyone and functioned to a certain extent as a Temple synagogue in the open air. It was a large area that covered 70.87 by 70.87 meters, 5,023 square meters, or 16,475 square feet.¹³¹³ And along the same wall as the Nicanor Gate (see Nb1 - Nicanor Gate) there were positioned 13 chests (shopharoth) for offerings called the Treasury. These chests were called shophars in the Talmud because they were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, and therefore each looked like a trumpet. Each was specifically marked. Eight were the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers, the other five, however, were strictly for voluntary gifts.

Each shophar was marked for a specific purpose. Trumpets 1 and 2 were designated for the Temple tax for the current or past year. Those women who were so poor that they could only afford young pigeons for a burnt or sin offering dropped their money in shophars 3 and 4, which was used to purchase and sacrifice the corresponding number of birds for that day. When the baby Jesus was presented at the Temple, this was where Mary would have placed her offering (Luke 2:24). In shophar 5 the contributions for the wood used in the Temple were placed, in trumpet 6 for the incense, and in trumpet 7 for the golden plates, spoons, and containers for the ministry were deposited. If a person had put aside a certain sum for

a sin offering, and any money was left over after its purchase, it was deposited into **shophar** 8. Likewise, **trumpets** 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 were designated for what was left over from the sin offerings (see my commentary on **Exodus Fc - The Sin Offering**), the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper (although it was never used until **Messiah's** day, see **Cn - The First Messianic Miracle: The Healing of a Jewish Leper**), and voluntary offerings. On the occasion such as the Passover season, it was customary for the people to make voluntary offerings to show their devotion to **the Temple**.

There was a special chamber within **the Treasury** that was called the chamber of the silent. There, devout people could give their money **in secret**, afterwards used for educating children and assistance for **the needy**. But "the chamber of the silent" was also for those **needy** who were embarrassed that **they** needed assistance and **they** also would go there to get help but no one would know **their** identity.¹³¹⁴

Yeshua sat down quietly on a bench opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the Temple treasury. He could distinguish the contributions of **the rich** who **gave out of their wealth**, from that of **the poor** who **gave out of their poverty**. Suddenly His gaze was riveted on a solitary figure, a **poor widow**. We can see **her** coming alone, as if ashamed to mingle with **the crowd of rich givers**; ashamed to have **her** offering seen; ashamed, perhaps, to bring it. **She** was a widow dressed in the clothing of a forsaken mourner. **The Great Rabbi** observed **her** closely and read **her** correctly. **She** held in **her** hand **two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents**. The Greek word **poor** is *ptochos*, and is used to designate a *pauper* rather than a mere peasant. The emphatic position of the word **poor** in the Greek text speaks to the fact that **she** was **poverty-stricken**, shown by **her** dress and disheveled look. **The two small copper coins, or two lepta** were each **the smallest copper coin** in circulation at that time. Sixty-four of them equaled a denarius, which was a day's wages for a common laborer.¹³¹⁵ **The rabbis taught that an offering of less than two lepta was not acceptable for voluntary offerings**. So **she** put the bare minimum into **the** appropriate **trumpet** (Mark 12:41a and 42; Luke 21:1a and 21:2).

The gifts of **the wealthy** brought no comment from **Jesus**, for **He** knew **the hypocrisy** in their giving. They were giving **to be honored by others**. Such gifts were unacceptable to **God**. Many rich people threw in large amounts (Mark 12:41b; Luke 21:1b). Earlier (see **Da - The Sermon on the Mount**) **Yeshua** had said: **So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with shophars, as the hypocrites do . . . to be honored by others** (Matthew 6:2a). This was probably an ironic allusion to **the trumpets** in the Court of the Women. The use of the word **trumpet**, described the conduct of **those** who in **their giving, they** sought glory from the Jewish community as a sounding **shophar** before **them**.

Christ's apostles were not sitting with Him so He called them to Him. The lesson He wanted to teach them was important enough for them to see for themselves as well as to hear about it later. He said: Truly I tell you, from God's perspective this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had to live on (Mark 12:43-44; Luke 21:3-4). The widow put more into the treasury than all the wealthy in the sense that relative to their respective means, her gift was far greater. The wealthy had their wealth to provide for them in the days ahead; the widow only had her faith to sustain her. She put in everything she had to live on. Her trust must be in ADONAI. When YHVH has our hearts, giving is not a burden, but a joy. It's not so much how much we give to God, but how much we withhold for ourselves that He is concerned about.¹³¹⁶

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

I was putting on my Winter Coat, and going to a Committee Meeting. And I was late. And Keturah said to me, Go thou by the way of the house of our Daughter, and give unto her this Package, and speak unto her such and such Messages, and then go to your Committee Meeting.

And I did even as she said unto me. But I was in haste and I tarried not long, nor sat down.

And as I hastened away, I heard a great Cry, and I turned back to see if the daughter of the daughter of Keturah had broken her Neck. And she had not broken her Neck, but I had broken her Heart.

And I asked, What is the matter with my little girl?

And she sobbed and she answered, Grandpa hardly spoke to me. Am I so little he does not care for me?

Now when I heard this I was smitten to mine heart, for it had been even as she said. And the little maiden is unto me as the Apple of mine Eye. But I had been in a Hurry, for there was a Committee Meeting, and I was late.

And I entered the House, and I took her into mine arms, and I sat in a Chair with the little maiden in my lap, and with her Golden Hair upon my Shoulder, and I said, Let the Committee Meeting go hang.

And she said, Do you love me, Grandpa, even if I am small?

And I said, My dear, I love thee as much as if thou were an Elephant in the Circus, and maybe more. Yea, I do not think it would be possible for a Grandpa to love a little damsel more than I love thee.

And she put her arms around my neck, and the Committee Meeting just had to mosey along as best it could till I got there.

Now after a while she got down, and we bade each other a Happy Good-bye, and I went my way. And as I went, I thought of the children of **God** who sometimes get to feeling just the same way, and thinking that their **Heavenly Father** doth not care for them because they are so Little, and **He** is busy with Great Things.

And I prayed unto my **God** on behalf of all such Heart-Broken children of **His**, that **He** will gather them in **His** arms, and comfort them, and tell them to cast all their care upon **Him**, for it Matters to **Him** concerning them.¹³¹⁷