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# FAQ

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## Hebrews 9:1-5

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**I heard a teaching that said that the author of Hebrews got it all “wrong” when it came to the ordering of the Tabernacle furniture as seen in the Torah. Can you at all help me with this? I have to believe that the Book of Hebrews is inspired Scripture!**

This entry has been reproduced from the commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*

**1 Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. (NASU)**

9:1 In spite of what the author of Hebrews has just said about the previous Levitical priesthood “growing old and ageing” (8:13, NEB), he wishes to make some important typological connections between it and the priestly ministry of Yeshua. Hebrews 9 shows us yet another dimension of the complicated spirituality and mind of our writer.

V. 1 begins with the statement “Now the first *covenant* also had regulations for ministry and an earthly sanctuary” (HCSB). Almost all versions insert “covenant,” with most not indicating it in *italics* (the notable exceptions being KJV, NKJV, NASU, LITV, YLT), in spite of the fact that *diathēkē* (διαθήκη) does not appear in the Greek source text: *Eiche men oun [kai] hē prōtē* (Ἔιχε μὲν οὖν [καὶ] ἡ πρώτη). What was it that had “regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary” (NIV)? Leon Morris validly points out, “The writer has no noun with his adjective ‘first,’”<sup>1</sup> yet most examiners conclude that “covenant” is being referred to. However, as previously examined for 8:7, the issue in view is the “first *priesthood/tabernacle/ministry*” or “first *service*,” represented by the Levitical priesthood and its sacrificial system.

Tim Hegg describes, “The repetition of the term ‘first’ in this opening verse not only links it to the final verse of chapter 8, but also helps bolster the interpretation...that the subject at hand is the priesthood—Messiah’s priesthood.”<sup>2</sup> David A. deSilva is probably the only Christian scholar (whom we have been examining) who gets the closest to this view, remarking, “The argument turns from comparison of the ‘staff’ of the two priesthoods...to a comparison of the ‘cultic regulations’ and the sacrifices enacted by these priesthoods.”<sup>3</sup> While he is correct in asserting that our author is discussing two priesthoods, and the Earthly Tabernacle set against the Heavenly Tabernacle, he still falls into the old paradigm of thinking that the “old covenant” is being referred to.

It is notable once again that our author makes a reference to the Tabernacle, and not the Temple. This is likely due to the fact that he is a Diaspora Jew whose principal contact with the sacrificial system was through what he read in the Tanach

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, “Hebrews,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:80.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Hegg, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Author, n.d.), 155.

<sup>3</sup> David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 291.

—and in its Septuagint form at that. Morris notes, for example, that the Tabernacle “would have had a wider appeal to Jews than the temple had. The temple was accessible only to those in Jerusalem; but wherever Jews were, their Scriptures told them all about the tabernacle.”<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to the widespread idea that our author is demeaning the Tabernacle service, the author of Hebrews actually holds it in high esteem. Donald Guthrie explains, “He is impressed by the orderliness of the arrangements within the Levitical cultus, and aims to present this in order to demonstrate the greater glory of the new.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, our writer relies upon his audience’s nostalgia for the Tabernacle and its priestly implements to show them how more profound the priestly work of Yeshua the Messiah is. The term he employs to describe its “regulation” is *dikaiōma* (δικαίωμα), meaning “**an action that meets expectations as to what is right or just, righteous deed**” (BDAG).<sup>6</sup>

Our author’s main appeal is to the original Tabernacle, which would have been much more authoritative for his broad audience, as some likely considered the Second Temple to be nothing more than a sign of a corrupt Saddusaical priesthood. Yet, in spite of the Tabernacle being a sign of presumably “simpler times,” before the Temple was constructed, it is still *kosmikos* (κοσμικός) or “of this world, earthly” (LS).<sup>7</sup> The “earthly sanctuary” is inferior to the Heavenly one where Yeshua presently serves.

9:2 What the NASU describes as “a tabernacle prepared, the outer one” is actually *skēnē gar kateskeuasthē hē prōtē* (σκηνὴ γὰρ κατεσκευάσθη ἡ πρώτη), or “a tabernacle was prepared, the first” (YLT), describing the first chamber of the Ancient Hebrews’ Tabernacle. Our author will describe how the Tabernacle was prepared, demonstrating an innate knowledge of not only what the Tanach says, but also of contemporary Jewish traditions of his time. He will show the incomplete nature of the Levitical priesthood and how Yeshua’s priesthood can only bring complete redemption. In spite of the common belief that two covenants—and not two priesthoods/tabernacles/ministries—are being referred to in this text, Christian commentators are absolutely correct in suggesting that Yeshua has brought in something better than the Levitical priesthood. William L. Lane summarizes our author’s message quite well:

“The appeal to the cultic appointments and actions in the tabernacle demonstrates the ultimate inadequacy of the Levitical institution and the necessity for the new cultic action of Christ, which brings a definite and better order of salvation with unlimited access to the presence of God.”<sup>8</sup>

The first element listed in v. 2 that is seen in the first chamber of the Tabernacle is the lampstand. The Greek *luchnia* (λυχνία) was employed in the LXX to render the Hebrew *menorah* (מְנוּרָה). The lampstand was commanded by God to be “in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:24; cf. 25:31-40). Pure oil of beaten olives was to be used to light the *menorah* by the priests in the Tabernacle continually (Exodus 27:21).

The second element listed in v. 2 is “the table and the bread of the Presence” (RSV). This was commanded by God to be placed on “the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil” (Exodus 40:22, NASU). The command to the priests was, “you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD...Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel” (Leviticus 24:5-6, 8, NASU), *sh'teim esreih challot* (שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה חֲלוֹת).

History actually attests that the bread used in the Tabernacle was unleavened. Philo states, “The setting out of twelve loaves—the same number as the tribes—on the sacred table especially guarantees the things which have been said. For they are all unleavened” (*On the Special Laws* 2.161).<sup>9</sup> The historian Josephus likewise records, “Upon this table, which was placed on the north side of the temple, not far from the most holy place, were laid twelve unleavened loaves of bread, six upon each heap, one above another: they were made of two tenth deals of the purest flour” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.142).<sup>10</sup> The Mishnah later states, “All meal offerings are brought unleavened, except for the leaven[ed cakes] of the thank offerings and the two loaves of bread [of Shabuot], which are brought leavened” (m.*Menachot* 5:1; cf. b.*Menachot* 77b).<sup>11</sup>

We need to understand that living in the Twenty-First Century and only reading the Biblical text, may not be enough for us to understand some of the nuances that can be detectable from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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<sup>4</sup> Morris, in *EXP*, 12:80.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Letter to the Hebrews*, Vol 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 178.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 249.

<sup>7</sup> LS, 446.

<sup>8</sup> William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hebrews 9-13*, Vol. 47b (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1991), 218.

<sup>9</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 583.

<sup>10</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 88.

<sup>11</sup> Neusner, 741.

3 Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, 4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (NASU)

9:3 By referencing how “Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies” (NASU), our author refers to the fact that a major barrier was placed between the first chamber of the Tabernacle, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Lane points out, “These terms do not designate two separate tents but rather one tent divided into a ‘front’ sanctuary and a ‘rear’ sanctuary.”<sup>12</sup> We may need to remind ourselves how *skēnē* (σκηνή) can widely mean “tabernacle,” in its most neutral sense can also mean “dwelling,” actually rendered by the NIV as “room.”

9:4 V. 4 has actually been a cause of some confusion for various readers, because the author of Hebrews says that in the Holy of Holies was “a golden altar of incense,” as this at least appears in a majority of modern English Bibles (i.e., RSV, NASU, NIV, NRSV, ESV, HCSB, CJB). The Torah tells us that the altar of incense (Heb. *mizbeiach*, מִזְבֵּיַחַ) was actually to only be in the Holy Place (Exodus 30:1-6), but not in the Holy of Holies. Has our writer misplaced his facts? We have already seen that our author's primary Bible is the Greek LXX, which has distinct differences from the Hebrew MT, and it is from those differences that many of his arguments about Yeshua are formed. Likewise, the author of Hebrews has a much more cosmopolitan Jewish world view than is commonly perceived. However, in this case it does not take much to see why most Bibles read with “golden altar of incense.”

We first must note what Exodus 40:2-5 tells us about the golden altar of incense, *mizbeiach ha'zahav* (מִזְבֵּיַחַ הַזָּהָב), and where it is to be placed:

“On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. You shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle” (NASU).

The golden altar of incense was to be placed in front of the the Ark of the Covenant just as the veil was placed between them. This is not only because the incense altar would provide a pleasant fragrance for the interior chambers of the Tabernacle, but that it would also be used to regularly cover up the stench of burning animal flesh and blood. This golden altar was not to be inside the Holy of Holies, but rather in front of it:

“Moreover, you shall make an altar as a place for burning incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. Its length shall be a cubit, and its width a cubit, it shall be square, and its height shall be two cubits; its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around, and its horns; and you shall make a gold molding all around for it. You shall make two gold rings for it under its molding; you shall make them on its two side walls—on opposite sides—and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you” (Exodus 30:1-6, NASU).

The most common explanation seen for the rendering of “golden altar of incense” appearing in the Holy of Holies, as detailed in the *Archaeological Study Bible*, is “its close relationship to the inner sanctuary and to the ark of the covenant.”<sup>13</sup> When the high priest would enter into the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur*, he would take a shovel full of coals from this altar as a pleasing aroma to God, but obviously he would not move this heavy, bulky piece of equipment. He would rather use a special vessel for transporting coals into the Holy of Holies. This is detailed in Leviticus 16:12, where Aaron is told, “He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil” (NASU).

The Hebrew used here for “firepan” is *machtah* (מַחְתָּה), meaning “fire-holder, censer, snuffdish” (*BDB*),<sup>14</sup> rendered in the Greek LXX as *thumiaterion* (θυμιατήριον) or “a vessel for burning incense, a censer” (*LS*).<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, *thumiaterion* is the actual term that appears in the source text of Hebrews 9:4, and is correctly rendered as “censer” in the KJV, NKJV, and YLT

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<sup>12</sup> Lane, 47b:219.

<sup>13</sup> Duane A. Garrett, ed., et. al., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1991.

<sup>14</sup> *BDB*, 367.

<sup>15</sup> *LS*, 371.

Cf. 2 Chronicles 26:19; Ezekiel 8:11; 4 Maccabees 7:11 (all LXX).

versions. (The notes in the *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* by Zodhiates also indicate “Or, censer.”)<sup>16</sup> This is what the high priest would have taken into the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur*, and the author of Hebrews has not made any error here. There is an explanation as to why most Bibles render this with “altar of incense.”

The Torah tells us that “the utensils of the altar, the pails and the shovels and the basins, the flesh hooks and the firepans; he [Bezalel, Exodus 37:1] made all its utensils of bronze” (Exodus 38:3, NASU; cf. Numbers 16:39). These items were made of *nechoshet* (נְחֹשֶׁת), either rendered as “bronze” or “copper” (ATS, NJPS) in our English Bibles. The altar of incense is what was made of *zahav* (זָהָב) or “gold” (Exodus 30:3). Secondly, Bible translators are often influenced by Philo’s usage the term *thumiatērion*, where he speaks of “three vessels among the sacred furniture, a candlestick, a bath, and an altar of incense [*thumiatērion*]” (*Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 226).<sup>17</sup> F.F. Bruce, defending the rendering of “altar of incense” for *thumiatērion*, says “though it might be argued that the special reference here is to Aaron’s censer, which he used on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12; cf. Num. 16:46), this censer was scarcely distinctive enough to be mentioned separately.”<sup>18</sup> Bruce, noting the lack of Scriptural reference to a golden censer to be used by Aaron, concludes instead that our author, being influenced by Hellenistic Jewish usages of *thumiatērion* (which probably has some merit with other terms he uses), used it to refer to the altar of incense.

Lane makes similar conclusions concerning *thumiatērion*, and discludes the rendering of “censer.” He indicates, “The censer was cast in brass, not gold, and there is no mention in the OT of a *golden* censer. Moreover, there is no Jewish tradition according to which the censer was left in the Most Holy Place...Most significantly, the term *qumiath,rion* is used in writings contemporary or near contemporary with Hebrews [such as Philo] to designate the golden altar of incense.”<sup>19</sup>

We should think that “censer” is the correct rendering of *thumiatērion*, and not “altar of incense,” given the fact that it is used in the Septuagint to render the Hebrew *machtah*. Yet, we do need to be informed in recognizing the reasoning of those who think that *thumiatērion* should be rendered as “alter of incense.” There are certainly Jewish traditions that attest to the usage of golden censers on the Day of Atonement. The Mishnah tells us, “Every day he would scoop out the cinders with a silver fire pan and empty them into a golden one. But today he would clear out the coals in a gold one, and in that same one he would bring the cinders in [to the inner sanctuary]” (*m.Yoma* 4:4).<sup>20</sup>

The second item mentioned in v. 4 by our author is the Ark of the Covenant. This, without any doubt, was placed in the Holy of Holies:

“They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high....You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies....He brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up a veil for the screen, and screened off the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses” (Exodus 25:10; 26:33; 40:21, NASU).

The third item mentioned in v. 4 is “a golden jar holding the manna.” While a golden jar of manna is missing from the Hebrew Torah in Exodus 16:33, it is referenced in the Greek Septuagint of Exodus 16:33:

EXODUS 16:33 (MT)	EXODUS 16:33
Moses said to Aaron, “Take one <b>jar</b> and put a full omer of manna into it; place it before HASHEM for a safekeeping for your generations” (ATS).	And Moses said to Aaron, Take a <b>golden pot</b> , and cast into it one full homer of manna; and you shall lay it up before God, to be kept for your generations (Apostle’s Bible).

<sup>16</sup> Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, 1627.

<sup>17</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 295.

Cf. *Life of Moses* 2.94; 2.101.

<sup>18</sup> F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 200.

<sup>19</sup> Lane, 47b:215 fn#x.

<sup>20</sup> Neusner, 271.

<p>וַיֹּמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַח צִנְצֻנֹת אַחַת וְהָן־שָׂמָה מִלֶּאֱהֲנֹמֶר מִן הַנֶּחֱט אֶתֹּ לַפָּנֵי הַהֹרֶה לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְדִרְתֵיכֶם:</p>	<p>καὶ εἶπεν Μωϋσῆς πρὸς Ααρων λαβὲ στάμνον χρυσοῦν ἕνα καὶ ἔμβαλε εἰς αὐτὸν πλήρες τὸ γομορ τοῦ μαν καὶ ἀποθήσεις αὐτὸ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς διατήρησιν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν</p>
<p>v'yomer Mosheh el-Aharon qach tzin'tzenet achat v'ten-shammah melo-ha'o'omer man v'hanach oto l'fnei ADONAI l'mishmeret l'doroteikhem.</p>	<p>kai eipen Mōusēs pros Aarōn labe stamnon chrusoun hena kai embale eis auton plēres to gomor tou man kai apothēseis auto enantion tou Theou eis diatērēsīn eis tas geneas humōn</p>

The MT of Exodus 16:33-34 employs the word *tzin'tzenet* (צִנְצֻנֹת), simply meaning “receptacle” (CHALOT),<sup>21</sup> which the LXX renders as *stamnon chrusoun* (στάμνον χρυσοῦν), meaning “golden pot” (LXE) or “golden urn” (RSV). We see that our author is once again reflecting a tradition evident from his time that the pot of manna was made of gold. Philo confirms that “the memorial of that heavenly and divine food was consecrated in the golden urn” (*On the Preliminary Studies* 100).<sup>22</sup> Because of Philo confirming that the jar of manna was made of gold, this likely leads many translators to accept thinking that our author uses *thumiatērion* for “altar of incense.” However, note that the Septuagint first introduces *stamnon chrusoun* for “golden jar,” and Philo is likely only repeating this. Our author’s usage of *thumiatērion* likewise should be influenced by the LXX first, before we consider outside sources—and this is what some translators fail to do.

V. 4 presents another possible challenge when it says that “Aaron’s rod which budded” was in the Ark of the Covenant. The Torah only tells us that Aaron’s rod stood before the Ark of the Covenant:

“But the LORD said to Moses, ‘Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put an end to their grumblings against Me, so that they will not die.’ Thus Moses did; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did” (Numbers 17:10-11, NASU).

The author of Hebrews is fully correct, though, in stating that “the stone tablets of the covenant” (NIV) were in the Ark of the Covenant. This is attested to numerous times in both the Torah and Tanach:

“At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark’” (Deuteronomy 10:1-2, NASU).

“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 8:9, NASU).

“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put *there* at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt” (2 Chronicles 5:10, NASU).

When we see the Scriptural testimony of only the Ten Commandments, the Torah, and likewise the receptacle of manna, being placed in the Ark of the Covenant, is the author of Hebrews wrong? Has he gotten his information mixed up? We need to keep in mind the fact that there are Jewish traditions that attest to the fact of *other items* being associated with the Ark of the Covenant that are not directly mentioned in the Tanach. The Talmud tells us, “At the side of the ark was placed the coffer in which the Philistines sent a present to the God of Israel, as it says, And put the jewels of gold which ye return him for a guilt offering in a coffer by the side thereof, and send it away that it may go, and on this was placed the scroll of the Law, as it says, Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord; It was placed by the side of the ark and not in it” (*b.Bava Batra* 14a).<sup>23</sup> This guilt offering was associated with the Philistines’ theft of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 5-6), and apparently it was believed important enough that it remained with it.

How much more important would Aaron’s rod have been to the Ancient Israelites? Certainly, it deserves a place of honor and respect. However, in the Rabbinical discussion in the Talmud the Ark of the Covenant would only have enough space after the Ten Commandments to hold something “half a handbreadth, a finger’s breadth for each side” (*b.Bava Batra* 14a).<sup>24</sup> This would likely leave just enough space for a Torah scroll and a small golden urn containing a few ounces of manna

<sup>21</sup> CHALOT, 308.

<sup>22</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 312.

<sup>23</sup> *The Soncino Talmud. Judaic Classics Library II.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

to be placed inside it. Certainly, a rod generally the size of a thick yardstick or meter stick could be nestled somewhere in the mix.

Two things that we need to keep in mind about Aaron's rod are, (1) we do not know what happened to Aaron's rod after it sprouted (Numbers 17:6-8), and if it were somehow cut down in size, or (2) if when the Ark of the Covenant was stolen by the Philistines they did not somehow break it. If either is the case, it would make sense that when the Ark of the Covenant returned, Aaron's staff (or what was left of it) was placed inside. One of the things that we have to keep in mind with Hebrews, or for that matter any text of Scripture, is that the author was closer to the events than we are. The author of Hebrews knew of customs and traditions, from the ancient Jewish community, that modern readers do not. We do not discredit the validity or relevance of the text of Hebrews, on the basis of how its author arranges the Tabernacle furniture or the elements contained outside of, or within, the Ark of the Covenant.

9:5 The last detail concerning the Ark of the Covenant is listed in v. 5. Our author writes, "Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover" (NIV). As the Torah records,

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel" (Exodus 25:17-22, NASU; cf. Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 7:89).

The *keruvim* (כְּרֻבִים) or "cherubim" are often defined to be "Winged creatures of a suprahuman variety....The most that can be said with certainty is that in Scripture the cherubim were celestial beings whose duty in the heavenly hierarchy was to guard and protect" (ISBE).<sup>25</sup> What we do know about the cherubim is that their wings covered the place where the mercy seat was placed, and likewise representations of them were "woven into the fabric of the tabernacle and the veil (Ex. 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35)" (ISBE).<sup>26</sup>

While any inquiring mind would like to sit and speculate on what the components of the Levitical Tabernacle represent in relation to Yeshua's priesthood, our author stops his audience and says, "we cannot discuss these things in detail now" (NIV). Is this because he was only interested in the "highlights," so to speak, of the Tabernacle, and intends to move his audience forward showing them the Messiah's superior ministry? This is what Paul Ellingworth concludes, as he remarks, "Κατὰ μέρος [kata meros] means 'in detail,' 'point by point'....The last part of this verse is best understood as a conventional way of cutting short a discussion, though not in form."<sup>27</sup>

It is also possible that the author of Hebrews did not want to deal with the debate that the Temple was larger than the Tabernacle, in spite of no Divine authorization for particular changes that were made. This was a discussion that the ancient Rabbis either avoided, or could never come to a consensus about.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps a third reason for our author stopping by not going into detail is that his audience was simply not mature enough to handle any more. Remember his previous words that "You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others" (5:12, NLT). Giving them too much information may only confuse them more, when the objective is to get them focused back on Yeshua and His completed work. However, recognizing that the Levitical priesthood and Tabernacle definitely had value and importance—for realizing the Messiah's priesthood and greater Heavenly Tabernacle—is key for readers to note, as we do not see any disparagement or disrespect issued for the previous service, which surely had to prefigure the work of the Messiah.

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<sup>25</sup> R.K. Harrison, "cherubim," in *ISBE*, 1:642, 643.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 642.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 431.

<sup>28</sup> Hegg, *Hebrews*, pp 155-156.