

## The Hebrew Corner

Honest measurement is a frequent theme in the Bible. Employment of just weights and measures is identified as a measure of the integrity of the individual, as exemplified in the following passage (Deuteronomy 25: 13-15):

“Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

The Hebrew word for weight used here is eben (אֶבֶן, EH-vehn) which in English is stone. Apparently a stone of known weight was used by the Israelites to measure weight. In the passage here the Hebrew phrase specifically used is eben v'eben (אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן, EH-vehn vuh-EH-vehn), literally weight and weight or weight-to-weight, translated in the KJV as divers weights. Not having, of course, a national standard for weights in the wilderness, the possibility for cheating in transactions between Israelites was always present. Using a lightweight stone to represent a standard weight would gain the seller a better exchange in quantity of corn, grain, fruit, or other produce. It is clear that God placed the need for just measurements high in importance, so much so that he included this instruction in the Torah. In this passage, there is also reference made to honest measurements of volume. The Hebrew word translated as measure in the passage is ephah (אֵיפָה, ay-FAH). In other passages this word is translated as ephah, referring to a specific dry volume measurement in biblical times, thought to be a little more than half a bushel. So

the biblical standard for volume measurement is set equally high.

In Proverbs 11:1 it is made clear that God dislikes the practice of using varying weights and measures:

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD; but a just weight is his delight.”

In the Hebrew text of the passage, a form of the word *toevah* (תועבה, *toh-ay-VAH*) is used, which means abomination. This description is confirmed in three other passages in Proverbs (16:11, 20:10, 20:23).

One reason why God considers varying weights an abomination is due to these being used to take advantage of poor people, as described in Amos 8: 4-5:

“Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.”

The full control that God exerts over the world is often described in terms of his power to measure vast quantities and lengths, as in the following passage (Isaiah 40:12):

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and

the hills in a balance?”

This remind us that God leaves nothing to chance, and has complete information and control of the internal working of the entire universe at all times. In prophetic passages concerning the future of Israel and specifically Jerusalem, the visions frequently describe an angel or messenger of God measuring the city or a holy structure with a measuring line, for example, Zechariah 2: 1-5:

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

The Hebrew phrase translated as measuring line is chevel middah (חבל מדה, CHEH-vehl mihd-DAH : *Hebrew grammar note: the dot in the center of the dalet indicates doubling of the letter, it is known as the doubling dagesh or dagesh forte*).

In Ezekiel 40-42 we have a detailed vision of a man with a measuring reed measuring the gate, inner court, outer court, and inside features of a temple. It is evident from the context given in Chapter 39 that this temple is to become a reality after the people of Israel have been brought back from the various nations among which they were scattered, and after God has given his Holy Spirit to the people of Israel. This is evidently a prophecy of the end times,

and may be describing the temple that Jesus our Yeshua will rule from during the millennial kingdom.

What is the purpose for describing these prophetic visions using measurements? Some possibilities are as follows:

1. Taking measurements establishes the reality of the vision. This gives substance to the hope, which increases our faith.
2. Measurement establishes the boundary of the city or structure being described and sets it apart as holy to God. In Revelation 11: 1-2, John was told to measure the temple of God but not to measure the court outside because it was given to the Gentiles to tread for forty-two months and so not set apart for the people of Israel at that time.
3. Measuring a structure is one of the privileges of ownership. It indicates that God's people are to be given the city or structure as an inheritance.

May we all walk by God's standards of integrity and justice in our dealings with people, until we are ready to claim our promised inheritance. Praise God and shalom to everyone!