

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL — ITS HIDDEN MEANING

Dan. 5:25-28

The primary meaning of this awesome communication from God, was made known to king Belshazzar, by Daniel himself. It portended the imminent overthrow of Babylon (type of Christendom); and the literal translation of the words of the writing, according to the best authorities, is: “numbered, numbered, weighed, and divisions.”

But our purpose here is to demonstrate a special, deeper and more hidden meaning in this writing. It is not unknown to Bible students, but has largely been lost sight of or forgotten in recent years, and—to this time—has not been positively established by Scripture.

This special significance of the “handwriting on the wall” is most pertinent to our times, is impressive, and it contains the key to the duration of the great prophetic period known as the “times of the Gentiles.”

In this study we are concerned with the ancient weights and measures,—but not especially with those of the Babylonians. Rather, we are here concerned with those units of weight and of value (money) which were authorized by divine inspiration for use in the Sanctuary of Jehovah. The cryptic words of the message are of the Chaldaic or Aramaic language, and are: MENE, *numbered*. (This word, in the Hebrew, is the maneh or mina of the Bible and is a measure of weight); TEKEL, *weighed*, is the Aramaic word for the shekel of the Bible,—a piece of money and also a definite unit of weight; UPHARSIN, “*and divisions*.”*

“Thus, the enigmatic writing was: a mina, a mina, a shekel, and a half-mina.”—*Edward E. Nourse and Elbert C. Lane, co-authors of “Weights and Measures” in A New Standard Bible Dictionary (1936).*

Our task now consists in the finding of the divinely authorized or God-given values of these measures: that is, of the shekel and the mina. These values as found in the Scriptures, are readily converted into gerahs. The gerah is the smallest weight that was in use by the Hebrews of Old Testament times.

A shekel of the Sanctuary was twenty gerahs; that is, the gerah was the twentieth part of a shekel, and this relationship of the shekel and the gerah is plainly given in the following scriptures: Ex. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47, etc. But the finding of the number of shekels in a mina is more difficult and until recently this value was not positively known. It is not found in the King James Bible or in any of the older English versions.

In a study of Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple and its measures, (Ezek. chapters 40-48) it has been noted that, in some cases, harmony is found in the readings of the Septuagint (ancient Greek version) where such harmony seemed lacking in other versions based upon the Hebrew text. This is true in reference to the scripture being examined.

* The first letter of UPHARSIN is Aramaic for “and”; TEKEL UPHARSIN therefore means, “weighed and (falling into) divisions.” PERES (verse 28) is a form of the same word, and its meaning is, “divided.” Further, it is the cryptic designation for the divided mina, that is, a half-mina.

In the transactions at the temple, it seems that cheating was a common practice; but in the ideal “temple” of the future, such things will not be tolerated. “Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah ... and a shekel shall be twenty gerahs.”—Ezek. 45:10-12

But the rest of verse 12 has been garbled by the ancient Jewish copyists—whether by intention or not, we do not know—and various inharmonious readings are found. More recently, and in line with the divine purpose for increased knowledge in the end of the age, scholars have come up with what is now recognized as the correct meaning of this difficult passage. It is a strong affirmation of the rigorous accuracy and honesty that shall be maintained in all of the affairs of the future dispensation.

The Messrs. Nourse and Lane, in the article already cited, state that the correct meaning of Ezek. 45:12, is that which is preserved in the Septuagint (Codex A) and is: “five shekels shall be five, and ten shekels ten, and fifty shekels shall be your maneh.” The denominations here defined are understood to be the standardized *weights*, for use along with the “just balances.”

To the foregoing we now add the rendering of verse 12 in full from the Revised Standard Version (1952): “The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; five shekels shall be five shekels, and ten shekels shall be ten shekels, and your mina shall be fifty shekels.”

Here, then, is all of the information required in the present investigation, and it comes out of the inspired Word of God. We are thankful that it is so. We then have:

One shekel of the Sanctuary = twenty gerahs

One mina of the Sanctuary = fifty shekels = 1000 gerahs

The Scriptural expression “times of the Gentiles” has reference to the interim between the passing of God’s typical or pictorial kingdom under David, Solomon, and their successors, and the establishment of the great antitype, the universal Kingdom of the Messiah. While Gentile times is the period in which the Gentile Kingdoms are permitted to hold sway over the peoples of the earth, it is also a period of punishment upon Israel for disregard of the law of the Lord. This is the meaning of the words, “I will chastise you seven times for your sins” (Lev. 26:18, 24, 28). Here the Hebrew word *sheba* (seven) used adverbially is understood to imply seven strokes of punishment, upon the nation of Israel.

Some have found fault with this interpretation on the ground that the Hebrew word MO’ED (time) is not present in the verses cited. In the original text the statement is simply, “I will chastise you seven-fold for your sins.” The spiritually minded student knows that the meaning here is *intentionally covered* or obscured for purposes of secrecy, until the due time for its revealment; and that the hidden significance has reference to a seven-fold punishment, consisting of seven prophetic years, to be understood symbolically, at the usual scale of a day for a year.

These things are crystal clear to the eye of faith, in those who are blessed with an intelligent appreciation of the *evidence*; to which is now added the divinely provided data from Scripture, on the full meaning of the “handwriting on the wall,” where it is now shown that the number of gerahs in the four words of the handwriting, have been so adjusted by the hand of God, as to agree with the number of years in the seven times of the Gentiles ($7 \times 360 = 2520$).

Since a mina is 50 shekels and a shekel is 20 gerahs, we have:

a mina	.....	1000 gerahs
a mina	.....	1000 "
a shekel	.....	20 "
a half-mina	.....	<u>500</u> "
TOTAL	.....	2520 "

Attention may now be invited to the fact that the "handwriting on the wall" is Prophecy and as such may be regarded as pointing to things that were future, from the standpoint of the time of its appearance on the wall of Belshazzar's palace. This was toward the close of the seventy years of captivity and desolation of the land of Israel, while the Gentile "lease" began to count at the beginning of the desolation, and at the overthrow of king Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem.

The question, how long is Gentile dominion to continue before Messiah takes Over the full control of the "purchased possession," is one to which few if any of the recognized leaders and teachers of today are able to give a satisfactory or convincing answer; yet we are told, in the words of the prophet Amos, "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."—Amos 3:7

Is it not possible that our present regrettable ignorance concerning this and other questions of surpassing importance both to the Church and the groaning creation, may be because we have not earnestly inquired of the Lord, that we might know these secrets of the Kingdom of God? The question is therefore worthy of thoughtful consideration that, since the destructive processes on Christendom began in 1914 and at exactly "seven times" after its type in the destruction of Jerusalem, is it not reasonable and in line with world conditions of today, to look for earth's Fifth Universal Empire under Christ, to follow its typical or pictorial illustration in Cyrus the Great, just "seven times" or 2520 years later? (536 B.C. + 1984 A.D. = 2520)

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