



The Threshing Floor; A Place of Worship?

by Karen Holland

When you think of a threshing floor what do you think of? Threshing floors were used to separate grain from the chaff at harvest time. This was usually a two step process. First, the cut stalks of grain were spread on the threshing floor and a threshing sledge was pulled over the stalks by oxen. The sledge was a simple wooden sled or heavy board with stone or metal spikes on the bottom that would break the heads of grain from the stalks (Isaiah 41:15-16). The same thing could be accomplished by having the oxen trample the stalks (Deuteronomy 25:4) or by beating them with heavy sticks (Judges 6:11).

The second step was to toss the broken stalks into the air. The wind would blow the lighter chaff to one side, while the heavier grain would fall back onto the floor, the grain could then be gathered. Winnowing is this process of separating grain from chaff by wind (Ruth 3:2, Isaiah 30:24). Because of the need for wind, threshing floors were normally located on hilltops or in large open fields, and were often used as landmarks (Genesis 50:10, 2 Samuel 6:6) or meeting places (1 Kings 22:10). Threshing floors were critical to the harvest and to the life of the people, they were highly valued. Because of this they were often subject to attack (1 Samuel 23:1).

This process of separating the grain from the chaff; this is what I initially thought of in connection to the threshing floor. Threshing and winnowing are common metaphors for judgment (Daniel 2:35; Isaiah 21:10; Jeremiah 15:7, 51:2, 33; Hosea 13:3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:17). The threshing floor is a place where good is separated from bad, true from false. The sheaves are beaten or crushed in order to make this separation. Micah 4:12 tells how the Lord will gather the nations "as the sheaves into the floor." The good fruit is gathered and saved, the bad is burned with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:17). All of this is seen as a clear picture of judgment.

Not until I started looking at (1 Chronicles 21; 2 Samuel 24) where David was instructed by the Lord to buy a threshing floor to use as a temple site, did my view of the threshing floor expand. David was to build an altar to the Lord on this threshing floor (1 Chronicles 21:18; 2 Samuel 24:18). So, why would God tell David to purchase the threshing floor from the Jebusite and use it as the temple site?

Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David his father, in the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

2 Chronicles 3:1

Solomon's temple is built on the very same threshing floor where David was instructed to build an altar to the Lord! It is also significant that this is the location of Mount Moriah and the offering of Isaac by Abraham (Genesis 22). In fact Jerusalem's Temple Mount on Mount Moriah, known as Har HaBayit in Hebrew (Mountain of the House [of the Lord]) has been the most disputed threshing floor in the world for thousands of years. So, just how does the idea of a threshing floor fit with the temple?

What I didn't quite see before is that while the threshing floor is a place of judgment and testing, it is also a place to receive blessing. It is a place where the grain of the harvest is actually taken from the sheaves. As such, it is a place where the blessing is received. The Bible refers to "the increase of the threshing floor" (Numbers 18:30) and to a time when "the floors shall be full of wheat" (Joel 2:24). Like the threshing floor, the temple is also meant to be a place of blessing for God's people. It's out of this blessing received from the threshing floor that an offering to the

Lord is to be made (Numbers 15:20, 18:27). This links the threshing floor to worship. The threshing floor as a place of receiving blessing, offering and worship fits perfectly with the temple! The judging, testing, and separation processes can be viewed as preparation for this worship.

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy dwelling place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Psalm 24:3-5

Clean hands and a pure heart are needed in order to draw near to the Lord (James 4:8). The Lord rewards according to the cleanliness of the hands (2 Samuel 22:21; Psalm 18:20, 24). When we enter into worship, we enter into a time of 'threshing', of separation and purification, a time of preparation to meet our God. If we are wise, like Esther who under went a year of beauty treatment, we will not approach our King unprepared or improperly 'dressed'. Ruth also washed and anointed herself; then put on her best clothes before going to meet Boaz (Ruth 3:3). Is it a coincidence that Ruth in the time of the barley harvest, went to the threshing floor to meet Boaz? Boaz represents Christ (our kinsman redeemer) and Ruth, the Bride of Christ, the church. This expands the meaning of the threshing floor even further as a place where the Bride and Bridegroom meet and recognize one another. The "grinding of grain" can be seen as a depiction of the act of marriage (Job 31:10). Along the same lines, the image of the threshing floor is used when God's people are not faithful. God calls it "adultery" or "playing the harlot" (Ezekiel 23:37, Hosea 4:12). Notice what God says to Israel in Hosea 9:1 - *You have loved harlots earnings on every threshing floor.*

The act of worship then can be seen as stepping onto God's threshing floor, to meet with and commune with our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. What are you willing to do to prepare yourself? Will you allow yourself to be 'sanctified, cleansed and washed' by Christ with the water of the word (Ephesians 5:26)? Will you put on the clothes of tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness (Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Peter 5:5). Will you anoint yourself with the oil of joy putting on the garment of praise (Isaiah 61:3)? Will you tie mercy and truth around your neck (Proverbs 3:3); a necklace displayed for all to see? Will you wear an everlasting crown of joy on your head (Isaiah 35:8-10)? Like Esther are you willing to 'dress' and prepare to meet your King?

What about an offering or sacrifice? This is also part of the idea of the threshing floor and worship. David was unwilling to take an offering to the threshing floor that belonged to someone else or 'cost' him nothing (1 Chronicles 21:24). What are the sacrifices that please the Lord?

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken {humble} spirit; a broken and contrite {humble & repentant} heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 51:15-17

The sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15) offered from a surrendered, humble, repentant heart through Jesus Christ our Lord, the fruit of lips that confess and continually praise His name; this pleases the Lord. In fact the Lord promises to dwell not only in the high and holy place, but also with those who have humble repentant hearts (Isaiah 57:15). Are you willing to humble yourself before the Lord and surrender your heart on His threshing floor? Are you willing to be a living sacrifice that surrenders to the process of being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory (2 Corinthians 3:18)? Are you willing to follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:1-5)?

Will you say as Jesus said, *yet not as I will, but as You will?* (Matthew 26:39) *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.* (John 6:38)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1-2

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

Isaiah 66:2

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