

Exodus 27

This chapter details the construction of the altar for burnt offerings as well as the outer courtyard which separates the place of worship from the world. This fact, in itself, shows that “worship” is a unique action performed at a specific time, for a specific purpose, with specific intent. In other words, “all of life” is *not* worship.

TRANSLATION - 27:1-8:

1 And you will make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide, square the altar will be and three cubits high. **2** And you will make its horns on its four corners from it, it will be its horns and you will overlay it with bronze. **3** And you will make its pots for to remove its ashes and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its fire pans for all its utensils you will make of bronze. **4** And you will make for it a grating, a work of a net of bronze and you will make on the net four rings of bronze on the four corners. **5** And you will put it under the rim of the altar beneath, and it will be the net to half of the altar.

6 And you will make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood and you will overlay them with bronze. **7** And there will be brought its poles in the rings and they will be the poles on the two sides of the altar to raise it. **8** Hollow boards you will make it just as it was shown you on the mountain; thus they will do.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Altar” (ver. 1) was used first in 17:15. This altar will be the altar for the sacrifices, specifically the burnt offering. “Horns” (ver. 2) is used 76 times in the OT. This is its first use in Exodus, out of 10 occurrences in Exodus. “Bronze” was used earlier at 25:3. “Pots” (ver. 3) was used earlier at 16:3. “To remove ashes” is only used here in Exodus, out of 11 times. “Shovels” is used only here in Exodus, out of 9 times. “Basins” is used twice in Exodus: 27:3; 38:3, out of 32 times. “Forks” is used in Exodus at 27:3; 38:3, out of 7 times. “Fire pans” was used earlier at 25:38. “Grating” is only used in Exodus: 27:4; 35:16; 38:4-5, 30; 39:39. “Net” is used in this context (27:4-5) and 38:4 in Exodus, out of 22 uses in the OT.

“To overlay” (ver. 6) was used in 25:11, 13, 24, 28. “Hollow” (ver. 8) is used here; 38:7; Jer. 52:21; Job 11:12. “Boards” was used earlier at 24:12. “Courtyard” (ver. 9) is used 192 times; it can refer to a village as well. “Pillars” (ver. 10) was used earlier at 13:21-22. “Gate” (ver. 16) was used earlier at 20:10. “Blue,” “purple,” and “worms of scarlet” were used earlier at 25:4. “Weaver” was used earlier at 26:36. “Service” was used very frequently earlier, first at 1:14.

REFERENCES (REFERIRI) AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

The patriarchs built altars, never using pre-existing altars which had been used in worship of idols (Gen. 8:20; 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7). Moses built two altars: 17:15; 24:4.

The horns were sprinkled with blood during sacrifices (Exo. 29:12; Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18).

See Exodus 38:1-7 for the actual construction of the altar for sacrifices.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Altars have been discovered, such as altars in Arad and Beersheba, which reflect this construction.

COMMENTARY:

This piece of furniture, like the others, was made of acacia wood. The altar was 7 1/2' squared (2.3 m²) and 4 1/2' (1.35 m) high (ver. 1). “Horns”, or projections to look like horns, were designed on the four corners, one piece with the altar, which was made of bronze (ver. 2). The utensils to use with the altar were all made of bronze (ver. 3). These utensils were used for

arranging the meat on the altar, the wood under the altar, and removing the ashes as well. The basin was perhaps used to hold the blood while it was sprinkled on the altar, the priests, or the people.

The “grating” mentioned in verse 4 was used, in some way, to attach the four rings at each corner. The “net” apparently was put, in some way, “under the ledge” so the “net” would reach halfway up the altar (ver. 5). This is not properly understood by modern scholars. As with the ark of the covenant, this altar was transported by poles, inserted through the rings. These poles were made of acacia wood (ver. 6), overlaid with bronze. The altar was to be hollow, perhaps in agreement with God’s instructions in 20:24-26. It would also make the altar lighter and easier to carry. Finally, once again, God emphasized that the altar was to be made after the pattern God had shown him. This suggests that perhaps more details were revealed to Moses which we do not have recorded.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Sacrifices were offered on this altar twice each day: Exo. 29:38-43; Num. 28:3-8. A fire was kept burning on the altar at all times: Lev. 6:12-13. Blood symbolized life, which was understood to belong to Jehovah God: Lev. 17:11-12, 14; Deut. 12:23. Consequently, Israel could not eat the blood: Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-12; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23-25; 15:23.

Later Jewish writers - This altar is smaller than the altar built by King Solomon for his temple (2 Chron. 4:1). It appears that the “horns” were used to bind sacrifices, according to Psa. 118:27. Consider the use of the altar in 1 Kings 13:5. At some point, it became acceptable for a fugitive to grab the horns of the altar to seek refuge: 1 Kings 1:5-53; 2:28-34. However, murderers could not do so: Exo. 21:14. The use of the hooks is seen in the event from 1 Sam. 2:13. Consider King Ahaz’s altar build in 2 Kings 16:10-16.

NT writers - The cross is the “altar” on which Jesus sacrificed Himself; see Heb. 13:10. Christians also have a “pattern” to follow in their worship, organization of the church, and the steps to being saved: Rom. 6:17; Phil. 3:17; 2 Tim. 1:13.

TRANSLATION - 27:9-19:

9 And you will make the courtyard of the sanctuary to the side southward curtains for the courtyard of linen woven one hundred cubits in length for one side. **10** And its pillars twenty and its sockets twenty of bronze and hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. **11** And thus to the northern corner for the length of the curtains one hundred [cubits] the length and its pillars twenty and its sockets twenty of bronze and and hooks of the pillars and its bands of silver. **12** And the width of the courtyard toward the sea, curtains fifty cubits, its pillars ten and its sockets twenty. **13** And its width of the courtyard toward the east, toward the sunrise, fifty cubits. **14** Fifteen cubits for the curtains for one side of the pillars three and its sockets three. **15** And to the second side, fifteen curtains, its pillars three and its sockets three. **16** And for the gate of the courtyard a cover twenty cubits and blue and purple and the worm of scarlet and linen woven, the work of a weaver, its pillars four and its sockets four.

17 All the pillars of the courtyard around, banded with silver and hooks of silver and sockets of bronze. **18** The length of the courtyard one hundred cubits and the width fifty by fifty and its height five cubits, of woven linen and sockets of bronze. **19** For all the utensils of the sanctuary in all its service and all its pins and all its pegs of the courtyard of bronze.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Courtyard” (ver. 9) is used 192 times; it can refer to a village as well. “Pillars” (ver. 10) was used earlier at 13:21-22. “Gate” (ver. 16) was used earlier at 20:10. “Blue,” “purple,” and “worms of scarlet” were used earlier at 25:4. “Weaver” was used earlier at 26:36. “Service” (ver. 19) was used very frequently earlier, first at 1:14.

REFERENCES (REFERIRI) AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

See Exodus 38:9-20 for the actual construction of the courtyard.

COMMENTARY:

There was a wall of coverings that were designed around the tabernacle, to create a courtyard. God specified the coverings on the south side (ver. 9) with its pillars, sockets of bronze and hooks of silver (ver. 10). Then He specified the coverings on the north side (ver. 11) with its pillars, sockets of bronze and hooks of silver. Next He specifies the coverings on the west side of the tabernacle, with its coverings, pillars and sockets (ver. 12). Finally, He details the coverings for the east side (ver. 13), where the entrance was located for the courtyard, with its coverings, pillars, and sockets (ver. 14) on one side of the entrance and the coverings, pillars, and sockets (ver. 15) on the other side of the opening.

The screen for the gate is detailed in verse 16. Silver bands were used to connect the pillars with hooks of silver and sockets of bronze (ver. 17). This courtyard was 150' (45.7 m) on the north and south sides; 75' (22.9 m) on the east and west sides (ver. 18). The total floor space of the courtyard was 11,250 square feet. The utensils used in the courtyard were made of bronze (ver. 19).

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - The tabernacle took up only about 1/15 of the space in the courtyard.

NT writers - The temple built by Solomon was destroyed by the Babylonians. A temple was rebuilt (John 2:20), overseen by King Herod in the times of the NT. This temple had four courts; one for the priests, one in which Jewish men were allowed, one for Jewish women, and the outer court for the non-Jews who wished to worship and sacrifice to Jehovah God. It was in this last courtyard where Jesus drove out the animals and the money-changers (Matt. 21:12-13).

TRANSLATION - 27:20-21:

20 But you will command the sons of Israel and they must take to you the fat of pure olive oil for a light to enlighten the lamp regularly. **21** In the tent of meeting, outside the veil, before the testimony Aaron will arrange it and his sons from evening until morning before the face of Jehovah a perpetual statute for their generations for the sons of Israel.

HEBREW WORDS:

"To command" (ver. 20) was used earlier at 1:22. "Olives" was used earlier at 23:11. "Oil" is only used five times in the OT: Exo. 27:20; 29:40; Lev. 24:2; Num. 28:5; 1 Kings 5:25. The verb "to enlighten," as it was translated at 25:37, means "to go up." Here, it refers to the light "going up" in order to shine its light. "To arrange" (ver. 21) is only used here and 40:4, 23 in Exodus; it is used 75 times in the OT. "Statutes" was used earlier at 12:14, 17, 43.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Clear" or "pure" olive oil was beaten, pounding the olives in a mortar with a pestle, rather than grinding them in a mill which could introduce impurities.

COMMENTARY:

For the lamps was used "clear" oil of beaten olives (ver. 20). The oil was introduced at 25:6 but it was not described until now. This oil was to be used with the lamps in the lamp stand and the lamp was to be kept burning "continually". The priests are about to be described with the garments in chapter 28. Here in verse 21, Aaron and his sons (who will serve as priests) will care for the lamp stand and its lights (including the rest of the acts of worship within the tabernacle). The light was to be kept burning from "evening to morning." This was a

“perpetual” or “indefinite” statute throughout the generations of the sons of Israel, until the whole concept of worship to God was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - It is not clear if this light is light from the lamp stand of Exodus 25:31. The high priest cared for the lamps in Exo. 30:7-8; Lev. 24:1-3; Num. 8:1-3.

Later Jewish writers - Samuel tended the lamp in 1 Sam. 3:3. We also see the lighting in 2 Chronicles 13:10-11.