



## Exodus - Chapter Twenty Seven

### II. Exodus 19:1-40:38 - The Covenant at Sinai (continues)

#### II.d Exodus 25:1-31:17 - Instructions for the tabernacle (continues)

##### Summary of Chapter Twenty Seven

Design details continue, starting with the bronze altar, its utensils and carrying poles. The altar was to be used for making burnt-offerings. This is followed by details for the design of the gated courtyard that would surround the tabernacle. Finally, a command is issued for the people to provide olive oil for the lamps, which are to burn continuously and are to be tended by Aaron and his sons.

#### II.d.vi Exodus 27:1-8 - The Altar of Burnt-Offering

This altar made of wood and overlaid with bronze is referred to again later by its function: the altar of burnt-offering; refer also to 38:1-7. The altar was placed before the door of the tabernacle with the bronze basin between them (40:6-7), and they were the only two items inside the court around the tabernacle. This is the altar where the priests will offer the sacrifices that the Lord commands Israel to bring to him, refer to Leviticus 1:1-7:38.

<sup>1</sup> You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and it shall be three cubits high.

<sup>2</sup> You shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.

#### Exodus 27:1-2

You shall, stated twelve times in this chapter alone, clearly indicates that God is commanding his people what to do; it is not a request!

You shall make the altar. The idea behind the Hebrew word for altar is essentially, ‘killing-place.’ It was a place of death and sacrifice, where atonement for sin was made and consecration unto God was marked.

Under the new covenant believers also have an altar: <<*We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat*>> (Hebrews 13:10). This altar - their ‘killing-place’ - is the Cross, where Jesus died for the sins of humankind and believers follow by dying unto self and living for Jesus.

Believers lay down our lives on that same altar: <<*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*>> (Galatians 2:19-20), and: <<*May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*>> (Galatians 6:14).

The altar was to be made with horns on each corner. The function and significance of the horns are not explained, but they are referred to when both Adonijah and Joab take hold of them in order to seek refuge from Solomon: <<*Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and went to grasp the horns of the altar*>> (1 Kings 1:50), and: <<*When the news came to Joab – for Joab had supported Adonijah though he had not supported Absalom – Joab fled to the tent of the Lord and grasped the horns of the altar*>> (1 Kings 2:28).



The Bronze Altar

The bronze altar for burnt-offerings stood in the outer courtyard with its poles removed. It was a hollow wooden box, overlaid with bronze, measuring 4.5 feet high and 7.5 feet long and wide (1.4m x 2.3m x 2.3m). There was a bronze grating on the top and on the sides of the altar.

You shall overlay it with bronze. Because of its overlay of bronze the altar could survive high temperatures. For years, the sides of this altar were smooth and shiny bronze. But Numbers Chapter 16 describes the rebellion of Korah, who challenged the leadership of Moses: <<***They assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?’***>> (Numbers 16:3). In confirming the leadership of Moses, God judged Korah and his followers, and caused the ground to split and swallow up all the rebels of Korah. The Lord then commanded the priests to take the bronze incense-censers held by Korah and his followers, to hammer them flat, and to cover the altar of burnt-offering with them, to be a memorial to the children of Israel (Numbers 16:40). From then on, every time someone came to the altar of burnt-offering, they noticed the rough, hammered finish of the bronze, and were reminded of Korah’s rebellion and God’s judgement against him and those who followed him.

<sup>3</sup> You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. <sup>4</sup> You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze; and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. <sup>5</sup> You shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net shall extend half-way down the altar. <sup>6</sup> You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze; <sup>7</sup> the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. <sup>8</sup> You shall make it hollow, with boards. They shall be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

### Exodus 27:3-8

You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and firepans. These utensils were used in the preparation of the offerings and the maintenance of the altar. Each was specially made for the tabernacle out of bronze and each was set-aside for the work of the tabernacle:

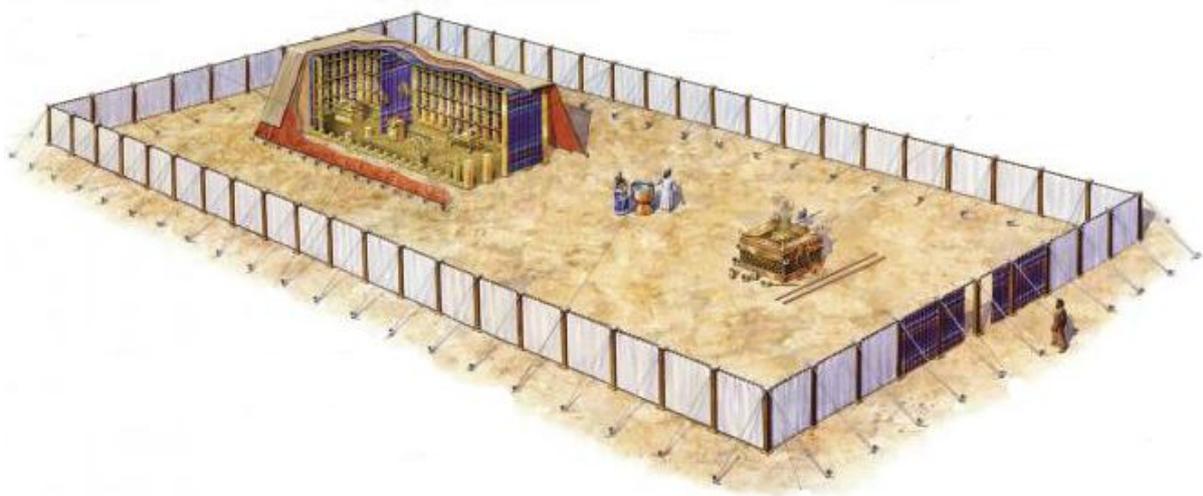
- The pots were to hold the fat-soaked ashes when they were removed from the hearth by the shovels.
- The basins were to catch the blood of the animals slain beside the altar to be sprinkled on the altar’s base.

- Three-pronged forks were used for arranging the sacrifice or retracting the priest's portion: <<*When anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself*>> (1 Samuel 2:13b-14a).
- The firepans were for carrying fire from the altar of incense inside the Holy Place; refer to Leviticus 10:1 and 16:12, and 1 Kings 7:50.

You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze. The grate provided a floor for the altar so the ashes and burnt remains fell down through the network of bronze. The grate also had the bronze rings and the poles with which the altar was carried.

#### II.d.vii Exodus 27:9-19 - The Court and Its Hangings

The court of the tabernacle encloses both the tabernacle and the bronze basin and altar of burnt-offering. The tabernacle was a portable temple – a ‘tent of meeting’ – within a movable courtyard. It was constructed after the pattern that Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was assembled in the desert as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. The tabernacle courtyard was 150 feet (46m) long and 75 feet (23m) wide, totalling 11,250 square feet, approximately 1 sq km.



#### The Tabernacle Courtyard

<sup>9</sup> You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side the court shall have hangings of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for that side; <sup>10</sup> its twenty pillars and their twenty bases shall be of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver.

<sup>11</sup> Likewise, for its length on the north side there shall be hangings one

hundred cubits long, their pillars twenty and their bases twenty, of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver.<sup>12</sup> For the width of the court on the west side there shall be fifty cubits of hangings, with ten pillars and ten bases.<sup>13</sup> The width of the court on the front to the east shall be fifty cubits.<sup>14</sup> There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on one side, with three pillars and three bases.<sup>15</sup> There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on the other side, with three pillars and three bases.

### Exodus 27:9-15

You shall make the court of the tabernacle. A fine linen fence marked off the courtyard and was white in colour. As the tent itself took up only about one-fifteenth or 7% of the area of the courtyard, there was plenty of room.

Its purposes were fourfold:

1. It was a barrier in that it prevented unlawful approach.
2. It was a protection, keeping out all wild animals.
3. It was a positive line of demarcation between the world and the holy presence of God.
4. With its single gate, it was a way of approach to God. Jesus said: *<<Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it>> (Matthew 7:13-14).*

The materials for constructing the court will include the precious metals bronze and silver, which are lesser metals than the pure gold prescribed for the elements inside the tabernacle (25:10-40), and are farther from the Most Holy Place, where the Lord dwells.

Their pillars twenty and their bases twenty, of bronze. The short linen fence surrounding the courtyard was held up by a system of bronze pillars, twenty on the long sides and ten pillars on the short side of the rectangular-shaped court, with three pillars on the side with the entrance to the tabernacle.

The instructions for the court include mention of the fact that the tabernacle and its court will be set up with the front to the east. The sanctuary, like the Garden of Eden, is entered from the east: *<<He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life>> (Genesis 3:24).*

<sup>16</sup> For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen,

embroidered with needlework; it shall have four pillars and with them four bases.

#### Exodus 27:16

For the gate of the court. The gate was on the east side, the same side as the gate to the tent of the tabernacle. It was woven from the four colours used for the weavings of the tabernacle: blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen.

A screen twenty cubits long. Although there was only one gate to the courtyard, it was large, about 30 feet or 9.1m wide. This was the only entrance to the court of the tent of meeting. It was the final part of the construction: <<*He set up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and put up the screen at the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work*>> (Exodus 40:33).

<sup>17</sup> All the pillars around the court shall be banded with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their bases of bronze. <sup>18</sup> The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty, and the height five cubits, with hangings of fine twisted linen and bases of bronze. <sup>19</sup> All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze.

#### Exodus 27:17-19

All the pillars around the court shall be banded with silver. Each pillar had a top of silver, making it shiny and visible from afar in the bright desert. Each pillar also had a base of bronze. Refining through the fire makes bronze. Silver, a metal illustrating redemption, was the foundation for the tent of meeting. It was also the top, i.e. the most visible part, of the pillars surrounding the courtyard. However, the courtyard fence hung on a foundation of refined bronze, a metal associated with judgement because it is forged in the fire. One could say that the tabernacle court was based on, founded upon the judgement Jesus took in mankind's place.

The pegs of the court helped anchor down the flaps of the tabernacle and the gates, and were also made of bronze.

The court of the tabernacle or the temple is an important theme throughout the rest of the OT. This is mainly because the temple itself was inaccessible except to a few priests. All others in Israel met God in the court. It can be said by application that God also invites believers to enter into his courts to praise and worship him:

- *Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple (Psalm 65:4).*
- *My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God (Psalm 84:2).*
- *For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness (Psalm 84:10).*
- *They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God (Psalm 92:13).*
- *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts (Psalm 96:8).*
- *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name (Psalm 100:4).*
- *I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 116:17-19).*
- *Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord; give praise, O servants of the Lord, you that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God (Psalm 135:1-2).*

In overview, in coming to the tabernacle, one saw a white linen fence, with shiny spots of silver on the posts holding up the fence, surrounded by thousands of black tents, with the pillar of cloud over a unassuming tent in the midst of the courtyard covered with fine leather. The entire tabernacle was a tent, a moveable structure. God wanted Israel to know he was with them wherever they went. It was not a case of 'You come to me,' but the idea was 'I have come to you'. The Hebrews were meant to feel that the God of their fathers was a fellow-pilgrim, that where they pitched he pitched, that their enemies, difficulties, and long toilsome marches were his: <<*Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you*>> (Deuteronomy 31:6).

#### II.d.viii Exodus 27:20-21 - The Oil for the Lamp

In addition to the sacrifices that will be prescribed, the people of Israel are also to bring olive oil for the lamp that is in the tabernacle.

<sup>20</sup> You shall further command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn regularly. <sup>21</sup> In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that is before the covenant, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning

before the Lord. It shall be a perpetual ordinance to be observed throughout their generations by the Israelites.

#### Exodus 27:20-21

You shall further command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light. The oil for the lamps on the lampstand, the only light in the tabernacle, came from pressed olives, not beaten olives. Beaten olive oil, so the Mishnah reveals, refers to the method of production of the very best oil.

Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. The priests were to tend the lamps, making sure that the lamps had oil to burn and that their wicks were trimmed, so that the lamps would never go out, especially during the night. God never wanted the lamps to lose their fire. Only by a continual supply of oil and trimming of the wicks could keep them burning. Believers can only continue to be on fire for God if they are continually supplied with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and are ‘trimmed’ by God to bear more light: *<<You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden>>* (Matthew 5:14).

*In dark days there is all the more reason to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be ‘trimmed wicks’ for the Lord: <<For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ>> (2 Corinthians 4:6), and: <<For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true>> (Ephesians 5:8-9).*