
EXODUS 27:1 "You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be square: and its height shall be three cubits.

The altar of burnt-offerings, and its dimensions, Exo 27:1; its horns, Exo 27:2; pans, shovels, etc., Exo 27:3; its grate and net work, Exo 27:4, Exo 27:5; its staves, Exo 27:6, Exo 27:7. Court of the tabernacle, with its pillars and hangings, Exo 27:9-15. Gate of the court, its pillars, hangings, length, breadth, and height, Exo 27:16-18. All the vessels used in the court of the tabernacle to be of brass, Exo 27:19. The Israelites to provide pure olive oil for the light, Exo 27:20. Every thing to be ordered by Aaron and his sons, Exo 27:21.

Verse 1

Thou shalt make an altar - מִזְבֵּחַ mizbeach, from חָבַח zabach, to slay: Septuagint, θυσιαστηριον, from θυσιαζω, to sacrifice or from θυω to kill, etc. See Clarke's note on Gen 8:20.

Four square - As this altar was five cubits long and five broad, and the cubit is reckoned to be twenty-one inches, hence it must have been eight feet nine inches square, and about five feet three inches in height, the amount of three cubits, taken at the same ratio.

EXODUS 27:2 You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it; and you shall overlay it with brass.

Verse 2

Thou shalt make the horns of it - The horns might have three uses:

1. For ornament.
2. To prevent carcasses, etc., from falling off.
3. To tie the victim to, previously to its being sacrificed.

So David: Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar; Psa 118:27. Horns were much used in all ancient altars among the heathen, and some of them were entirely constructed of the horns of the beasts that had been offered in sacrifice; but such altars appear to be erected rather as trophies in honor of their gods. On the reverses of several medals we find altars represented with horns at the corners. There is a medal of Antoninus on the reverse of which is an altar, on which a fire burns, consecrated Divi Pio, where the horns appear on each of the corners.

There is one of Faustina, on which the altar and its horns are very distinct, the legend Pietas Augusta. All the following have altars with horns. One of Valerian, legend Consecratio; one of Claudius Gothicus, same legend; one of Quintillus, same legend; one of Crispina, with the legend Diis Genitalibus; and several others. See Numismatica Antiq., a Musellio, under Consecratio, in the index.

Callimachus, in his Hymn to Apollo, line 60 introduces him constructing an altar of the horns of the animals slain by Diana: - πηξε δε βωμων Εκ κεραων κ. τ. λ.

Martial has these words: Cornibus ara frequens.

EXODUS 27:3 You shall make its pots to take away its ashes, its shovels, its basins, its flesh hooks, and its fire pans: all its vessels you shall make of brass.

Verse 3

Thou shalt make his pans - סִירוֹתָיו sirothaiv, a sort or large brazen dishes, which stood under the altar to receive the ashes that fell through the grating.

His shovels - יַעֲיִי yaaiv. Some render this besoms; but as these were brazen instruments, it is more natural to suppose that some kind of fire-shovels are intended, or scuttles, which were used to carry off the ashes that fell through the grating into the large pan or siroth.

His basins - מִזְרְקוֹתָיו mizrekothaiv, from זָרַק zarak, to sprinkle or disperse; bowls or basins to receive the blood of the sacrifices, in order that it might be sprinkled on the people before the altar, etc.

His flesh-hooks - מִזְלָגָתָיו mizlegothaiu. That this word is rightly translated flesh-hooks is fully evident from 1Sam 2:13, where the same word is used in such a connection as demonstrates its meaning: And the priest's custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in the seething, with a Flesh-Hook (מִזְלָג mazleg) of three teeth (prongs) in his hand, and he struck it into the pan, etc.; all that the Flesh-Hook (מִזְלָג mazleg) brought up, the priest took for himself. It was probably a kind of trident, or fork with three prongs, and these bent to a right angle at the middle, as the ideal meaning of the Hebrew seems to imply crookedness or curvature in general.

His fire-pans - מַחֲתָתָיו machtothaiu. Bishop Patrick and others suppose that "this was a larger sort of vessel, wherein, probably, the sacred fire which came down from heaven (Lev 9:24) was kept burning, whilst they cleansed the altar and the grate from the coals and the ashes; and while the altar was carried from one place to another, as it often was in the wilderness.

EXODUS 27:4 You shall make a grating for it of network of brass: and on the net you shall make four bronze rings in its four corners.

Verse 4

Thou shalt make for it a grate - Calmet supposes this altar to have been a sort of box, covered with brass plates, on the top of which was a grating to supply the fire with air, and permit the ashes to fall through into the siroth or pan that was placed below. At the four corners of the grating were four rings and four chains, by which it was attached to the four horns; and at the sides were rings for the poles of shittim wood with which it was carried. Even on this there is a great variety of opinions.

EXODUS 27:5 You shall put it under the ledge around the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar.

EXODUS 27:6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with brass.

EXODUS 27:7 Its poles shall be put into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar, when carrying it.

EXODUS 27:8 You shall make it with hollow planks. They shall make it as it has been shown you on the mountain.

Verse 8

Hollow with boards - It seems to have been a kind of frame-work, and to have had nothing solid in the inside, and only covered with the grating at the top. This rendered it more light and portable.

EXODUS 27:9 "You shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side:

Verse 9

The court of the tabernacle - The tabernacle stood in an enclosure or court, open at the top. This court was made with pillars or posts, and hangings. It was one hundred cubits, or about fifty-eight yards and a half, in length; the breadth we learn from Exo 27:12, Exo 27:18; and five cubits, or nearly three yards, high, Exo 27:18. And as this was but half the height of the tabernacle, Exo 26:16, that sacred building might easily be seen by the people from without.

EXODUS 27:10 and its pillars shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver.

EXODUS 27:11 Likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, and its pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver.

EXODUS 27:12 For the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten.

EXODUS 27:13 The breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits.

EXODUS 27:14 The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three.

EXODUS 27:15 For the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three.

EXODUS 27:16 For the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four.

Verse 16

And for the gate of the court - It appears that the hangings of this gate were of the same materials and workmanship with that of the inner covering of the tabernacle, and the outer and inner veil. See Exo 26:36.

EXODUS 27:17 All the pillars of the court around shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass.

EXODUS 27:18 The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass.

EXODUS 27:19 All the instruments of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pins, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.

Verse 19

All the vessels - shall be of brass - It would have been improper to have used instruments made of the more precious metals about this altar, as they must have been soon worn out by the severity of the service.

EXODUS 27:20 "You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually.

Verse 20

Pure oil olive beaten - That is, such oil as could easily be expressed from the olives after they had been bruised in a mortar; the mother drop, as it is called, which drops out of itself as soon as the olives are a little broken, and which is much purer than that which is obtained after the olives are put under the press.

Columella, who is a legitimate evidence in all such matters, says that the oil which flowed out of the fruit either spontaneously, or with little application of the force of the press, was of a much finer flavour than that which was obtained otherwise. *Quoniam longe melioris saporis est, quod minore vi preli, quasi luxurians, defluxerit* - Colum., lib. xii., c. 50.

To cause the lamp to burn always - They were to be kept burning through the whole of the night, and some think all the day besides; but there is a difference of sentiment upon this subject. See the note on Exo 27:21.

This oil and continual flame were not only emblematical of the unction and influences of the Holy Ghost, but also of that pure spirit of devotion which ever animates the hearts and minds of the genuine worshippers of the true God. The temple of Vesta, where a fire was kept perpetually burning, seems to have been formed on the model of the tabernacle; and from this the followers of Zeratusht, commonly called Zoroaster, appear to have derived their doctrine of the perpetual fire, which they still worship as an emblem of the Deity.

EXODUS 27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute forever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

Verse 21

The tabernacle of the congregation - The place where all the assembly of the people were to worship, where the God of that assembly was pleased to reside, and to which, as the habitation of their king and protector, they were ever to turn their faces in all their adorations.

Before the testimony - That is, the ark where the tables of the covenant were deposited. See Exo 25:16.

Aaron and his sons - These and their descendants being the only legitimate priests, God having established the priesthood in this family.

Shall order it from evening to morning - Josephus says the whole of the seven lamps burned all the night; in the morning four were extinguished, and three kept burning through the whole day. Others assert that the whole seven were kept lighted both day and night continually; but it appears sufficiently evident, from 1Sam 3:3, that these lamps were extinguished in the morning: And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, etc. See also Exo 30:8 : And when Aaron Lighteth The Lamps At Even. It appears therefore that the business of the priests was to light the lamps in the evening; and either to extinguish them in the morning, or permit them to burn out, having put in the night before as much oil as was necessary to last till daylight.

A statute for ever - This ordering of the lamps night and morning, and attendance on the service of the tabernacle, was a statute that was to be in full force while the tabernacle and temple stood, and should have its spiritual accomplishment in the Christian Church to the end of time. Reader, the tabernacle and temple are both destroyed; the Church of Christ is established in their place. The seven golden candlesticks were typical of this Church and the glorious light it possesses, Rev 1:12-20; and Jesus Christ, the Fountain and Dispenser of this true light, walks in the midst of them. Reader, hast thou that celestial flame to enlighten and animate thy heart in all those acts of devotion which thou professest to pay to him as thy Maker, Redeemer, and Preserver? What is thy profession, and what thy religious acts and services, without this? A sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal.

Tertullian asserts that all the ancient heathens borrowed their best notions from the sacred writings: "Which," says he, "of your poets, which of your sophists, have not drunk from the fountain of the prophets? It is from those sacred springs that your philosophers have refreshed their thirsty spirits; and if they found any thing in the Holy Scriptures which hit their fancy, or which served their hypothesis, they took and turned it to a compliance with their own curiosity, not considering those writings to be sacred and unalterable, nor understanding their true sense, every one altering them according to his own fancy." - Apologet.

The reader's attention has already been called to this point several times in the preceding parts of this work, and the subject will frequently recur. At the conclusion of Exo 25:31 (See Clarke's note at Exo 25:31) we had occasion to observe that the heathens had imitated many things in that Divine worship prescribed by Moses; but in application to their own corrupt system every thing was in a certain measure falsified and distorted, yet not so far as to prevent the grand outlines of primitive truth from being discerned. One of the most complete imitations of the tabernacle and its whole

service is found in the very ancient temple of Hercules, founded probably by the Phoenicians, at Gades, now Cadiz, in Spain, so minutely described by Silius Italicus from actual observation. He observes that though the temple was at that time very ancient, yet the beams were the same that had been placed there by the founders, and that they were generally supposed to be incorruptible; a quality ascribed to the shittim wood, termed ξυλον ασηπτον, incorruptible wood, by the Septuagint. That women were not permitted to enter this temple, and that no swine were ever suffered to come near it. That the priests did not wear party-coloured vestments, but were always clothed in fine linen, and their bonnets made of the same. That they offered incense to their god, their clothes being ungirded; for the same reason doubtless given Exo 20:26, that in going up to the altar nothing unseemly might appear, and therefore they permitted their long robes to fall down to their feet. He adds, that by the laws of their forefathers they bore on their sacerdotal vestments the *latus clavus*, which was a round knob or stud of purple with which the robes of the Roman knights and senators were adorned, which these priests seem to have copied from the breastplate of judgment made of cunning work, embroidered with purple, blue, etc. See Exo 28:15. They also ministered barefooted, their hair was trimmed or cut off, and they observed the strictest continency, and kept a perpetual fire burning on their altars. And he farther adds that there was no image or similitude of the gods to be seen in that sacred place. This is the substance of his description; but as some of my readers may wish to see the original, I shall here subjoin it. *Vulgatum (nec cassa fides) ab origine fani Impositas durare trabes, solasque per aevum Condentum novisse manus: hic credere gaudent Consedis Deum, seniumque repellere templis. Tum, queis fas et honos adyti penetralia nosse, Foemineos prohibent gressus, ac limine curant Setigeros arcere sues: nec discolor ulli Ante aras cultus: velantur corpora lino, Et Pelusiaco praeifulget stamine vertex. Discinctis mos thura dare, atque, e lege parenturn Sacrificam Lato vestem distinguere Clavo. Pes nudus, tousaeque comae, castumque cubile, Irrestincta focus servant altaria flammae. Sed nulla effigies, simulacrave nota Deorum Majestate locum, et sacro implevere timore.*

Punicor., lib. iii., ver. 17-31.

This is such a remarkable case that I think myself justified in quoting it at length, as an extraordinary monument, though corrupted, of the tabernacle and its service. It is probable that the original founders had consecrated this temple to the true God, under the name of אל EL, the strong God, or אל גבור El Gibbor, the strong, prevailing, and victorious God, Isa 9:6, out of whom the Greeks and Romans made their Hercules, or god of strength; and, to make it agree with this appropriation, the labors of Hercules were sculptured on the doors of this temple at Gades. In foribus labor Alcidae Lernaee recisis Anguibus Hydra jacet, etc.