

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 27

This chapter treats of the altar of burnt offering, and of all things relative to it, (^{<1271>}Exodus 27:1-8), of the court of the tabernacle, its hangings on each side, with pillars, sockets, and hooks for them, (^{<1279>}Exodus 27:9-19) and it is concluded with an order to the Israelites to bring oil olive for the lamp of the sanctuary, (^{<1271>}Exodus 27:20,21).

Ver. 1. *And thou shall make an altar of shittim wood*, etc.] This is a different altar from that made of earth before the tabernacle was built, (^{<1214>}Exodus 20:24) and from the altar of incense, (^{<1210>}Exodus 30:1) this was to offer burnt offerings on, and was placed at the door of the tabernacle, in the court of the people, where they brought their sacrifices to the priests to offer for them: it stood in the open air, as it was proper it should, that the smoke or the sacrifices might ascend up and scatter. This altar was not typical of the altar of the heart; though indeed all the saints are priests, and every sacrifice of theirs should come from the heart, and particularly love, which is more than all burnt offerings; but the heart is not this altar of brass to bear the fire of divine wrath, which none can endure; nor does it sanctify the gift, it being itself impure: nor of the Lord's table, or the table on which the Lord's supper is set; that is a table, and not an altar, a feast, and not a sacrifice; is not greater than the gift, nor does it sanctify: nor of the cross or Christ, on which he died, bore the sins of his people, and sanctified them by his blood; but of Christ himself, who by his office as a priest, his human nature is the sacrifice, and his divine nature the altar; and he is that altar believers in him have a right to eat of, (^{<1310>}Hebrews 13:10) his divine nature is greater than the human, is the support of it, which sanctifies and gives it virtue as a sacrifice, and which makes the sacrifices of all his people acceptable to God. This altar of burnt offering is said to be made of "shittim wood", a wood incorruptible and durable; Christ, as God, is from everlasting to everlasting; as man, though he once died, he now lives for evermore, and never did or will see corruption; his priesthood is an unchangeable priesthood, and passes not

from one to another, and particularly his sacrifice is of a continual virtue and efficacy:

five cubits long, and five cubits broad: the altar shall be square: as to the length and breadth of it, which were alike, two yards and a half each, according to the common notion of a cubit. The altars of the Heathens were made in imitation of this, they were square as this was. Pausanias makes mention of an altar of Diana, that was τετραγωνος “square”, sensibly rising up on high. And this figure may denote the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice, and the permanency of it; though the altars in Solomon’s temple, and in the visions of Ezekiel, are much larger, and which also were square, (⁴⁰⁰2 Chronicles 4:1 ³⁶¹⁶Ezekiel 43:16). Christ’s sacrifice is large and extensive, making satisfaction for all his people, and for all their sins; and he is an altar large enough for all their sacrifices to be offered up to God with acceptance:

and the height thereof shall be three cubits; a proper height for a man to minister at; for as Aben Ezra observes, the height of a man is but four cubits ordinarily; so that a man serving at the altar would be a cubit, or half a yard more above it, and would have command of doing on it what he had to do.

Ver. 2 *And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof*, etc.] Which were either for ornament, or for keeping what was laid upon the altar from falling off, or for the fastening of the sacrifice to them, and were what criminals fled to for refuge, and laid hold on; and may denote the power of Christ, who is the horn of salvation to preserve his people from a final falling away, and from ruin and destruction, and his protection of those that fly to him for refuge; and these horns being at the corners of the altar may respect the four parts of the world, from whence souls come to Christ for everlasting salvation:

his horns shall be of the same; that is, made of the same wood as the altar itself and so may lead to observe the like things: or “upwards out of it” ⁷⁹⁷, the altar; prominent from it, as the Arabic version, and so the sacrifices could be bound to them, (⁴⁸²⁷Psalms 118:27):

and thou shalt overlay it with brass; with plates of brass, that it may endure the fire, and preserve the wood from being burnt with it; this may denote not only the brightness, lustre, and glory of Christ, like the shining brass, but his great strength in bearing the sins of his people, and all the

punishment due unto them, even the fire of divine wrath, without being consumed by it. Jarchi observes, that it was overlaid with brass, because it was to make atonement for the impudence of the forehead, which is as brass, (~~2380~~ Isaiah 48:4).

Ver. 3. *And thou shall make his pans to receive his ashes*, etc.] Not to receive them in as they fell, but to gather them up in, and carry them away; and this was done every morning about cockcrowing, not much sooner nor later ^{f798}:

and his shovels; to throw up the ashes together to be put into the pans; Jarchi describes this vessel to be like the cover of a brass pot, with a handle to it; the same we call a fire shovel:

and his basins: to receive the blood of the sacrifice, and out of which it was sprinkled, as the word signifies, and may be rendered sprinkling basins:

and his flesh hooks; not such as were used to take flesh out of the pot, (~~4003~~ 1 Samuel 2:13) for there could be no use for such at the altar of burnt offering; but were, as Jarchi says, like hooks recurved, with which they struck into the flesh, and turned it upon the coals to hasten the burning of it; and with which very probably they kept the fire and the parts of the sacrifices in good order, until they were consumed:

and his fire pans; which were a kind of censers in which coals of fire were taken off from the altar of burnt offering, and carried to the altar of incense, as Jarchi and Ben Gersom observe, (see ~~4162~~ Leviticus 16:12) but as censers did not belong to the altar of burnt offering, but to the altar of incense, Fortunatus Scacchus ^{f799} is of opinion, that these were a larger sort of vessels, wherein the fire which came down from heaven was kept burning while the altar and grate were cleansed from the coals and ashes, and when the altar was had from place to place:

all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass; as being fittest for the use of this altar.

Ver. 4. *And thou shalt, make for it a grate of network of brass*, etc.] Or “sieve”, as in (~~3100~~ Amos 9:9), it was a plate of brass with holes in it, to let through either the blood that drained from the parts of the sacrifice, or the ashes of it; for this was the focus or hearth, on which the sacrifice and the wood were laid and burnt: this, according to the Targum of Jonathan on (~~4204~~ Exodus 38:4) was to receive the coals and bones which fell from the

altar: and so may denote the purity of Christ's sacrifice, which was offered up without spot to God, and the use of him as the altar to sanctify our gifts, and take away the sins of our holy things:

and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof; by which, with chains put into them, the grate was fastened to the four horns of the altar, and the use of them was to let it down and hang in the middle of the altar, and to take it up when there was occasion for it; though some think these rings were not "in" the grate, but "by" it, as the particle may be rendered, a little lower than that, on the sides of the altar; into which the staves after mentioned were put, and with which the altar was carried when removed from place to place.

Ver. 5. *And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath*, etc.] That is, the grate was to be put within the square compass of the altar, in the hollow part of it, for the wood and sacrifice to be laid upon it:

that the net may be even to the midst of the altar; and as the altar was three cubits high, this net or grate was let down by chains to its rings a cubit and a half, and being of such a depth was capable of containing a great deal.

Ver. 6. *And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood*, etc.] Like those that were made for the ark, and for the same purpose:

and overlay them with brass; with plates of brass, whereas those for the ark were overlaid with gold.

Ver. 7. *And the staves shall be put into the rings*, etc.] Not into the rings of the grate, as Jarchi and others: though Dr. Lightfoot^{f800} thinks these came out of each corner through the altar frame, and hung out of the frame, and in these the staves being put, made the frame and the grate sure together, and so they were also carried together; but it seems rather, that as the grate had rings peculiar to that, to let it down and take it up, and with which it was carried, with a purple cloth covered over it, (⁽⁻⁰⁴¹³⁾Numbers 4:13) so the altar had rings peculiar to that on the sides of it, into which these staves were put:

and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it; and which shows that the rings into which these were put were not the rings of the grate, for they were at the four corners of it, which hung upon the four horns of it; whereas the staves were on the two sides of it, in order to bear

it from place to place, which was done by the Levites; and was typical of the ministers of the Gospel bearing the name of Christ, and spreading the doctrine of his sacrifice and satisfaction, in the world, which is the main and fundamental doctrine of the Gospel.

Ver. 8. *Hollow with boards shalt thou make it*, etc.] The frame of it being made of boards of shittim wood, there was nothing within side but the grate, which was put within the square, down into the middle of it, and so was light of carriage; though the Targum of Jonathan, and other Jewish writers, represent this hollow as filled up with dust and earth, to answer to the altar of earth Moses was before bid to make; but this seems quite contrary to the present direction: the hollowness of the altar may denote the emptiness of Christ when he became a sacrifice: he emptied himself, as it were, when he became incarnate, of all his greatness, glory, and riches, and became mean and poor for the sake of his people, that they through his poverty might be made rich, (³⁸⁰⁰Philippians 2:7,8 ⁴⁰⁰⁰2 Corinthians 8:9)

as it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it; or, “as he showed thee”^{f801}, that is, God. Moses had a model of this altar showed him, and he was to be careful to instruct the workmen, and see to it, that they built it exactly according to the model.

Ver. 9. *And thou shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward*, etc.] This was a large court yard to the house of God, or tabernacle, which stood in it at the upper end of it; it was enclosed, but open to the air; and in it, between the entrance into it and the holy place, stood the altar of burnt offering before described, and on one side of that the laver for the priests to wash in; into this the people of Israel were admitted, and where they brought their sacrifices and worshipped: it was typical of the visible church of God on earth, which, though an enclosure, and is separated from the world, yet consists of professors, good and bad, of real saints and hypocrites; as into this court Israelites of every character, sex, and state entered. In David’s time it was divided into various courts, and what answered to it when the temple was built were the several apartments called the courts of the priests, where they sacrificed, and the court of Israel, where the men Israelites worshipped, and the court of the women, where they were by themselves; and in later times there was another court separate from these, called the court of the Gentiles, into which they might enter; and the description of this court begins with that side of it which lay full south: there shall be

hangings for the court of fine twined linen of one hundred cubits long for one side; for the south side; and these hangings, with the rest all around, made the court, and were the walls of it; and from hence we learn, that it was one hundred cubits or fifty yards long, according to the common computation of a cubit; though it was three hundred inches more, this cubit being three inches more than is commonly supposed. These hangings, vails, or curtains, for so in the versions they are differently called, were the enclosure of the court; they were made of fine linen, six times twisted, but not of various colours, and curiously wrought with cunning work, as the curtains of the tabernacle were; and according to the signification of the word, they were wrought full of holes, like eyelet holes, or in the manner of network; so that though they kept persons from entering in, they might be seen through, and through them might be seen what was doing in the court: and all this may signify that the visible church of God on earth is separated from the world, and should consist of men called out of it, and of such who are clothed with that fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints, and which is the righteousness of Christ, and who have both inward and outward holiness; and though none but those who are admitted members of it may partake of its ordinances, yet others may be spectators of what is done in it.

Ver. 10. *And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets [shall be of brass]*, etc.] On these pillars the hangings, rails, or curtains were set, and they were for one side, the south side, in number twenty; and so must stand five cubits, or two yards and a half or more, distant from each other, since the length of the hangings were one hundred cubits: these, according to Philo the Jew ^{f802}, were made of cedar, but if of wood, most probably of “shittim wood”, as they are by most thought to be; though one would think, according to the plain and express words of the text, they as well as their sockets were of brass: and Josephus ^{f803} expressly says they were of brass, and which seems fittest for the purpose: now though the church of God itself is a pillar, and so is every true member of it, (^{<50R5>}1 Timothy 3:15 ^{<6R12>}Revelation 3:12) yet ministers of the Gospel may be more especially designed, (^{<100>}Proverbs 9:1 ^{<800>}Galatians 2:9 ^{<4018>}Jeremiah 1:18) who are the principal support of the churches of God, and of the interest of religion; and are set for the defence of the Gospel, and are steadfast in the ministration of it:

the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver; the hooks on the pillars might be somewhat like our tenter hooks, and so Jarchi describes

them, as having one end crooked upwards, and the other end fixed in the pillar; and as for the fillets, he says, they were silver threads round about the pillars; but whether they were upon the face or of them all, or on the top, or in the middle of them, he confesses his ignorance; only this he knew, that the word has the signification of girding or binding; and these fillets might not only be for ornament, but for the binding of the hangings to the pillars: and so Ben Gersom says, that they were silver threads, with which the curtains were bound to the pillars, that the wind might not separate them from them; and both the silver hooks and fillets may signify the word and ordinances as administered by the preachers of the Gospel, in which there is an union, conjunction, and communion between them and the churches.

Ver. 11. *And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of one hundred cubits long,* etc.] The north and south sides of this court being equal, the same length of hangings were for the one as the other;

and his twenty pillars, and their twenty sockets of brass; there went on this side the same number of pillars and sockets, and of the same metal:

the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver; just as they were on the south side.

Ver. 12. *And for the breadth of the court, on the west side,* etc.] On the west end, the upper end of the court, near to which reached the holy of holies:

shall be hangings of fifty cubits: or twenty five yards and more, so that the court was but half as broad as it was long:

their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; which was a number proportionate to the hangings, and stood at an equal distance from each other, as the pillars for the sides, at five cubits, or two yards and a half, as commonly computed.

Ver. 13. *And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward,* etc.] Which was the entrance into it:

shall be fifty cubits; the east end and west end were of the same measure.

Ver. 14. *The hangings of one side of the gate,* etc.] Or entrance into the court:

shall be fifteen cubits; or seven yards and a half:

their pillars three, and their sockets three; and so stood at the same distance from one another as the rest of the pillars did, the distance of five cubits.

Ver. 15. *And on the other side [shall be] hangings fifteen cubits*, etc.] On the other side of the gate, or entrance into the court, on the northeast side, as the other may be supposed to be the southeast side, there was the same length of hangings:

their pillars three, and their sockets three; the same as on the other side of the gate.

Ver. 16. *And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits*, etc.] Which, with the fifteen on each side, make the fifty cubits, the breadth of the court eastward, (^{427B}Exodus 27:13), this hanging was better than the rest, much finer and richer;

for it was of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needle work: and was of the same as the hangings for the door of the holy place, (^{425B}Exodus 26:36) this was a figure of Christ, and of the graces of the Spirit in him, and of his bloodshed, sufferings, and death; who is the door into the church, and to the ordinances of it, and leads on to the holy place, and even to the holy of holies, (see ^{810D}John 10:9 ^{810D}Hebrews 10:20)

their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four: so that the pillars of this court at both sides and each end were sixty, twenty on each side, south and north, and ten at each end, west and east.

Ver. 17. *All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver*, etc.] This is observed, because only mention is made before of the pillars that were on the south and north sides of the court, as filleted with silver; but inasmuch as those at both ends, east and west, were to be so likewise, this is added:

their hooks [shall be of] silver, and their sockets of brass; no notice having been taken of the hooks to the pillars at both ends, though they were as necessary there as elsewhere, and must be supposed, and though the sockets are mentioned, yet not their metal, and therefore are in general included here.

Ver. 18. *The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits*, etc.] And as may be concluded from the length of the hangings on each side:

and the breadth fifty everywhere; at both ends, and was the breadth of the hangings there, and which all around made the court:

and the height five cubits; or two yards and a half, and somewhat more; it was but half the height of the tabernacle, and hence that might be seen above it every way; so that, according to Bishop Cumberland, it contained one rood, twenty one perches, and twenty seven square feet, and was half an Egyptian aroura, which is the square of one hundred Jewish or Egyptian cubits: “of fine twined linen”; of which the hangings were made, and here called the court, as they properly were, for they made it:

and their sockets of brass; the bases on which all the pillars stood, upon which the hangings of fine twined linen were, were of brass; which seems to be repeated, that the foundation of this court might be observed to be different from that of the tabernacle; the foundation of that, or the sockets, into which the boards of it were put, being of silver.

Ver. 19. *All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof*, etc.] Which either refers to the vessels belonging to the altar of burnt offering, and so is a repetition of what is said, (⁽¹²⁷⁾Exodus 27:3) or rather to instruments that were used at the setting up and taking down of the tabernacle; such as hammers and the like, to drive the staves into the rings, and knock out the pillars from their sockets, etc., as Jarchi and Ben Gersom observe; for otherwise the vessels used in the sanctuary were of gold or silver, or covered therewith, and not of brass, as these are afterwards said to be:

and all the pins thereof; what these were is not easy to say; for there was nothing made of brass in the holy or most holy place, but the taches or clasps, with which the curtains of goats’ hair were coupled together, and the sockets on which the five pillars were set at the entrance of the door of the tabernacle, (⁽¹²⁶⁾Exodus 26:11,37) and it is possible that those pillars might be fastened in their sockets with brass pins; for the clasps or taches can hardly be called pins:

and all the pins of the court shall be of brass; these were brass pins, or stakes fastened in the ground all round the court, to which cords were tied, and these fastened to the hangings; whereby they were kept tight and close,

that the wind could not move them to and fro, as Jarchi and Ben Melech observe, and so Josephus^{f804}; (see ^{<2333>}Isaiah 33:20).

Ver. 20. *And thou shalt command the children of Israel*, etc.] Here begins a new section of the law; an account being given of the tabernacle, and its parts, and the furniture thereof, next the several parts of service done in it are observed; and the account begins with that of the candlestick in the holy place, in order to which Moses is directed to command the people of Israel, whose business it was to provide for it:

that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light; for the light of the candlestick, to light up the several lamps in the several branches of it; and the oil to be brought and used there was not any sort of oil, as what is got out of fishes, as train oil, or out of nuts, as oil of almonds, but what comes from the olive tree; and this must be pure and free from lees and dregs, and must be beaten with a pestle in a mortar, and not ground in a mill, that so it might be quite clear; for being bruised and beaten, only the pulp or flesh of the olive was broken, but being ground in a mill, the stones were broken and ground, and so the oil not so pure.

Jarchi and Ben Melech, from their Rabbins, observe, that after the first drop was pressed out, they put them into mills and grind them; but then, though the oil was fit for offerings, it was not fit for the light of the candlestick. Ben Gersom says, they put the olives bruised into a basket, and the oil dropped from them without pressing at all; and this was the choicest and most excellent for the light. The quantity to be brought is not fixed; but the measure fixed by the wise men of Israel, as Jarchi says, was half a log, that is, for every lamp; and this was the measure for the longest nights, the nights of the month Tebet, and so the same for all other nights:

to cause the lamp to burn always night and day, continually, as it was proper it should, that the house of God might not be at any time in darkness; as it would otherwise be, since there were no windows in it; and his servants minister in it in the dark, even in the daytime, at the altar of incense, and at the shewbread table, which is not reasonable to suppose; and though there are some passages of Scripture which seem to intimate as though the lamps only burnt till the morning, and then went out, and were lighted every evening; this difficulty may be solved, and the matter reconciled by what Josephus^{f805} relates, who must be an eyewitness of it, that three of the lamps burned before the Lord in the daytime, and the rest were lighted at the evening; and Hecataeus^{f806}, an Heathen writer,

speaking of the golden candlestick, says, its light was unextinguished day and night, particularly the lamp which was in the middle; also the candlestick is by the ancient Jews, and by Nachmanides, said to have been never extinct.

Ver. 21. *In the tabernacle of the congregation*, etc.] The reasons usually given for this name of the tabernacle are, either because the children of Israel gathered and met together here at certain times, or because here the Lord met with Moses, and his successors, as he had promised, (⁽¹²⁵²⁾Exodus 25:22), but neither of them will hold good; not the first, because the place where the candlestick was, and which Aaron and his sons are here said to order, was in the holy place, into which only the priests entered, and therefore could not be called the tabernacle of the congregation, from the people of Israel being gathered and assembling there; not the latter, because it was in the most holy place, where the Lord promised to meet with Moses, and commune with him, even from between the cherubim over the mercy seat there: indeed, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation the children of Israel assembled, and there the Lord met them, and so the whole might be called from thence, and there seems to be no other reason for it, (⁽¹²⁵⁰⁾Exodus 29:42,43) and this place was

without the vail, which is before the testimony; that is, without the vail which divided between the holy and the most holy place, and which vail was before the ark, where the law or the testimony was put; for the candlestick was in that part of the tabernacle which was without the vail, or in the holy place: and here

Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord; that is, they were to take care that the lamps which went out might be lighted; and that they be kept clear and burning, they were to trim and snuff them, for which they had proper instruments provided for them, (⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾Exodus 25:37,38). This points at the word of God, which shines as a light in a dark place, and is a lamp to the feet, and a light to the path, and to the constant application of Gospel ministers in preaching it, in order to enlighten men in all ages unto the end of the world:

it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations, on the behalf of the children of Israel; on whom it was incumbent to provide oil for the lamps, as long as the tabernacle and temple service lasted; and figured out either the maintenance of Gospel ministers by the churches, or the grace and gifts

of the Spirit, with which they are furnished by the head of the church, often signified by oil in Scripture.