

Exodus Chapter 27

Verses 1-18: Here are instructions for the outer courtyard (“court”) of the tabernacle. Because this is where animal sacrifices were offered. Only the pieces that the priests needed for this duty were placed here: the “altar” of burnt offering (30:28; Lev. 4:7), also known as the bronze altar (38:30), and the bronze basin (40:6-7), for washing. The altar was quite large (about 7-1/2 feet square and 4-1/2 feet high), despite the fact it had to be portable.

Exodus 27:1 "And thou shalt make an altar [of] shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof [shall be] three cubits."

“Altar”: The largest piece of equipment, also known as the “altar of burnt offering” (Lev. 4:7, 10, 18), was situated in the courtyard of the tabernacle. It was covered, not in gold as the items inside the Holy Place, but in bronze. Like the other pieces of furniture and equipment, it was also built to be carried by poles (verses 6-7).

This altar was 7 1/2 feet square and 4 1/2 feet high.

Exodus 27:2 "And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass."

“The horns of it” (the altar): The bronze altar of burnt offering was also an altar with horns. An excellent example of such a horned altar has been discovered at Beer-sheba, dating to the eighth century B.C. In (Leviticus 4:7, 10, 18), this altar is named “the altar of burnt offering.” The position of this altar near the entrance of the main court indicates very clearly the absolute necessity for blood atonement before real fellowship can be initiated with an infinitely holy God. The slaughter of animals was a vivid reminder to Israel that sin indeed requires a high price. The horns were used to bind the sacrificial animals (Psalm 118:27).

"Brass" has to do with judgment. The brazen altar was the first thing a person came to when he entered the court. A person who comes to God has to go to the place of repentance first. You cannot truly worship God until you realize you have sinned, repent, be saved and then worship God. The place of repentance was before the place of baptism. This altar was outside the holy place in the outer court. When someone would sin, he would run to this place, grab hold of these horns of mercy and beg for forgiveness.

Even the priest on the way to the sanctuary had to pass by this brazen altar. This was a place of purging away sin. There was an altar in the holy place, but an individual could not go to that altar. This brazen altar was available to everyone. These "horns" on the corners of this altar showed God's strength, not man's. This altar not only made man conscious of his sin, but was a place where man could come and make peace with God. This altar, in that sense, was symbolic of the cross of Jesus which does the same thing. We Christians find our place of repentance at the cross of Jesus.

Exodus 27:3 "And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basins, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make [of] brass."

All the altar's utensils and accessories were also made of bronze, not gold.

Everything to do with this brazen altar was of the very same metal. These instruments did not need to be gold, because they would not be used in the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place.

Exodus 27:4 "And thou shalt make for it a grate of network [of] brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof."

Or "sieve", as (in 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 (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.

This was just explaining the rings in the four corners to carry it with and also, the grate to place the sacrifice on.

Exodus 27:5 "And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar."

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.

The "compass" here, was probably some sort of circle around the altar. Whether ornamental or to catch the residue to keep it from falling off the altar, was not indicated. Anything we might say about this would be pure guessing.

Exodus 27:6 "And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves [of] shittim wood, and overlay them with brass."

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.

Exodus 27:7 "And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it."

Not into the rings of the grate, as Jarchi and others. Though Dr. Lightfoot 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 (Num. 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, this was done by the Levites. This 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.

These "staves" as we have said before, were just poles that were slipped through the rings and people got hold of the poles and carried the altar. This brazen altar and everything about it matched. Brass was to be used with brass. This did not come in direct contact with God and was not necessary to be made of gold.

Exodus 27:8 "Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make [it]."

The frame of it being made of boards of shittim wood, there was nothing within 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, represents 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 humble and poor for the sake of his people, that they through his poverty might be made rich (Phil. 2:7).

"As it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it": Or, "as He showed thee", 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.

This "Hollow" here, was probably speaking of the altar where the offering was sacrificed. Probably dirt or sand was put in this hollow and the sacrifice was placed above that. At any rate, this altar was hollow in the middle.

Verses 9-19: The tabernacle courtyard (“court”), was a rectangle outlined by a wall of curtains (“hangings”), and posts (20 on the south side, 20 on the north, and 10 on the west end). These curtains, which were nearly 8 feet tall, blocked public view into the courtyard.

Exodus 27:9 "And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward [there shall be] hangings for the court [of] fine twined linen of a hundred cubits long for one side:"

“The court of the tabernacle”: The dimensions of the rectangular courtyard space, bordered by curtains and poles around the tabernacle were also precisely given (verses 9-19; 150 feet by 75 feet). The outer hangings were high enough, 5 cubits or 7.5 feet, to block all view of the interior of the courtyard (verse 18). Entry into the courtyard of God’s dwelling place was not gained just generally and freely from all quarters.

The long part of this outside court was a wall of linen 150 feet long.

Exodus 27:10 "And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets [shall be of] brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets [shall be of] silver."

On these pillars the hangings, rails, or curtains were set upon, 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.

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 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 (1 Tim. 3:15), yet ministers of the Gospel may be more especially designed (Prov. 9:1). Who are the principal support of the churches of God, and of the interest of religion; and are set for the defense of the Gospel, and are steadfast in the administration of it.

"The hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver". The hooks on the pillars might be somewhat like our tender hooks. And so Jarchi describes them, as having one end crooked upwards, and the other end fixed in the pillar. 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 each other. 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 a union, conjunction, and communion between them and the churches.

These "fillets" were thought to be connecting rods that held the tops of the curtains together and that the curtains actually hung from.

Exodus 27:11 "And likewise for the north side in length [there shall be] hangings of a hundred [cubits] long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets [of] brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets [of] silver."

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.

This "north side" and "south side" were both 150 feet long and this was held up by 20 pillars. This "curtain of linen" (righteousness), was going out around the entire court of the tabernacle.

Exodus 27:12 "And [for] the breadth of the court on the west side [shall be] hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten."

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.

Exodus 27:13 "And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward [shall be] fifty cubits."

Which this was the entrance into the court.

"Shall be fifty cubits": The east end and west end were of the same measure.

The east and the west outside walls were 75 feet wide. This made the outside enclosure 75 feet by 150 feet. As we said before, anyone could come here for help from God. The metals in all of this, give us the progression a Christian goes through on his way to God. The first thing is, we judge ourselves, which is represented by bronze. Then we seek redemption in Jesus. Redemption is symbolized by silver. God accepts us and brings us into His presence. Gold is symbolic of the presence of God. We find this progression: In the outer court, bronze at the entrance. In the Holy Place, silver and gold. And in the Most Holy Place, gold only.

Exodus 27:14 "The hangings of one side [of the gate shall be] fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three."

Or entrance into the court.

"Shall be fifteen cubits": or seven and a half yards.

"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.

This was just saying that on either side of the opening entrance to the outer court there were three pillars, not counting the corner pillar which holds the curtains up. The doorway was a curtain as well. To enter, they just pushed this curtain back and came in. You could call it a gate, but really it was just a loose curtain hanging in the opening to keep curiosity seekers from seeing inside. Anyone repentant could come to the outer court. Some Christians today never get beyond the outer court. They have just enough faith to keep them out of hell. They never get deeper in their walk with the Lord, and make Him their Lord, as well as their Savior.

Exodus 27:15 "And on the other side [shall be] hangings fifteen [cubits]: their pillars three, and their sockets three."

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.

This "fifteen cubits" was 22 1/2 feet on either side of the entrance. The opening was in the middle.

Exodus 27:16 "And for the gate of the court [shall be] a hanging of twenty cubits, [of] blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: [and] their pillars [shall be] four, and their sockets four."

"Gate of the court": The curtain forming the covering for the entrance way into the courtyard was colored differently from that which surrounded the oblong courtyard. Clearly there was only one way to enter this very special place where God had chosen to place the evidence of His dwelling with His people.

We see that this entrance into the outer court was beautiful. These beautiful heavenly colors were woven into this has such beautiful symbolism, that it cannot be overlooked. Someone outside the church can see the righteousness (linen), and they can also see the heavenly (three beautiful colors). This is the very thing that draws them to the church. These (four), pillars show that whosoever will can enter in at this gate. "Four" means universal and we know that God turns no one down because of nationality, color, sex or age. Salvation is offered to whosoever will. This gate was never locked, but was always open.

Exodus 27:17 "All the pillars round about the court [shall be] filleted with silver; their hooks [shall be of] silver, and their sockets [of] brass."

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 since 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.

Exodus 27:18 "The length of the court [shall be] a hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits [of] fine twined linen, and their sockets [of] brass."

As may be concluded from the length of the hangings on each side.

"And the breadth fifty everywhere": A both ends, and was the breadth of the hangings there, and which all around made the court.

"And the height five cubits": Or two and a half yards, 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.

As we said before, the outer court was 75 feet by 150 feet and the curtain that went around it was 7-1/2 feet high. Brass (judgment or strength), silver (redemption), and gold (purity of God), were the three prevalent metals. Fine linen (righteousness), was the covering. Red, blue and purple were the colors (all were godly colors).

Exodus 27:19 "All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, [shall be of] brass."

All the tools of the tabernacle used in all its workmanship, and all its tent-pins, and all the tent-pins of the court, shall be of bronze. The working tools of the sanctuary were most probably such things as axes, knives, hammers, etc. That were employed in making, repairing, setting up and taking down the structure (compare Num. 3:36).

"The tabernacle": The word is here to be taken as including both the dwelling place (Tabernacle), and the tent, as (in Num. 1:51; 1:53; see Exodus 26:1 note).

"The pins": Tent-pins.

These brass "vessels" were to be used in the outer court. Sacrifice, because of judgment, went on in the outer court.

Verses 20-21: The priests kept the seven lamps of the menorah (25:31-39), burning with the olive oil provided by the people. For "the Testimony" (see note on 25:10-22). The lampstand was in front of the ark, although a curtain ("veil"), separated the two sections of the tabernacle.

Exodus 27:20 "And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always."

"Pure oil olive beaten for the light": The clear oil from crushed un-ripened olives granted almost a smoke-free light. The people were to provide the fuel to maintain the light needed by the High-Priest and his priestly staff in the Holy Place.

This "beaten oil olive" is symbolic of the Holy Spirit of God. Just take the Holy Spirit out of the church and the light will go out. This Light, that was to burn always, is the Spirit. If the Light (Spirit), goes out, the church is dead.

2 Timothy describes this church where the Light (spirit) is gone:

2 Timothy 3:5 "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Exodus 27:21 "In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which [is] before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: [it shall be] a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel."

More literally called the tent of meeting. This is the first occurrence of this designation of the tabernacle, and the idea connected with it is that of Yahweh meeting with either Moses, or the priests, or (in a few cases), with the people gathered into a congregation at the entrance of the tent.

"Without the veil": Which is before the testimony; i.e. the holy place (see Exodus 25:16).

"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 (Exodus 25:37). 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.

This tabernacle was actually a tent where the priests entered to keep this statute forever. This was not something to be taken lightly. The priests and high priest were to see that this Light never went out. This Light was in the Holy Place. The testimony was the ark with the Ten Commandments on stone, the Manna and Aaron's rod that bloomed. These priests were a separated people and God would not allow sin in their lives.

Exodus Chapter 27 Questions

1. What was the size of the altar in verse 1?
2. This altar, in the outer court, was made of what?
3. Where were the horns attached?
4. What was the first thing a person saw, when he came into the court?
5. Which was the only altar that an individual could touch?
6. What did the horns on the altar symbolize?
7. What did this altar symbolize in a Christian's life?
8. Where were the brass vessels to stay?
9. What was the compass, most probably?
10. What were the staves for?
11. What were the curtains to the court made of?
12. How long was this court?
13. What were the fillets supposed to be?
14. How wide was the outer court?
15. What do the metals show the Christian?

16. How wide was the wall on either side of the door opening of the outer court?
17. How tall was the linen wall of the court?
18. What three colors were prevalent in the tabernacle and its court?
19. What was the oil for the lamp made of?
20. What does it symbolize?
21. How long should it burn?
22. Who was responsible to keep it burning?
23. Again, what three things were contained in the ark?