

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

Read **Exodus 30:1-10** – The Altar of Incense

**v.1** “YOU SHALL MAKE AN ALTAR TO BURN INCENSE ON; YOU SHALL MAKE IT OF ACACIA WOOD.”

The scripture, in its current division, now returns to the consideration of the altars and utensils of the tabernacle for a few verses. In fact, the Samaritan translation of the Old Testament places these 10 verses at the end of chapter 26 rather than the beginning of chapter 30. Some even contend that since these verses are placed “out of sequence” to the others describing the construction of those things used to worship God that they must be a “late addition” to the text and therefore not scripture. We have no evidence of this, just conjecture by some Bible scholars.

This was the altar upon incense was burned to represent the prayers of the people. It also was to be made of acacia wood.

**v.2** “A CUBIT **shall be** ITS LENGTH AND A CUBIT ITS WIDTH—IT SHALL BE SQUARE—AND TWO CUBITS **shall be** ITS HEIGHT. ITS HORNS **shall be** OF ONE PIECE WITH IT.”

The altar of incense was to be a cubit square and two cubits tall or 18 inches square and 36 inches tall this corresponds to the most comfortable counter or cabinet height for many people. The horns of this altar were to be made into the altar rather than just being made and then attached.

**v.3** “AND YOU SHALL OVERLAY ITS TOP, ITS SIDES ALL AROUND, AND ITS HORNS WITH PURE GOLD; AND YOU SHALL MAKE FOR IT A MOLDING OF GOLD ALL AROUND.”

It, like the brazen altar for burnt offerings, was to have the acacia wood overlaid but it would be gold instead of bronze. Then the top had a molding of gold around it, much the same as the ark, table and altar inside the Holy Place.

**v.4** “TWO GOLD RINGS YOU SHALL MAKE FOR IT, UNDER THE MOLDING ON BOTH ITS SIDES. YOU SHALL PLACE **them** ON ITS TWO SIDES, AND THEY WILL BE HOLDERS FOR THE POLES WITH WHICH TO BEAR IT.”

Just like the other furniture within the tabernacle God was very specific about how this altar should be constructed. It would have two gold rings, built under the molding on each side where they would act as holders for the poles or staves with which the altar was to be carried.

**v.5** “YOU SHALL MAKE THE POLES OF ACACIA WOOD, AND OVERLAY THEM WITH GOLD.”

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

The poles used to carry the altar were to be made of acacia wood overlaid with gold just like the poles to carry all of the other large items used inside the tabernacle.

**v.6** “AND YOU SHALL PUT IT BEFORE THE VEIL THAT *is* BEFORE THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY, BEFORE THE MERCY SEAT THAT *is* OVER THE TESTIMONY, WHERE I WILL MEET WITH YOU.”

The commentators go a twitter again over this verse. Some would try to place the altar of incense inside the Holy of Holies. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was to be placed in the Holy Place before the veil that divided the tabernacle into two rooms, the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place.

**v.7** “AARON SHALL BURN ON IT SWEET INCENSE EVERY MORNING; WHEN HE TENDS THE LAMPS, HE SHALL BURN INCENSE ON IT.”

This is the main reason that we know that this altar was to be outside of the Holiest of Holies. Aaron, and the high priests that followed him, were to offer the incense upon this altar every morning. The holiest of holies was only to be entered once each year. This was on the day of atonement, when the high priest came before God with offerings for the sins of the people of Israel.

**v.8** “AND WHEN AARON LIGHTS THE LAMPS AT TWILIGHT, HE SHALL BURN INCENSE ON IT, A PERPETUAL INCENSE BEFORE THE **LORD** THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS.”

So, in addition to the morning prayers, the incense was to be burned at eventide, as well, when Aaron would enter the Holy Place to light the lamps on the lampstand. As we can see in this example; the incense representing the prayers of the people were to be offered before God twice a day. A lamb as a burnt offering for the sins of the people was offered at the same time.

**v.9** “YOU SHALL NOT OFFER STRANGE INCENSE ON IT, OR A BURNT OFFERING, OR A GRAIN OFFERING; NOR SHALL YOU POUR A DRINK OFFERING ON IT.”

Again we see an exact command. This altar had one purpose and that was to be the altar upon which incense was burned. It was not to be used for anything else. To do so would be a violation of God’s commandment and we can see quite readily what happened when God’s law was ignored:

**Leviticus 10:1** “THEN NADAB AND ABIHU, THE SONS OF AARON, EACH TOOK HIS CENSER AND PUT FIRE IN IT, PUT INCENSE ON IT, AND OFFERED PROFANE FIRE BEFORE THE **LORD**, WHICH HE HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM.

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

And they suffered dire consequences of their actions.

**Leviticus 10:2** “SO FIRE WENT OUT FROM THE **LORD** AND DEVoured THEM, AND THEY DIED BEFORE THE **LORD**.”

The same kind of sacrilege was committed by those who bought and sold in the temple:

**Matthew 21:13** “AND HE SAID TO THEM, “IT IS WRITTEN, ‘*MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER,*’ BUT YOU HAVE MADE IT A ‘*DEN OF THIEVES.*’”

We profane the “house of God” today by doing that which is contrary to the will of God, abusing our bodies with tobacco, over eating or a litany of other things that are unbecoming to a Christian life.

**v.10** “AND AARON SHALL MAKE ATONEMENT UPON ITS HORNS ONCE A YEAR WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SIN OFFERING OF ATONEMENT; ONCE A YEAR HE SHALL MAKE ATONEMENT UPON IT THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS. IT **is** MOST HOLY TO THE **LORD**.””

This altar was to be cleansed of any corruption that had come upon it once each year on the day of atonement. The high priest was to place a bit of the blood from the sacrifice for atonement to cleanse the altar and make it usable for another year. Then the altar of incense is declared to be “MOST HOLY” to God. When we look into the perfect law of liberty under which we live today, we can be assured that the prayers of the faithful are just as holy and precious to the ears of God as the incense was under the old law.

Read **Exodus 30:11-16** – The Ransom for Souls

**v11-12.** “THEN THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: “WHEN YOU TAKE THE CENSUS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FOR THEIR NUMBER, THEN EVERY MAN SHALL GIVE A RANSOM FOR HIMSELF TO THE **LORD**, WHEN YOU NUMBER THEM, THAT THERE MAY BE NO PLAGUE AMONG THEM WHEN **you** NUMBER THEM.”

God now commands Moses to take a census or to number Israel. When this census is taken every man of the nation of Israel was to “GIVE A RANSOM FOR HIMSELF”. Today we might call this a head tax. To make sure that Moses and Israel understood the importance of this commandment God places a condition on any failure to obey this command. They were to comply “THAT THERE MAY BE NO PLAGUE” among them, God’s punishment for disobedience in this case. On this occasion all of the men of all tribes were numbered; later in Numbers 2, the tribe of Levi was omitted.

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

**v.13** “THIS IS WHAT EVERYONE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NUMBERED SHALL GIVE: HALF A SHEKEL ACCORDING TO THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY (A SHEKEL *is* TWENTY GERAHS). THE HALF-SHEKEL **shall be** AN OFFERING TO THE **LORD**.

The ransom for their souls was to be a half-shekel, equal to twenty gerahs. Using the information from a conversion chart that shows the gerah vs the weights and measures of various countries and periods in history we find that the 20 gerah coin or half-shekel weighted .36 troy ounces or just over 1/3 of a troy ounce. If this half-shekel was silver then in terms of the price of silver last week at \$31.78 per troy ounce it would be worth \$11.44. If it was gold it would be worth much more, \$599.22 in today's dollars.

But the purpose of this coin was even more interesting. It was to be given as a ransom for their souls and is a reflection of how poor and inadequate the Mosaic Law was in comparison to the Law of Christ (**Galatians 6:2**). Throughout the New Testament we are reminded of the ransom paid for the redemption of our souls. Our ransom was paid with the blood of the Son of God:

**Matthew 20:28** “JUST AS THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY.”

And then we are reminded by the Apostle Peter:

**I Peter 1:18-19** “KNOWING THAT YOU WERE NOT REDEEMED WITH CORRUPTIBLE THINGS, *like* SILVER OR GOLD, FROM YOUR AIMLESS CONDUCT **received** BY TRADITION FROM YOUR FATHERS, BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, AS OF A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH AND WITHOUT SPOT.”

As we study the Old Testament law we can better understand the words of the New Testament. Here we see and understand better the depth of mean of Peter's words regarding man being redeemed by silver or gold.

**v.14** “EVERYONE INCLUDED AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NUMBERED, FROM TWENTY YEARS OLD AND ABOVE, SHALL GIVE AN OFFERING TO THE **LORD**.”

Every man of Israel, twenty years old and above was to be numbered and to give this offering to God. While God did not need to recruit men for the armies of Israel this did serve the same purpose as our registration for the military draft. It determined how many men of age were available to serve the nation of Israel. In later times numbering Israel would be something that caused David to fall short and sin against God:

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

**II Samuel 24:10** “AND DAVID’S HEART CONDEMNED HIM AFTER HE HAD NUMBERED THE PEOPLE. SO DAVID SAID TO THE **LORD**, “I HAVE SINNED GREATLY IN WHAT I HAVE DONE; BUT NOW, I PRAY, O **LORD**, TAKE AWAY THE INIQUITY OF YOUR SERVANT, FOR I HAVE DONE VERY FOOLISHLY.”

**v.15** “THE RICH SHALL NOT GIVE MORE AND THE POOR SHALL NOT GIVE LESS THAN HALF A SHEKEL, WHEN *you* GIVE AN OFFERING TO THE **LORD**, TO MAKE ATONEMENT FOR YOURSELVES.”

Each man, regardless of wealth or poverty would be required to give the same amount. Clarke in his commentary contends that this reflects the fact that in the mind of God the value of the souls of men are equal regardless of status, wealth, fame or lack of any of these things in their lives. We’re reminded of the record of Paul:

**Romans 2:10-11** “BUT GLORY, HONOUR, AND PEACE, TO EVERY MAN THAT WORKETH GOOD, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GENTILE: FOR THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS WITH GOD.” (KJV)

**v.16** “AND THOU SHALT TAKE THE ATONEMENT MONEY OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND SHALT APPOINT IT FOR THE SERVICE OF THE TABERNACLE OF THE CONGREGATION; THAT IT MAY BE A MEMORIAL UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BEFORE THE **LORD**, TO MAKE AN ATONEMENT FOR YOUR SOULS.”

This half shekel was to be for an atonement for the souls of the children of Israel. As we know, later in the Mosaic Law the atonement for their sins was commanded to be accomplished annually with blood sacrifices for their sins and symbolically the sins of the people. So this was not a commandment that was carried forward into the latter part of the history of Israel.

**Leviticus 23:27** “ALSO THE TENTH *day* OF THIS SEVENTH MONTH *shall be* THE DAY OF ATONEMENT. IT SHALL BE A HOLY CONVOCATION FOR YOU; YOU SHALL AFFLICT YOUR SOULS, AND OFFER AN OFFERING MADE BY FIRE TO THE **LORD**.”

Read **Exodus 30:17-21** – The Bronze Laver

**v.17-18** “THEN THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: “YOU SHALL ALSO MAKE A LAVER OF BRONZE, WITH ITS BASE ALSO OF BRONZE, FOR WASHING. YOU SHALL PUT IT BETWEEN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING AND THE ALTAR. AND YOU SHALL PUT WATER IN IT,”

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

Washing and cleanliness was paramount in the preparation for worship under the Mosaic Covenant. It is a parallel to us being washed of our sins and clean again through the avenue of prayer and the continual forgiveness that God provides through the blood of Christ today. Both were done to be fit for coming before God in worship.

Consequently there was a place provided in the tabernacle and temple worship to cleanse, not only the priests who were coming before the Lord in worship, but the sacrifices as well. This bronze, or brazen (KJV) laver was to be placed between the tabernacle and the altar.

**v.19-20** "FOR AARON AND HIS SONS SHALL WASH THEIR HANDS AND THEIR FEET IN WATER FROM IT. WHEN THEY GO INTO THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, OR WHEN THEY COME NEAR THE ALTAR TO MINISTER, TO BURN AN OFFERING MADE BY FIRE TO THE **LORD**, THEY SHALL WASH WITH WATER, LEST THEY DIE."

One purpose of the water that was to be kept in the bronze laver was for Aaron and the other priests to use to wash themselves before appearing before the Lord in worship. The penalty for not doing so was death.

**v.21** "SO THEY SHALL WASH THEIR HANDS AND THEIR FEET, LEST THEY DIE. AND IT SHALL BE A STATUTE FOREVER TO THEM—TO HIM AND HIS DESCENDANTS THROUGHOUT THEIR GENERATIONS."

The commandment is repeated for emphasis.

Read **Exodus 30:22-33** – The Anointing Oil

**v.22-23** "MOREOVER THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: "ALSO TAKE FOR YOURSELF QUALITY SPICES—FIVE HUNDRED **shekels** OF LIQUID MYRRH, HALF AS MUCH SWEET-SMELLING CINNAMON (TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY **shekels**), TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY **shekels** OF SWEET-SMELLING CANE,"

Here we have the recipe for the anointing oil to be used in the tabernacle and later in the temple. The values are in terms of shekels was not in money but rather in weight as the shekel was also used as a value in weight. As we saw earlier the shekel in troy weight was about 180-220 grains or a little over one third of the troy ounce still used to measure precious metals today. So 500 shekels would equate to 180 troy ounces or about 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs in today's measure. Clarke in his commentary gives it a value of a little over 48 lbs for 500 shekels in his commentary but I don't understand how he came to that weight. Be that as it may, as in any recipe, portions would be the same whether we use current weights or those from the commentary.

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

The only difference would be the volume of the finished product. To me the numbers given to Clarke are suspect because we would be mixing over 144 lbs of spices with only five quarts of olive oil and that seems to me to be out of proportion.

In our study let's take a look at the ingredients of the recipe for this anointing oil.

Liquid Myrrh – myrrh is normally a resin made from the sap of a small tree that grows in the Middle Eastern arid soils. When these trees are tapped the myrrh flows like syrup but quickly becomes solidified and is much more of a gum than a liquid. Liquid myrrh found in its purest form, as secreted by the tree can be liquid.

Sweet cinnamon – the cinnamon that we know is made from the bark of a tree that is native to Southeastern Asia. The sweet cinnamon referred to here in Exodus is of a more purer form currently found only in the island nation of Ceylon, known today as Sri Lanka located off the coast of southern India.

Sweet Calamus – This spice is the product of a sweet sedge or grass like plant that is also imported from Southeastern Asia. In today's world it has a litany of names including being called sweet cinnamon. But in the scripture God makes a definite distinction between the two spices, indicating that the sweet cinnamon and the calamus are indeed different spices from different sources.

**v.24** “FIVE HUNDRED *shekels* OF CASSIA, ACCORDING TO THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY, AND A HIN OF OLIVE OIL.”

Here we have included in the recipe 500 shekels of cassia, another spice and a hin of olive oil. First we will consider the cassia.

Cassia – another spice derived from the bark of a tree found in China and parts of Southeastern Asia. It is called “Chinese cinnamon” by some and the tree from which it comes is related to the spice tree that produces sweet cinnamon but it is a different spice.

Clarke, in his commentary, equates the hin of olive oil to five quarts. In the weights and measure section of the Dickson study Bible, it is listed as about 3 quarts, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a pint.

We will also note that the weight of the shekel of the sanctuary would also support the smaller portions of spices in this recipe vs the larger portions that is found in Clarke's commentary. Both Coffman in his commentary and Cook in the Baker commentary contend that the recipe is made up of portions that equal less than one third of the amount that Clarke contends. So the portions of spice to oil are much more logical here in the scripture than they are in the commentaries.

### **Exodus Chapter Thirty**

**v.25** “AND YOU SHALL MAKE FROM THESE A HOLY ANOINTING OIL, AN OINTMENT COMPOUNDED ACCORDING TO THE ART OF THE PERFUMER. IT SHALL BE A HOLY ANOINTING OIL.”

This anointing oil was to be made using the talents and techniques of a perfumer or a druggist. In the KJV the word apothecary is used, the 17<sup>th</sup> century version of the modern drug store. The skills needed to make this anointing oil today would found on in the perfume or drug industry; or perhaps in a compounding pharmacy.

God adds that this recipe and the product that it produces is holy, sanctified, set aside for this purpose only. Later we will see confirmation of that fact and the penalty for anyone who would make or use it for another purpose. Now we will see how this anointing oil was to be used.

**v.26** “WITH IT YOU SHALL ANOINT THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING AND THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY;”

It was to be used to make holy, sanctify or hallow that which was to be used in service and worship to Jehovah God. Moses was to begin with the tabernacle and the ark of the Covenant or as it is called here the “ARK OF THE TESTIMONY.”

**v.27** “THE TABLE AND ALL ITS UTENSILS, THE LAMPSTAND AND ITS UTENSILS, AND THE ALTAR OF INCENSE;”

Then Moses was to anoint and make holy the table for the showbread, the candlestick or lampstand and the altar of incense with all of the utensils that were used to use them in service and worship to God.

**v.28** “THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING WITH ALL ITS UTENSILS, AND THE LAVER AND ITS BASE.”

This process of anointing and hallowing started with ark that was to be placed in the Holy of Holy's, then the items in the Holy Place and now finally the altar and laver in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

**v.29** “YOU SHALL CONSECRATE THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE MOST HOLY; WHATEVER TOUCHES THEM MUST BE HOLY.”

So not only were these things to be holy but as a result anything that touched them would be holy also. We see in:

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

**Numbers 4:15** “AND WHEN AARON AND HIS SONS HAVE FINISHED COVERING THE SANCTUARY AND ALL THE FURNISHINGS OF THE SANCTUARY, WHEN THE CAMP IS SET TO GO, THEN THE SONS OF KOHATH SHALL COME TO CARRY *them*; BUT THEY SHALL NOT TOUCH ANY HOLY THING, LEST THEY DIE.”

Now we see the reason for the poles or staves used to carry these instruments of worship. They were holy, hallowed and consecrated to God, to touch them was to die so they could only be transported by the other priests, those assigned to carry them, using the poles provided by God.

Anything that touched these things were also hallowed or made holy. We may remember from our study of Haggai that this is one of the questions that Haggai, the prophet, was directed by God to ask the priests. And it was a question which they answered correctly.

**v.30** “AND YOU SHALL ANOINT AARON AND HIS SONS, AND CONSECRATE THEM, THAT *they* MAY MINISTER TO ME AS PRIESTS.”

Finally, after everything that would be used in worship to God was hallowed, then Aaron and his sons would be anointed also and consecrated to the service of God.

**v.31** “AND YOU SHALL SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, SAYING: ‘THIS SHALL BE A HOLY ANOINTING OIL TO ME THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS.’”

This same anointing oil, made with this same recipe was to be used throughout the generations of the nation of Israel.

**v.32** “IT SHALL NOT BE Poured ON MAN’S FLESH; NOR SHALL YOU MAKE *any other* LIKE IT, ACCORDING TO ITS COMPOSITION. IT *is* HOLY, *and* IT SHALL BE HOLY TO YOU.”

It was to be used for no other purpose beyond what God had commanded. As noted back in verse 25 it was holy and the recipe was holy, not to be used for any other purpose and not even to be made according to this recipe for any other purpose.

**v.33** “WHOEVER COMPOUNDS *any* LIKE IT, OR WHOEVER PUTS *any* OF IT ON AN OUTSIDER, SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM HIS PEOPLE.”

Here we see the penalty for using this anointing oil for any other purpose or using it to anoint an outsider, a non-Israelite.

## Exodus Chapter Thirty

Read **Exodus 30:34-37** – The Perfume Recipe

**v.34** “AND THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES: “TAKE SWEET SPICES, STACTE AND ONYCHA AND GALBANUM, AND PURE FRANKINCENSE WITH **these** SWEET SPICES; THERE SHALL BE EQUAL AMOUNTS OF EACH.”

Take these “SWEET SPICES”, the recipe for incense or perfume that was burned in the tabernacle and the temple:

Stacte – this is believed to be an extract of the myrrh resin, essentially the essence of myrrh

Onycha – No one knows for certain just what this is but it is thought to be an extraction from a certain seashell used as a base for some perfumes and incense

Galbanum – This is an aromatic resin of a certain species of tree found in Persia.

Frankincense – this is an aromatic resin from the boswellia tree prized by perfume and incense makers virtually from the beginning of time.

Moses was to take equal amounts of each of these “SWEET SPICES” and have the incense made that was to be used in the tabernacle and temple worship.

**v.35** “YOU SHALL MAKE OF THESE AN INCENSE, A COMPOUND ACCORDING TO THE ART OF THE PERFUMER, SALTED, PURE, **and** HOLY.”

Again we see that the art of the perfumer or the apothecary would be needed to accomplish what God required. It’s interesting that these wandering nomads, ignorant in the sight of the intellectuals of today’s world would know so much about the world around them and how to use its bounty. To my mind it highlights the conceit and highmindedness of man when he seems, in his view at least, to have gained a little knowledge. They have forgotten, if they ever knew it, that:

**Proverbs 9:10** “THE FEAR OF THE **LORD is** THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE **is** UNDERSTANDING.”

It was to be salted, pure and holy. The word “SALTED” apparently means to be tempered together. It was to be pure. Since it was consecrated to be used in the worship of Jehovah God it was also holy.

**v.36** “AND YOU SHALL BEAT **some** OF IT VERY FINE, AND PUT SOME OF IT BEFORE THE TESTIMONY IN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING WHERE I WILL MEET WITH YOU. IT SHALL BE MOST HOLY TO YOU.”

### **Exodus Chapter Thirty**

It was all to be holy, consecrated to God, and used in the daily worship. But at the same time it was to be the very best, the finest that could be made. It was reserved for the worship by Moses and/or the High Priest toward God at those special times when they were allowed to enter into the Holiest of Holy's.

**v.37** "BUT *as for* THE INCENSE WHICH YOU SHALL MAKE, YOU SHALL NOT MAKE ANY FOR YOURSELVES, ACCORDING TO ITS COMPOSITION. IT SHALL BE TO YOU HOLY FOR THE **LORD.**"

This incense was to be made and used for the worship of God, and the worship of God only, that was conducted in the tabernacle and temple; the Lord's houses.