

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Eight

Read **Exodus 38:1-7** – The Altar of Burnt Offering

v.1 “HE MADE THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING OF ACACIA WOOD; FIVE CUBITS **was** ITS LENGTH AND FIVE CUBITS ITS WIDTH—**it was** SQUARE—AND ITS HEIGHT **was** THREE CUBITS.”

In keeping with the rest of the tabernacle and due to its availability the altar of burnt offering was also to be made of acacia wood. It was to be five cubits or 7.5 feet square and 4.5 feet tall assuming a cubit of 18 inches where Clarke in his commentary uses a cubit of 21 inches.

v.2 “HE MADE ITS HORNS ON ITS FOUR CORNERS; THE HORNS WERE **of one piece** WITH IT. AND HE OVERLAID IT WITH BRONZE.”

The altar was to have horns, projections at each of the four corners. The scripture doesn't tell us how long or how big they should be but that they should be made of one piece with the altar. I'm not sure how you could do that with wood but a craftsman could definitely do that with bronze or brass as part of the overlay. We see part of the purpose of the horns in:

Exodus 29:12 “YOU SHALL TAKE **some** OF THE BLOOD OF THE BULL AND PUT **it** ON THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR WITH YOUR FINGER, AND POUR ALL THE BLOOD BESIDE THE BASE OF THE ALTAR.”

Burnt sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant were for sin. The blood being put on the horns of the altar is symbolic of the blood of Christ that was required to provide a permanent remedy for sin. Another way the horns were used in:

I Kings 1:50 “NOW ADONIJAH WAS AFRAID OF SOLOMON; SO HE AROSE, AND WENT AND TOOK HOLD OF THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR.”

This altar was also the ultimate place of safety for an Israelite in trouble.

v.3 “HE MADE ALL THE UTENSILS FOR THE ALTAR: THE PANS, THE SHOVELS, THE BASINS, THE FORKS, AND THE FIREPANS; ALL ITS UTENSILS HE MADE OF BRONZE.”

Here we have all of the utensils necessary to tend the altar fire and for service during the sacrifices. Ash pans to carry away the ashes that had to be removed on a regular basis and shovels or scuttles to handle the ashes; basins or bowls to catch and hold the blood and forks, or fleshhooks in the older version, to handle the meat. In **I Samuel 2:13** these fleshhooks were used to secure a portion of the sacrifice for the use of the priests.

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v.4-5 “AND HE MADE A GRATE OF BRONZE NETWORK FOR THE ALTAR, UNDER ITS RIM, MIDWAY FROM THE BOTTOM. HE CAST FOUR RINGS FOR THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE BRONZE GRATING, AS HOLDERS FOR THE POLES.”

The grate or network serves as a place to put the flesh being offered on the altar and, like any grate, allow the ashes to fall through below the fire. This grate or network, as depicted in this picture, was to have four rings designed and placed at the four corners in order for it to be carried about. The grate was also to go “UNDER THE RIM” of the altar. Our artists rendition shows it as being inside, as we would expect. Cook, in the Baker Commentary, contends that there was a shelf half way down inside of the box that made up the main part of the altar. In that case the grate sat upon the shelf rather than on the ground as is shown in the pictures we used.

v.6-7 “AND HE MADE THE POLES OF ACACIA WOOD, AND OVERLAID THEM WITH BRONZE. THEN HE PUT THE POLES INTO THE RINGS ON THE SIDES OF THE ALTAR, WITH WHICH TO BEAR IT. HE MADE THE ALTAR HOLLOW WITH BOARDS.”

Poles or staves were to be made for the purpose of carrying the altar, just as they were used to carry the ark and the table of showbread. These poles were to be of acacia wood, covered with bronze or brass, depending upon the translation used. The altar was to have rings to be used to carry it just like the other tabernacle furniture. was to be hollow or open as we see it depicted in this picture.

Read **Exodus 38:8** – The Brazen Laver

v.8 “HE MADE THE LAVENDER OF BRONZE AND ITS BASE OF BRONZE, FROM THE BRONZE MIRRORS OF THE SERVING WOMEN WHO ASSEMBLED AT THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING.”

Washing and cleanliness is paramount in the preparation for worship under the Mosaic Covenant. It is a parallel to us being washed of our sins and when we stumble; cleansed through the avenue of prayer and the continual forgiveness that God provides through the blood of Christ today.

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.

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Two things of note in this verse that we did not see in earlier studies; first, the laver was made using mirrors collected from the serving women. These mirrors were not the kind of mirrors we would think about today because glass that could be used for mirrors had not been invented yet. Mirrors were commonly made of highly polished metal, in this case bronze or brass

Secondly the women “WHO ASSEMBLED AT THE DOOR” were women that served some purpose that God has not told us about in His revelation. Some think that they came in worship due to their devotion to God. Others speculate that they served as watchmen or as doorkeepers for the priests. We have record of them in:

I Samuel 2:22 “NOW ELI WAS VERY OLD; AND HE HEARD EVERYTHING HIS SONS DID TO ALL ISRAEL, AND HOW THEY LAY WITH THE WOMEN WHO ASSEMBLED AT THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING.”

And we find them being employed as doorkeepers in New Testament times:

John 18:17 “THEN THE SERVANT GIRL WHO KEPT THE DOOR SAID TO PETER, “YOU ARE NOT ALSO ONE OF THIS MAN’S DISCIPLES, ARE YOU?” HE SAID, “I AM NOT.”

Read **Exodus 38:9-20** – The Tabernacle Court

v.9-10 “THEN HE MADE THE COURT ON THE SOUTH SIDE; THE HANGINGS OF THE COURT **were of** FINE WOVEN LINEN, ONE HUNDRED CUBITS LONG. THERE **were** TWENTY PILLARS FOR THEM, WITH TWENTY BRONZE SOCKETS. THE HOOKS OF THE PILLARS AND THEIR BANDS **were** SILVER.”

Now we turn our attention to the courtyard in which the tabernacle was enclosed. The curtains or hangings were to be of fine linen, 100 cubits long, or about 150 feet. This speaks of the south side of the courtyard so which way did the tabernacle face? East, always east toward the rising sun, so directional terms can be used to describe various aspects of the tabernacle location and the facts of the situation could still be understood.

Twenty pillars were to be used to hold the curtain or outer boundary of the tabernacle. These pillars were to be of bronze, the sockets in which they sat of bronze and the hooks and bands by which the curtains were fastened of silver.

v.11 “ON THE NORTH SIDE **the hangings were** ONE HUNDRED CUBITS **long**, WITH TWENTY PILLARS AND THEIR TWENTY BRONZE SOCKETS. THE HOOKS OF THE PILLARS AND THEIR BANDS **were** SILVER.”

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The north side of the tabernacle courtyard was to be enclosed the same way as the south side; 150 feet of fine linen cloth, bronze pillars set in bronze sockets bit hook and bands of silver.

v.12 “AND ON THE WEST SIDE *there were* HANGINGS OF FIFTY CUBITS, WITH TEN PILLARS AND THEIR TEN SOCKETS. THE HOOKS OF THE PILLARS AND THEIR BANDS *were* SILVER.”

Along the west end, then, there would be a wall of linen curtains, hung on ten pillars, set in bronze sockets just as in the side walls. This curtain was to be fifty cubits or about 75 feet long so now we have the dimensions of the tabernacle court as 75x100 feet, exactly rectangular in shape.

v.13-14 “FOR THE EAST SIDE *the hangings were* FIFTY CUBITS. THE HANGINGS OF ONE SIDE *of the gate were* FIFTEEN CUBITS *long, with* THEIR THREE PILLARS AND THEIR THREE SOCKETS,”

The width on the east end was to also be fifty cubits. But on the east end the curtains would have a gateway or entrance way in them with one side fifteen cubits and the other fifteen cubits and the entrance between them.

v.15-16 “AND THE SAME FOR THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COURT GATE; ON THIS SIDE AND THAT *were* HANGINGS OF FIFTEEN CUBITS, *with* THEIR THREE PILLARS AND THEIR THREE SOCKETS. ALL THE HANGINGS OF THE COURT ALL AROUND *were of* FINE WOVEN LINEN.”

v.17 “THE SOCKETS FOR THE PILLARS *were* BRONZE, THE HOOKS OF THE PILLARS AND THEIR BANDS *were* SILVER, AND THE OVERLAY OF THEIR CAPITALS *was* SILVER; AND ALL THE PILLARS OF THE COURT HAD BANDS OF SILVER.”

Contrary to the tabernacle where gold was used to overlay the pillars, and many of the sockets were silver, on the boundary of the outer court the sockets were bronze or brass and the hooks, pillars, and bands were either silver or overlaid with silver.

v.18 “THE SCREEN FOR THE GATE OF THE COURT *was* WOVEN OF BLUE, PURPLE, AND SCARLET *thread*, AND OF FINE WOVEN LINEN. THE LENGTH *was* TWENTY CUBITS, AND THE HEIGHT ALONG ITS WIDTH *was* FIVE CUBITS, CORRESPONDING TO THE HANGINGS OF THE COURT.”

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The screen or curtain that covered the entrance to the outer court was woven in the same colors as the interior of the tabernacle, blue, purple and scarlet. The east end of the tabernacle court was 50 cubits or 75 feet, the curtain was 20 cubits or 30 feet and the enclosure on each side was 15 cubits or 20 feet wide.

v.19-20 “AND *there were* FOUR PILLARS *with* THEIR FOUR SOCKETS OF BRONZE; THEIR HOOKS *were* SILVER, AND THE OVERLAY OF THEIR CAPITALS AND THEIR BANDS *was* SILVER. ALL THE PEGS OF THE TABERNACLE, AND OF THE COURT ALL AROUND, *were* BRONZE.”

As noted before the structural components of the court boundary were silver and bronze and the tent pegs that held up both the tent structure and the outer court boundary were all of bronze or brass.

Read **Exodus 38:21-31** – The Sum of the Offerings

v.21 “THIS IS THE INVENTORY OF THE TABERNACLE, THE TABERNACLE OF THE TESTIMONY, WHICH WAS COUNTED ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF MOSES, FOR THE SERVICE OF THE LEVITES, BY THE HAND OF ITHAMAR, SON OF AARON THE PRIEST.”

Obviously Aaron had other sons besides Nadab and Abihu. So Ithamar, son of Aaron, was apparently tasked with numbering or accounting for the offerings that Israel was bringing for the tabernacle.

v.22 “BEZALEL THE SON OF URI, THE SON OF HUR, OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, MADE ALL THAT THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

Through the scripture states that Bezalel made all that God had commanded Moses, it would appear from our earlier study that there were not only other artisan that helped but also that there were people who were taught the skills required. This also provides is a lesson in management that some managers fail to learn. Regardless of how many people are employed in a work the manager is always responsible. The same holds true for elders in the Lord’s church. It doesn’t matter how many member there are, or who is doing what work, they are responsible to God for whatever is done or not done.

v.23 “AND WITH HIM *was* AHOLIAB THE SON OF AHISAMACH, OF THE TRIBE OF DAN, AN ENGRAVER AND DESIGNER, A WEAVER OF BLUE, PURPLE, AND SCARLET *thread*, AND OF FINE LINEN.”

Assisting him was Aholiab, who had special talents for engraving, design and weaving.

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v.24 “ALL THE GOLD THAT WAS USED IN ALL THE WORK OF THE HOLY *place*, THAT IS, THE GOLD OF THE OFFERING, WAS TWENTY-NINE TALENTS AND SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY SHEKELS, ACCORDING TO THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY.”

In earlier studies we determined that a gold shekel contained .51 troy ounces of gold; that a talent contained 3600 shekels or about 1836 troy ounces of gold. This verse tells us that the gold required to make the things of the “HOLY place” was so much; is this only that found in that part of the tabernacle called the holy place or all of the tabernacle? The ASV translates these words as the “HOLY SANCTUARY” indicating that it was the amount required for the entire tabernacle.

Be that as is may; 29 talents of gold would equal 29 x 1836 troy ounces or 53,244 troy ounces. Add to this the other 730 shekels or 372 troy ounces and we find that it took 53,616 ounces of gold. At the market rate on May 1, 2012 the June contract rate for gold was \$1,662.40 per troy ounce; 53,616 troy ounces would be worth over \$8.9 billion in today's US dollars.

v.25 “AND THE SILVER FROM THOSE WHO WERE NUMBERED OF THE CONGREGATION *was* ONE HUNDRED TALENTS AND ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE SHEKELS, ACCORDING TO THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY:”

In addition to the gold there were 100 talents and 1,775 shekels of silver required. When we consider that the silver half shekel weighed .36 troy ounces or just over 1/3 of a troy ounce and a shekel would weigh .72 troy ounces or just under $\frac{3}{4}$ of a troy ounce we can determine the value of the silver involved. In our earlier study we used 3600 shekels as the value of a talent and equated that to 88 pounds of gold. Further research tells us that the weight of a talent varied from time to time and country to country. A Greek talent was 57 pounds, a Roman talent 71 pounds, an Egyptian talent 60 pounds and a Babylonian talent 67 pounds.

In the Easton Bible Dictionary the silver talent is given as equal to 3000 silver shekels or 94 $\frac{3}{7}$ pounds. This is a lot of silver by anyone's measurement. So with 100 talents of silver at 3,000 shekels we have 300,000 shekels plus 1,775 or 301,775 shekels of silver. If a shekel weighted .72 troy ounces then that equals 217, 278 troy ounces of silver. Using again the July, 2012 contract value of silver from the May 1, 2012 commodity market of \$31.02 per troy ounce; that silver would be worth over \$6.7 million in US dollars.

Someone asked how could these people have that much precious metal? For the gold we see the Egyptians were very generous to give Israel their jewelry when they left Egypt (**Exodus 12:35-36**). As for the silver the scripture tells us:

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v.26 “A BEKAH FOR EACH MAN (*that is*, HALF A SHEKEL, ACCORDING TO THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY), FOR EVERYONE INCLUDED IN THE NUMBERING FROM TWENTY YEARS OLD AND ABOVE, FOR SIX HUNDRED AND THREE THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY *men*.”

Above, using information from various secular sources we determined that the number of silver shekels was 301,775. Now the scripture tells us that each man numbered, 603,550, was taxed a bekaah or half shekel. And when we apply a little simple arithmetic we find that 603,550 divided by two equals 301,775, the number of shekels we calculated. This also helps us understand that the quantities of silver, gold and other materials needed for God's purpose was readily available due to God's providence in Egypt and the sheer numbers in the Israelite nation.

v.27 “AND FROM THE HUNDRED TALENTS OF SILVER WERE CAST THE SOCKETS OF THE SANCTUARY AND THE BASES OF THE VEIL: ONE HUNDRED SOCKETS FROM THE HUNDRED TALENTS, ONE TALENT FOR EACH SOCKET.”

Each socket that held a vertical structural member of the tabernacle contained a talent of silver. This sounds like a lot but when you realize that the boards were 27 inches wide and 18 feet long they would need a ninety pound anchor.

v.28 “THEN FROM THE ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE *shekels* HE MADE HOOKS FOR THE PILLARS, OVERLAID THEIR CAPITALS, AND MADE BANDS FOR THEM.”

The balance of the silver was used to make the hooks for the curtains, bands for the boards and to overlay the capitals or tops of the boards.

v.29-30 “THE OFFERING OF BRONZE *was* SEVENTY TALENTS AND TWO THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED SHEKELS. AND WITH IT HE MADE THE SOCKETS FOR THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, THE BRONZE ALTAR, THE BRONZE GRATING FOR IT, AND ALL THE UTENSILS FOR THE ALTAR,”

The bronze or brass required totaled 70 talents and 2400 shekels. From that they made the sockets for the doors, the bronze altar, its grating and all it's utensils. And:

v.31 “THE SOCKETS FOR THE COURT ALL AROUND, THE BASES FOR THE COURT GATE, ALL THE PEGS FOR THE TABERNACLE, AND ALL THE PEGS FOR THE COURT ALL AROUND.”