

THE TABERNACLE: ALTAR, OUTER COURT EXODUS 27:1-21

The next piece of furniture God commanded Moses to build was the bronze altar standing in the outer court inside the entrance to the court and in line with the entrance to the sanctuary. Some theologians speculate it was located close to the entrance of the sanctuary in order to be closer to the presence of God, but that isn't indicated in the text. We do know altars used for worshipping Yahweh were always located outdoors; they were not placed in a temple of any sort. Whenever this altar is referred to in the Bible, it is with the definite article. This is not just any altar, it is THE altar of the Lord.

The commonly used words in the Bible to refer to an altar are *מִזְבֵּחַ* in Hebrew, and in Greek, *θυσιαστήριον*, meaning a place of sacrifice, derived from *θύω*, which means to sacrifice. *Βωμός* is the other Greek word used in the New Testament referring to a step, base, or pedestal, hence an elevated platform. *βωμός* is used in the New Testament only of pagan altars and then only in Acts 17:23 where Paul used it to refer to the altar "to an unknown god." The Latin word is *ara* or *altus* which in the Roman church evolved to be *altare* and *altarium* from which we obviously get our English word "altar." The Latin noun was formed from an adjective, *altus*, which meant "high" implying an elevated platform or object with a flat top on which sacrifices were performed and offerings presented.

From the beginning of history, altars seem to have taken the form of some sort of raised platform whether stones or earth or anything else. One theologian

claimed early pagans thought their deities lived in stones; therefore, sacrificing an animal on a stone gave strength to that deity through the shed blood.¹ The first mention of an altar in the Bible used for sacrificing to Yahweh was constructed by Noah in Genesis 8:20. Noah probably already knew about sacrificing to God because he was told to take clean animals suitable for sacrifice into the ark by sevens instead of by twos as the unclean animals were taken aboard, and he used those clean animals to sacrifice on the altar he built. I think it is possible God told Cain and Able to build an altar for their sacrifices, but if so, the Bible does not reveal it.

The reason I bring that up is because those who hold to or have at least been seriously influenced by liberal higher criticism of the Bible claim Moses and the Hebrews took over the pagan sacrificial system and cleaned it up in order to use it for worshipping Yahweh. For example, Blaiklock in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* claims, "The altar was a feature of universal worship [by pagans] taken over by the worship of the OT and developed as an object of ritual and sanctity.... They [pagan altars] demonstrate the manner in which the Mosaic code took over, purified, and adapted to its symbolic ritual and monotheistic purposes the forms and practices of alien religion."² Isn't it more likely pagans took over the pattern of God's sacrificial system and perverted it? That's the pattern we have come to realize exists in other areas. The Bible never

¹ E. M. Blaiklock, s.v. "Altar," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975, 1976), 1:119.

² Blaiklock, 1:119.

adopts or accommodates pagan practices, rather pagans adopt and pervert God's practices. We know before the Mosaic Law ever took effect, God's people constructed altars upon which to worship God. These men included Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. We also know Job, who predates the Mosaic Law, worshipped God by means of sacrificial offerings (Job 1:4) and while the text does not mention altars, it would be inconceivable that he failed to use one. That's why I think it possible that Cain and Abel had instructions for an altar; it became standard practice and was adopted and perverted by pagans. People picked up the practice from somewhere. God established the standard practices and then pagans set about perverting His standard.

The earliest altars were most likely an earthen mound (Ex. 20:24), possibly mud bricks, or simply a single, large natural stone (Judges 13:19-20; 1 Sam. 14:33-34). Unhewn stones were stacked into a raised place (1 Kings 18:30-35) forming an altar. The altar discovered at Beersheba dating to the period of the divided kingdom was of hewn stones with horns at each corner. As the practice of metallurgy advanced, bronze altars were constructed.

Altars were certainly places of sacrifice, but they also represented God's presence. Abraham and Isaac both built altars in locations where Yahweh appeared to them.

Genesis 12:7⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

Genesis 26:24–25 ²⁴The LORD appeared to him [Isaac] the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless

you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham." ²⁵So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Since God was present in that place, a sacrifice to Him might be accepted by Him right then and there. The same kind of thinking involved the Tabernacle and the Temple since God specifically said He was going to dwell in the Holy of Holies. These altars were constructed and built in places where God appeared to them or where He said He would dwell among them.

After Jacob had his dream of the ladder between earth and heaven, he had an interesting thing to say about setting up a rock pillar at the place called Bethel. Earlier, I said there are indications the earliest pagans thought the gods dwelt in rocks; therefore, the thinking is they started using rocks as altars.

Genesis 28:16, 22 ¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."... ²²"This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house ..."

We have to remember that Jacob had problems with some pagan influence in his life and that of his family, at least for some period of time. That could explain his belief the pillar he set up would be God's house. Remember, Rachel stole her father's household idols.

Genesis 31:34 ³⁴Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find *them*.

Genesis 35:1-4 ¹Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." ²So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify your-

selves and change your garments; ³and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” ⁴So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

Let's examine the particulars for constructing the altar. It is basically a simple wooden box overlaid with bronze.

Exodus 27:1–2 ¹“And you shall make the altar [מִזְבֵּחַ] of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. 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 bronze.

The hard, durable acacia wood was used to construct the box that would become the altar just as that wood was used for all the other applications in the Tabernacle's construction calling for the use of wood. It was 5 cubits square, or about 7.5 x 7.5 feet, and it was 3 cubits or 4.5 feet in height. This provided 56.25 square feet of surface area on the grill. It was overlaid with bronze. How much heat protection the bronze overlay gave the wood and how fire-resistant acacia wood is, I couldn't locate any answers for those questions. Some theologians believe this problem was solved by putting earth and/or stones on the inside which would help keep the flames and the heat from directly contacting the sides and damaging the wood in the frame. Earlier, the command was given to construct altars of earth or stone (Ex. 20:24-25); therefore, the thinking was by putting those items in the box, the command for using those materials was maintained. It would seem to me that earth would be much more useful than rocks for protecting the bronze clad wood from suffering heat damage. It is not out of

the question for both to be used; earth to insulate the sides and bottom and rocks to contain the fire on top of the earth and away from the sides. When necessary, the earth could be removed from the box in order to easily transport the altar. This idea presents another problem. There must have been some sort of ventilation system built into the box in order to draw some air in order to provide oxygen for the fire. Earth would have blocked any air coming in from the bottom or lower part of the box and tightly packed rocks would have done the same thing.

Altar, מִזְבֵּחַ, is the place of sacrifice. It is formed from the verb זָבַח, meaning to slaughter, to kill, to offer, to sacrifice. Literally, the altar was the place a sacrificial animal was slaughtered and offered to God.

The horns were to be made of one piece with the boards used for the sides and overlaid with brass. No one really knows the purpose of the horns on the altar; however, Psalm 118 suggests they were used to tie the sacrificial victim to it.

Psalm 118:27 ²⁷The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

One dictionary suggested, "The horns of the altar may have functioned as boundary markers, setting apart the sacred space that was the actual place of intersection of the divine and human spheres."³ That sounds very spiritual and theological, but I have no idea what it means. Another theologian wrote, "In the

³ Thomas W. Davis, "Altar," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 15.

context of Israel and in the context of the tabernacle complex (including the covenant declaration, the Ten Words) these horns represented the power, strength, and procreative might of Yahweh. The feature of horns is not unique to Israel's altar, but the context in which they function is Israel's alone—all power, strength, and fertility belong to Yahweh, the one who rescued Israel."⁴ This may be more accurate; the horns on the altar probably did represent these things in terms of a bull. Most theologians do believe the horns represent animal horns and probably a bull.

We do know the consecration ceremony for the priests involved putting some of the blood from the sacrificial bull on the horns of the altar.

Exodus 29:12 ¹²"You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar.

When people brought a sin offering to the Lord, some of the blood was put on the horns of the altar.

Leviticus 4:30 ³⁰The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all *the rest* of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.

In Exodus 21:14, it was noted that a person could not find sanctuary in the house of God if he committed what we would call a murder as opposed to a nonintentional manslaughter or accidental type of death. According to Casuto, it was a widespread practice among pagans in that time and place to

⁴ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, eds. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, LOGOS electronic ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 207.

prohibit punishing a person who entered any sacred place for any reason including murder.⁵ Yahweh removed that prohibition and allowed the removal of a murderer from the sanctuary for punishment.

Exodus 21:14 “If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily [premeditated murder], you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.

In 1 Kings, Solomon's brother, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne Solomon inherited from David. When Adonijah discovered Solomon had been crowned king, he fled to the sanctuary and took hold of the horns of the altar. Adonijah's crime was not a willful murder; therefore, Solomon spared his life.

1 Kings 1:50–53 ⁵⁰And Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. ⁵¹Now it was told Solomon, saying, “Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, for behold, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’ ” ⁵²Solomon said, “If he is a worthy man, not one of his hairs will fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he will die.” ⁵³So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and prostrated himself before King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, “Go to your house.”

In 1 Kings 2, Joab, who was a murderer, fled to the sanctuary, refused to leave the horns of the altar, and was put to death right there.

1 Kings 2:28–31, 34 ²⁸Now the news came to Joab, for Joab had followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom. And Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. ²⁹It was told King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and behold, he is beside the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, fall upon him.” ³⁰So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, “Thus the king has said, ‘Come out.’” But he said, “No, for I will die here.” And Benaiah brought the king word

⁵ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1967), 270.

again, saying, "Thus spoke Joab, and thus he answered me." ³¹The king said to him, "Do as he has spoken and fall upon him and bury him, that you may remove from me and from my father's house the blood which Joab shed without cause...." ³⁴Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell upon him and put him to death, and he was buried at his own house in the wilderness.

The Temple altar was much larger than the Tabernacle altar.

2 Chronicles 4:1 ¹Then he made a bronze altar, twenty cubits in length and twenty cubits in width and ten cubits in height.

This Temple altar was square measuring 30 feet on a side and it was 15 feet high which necessitated steps or a ramp leading up to it. The original commands for building altars prohibited steps so a ramp seems to be the likely method for allowing the priests to work on the level of the grate. We know from 1 Kings 8:64 this altar was a bronze altar. Presumably, it was the box that was bronze; the priests couldn't have walked around on metal whether heated by fire or by the sun especially since they ministered barefoot when in the Temple area.

Instructions were given from making the utensils necessary for doing the work of the Tabernacle.

Exodus 27:3–5 ³"You shall make its pails for removing its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. ⁴"You shall make for it a grating of network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. ⁵"You shall put it beneath, under the ledge of the altar, so that the net will reach halfway up the altar.

All of the utensils for service in the Tabernacle were made of bronze. If the procedure for casting the utensils for the Temple is any indication, they made

molds in suitable clay ground and poured the molten metal into the molds to form the utensils.

1 Kings 7:45–46 ⁴⁵and the pails and the shovels [יָעָ] and the bowls; even all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon *in* the house of the LORD were of polished bronze. ⁴⁶In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan.

This place is about 35 miles north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan River. This location is far from Sinai so they almost certainly didn't use this area to cast the Tabernacle utensils, but they may have had some other place with similar ground or they may have used another method. We don't know. We do know they cast these utensils in some way.

Pails were used to carry the ashes away from the altar for disposal and the shovels, יָעָ, were used to get the ashes into the pails. The TANAKH translates this word as a "scraper." Basins were used to collect the blood that was to be tossed upon or poured out next to the altar. The forks were used to take the meat on and off the altar and to move it around as needed. One lexicon suggested these forks had three tines on them. The firepans were used to hold coals from the fire.

The firepans were important because the fire of the altar was never to go out; live coals had to be kept to rekindle it when the Tabernacle was moved.

Leviticus 6:9, 13 ⁹"Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law for the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself *shall remain* on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire on the altar is to be kept burning on it.... ¹³Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out.

The Tabernacle's altar fire was supernaturally started by God and it was important to keep it going from that original flame.

Leviticus 9:24 ²⁴Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces.

“The sacrifices were consumed, not by fire ignited by Aaron, but by fire from before the Lord. This is the first of only five times that the OT records fire from God as a sign that a sacrifice was accepted (Judg. 6:21; 1 Kin. 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26; 2 Chr. 7:1). Since the fire on this altar was never to go out, all Israel's sacrifices from this time forward would be consumed by fire that originated from God.”⁶

The firepans served the purpose of keeping some coals hot in order to start the next fire when necessary.

Nadab and Abihu were killed by fire from God when they brought strange fire before God. The fire they brought into the Tabernacle was not the fire God provided for the altar in the beginning. It could have been fire they started themselves by means of ordinary fire-starting methods, but the text does not specify the exact nature of the fire.

Leviticus 10:1–2 ¹Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ²And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

⁶ Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, eds. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 165.

The Law of Atonement specified the incense used on that day had to be burnt with coals from the altar (Lev. 16:12). If that was true for the daily burning of the incense as well, they may have used fire from a source other than the altar to burn the incense which God may have termed “strange fire.” It is also possible they used some fire from sort of pagan worship.⁷ Any or none of these explanations are possible, but it was something done by those men concerning fire that was not from the altar before the Lord and it was used in a totally unacceptable manner that cost them their lives.

The next command involved constructing a grate of bronze.

Exodus 27:4–5 ⁴“You shall make for it a grating of network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. ⁵“You shall put it beneath, under the ledge [קֶרֶבֶת] of the altar, so that the net will reach halfway up the altar.

There needed to be a grate in the altar somewhere in order to hold the offering and allow its ashes to fall through. Ledge, קֶרֶבֶת, means a rim, a ledge, an edge. This may refer to the border around the top of the altar which had to be a plain edge in order to allow access to the grate with the sacrificial offerings. Others think this was a ledge halfway down the sides of the altar on the inside. This is the most difficult part of the altar's construction for me to understand and there is no consensus among theologians on the location of this bronze net and how it worked. It seems logical it had to go right under the rim in order to hold

⁷ Ibid., 166.

the burnt offerings in a place that was accessible for placement on the grate and for moving them around when necessary.

Cassuto believes the net was a bronze reinforcement for the bottom half of the altar and was upright against the sides in order to strengthen them. He claims that was necessary because the bottom had to have holes or gaps enough to allow oxygen into the box.⁸

Constable explained it this way: "There was a grate (v. 4) halfway to the ground inside the altar that allowed air to circulate under the sacrifices and ashes to fall to the ground below. The 'ledge' appears to have projected out from the altar about half way up its sides. Perhaps the priests stood on this ledge while placing the offerings on the altar."⁹ He is suggesting there was two grates, one at the top and the other half way down. The top grate was for the sacrifices and the lower one for the fire. I'm not convinced the Tabernacle's altar needed a ledge on the outside for the priests to stand on while working at the altar. It was only 4.5 feet high and even allowing for the fact they were short men at that time, they still wouldn't need a ledge to stand on in order to perform their duties.

Exodus 27:6–7 6" You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. 7" Its poles shall be inserted into the rings, so that the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried.

⁸ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1967), 364.

⁹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Logos electronic ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), Ex 27:1.

They needed poles to carry the altar. These were acacia wood but they were overlaid with bronze rather than gold. Bronze would have worn much better than gold. The bronze net had rings on the corners. Were they for carrying the altar and, if so, how did that work? Or were they for lifting the net out of the altar when it was down inside? The rings had to be on the outside in order to carry the altar.

The fact is we don't have all the details for building the altar. Once again, God reminded Moses he had been shown the pattern on the mountain and he was to have it made according to that pattern.

Exodus 27:8 ⁸“You shall make it hollow with planks; as it was shown to you in the mountain, so they shall make *it*.”

Surrounding the Tabernacle was the outer court which held the altar and the laver. The outside boundary of the courtyard was a fence of posts and linen curtains with a woven screen serving as the gate.

Exodus 27:9–10 ⁹“You shall make the court [הַחֲצֵר] of the tabernacle. On the south side *there shall be* hangings for the court of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for one side; ¹⁰and its pillars *shall be* twenty, with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver.”

Court, חֲצֵר, refers to an enclosed area, a courtyard. In this case, it identifies the area enclosed by this fence surrounding the sanctuary, the laver, and the altar.

The north and south sides of the outer court were the long walls, 150 feet in length. It required twenty pillars or posts and the sockets used for their stand

were made of bronze. The hooks for hanging the curtains and the bands for the pillars were made of silver. The curtains were fine twisted linen. The curtains were possibly hung on wooden rods that rested in hooks on the pillars with the curtains fastened to the rods somehow but whether it was with silver clasps or some other method, wasn't specified and the text does not specifically say rods were used. Alternatively, the curtains may have had hemmed holes of some sort on each edge that were attached to silver hooks on the pillars. This would have allowed them to be fastened to the pillars along the height of each curtain and along each side in order to provide stability. Without some structure similar to that, they would have simply blown around in the wind and lost all sense of what the fence was meant to be. They needed to be fastened somehow from top to bottom in order to keep them in place. The pillars would have been 5 cubits or 7.5 feet apart. The posts had silver rings around them whether for decoration or for attaching the curtains or both. Most of the illustrations I found show the posts with silver top caps, but that wasn't specified in the text. There was one bronze foundation socket for each post. I am presuming the curtains were each five cubits in width so they would each hang individually between the posts. The text seems to suggest the curtain was one solid length, but they may have been hung in 5 cubit wide individual sheets.

The same materials were needed for the northside fence.

Exodus 27:11 ¹¹"Likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings one hundred *cubits* long, and its twenty pillars with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver.

The west side, which is the side at the rear of the sanctuary was 75 feet in width requiring ten pillars and ten bronze sockets for their bases. It required the same materials and was built according to the same construction techniques as the north and south fences.

Exodus 27:12 ¹²“For the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits *with* their ten pillars and their ten sockets.

The east side of the outer court was also 75 feet in width, but it was divided into three sections.

Exodus 27:13–15 ¹³“The width of the court on the east side *shall be* fifty cubits. ¹⁴“The hangings for the *one side of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets. ¹⁵“And for the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets.

Either side of the gate was 22.5 feet wide requiring three pillars and their respective bronze bases. That left 30 feet for the width of the gate. The screen over the entrance gate was a woven garment similar to the screen for the entrance to the sanctuary.

Exodus 27:16 ¹⁶“For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, *with* their four pillars and their four sockets.

The width of the gate required four pillars and their bronze bases. The screen was apparently constructed of one-piece 20 cubits wide. The yarn and the colors of the yarn were the same as those used in the veil and the screen at the entry to the sanctuary. The pattern woven into the screen was not specified. The veil and the screen over the doorway to the sanctuary had cherubim wo-

ven into them, but that was not ordered for the screen to the courtyard. This screen was centered in the east side fence. One commentator claimed the gate curtain was primarily intended to secure the entrance at night and was therefore moved to the side during the day to facilitate ingress and egress.¹⁰ That would seem to be a very unwieldy undertaking given the weight of woven yarn. I am more inclined to think the entire fence including the gate was intended to define the space that was created by the fence to define a boundary that could only be entered for the purposes specified by Yahweh. Keeping the gate open seemed to be an invitation for people who didn't belong there to wander inside. There was an element of mystery God wanted to present to the pagans living around the Hebrews and opening up the courtyard to pagan eyes seems to mitigate that purpose of God for His people. The Jews were different from all the other people and that was supposed to arouse their curiosity and cause them to seek out what the Jews were doing in relation to their God. Opening the Tabernacle up that way doesn't preserve that air of mystery very well. That's conjecture, and it is possible they opened it up every day by moving the screen aside, but I'm skeptical. The fact is, we don't know exactly how they controlled access into the courtyard, we only know it was through this gate on the east side. It would have been attached to all four pillars in order to support the weight, but as a one-piece unit, it would have been a system differing

¹⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 599.

somewhat from the system used for the linen curtains assuming they were individual curtains rather than a single 100 cubit long curtain.

The order was repeated to apply silver bands and hooks to the pillars, presumably as part of the system for hanging the curtains, and the bronze bases for the pillars were to be made.

Exodus 27:17 17[“]All the pillars around the court shall be furnished with silver bands *with* their hooks of silver and their sockets of bronze.

The size of the courtyard fence was also reiterated. The new fact revealed here was the height of the fence which was 5 cubits or 7.5 feet.

Exodus 27:18 18[“]The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, and the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits of fine twisted linen, and their sockets of bronze.

Bronze was used to make all the utensils needed for performing the necessary services in the Tabernacle and for the pegs used as hangars and tent pegs.

Exodus 27:19 19[“]All the utensils of the tabernacle *used* in all its service, and all its pegs [יָתֵד], and all the pegs of the court, *shall be* of bronze.

The pegs were a new revelation. They were necessary for staking the fence pillars in place with ropes and also used for hanging utensils and other things needed for doing the work of the Tabernacle that needed to be put up out of the way but accessible when needed. The pegs were also made of bronze just as all the other utensils were bronze. Pegs, יָתֵד, means a pin, a peg, or a stake. They were used as tent pegs to hold the stabilizing cords for the pillars in the fence. They could also have been used as nails, which is an acceptable

definition, in places where the construction of the Tabernacle required them. However, nails could not have been used too much in too many applications because that would have defeated the portable nature of the structure.

The Israelites as a group of lay people apart from the priesthood were responsible for providing the oil needed for the Menorah.

Exodus 27:20 ²⁰“You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear [קֵי] oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually.

Clear, קֵי, pertains to olive oil lacking any sediment in it meaning it is pure, clean, and clear in appearance.

The next command was the first indication of the Aaronic priesthood. Aaron had a leadership role alongside his brother, but this is the first hint he will become the first High Priest of Israel.

Exodus 27:21 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 perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.

The Aaronic priesthood beginning with Aaron and his sons were charged with the responsibility of ministering in the Holy Place where they would keep the Menorah continually lit by replenishing the oil and trimming the wicks, replacing the bread weekly and burning the frankincense, and burning the incense on the Altar of Incense.

The Tabernacle set-up represents the truth that God cannot be directly approached by the Israelites. His presence was in the Most Holy Place, but no one could go in there to be in His presence with the exception of the High Priest

and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement which, at that point, was yet to be revealed. The Holy Place was also restricted to the priests. The courtyard was set aside as the place where people could come as close to God as possible to worship Him and that was by means of sacrifice at the altar.

The courtyard had to be large enough to accommodate a lot of people coming and going. Some of the sacrifices were to be eaten right there in the presence of Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 12:17–18 ¹⁷“You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. ¹⁸“But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.