



Study Guide: Exodus – Chapter 27

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Exodus Chapter 27 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Exodus Chapter 27 continues the detailed instructions given by God to Moses regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. This chapter focuses specifically on the altar of burnt offering and the courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle. It contributes to the book's flow by emphasizing the importance of worship, sacrifice, and holiness in the life of Israel. Readers should watch for the precise measurements and materials prescribed, which reveal God's desire for order and reverence in approaching Him.

Context

The immediate literary context of Exodus 27 is the ongoing divine instructions given to Moses on Mount Sinai, following the covenantal encounter at Horeb. These instructions are part of the broader covenant framework where God establishes His presence among Israel through the Tabernacle. The key speaker is God, communicating directly to Moses, who acts as the mediator for the people. Historically, this chapter fits within the narrative of Israel's journey from Egypt toward becoming a holy nation, set apart by God's laws and worship practices.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into two main sections. The first section details the construction and specifications of the altar of burnt offering, including its dimensions, materials, and accessories. The second section describes the courtyard of the Tabernacle, focusing on its size, structure, and the gate. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive picture of the physical space where Israel's sacrificial worship would take place.

Verse-by-Verse Study



Verses 1-3: These verses introduce the altar of burnt offering, specifying it as a hollow square structure made of acacia wood, measuring five cubits long and wide, and three cubits high. The hollow design indicates it was meant to contain fire and ashes, essential for the burnt offerings. The use of acacia wood symbolizes durability and incorruptibility.

Verses 4-5: The altar's horns are described here, projecting from its four corners and made of the same wood. These horns had a significant ritual function, often associated with refuge and atonement. The altar was overlaid with bronze, a metal symbolizing judgment and purification.

Verses 6-8: This section covers the altar's bronze grating, which was placed halfway down the altar, allowing ashes to fall below and air to circulate for the fire. The altar also had rings on its sides to hold poles for carrying, emphasizing its portability as the Tabernacle moved with Israel.

Verses 9-10: Instructions are given for the poles used to carry the altar, made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze. The poles were never to be removed, symbolizing the altar's permanence and the continual nature of sacrifice.

Verses 11-19: These verses shift focus to the courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle. The courtyard was to be 100 cubits long and 50 cubits wide, enclosed by curtains made of fine linen with bronze pillars and bases. The detailed description highlights the sacred boundary separating the holy space from the outside world.

Verses 20-21: The final verses describe the gate of the courtyard, made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with fine linen. This colorful entrance contrasted with the white linen curtains, symbolizing access to God's presence through beauty and divine provision. The chapter closes by emphasizing that the altar's fire must be kept burning continually, underscoring the perpetual nature of worship and sacrifice.

Key Themes

One key theme is the holiness and sanctity of worship. The precise measurements and materials reflect God's demand for reverence and order in approaching Him. Another theme is the symbolism of sacrifice as a means of atonement and relationship with God, represented by the altar and its continual fire. The portability of the altar and courtyard elements also highlights God's presence with His people during their journey, emphasizing both permanence and movement in their covenant relationship.



Cross-References

Leviticus 1 expands on the burnt offerings performed on the altar described here, providing the ritual context for its use. Hebrews 13:10–13 reflects on the altar’s significance in the New Testament, connecting Christ’s sacrifice to the Old Testament altar. Numbers 4:16 discusses the transportation of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, linking to the poles and portability emphasized in Exodus 27. These passages clarify the altar’s role in worship, sacrifice, and God’s presence with His people.

Application

Modern discipleship can draw from Exodus 27 the importance of approaching God with reverence and intentionality. The altar’s continual fire reminds believers of the need for persistent devotion and spiritual fervor. The detailed instructions encourage believers to value order and holiness in their worship practices. Additionally, the altar’s portability challenges believers to carry their worship and commitment with them in every season of life, recognizing God’s presence in all circumstances.

Summary

Exodus Chapter 27 provides detailed instructions for the altar of burnt offering and the courtyard of the Tabernacle, emphasizing the holiness, order, and continual nature of worship. Through precise measurements and materials, the chapter reveals God’s desire for a sacred space where sacrifice and atonement occur, symbolizing His presence with Israel. The altar’s design and the courtyard’s enclosure together underscore the themes of reverence, accessibility, and God’s abiding presence throughout Israel’s journey.