

that God is the LORD Jehovah is all the authorization that God needed for Him to command Israel or anyone else.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**30** And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of acacia wood shalt thou make it. (2) A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be; and two cubits shall be the height thereof; the horns thereof shall be of one piece with it. (3) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. (4) And two golden rings shalt thou make for it under the crown thereof; upon the two ribs thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make them; and they shall be for places for staves wherewith to bear it. (5) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (6) And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. (7) And Aar-on shall burn thereon incense of sweet spices: every morning, when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn it. (8) And when Aar-on lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Je-ho-vah throughout your generations. (9) Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt-offering, nor meal-offering; and ye shall pour no drink offering thereon. (10) And Aar-on shall make atonement upon the horns of it once in the year; with the blood of the sin-offering of atonement once in the year shall he make atonement for it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto Je-ho-vah.

(11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) When thou takest the sum of the children of Is-ra-el, according to

those that are numbered of them, then shall they give every man a ransom, for his soul unto Je-ho-vah, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. (13) This they shall give, every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered: half a shek-el after the shek-el of the sanctuary (the shek-el is twenty gerahs), half a shek-el for an offering to Je-ho-vah. (14) Every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of Je-ho-vah. (15) The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shek-el, when they give the offering of Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls. (16) And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Is-ra-el, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may be a memorial for the children of Is-ra-el before Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls.

(17) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (18) Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, whereat to wash. And thou shalt put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. (19) And Aar-on and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: (20) when they go into the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah. (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

(22) Moreover Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (23) Take thou also unto thee the chief spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred *shek-els*, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty, (24) and of cassia five hundred, after the shek-el of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; (25) and thou shalt make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil. (26) And thou shalt anoint therewith the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, (27) and the table and all the vessels

thereof, and the candlestick and the vessels thereof, and the altar of incense, (28) and the altar of burnt-offering with all the vessels thereof, and the laver and the base thereof. (29) And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. (30) And thou shalt anoint Aar-on and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (31) And thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, saying, This shall be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. (32) Upon the flesh of man shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any like it, according to the composition thereof: it is holy, *and* it shall be holy unto you. (33) Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people.

(34) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stac-te, and on-y-cha, and gal-ba-num; sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a light weight; (35) and thou shalt make of it incense, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure *and* holy: (36) and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. (37) And the incense which thou shalt make, according to the composition thereof ye shall not make for yourselves: it shall be unto thee holy for Je-ho-vah. (38) Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereof, he shall be cut off from his people.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief summary, topic, or theme(s) for the chapter.
2. What were the materials and the dimensions of the altar of incense? (30:1-2)
3. How were the horns of the altar connected to the rest of

the altar? (30:2)

4. What other items of furniture were made of the same materials as the altar and had several features in common? (25:10-12, 23-26)
5. How was the altar of incense carried about? (30:4-5; Num. 4:11)
6. Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle? (30:6; 40:5)
7. With what tabernacle room was the altar of incense sometimes associated? Why? (Heb. 9:2-4; I Kings 6:22)
8. When was incense burned on the altar? (30:8)
9. Of what was incense a symbol? (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5). What might the REGULAR burning of incense suggest about our devotional activities? (Compare Ps. 55:17)
10. What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense? (30:9)
11. What special act was done at the horns of the altar once a year? (30:10)
12. What was to be paid when a census was taken? (30:12-13)
13. What does this census rule suggest that God considers about his people? (Ezek. 18:4)
14. How much were the people to pay? (30:13)
15. Who was to pay it? (30:14-15)
16. As far as the people themselves were concerned, what was the purpose of this payment? (30:12, 15, 16)
17. What was the money used for? (30:16; 38:25-28)
18. What was the laver made of? (30:18, 38:25-28)
19. Where was the laver placed? (30:18)
20. What was the laver used for? (30:19)
21. When was the laver used? (30:20)
22. How seriously did God regard the washings at the laver? (30:21)
23. Of what may the laver have been a type? (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 7:14; Heb. 10:22; I John 1:9)
24. What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)
25. What was anointed? Who was anointed? (30:26-30)
26. What restrictions were placed on the use and making of anointing oil? (30:31-33)

27. Of what is anointing oil a symbol? (Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Psalm 45:6-8)
  28. What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make? (30:34-35)
  29. Where was incense placed? (30:36, 7)
  30. Where would God meet with Israel? (30:36)
  31. What restriction was placed on making incense? (30:37-38) Why?
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EXODUS THIRTY: INCENSE  
(and other Tabernacle Features)

- A. *Altar of Incense*; 30:1-10.
    1. Its pattern; 30:1-5.
    2. Its position; 30:6.
    3. Its rituals; 30:7-10.
  - B. *Atonement money*; 30:11-16.
    1. Collected during a census; 30:11-13.
    2. Collected from all alike; 30:14-15.
    3. Collected for tabernacle service; 30:16.
  - C. *Laver*; 30:17-21.
    1. Material; 30:17-18.
    2. Position; 30:18.
    3. Function; 30:19-21.
  - D. *Anointing oil*; 30:19:33.
    1. Formula; 30:19-25.
    2. Function; 30:26-31.
    3. Restrictions of use; 30:32-33.
  - E. *Incense*; 30:34-38.
    1. Formula; 30:34-35.
    2. Function; 30:36.
    3. Restrictions on use; 30:37-38.
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## INCENSE, A TYPE OF PRAYER! (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38)

1. Purpose; 30:1. (A sacrifice!; Heb. 13:15)
  2. Pattern; 30:1-2. (Must be *God's* pattern!)
  3. Power; 30:2. (Had horns!)
  4. Position; 30:6. (Nearest to God!)
  5. Practice; 30:7-8, 36. (Regular!)
  6. Purity; 30:35.
  7. Preciousness; 30:3, 34-35.
  8. Pulverized! 30:37.
  9. Private property! 30:37-38.
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GOD'S COUNTED ONES! (30:11-16)  
 "All souls are mine!" (Ezek. 18:4)

1. Those counted need ransom! 30:11-12.
  2. Those counted must pay! 30:13.
  3. Those counted are all equal before God; 30:15.
  4. Those counted render "service"; 30:16.
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EQUALITY BEFORE GOD! (Ex. 30:12-15)

1. ALL CLAIMED by God; 30:12.
  2. All need atonement; 30:12, 15.
  3. All redeemable by God; 30:15.
  4. All useful for service; 30:16.
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THE WASHING OF PRIESTS (Ex. 30:17-21)

1. Commanded by God; 30:19.
  2. Essential for life; 30:20, 21.
  3. Necessary for service; 30:20.
  4. Perpetual in practice; 30:21.
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ANOINTING OIL - A TYPE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!  
(Ex. 30:22-23)

1. Precious; 30:22-25.
  2. Pure; 30:25.
  3. Pervasive! 30:26-29.
  4. Sanctifying! 30:29.
  5. Qualifying; 30:30.
  6. Not for the world; 30:32-33; John 14:17.
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY

1. *What is in Exodus thirty?*

The chapter has a MIXTURE of subjects in it. Subjects include (1) the incense altar, (2) atonement money, (3) laver, (4) anointing oil, (5) incense formula. Inasmuch as the INCENSE is mentioned both first and last in the chapter, it is probably our most helpful memory aid to recall the contents of the chapter under the heading of INCENSE, etc.

Although the material of the chapter is mixed, ALL of it is essential for an accurate comprehension of the tabernacle. Without this material, our understanding would be hopelessly deficient.

Note that most of the paragraphs are introduced by the formula, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, . . ." (32:11, 17, 22, 34). This same introductory expression continues to appear in chapter 31 (31:1, 12). Indeed, it appears that chapter 31 is very closely joined to chapter 30, and probably should not even be divided from it by a separate chapter number.

We do not know why the segments of information in chapter thirty are grouped together just as they are. It would seem more orderly if the section about the altar of incense were placed back in chapter twenty-five with the

discussion of the lampstand and table. (Indeed, in chapter thirty-seven these three are grouped together.) The discussion of the laver would seem more natural back with that of the altar in chapter twenty-seven. (The two are associated in 38:1-8.) No one really knows why the material in chapter thirty is given just at this point as it is. In saying this we are NOT finding fault with the order that God's word presents its material. We are just stating a fact.

We have good reasons to reject the skeptical critics' notion that chapters thirty and thirty-one are very later supplements to the Priestly narrative,<sup>1</sup> and likely were written as late as the Babylonian exile.<sup>2</sup> If they really were "late additions," the editors would probably have stuck them into the narrative at points where they would appear to fit more naturally.

2. *What were the materials and dimensions of the altar of incense?* (30:1-5; 37:25-28; 40:5, 26; Lev. 4:7)

It was made of acacia wood. (See 25:5.) It was overlaid with pure gold, so that it is called the "golden altar" in 39:38 and Num. 4:11, to distinguish it from the brazen altar of burnt-offering. It stood two cubits (36") high, and had equal width and length of one cubit (18"). Horns projected from its four upper corners. The horns were made of one piece with the rest of the altar, rather than as separate pieces attached to it. It had a crown, or moulding, around the edge of its top, as did the table of showbread and the ark of the covenant (25:11, 24). Whether this was for ornamentation, or to keep material from sliding off its top is not stated.

The altar was transported by using staves that were thrust through golden rings anchored into the sides of the altar under its crown, very much like those on the ark of the covenant and the table of showbread. The staves were of acacia wood overlaid with gold. For the method of

<sup>1</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, I, (1969), p. 446.



covering and transporting the altar of incense, see Num. 4:11.

3. *Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle?* (30:6)

It was placed in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil. Just behind the veil was the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant, covered over by the mercy-seat. The smoke from the altar of incense wafted past the veil into the Holy of Holies, and thus, as it were, into the very presence of God.

The mention here of the mercy-seat along with the facts about the incense altar suggests that the altar of incense had a very intimate relationship to the ark and mercy-seat. Smoking incense was brought into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:12-13). For these reasons, and perhaps others, the altar of incense in Solomon's temple is spoken of as belonging to the oracle (Holy of Holies) (I Kings 6:22). Also Heb. 9:4 speaks of the golden altar as being in the Holy of Holies.

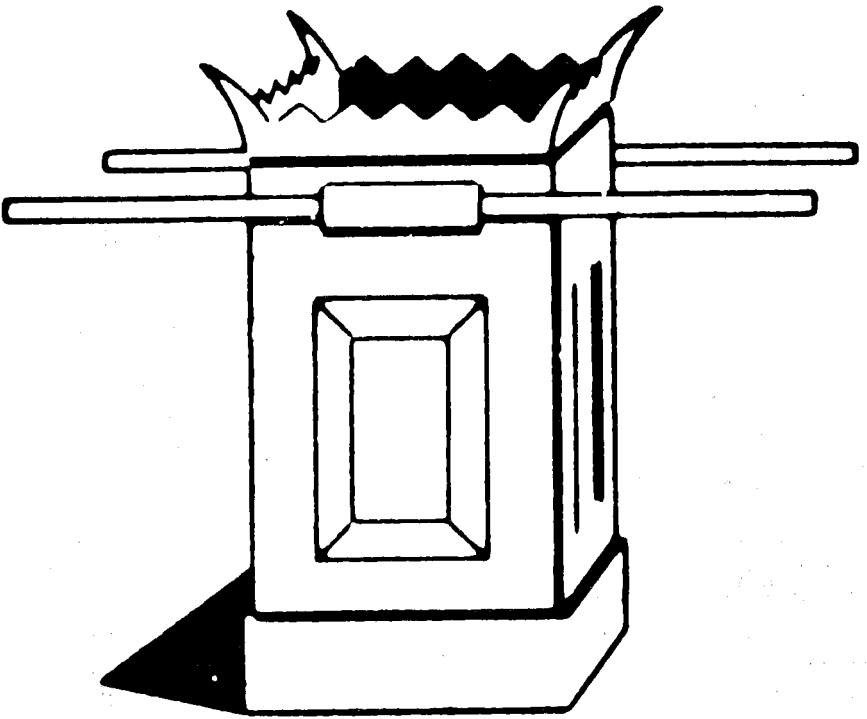
4. *When was incense burned on the altar?* (30:7-8)

Every morning and evening. When Aaron dressed (literally "made good") the lamps in the morning, he burned incense. Also when the lamps were lighted in the evenings (literally, "between the two evenings." See 12:6) he burned incense. "Morning by morning" Aaron caused the incense "to smoke." (These verses sound as if the lamp did not burn during the daytime, but compare 27:20-21; 25:37.)

5. *What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense?* (30:9)

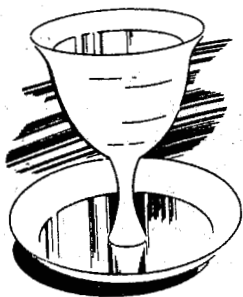
No strange incense, no burnt-offerings, no meal-offering, and no drink-offerings. Sin-offerings were made on its horns once a year. (30:10). "Strange" (or foreign) incense would be incense with any formula other than that described in 30:34-38. There was a distinctiveness about the use of this altar that was not to be compromised.

The "strange incense" of 30:9 is probably not the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1), although the "strange fire" incident shows how seriously

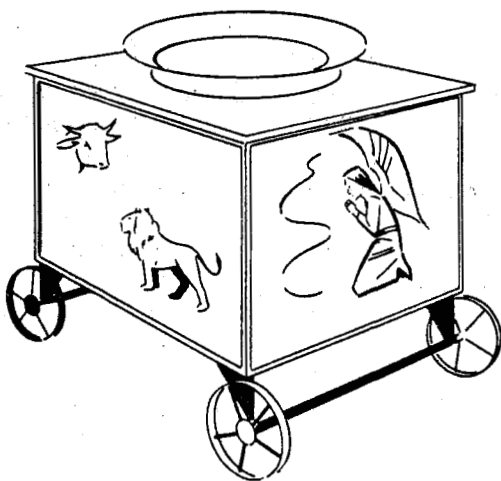


Altar of Incense

676A



Conjectural form  
of the laver and its base



Wheeled laver of the type made for Solomon's temple. It is remotely possible that the laver in the tabernacle may have had resemblances to this design.

God regarding His commands about the incense. See 30:37-38. We do not know with certainty what this "strange fire" was. On the annual day of atonement the priests was to obtain coals of fire from the altar of burnt-offering (Lev. 16:12). Upon these coals he placed incense as he went into the Holy of Holies. It appears that the fire used by Nadab and Abihu was taken from some place besides the altar. It is possible that when the priest burned incense on the altar each day, he did it by bringing in coals of fire from the brazen altar, although we do not know this for sure.

6. *What special act was done upon the horns of the altar once a year?* (30:10)

Once a year Aaron made atonement for the altar by placing the blood of the sin-offering upon the horns of the altar of incense. (Concerning sin-offerings, see 29:10-14.)

The preposition "upon" (Heb. 'al) in 30:10 probably means "for" it. This preposition is used in 29:36 to refer to making atonement "for" the altar of burnt-offering. Similarly Ex. 30:15 has "atonement for ('al) your souls." Similarly Lev. 16:18. Certainly the word means "upon," but here it seems to have the added meaning of "for." The A.S.V. has "upon" in the text and "Or for" in the margin.

We agree with Keil and Delitzsch<sup>3</sup> that the reference in Lev. 16:18 to putting blood "upon the horns of the altar round about" refers to the *altar of burnt-offering* rather than to the altar of incense (even though most commentators hold the opposite view). The expression "go out" in Lev. 16:18 refers not to Aaron's going out of the Most Holy Place into the Holy Place, but to his going out of the tent of meeting into the court.

However, as Keil and Delitzsch also assert, the allusion to Aaron's making atonement "for the tent of meeting"

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, II, p. 400.

(Holy Place) most probably refers to the yearly act of atonement on the altar of incense referred to in Ex. 30:10. After making this atonement for the tent of meeting by placing the blood of the sin-offering on the horns of the altar of incense, then Aaron went out to the altar of burnt offering to make atonement for it also.

Note that man's use made God's golden altar contaminated.

7. *How did God view the altar of incense?* (30:10)

It was *most holy* unto Jehovah, literally "holy (or holiness) of holies." The same expression is applied to the altar of burnt-offering (29:37; 40:10), to all the vessels of the sanctuary (30:28-29), and to the offerings of Israel that were partly eaten by the priests (Num. 18:9-10; Lev. 2:3).

8. *What was symbolized by the incense?* (Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5)

Prayer! "Let my *prayer* be set forth as incense before thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2).

Incense functioned also as sort of a *sacrifice*. The very fact that it was offered on an *altar* (Heb. *zebach*, a place of sacrifice) suggests the sacrificial quality in prayer. "In every place incense shall be *offered* unto my name" (Mal. 1:11). This should cause us to regard prayer as very necessary and serious in our Christian activities.

The *closeness* of the altar of incense to the veil and to the ark of the covenant suggests that we are never closer to God than when we pray. Only a thin veil separates us from the very face of God, and in Christ even this veil is removed! (II Cor. 3:14-18)

The presence of horns on the altar of incense suggests the *power* of prayer. Compare 27:2.

The necessity of *regularity* in prayer is suggested by the regular daily offering of incense. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17; Compare Dan. 6:10.)

The importance of *reading God's word* ("a lamp unto my feet"; Ps. 119:105) at the time of our prayers may be

suggested by the fact that the incense was offered at the same time that the lampstand was tended.

The concept of prayer as a *tribute* to God as king is at least hinted in the fact that the burning of incense was done as a tribute to great kings. See II Chron. 16:14; 21:19.

There is NO New Testament example or teaching which would lead Christians to incorporate the burning of incense into our worship assembly activities. To do this would be to borrow from the outgrown system of the law of Moses or from pagan religious rituals. To pagans incense is burned to drive out demons, or to add punch to prayers, or to convey some priestly blessings.

9. *What was to be paid when a census was taken?* (30:11-15)

Every one was to pay half a shekel. This money was a ransom for their souls, "to make atonement" for their souls. The amount paid was a very small sum. A shekel was about four-tenths of an ounce.<sup>4</sup> (At that time the shekel was not a coin, but a unit of weight, a piece of metal weighing that amount. Compare Gen. 24:22.) Anyone could have afforded this little payment. This very smallness of the offering should have made obvious the fact that the people were NOT purchasing their atonement by this pittance, but only acknowledging that they had a debt which God alone could pay for them. Compare I Pet. 1:18-19.

Implied in this law about censuses is the truth that *God owns all souls* (people). "All souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4). The very fact of counting one's flock or one's wealth suggests ownership. We do not usually count our neighbor's sheep or his income; we count our own. If we do count them, the owner will want to know about it. The experience of King David taking a census showed that taking a census could be a dangerous business. Seventy thousand people

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<sup>4</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, II, (1969) gives 0.40302. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 394, says the "shekel of the sanctuary" was double the weight of the regular shekel; but the difference is not positively known.

died in a plague (II Sam. 24:1, 15). Being counted in Israel meant that each Israelite owned up to his covenant membership and responsibilities with God. God still claims exclusive ownership of His people. (John 10:27-29).

The "offering" mentioned in 30:13 was a heave-offering (Heb. *terumah*), something "lifted up" to God. See notes on 29:27-28. Note the three-fold reference to the *offering* (30:13, 14, 15). Note also the three-fold reference to "soul" (30:12, 15, 16). ("Soul" is a very comprehensive term; it refers to everything about us that relates to life - our whole person, our physical animal life, our spirit, our emotions, etc.)

The payment of the half-shekel acknowledged not only God's ownership, but also the uncleanness and unworthiness of the people. By nature Israel was alienated from God, and could remain in covenant with the LORD only on the ground of His grace, which covered the sin. This idea of ransom and redemption extends on into the New Testament, where we read that in Christ we have "redemption" (ransom). (Eph. 1:7; I Pet. 1:18)

The fact that the rich and poor alike paid the same amount may have suggested to the people's minds that all people stand alike before God - one not preferred above another, all equally in need of atonement (30:15). Note that there were rich people in that generation of Israelites.

Censuses are referred to in Num. 1:2-3; 26:2. Ex. 38:25-26 mentions the silver half-shekel collection from 603,550 men, the exact same count as in Numbers 1:46. The census in Numbers one did not take place until *after* the building of the tabernacle, or some nine months after this atonement-money offering. The fact that the count was the same in both indicates the precision of both the atonement-money collection and the census. Probably the numbering in Numbers one according to "fathers' houses" (families and tribes) was greatly speeded up by the information gained in the previous numbering for atonement money.

On the shekel being 20 gerahs, see Lev. 23:25. The

word "gerah" means a "grain" (Harkavy's *Lexicon*) or possibly a "bean" (Barnes).

10. *What was the atonement money used for?* (30:16)

It was used for the *service* of the tabernacle. Compare 38:25-31. The shekels of silver furnished the material for the sockets (pedestals, or bases) used in the tabernacle, and also the hooks on the pillars.

The text does not state that the half-shekel atonement money was to be an annual levy, but rather that it was paid only when a census was taken. At a later time the half-shekel did become an annual temple tax (Matt. 17:24). In the time of Nehemiah the Jews themselves made ordinances to charge themselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of God. But this is not the same law as that in Exodus.

The atonement money was to be a "memorial" for the children of Israel before Jehovah. *Memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to something which brings the offerer into favorable remembrance before God. The term is applied to various sacrifices (Lev. 2:2, 9; 5:12; Num. 5:26), and to the memorial stones worn by the priest (Ex. 28:12), and to prayer and alms (Acts 10:4).

11. *What was the laver made of?* (30:17-18; 38:8; I Kings 7:37-38)

The laver was a wash basin made of brass, or, more correctly, bronze (See 25:3). The bronze came from metal that had formerly been in the mirrors owned by the women that ministered at the door of the tent of meeting. (Regarding the women, see I Sam. 2:22 and Luke 2:37.) These mirrors were probably obtained in Egypt (Ex. 12:35-36), where such mirrors were common objects.<sup>5</sup> They were made of flat discs of polished bronze to which was attached a short handle to be held in one hand. The handles were

<sup>5</sup>For photographs of Egyptian mirrors see *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 546; or *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 403.



sometimes ornate, carved, made of ebony, and even covered with gold plate. The reflector and handle would together be about eleven inches long. These would be difficult to obtain out in the wilderness where the Israelites were. But the women seemed willing to sacrifice that which assisted them to acquire beauty of features to make the thing which would give the priests beauty of soul. We admire this sacrifice.

The dimensions and shape of the laver are not given. If only Aaron and his four sons used it, it need not have been large. We doubt that it was shorter than the lowest item of tabernacle furniture, the table, which was a cubit and a half in height (27"). By contrast the molten "sea" where the priests washed in Solomon's temple was huge! (I Kings 7:23; II Chron. 4:2-6.)

A *base* (K.J.V., "foot") is always mentioned with the laver. The fact that they are always referred to separately suggests that they were detached from one another (31:9; 35:16; 39:39; Lev. 8:11). The base was anointed separately from the rest of the laver (Ex. 40:11). The bases under the ten lavers in Solomon's temple were separate from the lavers. These bases in Solomon's temple were bronze four-wheeled carts with side panels engraved with cherubim, lions, and palm-trees (I Kings 7:27-37).

The form of the base supporting the laver in the tabernacle is not described. We do not know whether it was actually coupled to the laver, or whether the laver simply rested on the base. We rather favor the view that they were not coupled to one another.

The fact that a cart-like wheeled base for a laver has been found in Cyprus<sup>6</sup> dating back to 1400-1200 B.C. causes us to think that possibly the base of the laver in the tabernacle may itself have had a similar form, and that this pattern was later adopted for Solomon's temple.

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<sup>6</sup>Werner Keller, *The Bible as History in Pictures* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 190.

Was there water in the base of the laver, as well as in the laver itself? Josephus says there was. (*Ant.* III, vi, 2) Except for the difficulty of washing the feet in a laver probably over two feet above ground, we know no reason to suspect that the base was designed to hold water.

12. *What was the function of the laver?* (30:19-21; 40:30-32)

The priests washed their hands and feet there when they went into the Holy Place and also when they came near to the altar to minister. They were to do this "that they die not." (Compare 28:35.) There is no mention of the priests' washing at the laver *after* they completed their ministrations.

Nothing is stated in Numbers four about the method of packing or transporting the laver or its base.

13. *Of what may the laver have been a type?*

Generally speaking, it was a type of the inner cleansing required of all who serve the Lord. "I will *wash* my hands in innocency: So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah" (Psalm 26:6).

The laver was used both for the *initial* washing of the priests during the consecration ceremony, and *repeatedly* thereafter when they came to minister. We suppose therefore that the laver symbolized the Christian's initial cleansing upon receiving the Lord, and the repeated cleansing he can share thereafter.

The Greek word for *laver* (*loutron*) occurs in Titus 3:5 and Eph. 5:26. Hebrews 10:22 speaks of our "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having our body *washed* with pure water." The "sprinkling" is certainly the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:2). Mentioned with the sprinkling of the blood is the washing of the body in pure water. This would seem to refer to our baptism. Thus, in accord with this, we read in the accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, that after Saul had heard and seen the Lord Jesus, and believed, and repented (even asking, "What shall I do, Lord?"), and prayed (Acts 9:11), the Lord sent the devout Ananias unto him. Ananias came and said to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? arise

and be baptized and *wash* away thy sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16). Note that the inner cleansing from sins occurred at the same time as the outer washing of baptism.

Even after becoming a priest unto God, after being washed in the “laver of regeneration,” the Christian still sins oftentimes and is unclean for the service of God (I John 1:8, 10). In those circumstances he may confess his sins and be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). (The promise in I John 1:9 is addressed to Christians and not to unsaved people.) The repeated washings at the laver would appear to have portrayed this frequent cleansing available to those in Christ.

The view is commonly expressed that it is the WORD (the scriptures) in which Christians are washed. Note Ephesians 5:26. It appears that Eph. 5:26 refers to the initial cleansing of believers, rather than to the cleansings we experience after receiving the Lord. This initial cleansing was accomplished “in word,” that is, in the sphere of the word, wherever the word was preached. In that realm where the word has been proclaimed men may be cleansed by the “washing of water.” The word itself does have cleansing power (Psalm 119:9), but only as a guide to direct us in seeking cleansing in God’s approved way. We take heed to our way *according to* God’s word. Salvation requires more than hearing alone. That word which we hear must be accompanied by faith (Heb. 4:2) and the “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

14. *What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)*

They were made into a holy anointing oil.

Blended with a hin (about a gallon) of olive oil were fifteen hundred shekels weight (about thirty-eight pounds) of spices! This might appear to form a thick mass, not pourable. But information from ancient Mesopotamian (Akkadian) documents indicates that the spices were subjected to a long and complicated process of soaking and boiling in water over a period of many days, so that

at the end of the distillation the fragrance of the spices remained as a liquid, even with the solid materials removed. This distilled fragrance was blended with the oil, and it is to this process that Exodus 30:25 refers.<sup>7</sup> A "perfumer" (or apothecary) made this product.

Spices mentioned include "flowing *myrrh*" (K.J.V., "pure myrrh"). "Flowing" refers to the liquid form, in contrast to the dry gum. This is a resin exuded from branches, stems, and incisions in a thorny shrub, or small tree found in south Arabia and Palestine. Secondly, there was "sweet *cinnamon*," from a tree up to thirty feet tall native to Ceylon. The commercial cinnamon is obtained from its fragrant inner bark. The third spice was the "sweet *calamus*," or "fragrant cane." The plant producing this is an aromatic reed (a perennial grass) that grows in India. Its sap forms the calamus, or ginger grass oil. The fourth spice was a *cassia*. See Psalm 45:8. This is the aromatic bark of a tree in India, Ceylon, and Malaya, similar to cinnamon, but of quality inferior to the true cinnamon. Ezekiel 27:19 mentions cassia and calamus as products of trade with Tyre. The copper "Treasure" scroll of the Dead Sea Cave III mentions a "vessel of incense in cassia wood."<sup>8</sup>

15. *What was anointed?* (30:26-30; 40:9; Num. 7:1)

*Everything* connected with the tabernacle was anointed, including the priests and their garments (29:21). This made everything "most holy" (or "holy of holies"). See notes on 29:37 concerning how those who touched the most holy things became "holy."

Since the anointing oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the thorough anointing of the tabernacle suggests that every aspect of the Christian faith, which the tabernacle symbolized, is anointed with the Holy Spirit, and is therefore touched with the very holiness of God. Our faith is precious with God's own Spirit in every aspect.

Anointing the tent did not mean smearing its entire

<sup>7</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 397. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, II, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup>*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 541.

surface, but just sprinkling a few drops on it.

16. *What restrictions were placed on the anointing oil?* (30:31-33)

The people were not to make any with the same formula. They were not to put it upon the flesh of anyone, Israelite or "stranger." People oftentimes did apply sweet oils to themselves (Prov. 27:9; Ps. 104:15). But this oil was for the tabernacle and the priests only. Anyone appropriating it for himself would be "cut off" from his people. This probably meant he would be executed. (See notes on 31:14.) Some have thought that being "cut off" was a punishment imposed by heaven, in that the transgressor would die before his time, leaving no children. A similar restriction was placed on the making of the holy incense (30:38).

17. *What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make?*

They were used to make a special incense to be burned only on the altar of incense. On the spiritual significance of incense, see notes on 30:10.

The spices and frankincense were mingled together in quantities of equal weight. These ingredients were "seasoned with salt" (K.J.V., "tempered together"). While the Hebrew verb here certainly can be translated as "to be salted," it does also appear here to mean "tempered" or "mixed" together. A similar meaning is given in the Greek LXX (*memigmenon*, mingled).

*Frankincense* is a light-colored (yellow or milky) resin exuded from incisions in the bark of the frankincense tree, which is native to Arabia and northern India. It forms beads which are easily ground into powder, and emit a balsamlike odor when burned. *Stacte* is a highly perfumed gum resin that exudes from the incised bark of the storax tree. The tree has a whitish color and grows in Palestine on dry hillsides with the oaks and terebinths. Another identification of stacte is the opobalsamum. *Onycha* is thought to be the covering flaps from certain mussel shells found in India. (Others say from the Red Sea.) When

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\*J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 354.

burned, this tissue gives a very pungent odor resembling musk. Its smell adds strength to the smell of other materials mixed with it. It was very costly. *Galbanum* seems to have been the gum resin excreted from the lower parts of stems of several species of *Ferula* herbs that grow in the Holy Land. When hardened tears of this resin are burned, the odor is pungent; but the effect when mixed with other spices is pleasant.

18. *Where was incense placed?* (30:36)

Incense was placed in the tent of meeting (the Holy Place), near the testimony (the ten commandments in the ark), where God met with Israel. It was burned on the altar of incense.

Note that the incense was beaten very small, probably in a mortar. This "smallness" might well remind us that when we come to God in prayer, we need to be "beaten small." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

19. *What restriction was placed on making the incense?* (30:37-38)

No one was to make any for themselves so they could smell of it.

If incense is a symbol of prayer, the stern rule about not making any of the special incense for men's own use and pleasure suggests that we dare not pray to anyone except the true God, who alone is worthy of prayer.

Regarding the penalty of "cutting off," see notes on 31:14 and 30:33.

Cole<sup>10</sup> tells that Knobel tried to reproduce the incense formula and found it to be "strong, refreshing, and very agreeable." To a Jew such an experiment would have meant death. His experiment is made even less worthwhile because the identification of some of the spices in the incense is rather uncertain.

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<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 208. Cole refers to Driver as his source of information.