

**The Altar of Sacrifice:
The Heart of the Temple Compound**

Ezekiel 43:12–27

Veritas Adult Community
The Commons, College Church

July 11, 2021

The Scripture

¹²This is the Torah of the House. All its surrounding territory at the top of the mountain shall be absolutely holy. Look! This is the Torah of the House.

¹³Now these are the dimensions of the altar in cubits (a cubit being one normal cubit plus a handbreadth). Its gutter was one cubit [deep] and one cubit wide, with a curb of one span around its edge. This is the base of the altar. ¹⁴From the bottom gutter to the [top of] the lower wall was two cubits, and its width was one cubit. From the lower wall to the [top of] the higher one was four cubits, and its width was one cubit. ¹⁵The altar hearth was four cubits [high]; and from the hearth four horns projected upwards. ¹⁶The hearth was twelve cubits long by twelve cubits wide, a four-sided square. ¹⁷The wall consisted of four equal sides; it was fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. The curb running around it was one-half cubit and together with its gutter one cubit wide all around, and its stairway faced toward the east.

¹⁸Then he said to me, “Human, this is what the Lord YHWH has declared: These are the ordinances concerning the altar [to be observed] on the day when it is constructed, for offering up whole burnt offerings on it and for dashing blood upon it. ¹⁹For a purification offering you shall deliver a young bull to the Levitical priests who are from the line of Zadok, and thus may approach me—the declaration of the Lord—to render priestly service to me. ²⁰You shall take some of its blood and smear it on its four horns, the four sides of the [upper] ledge, and the surrounding curb. Thus you shall decontaminate it and purge it. ²¹Then you shall take the bull [chosen for] the purification offering and have them burn it by the House guard outside the sanctuary. ²²On the second day you shall present an unblemished young goat as a purification offering. They shall decontaminate the altar just as they had done with the bull. ²³When you have completed the decontamination ritual you shall offer an unblemished young bull of the herd as well as an unblemished ram of the flock. ²⁴When you present them before YHWH, the priest shall sprinkle salt on them and offer them as a whole burnt offering to YHWH. ²⁵Each day, for seven days, you shall prepare a goat as a sin offering. They shall also prepare a young bull of the herd and a ram of the flock, both unblemished. ²⁶For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar, thereby purifying it and ordaining it [for divine service]. ²⁷Thus they are to complete the period. Then from the eighth day onwards, the priests may sacrifice your whole burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar, and I will accept you. The declaration of the Lord YHWH.

Exposition

Introduction: Structure

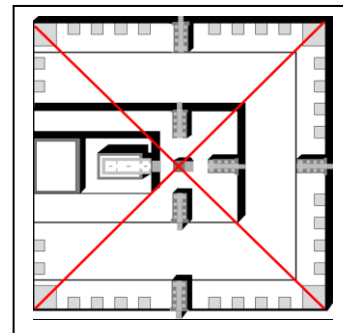
1. Thematic Introduction (v. 12)
2. A Detailed Description of the Altar (vv. 13–18)
3. The Consecration Ritual for the Altar (vv. 19–27)

A. What is the genre of this passage as a whole (v. 12)?

“This is the Torah of the House”

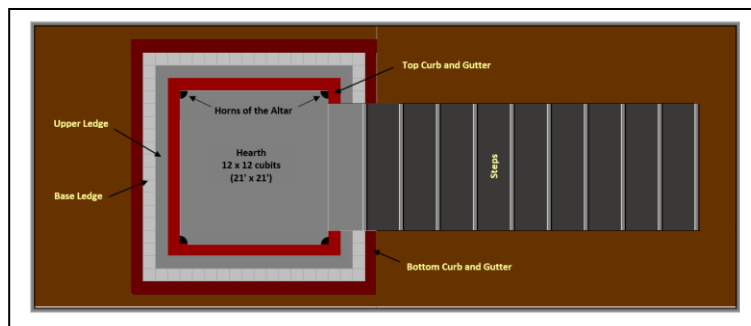
B. What do we learn about this Altar (vv. 13–17)?

1. The descendants of Zadok were charged with responsibly for the care of and the rituals involving the altar (40:46).
2. We should not confuse this altar with the “stone table” that goes by the same name (*mizbēah*, 41:22; 44:16).
3. The altar was located in front of the House but at the absolute center of the 500-cubit-square temple compound (40:47).
4. Two gutters/trenches preserve the sanctity of the altar and the ground around it (vv. 13, 17)
5. The altar is huge (The top is 21' x 21').
6. The hearth at the top is a perfect twelve-cubit square with horns on each corner.
7. The stairway faced east (v. 17).



C. What is the significance of this revelation of the altar (vv. 18–27)?

1. The Participate in the consecration and decontamination rituals
 - a. The prophet Ezekiel
 - b. Levitical priests descended from Zadok
2. The Rituals involved in the Consecration and Decontamination of the altar?
 - Day 1 (vv. 19–21)
 - Day 2 (vv. 22–24)
 - Days 3–7 (vv. 25–27)
2. The Point of the Ritual (v. 27)



C. Lessons from Ezekiel's Altar Text

1. The altar symbolizes the delight that YHWH finds in the worship of his people.
2. God has designed and revealed a way of acceptable worship.
3. Even in the new order defilement threatens fellowship with God.
4. In the light of the sacrifice of Christ, Christians may rejoice because:
 - (a) They have a mediator superior in quality and effectiveness to Moses and Ezekiel (Heb 3);
 - (b) They have a permanent high priest who has direct access to the heavenly throne of God and who offers perpetual intercession on their behalf (Heb. 4:14–7:28);
 - (c) The blood of a perfectly unblemished sacrifice has purchased our favor with God and eliminated the need for any further sacrifices (Heb. 9:1–10:31).