

## MIDDOTH, OR THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE TEMPLE.

WITH THE COMMENTARY OF RABBI OBADIAH OF BARTENORA.

*(Continued.)*

## CHAPTER II.

1. THE mountain of the house was five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits.<sup>1</sup> Its greatest space was on the south, the second on the east,<sup>2</sup> the third on the north, the smallest on the west. That space which had the largest measurement was most used.

2. All who entered the mountain of the house entered on the right hand and went round and out on the left hand,<sup>3</sup> except one to whom something had happened, who went round to the left. "And what aileth thee that thou goest to the left?"<sup>4</sup> "Because I am in mourning," "May He who dwelleth in this house comfort thee." "Because I am excommunicate," "May He who dwelleth in this house put into their hearts that they may restore thee." The words of Rabbi Meyer. Rabbi Jose said to him, "thou hast made them *appear* as if they had transgressed against him in judgment,<sup>5</sup> but *what they said was*, "may He who dwelleth in this house put into thy heart that thou listen to the words of thy fellows and they shall restore thee."<sup>6</sup>

3. Inside of this<sup>7</sup> was the *soreg*<sup>8</sup> [or reticulated wall], ten hand-breadths high; and thirteen breaches were there which the Greek kings made. *The Jews* built them up again and ordained thirteen obeisances opposite

<sup>1</sup> Surrounded on all sides by a wall.

<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the distance from the wall of the mountain of the house to the wall of the court on the south side exceeded the distance which was between them on the eastern side; and the distance which was between them on the eastern side exceeded the distance which was between them on the northern side, and the northern *space was* greater than the western.

<sup>3</sup> As if those entering by the Huldah gates, which were on the right, went round by way of the gate Tadi.

<sup>4</sup> They asked him "what aileth thee, that thou goest to the left?" He said, "because I am mourning." They said, "may He who dwells in this house comfort thee."

<sup>5</sup> If they said so to him, it would appear that those, his colleagues, had perverted judgment, and that his excommunication was not according to the *halachah* [not according to the decision of the oral law].

<sup>6</sup> Since it was understood that he had done something not allowed by the law for which penance was necessary. The decision was according to Rabbi Jose.

<sup>7</sup> Inside the mountain of the house.

<sup>8</sup> A partition (or wall) made full of holes, like a bedstead netted with cords. It was made of long and short pieces of wood placed one upon another obliquely.

them.<sup>9</sup> Within this<sup>10</sup> was the *chel* [or rampart], ten cubits *wide*, and twelve steps were there,<sup>11</sup> the height of *each* step<sup>12</sup> half a cubit and the tread<sup>13</sup> half a cubit. All the steps which were there were half a cubit high and the tread half a cubit, except those of the porch.<sup>14</sup> All the gateways and gates which were there were twenty cubits high and ten cubits broad, except *that* of the porch.<sup>15</sup> All the gateways which were there had doors except that of the porch. All the gates that were there had lintels,<sup>16</sup> except the gate Tadi, where two stones inclined one upon another. All the gates which were there were covered with gold [literally, were changed to be of gold], except *the doors* of the gate Nicanor, because a miracle<sup>17</sup> happened to them, and some say because their brass glittered like gold.<sup>18</sup>

4. All the walls which were there<sup>19</sup> were high, except the eastern wall,<sup>20</sup> in order that the priest who burned the cow, standing on the top of the Mount of Olives,<sup>21</sup> might see straight through the doorway of the Temple at the time of sprinkling the blood.

<sup>9</sup> When one came opposite either of the breaches, he bowed himself, and acknowledged *with thankfulness* the destruction of the Greek kings.

<sup>10</sup> Within this reticulated wall was a vacant space of ten cubits, which was called *chel* (rampart).

<sup>11</sup> In order to go up thence into the court of the women.

<sup>12</sup> Each step was half a cubit higher than the adjoining one, and also the first step was half a cubit high from the floor.

<sup>13</sup> The breadth of the step, which was the place for the tread of the feet, half a cubit.

<sup>14</sup> Except the steps which were between the porch and the altar, which were not all thus, as is taught in Chapter III.

<sup>15</sup> It is taught in the following chapter that the height of *the porch* was forty cubits, and its breadth twenty.

<sup>16</sup> A stone resting upon the two side posts against which the door struck, שַׁקְוֹפּוֹת, has the meaning of שַׁקְוֵי, "upper door post" (Exod. xii, 7). [Buxtorf derives the word שַׁקְוֵי from שָׁקַף, *percutere, pulsare*, "Quia a jauna subinde percutitus.]"

<sup>17</sup> As is explained in the third chapter of *the treatise* "Yoma."

<sup>18</sup> Like gilded things (מְזוּחָבוֹת), whose appearance is like gold, so that it was not necessary to make them of gold.

<sup>19</sup> In all the buildings of the mountain of the house. They were very high, in order that all the gateways which were in them might be twenty cubits high, besides what was above the gateway.

<sup>20</sup> This was the lower *gate* at the foot of the mountain of the house.

<sup>21</sup> Har-Hammishcha: this is the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. The face of the priest being towards the west he could see the door of the Temple over the top of the wall, through the gates which were within it, whilst sprinkling the blood, as it is written (Numb. xix, 4), "and sprinkle directly before the tabernacle of the congregation." And if the wall had been high, notwithstanding that the gates were all arranged one opposite the other, the gate of the mountain of the house opposite the gate of the court of the women, *that* of the court of the women opposite the gate of the great court, and

5. The court of the women was one hundred and thirty-five *cubits*<sup>22</sup> long by one hundred and thirty-five *cubits* broad.<sup>23</sup> There were four chambers at its four corners, each of forty cubits, and they were not roofed. And thus they will be in the future, as it is said (Ezek. xli, 21), "then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was a court.*" In the four corners of the court there were courts smoking (קטורות, "joined," A.V.), and the reason why [it is said] "smoking" is that they were not roofed.<sup>24</sup> And what were their uses? The south-eastern was the chamber of the Nazarites, because there the Nazarites cooked their peace-offerings and shaved their hair and cast it under the pot.<sup>25</sup> The north-eastern was the chamber of wood, for there the priests who had blemishes picked the wood,<sup>26</sup> and every piece in which was found a worm was unlawful for the top of the altar. The north-western was the chamber of the lepers.<sup>27</sup> The south-western, Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Jacob, said, "I forget what was its use."<sup>28</sup> Aba Saul said, "there they put wine and oil. It was called the chamber of the house of oil. *The court of the women* was plane at first,<sup>29</sup> and they surrounded it with a balcony,<sup>30</sup> so that the women could see from above

the gate of the great court opposite the doorway of the Temple, it would not have been possible to see the doorway of the Temple through the gateways, because the mountain went and rose and ascended, until the floor of the doorway of the Temple was twenty-two cubits higher than the floor at the foot of the mountain of the house, and the threshold of the Temple was two cubits higher than the lintel of the *eastern* gateway of the mountain of the house, for the gateway of the mountain of the house was only twenty cubits high, as is taught above, so that the priest who slaughtered the cow could not see the hollow of the doorway of the Temple through that gateway.

<sup>22</sup> From east to west.

<sup>23</sup> From north to south.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Genesis xix, 28, "the smoke of the country went up;" it is the same as to say מעלות עשן, causing the smoke to go up, because there was no roof to them.

<sup>25</sup> To burn it in the fire which was under the pot in which they boiled their peace-offerings, as it is written (Numb. vi, 18), "put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace-offerings."

<sup>26</sup> They rejected the pieces of wood in which was found a worm because they were unlawful for the fire of the altar.

<sup>27</sup> Because there the lepers bathed on the eighth day for their cleansing when they came to put their hands inside the gate of the court to have their thumbs touched with the blood of the trespass-offering, and the oil, and this bathing was requisite, even though he had bathed the evening before.

<sup>28</sup> R. Eliezer ben Jacob said, "I forget what was its use." It is understood from this, that all the above was spoken by R. Eliezer ben Jacob, and thus it is taught in the Gamara of Yoma (16 a), that in Middoth the simple Mishna was taught by Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob.

<sup>29</sup> And it was plane at the first. The explanation of Rambam is פרוצה, breached (or open), not surrounded by a wall.

<sup>30</sup> A balcony. They surrounded the court of the women with a kind of gallery, so that the women stood above upon the gallery, and the men below, to

and the men from below, in order that they might not be mixed. And fifteen steps<sup>31</sup> went up from within it to the Court of Israel, corresponding to the fifteen songs of degrees in the psalms, because upon them the Levites stood and chanted. They were not long and straight,<sup>32</sup> but curved like the half of a round threshing-floor.

6. And there were chambers under the court of Israel which opened into the court of the women, and there the Levites placed their harps and psalteries, and cymbals, and all instruments of song. The court of Israel was one hundred and thirty five cubits long by eleven broad, and also the court of the priests was one hundred and thirty five cubits long, by eleven broad, and pointed pieces of wood<sup>33</sup> divided between the court of Israel and the court of the priests. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said "a step a cubit high<sup>34</sup> was *there*, and upon it the desk<sup>35</sup> was placed, and in it were three steps of half a cubit each, so that the court of the priests was two cubits and a half higher than the court of Israel. The whole court<sup>36</sup> was one hundred and eighty seven cubits long, by one hundred and thirty-five broad.<sup>37</sup> And thirteen obeisances were *made* there. Aba Jose ben Khanan said "opposite *the* thirteen gates."<sup>38</sup> The southern gates near to the west *were* the upper gate, the gate of kindling, the gate of the first-born, and the water-gate. And why was it called the water-gate? Because through it they brought in the pitcher of water for the drink-offering of the Feast of Tabernacles. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said "and through it the waters ran, and in the future they will go out from under the threshold of the house." And opposite to them on the north, near to the west, the gate of Jechoniah, the gate of the offering, the gate of the women, *and* the gate of song. And why was it called the gate of Jechoniah? Because through it Jechoniah passed out when he went into captivity. That on the east was the gate Nicanor. And it had two wickets, one on its right and one on its left. The two on the west had no name.

see, at the rejoicings of the beth hashshavavah *at the Feast of Tabernacles*, in order that they might not be tempted to levity.

<sup>31</sup> The height of the floor of the court of Israel above the court of the women.

<sup>32</sup> *Not* long and angular like ordinary steps, but round, like half of a round threshing-floor.

<sup>33</sup> The heads of beams projecting and sticking out from the wall to distinguish between the court of Israel and the court of the priests.

<sup>34</sup> In the court of Israel. Its length corresponded to the length of the whole court.

<sup>35</sup> The desk of the Levites was built upon it, and made like a kind of raised seat (*atztaba*). The height of the desk was a cubit and a half, and in it were three steps of half a cubit each, by which they went up to the desk.

<sup>36</sup> From the commencement of the court of Israel to the vacant space of eleven cubits which was behind the house of atonement.

<sup>37</sup> From north to south.

<sup>38</sup> Which he immediately enumerates. And he who said there were seven gates to the court, explains the thirteen obeisances as corresponding to the thirteen breaches which the Greek kings made in the *Soreg*, as we have said above in this Chapter. The whole Mishna is explained in the first Chapter.