

BETH HABBECHEREH, OR THE CHOSEN HOUSE—

continued.

CHAPTER V.

1. THE mountain of the house, which was Mount Moriah, was five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits, and it was surrounded by a wall.¹ And arches were built upon arches beneath it, because of the tent of defilement.² And it was all roofed over, cloister within cloister.³

2. And there were five gates to it; one on the west, and one on the east, and one on the north, and two on the south.⁴ The breadth of each gate was ten cubits and its height twenty. And there were doors to them.⁵

3. Inside of it, a reticulated wall [*called soreg*] went all round. Its height was ten handbreadths,⁶ and inside of the *soreg* the rampart⁷ ten

¹ Middoth ii, 1, and i, 1.

² Parah iii, 3. "The mountain of the house and the courts were hollow underneath because of הַתְּהוֹם קָבֵר, the grave of the abyss," *i.e.*, lest there should be a hidden grave beneath.

³ Pesachim i, 5. "Rabbi Judah said two cakes of a thank-offering which had become defiled were put upon the roof of the porch, עַל גַּב הַאֵיצְטָבָא," and Rashi remarks that this porch was a סַטְיוֹ = *στωα*, *cloister*, which was "in the mountain of the house where the people assembled and sat." The Gemara upon the same passage (Pesach. 13 *b*) says "Rabbi Judah said that the mountain of the house was a double cloister . . . which was called אֲסַטְוֹנִית, a porch, a cloister within a cloister," and here Rashi adds that it was furnished with a roof to protect the people from the rain, and that the porch, אֵיצְטָבָא, went all round, סָבִיב סָבִיב מִקַּפֵּת, and had another inside it. In Pesach. 52 *b*, and Berachoth 33 *b*, this remark of Rabbi Judah is again noted, and in the former place Rashi explains that "double porches, אֵיצְטָבָאוֹת, were all round the mountain of the house one within the other." In Succah iv, 4, it is stated that the elders arranged the palm-branches of the people at the Feast of Tabernacles "upon the top of the porch," and here again the gloss of Rashi adds that the breadth, רַחְבָּהּ, of the mountain of the house was surrounded by covered cloisters." These cloisters and their roof are again mentioned in Succah 44 *b* and 45 *a*. According to the Talmud, therefore, a roofed double cloister extended all round the mountain of the house, but for the statement of Maimonides that the whole enclosure was roofed over (if that be the meaning of מְקוּרָה הִיא מְקוּרָה) I find no authority in the Talmud.

⁴ Middoth i, 1, 3.

⁵ Middoth ii, 3.

⁶ This reticulated wall (סוֹרֵג, *soreg*) is mentioned in Middoth ii, 3. The gloss of R. Shemaiah says "it was made of carved pieces of wood, מְקַלְיוֹת עֲצִים, intertwined one upon the other obliquely as they weave bedsteads." Rashi in Yoma 16 *a* says the *soreg* was "a partition made with many holes in it like a bedstead woven with cords, and was constructed of long and short pieces of wood called a lattice placed one upon another obliquely" (*cf.* Bartenora). I do not know that it is anywhere stated in the text of the Talmud whether the *soreg* was of stone or of wood.

⁷ חֵיל, *chel*. The word גִּבְהוֹ (its height) is placed between brackets, and is perhaps an interpolation of the transcribers. That the *chel* was a space and not

cubits (in height). It is this which is spoken of in the Lamentations (ii, 8), "He made the rampart and the wall to lament;" that is the wall of the court.

4. Within the *chel* was the court, and the whole court was one hundred and eighty-seven cubits long by one hundred and thirty-five broad.⁸ And it had seven gates, three on the north, near to the west, and three on the south near to the west, and one on the east,⁹ set opposite the Holy of Holies in the middle.¹⁰

5. Each of these gates was ten cubits broad, and twenty cubits high, and they had doors covered with gold, except the eastern gate, which was

a wall is proved by several passages in the Talmud. In Sanhedrim 88 *b*, it is said "on sabbaths and feast days they (the members of the court) sat in the *chel*." Rashi adds "because the people were many and the place in the chamber too narrow for them." Pesachim 64 *b*, notes that "the first company (bringing their lambs at the Passover) remained in the mountain of the house, and the second in the *chel*," and here Rashi has the important note that it was "within the soreg, between the soreg and the wall of the court of the women, where the mountain began to rise." Baal Aruch says the *chel* was a place surrounding the wall between the mountain of the house and the court of the women, and that there was a great divinity school, מדרש גדול, in it.

In Kelim 5 *b*, we read "the *chel* was more sacred than the mountain of the house, because idolaters and those defiled by the dead might not enter there." Not improbably there was a rampart, perhaps with an escarp at the inner side of the open space, and joined to the wall of the courts, and to this the door of the house Moked opened (Midd. i, 7). The remark of Baal Aruch "that the *chel* was a wall higher than the soreg" would in this case be intelligible, and it may have been such a wall which some have supposed to have been ten cubits in height.

R. Lipsitz thinks that four cubits of the *chel* were level, and the remaining six on the rising ground, and that those six cubits were occupied by the steps up to the court, which steps he holds to have extended all round the house for the people to sit upon, and he founds this opinion upon the passages in Pesachim (13 *b*, 52 *b*) above quoted, and the gloss of Rashi. This learned Rabbi also holds that these steps and all the mountain of the house outside of the inner wall (the wall of the courts) were roofed over, and that probably seats were placed on the level ground outside the soreg (Mishnaoth, vol. v, 311 *b*, Warsaw 1864). Rashi, in Yoma 16 *a*, remarks that the twelve steps leading from the *chel* to the court of the women were באותן יאמות "in those ten cubits" which formed the breadth of the *chel*, because the mountain rose from the Soreg to the court of the women six cubits, and he farther adds, in reference to these steps, that "in breadth each step was half a cubit, and in length extended, כמשך, along the whole breadth of the mountain from north to south." Of the *chel* he says that it was "a vacant place of ten cubits."

⁸ Middoth v, 1, 2, 6.

⁹ Middoth i, 4: cf. *ib.* ii, 6, and Shekalim vi, 3.

¹⁰ Berachoth ix, 5. "A man may not raise his head lightly (*i.e.*, indulge in levity) opposite the eastern gate, because that is set opposite the Holy of Holies."

covered with brass resembling gold, and that gate was what was called the upper gate, and it was the gate Nicanor.¹¹

6. The court was not set in the middle of the mountain of the house, but its distance from the south of the mountain of the house was greater than that from all *the other* sides, and its nearness to the west greater than that to all *the other* sides. And the space between it and the north was greater than that between it and the west, and *that* between it and the east greater than that which was between it and the north.¹²

7. And before the court on the east was the court of the women, which was one hundred and thirty-five cubits long by one hundred and thirty-five cubits broad. And at its four corners were four chambers of forty cubits by forty, and they were not roofed, and thus they will be in the future.

8. And what was their use? The south-eastern chamber *was* the chamber of the Nazarites, because there they cooked their peace-offerings and shaved off their hair (Num. vi, 18); the north-eastern was the chamber for storing wood, and there the priest who had blemishes removed the worms upon the wood, because every piece of wood in which there was a worm was unlawful *for the altar*.¹⁴ The north-western *was* the chamber of the lepers. In the south-western they put oil and wine, and it was called the chamber of the house of oil.¹⁵

9. The court of the women was surrounded by a balcony,¹⁶ in order

¹¹ Middoth ii, 3. In Succah v, 4, it is said "the two priests stood at the upper gate which led down from the court of Israel into the court of the women." That this was the gate Nicanor appears from Middoth i, 4, "the gate on the east of the court was the gate Nicanor" (cf. Yoma 19 a). Rashi in his note on Sotah i, 5, says "the gate of Nicanor was the upper gate, which was in the wall that was between the court of Israel and the court of the women." To this gate suspected women were brought to drink the bitter waters of jealousy (Num. v.), and lepers and women after childbirth were cleansed at it (Sotah i, 5; Negaim xiv, 8). R. Shemaiah also, on Kelim 5 b, says, "the gate Nicanor was the gate of the court of Israel." In Kle Hammikdash vii, 6, Maimonides remarks, "the upper gate was the gate Nicanor. And why was it called the upper gate? Because it was above the court of the women."

¹² Middoth ii, 1. The Tosefoth Yom Tob gives the following measurements of the several spaces:—

		Cubits.			Cubits.
Northern space	.. ..	115	Eastern space	.. ..	213
Southern "	.. ..	250	Western "	.. ..	100
Court..	.. ..	135	Court	.. ..	287
		500			600

¹³ Middoth ii, 5.

¹⁴ For the chamber of wood, see also Shekalim vi, 2.

¹⁵ Middoth ii, 5.

¹⁶ גזוזטרה, *tabulatum*; in Middoth ii, 5, it is called כציצורה, *tabula, asser cui aliquid imponitur* (Buxtorf). This balcony is said by R. Shemaiah and by Bartenora to have been for the accommodation of the women during the rejoicings

that the women might see from above and the men from below, and so not be mixed. And there was a large house on the northern side of the court outside, between the court and the rampart (*chel*); it was arched and surrounded by stone benches, and it was called *Beth Hammoked*, the House Moked. There were two gates to it, one opening to the court and one opening to the *chel*.¹⁷

10. And there were four chambers in it, two holy and two profane, and pointed pieces of wood¹⁸ distinguished between the holy and the profane. And for what did they serve? The south-western *was* the chamber of the lambs,¹⁹ the south-eastern the chamber for making the shewbread, in the north-eastern the family of the Asmoneans laid up the stones of the altar which the Greek kings defiled, and in the north-western they went down to the bathing-room.

11. A person descending to the bath-room²⁰ from this chamber went by the gallery which ran under the whole Sanctuary,²¹ and the lamps at the Feast of Tabernacles, and they take this opinion from the Gamara (Succah 51 *b*), which explains that the erection of this balcony was part of the "great preparations" which were made on that occasion. "At first the women were within and the men without, and when they began to indulge in levity it was arranged that the women should be outside, and the men inside, and seeing that the occasion of levity still arose they arranged for the women to be above and the men below" (Gamara, *loc. cit.*). Rashi upon this passage remarks that in the court of the women there were originally no beams, ן״ג, projecting from the walls, and that afterwards they placed beams jutting from the walls all round, and every year arranged these balconies of planks, upon which the women might stand and witness the rejoicings of the Beth Hashshavavah." Both Middoth and Maimonides speak of these balconies as if they were permanent.

¹⁷ Middoth i, 5, 7, 8.

¹⁸ ן״ג, *pieces of wood* (Rashi in Yoma 15 *b*). "Ends of beams projecting from the wall" Bartenora (*cf.* Middoth i, 6; ii, 6; iv, 5). They do not appear to have formed a partition, but only to have been a sign indicating the limits of the holy and profane parts of the house.

¹⁹ Middoth i, 6, where it is called the chamber of the lambs for the offering. In Tamid iii, 3, the chamber of the lambs is said to have been at the south-western corner, which evidently refers to its position in relation to the altar and court of the priests, and shows the position of the house Moked itself without contradicting the statement of Middoth and our author. There can hardly be a doubt that it was, as here stated, at the south-western corner of Moked, though the gloss on Tamid says it was on the north-west of that house (*cf.* Yoma 15 *b*, and Tosefot Yom Tov on Tamid iii, 3).

²⁰ בית הטבילה, *domus lavaeri*, house of bathing or dipping. The bathing here practised differed from baptism in the usual modern signification of the term, inasmuch as it was not an initiatory rite, and might be repeated.

²¹ In Tamid i, 1, it is "under the Birah!" "What is Birah? Rabbah, son of Bar Chanah, said that R. Johanan said there was a place in the mountain of the house, the name of which was Birah, and Reioh Lakish said all the house was called Birah," as is said (1 Chron. xxix, 19) "and to build the palace, *birah*, for which I have made provision" (Zevach. 1c4 *b*). Maimonides here uses the

burned on either side until he came to the bathing-room. And there was a large fire²² there and an excellent²³ watercloset, and this was its excellence, that if he found it shut he knew there was some one inside.

12. The length of the court from east to west *was* a hundred and eighty-seven *cubits*, and these were the measurements, viz., from the western wall of the court to the wall of the temple (הַיִּבֵּי) eleven cubits, the length of the whole temple a hundred cubits, between the porch and the altar two and twenty, the altar two and thirty, the place of the tread of the feet of the priests, which was called the court of the priests, eleven cubits, the place of the tread of the feet of Israel, which was called the court of Israel, eleven cubits.²⁴

13. The breadth of the court from north to south *was* a hundred and thirty-five *cubits*, and these were the measurements,²⁵ viz., from the north wall to the shambles eight cubits, the shambles twelve cubits and a half : and there on the side they hung up and skinned the holy sacrifices.

14. The place of the tables was eight cubits, and in it were marble tables, upon which they laid the pieces of the offerings and washed the flesh to prepare it for being boiled. These were eight tables. And by the side of the place of the tables was the place of the rings, twenty-four cubits, and there they slaughtered the holy sacrifices.

15. Between the place of the rings and the altar *was* eight cubits, and the altar two and thirty, and the sloping ascent to the altar (כֶּבֶשׁ, *Kebeah*) thirty, and between the sloping ascent and the south wall twelve cubits and a half. From the north wall of the court to the wall of the altar, which was the breadth, was sixty *cubits* and a half, and corresponding to it from the wall of the porch to the east wall of the court, which was the length seventy-six.²⁶

term מִקְדָּשׁ, *mikdash*, as synonymous with *birah*. Bartenora, in Pesachim vii, 8, and again in Tamid, remarks that "the whole of the Sanctuary was called Birah." The gallery here spoken of, מִסְבָּה, *ambitus, circuitus*, was subterranean, הַקִּרְקַע תַּחַת (Beth Habbec. viii, 7). It opened into the profane part of the enclosure, and was consequently not holy.

²² A wood fire, מִדֹרֶה, *Cf.* Isaiah xxx, 33; Ezekiel xxiv, 9, 10.

²³ *Lit.* honourable, שֵׁל כְּבוֹד. The whole of this section is from Tamid i, 1.

²⁴ Middoth v, 1.

²⁵ Middoth v, 1.

²⁶ In Middoth v, 2, where the measurements of the court from north to south are given, a remainder of twenty-five cubits is said to have been "between the sloping ascent and the wall and the place of the pillars," and Maimonides has allotted one-half of this measurement to the former space, and one-half to the latter, the result of which is to place the central line of the altar nine cubits south of the central line of the door of the Temple and of the court. His authority for this is the Gamara of Yoma 16 *b*, for although R. Judah maintained (*loc. cit.* and Zevach. 58 *b*) that the altar "was placed in the middle of the court, and measured thirty-two cubits, ten cubits opposite the door of the Temple הַיִּבֵּל, eleven cubits to the north and eleven cubits to the south," the

16. All this quadrangle was called "north," and it was the place in which they slaughtered the most holy sacrifices.²⁷

17. There were eight²⁸ chambers in the court of Israel, three on the other rabbis disputed that opinion, bringing forward the passage in Middoth v, 2, to prove that "the greatest part of the altar lays to the south."

The following are the measurements given by the three chief authorities:—

	Middoth and Gamara of Yoma.	Maimonides.	Rashi.
From north wall to place of the pillars	8	8	8
Place of pillars	12½ (?)	12½	10½
From pillars to tables	4	..	4
Place of tables .. .. .	..	8	4
From tables to rings .. .. .	..	..	4
Place of rings	24	24	24
From rings to altar	4	8	8
Altar	38	32	32
Sloping ascent	32	30	30
Between sloping ascent and south wall	10½ (?)	12½	10½
	135	135	135

According to Maimonides, therefore, twenty-five cubits, and according to Rashi, twenty-seven cubits of the altar were south of the central line of the court. Rashi, in his elaborate note on this subject in Yoma 16 b, explains that the northern side of the altar extended just as far as the northern doorpost of the central gates, and that the receding of the foundation and circuit of the altar (Midd. iii, 1) left two cubits on the northern side of the top of the lower gate (that east of the court of the women) not obstructed, and that it was through this small space the priest standing on the Mount of Olives could see into the door of the Temple (Midd. ii, 3). It will be remembered that the summit of the altar was exactly twenty cubits above the floor of the court of the women, and that consequently the aperture of the lower gate was obstructed by it to the top, except on its northern side, if Rashi's supposition as to its position is correct, and on the south of the northern horn where one cubit would be left above the altar, through which a person could see into the Temple if his eye were placed in a line with the lintel or not more than one cubit below it. As to the priest on the summit of the Mount of Olives looking through the gateway, this will appear hardly possible when it is remembered how much higher the Mount of Olives is than the Temple Hill. He must have looked *over* the eastern wall and *over* the lower gate.

²⁷ Zevachim 20 a.

²⁸ Middoth v, 3 and i, 4, and Yoma 19 a. In Yoma the chambers on the north and south are placed as Maimonides here places them, but in Middoth the chambers of salt, of Parvah, and of the washings are placed on the north, and the other three on the south.

north and three on the south. Those on the south were the chamber of salt, the chamber of Parvah,²⁹ and the chamber of washing. In the chamber of salt they put salt to the offering, in the chamber Parvah they salted the skins of the holy sacrifices, and on its roof was the bathing-room for the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement.³⁰ In the chamber of washings they washed the inwards of the holy sacrifices, and from it a winding staircase (מסיבה) ascended to the roof of the house of Parvah. And the three on the north were the chamber of hewn stone,³¹ the chamber of the draw-well, and the chamber of wood. In the chamber of hewn stone the great Sanhedrim sat, and half of it was holy and half was profane; and it had two doors, one to the holy and one to the profane part, and the Sanhedrim sat in the profane half. In the chamber of the draw-well³²

²⁹ R. Shemaiah on Middoth (37 b) says that the name Parvah was derived from פרים, *parim*, young bulls, because it was the skins of the oxen offered as sacrifices which were salted in it. Baal Aruch quotes from Yoma 35 a, "What is Parvah? R. Josef said Parvah was אמגושה, *amgusah*, a magician," and explains "Parvah was the name of a certain *magus*, and some of the wise men say that he dug a hollow place underground in the Sanctuary so that he might see the service of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement; that the wise men became aware of the pit which he had dug in that place, and found him, and that the chamber was called after his name." Maimonides in his comment on Middoth says "Parvah was the name of a magician who dug in the wall of the court in this chamber until he could see the service; and he was killed." Since the service of the Day of Atonement was chiefly performed on the northern side of the court, this story is a confirmation of the statement of Middoth that the chamber of Parvah was on the northern side. Bartenora, quoting Rashi (on Yoma iii, 6), remarks "a certain magician, מכשף, named Parvah, built this chamber, and it was called after his name;" and in his work on Middoth v, 3, the same writer intimates that the chamber was built by magic. Parvah was in the sacred part of the Temple enclosure (Yoma iii, 3, 6).

³⁰ Yoma iii, 3, 6.

³¹ לשכת הגזית. The chamber Gazith. The Gamara of Yoma (25 a) says "it was like a large basilica; the lots were on the east, the elders sat on the west," so that its long diameter appears to have been east and west. That one half of it was holy and one half profane is stated on the same page. The reason why the Sanhedrim sat in the profane half is that only kings of the House of David might sit in the court (*loc. cit.*). The Tosefoth Yom Tov (Midd. v, 4) says the chamber of the draw-well was south, and the chamber of wood to the north of the chamber Gazith.

³² לשכת הנולה. Lightfoot calls it the room of the draw-well, because there was in it a wheel with which to draw water. Middoth (in some copies) speaks of the בור הנולה, the well of the captivity, being placed in it, and this well is said to have been dug by those who came up from the captivity, and to have given its name to the chamber (Bartenora and Tosefoth Yom Tov). This well is mentioned in Erubin x, 14. "They were permitted to draw water from the well of the captivity and from the great well on the Sabbath." R. Shemaiah, in Middoth, says it had sweet water for drinking and a pipe or reservoir, אמת, of water for washing (*cf.* Jer. Yoma 41 a, 1). The word גולה, or more accurately

was a well from which they drew by means of a bucket,³³ and thence supplied water to the whole court. The chamber of wood³⁴ was behind these two. It was the chamber of the High Priest, and is what was called the chamber Parhedrin.³⁵ And the roof of the three was even. And there were two other chambers in the court of Israel, one on the right of the eastern gate, which was the chamber of Phinehas the vestment keeper, and one on the left, which was the chamber of the pancake maker.

גִּלְגָּל, means also a fountain or source of water (*cf.* Jud. i, 15), and inasmuch as it is taught in both Talmuds (Jerus. Yoma 41 *a* ; Bab Yoma 31 *a* ; Bechor 44 *b* ; Shabb. 145 *b*, and the notes of Rashi, also Maim. Baith Hammikdash v, 15), that the water of the fountain Etham, עֵיטָם, was brought to the Temple, it is not certain that לִשְׁבֵת הַגּוֹלָה should not be translated "the chamber of the fountain." Solomon's molten sea is said to have been supplied from Etham, and the laver to have been filled from it. In Yoma 31 *a* it is said "the fountain of Etham was twenty-three cubits above the level of the court."

³³ נְרֵה is also a jug or similar vessel, *lecythus*, or "a large round basin, עֲנֹל עֲנֹל" (Tosefoth Yom Tov to Midd. v, 4). Some kind of bucket is here signified by Maimonides, but whether it was of wood, metal, or clay it is impossible to determine. The suggestion of a modern commentator (Mishnaoth Schmid, Vienna, 1835) may here be noted "probably the בּוֹר הַגּוֹלָה was a common well with two buckets worked by a wheel, one descending into the water as the other was drawn up."

³⁴ The chamber of wood is said to have been for storing the wood fit for the altar (Tosefoth Yom Tov to Midd. v, 4 ; *cf.* Midd. ii, 5).

³⁵ "Seven days before the Day of Atonement they separated the High Priest from his house into the chamber Parhedrin" (Yoma i, 1). "And why the chamber Parhedrin? Was it not the chamber of the councillors? At first it was called the chamber of the councillors בְּלוּטֵי לִשְׁבֵת בְּלוּטֵי = *παστοφειριον των βολευτων*, but because they began to purchase the priesthood with money and to change it every twelve months, as these assessors were changed every twelve months, therefore they called it לִשְׁבֵת פְּרֵהֲרֵרִין, the chamber of the assessors" (*Ib.* 8 *b*, and the note of Rashi). "Rab Papa said there were two chambers for the High Priest; one, the chamber Parhedrin, and one the chamber of the house of Abtinias; one *being* on the north, and one on the south, *of the court* . . . I do not know whether the chamber Parhedrin was on the north and the chamber of the house of Abtinias on the south; or the chamber of the house of Abtinias on the north, and the chamber Parhedrin on the south, but we are of opinion that the chamber Parhedrin was on the south" (Yoma 19 *a*).

(To be continued).