

MIDDOTH, OR THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE TEMPLE.

WITH THE COMMENTARY OF RABBI OBADIAH OF BARTENORA.

CHAPTER I.

1. The priests kept watch in the Sanctuary in three places:¹ in the house of Abtinus, in the house Nitsus, and in the house Moked.² And the Levites in twenty-one places;³ five at five gates of the mountain of the house, four at its four corners⁴ within,⁵ five at five gates of the court,⁶ four at its four corners without,⁷ and one in the chamber of the offering, and one in the chamber of the veil, and one behind the house of atonement.

2. The man⁸ of the mountain of the house went round from watch

¹ Not for fear of robbers or thieves, but because it was an honour and glory to the house, that it should not be without guards; and this guarding was commanded for the whole night. The three places in which the priests kept watch corresponded to what is written in the law (Numb. iii, 38), "those that encamp before the tabernacle towards the east, &c." "*Keeping the charge of the Sanctuary for the charge*" indicates three guards in three places, and as in the Tabernacle Aaron and his two sons kept watch in three places, so in the Eternal House [the Temple] likewise.

² The House of Abtinus and the House Nitsus were two upper rooms built beside gates of the court. The house Moked was not an upper room, but a vaulted building, *arquatta* [=arcuatus] in the barbarian tongue, erected upon the ground. Thus it is explained in the beginning of the treatise "Tamid."

³ Because they were bound to guard the Sanctuary in twenty-four places; as it is written in 1 Chronicles xxvi, 17, "eastward six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two and two. At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar." Lo, there were twenty-four watches, three of which were for the priests as we have said above, and twenty-one for the Levites, notwithstanding that the Scripture speaks only of Levites. Priests are also called Levites, for it is written in Ezekiel xliv, 15, "the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok."

⁴ There were five watchers at five gates of the mountain of the house, and four others at its four corners.

⁵ Inside the wall of the mountain of the house.

⁶ This doctor thought that there were only five gates to the court, and as to the words of him who afterwards said there were seven gates, it was conceded that there was a watch at only five.

⁷ Because no one might sit in the court except kings of the house of David only, and it was not possible for the watchers to watch standing all night, therefore the watchers were at the corners of the court, and also those who kept watch at the gates of the court watched on the outside in order that they might be allowed to sit. They leaned on the Scripture, for it is written "two at Parbar," towards *bar*, *the outside*, *i.e.*, outside the wall of the court.

⁸ The prefect over all the guards.

to watch, with torches flaming before him, and to every guard who was not standing, the man of the mountain of the house said, "peace be upon thee:" if it was evident that he slept, he beat him with his staff, and he had authority to set fire to his cloak. And they said, "what is the voice in the court?" "The voice of a Levite being beaten and his garments burned, because he slept on his watch." Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Jacob, said, "once they found my mother's brother sleeping, and they set fire to his cloak."

3. There were five gates to the mountain of the house: the two gates of Huldah on the south served for going in and going out;⁹ Kipunus on the west¹⁰ served for going in and going out; Tadi on the north was not used at all; upon the eastern gate Shushan the palace was pourtrayed,¹¹ and by it the high priest¹² who burned the heifer¹³ and the heifer and all his assistants went out to the Mount of Olives.¹⁴

4. There were seven gates in the court. Three on the north, and three on the south, and one on the east. Those on the south were—the gate of kindling¹⁵ second to it, the gate of the first born,¹⁶ third, the water gate.¹⁷ That on the east was the gate Nicanor,¹⁸ and there were two chambers to it, one on the right hand and one on the left. One was the chamber of Phinchas, the keeper of the vestments,¹⁹ and one the chamber of the pancake maker.²⁰

⁹ By them they entered and went out from the mountain of the house.

¹⁰ A gate on the western side of the mountain of the house, the name of which was *Kipunus*, and that on the north was named *Tadi*.

¹¹ When they came up from the captivity, the King of Persia commanded them to make a representation of Shushan the palace upon the gates of the house, in order that they might fear their king, and they depicted it on the eastern gate.

¹² This Mishna is according to Rabbi Meyer, who was of opinion that the red heifer could be burned by none other than the high priest. But this is not the decision.

¹³ All the priests who assisted and helped the priest who burned it.

¹⁴ הר המושבה, the Mount of Olives, which was on the east of Jerusalem, and there they burned the heifer.

¹⁵ It was called the gate of kindling because through it they carried the wood for the pile which burned upon the altar.

¹⁶ We learn that there they took in the first-born of *beasts*, which were slain on the south of the altar.

¹⁷ According to what is written in the book of Ezekiel xlvi, 2, "And, behold, there ran out waters on the right side." And it is the south which is called the right side, for it is written "north" and "on the right." And Ezekiel saw in his prophecy that waters went out from the Holy of Holies in a thin stream like the horns of locusts, and when they reached this gate became a stream as large as the full mouth of a small bottle (ב), and this is what is said of them in the Scripture, מים מפכי, "waters ran out."

¹⁸ Explained in the treatise "Yoma."

¹⁹ He was the prefect whose function it was to dress the priests at the time of the service, and to undress them after the service, and take care of the priestly garments.

²⁰ There they made the meat-offering which the high priest offered every

5. And those on the north *were* the gate Nitsus, which was a kind of *exhedra* with an upper²¹ room built over it, that the priests might keep watch above and the Levites below, and it had a door into the rampart²² (*chel*); second to it, the gate of the offering,²³ third, the house Moked.²⁴

6. There were four chambers in the house Moked, like small rooms²⁵ opening into a hall (מִרְקָלִיּוֹן = *triclinium*), two in the holy and two in the profane²⁶ part, and pointed pieces of wood²⁷ distinguished between the holy and the profane. And what were their uses? The south-western was the chamber of (the lambs) for the offering.²⁸ The south-eastern was the chamber (of the maker) of the shewbread.²⁹ In the north-eastern the Asmoneans preserved the stones of the altar which the Greek kings had defiled.³⁰ In the north-western they went down to the bathing room.³¹

7. There were two gates to the house Moked; one opened to the *chel*³² day, half of it in the morning, and half of it in the evening, and because respecting this it is said (Levit. vi, 21) "in a pan it shall be made with oil," they were called pancakes.

²¹ Two walls, one on each side of the gate, projected outwards from the outside of the wall of the court towards the mountain of the house, and a chamber was built above upon these two walls.

²² In one of the walls was a door leading out to the *chel*, for there was a place within the wall of the mountain of the house, outside of the court, which was called *chel* (*rampart*).

²³ There they brought in the most holy sacrifices, which were slaughtered on the north.

²⁴ It was called Beth Hammoked (*locus foci*) because there were fires burning continually in it by which the priests, who went barefoot, might warm themselves. It was a large room, and in its four corners were four small chambers, as is explained below.

²⁵ Like the small chambers which open into the large room, or triclinium, of kings.

²⁶ Because the house Moked was built part within the court which was hallowed, and part in the profane place.

²⁷ Ends of beams projecting from the wall to the place which was holy, in order to show which was holy and which was profane, and that they might eat the holy things in the holy part.

²⁸ Because there the lambs were examined for the continual sacrifices, as it is taught in the Mishna, "there may not be fewer than six lambs in the chambers of the lambs," Erachin ii, 5.

²⁹ The family of Garmu made the shewbread there.

³⁰ They offered idolatrous sacrifices upon it. In the treatise "Shekalim" and the treatise "Tamid" *this chamber* is called the chamber of the seals.

³¹ By this chamber a priest to whom an uncleanness happened descended and went by the hollow way which was under [or behind, שַׁרְרָה, according to some copies] the sanctuary to the bathing room, where was a fire by which the priest warmed himself after bathing and going up and wiping himself. It was called the house Moked, and opened to the large house Moked [*i.e.*, the great central hall].

³² The northern gate of the house Moked opened to the *chel*, and that on the south opened to the court.

and one opened to the court. Rabbi Judah said there was a wicket³³ to the gate which opened to the court by which they entered to examine the court.³⁴

8. The house Moked was a vaulted room,³⁵ large and surrounded by stone benches,³⁶ and the elders of the house of the fathers³⁷ slept there with the keys of the court in their charge [literally, in their hands] and the young priests,³⁸ each with his pillow on the ground.³⁹

9. And a place was there, a cubit by a cubit, and a slab of marble and a ring was fixed in it, and a chain, on which the keys were hung. When the time for locking arrived⁴⁰ he raised the slab by the ring and took the keys from the chain. And the priest locked from inside and the Levite slept⁴¹ outside.⁴² Having finished locking he returned the keys to the chain and the slab to its place, put his cloak upon it, and slept. If an uncleanness happened to one of them he went out and departed by the winding way,⁴³ which ran under the Sanctuary (*birah*). And the lamps

³³ In the middle of the great gate.

³⁴ By this wicket they entered every morning to see that all the vessels of service which were in the court were in their places. Thus it is taught in the first chapter of Tamid, "he took the key and opened the wicket and entered from the house Moked to the court, &c." One party went by the exhedra towards the east, and the other went by the exhedra towards the west; they searched and went until they reached the place where they made the pancakes. Having reached it, each party said "is it peace?" "All is peace;" that is to say, all the vessels of service are in their places in peace. The interpretation of לְבַלְיֹשׁ is to search and examine.

³⁵ The structure of the house Moked was not that of an upper chamber, but a vaulted room (*arqualta* in the barbarian tongue) erected upon the ground.

³⁶ All round seats (or benches) of hewn stone were sunk in the wall, and projected from the wall into the interior of the house Moked on the floor, and over them were other shorter stones, which also projected from the wall and formed a sort of steps, one above the other.

³⁷ The watch was divided into seven houses of fathers, corresponding to the days of the week, each one doing duty on its day, and the elders of the house of the fathers for that day slept there upon those stone benches.

³⁸ Young men whose beards were beginning to grow; and they were the watchers.

³⁹ Because they were not permitted to sleep there upon beds but upon the ground, as the watchers in the courts of kings do. כִּסְאוֹ (his cushion) is a kind of bolster or pillow [*cf.* Ezek. xiii, 18, 20].

⁴⁰ The time for locking the gates of the court.

⁴¹ Some copies read here שָׁב, *sat or remained*, instead of שָׁי, *slept*.

⁴² Because the Levites were associated with the priests, as it is said (Numb. xviii, 2) "that they may be joined with thee and minister under thee." On this account in the house Abtinus and the house Nitsus, which were upper rooms, the priests watched above, and the Levites below, and at the house Moked, which was only a vaulted room built upon the ground, the priest was within and the Levite without.

⁴³ In the מְהוּלָה, cavern, or cavernous passage, which went under the whole Sanctuary (*birah*), for a cavernous passage was under the Sanctuary, and all the

were burning on each side, until he reached the bathing room. Rabbi Eleazer, the son of Jacob, said, he went forth by the winding way, which went under the *chel* and passed out by Tadi.⁴⁴

Sanctuary was called *birah*, as it is written (1 Chron. xxix, 19), "the *birah* (palace, A.V.) for which I have made provision." And because he was unclean (בעל קרי) he did not go by way of the court, but by way of the caverns, it being a statute with us that the caverns were not hallowed.

⁴⁴ He passed out by the winding way which went under the *chel*, and did not return to the house Moked, because he was *tibool youm* (had bathed but would not be clean until the sun went down). The decision was not according to the opinion of R. Eleazer, the son of Jacob, but as it is taught in the beginning of Tamid, "he came and sat by his brethren the priests in the house Moked until the gates were opened, when he went his way." For although it was unlawful for a *tibool youm* to enter the court of the women, which is the camp of Levi, it was made lighter for this one because he had become unclean whilst within.

(To be continued.)