

p. 25

CHAPTER VI.

MISHNA: (a) There were thirteen curved chests [a1](#) and thirteen tables in the Sanctuary, and thirteen prostrations took place in the Sanctuary. The family of R. Gamaliel and of R. Hananiah, chief of the priests, made fourteen prostrations; this extra prostration was made towards the wood-chamber, [a2](#) because, according to an ancestral tradition, the ark was hidden there.

(b) Once a priest [b1](#) was engaged there, and he noticed that one of the paving-stones on one place appeared different from the others. He went out to tell others of it; but he had not yet finished speaking, when he gave up the ghost; thereby it was known to a certainty that the ark of the covenant [b2](#) was hidden there.

(c) In what direction were the prostrations made? Four towards the north, four towards the south, three towards the east,

p. 26

and two towards the occident; *i.e.*, towards the thirteen gates. [c1](#) The southern gates were near a corner of the western. These were: The upper gate, the fire gate, the firstling gate, and the water gate. Why is it called water gate? Because a glass of water was carried through it for the sprinkling of the altar on the Feast of Booths. R. Eliezer son of Jacob says: At that gate the waters (flowing from the Holy of Holies) commence to flow rapidly downwards, until they again flow out under the threshold of the Temple. Opposite there were the northern gates, near the other corner of the western. These were: The door of Jekhaniah, the gate of sacrifice, the women's gate, and the music-gate; and why is the first one called the gate of Jekhaniah? Because Jekhaniah went through it, when he went into exile. In the east was the gate Nikanur, which also had two small doors, [c2](#) one to the right and the other to the left; lastly, there were two in the west, which were nameless.

(d) Thirteen tables were in the Sanctuary: Eight marble ones in the slaughter-house, on which the entrails were washed. Two to the west of the altar-sheep, one marble and one silver: on the marble one the sacrificial pieces were placed, and on the silver table the utensils were placed. Two in the corridor on the inside of the Temple entrance, a marble table and a golden one: on the marble one the showbreads were placed at the time they were brought in, and on the golden one when they were taken out; because the principle is, that the veneration of the

p. 27

sacred must be heightened and not lessened. [d1](#) Lastly, there was one golden table in the Temple itself, upon which the showbreads were constantly lying.

(e) Thirteen curved chests were in the Sanctuary. [e1](#) On them was written: *Old shekalim, new shekalim*, bird-offerings, doves for whole-offerings, wood, incense, gold for the cover of the Holy of Holies. Six were for donations in general. [e2](#) The term *new shekalim* is used for those paid annually. *Old shekalim* were those which were paid by men who had failed to pay them in the year when they were due, and paid them in the following year. "In those marked 'bird-offerings,' the money for turtle-doves was deposited; in those marked 'doves,' money for young doves was deposited: but they were all whole-offerings." So says R. Jehudah. The sages say: "In the former, money for both sin-offerings and whole-offerings was placed, and in the latter only for whole-offerings." [e3](#)

p. 28

(f) If one vow, "I will furnish wood for the altar," he must not furnish less than two cords. If one vow (to furnish) incense, he must not furnish less than a handful. If one vow (to furnish) gold coin, he must not furnish less than a Dinar. [f1](#) Six (chests) were for voluntary offerings. What was done with these? Whole-offerings were bought for these, the meat of which was sacrificed to God, but the hides belonged to the priests. [f2](#) The following explanation was made by Jehoiada the high priest, of the expression [Lev. v. 19]: "It is a trespass-offering; be hath, in trespassing, trespassed against the Lord": The rule is: With everything coming in under the name of sin or guilt offering, whole-offerings are bought, the meat of which is offered up to God and the hides of which belong to the priests; hence the two expressions: A guilt-offering for God and a guilt-offering for the priests, as it is written [II Kings xii. 16]: "The money for trespass-offerings and the money for sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord: it belonged to the priests."

Footnotes

[25:a1](#)

CHAPTER VI.

MISHNA *a*. The thirteen chests were used as explained in Mishna *e*, and they were shaped like horns, so that a hand could not be inserted from the top. This Mishna places the number of everything at thirteen (on account of the thirteen kinds of mercy attributed to God). R. Ishmael composed the thirteen rules with which the Law is expounded.

[25:a2](#) The location of the wood-chamber can be determined in Tract Midoth.

[25:b1](#) MISHNA *b*. The priest was a man of blemish (deformed), and could not take part in the sacrifices, but was allowed to select and peel the wood used at the altar.

[25:b2](#) The ark was hidden during the existence of the first Temple in order to save it from the Babylonians, after all hope had been abandoned, and its hiding-place was underground. The

priests who subsequently took charge probably noticed some sign made by the former generation when the ark was hidden, and this particular priest died as a consequence of his attempt to reveal the secret.

[26:c1](#) MISHNA *c*. That there were thirteen gates in the Temple is vouched for by Abba Jose ben Johanan; but the sages declare, that there were only seven gates and that the thirteen prostrations were made in the direction of the twelve breaches made by the Greeks in the walls of the Temple at the time of the Maccabees, and towards the altar; the twelve breaches had been repaired, and each prostration was a mark of gratitude for the good fortune. From the fact, however, that the Mishna cites nine of the gates by their names and describes their location, it seems that Abba Jose ben Johanan was correct, and had his knowledge of the matter from tradition.

[26:c2](#) Concerning the gate Nikanur, it is said that the two doors were made in the gate proper, because the gates were very heavy and it required a number of priests and Levites to open them (as explained in Tract Tamid). Hence, in order to facilitate entrance and egress, the two doors were added.

[27:d1](#) MISHNA *d*. Because the showbreads were lying on a golden table in the Temple, they were not to be placed on marble tables when taken out.

[27:e1](#) MISHNA *e*. When a man paid his half-shekel in Jerusalem, he would go to the Temple and throw his half-shekel into the chest marked *new* shekalim. Into the chest marked *old* shekalim, such as had not given pledges for the payment of the Shekalim, and came voluntarily to pay same, would throw their half-shekel. One who wished to donate money for specific purposes, *e.g.*, for bird-offerings, etc., would deposit the money in the respectively marked chests.

[27:e2](#) Only one of these chests was for donations in general. The other five were marked as follows: One, "For the remainder of a sin-offering," *i.e.*, money left over from a sum originally intended for the purchase of a sin-offering, was thrown into this chest and was used only for sin-offerings; the second, "for the remainder of guilt-offerings"; the third, "for the remainder of bird-offerings of women who had been confined and of persons suffering from venereal diseases"; the fourth, "for the remainder of Nazarite-offerings"; and the fifth, "for the remainder of offerings of those afflicted with sores." If any one had money left over from such offerings, he deposited it in the respectively marked cases. The contents of the chest marked "for donations in general" were used for the maintenance of the Temple. (Maimonides.)

[27:e3](#) R. Jehudah means to say, that a man who throws money into the chest marked "for bird-offerings" intends that his offerings [p. 28](#) should be for the altar only, and not for the benefit of those who eat sacrifices, while the sages differ with him, as stated in the Mishna.

[28:f1](#) MISHNA *f*. In the preceding Mishna the remainder of offerings is treated of, and it made no difference how little the remainder was, it could be thrown into the chest. In this Mishna, the case of a man who vows to bring an offering is spoken of, and a minimum value is placed.

[28:f2](#) Incidentally we are told that the meat of the sacrifices belonged to the Divinity, while the

hides belonged to the priests; and what immense sums were realized from the sale of such hides may be gleaned from the mentioned "Priester und Cultus," by Büchler.

[Next: Chapter VII.](#)