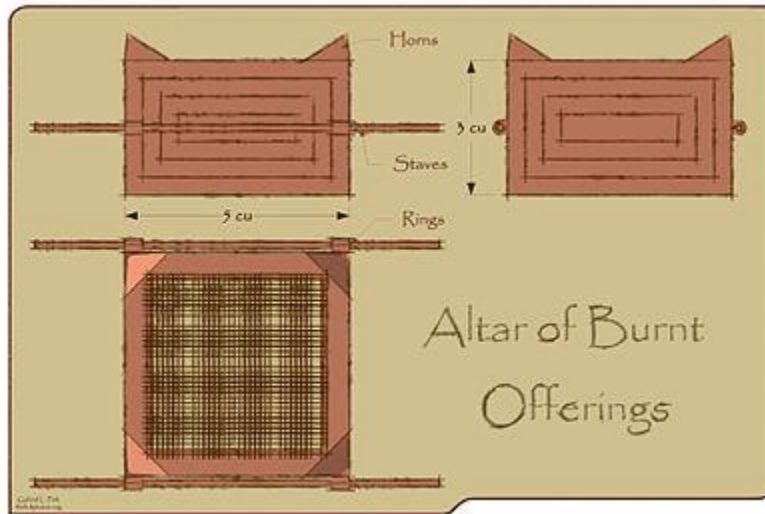


## מזבח העלה ומזבח קטרת הסמים - התפקוד חשוב יותר מהצורה

אבנר רמו



We read in the Book of Exodus:

ויעש את-מזבח העלה עצי שטים : חמש אמות ארכו וחמש-אמות רחבו, רבוע, ושלוש אמות קמתו.

“And he made the altar of the burnt-offering of acacia-wood: five cubits was its length and five cubits its breadth, a square, and three cubits its height” (Ex 38:1; see also: Ex 30:28; 31:9; 35:16; 40:6, 10, 29; Lev 4:7, 10, 18, 25, 30; 1 Ch 6:34; 21:29; 16:40; 21:26; 2 Ch 29:18).

ויצף אתו נחשת.

“and he overlaid it with brass” (Ex 38:2).

Yet eleven chapters earlier we find:

ועשית את-המזבח [] עצי שטים : חמש אמות ארך וחמש אמות רחב, רבוע יהיה המזבח, ושלוש אמות קמתו.

“And you shall make the altar [] of acacia-wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be a square; and three cubits its height” (Ex 27:1).

וצפית אתו נחשת.

“and you shall overlay it with brass” (Ex 27:2).

Yet the comparison between these verses suggests that here המזבח is a vowel letter-insertion and word deletion error of: מזבח העלה - “the altar of the burnt-offering.” In addition, the comparison between these verses suggests that in verse Ex 38:1 the word רבוע is a word deletion error of: רבוע יהיה המזבח - “the altar shall be a square.”

In the Book of Exodus we also find:

ונחשת התנופה, שבעים ככר ואלפים וארבע-מאות שקל.

ויעש בה את-אדני פתח אהל מועד, ואת מזבח הנחשת, ואת-מכבר הנחשת אשר-לו; ואת כל-כלי המזבח.

“And the brass of the offering was seventy talents and two thousand and four hundred shekels.

And with it he made the sockets to the door of the tent of meeting, and the brazen altar, and the brazen grating for it, and all the vessels of the altar” (Ex 38:29-30; see also: Ex 39:39; 1 Ki 16:14, 15; Eze 9:2; 2 Ch 1:5, 6, 7:7).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that the words: מזבח הנחשת is a word deletion error of: מזבח העלה מצופה הנחשת - “the altar of the burnt-offering that is overlaid with brass.”

In regard to the מזבח העלה - “the altar of the burnt-offering” we read:

ואת צדוק הכהן ואחיו הכהנים, לפני משכן יהוה-בבמה אשר בגבעון.  
להעלות עלות ליהוה על-מזבח העלה, תמיד-לבקר ולערב; ולכל-הכתוב בתורת יהוה אשר צוה על-ישראל.

“and Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of *YHWH* in the high place that was at Gibeon:

To offer burnt-offerings to *YHWH* upon the altar of burnt-offering continually morning and evening, and according to all that is written in the Law of *YHWH*, which He commanded to Israel” (1 Ch 16:39-40; see also: Lev 4:8-10, 26, 31, 35).

However, unlike the Chronicler who wrote here (see also: Ex 40:29; Lev 14:20; 1 Ch 21:26; 2 Ch 29:18-29): להעלות עלות - “To offer burnt-offerings”, in the Book of Leviticus we find: “as it is taken off from the ox of the sacrifice of peace-offerings; and the priest shall make them smoke upon the altar of burnt-offering” (Lev 4:31; see also: Ex 29:13; Lev 1:9, 13, 15, 17; 2:1-2, 5-10, 11, 14-16; 3:5, 10-16; 4:19, 31, 35; 5:11-12; 6:1-9; 7:1-10, 31; 9:10-14; 17:6; Num 5:15-26; 2 Ki 16:15).

The word used here: והקטירם was translated to English as: “and he shall make them smoke” and to Greek as: “and he shall offer them”, which indicate that the translators believed that here the word והקטירם had erroneously replaced the word והעלם (*vehee'lam*).

In the Book of Samuel we find a similar error:

ומשפט הכהנים את-העם-כל-איש זבח זבח, ובא נער הכהן כבשל הבשר והמזלג שלש השנים בידו.

“And the custom of the priests with the people was, that, when any man sacrificing a sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand” (1 Sam 2:13).

גם בטרם יקטרו את-החלב, ובא נער הכהן ואמר לאיש הזבח, תנה בשר לצלות לכהן; ולא-יקח ממך בשר מבשל כי אם-חי.  
ויאמר אליו האיש, קטר יקטירון כיום החלב וקח-לך כאשר תאווה נפשך;

“Even before they smoked the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that was sacrificing: Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not take from you boiled flesh but raw.

And if the man said to him: Let surely smoke today the fat, and [then] take as much as your soul desires” (1 Sam 2:15-16).

As the people were coming to sacrifice, it is suggested that here the word **יקטרו** had erroneously replaced the word **יעלון** - “they were offering.”

Similar error occurred also in verse 1 Ch 6:34 were we find:

“And Aaron and his sons were offering upon the altar of burnt-offering, and upon the altar of incense” (1 Ch 6:34).

However, the reading in the same book:

כי-מעלו אבתינו ועשו הרע בעיני יהוה-אלהינו-ויעזבהו; ויסבו פניהם ממשכן יהוה ויתנו-ערף.  
גם סגרו דלתות האולם ויכבו את-הנרות, וקטרת לא הקטירו; ועלה לא-העלו בקדש לאלהי ישראל.

“For our fathers acted treacherously, and did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH* our God, and have forsaken Him, and turned away their faces from the habitation of *YHWH*, and turned their backs.

They also shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and did not incensed incense nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel” (2 Ch 29:6-7),

suggests that we should read in verse 1 Ch 6:34:

“And Aaron and his sons were offering upon the altar of burnt-offering, and incensing upon the altar of incense.”

Another function of the **מזבח העלה** - “the altar of the burnt-offering” is described in the Book of Leviticus. We are told that if: “a ruler” (Lev 4:22) or “the anointed priest shall sin” (Lev 4:3), then he should “slaughter a male goat without blemish” (Lev 4:23-24) or “a bullock” (Lev 4:4), and:

ולקח הכהן מדם החטאת באצבעו, ונתן על-קרנת מזבח העלה; ואת-דמו ישפך אל-יסוד מזבח העלה.

“And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, and the remaining blood he shall he pour out at the base of the altar of burnt-offering” (Lev 4:25; see also: Lev 4:30).

Yet In contradiction to verse Ex 30:10, we find in the Book of Leviticus:

“And the priest shall put of the blood upon the horns of the altar of the [sweet] incense” Lev 4:7).

In all likelihood it appears to me that here **מזבח קטרת הסמים** is a word substitution error of: **מזבח העלה** - “the altar of the burnt-offering.”

In the Book of Kings we find an odd verse:

והעלה שלמה שלש פעמים בשנה עלות ושלמים על-המזבח אשר בנה ליהוה, והקטיר אתו, אשר לפני יהוה; ושלם את-הבית.

**“And three times in a year Solomon offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon the altar which he built to YHWH, and offering thereby, [upon the altar] that [was] before YHWH. and he finished the house” (1 Ki 9:25).**

The additions inserted by the English translator to this verse which displays an unusual Hebrew syntax, indicate that he believed that it was corrupt. The Greek translator apparently was so embarrassed by it that he completely omitted it from his translation of the Book of Kings. Not only that there is no mention of the “**altar of incense**” in the Book of Kings, we are told here that on the altar that Solomon offered “**burnt-offerings**”, he also: **והקטיר אתו** literally meaning: “**and he incensed with it.**” It appears that even the Chronicler tried to ameliorate this problem, by telling us that Solomon said:

**הנה אני בונה בית לשם יהוה אלהי, להקדיש לו להקטיר לפניו קטרת-סמים ומערכת תמיד ועלות לבקר ולערב, לשבתות ולחדשים, ולמועדי יהוה אלהינו: לעולם, זאת על-ישראל.**  
“Behold, I am building a house for the name of YHWH my God, to dedicate [it] to Him, and to incense before Him incense of [sweet] spices, and for the continual show[bread], and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the months, and on the appointed holydays of YHWH our God. [This is an ordinance] for ever to Israel” (2 Ch 2:3).



**Model of the Altar of the incense of spices**

In the Book of Leviticus we read about: **מזבח קטרת הסמים** - “**the altar of sweet incense**” (Lev 4:7). The Greek translator wrote here: “the altar of the incense of the combination.” However, it appears that the Greek translator of this book was not sure what the word **סמים** (*samim*) meant, and in verse Lev 16:12 he translated it to “compound.” In the Book of Exodus where the preparation of: **קטרת הסמים** is described, **סמים** was translated to Greek as “spices” (Ex 30:34).

In the Book of Exodus we read:

ויעש את-מזבח הקטרת עצי שטים : אמה ארכו ואמה רחבו רבוע, ואמתים קמתו-ממנו היו קרנתיו.

ויצף אתו זהב טהור, את-גגו ואת-קירתיו סביב-ואת-קרנתיו; ויעש לו זר זהב סביב. ושתי טבעת זהב עשה-לו מתחת לזרו, על שתי צלעתיו, על שני צדיו-לבתיים לבדים, לשאת אתו בהם.

ויעש את-הבדים עצי שטים; ויצף אתם זהב.

“And he made the altar of incense of acacia-wood: a cubit its length, and a cubit its breadth, a square; and two cubits its height; its horns were of it.

And he overlaid it with pure gold, its roof, and its sides round about, and its horns; and he made for it a crown of gold round about.

And he made for it two golden rings under its crown, upon its two ribs, upon its two sides, as holders for staves to bear it.

And he made the staves of acacia-wood, and overlaid them with gold” (Ex 37:25-28; see also: Ex 30:27; 31:8; 35:15; 1 Ch 6:34; 28:18; 2 Ch 26:16, 19).

Yet seven chapters earlier we find:

ועשית מזבח מקטר קטרת; עצי שטים תעשה אתו.

אמה ארכו ואמה רחבו, רבוע יהיה, ואמתים קמתו; ממנו קרנתיו.

וצפית אתו זהב טהור, את-גגו ואת-קירתיו סביב-ואת-קרנתיו; ועשית לו זר זהב סביב.

ושתי טבעת זהב תעשה-לו מתחת לזרו, על שתי צלעתיו-תעשה, על-שני צדיו; והיה לבתיים לבדים לשאת אתו בהמה.

ועשית את-הבדים עצי שטים; וצפית אתם זהב.

“And you shall make an altar to burn incense [upon]; of acacia-wood you shall make it.

A cubit its length, and a cubit its breadth; it shall be a square; and two cubits shall be its height; and of it its horns.

And you shall overlay it with pure gold, its roof, and its sides round about, and its horns; and you shall make for it a crown of gold round about.

And you shall make for it two golden rings under its crown, upon its two ribs, upon its two sides you shall make [them]; and they shall be as holders for staves to bear it.

And you shall make the staves of acacia-wood, and overlay them with gold” (Ex 30:1-5).

Yet in the Book of Exodus we also find once: **מזבח הזהב לקטרת** - “the golden altar for incense” (Ex 40:5, and twice just: **מזבח הזהב** - “the golden altar” (Ex 39:38 and 40:26; see also: Num 4:11; 1 Ki 7:48; 2 Ch 4:19).

However, the comparison between these verses suggest the words: **מזבח הזהב** are a word deletion error of: **מזבח הקטרת מצופה הזהב** - “the altar of incense that is overlaid with old.”

In regard to the **מזבח הקטרת** - “the altar of incense” we read:

והקטיר עליו אהרן קטרת סמים; בבקר בבקר בהיטיבו את-הנרת-יקטירנה.

ובהעלת אהרן את-הנרת בין הערבים, יקטירנה-קטרת תמיד לפני יהוה לזרתכם.

לא-תעלו עליו קטרת זרה ועלה ומנחה; ונסך לא תסכו עליו.

וכפר אהרן על-קרנתיו אחת בשנה: מדם חטאת הכפרים,

“And Aaron shall incense upon it incense of [sweet] spices; every morning, when he prepares the lamps, he shall incense it.

And when Aaron lights the lamps at dusk, he shall incense it, a perpetual incense before *YHWH* throughout your generations.

You shall not bring up on it a strange incense, nor burnt-offering, nor meal-offering; and you shall not pour on it drink-offering.

And once a year Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns; with the blood of the sin-offering of atonement” (Ex 30:7-10; see also: 2 Ch 26:16).

In the Book of Numbers we read:

וכל בקר זבח השלמים, עשרים וארבעה פרים, אילים ששים עתדים ששים, כבשים בני-שנה ששים:

“And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace-offerings twenty and four bullocks, the rams sixty, the he-goats sixty, the he-lambs of the first year sixty” (Num 7:88).

The sacrifice of **אילים** - "rams" is mentioned in the Bible multiple times: (Num 7: 17, 23, 29, 35, 41, 47, 53, 59, 65, 71, 77, 83; 1 Sam 15:22; Is 1:11; 34:6; Eze 39:17-18). Yet in the Book of Psalms we find:

אבוא ביתך בעולות; אשלם לך נדרי.  
אשר-פצו שפתי; ודבר-פי בצר-לי.

עלות מיחים אעלה-לך עם-קטרת אילים; אעשה בקר עם-עתודים סלה.

“I will come into Your house with burnt-offerings, I will pay You my vows;

Which my lips uttered, and my mouth spoken, when I was in distress.

I will offer to You burnt-offerings of fatlings, with the [sweet] smoke of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah” (Ps 66:13-15; see also: Ex 29:18; 22-25).

The translation of: **קטרת אילים** to: “smoke of rams” by the English translator indicates that he felt uneasy about the meaning of these words. The Greeks translated them more literally to “incense of rams.” Yet it is suggested that this unusual word-combination is the result of erroneous word substitution of: **זבח אילים** - “sacrifice of rams.”