

The first altar mentioned in the scriptures is that erected by Noah after the Flood in Genesis 8:20 -22.

“Noah built an altar unto Yahweh; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And Yahweh smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:20–22). This is teaching us that sacrifice, when offered in the right spirit, was acceptable to God for what it represented. Clean animals were not predators and speak of a life given for benefit of mankind. The salvation of God to Noah and his family as the solitary human occupants on earth, surrounded by scenes of desolation, would have reminded Noah of the treatment he had been subject to at the hands of those who hated God and His ways, and it would have filled Noah’s heart thanksgiving to God for his deliverance from the terrible catastrophe which had swept away all those evil doers from the face of the earth. And especially would gratitude to Yahweh fill his heart, by the assurances that God had promised him in regard to the continuance himself, his family and his posterity that never again smite every living thing, but “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Gen 8:21-22) Such temporal blessings were assured by the token of His bow in the cloud, which is seen to this day.

The next is given in Genesis 12:7 where Yahweh made his first promise to Abraham. It was after the long journey from Ur to Haran and then to Canaan. Abraham’s eyes looked on the land Then came the first promise: “To thy seed will I give this land”; and he realized he was standing on holy ground. In response Abram built an altar unto the Yahweh. Notice to whom this first promise given. Not to Abraham but to his seed. לְיִצְחָק (masculine singular) See Galatians “He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”. (Gal 3:16 KJV) Surely there is a clear indication that the seed to whom the promise was preeminently the Lord Jesus Christ, and, even in this

promise, it is true that “Before Abraham was, I am”.(John 8:58) After this Abraham led his caravan to the east of Bethel meaning ‘house of God’ with Bethel on the west and Hai on the east and there he built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.” In this act of worship we are shown how the true worship of God instituted in Eden is the only acceptable way of approach to God, where the offerer typifies the repudiation of sin which dwells in us as the basis of divine fellowship and acceptability with God.

Abraham then went down into Egypt to escape the famine that arose in Canaan, it proved to be an unwise move, and but for divine intervention he might have lost his wife. In the event Pharaoh loaded him with wealth and virtually thrust Abraham and his company out of Egypt, a projection of things to come. So we learn, how “Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD”. (Gen 13:1-4) Abram evidently realized that although Egypt had made him very rich it had almost robbed him of his reason for leaving Ur. So Abram did what we must ever be prepared to do in similar circumstances, where we make a serious mistake, make a fresh start, go back to the beginning, back to Bethel (the house of God), back to the altar. There Abram “called on the name of the Lord”, a phrase which everywhere in Scripture implies heartfelt persistence. See *e.g.* Deut. 4:7; Judges 16:28; 1 Sam. 12:17; 2 Sam. 22:7; 1 Kings 18:24–26; 2 Kings 4:11; 1 Chron. 4:10 and 21:26; Isa. 55:6, 58:9, 64:7; Jer. 29:12; Jonah 1:6; Acts 22:16; and many places in the Psalms.

Consequently soon afterwards there came the clash of interests with Lot, but Abram readily surrendered his right of choice. So Lot, who had also been in Egypt, chose the plain of Jordan which seemed to him “as the garden of the Lord”, but was much more “like the land of Egypt” for being close to Sodom it proved to be a snare to one of God’s elect.

There, after that Lot had separated himself, Yahweh said to Abram “Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where thou are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see TO YOU will I give it, and to YOUR SEED for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be

numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for I WILL GIVE IT UNTO THEE”

Thus having promised Abram that he would make of him a great nation, Yahweh again appeared unto Abram in the land of Canaan, making a further revelation to him; attention, as to THE “PLACE which Abram should after (his resurrection from the dead) receive for AN INHERITANCE.”

The last time an altar is mentioned in connection with Abraham is when God called upon him to take his only son whom he loved and take him to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. There was no hesitation with Abraham in carrying out this request and he got up early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men, Isaac his son, and wood for the burnt offering, he went unto the place of which God had told him. It took three days to arrive at the place. Abraham instructed his young men, to wait here with the ass; while he and the lad went to the place to worship, and he assured them they come again to them.

So we read “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac said to Abraham his father, “My father: Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering? Abraham replied, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. When they came to the place that God had told him of; Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. We cannot help but notice the deliberation and resolve of Abraham’s mind that he was fully prepared to do exactly what God had requested of him.

Which indicates that he knew and believed that even if he did slay his son, God would raise him from the dead in order that the promise God had made concerning his seed should be fulfilled. The whole transaction reminds us of the sacrifice that God made in respect of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The place selected was the place where Jesus would be crucified outside Jerusalem, Abraham saw the place afar off. Jesus says Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad. Clearly Abraham understood the significance of God’s request. The fact that Abraham laid the wood on Isaac to carry reminds us

of Jesus bearing his cross the instrument of his crucifixion. Moreover Abraham and Isaac went together to perform what God required. It shows Isaac's absolute trust in his father, and the fact he was conscious that he was not alone, so Jesus stated, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me. (Joh 16:32) In this event Abraham built an altar and he found the ram caught in a thicket, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Yahwey-yireh: as it is said *to this day*, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. (Gen 22:13-14)

So the letter to the Hebrews explains, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. (Heb. 11:17-19)

Only one construction of an altar is mentioned in relation to Isaac. It was done when "there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech, King of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of; sojourn in *this land*, and I will be with thee; *for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give* ALL THESE COUNTRIES, *and I will perform* THE OATH *which I swore unto Abraham thy father*; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; *and in thy seed shall* ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH *be blessed*; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" when Yahweh appeared unto him at night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. Later after considerable trouble with the Philistines And Isaac built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants dug a well. (Gen 26:24-25) Isaac called the place Beer-Sheba and it remains so unto this day.

An interesting event in the life of Jacob in relation to an altar is noted when he fled from his brother Esau. On his journey north Jacob rested his head on a stone and fell asleep, and "he dreamed of a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you are lying, to you will I give it, and to your seed; And your seed shall be as the dust of the

earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I *am* with you, and will keep you in all *places* where you go, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to you of. When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, and he said “this *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven (Gen 28:12-19)

Jacob rose up early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had used for his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first. (Luz = almond Tree)

This was not an altar in the general sense but it was an altar of libation and Brother John Thomas made some interesting observations about it.

Jacob’s stone pillar, then, was typical of a House of Elohim to be set up after he awakes from his sleep of centuries. When he awakes, he will find himself in an awful time and place, the gate of heaven opened, and the house of Elohim in manifestation, but he, nevertheless, without dismay. What he saw in vision he will then see in fact—“Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”—John 1:51.

But there is a sense in which Jacob’s pillar of the stone exists as a house of Elohim even now, and in intimate connection with the house he will see when he awakes from his present know-nothing state. Paul presents to us this sense in the saying, that “a House of Deity is an ecclesia of living Deity, a PILLAR and material habitation, (*hedraioma* from *hedra*, a *habitation of gods*,) of the truth”—1 Tim. 3:15. This pillar and habitation is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Anointed being chief-corner”—Eph. 2:20. As a monumental pillar, the inscription upon it is “the exceeding great and precious promises” believed by each saint, or “living stone,” of which the pillar is composed—“promises” concerning the kingdom and name made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as narrated by Moses. This pillar was anointed on the top of it on the Day of Pentecost, when the spirit was poured upon the apostles. That anointing was perpetuated in “*the testimony for Jesus*” which has reached even to us, and with which every true believer is anointed. An ecclesia, however, is not only a pillar inscribed with the truth, but is a *hedraioma* of the truth. It is a material thing made up of “*gods*,” as David styles them or of “*children of Deity*,”

according to 1 John 3:2; Psalm. 82:6. These are anointed with the truth, and therefore they are a god-habitation, or *hedraioma* of the truth.

In regard to this word *hedraioma*, it may be remarked here, that it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, nor in any classical author. The word is derived from *hedra*, which signifies “*a seat, habitation, especially of gods, a temple, altar, &c.*” Hence, the expressiveness of the word, and its peculiar and exclusive application to a habitation of the truth constituted of gods, or children of Deity, who are, as represented in the Apocalypse, “the Altar,” “the temple,” “the Holy City,” or, as Paul expresses it, “an habitation of Deity by spirit—Eph. 2:22.

²⁴ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

²⁵ And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

²⁶ Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon. (Exo 20:24-26 KJV)

But, in the building of altars the will of the God was that they should be of earth; or if of stone, that the stone should not be hewn. “*An altar of earth* thou shall make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for *if thou lift up thy tool upon it*, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, *that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon*—Exod. 20:24. The permanent altar was made of wood, overlaid with brass; and when cleansed, anointed, and sanctified, it was Most Holy; and whatsoever touched it was holy.

Now, all this was significant of the substance, Christ, who was “the end of the law.” The Holy Spirit signified something that he regarded important in his system of wisdom, in commanding an altar to be made of earth, or of unhewn stone; and in forbidding a tool to be lifted upon it. The things commanded were “a *parabola* for the time then present”—a riddle, the meaning of which would be found in the realities developed in the Christ. He is declared by Paul to be the ‘Christian’ altar. “We have an altar,” says he in Heb. 12:10, which in being cleansed by the blood of Jesus is made identical with him. He was the altar of earth, or of unhewn stone; and in his making, or generation, he was begotten, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the

Deity.” To affirm, that in his generation he was begotten of Joseph, is to “pollute him.” In admitting his altar-ship, and at the same time affirming his paternity to be of Joseph, and not of the Deity, as related in Luke, is to make Joseph the builder of an altar of hewn stone—a polluted altar, upon which a man’s nakedness had been discovered.

Jesus being set forth by the Deity a propitiatory for the remission of sins that are passed through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:25) exhibits him in relation to the believer of the truth as an Altar—the real *Ailelohai-Yisraail* and *Yahweh-nissi*.

The Word made Flesh was at once the victim, the altar, and the priest. The Eternal Spirit-Word was the High Priestly Offerer of His own Flesh, whose *character* was without spot—“holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;” “who knew no sin;” yet whose *nature* was in all points like ours—“sin’s flesh,” in which dwells no good thing—Heb. 9:14; 7:26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; 7:18; Heb. 2:14–17. The Flesh made by the spirit out of Mary’s substance, and rightly claimed therefore in Psalm 16:8; Acts 2:31, as His flesh, is the Spirit’s Anointed Altar, cleansed by the blood of that flesh when poured out unto death “on the tree.” This flesh was the victim offered—the sacrifice. Suspended on the tree by the voluntary offering of the Spirit-Word (John 10:18), “sin was condemned in the flesh,” when the soul-blood thereof was poured out unto death. The Spirit-Word made his soul thus an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10); and by it sanctified the Altar-Body on the tree. It was now a *thusiasterion*—an Altar Most Holy; and all that touch it are holy; and without touching it none are holy.
DHH