

Five Conflicting Systems of Worship Part 1

Written by Administrator

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For a long time now the adherents of Pharisaic Judaism, Christendom and Islam have acknowledged the bloody sacrificial system as part of Mosaic Code – originally endorsed and implemented by God Himself. Very few realize the fact that Jesus, his apostles and the earliest believers called Nazarenes who were later known by their derogatory name Ebionites, commonly referred to as Jewish Christians, rejected the sacrificial commands as false pericopes and uninspired interpolations. Ebionites were not the first to regard the sacrificial system as interpolations. The Nazarenes and Essenes of the pre-Christian times displayed the same tendencies. They themselves rejected the sacrificial cult as not authentic and also abstained from eating any kind of animal flesh. The true prophets of Israel also entertained this view. Jeremiah in particular regarded the sacrificial rites as interpolation by the lying pen of the scribes. When we carefully study the Bible we come to a realization that it actually contains five conflicting systems of religious worship – each one supposedly sanctioned by the true God. These texts were originally written by independent writers representing the view of different Jewish sects which were later fused by Ezra

– the priest and scribe of Judah. These texts are not preserved in their original form but have actually undergone certain corrections, deletions and interpolations. By careful and thorough study it is possible to trace each independent system throughout the writings of the Bible.

One system prescribes Jerusalem and its temple as the only centralized shrine where all the tribes of Israel were required to present their bloody sacrifices and burnt offerings. In the same place they were to celebrate three annual festivals: The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. This religious system was embraced and propagated by the Aaronid priests –descended from Aaron through Eleazar and Phinehas. The rabbis of Judaism likewise embraced this system during the Second Temple period. The Christian Church also recognizes the temple Solomon built as the only authentic House of the LORD - where all sacrificial rites occurred, foreshadowing the supreme and divine sacrifice of Jesus.

The second system prescribes Mount Ebal [Mount Gerizim in the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch] as the only authentic shrine where all the sacrificial rites and annual festivals were to occur.

The next system prescribed the Tabernacle, which was supposedly constructed by Moses in the

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desert, as the only authentic place where all types of sacrificial rites were to take place. Even the animals which were to be consumed by people had to be slaughtered on the altar at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The blood was to be poured upon the altar. This system condemned anyone who killed an animal anywhere else but the place where the altar for sacrifices stood in front of the Tabernacle.

The fourth system rejects the centralized shrine and instead prescribes the local worship on the high places – called bamoth in Hebrew. This system recognized many places where the sacrificial altar was to be erected. At all these places where altars were erected it was lawful to perform sacrificial rites and the slaughtering of animals for human consumption.

The fifth system rejects all other systems of worship. It rejects the sacrificial rites as not authentic. It claims that the bloody sacrifices and burnt offerings were interpolations by the lying pen of the scribes. It rejects the claim that sacrifices were offered to the true God during forty years the Israelites wandered through the desert. It rejects the idea that the true God implemented the sacrificial system after He led the Israelites out of Egypt. It plainly reveals that the Most High God actually abhorred the sacrificial rites. In order for you to realize this fact it is essential to closely examine the biblical texts related to these sacrificial systems. For only then will you be able to see that they fundamentally contradict each other. By the time you finish reading this book you will become aware that the Bible as we have it is not infallible as the Christian Church claims. You will also realize that the original true religion implemented by the Most High was radically different from the Pharisaic Judaism, Islam and traditional Christianity.

The Centralized Worship

The adherents of Normative Judaism claim that the book of Deuteronomy sanctions Jerusalem and its temple built by Solomon as the only recognized and authentic centralized shrine for worship and sacrificial rites:

“Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their wooden poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. You must not worship Yahweh your God in their way. But you are to seek the place Yahweh your God will choose from among all your tribes to put His Name there for a dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your

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freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

There in the presence of Yahweh your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because Yahweh your God has blessed you...But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance, and He will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. Then to the place Yahweh your God will choose as a dwelling for His Name – there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to Yahweh. And there rejoice before Yahweh your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place Yahweh will choose in one of your tribes; there you shall offer your burnt offerings" [Deuteronomy 12:2-14]. Here we find the contrast between the system of Canaan and that of Judaism. The Canaanites erected stone pillars and wooden poles beside the altars on the high places where they worshipped their gods with bloody sacrifices. The Israelites in contrast were to have one centralized shrine – according to the Deuteronomic texts.

"You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town Yahweh your God gives you except in the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover" [Deuteronomy 16:5-6].

"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of Yahweh your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, so that you may learn to revere Yahweh your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by Yahweh your God and cannot carry your tithe [because the place where Yahweh will choose to put His Name is so far away], then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place Yahweh your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or fermented drink, or anything you lust for. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of Yahweh your God and rejoice" [Deuteronomy 14:22-26].

"Three times a year all your men must appear before Yahweh your God at the place He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles" [Deuteronomy 16:16].

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Undoubtedly these texts of Deuteronomy insist on a centralized shrine. Later we find Solomon and other writers claim that these texts applied to the choosing of Jerusalem and the temple he built. We shall see that Solomon claimed that no city or tribe was chosen until the tribe of Judah was chosen in the days of David. Others used these texts to sanction their shrines at Shiloh, Beth El, Mizpah, Gilgal, Nod...

They did this despite the fact that the Deuteronomic source plainly names the chosen place as Mount Ebal and its adjacent Mount Gerizim. The Deuteronomic source demands that all tribes go to the place Yahweh will choose. This is to be done even if the place is too distant. The Israelites were to convert their property into silver and then go to the chosen place. These texts expressly forbid them to present sacrifices and burnt offerings in any place they choose. They were also expressly forbidden to sacrifice the Passover lamb anywhere but in the town Yahweh was to choose to place his name. The following texts plainly reveal that the tribe of Judah understood these Deuteronomic texts to sanction Jerusalem and its temple as the only authorized central shrine:

“When Solomon had finished the Temple of Yahweh and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all that he had in mind to do in the Temple of Yahweh and in his own palace, Yahweh appeared to him at night and said: I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a temple for sacrifices. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among My people, if My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my name may be there forever. My eyes and My heart will always be there” [2 Chronicles 7:11-16].

This text plainly states that Yahweh exclusively chose and consecrated the temple Solomon built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem as the temple for sacrifices. It further claims that Yahweh would dwell and place his name in this temple forever. Obviously the author was unaware that the temple was going to be desecrated twice and finally destroyed. Otherwise he would not have claimed that Yahweh would forever be present within its walls. Rehoboam the son of Solomon was forty one years old when he was crowned king. He ruled seventeen years in Jerusalem “the city Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put His Name” [1 Kings 14:21].

Whoever wrote this text he regarded Judah as the only authentic tribe in which Yahweh chose to establish his name. In this tribe alone – in Jerusalem, more particularly, the temple Solomon

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constructed – all the tribes of Israel were required to take their burnt offerings and sacrifices along with all their other gifts and presents. In this place alone the males of all the tribes were required to present themselves three times a year. The temple in Jerusalem was to be the exclusive shrine for worship. When the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh announced to Jeroboam that he was to become the king of the Ten Tribes of Israel, he also told him that Yahweh would make sure Rehoboam the son of Solomon would retain the rule over the tribe of Judah. This was so that David would always have a lamp in the place where Yahweh supposedly chose to establish his name:

“But for the sake of My servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe...I will give one tribe to his son so that David My servant may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put My Name” [1 Kings 11:32,36].

Again, the author had no idea that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. Neither was he aware that David’s dynasty was going to come to an end. He assumed that David would always have a descendant to rule in Jerusalem. But this was not to be. This author insisted that Jerusalem was to remain a chosen place of worship even if David’s descendants turn against Yahweh and worship hinder gods. When Solomon deserted Yahweh and became guilty of gross idolatry, he did not lose his throne because of supposed unconditional oath to David.

Rehoboam his son was also guilty of gross sins but did not lose his throne because Jerusalem was supposedly eternal, invincible city where all the tribes were required to worship. The redactor explicitly states that even though the descendants of David would practice idolatry – Yahweh would not end their reign no reject the temple and Jerusalem he chose to place his name:

“He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh. Nevertheless, for the sake of His servant David, Yahweh was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever” [2 Kings 8:18-19].

“He committed all the sins his father had done before him...Nevertheless, for David’s sake Yahweh his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong” [1 Kings 15:3-4].

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Yahweh supposedly ignored gross idolatry and horrible abominations of David's descendants in order to preserve Jerusalem and its temple forever. If these texts are genuine and if Yahweh indeed swore to David that he will always have a son to rule in Jerusalem – the chosen city – how is it then that Jerusalem was destroyed and the Davidic dynasty became extinct? It is obvious to me that these claims are either spurious and interpolations by the lying pen of the scribes – or else they were written by the original author who was led to believe and practice the false religious system. Yahweh supposedly rejected Eli and his descendants for some technical sin, while at the same time fully ignored the wicked abominations of David's descendants. He rejected King Saul for minor mistakes, but ignored the wicked abominations of the kings of Judah and even David himself.

Now please pay a special attention to the following text recording the very words of Solomon:

“I have built a magnificent Temple for You, a place for You to dwell for ever...Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, who with His hands has fulfilled what He promised with His mouth to my father David. For He said, Since the day I brought My people out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a Temple built for MY Name to be there, nor have I chosen anyone to be the leader over My people Israel. But now I have chosen David to rule My people Israel” [2 Chronicles 6:2-6].

If Solomon really made such a statement and if other claims in the Bible are true, then Solomon credited Yahweh with a false statement. He emphatically stated that since Yahweh brought the Israelites out of Egypt he never chose a city where he would establish his name. But this is simply not true providing the text in Jeremiah 7:12 is correct:

“Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for My Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people.”

Here we are plainly told that Shiloh, a city in the tribe of Ephraim, was first chosen where Yahweh established his name. We know from other scriptures that it was at the very temple of Shiloh that the boy Samuel served and was raised. We know that there was a temple there for we are told that Eli sat “beside the doorpost of Yahweh's temple” [1 Samuel 1:3,9]. Some would want you to believe that this was not actually a built temple but rather the Tabernacle Moses supposedly constructed in the desert. But this could not have been the case. The Tabernacle

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was not destroyed at that time. It was in existence even in the days of David and Solomon.

The temple of Shiloh however was destroyed because of people's wickedness. Yahweh threatened to destroy the temple in Jerusalem just as he destroyed the temple in Shiloh. He threatened to reject the tribe of Judah just as he rejected the whole tribe of Ephraim [Jeremiah 7:14-15]. The Tabernacle in Shiloh was apparently erected in the days of Joshua [Joshua 18:1]. In the book of Judges we are told that Jonathan and his sons served as priests in Dan "all the time that the House of God was in Shiloh" [Judges 19:31]. If these texts are authentic then the text preserving the speech of Solomon must be spurious. If the text faithfully preserved the speech of Solomon then he must have either lied or was ignorant of the true facts.

In Psalm 78 Asaph states:

"He abandoned the Tabernacle at Shiloh...He rejected the tents of Joseph, He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loved. He built His Sanctuary like the high mountains, like the earth that He established for ever" [verses 60,67-69].

According to this text, Yahweh never chose the tribe of Ephraim but rather the tribe of Judah. He deserted the temple of Shiloh and instead supposedly built the Sanctuary [Solomon's temple] in Judah to endure forever.

The Samaritans claim that the temple of Shiloh was established by Eli the High Priest who deserted the original temple built at Shechem. The Bible itself reveals that indeed there was a Sanctuary at Shechem even in the days of Joshua:

"Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God...On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak beside the sanctuary of Yahweh" [Joshua 24:1,25].

This text plainly states that there was a Sanctuary at Shechem. It also reveals that a stone pillar

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and the oak were beside the Sanctuary. We shall see later that the redactors sanctioning the tribe of Judah and the temple of Jerusalem –sternly condemned the practice of erecting stone pillars and wooden poles beside the altar or Sanctuary. From Joshua 22 it is evident that the Israelites in his days regarded Shiloh as the sole centralized shrine at which alone it was lawful to offer burnt offerings and perform other sacrificial rites. There we are told that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar in Gilead near Jordan. When the other tribes learned of this they assembled all their armies at the central shrine at Shiloh intending to make war with Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh. Before attacking however, the Israelites sent Phinehas, the son of Eliazar, along with ten chieftains:

“So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eliazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead – to Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. With him they sent ten chief men, one for the each tribe of Israel, each the head of the family division among the Israelite clans. When they went to Gilead – to Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh – they said to them: The whole assembly of Yahweh says: How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from Yahweh and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against Him now?...If you rebel against Yahweh today, tomorrow He will be angry with the whole community of Israel. If the land you possess is defiled, come over to Yahweh’s land, where Yahweh’s Tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against Yahweh or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of Yahweh your God...

Then Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel: God, God Yahweh...He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to Yahweh, do not spare us this day. If we have built our own altar to turn away from Yahweh and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may Yahweh Himself call us to account. No! We did it for fear that someday your descendants might say to ours, What do you have to do with Yahweh, the God of Israel? Yahweh has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you – you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in Yahweh. This is why we said, Let us get ready and build an altar –but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.

On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship Yahweh at His Sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, You have no share in Yahweh. And we said, If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of Yahweh’s altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you. Far be it from us to rebel against Yahweh and turn away from Him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of Yahweh our God that stands before His Tabernacle” [Joshua 22:13-29].

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When Phinehas and the other chiefs heard their reply they no longer spoke about going to war with their brothers [verse 33]. It is not possible to know for certain whether this text represents an actual historical event or whether it is a later gloss. What is clear however, is the fact that the tribes at this point of history were fully convinced that no altar was to be erected anywhere in Israel apart from the one Moses supposedly constructed in the desert. Only at this altar which was placed at the entry of the Shiloh Sanctuary all the tribes were to present their bloody sacrifices. At this place alone they were also to kill their fellowship sacrifices. The fellowship sacrifices consisted of partaking of animal flesh and holding community festivities.

Whoever wrote Joshua 22 most certainly believed the texts of Deuteronomy 12, 14 and 16, as well as the text of Leviticus 17 – where worship in the central shrine was enforced. He however, was either ignorant or rejected the text of Exodus 20:24-25 which allowed building an altar in all the places Yahweh was to choose. According to this text of Exodus the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were at liberty to build an altar in Geliloth and present their bloody sacrifices there. This will become apparent later.

In 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon did not only claim that Yahweh never chose a tribe and a city prior to choosing Judah and Jerusalem – a claim that cannot be justified on the evidence presented. He also stated that Yahweh never chose anyone to be the leader of Israel until he chose David his father. This claim is at odds with other scriptures. According to certain texts of the Bible, Yahweh chose Saul the son of Kish to be the king of Israel before David. It is claimed that Samuel in fact anointed Saul as king over the whole Israel [1 Samuel 10:1]. In order to accept the text of 2 Chronicles 6, we must discard all other texts in the Bible which contradict Solomon's claim. It is just not possible to accept all the conflicting views propagated by various authors and redactors in the Bible. We must make a choice and decide which texts are reliable and credible - in harmony with the perfect character of the true God - and which are later gloss and lying interpolations. By the time you finish reading this book the decision will not be all that difficult to make.

The Centralized Shrine of Mount Ebal

We have already seen that the descendants of Judah believed that Yahweh chose the tribe of

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Judah and the temple of Jerusalem where to place his name in fulfilment of Deuteronomy 12, 14 and 16. We have also seen that others claimed Shiloh to be the centralized shrine in fulfilment of the same texts. The Samaritans however claimed that neither of these places were chosen by Yahweh. They insisted that Mount Gerizim [adjoining Mount Ebal] was the only legitimate central shrine where all sacrificial rites were to take place.

To this day they kill their Passover lambs in Shechem [modern Nablus] – at the foot of Mount Gerizim. Their original temple which once stood on Mount Gerizim was destroyed by Jewish king John Hyrcanus. Who were the Samaritans and on what grounds do they claim that Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem was the chosen place?

Jews insist that the Samaritans were Gentiles who settled in the land of Israel when the Ten Tribes were enslaved by the Assyrians. Samaritans on the other hand claim that they are legitimate descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. In the New Testament itself it is evident that Jews and Samaritans did not associate. The Samaritan woman told Jesus that the Jews claimed the place of worship was in Jerusalem while the Samaritans claimed it was on the Mount Gerizim. She stated that Jacob, whom she identified as their father, worshipped on Mount Gerizim.

Jesus however rejected both Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. He claimed that neither Jewish view nor the Samaritan view was pleased to God. The true worshippers, said Jesus, worship everywhere in spirit and in truth [John chapter 4]. Believe it or not, the Samaritans likewise appealed to the book of Deuteronomy in order to prove that their shrine was the only legitimate centralized place of worship. They appealed to the following texts:

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse - the blessing if you obey the commands of Yahweh your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of Yahweh your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following hinder gods, which you have not known. When Yahweh your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, westward, towards the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh...[Deuteronomy 11:26-30].

Please note that chapter 12 follows this text. The Samaritans claim that it is actually continuation of the thought expressed in chapter 11. However, there is an explicit text in Deuteronomy which plainly singles out Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim as the only authentic

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places to worship and present sacrifices:

“When you have crossed the Jordan into the land Yahweh your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land Yahweh your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, promised you. And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. Build there an altar to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them. Build the altar of Yahweh your God with stones from the field and offer burnt offerings on it to Yahweh your God. Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of Yahweh your God. And you shall write very clearly all the words of the law on these stones you have set up” [Deuteronomy 27:2-8].

In verses 12 and 13 of the same chapter we are told that six of the tribes should stand on Mount Gerizim while they pronounce the blessings and other six should stand on Mount Ebal while they pronounce the curses. When the Israelites entered the land, Joshua, so it is claimed, actually built the altar according to the instructions of Moses:

“Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to Yahweh, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what was written in the Book of the Law of Moses - an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to Yahweh burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings. There in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, facing those who carried it - the priests who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of Yahweh had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel. Afterwards, Joshua read all the words of the law - the blessings and the curses - just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel” [Joshua 8:30-35].

If we were to accept the Deuteronomic texts which prescribe the centralized national worship, we would have to admit that Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim with its altar was the only authentic place where the sacrificial rites were to be performed. How and why the Shiloh was chosen is an enigma. Why the tribe of Judah rejected the altar of Mount Ebal is also an enigma.

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Joshua supposedly erected the shrine at Shiloh - forbidding anyone to erect another anywhere else. Yet the same Joshua supposedly erected the altar on Mount Ebal according to the instructions of Moses.

Later, prophet Samuel ignores the Deuteronomic texts and supposedly sacrifices on high places of Beth El, Gibeon, Mizpah and other towns. Prophet Elijah rejects the temple of Jerusalem and supposedly sacrifices on Mount Carmel - recognizing many altars of Yahweh in the land of Israel and not Judah.

Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah altogether reject the shrine worship of any kind. All the texts which prescribe the sacrificial cult of any sort they regard as interpolations - claiming that the true God never implemented it. This will be fully documented when we deal with the fifth system of worship - the system which flatly rejects the sacrificial cult.

The Altar at the Tent of Meeting

According to the text of Exodus – Moses was shown a pattern of the Sanctuary of Yahweh. He was instructed to erect the Tent of Meeting [Tabernacle] which was to consist of two apartments: The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. He was also told to make an altar of acacia wood and overlay it with bronze. On this altar all the sacrificial rites were to be performed. On the golden altar which he was also instructed to make, the incense was to be burned perpetually.

He was also to make a golden lampstand [The Menorah], as well as all sort of utensils required for the sacrificial cult. The most holy object that was supposedly constructed in the desert was the Ark of the Covenant which was overlaid with gold and whose lid was made of pure solid gold. This Ark was to rest between two cherubim which Moses was to make of pure gold. This Ark was called the throne of Yahweh and the mercy seat. In it Yahweh lived. The cherubim creatures were animals resembling bulls. They had human faces and long wings. On the Day of Atonement - 10th of the Jewish seventh month - the High Priest was to enter the Most Holy Place and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat in order to atone for the sin of his nation. Each day – morning and evening – the priests were to present a lamb as a perpetual sacrifice. This rite became known as the daily sacrifice.

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The Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year after exodus from Egypt [Exodus 40:17]. The altar for burnt offerings and sacrifices was placed near the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. There the priests kept performing the sacrificial rites [40:20].

In Leviticus 17 we find the following clear instructions regarding the Tent of Meeting and its sacrificial altar:

“This is what Yahweh has commanded: Any Israelite who slaughters an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it instead of bringing it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to Yahweh in front of the Tabernacle of Yahweh - that man shall be regarded guilty of bloodshed: he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people. This is so that the Israelites will bring to Yahweh the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to Yahweh, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting [where the altar was located] and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. The priest is to sprinkle the blood against the altar of Yahweh at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to Yahweh. They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to their goat idols [Satyrs] to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be an everlasting ordinance for them throughout their generations” [17:1-7].

This priestly source commands all the tribes of Israel to bring their sacrifices and burnt offerings and present them on the altar in front of the Tabernacle. The text also forbade any Israelite or an alien to slaughter his animals anywhere else but the altar of the Tabernacle. They were to bring it there as fellowship offerings – and eat them in the ‘presence of Yahweh.’ This law was not to be in force only while they were in the desert but "everlasting, through all their generations."

The first book of Samuel plainly reveals that the Israelites prior to the days of David and Solomon at least partially adhered to this command. They never slaughtered their animals for human consumption at their homes. They brought them to the place of worship. They accepted the fact that they could not kill their animals apart from the altar, but they did not always bother to bring it to the Tent of Meeting. They took their animals to Shiloh, Beth El and other sacrificial centres - or simply erected their own altars. Elkanah, the father of Samuel, took his animals to Shiloh every year. There he and his family ate of the flesh. Since he loved his wife Hannah more than his other wife or children he gave her double portion of meat [1 Samuel 1:3-4].

When King Saul conquered the Philistines, the army seized the animals and killed them on the

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ground rather than the altar. Then they ate the meat. Some soldiers came to Saul and told him that the people are sinning against Yahweh because they ate meat by bloodshed. Saul was very disturbed and ordered the soldiers to bring the animals to him. He took a large stone and commanded the people to kill their animals on this stone so that they would not be guilty of bloodshed – that is, murder.

When Christians, Muslims and the adherents of Judaism read the text of 1 Samuel 14:31-34, they fail to realize the real meaning of it. Most assume that their sin was eating flesh together with the blood. But this was not the case. The text first of all states that they slaughtered the animals. Since they were slaughtered that means that they were bled. The Hebrew word "shachat" means "to kill or slaughter animal for food, sacrifice or human being in sacrifice." They cut the throat of their animals and so they were bled. But they slaughtered the animals on the ground and not an altar. Saul commanded that large stone be brought to him upon which they should slaughter their animals. This act plainly reveals that Saul believed [at least it is so claimed] that it was lawful to kill the animals for human consumption only upon the altar. On this occasion he built his first altar to Yahweh. The correct translation of this text from Hebrew is as follows:

"That day, after the Israelites had defeated the Philistines from Mikdash to Ayalon, they were exhausted. They pounced on the plunder and, taking sheep, cattle and calves, they slaughtered them on the ground and ate them through bloodshed [murder]. Then someone said to Saul, Look, the men are sinning against Yahweh by eating flesh through

bloodshed. You have broken faith, he said. Roll a large stone over here at once. Then he said, Go out among the men and tell them, Each of you bring me your cattle and sheep, and slaughter them here

[on the stone] and eat them. Do not sin against Yahweh by eating meat through bloodshed. So everyone brought his ox that night and slaughtered it there. Thus Saul built an altar to Yahweh; it was the first time he had done this."

Please recall that the text of Leviticus 17 regarded the slaughter of an animal as murder unless it was done so on the altar near the entrance of the Tabernacle. Saul did not build the altar near the Tent of Meeting but he nevertheless obeyed the rest of the Levitical text. Also there was Ahijah the priest with him there [verses 18-19]. The rabbis of Judaism teach that it is forbidden to sacrifice animals to Yahweh when there is no temple in Jerusalem. That is why the Jews do not present sacrifices and burnt offerings since the temple was destroyed in 70 c.e. But the rabbis allow eating of flesh regardless where the animal was killed.

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By forbidding animal sacrifice but allowing the slaughtering of animals in order to gratify their lusts they are most definitely guilty of bloodshed. According to the Levitical text they should be cut off from among their people. The rabbis teach that the Pentateuch was written by Moses and claim the inspiration of every letter. Why then do they reject the text of Leviticus which orders the Israelites and the aliens to slaughter their animals on the altar of Yahweh alone? This rule was to be an everlasting ordinance - throughout the Hebrew generations.

Worship on the High Places

The phrase *high place* occurs more than hundred times in the Bible. It comes from the Hebrew word *bamah* and primarily refers to a cultic site of some sort. St. Jerome rendered the Hebrew word *bamah* as *excelsus* in his Latin Vulgate Bible and hence the high place in the King James Bible. The Hebrew word *bamah* means more than just a high place. New English Bible renders 'bamah' 'high shrine' while Revised Standard Version and New Jewish Publication Society render it 'shrine.' The Jerusalem redactors sternly condemn 'bamot' [plural of bamah] of any sort.

The Deuteronomic and Levitical sources prescribed the sacrificial worship in one place alone. Yet we find the Israelites continuously associated with many altars on the high places. When Saul first met Samuel he went with him to bamah – because Samuel had to officiate at the shrine since there was a festival to be observed and sacrifices to be presented [1 Samuel 9:11-25].

After having a sacrificial meal with Saul, Samuel sent him to Bethel, to the hill where the company of prophets met him. [Beth El was the important shrine to the Patriarchs and the Israelites. Later it became one of the two main shrines of the Ten Tribes. Its name means: House of El]. How is it that the Israelites had many sacred shrines in the high places when the original Tabernacle Moses supposedly made in the desert was available to them and was actually situated at the high place of Gibeon? [1 Chronicles 21:29]. How is it that even the men of Yahweh, such as Samuel, actually worshipped on high hills and in different locations and offered sacrifices at the shrines of Beth El, Mizpah, Shiloh, Gibeah, Galgal, Ramah...? Why did he not worship only at the Tent of Meeting which was located at Gibeon? Why was there also a Sanctuary at Shechem as well as Shiloh and Nod – when all along the Israelites had the mobile Sanctuary which Moses allegedly constructed? By building all other shrines and Sanctuaries on the high places they most definitely sinned if the Deuteronomic texts which enforce the centralized worship are authentic.

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They were guilty of murder by shedding blood of animals on altars other than the one Moses supposedly constructed in the desert for all times. Why did even Elijah recognize various altars on the high places as the altars of Yahweh – when the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem still stood erect?

All these questions have haunted the rabbis of Judaism, as well as Christian theologians, for thousands of years. To date they have been unable to solve the enigma. This however, did not prevent them from claiming that every letter in the five books of Moses is inspired and infallible. The rabbis of Normative Judaism pronounce a curse on anyone who even questions Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch. The Christian Church went as far as claiming that every word in the entire Bible is inspired and infallible.

If the true God was indeed the Author of the entire Bible, why then is it full of errors and contradictions? Why did the Ebionites reject many portions of it? Why did Jeremiah himself charge the Jewish scribes of falsifying the Pentateuch? Why are so many books missing from the original Bible? Why these conflicting accounts concerning the chosen place and where the sacrificial cult should be practiced?

Let us now return to the subject of the shrines on the high places. Where did King David worship Yahweh and offer sacrifices and burnt offerings? Most definitely not in Gibeon where the Tent of Meeting was located. He most definitely offered sacrifices in different places – if the Bible as we have it is to be trusted. He pitched a tent in Jerusalem in which he placed the Ark of the Covenant. In the same place he offered bloody sacrifices [2 Samuel 6:17-18]. Yahweh supposedly told him to do so despite the fact that the Tent of Meeting and its sacrificial altar was located in Gibeon. By commanding David to build an altar in Jerusalem and to present sacrifices thereupon did not Yahweh violate His own command given to Moses and the Israelites in the desert [Lev.17], commanding the Israelites to present their sacrifices on the altar of the Tabernacle throughout their generations?

David presented sacrifices on the altar he built in Jerusalem where he placed the Ark of the Covenant. He built an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah and there he performed sacrificial rites [2 Samuel 24:18-25].

Please pay attention to the following text:

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“So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. David built an altar to Yahweh there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering...At that time, when David saw that Yahweh had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. The Tabernacle of Yahweh, which Moses had made in the desert, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon” [1 Chronicles 21:25-29. See also 1 Chronicles 6:31-32].

But now please note the following text which reveals an amazing act of David:

“As the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him in her heart. They brought the Ark of God and set it inside the tent that David pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God...He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the Ark of Yahweh, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise Yahweh, the God of Israel...David left Asaph and his associates before the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh to minister there regularly...David left Zadok the priest and his fellow priests before the Tabernacle of Yahweh at the high place in Gibeon to present burnt offerings to Yahweh on the altar of the burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, in accordance with everything written in the Law of Yahweh, which He had given to Israel” [1 Chronicles 15:29 - 16:40].

Here most plainly we are told that David established two places of worship. In both places sacrificial rites took place. We are also plainly told that the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the tent David pitched in Jerusalem and not the Tabernacle Moses allegedly built which was situated at Gibeon. Yet on the sacrificial altar at Gibeon he charged Zadok to offer daily sacrifice in accordance with the supposed command of Yahweh written in the so called Mosaic Law. Of what value was the Tabernacle in Gibeon since its most sacred object was not there? This Tabernacle was deserted since Yahweh supposedly resided in the Ark - which was placed in Jerusalem. By establishing two places of worship, did David fulfil the commands of Deuteronomy 12, 14 and 16 - prescribing only one centralized shrine? Did he fulfil Leviticus 17 by slaughtering animals for either sacrifices or human consumption on the altar at the entry of the Tent of Meeting?

The answer is resounding no!

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Just what are we supposed to make of all these absurd and contradicting texts? Which ones are authentic and inspired - revealing the perfect will of the true God? As far as God's true prophets, Jesus, his apostles and the Ebionites were concerned – none of them. They altogether rejected the sacrificial rites of any kind – whether in Jerusalem, Tent of Meeting or any other high shrine. This fact will become crystal clear in this book.

In 1 Kings 3, the Deuteronomic redactor attempts to justify people who continued to sacrifice in the high places saying:

“The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a Temple had not yet been built for the Name of Yahweh” [verse 2].

But what difference does this make? They had the most sacred Sanctuary at Gibeon. And why on a high place if it was something Yahweh hated as I have already pointed out in the quoted text previously? How could he justify the sacrificial rites on the high places if the text of Leviticus 17 is authentic? In 1 Kings 3:3 Solomon himself is criticized for worshipping Yahweh on the high places:

“Solomon showed his love for Yahweh by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burnt incense on the high places.”

Whoever wrote this text obviously believed that it was wrong to sacrifice on shrines of the high places. Yet in the same chapter we are told that Solomon presented 1000 cattle on the most sacred high place in Gibeon. There, at that very high shrine Yahweh supposedly appeared to Solomon and told him to ask of Yahweh whatever he will. He did not ask for riches but rather for wisdom so that he would be able to lead the Israelites wisely [1 Kings 3:4-5].

How is it that Yahweh never told Solomon that to present sacrifices on the high place of Gibeon was wrong? It is obvious to me that not all the texts in the Bible were inspired by the true God. Many texts were written by various redactors in the name of someone else in order to bolster their religious views and convictions.

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The redactor of the book of Kings attempted to justify the people for sacrificing on the high places because the temple in Jerusalem was not as yet built. But on what grounds would he justify the action of Elijah who lived many years after Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem? The Prophet Elijah did not recognize that temple as the only authentic place for worship. As a matter of fact he did not even worship in the temple at Jerusalem. He was preaching in the Kingdom of Israel – during the days of Ahab and Jezabel. Please note the following text:

“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet on Mount Carmel...So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel...Then Elijah said to all the people, Come here to me. They came to him, and he repaired the alter of Yahweh, which was in ruins” [1 Kings 18:19-20,30].

This text claims that there was an altar of Yahweh on Mount Carmel. Baal’s prophets demolished it and left it in ruins. Elijah supposedly repaired it and offered a sacrifice on it. Yahweh supposedly responded with fire. How could there be an altar on Mount Carmel after the temple in Jerusalem was supposedly exclusively consecrated for sacrifices and burnt offerings? How could Elijah repair this altar and present a sacrifice to Yahweh in a place other than the one Yahweh supposedly chose to place his name?

By sacrificing a bull on Mount Carmel, Elijah was guilty of murder. He should have taken it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting as the Levitical text commanded to be done forever – through all generations. Or if this is a forged text, then to the temple Solomon built. Why offer a sacrifice on a high place [bamah]? How could he even offer sacrifices when he was not a priest? How could even Samuel, David and others in the Bible offer sacrifices when they were not priests? Samuel was a descendant of Korah and was not a descendant of Aaron.

In 1 Kings 19:14 Elijah supposedly said to Yahweh:

“I have been very zealous for Yahweh God Shaddai. The Israelites [Ten Tribes] have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars [plural], and put your prophets to death with the sword.”

How could Elijah state that there were alters of Yahweh in the kingdom of Samaria when we are

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told elsewhere that the only authentic altar for sacrifices was the one Moses supposedly constructed in the desert? What about the altar Solomon built and which stood at the entrance of the temple? That altar was supposedly exclusively chosen by Yahweh for sacrifices and burnt offerings. Why then all the altars in the kingdom of Israel?

These are baffling questions which you must answer if you want to serve the true God in spirit and truth. By the time you read this book it will become apparent that all these texts sanctioning various shrines are not authentic. You will realize that they are interpolations by the lying pen of the scribes. That is why they fundamentally contradict each other.

In the books of Kings and Chronicles - Hezekiah, King of Judah implemented a great religious reform. The Jewish redactor of the book of Kings who strongly supported the Jewish claim regarding Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon - identifies King Hezekiah as most righteous of all kings:

“He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the wooden poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. It was called Nehushtan. Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before or after him” [2 Kings 18:3-5].

It is claimed that no king as righteous as Hezekiah arose after him. Yet we are told the same about King Josiah who himself also implemented a great religious reform not many years after Hezekiah's reform. It is claimed that no king before or after Josiah was as righteous as he who served Yahweh with all his heart and soul. More about Josiah's reform later.

When people read the last text quoted from the book of Kings - they usually suppose that the high places Hezekiah destroyed were the places where Israelites worshipped Baal. It is true that Hezekiah destroyed the altars of Baal but he also destroyed the altars of Yahweh built by the worshippers in the Ten Tribes. The Ten Tribes erected sacred stone pillars and wooden poles [asherim] beside the altars they built for Yahweh. The tribe of Judah hated this system of worship. That is why Hezekiah smashed all the altars and the stone pillars and wooden poles – commanding all the tribes to worship in Jerusalem alone – at the temple Solomon built. In the Torah itself we find texts sanctioning and forbidding the stone pillars and wooden poles. We find the people both erecting and demolishing them.

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Moses himself is depicted as erecting twelve stone pillars beside the altar he supposedly built [Exodus 24:4]. Jacob erected a stone pillar at Beth El beside the altar he supposedly built [Genesis 28:18,22; 35:6-7]. Joshua himself erected the large stone pillar beneath the same oak tree Jacob did [acting as a wooden pole] beside the Sanctuary at Shechem [Joshua 24:25-25]. Even in the days of Gedeon this stone pillar was in existence. For we are told that Abimelech was crowned King of Israel beside this pillar:

“Then all the citizens of Shechem and Beth millo gathered and made Abimelek king beside the sacred tree at the standing stone in Shechem” [Judges 9:6 Moffat Bible].

The Israelite altars in honour of Baal or Yahweh were always associated with sacred stone pillars [masaboth] and wooden poles or oaks – rendered *groves* in the King James Bible. The tribe of Judah sternly condemned this practice. That is why we find a redactor’s insertion which prohibits this practice:

“Do not set up any wooden pole beside the altar you build to Yahweh your God, and do not erect a sacred stone pillar, for these Yahweh your God hates” [Deuteronomy 16:21].

If Yahweh hates this practice, why then did Jacob erect the pillars near the altar? Why did Moses do it and even Joshua? Hezekiah destroyed all these shrines built by the Israelites. He even dared to destroy the bronze serpent [Nehushtan] which Moses made in the desert. But he did not touch the altars Solomon erected in honour of the pagan gods. Solomon built altars to the gods of his pagan wives. Hezekiah did not touch these altars but he destroyed all altars which were erected to Yahweh in the territory of the Ten Tribes – especially those in Ephraim and Manasseh. It was Josiah who smashed the altars Solomon erected to the pagan gods [2 Kings 23:13]. Solomon was Hezekiah’s ‘hero’ and the ‘founder’ of the religion he reformed. That Hezekiah also destroyed the altars the Israelites regarded to be those of Yahweh – is also evident from the following text:

“The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They came to Jerusalem...The field commander said to them, Tell Hezekiah: This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says...if you say to me, We are depending on Yahweh our God – isn’t He the One whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, you must worship before

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this altar in Jerusalem?...Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from Yahweh? Yahweh Himself told me to march against this country and destroy it" [2 Kings 18:17-25].

Hezekiah was forced to pay the tribute to the king of Assyria. He took all the gold he could find but was also forced to strip the gold from the doors and posts of the temple in order to pay his tribute [1 Kings 18:16]. What an irony! The most "righteous" king of Judah was forced to desecrate the temple in order to pay his tribute to the Gentile king. Please note how this text resembles the text in connection with Josiah:

"After all this, when Josiah had set the Temple in order, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. But Neco sent messengers to him saying, What quarrel is there between you and me, O king of Judah? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, Who is with me, or He will destroy you. Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Neco had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo" [2 Chronicles 35 20-22].

Hezekiah became subject to the king of Assyria. Josiah was killed in a battle against Neco, the king of Egypt. Yet both kings instituted great religious reforms and each is said to be more righteous than any other king that ruled in Judah. Why then were they defeated by the pagan kings? There is obviously something drastically wrong with these stories. When we carefully compare the story of Hezekiah given in 2 Kings 18-20 with that given in 2 Chronicles 29-32 – we discover some significant differences. The same can be said about the two stories in regards to Josiah and his reform. So far we have examined the four systems of worship which are sanctioned in one way or another in the Bible. We have seen that there are many conflicting texts - each one written by someone in order to uphold a certain religious system concerning the sacrificial cult. Those who built altars in various places and offered sacrifices there, appealed to the example of the Patriarchs and especially the text of Exodus 20:24-25:

"An altar of earth thou shalt make 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 will bless thee" [King James Bible].

This text of Exodus commands the Israelites to make an altar of the earth. This was preferred. If

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made of stones they must not cut them in any way. But Moses built an altar of stones. So did Joshua. So did Elijah repair the altar of stones. This text allows the erection of altars to Yahweh in more than one place – in all the places Yahweh will establish his name. In all these places they were allowed to perform sacrificial cult. The text of Deuteronomy allowed them to build an altar only in one place – the very place Yahweh was to choose from all the tribes of Israel.

Another Deuteronomic source sanctioned only the altar on Mount Ebal. The text of Leviticus 17 altogether forbade the Israelites to build any altar whatsoever. It regarded the altar Moses supposedly built in the desert as the only authentic altar for all times. Only at this altar which was located at the entrance of the Tabernacle they were to slaughter their sacrifices of all types. When Solomon built the temple he altogether ignored this text. He did not even use the altar Moses supposedly built in the desert of acacia wood overlaid with bronze - whose size was 3 cubits high, five cubits long and five cubits wide [Exodus 27:1]. Please note the following text:

“He made a bronze altar twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high. He made the Sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high. It took a line of thirty cubits to measure round it. Below the rim, figures of bulls encircled it – ten to a cubit. The bulls were cast in two rows in one piece with the Sea. The Sea stood on twelve bulls, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south and three facing east. The Sea rested on top of them” 2 Chronicles 4:1-5].

The altar of Exodus text was 3 cubits [1 meter] high. It could not have been any higher since the text forbade the erection of any steps in connection with the sacrificial altar [Exodus 20:26]. Since Solomon’s altar was more than 3 meters high - it had to have steps in order for the priests to be able to lay the timber and sacrifice on top of the altar. This would have contradicted the Exodus text. But then Solomon would have ignored it anyway since this text of Exodus sanctions more than one place of worship. He could have paid attention to the latter Jewish tradition which allowed the altars with steps but commanded the priests to wear underpants in order not to expose their nakedness [Exodus 28:40-42, Ezekiel 43:13-17].