

UNIT 47

THE TABLE OF BREAD OF PRESENCE

(Exodus 25:23-30; 37:10-16)

The Table of Bread (“Shewbread” in Tyndale) was to be a standing acknowledgment that the LORD was the giver of daily bread. It was called the “presence bread” because it was bread set out in His presence. The theology was **God provides**; the practice was that *the people must provide for constant thanksgiving to God*. So if the ark spoke of communion through propitiation, the table speaks of **dedicatory gratitude**.

In the ancient Near East tables were placed in the sanctuaries for the deities. In Assyria it appears also that twelve loaves were placed on the table (*EB IV: 4116*). But in pagan societies the gods were supposed to eat; in Israel the table acquired a higher significance (Num. 4:7).

There are not many terms in this section that call for exhaustive study. “Bread of Presence” may, but probably not too much will turn up. Also, the structure will not offer much that is striking: verse 23 has the table, verses 24-27 its decor, verse 28 the poles, verse 29 the dishes and bowls, and verse 30 its purpose. Perhaps verses 23-28 could be treated for the provision of dedication, verse 29 for the details (find the purpose for the utensils elsewhere—fine flour, wine, incense—and what they signified), and the purpose of the table in verse 30, that is, for bread to be *continually* before the LORD.

In the New Testament we would be looking for passages that tell believers to continually offer thanks to God for His provisions, and to offer their substance to Him as proof of their thanks. The point of this passage, once again, is the instruction to prepare for this. So I would “back up” the application to say believers should organize their worship to include the continual offering of thanksgiving to God—in a tangible way.