

# THE BUTCHERING AREA

*by Rabbi Yoav Elan*

At a distance of 8 cubits (12 feet) from the northern edge of the Altar were twenty-four iron rings set into the floor of the Courtyard where animals would be held during slaughter. The rings took up an area of 24 cubits (36 feet) square, arranged in six rows north to south of four rings each (the four rings ran east-to-west). Each ring was a half-circle, hinged on one side so that the other side could be lifted for the animal's head to be inserted and then locked down. The rings were oriented so that the animal would be facing south when put into the ring. Each watch of *Kohanim* was assigned their own ring which they would use during their shift. The exception to the above was the *Tamid* offering [the continual offering brought twice daily] which was always slaughtered in the same ring, regardless of which watch was on duty.

The eight short stone columns north of the rings were much shorter than a man's height and topped by a heavy piece of square cedar. This block of wood was not fastened to the columns but remained in place under its own weight. Along each side of the cedar block, save for the west, were affixed one row of iron hooks from which the animals were hung for skinning. These hooks protruded one handbreadth (3 inches) from the blocks of wood.

There were eight stone tables near the columns used to support large animals during the skinning, to rest knives upon, and to wash the innards upon. More analogous to small footstools, the tables measured just 1 cubit tall and 1 cubit square (1½ feet per side).

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