



Exodus - Chapter Thirty Five

II. Exodus 19:1-40:38 - The Covenant at Sinai (continues)

Summary of Chapter Thirty Five

After a brief reminder of the Sabbath law requirements, Moses instructed the people to take up an offering of all the things that God required so that the tabernacle could be made. He also instructed all those gifted in various arts and crafts to come forward to construct the tabernacle, its contents and the clothes that the priests were to wear.

When Moses had finished speaking the Israelites departed. Then all the men and women who had willing hearts brought all the items that were required and worked with the skills they had to make the tabernacle and all its articles.

Moses then informs the people that God had put the divine spirit in Bezalel to perform all the intricate design work along with Oholiab.

II.g Exodus 35:1-40:38 - The Tabernacle: Preparation for the Presence

This final section describes the preparation (35:1-36:7), construction (36:8-39:43), and assembling (40:1-33) of the tabernacle, which is then filled by the glory of the Lord (40:34-38).

The order in which the construction of the elements of the sanctuary is narrated corresponds to the order in which Moses was instructed to assemble them when the tabernacle was finally erected (40:2-15). The length of the account of the work underlines its importance. The assembly of the tabernacle is the visible guarantee of God's continuing presence with and care of Israel.

II.g.i Exodus 35:1-36:7 - Moses Prepares the People

Moses prepares the people to carry out the instructions for the tabernacle by reaffirming the need to keep the Sabbath (vv.1-3), calling for the contribution of

materials and craftsmen (vv.10-19), and setting Bezalel and Oholiab over the work (35:30-36:1). The people respond by bringing their contributions (vv.20-29), such that the craftsmen have more than they need and Moses has to restrain them from giving more (36:2-7).

II.g.i.1 Exodus 35:1-3 - Sabbath Regulations

The instructions for the tabernacle end with a section on keeping the Lord's Sabbaths, refer also to 31:12-17, and the description of the fulfilment of those instructions begins with Moses calling the people to keep the Sabbath (vv.2-3). Israel is to embody faithfulness to the Lord by keeping the Sabbath holy while they are building his sanctuary.

¹ Moses assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and said to them: These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do:

Exodus 35:1

These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. Before any instructions are given or action is taken, Moses makes sure the people know this is what God requires of them.

² For six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. ³ You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day.

Exodus 35:2-3

For six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord. As these final chapters indicate, there was a lot of work for Israel to do. They had to build a complex and exact tabernacle of meeting. Yet before they did anything, they should be reminded to enter into God's rest and to respect the Sabbath. The same principle holds true for anyone's walk with God. Anything they do for the Lord must grow out of their rest in him, and rest in his finished work on their behalf.

Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. This was a strict call to obedience. Before they did the work of building the tabernacle, God first called Israel to the work of simple obedience. Basic obedience is a pre-requisite for doing work for the Lord.

The Hebrew language has two words for work: *avodah* and *melachah*. *Avodah* is a general term meaning work, while *melachah* is a word more related to business and things specifically forbidden on the Sabbath. One might say that

here, God allowed some work (*avodah*) to be done on the Sabbath, but did not allow certain things on the Sabbath, especially anything business-related.

You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day. The Jews understand this precept as forbidding the kindling of fire only for the purpose of doing work or dressing victuals; but to give them light and heat, they judge it lawful to light a fire on the Sabbath day.

II.g.i.2 Exodus 35:4-19 - Preparations for Making the Tabernacle

The lists of the materials needed, first listed in 25:3-7, and the objects to be constructed (vv.10-19) presume a familiarity with the instructions for the tabernacle, which Moses must have relayed to the people at some point.

⁴ Moses said to all the congregation of the Israelites: This is the thing that the Lord has commanded: ⁵ Take from among you an offering to the Lord; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁶ blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen; goats' hair, ⁷ tanned rams' skins, and fine leather; acacia wood, ⁸ oil for the light, spices for the anointing-oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁹ and onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece.

Exodus 35:4-9

This is the thing that the Lord has commanded. Now it was time to do what God originally commanded Moses in Exodus Chapters 25-31 regarding the building of the tabernacle and its associated items.

Take from among you an offering to the Lord; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering. This offering came from God's command, not from Moses' clever fund-raising techniques. This shows God's normal way of channelling resources to his work is by the gifts given from his people with a willing heart. God could cause the money and materials to appear by a miracle or by perhaps unwilling donations from the rich or from financial institutions. Yet he chooses to fund his work through the willing gifts of his people. He works this way because believers need to be a giving people. This idea is echoed by Paul: <<*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*>> (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen. These and the rest of the items listed were the materials necessary to build the tabernacle as commanded in Exodus Chapters 25-31.

¹⁰ All who are skilful among you shall come and make all that the Lord has commanded: the tabernacle, ¹¹ its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; ¹² the ark with its poles, the mercy-seat, and the curtain for the screen; ¹³ the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; ¹⁴ the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; ¹⁵ and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing-oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, the entrance of the tabernacle; ¹⁶ the altar of burnt-offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin with its stand; ¹⁷ the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; ¹⁸ the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; ¹⁹ the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests.

Exodus 35:10-19

All who are skilful among you shall come. The call for contributions is not simply for materials but also for every skilful craftsman, both male and female.

The tabernacle, its tent and its covering. This lists the items of the tabernacle that must be made, again repeating them from Exodus Chapters 25-31.

II.g.i.3 Exodus 35:20-29 - Offerings for the Tabernacle

The description of all the contributed materials emphasises the people's willingness of heart, which indicates that they are responding in accordance with the initial call for contributions (36:3-7) and shows their penitence for making the golden calf. However, it should also be remembered that much of what they now gave was given to them by the Egyptians as they departed their land. This was in accordance with the will of God.

²⁰ Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. ²¹ And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. ²² So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an

offering of gold to the Lord. ²³ And everyone who possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather, brought them. ²⁴ Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the Lord's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work, brought it. ²⁵ All the skilful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen; ²⁶ all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. ²⁷ And the leaders brought onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece, ²⁸ and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing-oil, and for the fragrant incense. ²⁹ All the Israelite men and women whose hearts made them willing to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill-offering to the Lord.

Exodus 35:20-29

Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. After Moses asked them to give, he sent them home to decide what they would give. This shows that Moses did not use manipulative techniques, such as asking people to make quick, public decisions about their giving. There was no manipulation at all in Moses' request. Moses did not have a contest pitting one tribe against another, to see which tribe could raise the most money, or try to make the people feel guilty about their giving, or any other such nonsense. God did the work in the hearts of the people.

And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing. The idea of the freedom and lack of coercion in the offering is repeated and emphasised. Although their hearts were willing, they did not know what to give, when to give, or how to give until Moses led them. Willing hearts still need to be told when there is a need and how they can meet that need.

The Israelites would be stirred to the same generous giving spirit following the construction of the temple in Jerusalem: <<Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill-offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite>> (1 Chronicles 29:6-8).

The Lord's offering, a freewill-offering to the Lord. It was also clear exactly to whom they gave - the Lord, not to Moses or even to the nation.

Both men and women; all who were of a willing heart. In this it can be seen just how many among Israel gave to the work. It was not only the wealthy, but everyone who could and who had a willing heart, gave. There were many willing hearts. The people gave what they could. Not all could give gold or precious gems, but they could give some goat's hair. Certainly, a gift of goat's hair could be just as welcome in God's sight as a gift of gold, if it is given with the right heart.

II.g.i.4 Exodus 35:30-36:7 - Bezalel and Oholiab

This section refers to Bezalel and Oholiab, whom God had identified in 31:1-6 to oversee the designs and construction of every aspect related to the tabernacle, as those whom the Lord has gifted with the necessary skills. It also describes the skill of every craftsman who will help as the Lord enables them. In the same way that the Lord enabled his people to contribute the materials for the sanctuary, he has also prepared or empowered some of them with the skills required to craft the sanctuary.

³⁰ Then Moses said to the Israelites: See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹ he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, ³² to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ³³ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. ³⁴ And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen, or by a weaver – by any sort of artisan or skilled designer.

Exodus 35:30-35

He has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft. God chose Bezaleel and Oholiab to be the general contractors for this building project. He equipped them with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit to do the work.

He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer. The leaders of the work of building the tabernacle had a unique inspiration of the Holy Spirit to do this important and practical work. Since God wanted the work done according to a certain pattern (25:9), it made sense that he specially inspired and gifted some to do the work.