



Exodus - Chapter Thirty Eight

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

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

II.g.ii Exodus 36:8-39:43 - Tabernacle Construction (continues)

Summary of Chapter Thirty Eight

The construction of the tabernacle continues. This chapter describes the making of the Altar of Burnt-Offering that will be located outside of the tabernacle and all the utensils that will be used with it. Finally, the material for the courtyard itself is made.

The chapter concludes with a summary statement describing the process for making the items that were used for the tabernacle and a catalogue of the materials that were used.

II.g.ii.7 Exodus 38:1-8 - Making the Altar of Burnt-Offering

Having completed all the items inside the tabernacle, attention now turns to the construction of the altar that would stand outside in the courtyard to be used for the sacrificial offerings.

¹ He made the altar of burnt-offering also of acacia wood; it was five cubits long, and five cubits wide; it was square, and three cubits high.

² He made horns for it on its four corners; its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. ³ He made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans: all its utensils he made of bronze. ⁴ He made for the altar a grating, a network of bronze, under its ledge, extending half-way down. ⁵ He cast

four rings on the four corners of the bronze grating to hold the poles;
⁶ he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze.
⁷ And he put the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar, to carry it with them; he made it hollow, with boards.

Exodus 38:1-7

These verses describe the making of the altar of burnt-offering and its associated utensils according to the command and description in Exodus 27:1-8.

⁸ He made the basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Exodus 38:8

The description of the basin includes details about the objects from which the bronze was taken and the women who gave them. The mirrors would have been good quality and made of highly polished pieces of bronze that were most likely brought out of Egypt (12:36).

The role of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting would have been clear to the initial audience, but is not explained anywhere else in the OT and is referred to elsewhere only in connection with the sin of Eli's sons: *<<Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting>>* (1 Samuel 2:22).

It is wonderful to think that these women gave up their ability to measure their own physical beauty to make this reservoir for the water of ceremonial washing. By analogy, it may be said that some are so focused on looking at themselves that they fail to look to Jesus. It is always time to surrender such a mirror to Jesus. From a NT perspective, one may say that believers experience the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26), and that the Word of God is like a mirror and people see it from different perspectives: *<<But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing>>* (James 1:22-25).

II.g.ii.8 [Exodus 38:9-20 - Making the Court of the Tabernacle](#)

The final items to be made are those that will be used to construct the outer courtyard itself.

⁹ He made the court; for the south side the hangings of the court were of fine twisted linen, one hundred cubits long; ¹⁰ its twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. ¹¹ For the north side there were hangings one hundred cubits long; its twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. ¹² For the west side there were hangings fifty cubits long, with ten pillars and ten bases; the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. ¹³ And for the front to the east, fifty cubits. ¹⁴ The hangings for one side of the gate were fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three bases. ¹⁵ And so for the other side; on each side of the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three bases. ¹⁶ All the hangings around the court were of fine twisted linen. ¹⁷ The bases for the pillars were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver; the overlaying of their capitals was also of silver, and all the pillars of the court were banded with silver. ¹⁸ The screen for the entrance to the court was embroidered with needlework in blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine twisted linen. It was twenty cubits long and, along the width of it, five cubits high, corresponding to the hangings of the court. ¹⁹ There were four pillars; their four bases were of bronze, their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their capitals and their bands of silver. ²⁰ All the pegs for the tabernacle and for the court all around were of bronze.

[Exodus 38:9-20](#)

These verses describe the making of the courtyard with its pillars and linen fence, designed according to the command and description in Exodus 27:9-19.

II.g.ii.9 [Exodus 38:21-31 - Materials of the Tabernacle](#)

This section represents an official record (v.21) of those who oversaw the work of the tabernacle (vv.22-23) and of the precious materials gold (v.24), silver (vv.25-28), and bronze (vv.29-31) that were used in its construction.

²¹ These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the covenant, which were drawn up at the commandment of Moses, the

work of the Levites being under the direction of Ithamar son of the priest Aaron.²² Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord commanded Moses;²³ and with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, engraver, designer, and embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen.

Exodus 38:21-23

Which were drawn up at the commandment of Moses. By some estimations the present day value of the materials used in the tabernacle would total more than £8 million. Their combined weight would be almost 8,500kgs. This was a significant project to manage. The majority of the resources were those donated by the Egyptians before the Israelites left their land.

The work of the Levites being under the direction of Ithamar son of the priest Aaron. Ithmar oversaw the Levites who had the responsibility of managing all these resources. They had undertaken an immense task and seemed to do it well.

²⁴ All the gold that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold from the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, measured by the sanctuary shekel.

Exodus 38:24

Twenty-nine talents. Some commentators estimate a talent to equal about 32kgs. This means there was something like 920kgs of gold used in the tabernacle.

²⁵ The silver from those of the congregation who were counted was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, measured by the sanctuary shekel;²⁶ a beka a head (that is, half a shekel, measured by the sanctuary shekel), for everyone who was counted in the census, from twenty years old and upwards, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men.²⁷ The hundred talents of silver were for casting the bases of the sanctuary and the bases of the curtain: one hundred bases for the hundred talents, a talent for a base.²⁸ Of the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their capitals and made bands for them.

Exodus 38:25-28

The silver from those of the congregation who were counted. Exodus 30:13-16 described how the Israelites were to give silver as part of a census, a counting of the nation. This accounts for the high amount of silver given.

The record of a beka a head of silver for each person twenty years old and upwards appears to indicate that Israel had already been numbered and that atonement money had already been collected.

²⁹ The bronze that was contributed was seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels; ³⁰ with it he made the bases for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze grating for it and all the utensils of the altar, ³¹ the bases all around the court, and the bases of the gate of the court, all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs around the court.

Exodus 38:29-31

These final verses record the amount of the lower value yet still significant amount of bronze used for making the items that were outside the tabernacle.