

Exodus:

The Redemption of God's People (1-18),
a Covenant with God's People (19-24),
the Plans for a Worship Center for God's people (25-31),
the Failure and Renewal of God's people (32-34),
and the Worship Center of God's People (35-40).

IV. Comment on the Writing

- A. The Redemption of God's People from Egypt, 1:1-18:27
- B. The Revelation to the God's People at Mount Sinai, 19:1-40:38
 - 1. The revelation of the Mosaic covenant, 19:1-23:33
 - 2. The Ratification of the Law, 24:1-15
 - 3. The Instructions for the worship of God, 25:1-31:17
 - 4. The Breaking of the Covenant and the Renewal of the Covenant, 32:1-34:35
 - 5. The Construction of the Tabernacle, 35:1-40:38

With the covenantal relationship renewed, the construction of the tabernacle became essential. Most of the material in these chapters follows God's instruction to Moses that he previously received on the mountain (25-31), except there is a change in verb tense (past) and some of the sequence of information is reordered. The emphasis is upon the actual construction of the tabernacle, not simply directions for its construction. While the material is generally the same as previously commanded, the order varies (here the order is that of the actual construction).

35- Collection of materials

35- Gathering of workers

36:1-39:31- Construction

36: the tabernacle

37: the furniture and outer court

38: the conclusion

39: the garments of the priests

39:32-42- Summary of cost and constructed items listed

40:1-33- Assembly of itemized parts and installation of the priests

40:34-38 The presence of God

Parenthesis: Of the forty chapters in Exodus twelve are devoted to the erection of the Tabernacle, the presence of God among His people and the proper approach in worship. What does this tell us?

- That God desires to dwell among His people.*
- That the repetition indicates the importance of that which is repeated.*
- That the worship of God is a serious, even costly, endeavor.*
- That God has provided for His people so that they could worship.*
- That, though a gift from God in allowing His people to approach him, the Tabernacle was symbolic, temporal, and anticipatory. Hebrews 9:9-12: "...the tabernacle...which is a symbol...until a time of reformation. But when Christ appeared...." "The word became flesh and dwelt [the word is "tabernacled"] among us" (John 1:14), wrote the apostle. Jesus is the presence of God, now through the Spirit, among us.*

a. The preparations for the construction of the tabernacle, 35:1-36:7

1) The observation of Sabbath rest, 35:1-3

It is of interest to ponder why the construction of the tabernacle is prefaced with commands to observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the weekly sign of covenant faithfulness, the fourth commandment. Further, since the topic of chapters 35-40 concerns proper worship, an emphasis of the setting aside of time to worship seems appropriate. A secondary reason for the Sabbath reiteration here may be to keep them from violating it in the Tabernacle's construction.

2) The command to gather materials for the tabernacle. 35:4-19

The language of vv. 5-9 duplicates exactly that of 23:3-7. The donations exceeded the need!

a) The call for voluntary gifts, vv. 4-9

The required gifts are itemized. It is lengthy (metals, yarn, linen, precious stones, animal hide, wood, fixtures, etc.) detailing all the materials needed for construction.

b) The call for skilled workers, vv. 10-19

The items for construction are itemized. Here the constructed items are detailed indicating the skill needed to create them

(furniture, oils, incense, embroidered items, curtains, posts, framing, pegs).

3) The gathering of materials, 35:20-29

While precious metals are listed in 25:3, an additional is made here (gold jewelry). Also, we are told that women were heavily involved in the task of weaving as well as giving.

Verse 29 is a wonderful summary of the paragraph. Both women and men contributed: it was voluntary, the work was seen as God's work, and that God had ordered it to be done. There was the expression of joy in doing so!

4) The appointment of Bezalel and Oholiab to direct the work, 35:30-36:1

Prerequisite for participation in the actual construction of the Tabernacle is that of giftedness to undertake the task as its fulfillment had to be as God commanded. It was not a project that just anyone could execute, nor were the participants free to alter the plan. Certain tasks required certain giftedness! When the task required a variety of skills, a variety of skillfulness was necessitated.

5) The enthusiastic willingness of the people to sacrifice, 36:2-7

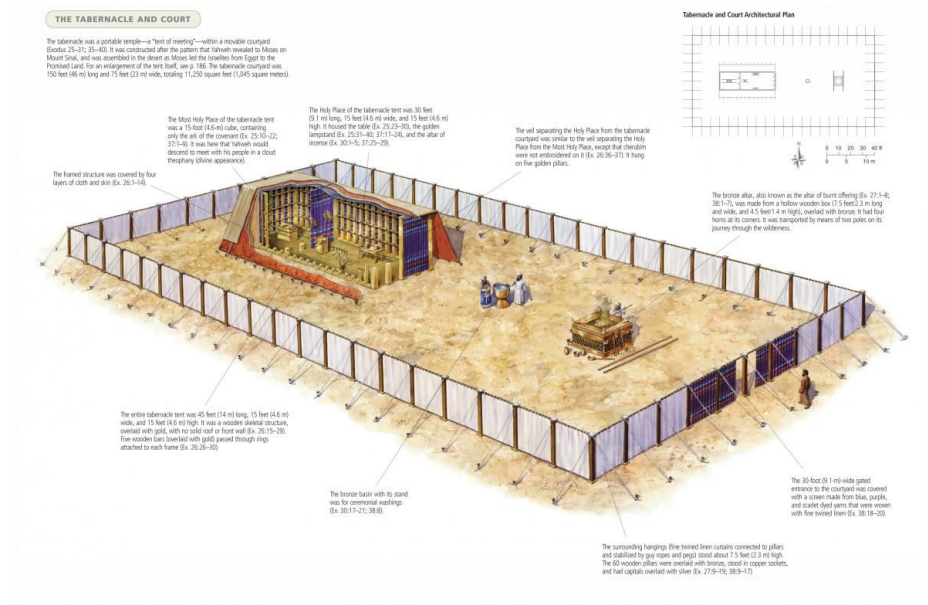
"So, the people were constrained from giving for the material they had was sufficient (v. 7)."

b. The construction of the tabernacle complex, 36:8-38:31

1) The construction of the tabernacle structure, 36:8-38

This chapter records the construction of the boards and curtains for the tabernacle. The instructions lack an emphasis on dimensions or size of things, so the point is the creation of them. Unlike, the original instructions (25-31), it begins with the Tabernacle structure rather than the furniture.

Four components are listed: the linen curtains that formed the walls of the Tabernacle, the coverings over the tabernacle, the frame of the structure including the crossbars stabilizing the frame (overlaid in gold), and the two curtains or veils (one forming the entrance and the other separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies).



2) The construction of the tabernacle furniture, 37:1-38:8

In chapters 25-26 the order of construction was first the furniture and then the tabernacle proper; here the furniture is constructed after the Tabernacle frame.

a) The Ark of the Covenant, vv. 1-9

Jesus is our true mercy seat. "He, having made one sacrifice for sin for all time, sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12)."



b) The Table of Showbread, vv. 10-16

Jesus is the true "Bread of Life (6:35)." It was a reminder to the ancient people, and now to us in the New Covenant, of God's life-sustaining provision. Now we celebrate His provision for us at the Lord's Table.



c) The Lampstand, vv. 17-24

The lamp functioned to dispel darkness and so it anticipated the coming of the “True Light.” Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world (John 8:12) through a golden symbol suggesting deity and holiness.



d) The Altar of Incense, oil, and perfume, vv. 25-29

The burning of incense indicated the prayers of God’s people; its fragrance symbolized the sweetness of divine access as well as the infinite being available through prayer, an act of humility on our part. We access God through prayer!



e) The Bronze Altar, 38:1-7

Placed as the first piece of furniture in the Tabernacle complex one encounters upon entering suggests that entrance into the presence of God required first a cleansing from sin. Entrance into the presence of God required a sacrificial cleaning, a

symbolic cleansing. Jesus is our source having ended our defilement before God in becoming our death in our place. His death on the “bronze altar” became the source of our cleansing at the divine mercy seat of God.



f) The bronze basin or Laver v. 8

The water of the laver signified the need for cleansing of the priest before performing his work, but also the High Priest before entering the Holy of Holies once yearly. It signified the cleansing required to serve the Lord. It prefigures Christ who is the “true cleanser” that fits us for service in the presence of God.



An additional fact only noted here is that the laver or basin was made of polished bronze (mirrors) that belonged to women who served at the entrance to the Tent of the Meeting, Moses’ construction outside the encampment (33:7-11). [It could,

however, refer to the Tabernacle itself as it does in 40:1, 12, 24,26, 29-30, 34-35].

Parenthesis: Is there something to be learned from the sequencing of the Tabernacle furniture from the entrance to the outer court to the Holy of Holies?

-Bronze altar: here the sacrifice given to the priest was offered for the Israelite. The priest offered it; the Israelite brought only his need with the substituted provision.

-Bronze Laver: here the priest cleansed himself ritualistically to serve there and in the holy Place.

Jesus was without sin and divinely pure of any uncleanness. He could enter the Holy Place immediately.

-Table of Bread and Lampstand. Jesus is the true life and the true light.

-Altar of Incense: Jesus is the ultimate of pray as he prayed to God and for us.

-Ark and Mercy Seat: Jesus entered once for us pouring out His blood on the mercy seat, not for Himself but for us.

Atonement accomplished forever! Jesus' ministry was inside the Tabernacle, not the outer court!

3) The construction of the outer courtyard, 38:9-20

This section duplicates what is found in 27:9-19.

4) A summary of the volume of construction materials, 38:21-31

Normally Moses refers to the worship center as the tabernacle or the Tent of the Meeting. Here, however (v. 21), he refers to it as "the tabernacle of Testimony (witness, covenant, and testimony are translations of the same Hebrew word)." The point being that God's presence among the people was a certain sign of His covenant with them.

The inventory of the construction items is impressive! Further, it is not found in chapters 25-31.

A ton of gold (v. 24)

Four tons of silver (vv. 25-28)

Two and one-half tons of bronze (vv. 29-31)

c. The construction of the priestly garments, 39:1-31



- 1) The Ephod, vv. 1-7
The ephod was a decorative outer garment worn (gold, blue, purple, and scarlet) over a white linen inner garment attached by a sash. On the shoulders of the ephod were attached onyx stones signifying the twelve tribes.
- 2) The Breastplate, vv. 8-21
Consisting of twelve stones representing the tribes, and containing the Urim and Thummim, it was worn on Aaron's chest (these are not mentioned here of them since the issue is that of construction, not function).
- 3) The other garments, vv. 22-31
These consisted of the inner robe under the ephod, and tunic for Aaron's sons, and the headband engraved ("Holy to the Lord").
- d. The completion of the components of the center of worship, 39:32-43
The components of the tabernacle are brought to Moses, they are again itemized, for approval. "So, Moses blessed them [the workers] (v. 43)."
- e. The assembly of the center of worship, 40:1-38
 - 1) The assembly of the tabernacle, vv. 1-11
The tabernacle furniture is listed first beginning with the Holy Ark (vv. 1-7) and the outer court (v. 8) followed by anointing the complex (again a listing of the items in it).
 - 2) The anointing of Aaron and his sons, vv. 12-16
Then the high priest and his sons were dressed and anointed for the task.

The assembly and inauguration of Tabernacle service occurred about one year and after the exodus (after arriving at Mt. Sinai and about eight months later). The erection of the Tabernacle occurred at the Feast of the Passover (“first day of the first month”).

- 3) The completion of the work: summarized, vv. 17-33
- 4) The divine sanction of the center of worship, ere the presence of God, vv. 34-38

The filling of the tabernacle with God’s glory evidenced that God was truly dwelling among His people to bless and direct them, but, more importantly, to receive their worship. What a way to end the book!

What a wonderful moment in the life of the nation, an enthusiastically devoted people to the Lord and His worship. This said, how to you account for Israel’s unfaithfulness at Kadesh Barnea, Baal Peor, Ai, and the later deportations? Is there a lesson for us here?

Applications

1. When people are right with God, they evidence it with a liberal spirit and a joyful heart. Coupled with the previous chapters that described the disobedience of the people, the action of the people in these chapters is amazing. What does this tell us about human nature? Are we not a people capable of great devotion and at the same time significant depths of dereliction? Does this insight help you to understand the contradictions in your life as well as in the lives of people that you know?
2. In Bezalel and Oholiab, we have an example of consecrated ability, devotion and skill combined. We should strive to be like them in whatever task God has given us to do. Skill in a task is a gift from God; the use of it for His glory is our duty. Are you using your gifts, talents, and time to offer your praises to God through the avenue of service to Him? We have an example in them of the diligence and thoroughness with which we should do the work of God.
3. To accomplish a project requires a willingness of a people to execute it, resources for construction, a detailed master plan, skilled craftsman, and willing workers (36:2-3). When a task is to be completed it requires careful planning. The Lord provided the plan, the people the resources, direction by Bezalel and Oholiab, and many labors. Is there an insight into what should be

determined before a task is commenced? Have you been involved in projects that failed to come to fruition because there was little or no assessment of potential, resources, and skills?

4. The beauty of the Tabernacle furnishings, its ornate furniture and colorful draperies must have been stunning. When a people are devoted to the Lord it is reveal in the choices that they make. You tell a lot about the priorities of people by what they devote themselves to doing. These people gave abundantly out of a joyful heart and had to be discouraged from giving more. All of this tells us more about their heart, even more that the size of their purse strings. What does your conduct tell you about your heart?
5. Our passage tells us that Moses examined the completed work of the Tabernacle, including the priestly garments, “and they had done it, just as the Lord had commanded (39:43). What a wonderful testimony to a faithful people. To do what God commands, and to do it to the best of our resources and abilities, results in the pleasure of God. When people see the work of your hands would they bring to commendation? To do a task well is a testimony to what we believe is most important in our lives.
6. When you think about it, time seems to go slow, and little seems to be accomplished. However, in retrospect we can see that a lot has been accomplished. Imagine the wonder that a people was delivered from Egyptian slavery, within two months arrived at the site where God would grant them instruction of how-to walk-in obedience to Him and to worship Him properly, and with a year completed the Tabernacle. All of this despite their numerous failures at places like Marah and with the Golden Calf. Things may appear to be moving slow, but God has a plan that He is executing with perfection. Does this not encourage you when you think you are doing little for God?
7. The book ends with the completion of the center of divine worship and God condescending to dwell among the people. The book began with enslavement to a cruel monarch; it ends with a gracious monarch dwelling in their presence to direct and comfort them. The most important reality in our lives is the presence of God. The sweet presence of God is beyond comparison. Our text reaches its grand culmination with the statement, “...the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle (40:34).” Do you understand that the presence of God, intimacy with God, is the greatest of all gifts? Does that anticipation not thrill you? Does not the grace of God cast away your fears and bring great light and hope to you?