

Bible Study # 65 Exodus 36.1–38 04–22–2021

This is a classic example of how chapter division are not always helpful. There is no break in the flow of the narrative here and certainly no reason to indicate a significant break at this point. This verse is a summary statement. It notes that all those involved in the work followed God's instructions carefully.

This was for the leaders, Bezalel and Oholiab, on down to any others to whom the Lord had given ability to do this sacred work. It was carried out precisely in accordance with his directions. There was no room for deviation from the pattern set out by divine revelation.

When the time had come for the work to commence, Moses summoned all those whom the Lord had chosen for the task. Once more the qualifications of those people are emphasized: 'every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work.' Supernatural gifts were required, together with a willing heart (see the earlier references to this in 35:31 and 36:1).

We know the Egyptian artists were considered the most advanced of the world when God delivered the people of Israel from captivity. It is highly probable that the Egyptians had also trained some of the Israel slaves in their craftsmanship. So God was going to use the skills which they learned in Egypt to build a special traveling temple for his people.

Just like now, God can use the training we receive in our jobs for the glory of his kingdom. Plus, he imparts to us spiritual gifts and God driven motivation to serve him. You will hear in another day or so, how God also used the wealth of Egypt so that these ex-slaves could use the wealth of Egypt to properly furnish and decorate God earthly, traveling temple, until the Temple in Jerusalem would be built.

The gifts from the people were handed over by Moses to these men to be used in their work. The liberality was such that they had to come to Moses and request that the flow of gifts be curtailed, as they had more than enough for their tasks. Moses acted on the request, and men and women in the community were prevented from giving further gifts for the building.

At this point the account of how those constructing the Tent of Meeting carried out their commission begins. The narrative varies from the earlier instructions in that a different order is followed.

The narrative in vs. 8–19 commences with a statement that echoes the earlier instruction ('make ... then make', 26:1) by stating twice over that the work was completed ('made ... made them', NASB, NKJV). This first verse of this section is longer and more detailed than the corresponding clauses in succeeding paragraphs, that simply read 'and he made' or 'and they made'.

The verb 'made' is featured prominently in chapters 25–40, as these chapters relate how the Israelites carried out the instructions they were given. At the start of the book the Israelites had to build 'storehouses' for the Egyptians, while at the end they build 'a dwelling place' for the LORD. There are only slight differences between this account and the earlier instructions in 26:2–11, such as the omission of 26:9b and part of 26:11.

The largest undertaking (vs. 8–13) was of course the fashioning of the gigantic drapes, ten in number, each of them twenty-eight cubits long (a little over forty feet) and four cubits wide (almost eleven feet) and equipped with strong loops to protect them against the pressure of desert winds. In addition, fifty gold clasps were installed to fasten the adjacent curtains firmly together.

The goat-hair curtains (vs. 14–19) were to cover the support posts and the frame to prevent the rain from harming anything and anyone within the tent. There were eleven curtains of uniform dimensions, each of them thirty cubits long and four cubits wide, with fifty bronze clasps to hold them in place.

Then over this goat-hair covering there was still another prescribed covering consisting of red-dyed ramskins, surmounted by the outermost covering composed of the hides of the dugong (an aquatic mammal with divided tail, which used to live by the shores of the Red Sea and southernmost Palestine; NASB and NIV translate it as “sea cow”).

The acacia wood poles (vs. 20–30) which stretched along the base of the upright posts, were shaped to fit into sockets designed to receive twin upright vertical poles. These sockets or frames were spaced apart at a uniform distance, so that there were forty silver bases to accommodate all of the uprights.

In order to keep them strongly resistant to weight and wind, each vertical pole was pierced with a round hole into which horizontal rods were fitted. Six frames were needed for the western end of the Tabernacle, but for the eastern end, the entrance required a greater distance between the posts that framed the doorway.

The horizontal bars (vs. 31–34) mentioned above are discussed in these verses. There was just one long crossbar which extended from front to back; the others were somewhat shorter. But all of these frames were covered over with gold plate, not only for beauty’s sake, but also in order to preserve the wooden core from decay or infestation by termites.

The beautiful drapes (vs/ 35–38) were finally completed, adorned with representations of angelic cherubim worked into the fine-twined linen of the curtain as representations of the adoring worship of the angelic host as they stand in the presence of the Lord of Hosts.

Four upright posts were especially prepared for the drape which served as the door into the Holy Place and was composed of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, against a background of fine twined linen. Five large hooks were fashioned for the suspension of the heavy curtain, and the top of each supporting post was overlaid with gold.

Bronze was used for the footing of these poles, not only because they would not be visible to the beholder, but also because bronze is a much tougher metal than gold. Therefore, it was more suitable to hold the uprights permanently in place.

Our study will continue with chapter 37:1–29.