

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 26

Chapters 39-40

In the previous four chapters, the book of Exodus reiterates the details of the construction of the Tabernacle with all its furnishings, fixtures and utensils. Chapter 38 ends with an accounting of all the materials used in the project. Beginning in chapter 39, the book continues with the making of the priestly garments and regalia.

Making of the Priestly Ephod

Exodus 39:1 Moreover, from the blue and purple and scarlet *material*, they made finely woven garments for ministering in the holy place, as well as the holy garments which were for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.² And he made the ephod of gold, *and* of blue and purple and scarlet *material*, and fine twisted linen.³ Then they hammered out gold sheets and cut *them* into threads to be woven in *with* the blue and the purple and the scarlet *material*, and the fine linen, the work of a skillful workman.⁴ They made attaching shoulder pieces for the ephod; it was attached at its two *upper* ends.⁵ And the skillfully woven band which was on it was like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold *and* of blue and purple and scarlet *material*, and fine twisted linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.⁶ And they made the onyx stones, set in gold filigree *settings*; they were engraved *like* the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel.⁷ And he placed them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, *as* memorial stones for the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Just as planned, the Ephod was completed. (See notes from Exodus 28, Lesson 28 for a full commentary.)

Making of the Priestly Breastpiece

Exodus 39:8 And he made the breastpiece, the work of a skillful workman, like the workmanship of the ephod: of gold *and* of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen.⁹ It was square; they made the breastpiece folded double, a span long and a span wide when folded double.¹⁰ And they mounted four rows of stones on it. The first row *was* a row of ruby, topaz, and emerald;¹¹ and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond;¹² and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;¹³ and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They were set in gold filigree *settings* when they were mounted.¹⁴ And the stones were corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were twelve, corresponding to their names, *engraved with* the engravings of a signet, each with its name for the twelve tribes.¹⁵ And they made on the breastpiece chains like cords, of twisted cordage work in pure gold.¹⁶ And they made two gold filigree *settings* and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece.¹⁷ Then they put the two gold cords in the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece.¹⁸ And they put the *other* two ends of the two cords on the two filigree *settings*, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the

ephod at the front of it.¹⁹ And they made two gold rings and placed *them* on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inner edge which was next to the ephod.
²⁰ Furthermore, they made two gold rings and placed them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it, close to the place where it joined, above the woven band of the ephod.²¹ And they bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, that it might be on the woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece might not come loose from the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Just as the LORD instructed, the Breastpiece was completed. (See notes from Exodus 28, Lesson 28 for a full commentary.)

Making of the Priestly Robe

Exodus 39:22 Then he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue;²³ and the opening of the robe was *at the top* in the center, as the opening of a coat of mail, with a binding all around its opening, that it might not be torn.²⁴ And they made pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet *material and* twisted *linen* on the hem of the robe.²⁵ They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates all around on the hem of the robe,²⁶ alternating a bell and a pomegranate all around on the hem of the robe, for the service, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The priestly robe was completed. (See notes from Exodus 28, Lesson 28 for a full commentary.)

Making of the Priestly Tunic

Exodus 39:27 And they made the tunics of finely woven linen for Aaron and his sons,²⁸ and the turban of fine linen, and the decorated caps of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twisted linen,²⁹ and the sash of fine twisted linen, and blue and purple and scarlet *material*, the work of the weaver, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Just as planned, the tunic was completed. (See notes from Exodus 28, Lesson 28 for a full commentary.)

Making of the Priestly Plate of Holy Crown

Exodus 39:30 And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and inscribed it like the engravings of a signet, "Holy to the LORD."³¹ And they fastened a blue cord to it, to fasten it on the turban above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

In Exodus 29, Lesson 29, we discovered the plate that was engraved with the words "Holy to the LORD." Here, we want to reiterate that the plate was part of the holy crown that was worn on top of the turban. It hung in the front of on the forehead, just above the eyebrows.

The Completed Work

Exodus 39:32 Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did.

All the work was completed exactly as the LORD had commanded and Moses had recorded while he was on Mount Sinai about six months before.

Work Presented to Moses

Exodus 39:33 And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars and its sockets; ³⁴ and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of porpoise skins, and the screening veil; ³⁵ the ark of the testimony and its poles and the mercy seat; ³⁶ the table, all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; ³⁷ the pure gold lampstand, with its arrangement of lamps and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; ³⁸ and the gold altar, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the veil for the doorway of the tent; ³⁹ the bronze altar and its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils, the laver and its stand; ⁴⁰ the hangings for the court, its pillars and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords and its pegs and all the equipment for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; ⁴¹ the woven garments for ministering in the holy place and the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.

Once all was completed, everything was brought to Moses.

Moses Examines Work

Exodus 39:42 So the sons of Israel did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses. ⁴³ And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them.

Moses examined the work and found everything to be in order. He then blessed the workers. In other words, Moses gave the workers praise for what they had done. Moses probable prayed to the LORD on their behalf at that time.

First Day of First Month

Exodus 40:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³ "And you shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. ⁴ "And you shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. ⁵ "Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle. ⁶ "And you shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ⁷ "And you shall set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ⁸ "And you shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court.

As chapter 40 begins, a time marker is recorded to indicate how long the Israelites had been out of Egypt. When they left, the LORD instructed them to make that month the first month on their calendar. It was actually the sixth month of the year in the rest of the world at that time. They left Egypt on the 15th day of that month. With this verse we see that all the work had been completed before the end of the last month of their new year. On the first day of the first month all the pieces were to be assembled for the first time.

Consecration of the Construction

Exodus 40:9 "Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy.

10 "And you shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar; and the altar shall be most holy. **11** "And you shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it.

It was Moses' job to "consecrate" everything that was made. To "consecrate" means *to devote the items to the service of the LORD*. The ceremony used the oil prepared by the special recipe that Moses had received from the LORD was used for the ceremony. Just how much oil was used we do not know. He may have wiped everything down with the oil, giving it a light coat, or he may have applied just a touch of it in certain places on each piece.

Consecration of the Priests

Exodus 40:12 "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. **13** "And you shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me.

14 "And you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them; **15** and you shall anoint them even as you have anointed their father, that they may minister as priests to Me; and their anointing shall qualify them for a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations." **16** Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

After the place of worship was anointed by Moses, it was then time for the priests to be anointed and consecrated. In the ceremony, he dressed them for the first time. It was Moses' job. In the future, the priests will consecrate each new generation and pass it on.

Moses Follows Instructions

Exodus 40:17 Now it came about in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was erected. **18** And Moses erected the tabernacle and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and inserted its bars and erected its pillars. **19** And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. **20** Then he took the testimony and put it into the ark, and attached the poles to the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. **21** And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up a veil for the screen, and screened off the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. **22** Then he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil. **23** And he set the arrangement of bread in

order on it before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.²⁴ Then he placed the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle.²⁵ And he lighted the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.²⁶ Then he placed the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the veil;²⁷ and he burned fragrant incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.²⁸ Then he set up the veil for the doorway of the tabernacle.²⁹ And he set the altar of burnt offering *before* the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.³⁰ And he placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing.³¹ And from it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet.³² When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.³³ And he erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work.

And so, the Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month, near the beginning of their second year after leaving Egypt. On that same day, Moses anointed and consecrated everything including the priests. Everything occurred 14 days short of a full year out of Egypt.

Cloud Covered Tabernacle

Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

At the completion of the ceremony, the cloud that had led the people by day descended onto the Tabernacle. At that time, the glory of the LORD rested on the Mercy Seat which rested on top of the Ark of the Covenant. Notice that the LORD was totally in control of the work of Moses and the priests. He restricted their going and coming from the tent with the cloud. When the LORD wanted to speak to Moses, the cloud which engulfed the tent would move, allowing Moses to enter the Holy of Holies.

Summary of the Workings of the Cloud by Day and Fire by Night

Exodus 40:36 And throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out;³⁷ but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up.³⁸ For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

And so, we now come to the end of the Book of Exodus with a summary concerning the function of the cloud and fire that would rest on and in the Tabernacle and alert the people when it was time to move to a new campsite. It also controlled how long the tribes stayed at a campsite. It was a visible sign that all the “house of Israel” could see and no one could deny.

The Book of Exodus started out with a listing of all the descendants of Jacob. It progressed through the birth and life of Moses. We discovered the pharaohs who controlled the Israelites

for 430 years. We investigated Moses' ouster from Egypt and his 40-year life in the land of Midian. We explored his first meeting with the LORD at the burning bush and followed the details of his journey to Egypt to lead the LORD's people from slavery and bondage. We tracked the plagues and traced the miracles that occurred from the first night of camp out of Egypt to the dedication of the Tabernacle and all its furniture and fixtures on the first day of the first month of the first year after they departed from Egypt. We rode the emotions of the victories and defeats, the praises and the complaints, births and deaths and we can only wonder what it was like to be in that camp in those days.

By the end of the book, the Tabernacle was finished and consecrated and the priests were ordained. With this last summary, the calendar needed just 14 more days to complete a full year since leaving Egypt. That Tabernacle with all the other items would serve the Israelites faithfully for the next 484 years until Solomon completed the Temple. (1 Kings 6:1) It would be with the children of Israel on their 40-year journey in the wilderness. Once the Israelites began to take the Promised Land, it would be setup first in Gilgal. (Joshua 4:19) Before Joshua died, it would be moved and set up at Shiloh. (Joshua 18:1) There it would be the place of national worship and considered the place of the Sanctuary of Israel throughout the entire time of the Judges. (Joshua 19:51) During the life of Eli, it would be moved to Nob in the tribal area of Benjamin about three miles from modern day Jerusalem. (1 Samuel 21:1-9) From there, David would move it to Gibeon. (1 Chronicles 16:30) When Solomon completed the Temple, he moved all the items of the Tabernacle to their new home in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 3:4) However, we do not know what became of Tabernacle after the Temple was completed; the Scripture says nothing. We do know about the Ark of the Covenant, the tables, altars and the rest of the furniture, fixtures and utensils. They were placed in the new Temple where they would remain until Nebuchadnezzar tore the Temple down and carried all those items away to Babylon in 586 BC where they would remain for 50 years until King Cyrus would allow them to be returned to Jerusalem in 536 BC. Two exceptions were the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar of Incense. Nebuchadnezzar did not get his hands on those items. According to tradition recorded in the rabbinical writings, the Ark was hidden, and the place was marked by a big block of stone. According to Second Maccabees 2:4-8, (an apocrypha book translated by Jerome and found in all Catholic Bibles) when Nebuchadnezzar was making his siege on Jerusalem, Jeremiah instructed the men to follow him and carry the Ark to Mount Nebo where Moses had been buried by the LORD a thousand years before. There, Jeremiah placed it in a cave along with the tent of the Tabernacle, and the Altar of Incense. He then sealed the entrance to the cave. When some people tried to find the cave, Jeremiah said, "The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy." (2 Macc. 2:7) The truth of this report is not known, but neither has the Ark, Altar and Tent have never been found in that small compact part of the terrain in Israel. When Cyrus the Great gave permission for the Israelites to rebuild the Temple with Persian funds, those three items were not present. Even in the day of Jesus, the rebuilt Temple was without those items. No wonder it was inferior to the first. In the Tabernacle and the first Temple, the LORD rested on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. The Lord was absent from the second Temple; it needed a LORD. One day, the LORD was brought to the Temple as a babe. Later, as a boy, the LORD taught the teachers in the Temple. Then, after His

baptism, the LORD visited the Temple many times in the last three years of His life. When He died on the cross, the veil of the rebuilt Temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom and exposed to the world the absence of the Ark of the Covenant. Every year, when the high priest made his visit into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he presented an offering to nothing. No Ark, no LORD, no danger of death for an unclean offering. The rope around his ankle to pull him out if the LORD rejected his offering meant nothing at all. It was all vanity. It was all for show. It was all fake. No wonder the Israelites needed a Savior.

In conclusion, we noticed several times in the study of this book that it referred to the forty-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness or throughout their journeys as mentioned in this last passage. We have also noticed that the last chapters of this book spoke about the works of Moses whereas in the earlier chapters, Moses spoke for himself. We can only conclude that someone besides Moses completed the book after Moses 'death. Joshua was the most likely candidate as he was Moses' successor.

We cannot leave this study without one more thought. Regardless of how long it took to record the finding presented in this book, the major focus and its purpose was to convey the cry of the Israelites in the last years of their slavery in Egypt and how the LORD God had prepared a man to lead them out of that bondage and help them prepare a place where He could dwell among them, in a place where they could always find Him. The LORD dwelt among men. In 1464 – 1463 BC, the LORD did just that, He came to dwell among His creation and His chosen people on earth in the Tabernacle that was a replica of the one He created in heaven. He had answered their prayers and established a nation that He would one day be born into as its GOD-man Savior. A Savior who would be willing to die for the sins of all the people of the world for all time. Their Savior. Your Savior. My Savior!