

Exodus Chapter Forty

Read **Exodus 40:1-16** – God’s Tabernacle Commandment

v.1-2 “THEN THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: “ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH YOU SHALL SET UP THE TABERNACLE OF THE TENT OF MEETING.”

All of the material, the items needed for worship, the utensils and clothing are completed according to “ALL THAT GOD COMMANDED” and the time has come to set up the tabernacle. This was to occur on the first day of the first month and later in the chapter we will see that it was the first day of the second year after God had delivered Israel from Egypt.

If we were continuing our study through the Pentateuch we would find that from the beginning of setting it up until it was ready to be used was about a month.

Numbers 1:1 “NOW THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES IN THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI, IN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, ON THE FIRST *day* OF THE SECOND MONTH, IN THE SECOND YEAR AFTER THEY HAD COME OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, SAYING:”

Mr. Clarke, in his commentary, writes that Israel started on the preparation for the tabernacle at the end of the sixth month after leaving Egypt. Therefore, it took six months to make all of the materials, furniture and clothing that God required.

v.3-4 “YOU SHALL PUT IN IT THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY, AND PARTITION OFF THE ARK WITH THE VEIL. YOU SHALL BRING IN THE TABLE AND ARRANGE THE THINGS THAT ARE TO BE SET IN ORDER ON IT; AND YOU SHALL BRING IN THE LAMPSTAND AND LIGHT ITS LAMPS.”

The ark of the covenant was the only item to be placed inside the Most Holy Place, the residence of God among his people. Then the veil was to be hung in place to close the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. The table of showbread was to be installed with the utensils that were to be on it and the lampstand or candlestick was to be filled with oil and lighted.

v.5-6 “YOU SHALL ALSO SET THE ALTAR OF GOLD FOR THE INCENSE BEFORE THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY, AND PUT UP THE SCREEN FOR THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE. THEN YOU SHALL SET THE ALTAR OF THE BURNT OFFERING BEFORE THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF THE TENT OF MEETING.”

The golden altar of incense was to be placed within the Holy Place and the screen installed to enclose the tabernacle. Then the altar of the burnt offering was to be placed in the courtyard in front of the tent structure.

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v.7 “AND YOU SHALL SET THE LAVENDER BETWEEN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING AND THE ALTAR, AND PUT WATER IN IT.”

The last item to be placed in the courtyard was the basin or laver for washing.

v.8 “YOU SHALL SET UP THE COURT ALL AROUND, AND HANG UP THE SCREEN AT THE COURT GATE.”

After everything else was in place then the boundary of the courtyard was to be put in place.

v.9 “AND YOU SHALL TAKE THE ANOINTING OIL, AND ANOINT THE TABERNACLE AND ALL THAT *is* IN IT; AND YOU SHALL HALLOW IT AND ALL ITS UTENSILS, AND IT SHALL BE HOLY.”

As we remember from our earlier studies, the tabernacle and all of that which was to be placed inside was to be consecrated, made holy. It belonged to God and was for the purpose of worshipping and honoring God, so it had to be clean and it had to be sanctified. The same applies to us today. In order to worship and honor God acceptably we must be clean and we must be sanctified. This is accomplished, of course, by the washing of water in baptism by which we are placed in Christ, added to His church and then our cleanliness is maintained by our repentance and prayer.

v.10-11 “YOU SHALL ANOINT THE ALTAR OF THE BURNT OFFERING AND ALL ITS UTENSILS, AND CONSECRATE THE ALTAR. THE ALTAR SHALL BE MOST HOLY.”

We see that there is a difference in the wording in these two verses. The things in the tabernacle were to be holy, while the things outside in the courtyard were to be most holy. Normally we see the part of the tabernacle that contained the ark as being called the Most Holy Place, because it was the residence of God, while the part that contained the table, incense altar and candlestick were called the Holy Place. But here the record is different.

Here we see the altar of burnt offering being called “MOST HOLY”. When we go back to chapter 30 we see in verses 26-29 that the entire tabernacle and all of its furnishings were to be considered most holy. Mr. Cook in the Baker commentary sees that as being a precaution because those items in the courtyard could be exposed to the general population when they gathered in the courtyard. And they were to honor and respect not only God and God’s commandments, but the items of worship as well.

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v.12-14 “THEN YOU SHALL BRING AARON AND HIS SONS TO THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING AND WASH THEM WITH WATER. YOU SHALL PUT THE HOLY GARMENTS ON AARON, AND ANOINT HIM AND CONSECRATE HIM, THAT HE MAY MINISTER TO ME AS PRIEST. AND YOU SHALL BRING HIS SONS AND CLOTHE THEM WITH TUNICS.”

The final washing and anointing would be that of Aaron, the high priest, and his sons who serve as priests along with him.

v.15-16 “YOU SHALL ANOINT THEM, AS YOU ANOINTED THEIR FATHER, THAT THEY MAY MINISTER TO ME AS PRIESTS; FOR THEIR ANOINTING SHALL SURELY BE AN EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD THROUGHOUT THEIR GENERATIONS. THUS MOSES DID; ACCORDING TO ALL THAT THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED HIM, SO HE DID.”

The sons of Aaron were to be anointed as an everlasting priesthood, throughout their generations. The Levitical priesthood was to last how long; everlasting? No it was to last only throughout their generations. When the Jewish nation, Jerusalem, and the temple was destroyed in AD70 – the priesthood of the tribe of Levi became of no value due to the establishment of a new covenant between God and mankind. It is not even maintained by those who profess to worship God under the Mosaic Covenant today.

Read **Exodus 40:17-33** – Moses Sets up the Tabernacle

v. 17 “AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE SECOND YEAR, ON THE FIRST *day* OF THE MONTH, *that* THE TABERNACLE WAS RAISED UP.”

This verse confirms that Moses did as God commanded him in verse two.

v.18-19 “SO MOSES RAISED UP THE TABERNACLE, FASTENED ITS SOCKETS, SET UP ITS BOARDS, PUT IN ITS BARS, AND RAISED UP ITS PILLARS. AND HE SPREAD OUT THE TENT OVER THE TABERNACLE AND PUT THE COVERING OF THE TENT ON TOP OF IT, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

First, Moses sets up the tabernacle and the tent that covers it. He built up the structure first and then spread the tabernacle covering and the tent over it.

v.20-21 “HE TOOK THE TESTIMONY AND PUT *it* INTO THE ARK, INSERTED THE POLES THROUGH THE RINGS OF THE ARK, AND PUT THE MERCY SEAT ON TOP OF THE ARK. AND HE BROUGHT THE ARK INTO THE TABERNACLE, HUNG UP THE VEIL OF THE COVERING, AND PARTITIONED OFF THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

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“HE TOOK THE TESTIMONY”, what was the testimony? It was the tablets of stone carved by the finger of God, the basic laws of the Mosaic Covenant. This is one of the items was to be kept in the ark. A pot of manna was kept in the ark:

Exodus 16:33-34 “AND MOSES SAID TO AARON, “TAKE A POT AND PUT AN OMER OF MANNA IN IT, AND LAY IT UP BEFORE THE **LORD**, TO BE KEPT FOR YOUR GENERATIONS.” AS THE **LORD** COMMANDED MOSES, SO AARON LAID IT UP BEFORE THE TESTIMONY, TO BE KEPT.”

Later the rod of God, or Aaron’s rod was included:

Numbers 17:10 “AND THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES, “BRING AARON’S ROD BACK BEFORE THE TESTIMONY, TO BE KEPT AS A SIGN AGAINST THE REBELS, THAT YOU MAY PUT THEIR COMPLAINTS AWAY FROM ME, LEST THEY DIE.”

And the Book of the Law, probably that which we have recorded as Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers:

Deuteronomy 31:26 “TAKE THIS BOOK OF THE LAW, AND PUT IT BESIDE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE **LORD** YOUR GOD, THAT IT MAY BE THERE AS A WITNESS AGAINST YOU;”

v.22-23 “HE PUT THE TABLE IN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, OUTSIDE THE VEIL; AND HE SET THE BREAD IN ORDER UPON IT BEFORE THE **LORD**, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

We are given the commandment of God regarding the table of showbread in the book of Leviticus along with the recipe for the bread:

Leviticus 24:5-6 “AND YOU SHALL TAKE FINE FLOUR AND BAKE TWELVE CAKES WITH IT. TWO-TENTHS *of an ephah* SHALL BE IN EACH CAKE. YOU SHALL SET THEM IN TWO ROWS, SIX IN A ROW, ON THE PURE *gold* TABLE BEFORE THE **LORD**.”

The tabernacle faced east and the table of showbread was placed in the north side of the Holy Place. Consequently it would be on the right hand side of the entrance.

v.24-25 “HE PUT THE LAMPSTAND IN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, ACROSS FROM THE TABLE, ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE; AND HE LIT THE LAMPS BEFORE THE **LORD**, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

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Conversely the lampstand or candle stick would be on the south side or left hand side of the Holy Place.

v.26-27 “HE PUT THE GOLD ALTAR IN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING IN FRONT OF THE VEIL; AND HE BURNED SWEET INCENSE ON IT, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

The gold altar was the altar of incense, that which was sent up before the Lord as a sweet smelling aroma. The golden altar was set up in the center of the Holy Place, in front of the veil and before the Ark – God’s resting place. What is comparative to the incense under the Covenant of Christ? Our Prayers.

v.28-29 “HE HUNG UP THE SCREEN *at* THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE. AND HE PUT THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING *before* THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE OF THE TENT OF MEETING, AND OFFERED UPON IT THE BURNT OFFERING AND THE GRAIN OFFERING, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES.”

As we studied back in chapter 28, Moses performed the duties of the High Priest of God until Aaron and his sons were dully ordained and consecrated. These things had been made specifically for the service and worship to God so they had to be made holy before they could be used. The altar of burnt offering was placed in front of the door of the tabernacle.

v.30-31 “HE SET THE LAVENDER BETWEEN THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING AND THE ALTAR, AND PUT WATER THERE FOR WASHING; AND MOSES, AARON, AND HIS SONS WOULD WASH THEIR HANDS AND THEIR FEET *with water* FROM IT.”

Not only were the hands of the priests to be washed but their feet as well, as well they should because in serving before the Lord they, like Moses at the burning bush, are standing on holy ground.

v.32-33 “WHENEVER THEY WENT INTO THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, AND WHEN THEY CAME NEAR THE ALTAR, THEY WASHED, AS THE **LORD** HAD COMMANDED MOSES. AND HE RAISED UP THE COURT ALL AROUND THE TABERNACLE AND THE ALTAR, AND HUNG UP THE SCREEN OF THE COURT GATE. SO MOSES FINISHED THE WORK.”

So any time that the priests went into the tabernacle of meeting, whether to offer incense or tend to the table of showbread and the golden candlestick they were required to wash. We see a parallel here of what is required of us today. We must be washed free of sin in order to be fit to enter into the house of God and in order to be acceptable as worshippers of God.

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Read **Exodus 40:34-38** – God Occupies His House

v.34 “THEN THE CLOUD COVERED THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, AND THE GLORY OF THE **LORD** FILLED THE TABERNACLE.”

God shows his approval of their work by occupying the tabernacle with a manifestation of his presence. It is recorded that the “GLORY OF THE LORD” completely filled the tabernacle. We are not told how his glory was manifested but since “GOD IS LIGHT” (**I John 1:5**) we can surmise that it was in some form of light and most likely be accurate.

v.35 “AND MOSES WAS NOT ABLE TO ENTER THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, BECAUSE THE CLOUD RESTED ABOVE IT, AND THE GLORY OF THE **LORD** FILLED THE TABERNACLE.”

Even though Moses had been in the presence of God on the mountain and had even been allowed to see the backside of God as he traveled by Moses, he could not enter the tabernacle because of God’s presence. The cloud represented God in the daytime, and a pillar of fire represented God at night

v.36 “WHENEVER THE CLOUD WAS TAKEN UP FROM ABOVE THE TABERNACLE, THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WOULD GO ONWARD IN ALL THEIR JOURNEYS.”

All during the following 39 years the cloud led Israel on their journey. When the pillar of cloud lifted and moved from the tabernacle they knew that it was time for them to pack up and move along with it.

v.37 “BUT IF THE CLOUD WAS NOT TAKEN UP, THEN THEY DID NOT JOURNEY TILL THE DAY THAT IT WAS TAKEN UP.”

Likewise when the cloud did not move, Israel did not move.

v.38 “FOR THE CLOUD OF THE **LORD was** ABOVE THE TABERNACLE BY DAY, AND FIRE WAS OVER IT BY NIGHT, IN THE SIGHT OF ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, THROUGHOUT ALL THEIR JOURNEYS.”

Thus God manifested his presence with them day and night and they merely had to look up to see that manifestation. What a comfort that should have been for them.