

Parashah 22

Vayak'hel

ויקהל

“He assembled”

Exodus 35:1 – 38:20

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion (along with the next one) describes the actual construction of the Tabernacle along with all its furnishings and associated items. It explains how the materials were obtained and how the actual work was done. There are several lessons we can learn by comparing God's dwelling place as constructed by the Israelites with God's dwelling place today.

1. Sabbath Regulations - 35:1-3

In this short passage, God again reinforces the command to keep Shabbat. What do you think is behind His command “not to light a fire in any of your dwellings”?

2. Materials for the Tabernacle - 35:4 - 29

a) The list of materials in verses 5 through 9 is very diverse. What does this suggest to you about the composition of God's dwelling place today? Do you find any interesting symbolism in this list of materials?

Why revisit the Sabbath regulation?

The remainder of the book of Exodus tells of the actual construction of the Tabernacle. One reason that this short passage about observing the *Shabbat* may appear here is to remind the Israelites that while the work on the Tabernacle is important, it is not more important than God's command to observe the *Shabbat*.

Symbolism of Materials

Many of the materials used in the construction of the Tabernacle have symbolic meaning. Here is a partial list of some of the materials.

Gold	-	God's presence
Silver	-	Redemption
Bronze	-	Judgment
White	-	Purity &
Linen	-	Righteousness
Scarlet	-	Blood sacrifice
Purple	-	Royalty
Blue	-	Heaven
Acacia	-	Humanity
Wood	-	

A Giving Heart

Consider the materials used for the construction of the Tabernacle. God could have miraculously provided the materials for the Israelites. Or He could have required that each Israelite give a specific amount, like a tax. Instead, God chose to obtain the materials from the people as gifts, each giving as his heart moved him (vss 21 & 29). God wants to have a relationship with us, but He won't force us. He desires that we come to Him of our own free will, because we also want a relationship with Him.

Why give to God?

Have you examined your motives for giving to God? Some people give grudgingly, an unpleasant but necessary task. Others give because they seek something in return – a blessing from God. But God wants us to give out of a thankful heart, because we appreciate all that He has done for us and because we want to honor Him with our gifts.

b) How were all these materials collected? Does this give you any insight into God's desire to have a relationship with his people? What does this imply about God's ability to work in the hearts of people?

“. . . and everyone whose heart moved him brought an offering to YHWH for the Tent of Meeting.”

Exodus 35:21

3. Bezalel and Oholiab - 35:30 - 36:7

a) Who chose Bezalel and Oholiab for their roles? How were they equipped to serve? Who worked with them to accomplish their goal?

b) Each of these two men contributed in two very different ways. What were they? Do you see any application here for your own service to God?

c) Were there enough materials to construct the Tabernacle? What does this say about the hearts of the people at this time? Why do you think this was so?

4. The Tabernacle - 36:8-38

This passage describes in detail how all the different parts were integrated together “so that the tabernacle was a unit” (verse 13). Is this the case in God’s dwelling place today?

5. The Ark, the Table, the Lampstand, & the Altar of Incense - 37:1-29

This chapter describes in detail the construction of the furnishings inside the tabernacle. What were the two primary materials used for these items? Can you see any symbolism in these materials?

6. The Altar of Burnt Offering and the Bronze Laver - 38:1-8

Compare the descriptions of the altar of burnt offering and the laver. How were they similar? What was used to make the laver? Do you see any symbolism here?

7. The Courtyard - 38:9-20

Describe the structure used to separate the Tabernacle and its surrounding area from the rest of the camp. About how big was the Tabernacle area in modern terms? What would it have looked like from the outside?

Scripture Link:

We know that today God dwells in the hearts of His believers (**Ephesians 2:22**). We also know that God desires His followers to be brought together as “one” (**John 17:20-23**), a single unit. Just as the Tabernacle, which was constructed from a wide variety of diverse materials, came together as a single unit, so today God desires that His dwelling place (composed of a diverse collection of human hearts) come together as a single unit. How do you think we’re doing?

What did the laver look like?

You may have wondered why the size and shape of the laver (basically a large wash basin) weren’t specified like the other furnishings of the Tabernacle. According to **Exodus 38:8**, the laver was constructed from the mirrors of the women in the camp. (A woman’s hand mirror was usually fashioned from a polished piece of brass or copper.) The reason the size was not specified is because its size was based on the number of mirrors that were given for its construction. In this way, the size of the laver indicated the willingness of the women to sacrifice their vanity.

Digging deeper

1. First Kings 5:13 - 6:38 and 7:13 - 8:9 tell of the construction of the first temple, built by King Solomon in Jerusalem beginning around the year 966 bce. Compare this structure to the tabernacle Moses built. What were some of the differences? What things were the same? Do you see any symbolism for today's believers in this?

The Symbolism in the Tabernacle

Consider the way that a priest came before God. His first act was to offer a sacrifice. Then he cleansed himself with the water in the laver. Upon entering the Tabernacle, on his left was the Menorah, representing God's guiding light and on the right was the Table of Showbread, which contained the food we need to live. Before the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place sat the Altar of Incense. And finally, behind the veil, was the Ark of the Covenant atop which sat the Mercy Seat, where God met with the High Priest. Can you find any symbolism in these items? (Hint: For example, God says that "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."
(Deuteronomy 8:3))

2. List all of the types and shadows (or symbolism) that you can find in the construction and furnishings of the tabernacle.

For further study, see

Haftarah : 1 Kings 7:13-26 or 7:40-50

Brit Hadashah : 2 Corinthians 9:1-15; Hebrews 9:1-14;
Revelation 11:1-13