

Exodus 40

Once the tabernacle and all its veils, coverings, and furniture was manufactured (chapters 35-39), the last action to be completed was the setting up and arranging everything according to God's specifications. That is the theme of this chapter. Once everything has been done "just as Jehovah commanded Moses" (which is repeated seven times: 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32), then the glory of Jehovah God can fill the tabernacle (40:34) and Israel will know His presence is with them. The cloud of God's glory rested over the tabernacle to let Israel know His presence was inside the tabernacle and when the cloud moved, Israel was to pack up their tents and the tabernacle and follow the cloud (40:35-38).

TRANSLATION - 40:1-11:

1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, **2** "In the first day, in the first month you will raise the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. **3** Put there the ark of the testimony and put around the ark the veil. **4** And bring the table and arrange its things and bring the lamp stand and light its lamps. **5** And set the gold altar for incense before the ark of the testimony and place the veil of the door to the tabernacle. **6** And set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. **7** And put the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and set there water. **8** And put the court around and put the screen of the gate of the court. **9** And you will take the oil of anointing and anoint the tabernacle, all which [is] in it and sanctify it and all its utensils and it will be holy. **10** And anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils and sanctify the altar and it will be an altar of holiness of holies. **11** And anoint the laver and its base and sanctify it.

HEBREW WORDS:

"Tabernacle" (ver. 2) is used first at 25:9. "Tent" was used earlier at the 16:16. "Meeting" was used earlier at 9:5. "To sanctify" (ver. 9) was used earlier at 13:2. It is used four times in this chapter: 40:9-11, 13. "Holy" was used first at 3:5.

COMMENTARY:

Israel had left Egypt a year before (40:17). As the new year started, Jehovah commands Moses to set up the tabernacle (ver. 1). The tabernacle itself and its furniture has been made. Now it is time to start using all the items for worship. In verses 3-8, Jehovah mentions each piece of furniture and where Moses is supposed to place it. In verse 9, Jehovah informs Moses that he is to anoint these same items so they will set apart for special service to Jehovah God "To anoint" is used six times in this chapter: 40:9-11, 13, 15.

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passages in which these items of furniture were first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:12-16:

12 And you will bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting and you will wash them in water. **13** And you will clothe Aaron with the garments of holiness and you will anoint him and you will sanctify him and he will serve as a priest to Me. **14** And his sons you will present and you will clothe them in tunics. **15** And you will sanctify them just as you sanctified their father and they will serve as priest to Me and it will be surely for them their anointing for the priesthood indefinitely for their generations. **16** And Moses did just as all which Jehovah commanded him; thus he did.

HEBREW WORDS:

“To serve as (or be) a priest” (ver. 13, 15) is one word, related to the noun “priest.” It was used earlier at 28:1. “Indefinitely” (ver. 15) was used first in 3:15. It is often translated “forever” but it *rarely* means “forever.” It means “indefinitely.” The word is used 17 times in Exodus.

HEBREW GRAMMAR:

“Surely” (ver. 15) is the verb “to be” in the form of an infinitive construct, following the same verb “to be” in the perfect tense. Thus, it is an emphasis: “surely.”

COMMENTARY:

This paragraph still fits within the context of Jehovah’s command to Moses to get everything ready for worship (ver. 1). Here Aaron and his sons were to prepare themselves to serve as priests: clothing, washing in the laver, and being anointed with oil. In the first of eight references, verse 16 notes that Israel did just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where the priests’ garments and the ritual for consecration was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:17-19:

17 And it was in the first month, in the second year in the first [day] of the month the tabernacle was raised. **18** And Moses raised the tabernacle and he laid its sockets and he set up its frames and he laid its bars and he raised its pillars. **19** And he spread out the tent on the tabernacle and he set the covering of the tent on it above, just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Verse 17 begins the actual fulfillment by Moses of the command Jehovah gave him in verse 1 to prepare everything once it has been constructed and sewn. This setting up of the tabernacle happened in the second year after Israel came out of Egypt and this began a new relationship with Jehovah God. Moses set up the tabernacle with all its smaller parts. He did so, just as Jehovah had commanded (ver. 19).

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where these items were first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:20-21:

20 And he took and laid the testimony to the ark and placed the poles to the ark and set the atonement cover on the ark above. **21** And he brought the ark to the tabernacle and set the veil of the screen and covered the ark of testimony just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

The “testimony,” the ark with the Covenant on it, was placed inside the ark of the covenant, which was placed inside its special room, the Holiest of Holy places, “just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.”

TRANSLATION - 40:22-23:

22 And he set the table in the tent of meeting at the side of the tabernacle northward opposite the curtain. **23** And he arranged on it in order bread before Jehovah just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Next, the table for the “bread of the Presence” was set up, on the north side of the tabernacle. It was arranged “just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.”

APPLICATION:

See the passage where this was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 20:24-25:

24 And he set the lamp stand in the tent of meeting opposite the table at the side of the tabernacle southward. **25** And he lit the lamps before Jehovah just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Next, the lamp stand, the *menorah* was set up on the south side of the tabernacle, “just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.”

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where the lamp stand was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:26-27:

26 And he set the gold altar in the tent of meeting before the veil. **27** And he burned on it fragrant incense just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Next Moses set up the golden altar in front of the veil, on which would be burned the fragrant incense. He fulfilled the commands of Jehovah.

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where the gold altar was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:28-29:

28 And he placed the screen of the door to the tabernacle. **29** And the altar of burnt offering there [at] the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting and arranged on it the burnt offering and the gifts just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Next, Moses set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle and then set up the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard on which would be offered the burnt offering and other gifts. Once again it is stated that Moses fulfilled the command of Jehovah.

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where the screen and, especially, the altar of burnt offering, was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:30-32:

30 And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and set there water for washing. **31** And they washed from it Moses and Aaron and his sons their hands and their feet. **32** When they came to the tent of meeting and when they approached the altar they washed just as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY:

Finally, Moses set up the laver and filled it with water for Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and their feet (ver. 12). This was to be a regular practice for the priests, just as Jehovah had commanded Moses (ver. 32).

APPLICATION:

For application, see the passage where the laver was first commanded.

TRANSLATION - 40:33-38:

33 And he raised the court around the tabernacle and for the altar and set the screen of the gate of the court and Moses completed the work.

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. **35** And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud dwelt on it and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

36 And when the cloud went up from on the tabernacle the sons of Israel broke camp in all their journeys. **37** And if the cloud did not go up, then they did not break camp until the day it went up. **38** Because the cloud of Jehovah [was] on the tabernacle in the day and fire was at night on it for the eyes of all the house of Israel in all their journeys.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Work” or “service” (ver. 33) was used earlier at 12:16. “To cover” (ver. 34) was used earlier at 8:2. “Cloud” was used earlier at 13:21-22. It is used five times in this last paragraph. “Glory” was used earlier at 16:7, 10. The “glory of the Lord” is used 6 times in Exodus: 16:7, 10; 24:16-17; 40:34-35. “To fill” was used earlier at 1:7. “Tabernacle” is used 17 times in this final chapter of Exodus. The verb translated “dwelt,” relative to the cloud (ver. 35) is the verbal form of the word translated “tabernacle.” The verb was used earlier at 24:16. “To break camp” (ver. 36) was used earlier at 12:37. It is related to the noun in the same verse: “journeys.” It was used earlier at 17:1.

COMMENTARY:

As Moses concludes his account of the exodus from Egypt, he summarizes in verse 33 the erection of the tabernacle and all its accouterments: “and Moses completed the work.” At that point, almost as if God was waiting for everything to be prepared, He caused His cloud to cover the tabernacle and His glory filled its walls (ver. 34). At that point, Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle due to the glory of Jehovah and His glory. Consistent with chapter 34:29-35, it appears that at other times, Moses could enter the tabernacle. It was simply on this occasion that Moses could not enter the tabernacle.

The last paragraph in the last chapter of this book relates that when Jehovah took His cloud away from the tabernacle, then Israel would break their camp and begin their travels (ver. 36). If the cloud of Jehovah remained, Israel would remain in camp (ver. 37). The cloud of Jehovah appears during the day while a fire hovered over the tabernacle at night (ver. 38) to let Israel know God’s presence was with them. This happened throughout the travels of Israel. The last word in the book of Exodus (in Hebrew) is “journeys.”

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - None of the subsequent acts of disobedience or lack of trust in Jehovah God should have occurred if Israel had reminded itself that the cloud above the tabernacle in the day while the fire in the night represented the presence of their heavenly Creator.

Later Jewish writers - When King Solomon built the temple, also according to God’s pattern, Jehovah sent His glory to fill that temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). However, when Israel began practicing the same sins of the Canaanites, primarily idolatry, then God removed His glorious presence from their temple (Ezekiel 10:4; 11:23).

NT writers - The glory of Jehovah would return to earth in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 17:4-5). The fulness of the Godhead dwelled within Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9). Additionally, once one is immersed into Jesus Christ, then the Godhead dwells within the Christian: Colossians 1:27; Romans 8:11.