

Exodus 35:4-29 and 36:2-7 and 38:21-31

Introduction

In this fourth and last major section of Exodus, we've learned that Yahweh is the God who desires to **dwelt** among His people. We've learned this not as a simple, bare fact, but as something deep and wide, and rich and full.

We've seen that this last major section is divided into two parts: "The Plan of the Tabernacle Described in Detail" (25-31), and then "The Plan of the Tabernacle Followed Exactly" (35-39). Because these two sections are almost completely identical, I've put them together for the sake of preaching. So after preaching about the outer court "described in detail," I would conclude that sermon by reading the passage about how the plan for the outer court was "followed exactly." And if you remember, we would always introduce the repetition in the "followed exactly" section with words like this: "So skipping ahead, now, maybe we can read with a growing delight and joy..." The craftsmen built exactly according to the wise, and wonderful, and perfect plan that God had commanded. And so, in this way, we covered *most* of the "followed exactly" section (five chapters) probably without hardly even realizing it.

The drawback of doing this, however, is that if we're not careful we can miss one of the main reasons that the "followed exactly" section is so wonderful. Sandwiched in between the "described in detail" section and the "followed exactly" section, we have the near disaster of the golden calf. It's only *after* the "interlude" of the golden calf that we can fully appreciate these five chapters of detailed repetition (35-39) where the tabernacle that was commanded—and then nearly lost forever—is now, *finally*, being built. Now, every word of repetition is an even sweeter and even more beautiful word of *grace* than it could have ever been before.

We said that in going through the "described in detail" section we covered *most* of the "followed exactly" section – but not all. Way back at the very beginning of Part IV—at the very beginning of the "Tabernacle described in detail"—we read in Exodus 25:

- **Exodus 25:1-9** — The LORD said to Moses, "**Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him [*nathav*] you shall receive the contribution for me.** And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

It's been a long time since we were in Exodus 25, but now, after all we've read and all we've seen since then—and *especially* after just finishing the interlude of the golden calf, maybe we can come to the *very first words* of the "followed exactly" section and read with a wonderful feeling of relief, and gratitude, and joy:

I. Exodus 35:4–9 — Moses said to **all the congregation of the people of Israel**, “This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. **Take from among you a contribution to the LORD.** Whoever is of a generous [*nathiv*] heart, let him bring the LORD’s contribution: gold, silver, and bronze; blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen; goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, and goatskins; acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.”

Here’s an exact, *word* for *word* repetition of what we read all the way back in chapter 25; and so we know, finally, that we’re back on track – finally moving forward again. It all begins with instructions for taking up a *contribution “to the Lord”*; this is to be “*the Lord’s*” contribution. Back in chapter 25, the Lord said to Moses:

➤ Exodus 25:2 — Speak to the people of Israel, that they **take for me a contribution**. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive **the contribution for me**.

So, the first thing we see is that this is not a contribution *to the craftsmen*, or *to the leaders*, or *to the general fund*, or *to the nation itself* – this is, **in reality**, a contribution *to the Lord*! That’s a crazy thought – that *we* should be able to **give** to the Lord God of the universe! That’s an amazing privilege.

In verse one of this chapter we read that Moses “assembled **all the congregation of the people of Israel**.” Now, in verse four, the same point is repeated and emphasized: “Moses said to **all the congregation of the people of Israel**.” The *very* obvious point here is *all, everyone, each one, without exception*. **All** are now being given the *opportunity* to be a part of this great and awesome work of building God’s tabernacle. What we need to see is that to contribute *to* the work is to participate in the work. And so *everyone*, without exception, is to be granted this great privilege and honor. We know it had to be considered a high privilege and honor if the contributions were all to be completely voluntary:

“Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. *Whoever* is of a generous [*nathiv*] heart, let him bring the LORD’s contribution.” The Hebrew word, *nathiv*, means generous, or willing, or free, or spontaneous. There was no required duty here. The Lord’s contribution was only to be given joyfully and gladly, freely and willingly from the heart.

We move on, now, to verses 10-19. After the contributors, Moses turns to the craftsmen.

II. Exodus 35:10–19 — “Let every skillful craftsman [lit. every wise heart] among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its hooks and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; the ark with its poles, the mercy seat, and the veil of the screen; the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin and its stand; the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; the finely worked garments for ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron

the priest, and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests.”

We said that after the contributors, Moses turns to the craftsmen. Or, we could say: After those of a generous heart (those who contribute the materials), Moses moves to those of a wise and skillful heart (those who craft and shape the materials). Without all the generous hearts to contribute, the wise and skillful hearts could never have accomplished a single thing. That’s a strong statement, but it’s not an exaggeration! This helps us to see, again, that those who bring the Lord’s contribution are actually participating in this great and awesome work – *no less* than are the craftsmen who actually *make* what the Lord has commanded.

The point, here, isn’t to make us satisfied with doing “less” (giving and not doing/going). Instead, the result should be to produce in us an ever greater and greater spirit of glad and willing generosity. Why? Because to *contribute to* the work of building God’s tabernacle is to be granted the privilege of *participating in* that awesome work. To contribute to the work of God wherever it’s happening in the world, but especially in and through His church, is to *participate in His work*. That’s how *God* sees things, and so that’s how *we* should see things as well. I may not be able to do the crafting and the shaping and the weaving, but I *can contribute!*

So, now that Moses has given instructions concerning the contribution that’s to be taken and the skillful craftsmen that are to come and do the work, we get to see the people’s response in verses 20-29:

III. Exodus 35:20–29 — Then all [*kol*] the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, everyone [*kol*] whose heart stirred him [*nasa*], and everyone [*kol*] whose spirit moved him [*nathav*], and brought the LORD’s contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all [*kol*] its service, and for the holy garments. So they came, both men and women. All [*kol*] who were of a willing [*nathiv*] heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of [*kol*] gold objects, every [*kol*] man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD. And every [*kol*] one who possessed blue or purple or scarlet yarns or fine linen or goats’ hair or tanned rams’ skins or goatskins brought them. Everyone [*kol*] who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD’s contribution. And every one [*kol*] who possessed acacia wood of any [*kol*] use in the work brought it. And every [*kol*] skillful [wise-hearted] woman spun with her hands, and they brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. All [*kol*] the women whose hearts stirred them [*nasa*] to use their skill [wisdom] spun the goats’ hair. And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastpiece, and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. All [*kol*] the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them [*nathav*] to bring anything [*kol*] for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering [*nathavah*] to the LORD.

The main point of these verses seems to be emphasized in every possible, different way. First of all, we have now the *third* reference in this chapter to “**all the congregation of the people of Israel.**” (v. 20) And then, in order to drive this point home, we have in verse 22, “So they came, *both men and women.*” In verses 25 and 26 we hear about the skillful (wise-hearted) *women*, and the generous *women* who used their skill and wisdom to spin materials with their hands. In

verses 27-28 we have the *leaders* bringing precious stones, and spices, and oils. And then in verse 29, we read again: “All the **men and women**, the people of Israel...” The point is obviously *all, everyone, each one, without exception*.

But more than that, we see that these are all people who are giving with joy and gladness: “[They] **departed** from the presence of Moses. And they **came**, everyone whose **heart stirred [nasa] him**, and everyone whose **spirit moved [nathav] him**, and brought the LORD’s contribution.” It’s such a wonderful, exuberant, euphoric picture! We see them “departing,” and then immediately “coming,” as though they ran home as fast as they could in order to get back with their contributions as fast as possible. When we read that their hearts were “stirred,” the Hebrew word is *nasa*, and it literally means “to carry.” (Exod. 25:28; Lev. 5:1) So maybe we could more vividly translate here: “everyone whose heart carried him,” or maybe even, “everyone whose heart carried him away.” In the *same way* that the *craftsmen’s* hearts are said to “stir them up” in chapter 36 (36:2), so also the hearts of *those who give* are said to “stir them up” and “carry them away” – the one no less than the other! When we read that their spirits were “moved,” that Hebrew word (*nathav*) is related to the same word that we saw earlier in verse five (*nathiv*), meaning *generous, free, willing, spontaneous*. And so we go on to read in verse 22: “All **who were of a willing [nathiv] heart...**” And, then, in verse 26: “All the women **whose hearts stirred [nasa] them...**” And then, again, in verse 29: “All the men and women, the people of Israel, **whose heart moved [nathav] them** to bring anything for the work... brought it as a **freewill offering [nathavah]** to the LORD.”

Have you notice a lot of “all’s,” and “everyone’s,” and “any’s,” and “anything’s”? That’s because they’re all translations of the same Hebrew word, *kol*, and that little word, *kol*, appears in these ten verses a grand total of fifteen times! So I just have to say once again: What a wonderful, exuberant, euphoric picture! And that’s not just us being “dramatic.” That’s just us recognizing what’s obviously and clearly right here in the text. All were granted the privilege of contributing wholeheartedly and joyfully to this great and awesome work. And now we see that all are, in fact, contributing willingly and joyfully with all their heart and soul – both men *and* women, leaders *and* laity alike.

So how do we explain this? How are we to make sense of this seemingly over-the-top, whole-hearted exuberance? I think, again, the reason is to be found in understanding that to **contribute to** the work is nothing less than to be a **participant in** the work – The work of building the tabernacle where Yahweh Himself will come to live among His people. To contribute to this work is nothing less than to contribute to the Lord, Yahweh, Himself. This is a time when the people are not saying to themselves, “Do I *have* to give?”, but, “Can I give?” and “Can’t I give *more*?” And now this already exuberant picture is painted with even more exuberance and euphoria than ever when we skip ahead to the conclusion in chapter 36 verses 2-7. (We looked at 35:30-36:1 in the sermon on 31:1-11)

IV. Exodus 36:2–7 — And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, **everyone whose heart stirred him up [nasa]** to come to do the work. And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. **They still kept bringing him freewill offerings [nathavah] every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary**

came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, “The people bring *much more than enough* for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.” So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “*Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.*” So the people were *restrained from bringing*, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, *and more.*

Need we say anything more? Isn't this very literally—without any exaggeration—a wonderful, exuberant, euphoric picture of whole-hearted, joyful giving to the work? Over the next few chapters, we see the craftsmen making all the various parts of the tabernacle itself. And then, just before the description of how the craftsmen made the garments for the priests, we have this in chapter 38:

V. Exodus 38:21–31 (cf. 12:35–36) — These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses, the responsibility of the **Levites** under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.¹ Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of **Judah**, made all that the LORD commanded Moses; and with him was Oholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of **Dan**, an engraver and designer and embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. **All the gold** that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, **the gold from the wave offering**, was twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary [approximately 2,200 pounds]. **The silver** from those of the congregation who were recorded was a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary [approximately 7,550 pounds]: a beka a head (that is, half a shekel, by the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone who was listed in the records, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men. The hundred talents of silver were for casting the bases of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil; a hundred bases for the hundred talents, a talent a base. And of the 1,775 shekels he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their capitals and made fillets for them.² **The bronze from the wave offering** was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels [approximately 5,300 pounds]; with it he made the bases for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze grating for it and all the utensils of the altar, the bases around the court, and the bases of the gate of the court, all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs around the court.

Why do these verses single out from the materials that were used for the tabernacle only the gold, and the silver, and the bronze? I think the reason has to be that the amounts of these three metals is the quickest and clearest way of reminding us of the beauty, and the extravagance of God's tabernacle. And so it's the amounts of these three metals that also reminds us of the people's **extravagant** giving and whole-hearted generosity. (cf. Durham; Stuart)

We're *specifically* reminded in verse 24 [SLIDE]: “All the gold that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold *from the wave offering*, was twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary.” And then, again, we're *specifically* reminded in verse 29: “The bronze *from the wave offering* was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels.” It's a vivid picture. What we see is the people coming before the Lord's presence and holding up and waving their contributions as a sign of their confidence that it is, actually, the Lord Himself who

¹ Cf. Exod. 6:23; 28:1

² For Exodus 38:25–28 see the sermon on Exod. 30:11–16

receives their gifts from their hands! These are not, ultimately, contributions to the craftsmen, or to the leaders, or to the general fund, or to the nation itself. These are contributions that the Lord God Himself is pleased to receive from the hands of His people. To sum up, we could say that “the records of the tabernacle” (cf. 38:21) are really, in a sense, the records of a joyful and extravagantly generous people.

Conclusion

Now, at this point, we might be wondering where these people came from. Is this really the same people that just built the golden calf? And is this really the same people who will constantly rebel against the Lord until they’re sentenced to die in the wilderness? (cf. Numbers) We’ll try to answer that question in a moment, but for right now there’s something else we need to see.

This account in Exodus of the people giving so freely and so generously becomes the **pattern** for two other places in the Bible where God’s people contribute for the building of a house for God. The first place is 1 Chronicles 29, when preparations were underway for the temple that Solomon would build.

- 1 Chronicles 29:1–9 (cf. 1 Chron. 28:20-21) — David the king said to all the assembly, “... I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble. Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, and for all the work to be done by craftsmen, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. **Who then will offer willingly [nathav], consecrating himself today to the LORD?” Then the leaders of fathers’ houses made their freewill offerings [nathav]**, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king’s work. They gave for the service of the house of God 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD... **Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly [nathav], for with a whole heart they had offered freely [nathav] to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.**

The second place where we see Exodus providing the pattern for another temple building project is in Ezra when the Jews return to Jerusalem, from Babylon, to *rebuild* the house of the Lord.

- Ezra 1:2–6 (cf. Ezra 2:68-69) — “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has... charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem... Whoever is among you of all his people... let him go up to Jerusalem... and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel... **And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings [nathavah] for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.**” Then rose up the heads of the

fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. **And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered [nathav].**

It's in connection with these three passages in Exodus, 1 Chronicles, and Ezra that the verb *nathav*, or the noun *nathavah*, or the adjective *nathiv* appears no less than 17 times. There's no other parallel in the Old Testament where we see these words used in this way or anywhere near this often. And so the picture that's painted in 1 Chronicles and Ezra is the very *same* picture that's painted in Exodus. In all three places, what we see is a joyful and exuberant people giving freely and willingly and wholeheartedly to the work – and, therefore, **to the Lord.**

And there's *another* thing we see. David's desire was that the people's physical and monetary giving would simply be the outward expression of their giving of *themselves* wholly to the Lord. David said to the people: "Who then will offer willingly, **consecrating himself** today to the LORD?" (cf. Thompson, NAC; 2 Chron. 29:31) Certainly, this is also **why** Moses is so careful to paint the picture that he paints in Exodus. What Moses desires is also what the Lord desires – that Israel's exuberant and generous and joyful giving of gold and silver and bronze should be nothing less than the expression of their giving of *themselves* wholly and wholeheartedly to the Lord. Whether or not this is the case will remain to be seen in the book of Numbers. Are the people really offering up *themselves* wholly to the Lord? Or, is this just a temporary "high" with the people all breathing a sigh of relief over their recent deliverance from disaster? (cf. Ps. 78:34-37)

I think it's safe to say that *we* can't be giving *ourselves* wholly to the Lord if we aren't "exuberant" in our monetary and financial giving *to the Lord*. On the other hand, *it is* also possible to give financially, and yet not be giving as the expression of giving our very selves to the Lord. And so we see that in God's eyes, the one is always to be accompanied by, and to be the sign of, the other. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8:

- 2 Corinthians 8:3–5 — [The churches of Macedonia] gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but **they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**

After all the contributions of the people in 1 Chronicles 29, David prayed this prayer before the Lord:

- 1 Chronicles 29:14, 17 — "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to **offer willingly [nathav]**? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you... **I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered [nathav] all these things,** and now I have seen your people, who are present here, **offering freely [nathav] and joyously to you.**"

Would you characterize your giving as "exuberant?" Do we understand that **giving to** the work is actually **participation in** the work? What a high privilege it must be, then, to *give!* What a

wonderful thing it is to know that “giving” is a privilege God grants to *everyone* – to *all*, without exception! We ought to be begging earnestly for the favor and the privilege of giving. Do we understand that “giving to the Lord” is not just an expression, but that it actually *is* the Lord Himself who is pleased to receive our gifts from our hands? How would *this* change our approach to dropping the check in the offering bag? How would this, perhaps, change even the amounts that we give – whether on Sunday morning or otherwise? When we give to the Lord’s work, do we give by faith that it’s truly the Lord Himself who receives our gifts from our hands? And lastly, is all of our giving really and truly just the expression, and the overflow, of our giving of *ourselves* wholly to the Lord?

If the answer to all of these questions is “yes,” then how can all of our giving not be willing, and generous, and free, and always *from the heart*? (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6-14) How can all of our giving not be, quite literally, joyfully exuberant? Indeed, in God’s eyes, no other giving will do – for God loves the *cheerful* giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)

The people of Israel were contributing to the work of building the tabernacle – the place where their covenant Lord would dwell among them. This means that their giving should also be their joyful response to the covenant love, and mercy, and grace that God had *first* given to them. And if this was so under the Old Covenant, *how much more* should our giving be our joyful **response** to the covenant love, and mercy, and grace that God has *first* given to us in Christ? When Paul was urging the churches of Macedonia to be generous in their collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he said:

➤ 2 Corinthians 8:9 — For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

And then, again, in 2 Corinthians 9, he concludes his exhortation to give “bountifully,” and “cheerfully,” and “freely,” and “generously” with these words:

➤ 2 Corinthians 9:15 — Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

No matter what the amount that we give, no matter what the amount that we’re ever *able* to give, may all of our giving as people of the New Covenant always be joyfully extravagant – to the glory of our wonderful, covenant God.