

**The Tabernacle Is Erected (1 Nisan [March/April] 1445 BC)**

Exodus 40:1–33

**Yahweh Gives Instructions for Erecting the Tabernacle**

- 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 “You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil.
- 4 “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 “You shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.
- 7 “You shall set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it.
- 8 “You shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court.
- 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 “You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy.
- 11 “You shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it.
- 12 “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.
- 13 “You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me.
- 14 “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 will qualify them for a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.”

**Moses Carefully Follows Yahweh’s Instructions**

- 16 Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.
- 17 Now in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, the tabernacle was erected.
- 18 Moses erected the tabernacle and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and inserted its bars and erected its pillars.
- 19 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 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 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 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 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 He placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing.

31 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 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.

### Yahweh's Glory Fills the Tabernacle (1 Nisan [March/April] 1445 BC)

Exodus 40:34–35, 38

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.  
 35 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.

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.

Numbers 9:15–16

15 Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony,

and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning.

16 So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it *by day*, and the appearance of fire by night.

### The Burnt Offering (1 Nisan [March/April] 1445 BC)

Leviticus 1; 6:8–13; 7:8

#### From the Herd

1:1 Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying,  
 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock.  
 3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. [cf. [Rom 12:1](#)]  
 4 He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.  
 5 He shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting.  
 6 He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.  
 7 The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire.  
 8 Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar.  
 9 Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

#### From the Flock

10 'But if his offering is from the flock, of the sheep or of the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer it a male without defect.  
 11 He shall slay it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.  
 12 He shall then cut it into its pieces with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar.

13 The entrails, however, and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it, and offer it up in smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

#### **From the Birds**

14 'But if his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering from the turtledoves or from young pigeons.

15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head and offer it up in smoke on the altar; and its blood is to be drained out on the side of the altar.

16 He shall also take away its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar eastward, to the place of the ashes.

17 Then he shall tear it by its wings, *but* shall not sever *it*. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar on the wood which is on the fire; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

#### **Disposal of the Offering**

6:8 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

9 "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law for the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself *shall remain* on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire on the altar is to be kept burning on it.

10 The priest is to put on his linen robe, and he shall put on undergarments next to his flesh; and he shall take up the ashes *to* which the fire reduces the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar.

11 Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.

12 The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out, but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat portions of the peace offerings on it.

13 Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out.

#### **Priestly Portion**

7:8 Also the priest who presents any man's burnt offering, that priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has presented.

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### **Chronological Notes**

#### 1) Early Tabernacle Chronology.<sup>1</sup>

- A) The tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month of the second year (1 Nisan 1445 BC; Exod 40:1), and the cloud lifted from the tabernacle on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year (20 Iyyar 1445 BC; Num 10:11). Those 50 days marked the beginning of the era of tabernacle worship, and the events that took place during that time period are recorded in Exodus

<sup>1</sup> The most thorough analysis of the temporal aspects of Leviticus that I have found is Andreas Ruwe's "The Structure of the Book of Leviticus in the Narrative Outline of the Priestly Sinai Story (Exod 19:1–Num 10:10)" in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, ed. Rolf Rendtorff & Robert A. Kugler, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 55–78. Ruwe argues that Leviticus is a narrative text and that the twenty-seven chapters of Leviticus form a narrative context (with all events "assigned to the first month of the second year"). Ruwe insists that Leviticus is not an independent narrative, but is part of the priestly narrative context of the Sinai pericope, Exodus 19:1–Numbers 10:10.

40:16–38, Leviticus 1–27 and Numbers 1:1–10:10.

B) Leviticus and Numbers record the events of this period in chronological order with the exception of Numbers 7–9 (these chapters record “other less important events that fell within that same period, and constitute a digression whose beginning and end are marked by the inclusion, *on the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle*”; Num 7:1; 9:15). My chronology will follow the basic outline given by Wenham.<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, uncertainty as to the exact day on which certain portions of Leviticus were given by Yahweh to Moses and/or Aaron.

(1) Day 1 (1 Nisan [March/April] 1445).

- (a) The erection of the tabernacle (Exod 40).
- (b) Yahweh explains the sacrificial system (Lev 1–7).
- (c) Ordination of Aaron and his sons (Lev 8).
- (d) The first tabernacle offering is given by the tribe of Judah (Num 7:1–17).

(2) Days 2–7 (2–7 Nisan [March/April] 1445).

- (a) Tabernacle offerings are given by the tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, Reuben, Simeon, Gad and Ephraim (Num 7:18–53).

(3) Day 8 (8 Nisan [April] 1445).

- (a) Yahweh confirms the ministry of the Aaronic priesthood (Lev 9).
- (b) Nadab and Abihu are killed by Yahweh (Lev 10).
- (c) A tabernacle offering is given by the tribe of Manasseh (Num 7:54–59).

(4) Days 8–11 (8–11 Nisan [April] 1445).

- (a) The Laws of Purity (Lev 11–15).<sup>3</sup>
- (b) The Day of Atonement (Lev 16).
- (c) The Laws of Holiness (Lev 17–27).
- (d) Tabernacle offerings are given by the tribes of Benjamin, Dan and Asher (Num 7:60–77).

(5) Day 12 (12 Nisan [April] 1445).

- (a) The last tabernacle offering is given by the tribe of Naphtali (Num 7:78–83).
- (b) All offerings are inventoried and accounted for (Num 7:84–89).
- (c) Clarification on the use of the lamps (Num 8:1–4).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, “Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary,” *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 104. Wenham’s outline is also followed by R. Dennis Cole, “Numbers,” *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 136 and Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol. 2* (Zondervan, 1990), 756–757.

<sup>3</sup> My assumption that the events of Leviticus are recorded in chronological order, and the close connection between Leviticus 10:10 and Leviticus 11:2, has led me to place Leviticus 11–15 after the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. At the least, Leviticus 16:1–2 confirms that the events of Leviticus 16–27 took place after this unnecessary tragedy.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to know where to place Numbers 8 chronologically (it does not have a temporal marker as in Num 7:1 and 9:1). The context implies that the events in the chapter took place on or after the last day of the tabernacle offerings (cf. Num 7:78–89). The earliest 8:1–4 could have occurred is the “eighth day” (Aaron was not able to enter the tabernacle until that time; cf. Lev 9:23). As far

(d) The Levites are appointed for service (Num 8:5–26).

(6) Day 14 (14 Nisan [April] 1445).

(a) The second Passover is celebrated (Num 9:1–14).

(7) Day 31 - c. Day 48 (1 - c. 18 Iyyar [April/May] 1445).

(a) The first census is taken (Num 1–6).

(8) c. Day 48 (18 Iyyar [May] 1445).

(a) Preparation for the departure from Sinai (Num 10:1–10).

(9) Day 50 (20 Iyyar [May] 1445).

(a) The cloud lifts from the tabernacle and Israel begins the journey to Canaan (Num 10:11).

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as 8:5–26 is concerned, the question is—were the Levites dedicated before or after the census of Numbers 3:5–10? For now, I have left it in the reading after 8:1–4, but I’m open to being convinced to place it after Numbers 3.