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The Appointment of Bezalel and Oholiab 31:1-11, 35:10-19, 30 to 36:3a and 38:22-23

DIG: What skills did Bezalel and Oholiab possess? What does Bezalel mean? What does this say about the way the Spirit of God equips people for leadership? Why might God have equipped them with people skills as well as artistic and practical skills? How would each be needed in building the Tabernacle?

REFLECT: When told everything to do and exactly how to do it, how do you typically respond? If given the spiritual and physical resources to do it, and protected from overworking, how do you respond? These were spiritual gifts given to these men. Does anyone in your place of worship have the spiritual gift of gold, silver or bronze, the spiritual gift to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship? Does this point to some spiritual gifts in the Dispensation of Torah ceasing to exist in the Dispensation of Grace? Why? Why not?

Not only does **ADONAI** give the details and specifications for the building of **the Tabernacle**, but **He** also personally selected who would oversee the work. **Bezalel** (meaning *under the protection of God*) was to have overall charge of the building with **Oholiab** as **his** assistant. Without a doubt these men were selected because of **their** superior talent and previous experience. **God** promised that **Bezalel** would be **filled with the Spirit of God**. The construction of the Tabernacle was no small task. It would take skill and imagination. For this responsibility **God** chose the best and gave **them** divine help.⁵⁰⁴



Then ADONAI said to Moses His prophet: See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the

son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. It is unusual to mention the names of both a father and grandfather together. **But the rabbis teach that Hur was murdered for opposing the making of the golden calf.** If true, **Hur's** life was redeemed in the work of **his** grandson, who fashioned **gold** into the dwelling of the living **God.**⁵⁰⁵ **And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship (31:1-5, 35:30-33, 38:22).** Bezalel was **filled**, or controlled, by **the Holy Spirit** to do **His** ministry. **The rabbis also teach that Bezalel was only thirteen when selected by God to do the work of constructing the Tabernacle.**

In addition to **Bezalel, ADONAI appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan to help him.** It is interesting to notice that Hiram, the chief artist Solomon employed to make the ornamental work of the Temple was also from **the tribe of Dan (Second Chronicles 2:13-14).** And God gave **both** of them **the ability to teach others (35:34).** Although **all of the craftsmen** possessed **skill**, literally *wise of heart*, but only **Bezalel** was **filled with the Spirit of God.** The supervisors' names were appropriate indeed, since **Bezalel** means, *in the Shadow of God*, and **Oholiab** means, *God the Father is My Tent.*⁵⁰⁶

In **His** sovereignty, **ADONAI** chose both men. Other than their names, we know precious little about these two men. However, we do know that **Bezalel** was from the tribe of Judah (**First Chronicles 2:20; Second Chronicles 1:5**), while **Oholiab** was from **the tribe of Dan.** The history of those two tribes could not be more striking. Judah was the one from which **Christ** would come. But **Dan** was the first tribe to introduce idolatry into the nation of Isra'el on a regular official basis (**Judges 18:1-31**). It was also in **Dan** that Jeroboam, who led the rebellion that culminated in the divided kingdom, set up one of his two golden calves (**First Kings 12:28-30**). **God** knew that all this would come to pass.

So it would seem that **Dan** would be the last **tribe** from which a man would be selected to supervise the building of **the Tabernacle.** From Judah we can understand, but from **Dan**? Ah, but **God's** thoughts are very different from man's thoughts. The one called to deliver Egypt from seven years of drought was taken from a dungeon. **He** who was called to lead Isra'el across the desert was found on the backside of the desert. And a boy after **God's** own heart would be chosen to sit on Isra'el's throne. Those who are rated lowest by the world are often the ones through whom **God** performs **His** greatest wonders. **But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (First Corinthians 1:27-28).**⁵⁰⁷

To the others that **Bezalel** and **Oholiab** would supervise, **ADONAI** said: **I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you (31:6), embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers - all of them master craftsmen and designers (35:35, 38:23).** The items to be made by the craftsmen were then listed. **The Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the Tabernacle - the table of the bread of the Presence and its articles, the pure gold Lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, the Bronze Altar, and all its utensils, the Bronze Basin with its stand - and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you (31:7-11).** The listing of the various items serves as a summary statement of what has been described in **Chapters 25-30**. In fact, the order in which the items are listed is almost the same as that of the descriptions in those chapters.⁵⁰⁸

So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person among the Israelites to whom the Lord has given skill and ability were commissioned to carry out all the work of constructing the Tabernacle as ADONAI had commanded (36:1). Although a large number of **skilled** and dedicated men and women would share in doing the work, **Bezalel** and his helper, **Oholiab**, would supervise them. They were to construct **the Tabernacle and the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and his sons (35:10-19).**

Bezalel could have been very much like some laymen today. **He** could have said, "Look here, **God**, I want to wear these high priestly **garments** like **Aaron**. That's how I want to serve you." But **God** would have said, "That is not what I had in mind." In one sense **Bezalel's** gift was more important than **Aaron's**. **His** gift was essential for the building of **the Tabernacle**. **God** will give *you* a gift, friend, which will develop the talents that *you* have. **The Spirit of God** gives us talents, but **He** wants us to dedicate them to **Him**.

We do not all have the same talents and gifts. There is a wrong impression circulating by some today that if you cannot sing, dance, teach, speak publicly, or be an usher, you are pretty much out of the picture. But there are many other gifts that **God** gives to men and women to serve **Him**. It is up to us to determine what **His** gift is for us. Whatever gift **God** has given you, use it for **His** service.⁵⁰⁹

Then ADONAI summoned them and they received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the Tabernacle (36:2-3a). The author of the book of **Hebrews** reminds us that **the Tabernacle in Exodus**



was **man made** and is **a part of this creation (Hebrews 9:11)**. And even though it was **set up by ADONAI (Hebrews 8:2)**, it was still a mere shadow of the true, heavenly **Tabernacle**. One day we shall worship in that eternal **Tabernacle**, and it is there that **Jesus** serves as **High Priest**. **For Christ did not enter a man-made Tabernacle that was only a copy of the true one, He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence (Hebrews 9:8)**. Not much can be said of the heavenly **Tabernacle** because we know so little about it. Yet, one day we shall know it well.⁵¹⁰