
EXODUS 31:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Bezaleel appointed for the work of the tabernacle, Exo 31:1-5. Aholiab appointed for the same, Exo 31:6. The particular things on which they were to be employed, the ark and mercy-seat, Exo 31:7. Table, candlestick, and altar of incense, Exo 31:8. Altar of burnt-offering and the laver, Exo 31:9. Priest's garments, Exo 31:10. Anointing oil and sweet incense, Exo 31:11. God renews the command relative to the sanctification of the Sabbath, Exo 31:12-17. Delivers to Moses the two tables of stone, Exo 31:18.

EXODUS 31:2 "Behold, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

Verse 2

I have called by name Bezaleel - That is, I have particularly appointed this person to be the chief superintendent of the whole work. His name is significant, בצלאל *betsal-el*, in or under the shadow of God, meaning, under the especial protection of the Most High. He was the son of Uri, the son of Hur, the son of Caleb or Chelubai, the son of Esron, the son of Pharez, the son of Judah. See 1Chr 2:5, 1Chr 2:9, 1Chr 2:18, 1Chr 2:19, 1Chr 2:20, and see Clarke's note on Exo 17:10.

EXODUS 31:3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship,

Verse 3

I have filled him with the spirit of God - See Clarke's note on Exo 28:3.

In wisdom - חכמה *chochmah*, from חכם *chacham*, to be wise, skillful, or prudent, denoting the compass of mind and strength of capacity necessary to form a wise man: hence our word wisdom, the power of judging what is wise or best to be done; from the Saxon, to teach, to advise, and to judge; hence the doom or judgment of the well taught, wise, or prudent man.

Understanding - תבונה *tebunah*, from בן *ban* or *bun*, to separate, distinguish, discern; capacity to comprehend the different parts of a work, how to connect, arrange, etc., in order to make a complete whole.

Knowledge - דעת *daath*, denoting particular acquaintance with a person or thing; practical, experimental knowledge.

EXODUS 31:4 to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

Verse 4

Cunning works - מַחֲשָׁבוֹת machashaboth, works of invention or genius, in the goldsmith and silversmith line.

EXODUS 31:5 and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of workmanship.

Verse 5

In cutting of stones, etc. - Every thing that concerned the lapidary's, jeweler's, and carver's art.

EXODUS 31:6 Behold, I myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

Verse 6

In the hearts of all that are wisehearted I have put wisdom - So every man that had a natural genius, as we term it, had an increase of wisdom by immediate inspiration from God, so that he knew how to execute the different works which Divine wisdom designed for the tabernacle and its furniture. Dark as were the heathens, yet they acknowledged that all talents, and the seeds of all arts, came from God. Hence Seneca: *Insita nobis omnium artium semina, magisterque ex occulto Deus producit ingenia.* In the same way Homer attributes such curious arts to Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, and Vulcan, the god of handicrafts. Ὡς δ' ὅτε τις χρυσον περιχευεται αργυρω ανηρ Ἰδρις, ὃν Ἥφαιστος δεδαεν και Παλλας Αθηνη Τεχνην παντοιην, χαριεντα δε εργα τελειει.

Odyss., 1. vi., ver. 232.

As by some artist, to whom Vulcan gives
His skill divine, a breathing statue lives;
By Pallas taught, he frames the wondrous mould,
And o'er the silver pours the fusile gold. - Pope.

And all this the wisest of men long before them declared; when speaking of the wisdom of God he says, I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions; Pro 8:12. See Clarke's note on Exo 28:3, to which the reader is particularly desired to refer. There is something remarkable in the name of this second superintendent, אֲהִלְיָאב Aholiab, the tabernacle of the father, or, the father is my tabernacle; a name nearly similar in its meaning to that of Bezaleel, see Clarke's note on Exo 31:2.

EXODUS 31:7 the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat that is on it, all the furniture of the Tent,

EXODUS 31:8 the table and its vessels, the pure lamp stand with all its vessels, the altar of incense,

Verse 8

The pure candlestick - Called so either because of the pure gold of which it was made, or the brightness and splendor of its workmanship, or of the light which it imparted in the tabernacle, as the purest, finest oil was always burnt in it.

EXODUS 31:9 the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels, the basin and its base,

Verse 9

The altar of burnt-offering - See Clarke's note on Exo 27:1.

The laver and his foot - The pedestal on which it stood.

EXODUS 31:10 the finely worked garments—the holy garments for Aaron the priest—the garments of his sons to minister in the priest's office,

Verse 10

Clothes of service - Vestments for the ordinary work of their ministry; the holy garments - those which were peculiar to the high priest.

EXODUS 31:11 the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

Verse 11

The anointing oil - See Clarke's note on Exo 30:23.

Sweet incense - See on Exo 30:24 (note).

EXODUS 31:12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

EXODUS 31:13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, 'Most certainly you shall keep my Sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.'

Verse 13

My Sabbaths ye shall keep - See Clarke's note on Gen 2:3. See Clarke's note on Exo 20:8.

EXODUS 31:14 You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Verse 14

Every one that defileth it - By any kind of idolatrous or profane worship.

Shall surely be put to death - The magistrates shall examine into the business, and if the accused be found guilty, he shall be stoned to death.

Shall be cut off - Because that person who could so far contemn the Sabbath, which was a sign to them of the rest which remained for the people of God, was of course an infidel, and should be cut off from all the privileges and expectations of an Israelite.

EXODUS 31:15 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death.

EXODUS 31:16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

Verse 16

A perpetual covenant - Because it is a sign of this future rest and blessedness, therefore the religious observance of it must be perpetually kept up. The type must continue in force till the antitype come.

EXODUS 31:17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Verse 17

Rested, and was refreshed - God, in condescension to human weakness, applies to himself here what belongs to man. If a man religiously rests on the Sabbath, both his body and soul shall be refreshed; he shall acquire new light and life.

EXODUS 31:18 He gave to Moses, when he finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets, written with God's finger.

Verse 18

When he had made an end of communing - When the forty days and forty nights were ended.

Two tables of testimony - See Clarke's note on Exo 34:1. Tables of stone - That the record might be lasting, because it was a testimony that referred to future generations, and therefore the materials should be durable.

Written with the finger of God - All the letters cut by God himself. Dr. Winder, in his History of Knowledge, thinks it probable that this was the first writing in alphabetical characters ever exhibited to the world, though there might have been marks or hieroglyphics cut on wood, stone, etc., before this time; see Exo 17:14. That these tables were written, not by the commandment but by the power of God himself, the following passages seem to prove: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mountain, and be thou there; and I will give thee tables of stone Which I Have Written, that thou mayest teach them;" Exo 24:12. "And he gave unto Moses, upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, Written With The Finger Of God;" Exo 31:18. "And Moses went down from the mount, and the two tables of testimony were in his hand; the tables were Written on both their sides. And the tables were The Work Of God, and the Writing Was The Writing Of God, graven upon the tables;" Exo 32:15, Exo 32:16. "These words [the ten commandments] the Lord spake in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more, But He Wrote Them on two tables of stone;" Deu 5:22. It is evident therefore that this writing was properly and literally the writing of God himself. God wrote now on tables of stone what he had originally written on the heart of man, and in mercy he placed that before his eyes which by sin had been obliterated from his soul; and by this he shows us what, by the Spirit of Christ, must be rewritten in the mind, 2Cor 3:3; and this is according to the covenant which God long before promised to make with mankind, Jer 31:33. See also what is said on this subject, Exo 20:1 (note), Exo 34:1 (note), and Exo 17:14 (note). "No time," says Dr. A. Bayley, "seems so proper from whence to date the introduction of letters among the Hebrews as this, for after this period we find continual mention of letters, reading, and writing, in the now proper sense of those words. See Deu 27:8; Deu 31:9. Moses, it is said, παιδευθη, was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians - in all the learning they possessed; but it is manifest that he had not learned of them any method of writing, otherwise there had been no want of God's act and assistance in writing the two tables of the law, no need of a miraculous writing. Had Moses known this art, the Lord might have said to him, as he does often afterwards, Write thou these words; Exo 34:27. Write on the stones the words of this law; Deu 27:3. Write you this song for you; Deu 31:19. Perhaps it may be said, God's writing the law gave it a sanction. True; but why might it not also teach the first use of letters, unless it can be proved that they were in use prior to this transaction? It might be thought too much to assert that letters no more than language were a natural discovery; that it was impossible for man to have invented writing, and that he did not invent it: yet this may appear really the case from the following reflections: -

1. Reason may show us how near to an impossibility it was that a just and proper number of convenient characters for the sounds in language should naturally be hit upon by any man, for whom it was easy to imitate and vary, but not to invent.
2. From evidence of the Mosaic history, it appears that the introduction of writing among the Hebrews was not from man, but God.
3. There are no evident vestiges of letters subsisting among other nations till after the delivery of the law at Mount Sinai; nor then, among some, till very late."