

Exodus 31:1-11

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The LORD specifies which Israelites were to construct the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

After giving the details of the tabernacle construction, *the Lord spoke to Moses* concerning another matter. The LORD declared, *See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.* The language in this verse is very emphatic. The word *see* is used in the Old Testament as either an introduction, or for the bestowment of a gift, or an appointment to an office ([Genesis 41:41](#); [Deuteronomy 1:8](#); [Jeremiah 1:10](#)). Here, *Bezalel* (which means “in the shadow of El”, “El” being a name for God) was *called by name* by the LORD to accomplish a special task. *Bezalel* was of the *tribe of Judah* and a descendant of *Hur*, possibly the same one as mentioned in [Exodus 17:10](#).

In verse 3, the LORD states that He has *filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God.* To be *filled with the Spirit of God* is to be given a special enablement by the LORD to accomplish a task. This is the first person in the Bible that is said to be *filled with the Spirit of God.* This filling consisted of receiving *wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skill in all kinds of craftsmanship.* In the New Testament, one aspect of the *filling of the Holy Spirit* is the giving of spiritual gifts ([1 Corinthians 12:1, 4](#)). In this case, the gift God gave to *Bezalel* was skill in craftsmanship.

The word for wisdom (Heb. “hokmah”) is the same as used in the book of Proverbs ([Proverbs 1:2](#)). The root meaning is “skill”, and in Proverbs it refers to the skill of living. Here, it means skills associated with art and building.

The word for understanding (Heb. “tebunah”), one aspect of *wisdom* ([Proverbs 2:2](#)), is related to the preposition “ben,” which means “between.” The idea of “tebunah” is that of having the ability to distinguish between a good plan from a bad one, the right way to do something from the wrong way, etc.

Knowledge (Heb. “da’at”), another “wisdom” word ([Proverbs 2:6](#)) means intellectual content. Here, *Bezalel* is given a special amount of *knowledge* on how to build the tabernacle and its contents.

Along with *wisdom*, *Bezalel* was given a special ability to do *all kinds of craftsmanship*. This implies that this man was uniquely skilled in many (if not all) of the disciplines necessary to build the tabernacle and its contents.

In verses 4 and 5, the LORD states the purpose for the filling of the Spirit. *Bezalel* was appointed *to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze* (in other words, metallurgy), *and in the cutting of stones for settings* (stonemasonry and possibly sculpture), *and in the carving of wood* (carpentry), *that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship*. *Bezalel* was divinely enabled to be a master craftsman in all of these areas.

In verse 6, the LORD appoints an assistant to *Bezalel*. He declared that *behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab*. The words *behold, I Myself* are emphatic in the Hebrew text. It stressed the fact that the LORD appointed *Oholiab* and was purely His choice. Thus, it should not be altered or challenged. *Oholiab* did not appoint himself to the position.

Oholiab was the son of *Ahisamach*, of the tribe of *Dan*. *Samson* was also from the tribe of *Dan* ([Judges 13 – 16](#)).

Bezalel and *Oholiab* were the leaders, but they were not the only ones empowered with the skills to build the tabernacle. The LORD Himself stated that *in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you*.

Verses 7 – 11 provide a summary of the items to be built by the skilled artisans, supervised by *Bezalel* and *Oholiab*.

- *The tent of meeting* ([Exodus 25:8](#))
- *The ark of testimony* ([Exodus 25:10ff](#))
- *The mercy seat upon it* ([Exodus 25:17ff](#))
- *All the furniture of the tent*
 - *The table also and its utensils* ([Exodus 25:23ff](#))
 - *The pure gold lampstand with all its utensils* ([Exodus 25:31ff](#))
 - *The altar of incense* ([Exodus 30:1](#))
 - *The altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils* ([Exodus 27:1ff](#))
 - *The laver and its stand* ([Exodus 30:18ff](#))
- *The woven garments as well* ([Exodus 28:4ff](#))
- *The holy garments for Aaron the priest* ([Exodus 28:2ff](#))
- *The garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood* ([Exodus 25:17ff](#))
- *The anointing oil also* ([Exodus 30:25ff](#))

- *The fragrant incense for the holy place* ([Exodus 30:34ff](#))

The LORD then reminds Moses that *they are to make them according to all that I have commanded*. There was to be no independent creativity on the part of the skilled artisans when building the place of worship to the LORD. They were to obey the LORD's instructions exactly.

The tabernacle was a copy of real things in heaven, according to [Hebrews 9:23-24](#). So God insisted that the copy be constructed truly. The tabernacle was a teaching tool. It spoke constantly of access to the true and living God through sacrifice and prayer. The sacrifices looked forward to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice ([Hebrews 9:23-28](#)).

Biblical Text:

¹ Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, ⁴ to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵ and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. ⁶ And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent, ⁸ the table also and its utensils, and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹ the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand, ¹⁰ the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood; ¹¹ the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you.”