

Exodus 35:4-36:7 • Plans for the Plunder

Introduction

Have you ever suddenly received money you weren't expecting? A larger-than-expected tax refund? A bonus? An inheritance? What a wonderful surprise it is when money or possessions appear out of the blue. There's a great sense of freedom from financial stress and an even greater anticipation on how the money will be spent. Usually we make immediate plans for our new resources, for there are always things in life we'd like to have but can't afford.

The Hebrews faced a similar situation during the Exodus; that is, sudden individual and personal wealth. What would they do with their newly acquired possessions?

What they did with that wealth may surprise us and serves as a great lesson concerning our relationship with those possessions and our relationship with God. We'll begin our study by tracing the source of those possessions from the very beginning.

¹²Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

^{3:19}"But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. ²⁰So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. ²¹I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ²²But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians."

^{12:35}Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

[Read Genesis 15:12-14]

Q: How many years before the Exodus does this revelation to Abraham take place?

A: Approximately five- to six-hundred years. According to Exodus 12:40, the Hebrews spent 430 years from the time of Jacob's journey there to the time of the Exodus. Before Jacob, there was Isaac, and before Isaac there was Abraham who was 100 when Isaac was born and 75 when he arrived in Canaan and received the promise.

Q: How is the promise of "many possessions" confirmed in God's meeting with Moses at the burning bush? (Refer to Exodus 3:19-22 to the left.)

A: The passage states that the plagues in Egypt will be so bad that the people will pay the Hebrews to leave! The point is that God had plans for the plunder even before Abraham.

Q: What is the evidence that the "plunder" of "many possessions" actually took place, and why were the Egyptians anxious to grant the Hebrews' requests? (Refer to Exodus 12:35-36 to the left.)

A: In both Exodus 3 and 12, there is a cooperative effort between God and the Hebrews. Exodus 12:36 states that "the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians." That was God's part. But God commanded "every woman" to ask her (Egyptian) neighbor for the possessions, which they did (Exodus 12:35). Both were required for the Hebrews to acquire the possessions: God's providential intervention and the Hebrews' obedience. Had either not been done, the Hebrews would have left Egypt with only the clothes on their back.

Application: *If you were a Hebrew, how would you have perceived the sudden accumulation of wealth? What had your life been like before leaving Egypt? What do you suppose the Hebrews planned to do with their new wealth? Would you have felt it was "pay-back time" or that you deserved the wealth having served so many years of oppression?*

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. ³This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, ⁴blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, ⁵rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, ⁶oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

⁴Moses spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying, ⁵“Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD’S contribution: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁶and blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goats’ hair, ⁷and rams’ skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood, ⁸and oil for lighting, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, ⁹and onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

²⁰Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel departed from Moses’ presence. ²¹Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the LORD’S contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.

²²Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD.

²³Every man, who had in his possession blue and purple and scarlet material and fine linen and goats’ hair and rams’ skins dyed red and porpoise skins, brought them.

²⁴Everyone who could make a contribution of silver and bronze brought the LORD’S contribution; and every man who had in his possession acacia

[Read Exodus 25:1-9]

Q: The plan for the plunder of the Egyptians becomes evident in these verses. What is God’s plan for the Hebrews newly acquired wealth, and what is God’s ultimate blessing for the Hebrews?

A: God desires to use the plunder from the Egyptians to “construct a sanctuary for Me.” That is, the possessions the Hebrews acquired are part of a great plan designed by God centuries earlier. The ultimate blessing for the Hebrews is that God Himself will “dwell among them.”

Q: Does God command each Hebrew to give up his possessions?

A: No. Verse 2 clearly states that it is a matter of the heart. There are always those who catch God’s vision and those who hold so tight to their possessions that the matter of God’s presence is not all that important.

Application: What are some additional reasons that someone might maintain a tight hold on their possessions?

[Read Exodus 35:4-9 and 35:20-29]

Q: What was the response of the Hebrews and why do you suppose those who gave, gave? In verse 21, how were those who contributed characterized?

A: Those who contributed are described as “everyone whose heart stirred him” and “everyone whose spirit moved him.”

Application: Discuss the parallels of Israel’s actions to today’s Believer. Do you see the similarity in giving over everything to Him to experience His presence in the wilderness of this present life so that He will lead you to the rewards and blessings of the Promised Land/next life? Do you see the parallels of devoting everything that you are and everything that you have to His service?

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wood for any work of the service brought it.

²⁵All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue and purple and scarlet material and in fine linen.

²⁶All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' hair.

²⁷The rulers brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting for the ephod and for the breastpiece; ²⁸and the spice and the oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense.

²⁹The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring material for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD.

²Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it. ³They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning.

⁴And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing, ⁵and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded us to perform."

⁶So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary."

Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more. ⁷For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it.

[Read Exodus 36:2-7]

Q: How had the plans for their newly acquired possessions from the Egyptians changed for many of the Hebrews?

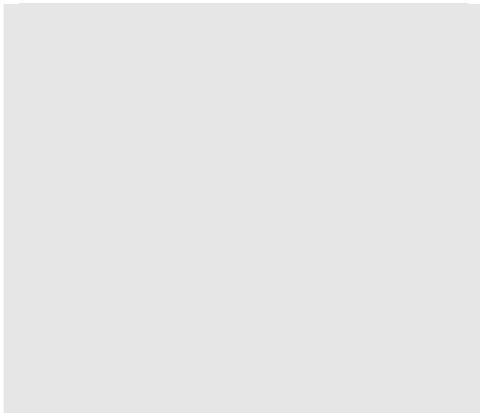
A: Many, many Hebrews made **God's** plans for the possessions **their** plans. They realized that God had a plan from the beginning, that the possessions would be of little value in the desert, and that God's plan was better than their own. It is evident that many Hebrews caught God's vision and plan for the possessions, for the workers had more than enough to complete what was to be the tabernacle where the presence of God would dwell.

Q: How were the Hebrews rewarded for their free-will offering? (See Exodus 40:34-38 below.)

A: The Hebrews witnessed the "*glory of the LORD*" will the tabernacle which was built with their own hands and their own possessions.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 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. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. 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.

Exodus 40:34-38



Final Application

- *If you were one of the Hebrews who contributed to the tabernacle, how would you have felt when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle?*
- *How would you have felt if you had withheld your possessions, or used them in an inappropriate manner as some did in chapter 32, the making of the golden calf?*
- *If you are presently giving to a church, mission organization or cause, are you giving from a “willing heart”?*
- *If you are not presently in some form of giving, why not?*