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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

## THE CASE FOR THE MOSAIC TABERNACLE.

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### IV.

#### THE PROVISIONAL TENT OF MOSES.

IN his work on Exodus (pp. 427f.) Dr. Driver tabulated the differences between what he calls JE's representation of the Tent of Meeting and P's. In the former it is a simple tent, in the latter a splendid structure; in the former it is outside the camp; in the latter it is inside; in the former it is guarded by Joshua, in the latter by a body of Levites; the Ark moves in the vanguard of the march in the former, in the latter in the midst of a great procession, etc. This evidence, however, seems to corroborate our position, that the former tent was a temporary one. Now there is an interval of some eight months between the command to construct the Tent of Meeting and its actual erection; i.e., between the forty days of Exodus xxiv. 18, after "the third month" (Exod. xix. 1) and "the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month," when "the tabernacle was reared up" (Exod. xl. 17.) In the meantime we read in Exodus xxxiii. 7: "Moses took the tent, and pitched it without the camp, . . . and he called it the tent of meeting. And it came to pass that every one that sought the Lord went out into the tent of meeting, which was *without the camp*. And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tent, and (He) spake with Moses . . . And he turned again to the camp, but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tent."

The R.V. renders the verb in this passage (קָיָם) "Moses *used to take* the tent, and to pitch it," making it a frequentative. Driver<sup>1</sup> says: "The tenses are frequentative, and describe what was Moses' habitual practice—no doubt, in E's view, during the whole time of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness," and "used to take" means "at every new encampment of the Israelites."

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus*, p. 359. See also *art.* Tabernacle, Hastings D.B. iv. 654, by A. S. Kennedy, "The tenses employed are intended to describe the habitual custom of the Hebrews and their leader during the whole period of the wanderings."

Then, of course, according to E, we are left to infer that Joshua remained in this tent during the whole time of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. Is it at all likely or intelligible that the General of the Hebrews should be always so employed? The mistake lies in regarding this imperfect tense or the frequentative force of it as extending for so long a time. The LXX has simple aorists: "And Moses having taken (*λαβών*) *his* tent, pitched (*ἐπηξεν*) it without the camp." Driver himself in *Hebrew Tenses*, page 31, says this Hebrew imperfect may be rendered in English by the "historical present."<sup>1</sup> So we may interpret the passage: "And Moses takes the tent and pitches it." Note that the LXX says it was "*his* tent" (*αὐτοῦ*) in Exodus xxxiii, but "*the* tent" in Exodus xl, and here Rashi and other commentators regard it as Moses' tent. But it is not necessary to suppose that he actually with his own hands pitched it, no more than that he erected the large Tabernacle in Exodus xl. 18, where it is said "Moses reared up the tabernacle." Dr. McNeile regards it as "an ordinary nomad tent which Moses himself could carry and pitch outside the camp" (Num. p. 2). This seems absurd.

Driver objects to this tent being regarded as provisional. He says: "The same representation of the Tent of Meeting—outside the camp, seemingly also with Joshua as its guardian—is found in the Pentateuch even after the erection (Exod. xl) of the splendid tabernacle described by P; see Numbers xi. 16, 24-30; xii. 4, 5 (note especially 'come out' in ver. 4, and cf. Deut. xxxi. 14f.)."<sup>2</sup>

Is this statement accurate? we ask. It is repeated by Chapman and McNeile. But let us examine the passages mentioned to prove that we have in JE and P different representations of the same structure.

(1) Numbers xi. 16, 24-30. This is the incident of Eldad and Medad, and *is assigned to E*. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel and their officers, and bring them unto the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with thee." If this was the tent referred to in Exodus xxxiii. 7, which we have treated as a provisional tent, and which the

<sup>1</sup> See Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 315, where the imperfect is used (a) "of constantly repeated actions," and (b) of "momentary actions on the same principle as we employ the present tense in lively representations of the past."

<sup>2</sup> *Exodus*, p. 427.

Critics regard as the only tent or tabernacle in the days of Moses, we are faced with a number of difficulties. The provisional tent was outside the camp, but this tent is not necessarily outside the camp. The Critics have laid stress upon the meaning of the Hebrew *yatsa'* (יָצָא),<sup>1</sup> in the case of Eldad and Medad, who "had not *gone out* unto the tent, and they prophesied in the camp" (ver. 26). The LXX simply renders "came to" (ἦλθον πρὸς). The same Hebrew verb is used in verse 24: "Moses *went forth* (ἐξῆλθε LXX.) and told the people the words of the Lord." Here it implies a central position, such as the Mosaic Tabernacle of P occupied. It cannot surely mean that Moses went *outside the camp* to speak to the people in the camp. The camp lay all around the Tabernacle, and at some distance. There is nothing inconsistent with that position in this narrative. Eldad and Medad remained in the camp. They did not go to the Tabernacle. The order to Moses regarding the seventy was "bring them unto the tent of meeting," not "bring them *outside*, unto the tent." The Hebrew verb (קָחָה) means "take"; the LXX. "thou shalt lead" (ἀξείεις), not "lead *out*," which would have been used had this tent been outside the camp. In verse 30: "And Moses *gat* him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel," the Hebrew verb (קָבַץ) is used which means to add or gather. It was used in verse 24: "And he gathered seventy men of the elders; and set them round about the tent." Now if we must render this verb in verse 30, "Moses *went back* into the camp, he and the elders," we must give it the same meaning in verse 24, and taking the verb *yatsa'* in the sense "come out" according to Driver,<sup>2</sup> we have this sentence: "Moses went outside the camp, and told the people the words of the Lord, and brought back into the camp seventy men." This would have the effect of putting the whole congregation outside the camp. And this is the logical result of the attempt to put this tent outside the camp. But if we regard the tent in the passage as being in the very centre of the camp, with a clear space around it, everything works out harmoniously,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This verb is followed by no preposition in Hebrew, but by a noun in quasi accusative case.

<sup>2</sup> *Exodus*, p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> In Numbers xvi. 12. If the words are to be taken literally, one would imagine from Dathan and Abiram's answer to Moses, "We will not come up" (*na'aleh*, הָלַכְנָה), that Moses was still on a height. It would be more suitable that the camp should be erected round a rising eminence as a sort of *dun* than to have such an eminence close by, a vantage ground for foes.

Moses simply goes forth from the "tent" "to address the people who are around the 'tent.'"

(2) Again, see Numbers xii. 4, 5, also assigned to E by the Critics, the dispute with Aaron and Miriam, verse 4: "Come out ye three unto the tent of meeting. And they three came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both *came forth*." Dr. Driver calls attention to this verb "*come out*" (*yatsa*). We have already shown that it does not necessarily imply that the Tent of Meeting was outside the camp, as it would be impossible to adhere consistently to this meaning without falling into self-contradictions.

Aaron and his sister would have had to come forth from their own tents to go to the tent of meeting wherever it might be.

In neither of these passages is anything said about Joshua acting as "caretaker" of this tent. In Numbers xi. 28, he is there with the seventy elders as "the minister of Moses;" in Numbers xii he is not mentioned.

(3) Deuteronomy xxxi. 14, 15. In this passage, also assigned to JE, Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses. "Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua *went*, and presented themselves in the tent of meeting." Here there is another verb which does not mean "go out," but simply "go."<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word to "present themselves" is the same word as is rendered "stand" in Numbers xi. 16 (*yatsabh* in Hithpael). There is nothing to show that this tent was "outside the camp," and this verse is a proof that Joshua was *not* the caretaker of it. It is also to be noted that the LXX has: "Call Joshua, and do ye stand at (*στήτε παρά*) the doors of the tent of witness." As the LXX suggests, the Hebrew preposition (*ב*) might equally well be rendered *at* as *in* in Deuteronomy xxxi. 14—"present yourselves *at* the tent of meeting." See 1 Samuel xxix. 1: "*at* the fountain" (*בְּעַיִן*); "*at* the gate" (*בְּשַׁעַר*), 2 Kings vii. 17. There was nothing, then, in the behaviour of Joshua, who was an Ephraimite, or in that of the seventy elders who stood round the tent, contrary to the regulations of P, which apparently forbade a stranger or non-Levite from entering it, although they might stand at the door of the Tabernacle (Lev. i. 3; iii. 2; Num. i. 51).

<sup>1</sup> *Yalah* (*יָלַח*), *ἐπορεύθη*.

There is nothing in these three passages cited by Driver to show that this tent was outside the camp, or that it was a simple tent, or that Joshua was its caretaker. There is nothing inconsistent in what is said about it with what is said of the Tabernacle in P. Accordingly, these three passages do not show that "the provisional tent of Moses, of which Joshua was in charge, was in existence and use after the erection of the splendid tabernacle of P."

Strange as it may appear, there is one passage (Num. xix. 3) assigned to P by the Critics which distinctly implies that the Tent of Meeting—"the splendid tabernacle described by P and placed by him in the centre of the camp,"—was "outside the camp." The red heifer was to be brought without the camp; there her body was to be burnt, and her blood sprinkled toward the front of the tent of meeting, and afterwards the priest was to come into the camp. Was this the tent of Moses of which Joshua was caretaker? Why, then, is there no mention of Joshua, but only of Eleazar the priest? "Ye shall give her (the red heifer) unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face." The unbiased critic will doubtless agree that the Higher Critics have not established their position regarding the provisional tent of Moses, and that the evidence produced by us against the theory of the post-exilic date of the Mosaic Tabernacle is stronger than the evidence produced on its behalf.

Finally, we have now to answer the principal objections of the Critics to the historical character of the Tabernacle, as we have it described in the Pentateuch. These are set forth by Driver in his work on Exodus,<sup>1</sup> and repeated by later commentators of his school. He writes: "For these reasons—the presumable absence of the skill and the means for constructing it, the divergent representations of it found in the Pentateuch itself, and the impossibility of finding a place for it in the early religion of Israel given in Judges and Samuel—it does not seem possible to regard the Tent of Meeting as described by P as historical" (p. 430). He regards it, then, as a physical impossibility for the Israelites at Mt. Sinai to have constructed or conveyed this heavy and costly fabric.

What evidence has he to prove the Israelites had not the necessary skill? Is it sufficient to assert that the Hebrews were a "subject nation," "nomad tribes," whose "painful occupations were

<sup>1</sup> *App.* iv. 426-432.

the pasturing of cattle, and the forced labour of the *corvée*” (p. 427)? What proof is there that all the Hebrews were herds or brick-labourers? None whatever. Is it at all probable that among the men who built for Pharaoh the store cities of Rameses, now identified by the remains of a town and temple of Rameses II, and Pithom (Exod. i. 11), who lived in houses of brick (Exod. xii. 12), who presumably could make graven images (Exod. xx. 4), who were surrounded by Egyptian art of all kinds on every side, were none who had any skill in metal-work, joinery or embroidery, in which the Egyptians, as Dr. Flinders Petrie<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, excelled? Are we to believe that among the people, who have proved themselves one of the most brilliant and gifted in the world, were none who had any ability except to make a brick, carry a brick, and lay a brick? And indeed a skilful bricklayer is a man who can easily advance to higher things. Have any tried to build a wall, not to say a house, without ability, skill, training, measurements, designs or specifications? It would soon fall to the ground. Bricklaying may be coarse work, but it demands trained hands, eyes, and intelligence. The appointment of two artists—Bezalel and Oholiab, and others who were “wise-hearted,” i.e., “possessed artistic aptitudes” (Driver), is a confutation of this statement. But the Critics assign this passage to P<sub>3</sub>, so as to cancel its evidence!

Let us hear Dr. Driver again: “When the Hebrews had been long settled in Palestine, and had no doubt added something to their knowledge of Art from their contact with the Canaanites, Solomon hired Phœnician workmen to make all the metal furniture and vessels of the Temple. 1 Kings vii. 13f., 41ff.” (p. 427). Even if Solomon did so, his action would have a parallel in the action of those who used to bring over Italian workmen to do the stucco work in their Georgian houses in England and Ireland. Could that be cited in the year 3000 as proof that the England of the eighteenth century—the England of Joshua Reynolds—was utterly ignorant of the fine arts?

But Driver appears to have here, as elsewhere, overstated his case. The Phœnician *workmen* turn out on investigation to be one man, Hiram, who had exceptional skill in one kind of metal-work. Does this prove that the Hebrews had no skill in other metal-work, or even in this? Suppose Driver engaged an American

<sup>1</sup> See *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt and Egypt and Israel*.

counsel for his case. Would that imply that there were no barristers in England, or that they were not equally good? His own opinion on this question would not affect the case on the point. And if he brought one counsel from America, would that justify a reporter, when writing an account of the case for the Press, in saying that the whole Bar consisted of Americans, as no Englishman was competent? And yet Dr. Driver reached a similar conclusion from a similar premise. It is not proved, then, that the want of skilled labour among the Hebrews would not permit of their executing so artistic a work.

We now come to the argument based on the lack of proper material. In the first place, we note that the timber used was the shittim wood which grows so plentifully in the region of Mt. Sinai. Next, that before the Israelites left Egypt they received jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and "utterly spoiled the Egyptians." Dr. Driver estimates the weight of gold used in the Tabernacle as one and a quarter tons; silver, four and a quarter tons; bronze, three tons.<sup>1</sup> Computing the number of families at 45,000 (double that of first born—Num. iii. 43), it would work out at nearly one ounce of gold, three ounces of silver, and under two and a half ounces of bronze per family. That would not mean a very great deal, and considering the aptitude the Hebrews possessed from the earliest days for acquiring such things, it would not be an excessive offering on their part to God. "Moreover," it is said, "it would be very difficult to procure the olive oil for the lamps, and the dyes—violet and purple from Tyrian shellfish, and crimson from an insect found on a particular kind of oak tree."<sup>2</sup> It is not stated that these things were procured in the wilderness. It is distinctly stated that they had brought them with them from Egypt. "Every man with whom was found blue and purple and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, brought them." (Exod. xxxv. 23)<sup>3</sup> It seems strange that critics should commit such errors where a concordance would have saved them. This passage is referred to by the critics to P<sub>3</sub>!

The Critics also allege that the descriptions are found to be marked by "*omissions and obscurities.*"<sup>4</sup> Driver enumerates six.

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus*, p. 427.

<sup>2</sup> McNeile, *Exodus*, p. lxxxii.

<sup>3</sup> Assigned by the Critics to P<sub>3</sub> (l). It evidently upset their theory somewhat, therefore it must be much more recent even than P.

<sup>4</sup> Driver, *Exodus*, p. 426.

He says : " Nothing is said of the shape of the cherubim, the nature and position of the ledge on the bronze altar, the position of the border round the table of Presence-bread, the thickness of the solid gold mercy-seat, and especially of the thickness of the boards or ' frames,' or of the manner in which the hollow wooden case, plated with bronze, which formed the altar of burnt-offering, was to be used." His conclusion is that these " obscurities and omissions " indicate that the descriptions " are not the work of an eyewitness."

Now these six omissions could have been rectified by the addition of six verses. The directions for the construction of the Tabernacle occupy 179 verses (cc. xxv-xxviii, xxx). And because the writer who was able to give such a full account of other matters, omitted to give a few details which the Critics have seized upon as important, he was not an eyewitness ! Would any journalist of 1918, who had given an account of Westminster Abbey, consider a critic of the year 2018 unprejudiced who would say that his account was not that of an eyewitness because he had omitted to give a full account of the coronation-chair, and of the size and kind of stone, or of the tombs of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, in the Abbey ? It is nowhere stated that the description is, as Driver alleges, " the working directions upon which a fabric, such as described, could be actually constructed."<sup>1</sup> They are not as minute and precise as the ordinary specifications for a house. It is implied that they were supplemented by a " pattern " as design, which Moses mentions twice (Exod. xxv. 9, 40). The fact that the Critics do not understand the exact arrangement of the pillars and the hangings, a thing which could have been made clear by the sketch, cannot be said to be due to the inexactness of the writer. But if that writer had specified the distances between the pillars, and those distances would not work out harmoniously with the rest of the plan, then one might have said something about his inaccuracy. Whereas now it is our information that is at fault, and reasoning based upon imperfect information is never sound.

The weight of the Tabernacle is also an objection. " It is alleged that the Merarites have only four wagons assigned to them, evidently an altogether insufficient number."<sup>3</sup> Driver refers to Numbers,

<sup>1</sup> The Critic of 2018, knowing nothing of the removal of this stone during the war, would assert, like all these critics, that it had never been removed, because he did not happen to find a record of its removal.

<sup>2</sup> Driver, *Exodus*, p. 426.

<sup>3</sup> *Exodus*, p. 426.

vii. 8, but he should have proceeded to the next verse: "But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none (i.e., oxen and wagons): because the service of the sanctuary belonged to them; they bare it upon their shoulders." The smallness of the number of the wagons is, after all, a proof of the honesty of the writer. He could easily have given forty, if he chose. A great portion of the furniture, etc., was carried by the Kohathites, and doubtless a great deal of the fabric was borne by the Merarites (see Num. iii. 31, 36).

Consequently we are justified in blaming our opponents for making mountains out of molehills. With one keen eye for anything that may help to establish their theory, they turn their blind side to all that is against it, e.g., the evident similarity to many Egyptian customs and arrangements in the structure and furniture of the Tabernacle. As one may see from such a handbook as Dr. Flinders Petrie's *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt*, the Egyptian was "completely master of the arts of combined labour, of masonry, of sculpture, of metal-working, of turning, of carpentry, of pottery, of weaving, of dyeing, and other elements of a highly organized social life." (p. 151). It is also evident from recent discoveries that there was much gold and silver and bronze in the Egypt of Moses' day, the period of the Nineteenth Dynasty. In his *Egypt and Israel* (p. 47f.) Dr. F. Petrie describes the remains of a large temple built in Sinai at Serabit al Khadem, by Egyptians, dating before the Exodus, showing small upright altars of incense, lavers for washing, etc. The Jewish altar of incense was the smallest altar, and stood before the ark (Exod. xxx. 27; xl. 5). For the laver, see Exodus xxx. 18. Burnt-offerings were also made in the high place at Serabit, as the pile of ashes shows.

It is also pointed out by Egyptologists that the Egyptians had sacred arks or chests for their gods, with figures of Maat or Truth spreading wings over at each end, giving point to such phrases as "Mercy and Truth are met together" (Ps. lxxxv. 10). An illustration is given by Dr. Flinders Petrie in *Egypt and Israel* (p. 62). This may have suggested the idea of the Cherubim with outstretched wings over the ark. The border of the high priest's robe, consisting of bells and pomegranates (Exod. xxviii. 33-34), is modelled after the Egyptian border of lotus flowers and seed-vessels.<sup>1</sup> The dignity of the priestly office, the linen robes of the priests, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt and Israel*, p. 62.

mitre of the high priest are Egyptian. And the position and various divisions of the Tabernacle may also have been modelled after Egyptian temples, in which the Holy of Holies was at the west end and shut off by a veil.

As regards Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was placed for many years, it is interesting to know that its site is fixed with certainty, and Sir Charles Wilson in the *Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1873, pointed out a level court 77 feet wide and 412 feet long, in the "tell," which might have been prepared for the Tabernacle.

To sum up : We have shown that not one of the Critical objections to the historical character of the Mosaic Tabernacle would be accepted as valid evidence in a modern court of justice, and we have also demonstrated by lines of proof, literary, documentary and archæological, such as would be accepted as evidence in a modern court of justice, that the Mosaic Tabernacle of Exodus xxx-xi, instead of being one of the greatest fictions of the world, is one of its indisputable facts.

F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK.

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