EXODUS

Chapter 25

*Offerings for the Tabernacle*

**The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. 3 These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; 4 blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; 5 ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; 6 olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 7 and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. 8 “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.**

**Chs 25–40** The account of building the tabernacle is paralleled by similar accounts from the rulers Gudea of Lagash and Samsu-iluna of Babylon, and the Baal myth of Ugarit. Moses records the account in a known literary style that includes God’s command, preparations, manufacture, consecration, and blessings. (TLSB)

**25:1** *The Lord* *said to Moses*. Formula that occurs seven times in chs 25–31 (25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12), perhaps echoing the repetition in the story of creation (Gn 1). The seventh use (31:12) introduces the Sabbath. (TLSB)

**25:2** *offering.* Here refers to a voluntary contribution. (CSB)

Not an obligation but a voluntary offering. (TLSB)

**25:3–7** Describes highest quality materials. (TLSB)

**25:3** *gold, silver, and bronze*. The closer to the Most Holy Place, the more precious the metal. The tabernacle and its furniture were gold (v 24), bases (26:19–21) and anchoring hooks were silver (27:10–11); items in the court were bronze (27:1–3; 30:17–18). (TLSB)

**25:4** *blue, purple and scarlet.* Royal colors. (CSB)

 *blue, purple.* Dyes derived from various shellfish (primarily the *murex*) that swarm in the waters of the northeast Mediterranean. So important for the local economy was the dyeing industry that the promised land was known as Canaan (which means “land of purple”), later called Phoenicia (also meaning “land of purple”) by the Greeks. (CSB)

 *scarlet.* Derived from the eggs and carcasses of the worm *Coccus ilicis*, which attaches itself to the leaves of the holly plant. *fine linen.* A very high quality cloth (often used by Egyptian royalty) made from thread spun from the fibers of flax straw. The Hebrew for this term derives ultimately from Egyptian. Excellent examples of unusually white, tightly woven linen have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Some are so finely woven that they cannot be distinguished from silk without the use of a magnifying glass. (CSB)

 *goat hair.* From long-haired goats. A coarse, black (cf. SS 1:5; 6:5) material, it was often used to weave cloth for tents. (CSB)

**25:5** *ram skins dyed red.* After all the wool had been removed from the skins. The final product was similar to present-day morocco leather. *sea cows.* Native to the Red Sea. (CSB)

 *acacia.* The wood is darker and harder than oak and is avoided by wood-eating insects. It is common in the Sinai peninsula. (CSB)

Hard wood, brown to orange in color, used for cabinetmaking. (TLSB)

**25:6** *spices.* Those used in the anointing oil are identified in 30:23–24 as myrrh (balsam sap), cinnamon (bark of the cinnamon tree, a species of laurel), cane (pith from the root of a reed plant) and cassia (made from dried flowers of the cinnamon tree). Those used in the fragrant incense are identified in 30:34 as gum resin (a powder taken from the middle of hardened drops of myrrh—rare and very valuable), onycha (made from mollusk shells) and galbanum (a rubbery resin taken from the roots of a flowering plant that thrives in Syria and Persia). (CSB)

**25:7** *other gems.* See 28:17–20. (CSB)

**25:8** *sanctuary.* Lit. “holy place,” “place set apart.” See note on 3:5. (CSB)

 *that I may dwell in their midst*. God would now dwell among His people in His sanctuary. The sanctuary’s three spheres of holiness were reminiscent of those at Mount Sinai: (1) At the base of Mount Sinai was an altar; the people approached no farther (19:23). The Israelites typically came no farther than the entrance to the tent of meeting (Lv 1:2–5). (2) The priests and the elders were permitted farther up Sinai (Ex 24:1). Only priests were permitted in the Holy Place (Nu 18:4–7). (3) The peak of Sinai was reserved for Moses (Ex 19:20; 24:2). This corresponds to the Most Holy Place, reserved for the high priest (Heb 9:7). (TLSB)

**25:9** *tabernacle.* Lit. “dwelling place.” The word is rarely used of human dwellings; it

almost always signifies the place where God dwells among his people (see v. 8; 29:45–46; Lev 26:11; Eze 37:27; cf. Jn 1:14; Rev 21:3). (CSB)

 *pattern.* See note on v. 40. (CSB)

Hbr *tabnith*, from the verb “to build.” The Lord showed Moses patterns, or models, to guide the work. (TLSB)

 *Tabernacle.* Tent-dwelling. (TLSB)

 **25:1–9** The Lord tells Moses to build a sanctuary in which He will dwell. Though God is present everywhere, He locates His saving presence in the tabernacle, where He has promised to be found. Today, He locates His blessings of salvation for you in the Word and Sacraments of His Church. • Lord God, what a wonderful blessing that You meet with us through Your Son, Jesus. Move our hearts to share the Gospel with others, that many more may hear, learn, and believe in You. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Ark*

**10 “Have them make a chest of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. 11 Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. 12 Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. 13 Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 14 Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it. 15 The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. 16 Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. 17 “Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. 18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. 19 Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. 20 The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. 21 Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. 22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.**

**25:10** *chest.* See v. 14. Such was its form and function. The Hebrew for this word is translated by the more traditional term “ark” throughout the rest of Exodus (see note on Dt 10:1–3); it is different from that used to refer to Noah’s ark and to the reed basket in which the infant Moses was placed (see note on 2:3). Of all the tabernacle furnishings, the ark is mentioned first probably because it symbolized the throne of the Lord (see 1Sa 4:4; 2Sa 6:2), the great King, who chose to dwell among his people (see note on v. 9). (CSB)

Same Hbr term as Moses’ basket (2:3) and Noah’s boat, where eight people were preserved (Gn 6:14). (TLSB)

**25:11** *pure gold.* Uncontaminated by silver or other impurities. (CSB)

Gold leaf applied to the wood. (TLSB)

**25:12** *rings.* Lit. “houses,” “housings,” into which poles were inserted to carry the ark (see v. 14). (CSB)

**25:13–15** *poles*. Used to carry the ark. Such a chest with rings, carried by poles, was discovered in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. (TLSB)

**25:16** *Testimony.* The two tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments as the basic stipulations of the Sinai covenant (see 20:1–17; 31:18). The Hebrew word for “Testimony” is related to a Babylonian word meaning “covenant stipulations.” See also notes on v. 22; 16:34. (CSB)

The Ten Commandments (20:1–17), the basis for the covenant (24:7–8). Also referred to as the “covenant” or the “tablets” (34:27–28). (TLSB)

**25:17** *mercy seat*. Hbr *kapporeth*, “atonement,” from the idea of covering something. See “atonement,” p 5. This is the traditional translation for the cover of the ark, which was regarded as God’s footstool or throne (1Sm 4:4; Ps 132:7) from which God spoke to Moses (v 22; Nu 7:89). God forgave sin when the high priest sprinkled or “covered” the mercy seat with the blood of the appointed sacrifices (Lv 16:14–18; Heb 9:6–12). The Ten Commandments were placed underneath the mercy seat (1Ki 8:9; Heb 9:4) so that the blood of sacrifice would cover them. (TLSB)

 *atonement cover.* See NIV text note; see also Lev 16:2 and note. That God’s symbolic throne was capped with an atonement cover signified his great mercy toward his people—only such a God can be revered (see Ps 130:3–4). (CSB)

 *atonement.* Reconciliation, the divine act of grace whereby God draws to himself and makes “at one” with him those who were once alienated from him. In the OT, the shed blood of sacrificial offerings signified atonement (see Lev 17:11 and note); in the NT, the blood of Jesus, shed once for all time, effects it (see Ro 3:25; 1Jn 2:2). (CSB)

 **25:18** *cherubim.* Probably similar to the carvings of winged sphinxes that adorned the armrests of royal thrones (see note on v. 10) in many parts of the ancient Near East (see also note on Ge 3:24). In the OT the cherubim were symbolic attendants that marked the place of the Lord’s “enthronement” in his earthly kingdom (see 1Sa 4:4; 2Sa 6:2; 2Ki 19:15; Ps 99:1). From the cover of the ark (God’s symbolic throne) the Lord gave directions to Moses (see v. 22; Nu 7:89). Later the ark’s presence in the temple at Jerusalem would designate it as God’s earthly royal city (see Ps 9:11; 18:10 and notes). (CSB)

Artwork to represent the devotion of the angels of heaven. Cf 20:4; Ezk 10:1. (TLSB)

**25:20**  *overshadowing*. Cherubim sheltered the mercy seat, depicting God as the One enthroned on cherubim (v 17). Their outstretched wings depicted movement (cf 2Sm 22:11). (TLSB)

 *their faces one to another*. Looking toward the place of atonement, not toward God’s face. (TLSB)

**25:22** *ark of the Testimony.* Called this because it contained the Testimony (see note on v. 16). The phrase “ark of the Testimony” is a synonym of the more familiar phrase “ark of the covenant” (see, e.g., Nu 10:33). (CSB)

 *I will meet with you.* See note on 27:21. (CSB)

“You” is singular, meaning Moses. Earlier, the Lord met with Moses on Mount Sinai (19:9, 16–19), also called Mount Horeb (Dt 18:16). Frightened, the people (Ex 19:10–25) asked the Lord to speak through Moses as an intermediary (Dt 18:16–17). Melancthon: “From this mercy seat God was going to speak to the people and there He would answer their prayer.… There are several types which apply here. Just as the mercy seat is the seat of God, so Christ is the seat of God, because in Christ the divine nature truly exists and before Him the church is gathered; and our prayers are not heard except for His sake.… Those who pray without knowledge of Christ or trust in Him will be rejected by God, as will all those who do not know the Gospel” (Chem, *LTh* 2:658). (TLSB)

 *commandment*. God also addressed the liturgical shape of Israel’s life. (TLSB)

**25:10–22** The Lord speaks to Moses from the mercy seat, the place of the Commandments and the atonement—His Law and His Gospel-mercy. Today, God no longer speaks from Mount Sinai or between the cherubim of the ark. He has spoken in these last days by His Son (Heb 1:2), who came to fulfill the Law for us and atone for all our sin. • Lord God, move our hearts to be attentive as You speak, and give Yourself to us in Your Word and Sacraments, through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Table*

**23 “Make a table of acacia wood—two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. 24 Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it. 25 Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. 26 Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. 27 The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. 28 Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. 29 And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. 30 Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.**

**25:23** *table.* The table taken from the second (Zerubbabel’s) temple by Antiochus Epiphanes is depicted on the Arch of Titus among the items the Romans took back to Rome after conquering Jerusalem in a.d. 70. (CSB)

**25:26** *rings.* See note on v. 12. (CSB)

**25:29** *drink offerings*. Flagons filled with wine. Priests may have drunk the contents of these flagons when they ate the bread every Sabbath (Lv 24:8–9). (TLSB)

**25:30** *bread of the Presence.* Traditionally “showbread.” In this phrase, “Presence” refers to the presence of God himself (as in 33:14–15; Isa 63:9). The bread (twelve loaves, one for each tribe) represented a perpetual bread offering to the Lord by which Israel declared that she consecrated to God the fruits of her labors, and by which she at the same time acknowledged that all such fruit had been hers only by God’s blessing. See Lev 24:5–9. (CSB)

Lit, “the bread of the face,” i.e., before God’s face, since He was present in the Most Holy Place. See application note, Lv 24:5–9. (TLSB)

**25:23–30** God sets before His people the bread of His presence. Jesus is “the living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51). • Lead us, dear Jesus, to feast on Your sacramental body in the bread and drink Your blood in the cup of thanksgiving (1Co 10:16), that we may be nourished by Your presence for all eternity. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Lampstand*

**31 “Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. 32 Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the other. 33 Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. 34 And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. 35 One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair—six branches in all. 36 The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. 37 “Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. 38 Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. 39 A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. 40 See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.**

**25:31** *lampstand*. For burning oil and lighting the holy place. (TLSB)

 *flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms.* The design is patterned after an almond tree (see v. 33), the first of the trees in the Near East to blossom in spring. The cups of the lampstand resemble either the calyx (outer covering of the flower) or the almond nut. (CSB)

The leaves surrounding a flower; they look like a cup from which the flower blooms. (TLSB)

**25:33** *almond blossoms*. Earliest to flower in spring. (TLSB)

**25:37** The beautiful lampstand served a practical purpose, lighting the tabernacle. The golden lampstand foreshadowed Christ (Jn 1:6–9). Cf Rv 1:12–13. As the lampstand gave the sanctuary light, so Christ is the light of the world (Jn 8:12). Many congregations today have two lampstands of seven lamps in the chancel, symbolizing the presence of Christ with His Church. (TLSB)

 *seven.* Signifying completeness. *lamps.* The ancient lamp was a small clay saucer with part of its rim pinched together to form a spout from which protruded the top of a wick fed by oil contained in the saucer. (Examples of seven-spouted lamps come from the time of Moses.) The ruins of Beth Shan and Megiddo have yielded examples of a metal pedestal topped by a ledge designed to carry a lamp. The classic representation of the shape of the tabernacle lampstand comes from the time of Herod the Great and may be seen on the Arch of Titus in Rome. The lamps were to burn all night in the tabernacle, tended by the priests. Oil for the lamps was to be supplied by the people; the light from the lamps represented the glory of the Lord reflected in the consecrated lives of the Israelites—Israel’s glory answering to God’s glory in the tabernacle (29:43). See 27:20–21. (CSB)

As the seven “lights” in a week. (TLSB)

**25:38** *tongs*. To remove the burnt wicks. (TLSB)

 *trays*. Held the wicks. (TLSB)

**25:40** Quoted in Heb 8:5 in order to contrast the “shadow” (the trappings of the old covenant) with the reality (the Christ of the new covenant). See also Heb 10:1. (CSB)

**25:31–40** The lampstand serves both practical and symbolic functions, providing the only light in the dark sanctuary and representing the sacred order God established in the daily and weekly services of His house. No wonder “light” and “enlightenment” have come to describe His work among us through the Word we hear at His house, which enlightens our understanding of His ways. • Jesus, we praise You, for in mercy You have not left us in darkness but have enlightened us with the Word of Your salvation. Lead us to reflect Your light in a lost world. Amen. (TLSB)