

# EXODUS

## Chapter 25

### *Contributions for the Sanctuary*

**The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. 3 And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, 4 blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, 5 tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, 6 oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. 9 Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.**

**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** *contribution.* 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)

*goats 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** *tanned rams' skins*. 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)

**25:8** *sanctuary*. Lit. “holy place,” “place set apart.”. (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*. 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 of the Covenant*

**10** “They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits[b] and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. **11** You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. **12** You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. **13** You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. **14** And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. **15** The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. **16** And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you. **17** “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. **18** And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy

**seat. 19 Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. 20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. 21 And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. 22 There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.**

**25:10** *ark*. Such was its form and function. The Hebrew for this word is translated by the more traditional term “ark” throughout the rest of Exodus; it is different from that used to refer to Noah’s ark and to the reed basket in which the infant Moses was placed. 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. (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.” (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)

**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. 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. (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. 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*. "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 for Bread*

**23** "You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. **24** You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a molding of gold around it. **25** And you shall make a rim around it a handbreadth wide, and a molding of gold around the rim. **26** And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. **27** Close to the frame the rings shall lie, as holders for the poles to carry the table. **28** You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with these. **29** And you shall make its plates and dishes for incense, and its flagons and bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. **30** And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.

**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)

**25:29** *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 Golden Lampstand*

**31 “You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. 32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 33 three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 34 And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, 35 and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. 36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. 38 Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. 40 And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.**

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

*its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers.* 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)