

Exodus Chapter 25

Verses 25:1 – 40:38: Most all of the remaining chapters specify the construction, care, and coordination of the tabernacle. Everything from the building materials, to decorations, instruments, regulations, offerings, furniture arrangement, wardrobe and personnel are mentioned. The details of this ornate place of worship, symbolizing the presence of a holy God and typifying Christ's future redemption of humanity, are so important that two complete records of them are given (25-31; 35-40). The tabernacle was not just a place of worship; it was a structure where Yahweh would "meet" (commune), with His people.

The primary focus of attention in the closing chapters is upon the design and construction of the central place of worship for the nation. In preparation for occupation of their Land, they had been given a system of law to regulate individual and national life, to prevent exploitation of the poor and the stranger, and to safeguard against polytheism and idolatry. That these safeguards were needed was confirmed by the idolatrous golden calf incident (32:1-35). The very detailed and divinely given blueprint of the tabernacle removes all speculation about whether it has any comparison with, or was somehow derived from, the little portable sanctuaries belonging to various tribal deities. The origin of the tabernacle was found in God and delivered to Moses by special revelation (25:9, 40; 26:30; Heb. 8:5).

The "Pattern" (design and specifications), and all the regulations for the tabernacle came from "the Lord" Himself; Moses was simply His spokesperson and foreman.

Exodus 25:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

When on the mount, and in the midst of the cloud with him: saying; as follows.

Exodus 25:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering."

This instruction about "the offering" reflects the type of giving commanded (in 2 Cor. 9:7). Joyful, willing offerings have ever been God's desire.

We see in these two verses above, the type of giving that is pleasing to God. Gifts given with love from the heart are acceptable to God. Those who give grudgingly or of necessity, might as well keep it, because it is unacceptable to God.

2 Cor. 9:7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

I truly believe that if a person gives because it is expected of him or her and really doesn't want to give, the gift does not benefit God or the giver. A person, who truly loves God, wants to give. In fact, he usually gives much more than is expected of him.

Exodus 25:3 "And this [is] the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,"

The Israelites had brought out of Egypt

- (1) Their ancestral wealth—the possessions of Abraham and the accumulations of Joseph; and
- (2) The rich gifts received from the Egyptians at the moment of their departure.

They had added to their wealth by the plunder of the Amalekites. Thus, they possessed a considerable store of the precious metals. And there is no difficulty in supposing that they furnished the gold needed for the tabernacle without seriously impoverishing themselves. The silver, which was of small amount comparatively, appears ultimately to have been furnished in another way (Exodus 30:12-16; 38:25-28). The brass or rather bronze, for brass seems to have been unknown at this time, was small in amount (Exodus 38:29). And of no great value. It would have constituted no serious drain on the resources of the people.

The "gold" was needed mostly for everything in the Holy of Holies where God dwelt. All items had to be either 24 karat gold or 24 karat gold overlaid. The spiritual meaning of gold has to do with purity associated with God. There is no need for us to try to figure out where all this gold came from. We do know from Scripture that this nearly three million people spoiled the Egyptians and brought gold and other precious metals into the wilderness with them. Perhaps they also had gold and other precious items handed down from other generations.

The spiritual meaning of "silver" is redemption. Items associated with the tabernacle, other than in the Holy place were silver. The people came to be redeemed.

"Brass" has to do with judgment and strength.

Exodus 25:4 "And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' [hair],"

"Blue, and purple, and scarlet": These colors were produced by dyeing the thread: blue from a shellfish, purple from the secretion of a murex snail, and crimson from powdered eggs and bodies of certain worms, which attached themselves to holly plants. Deriving different colored dyes from different natural sources demonstrates a substantial degree of technical sophistication with textiles and fabrics.

"Fine linen": Egypt had a reputation for excellence in producing finely twined linens.

The "blue", "purple" and "scarlet" probably were the colors of material. These three colors also have spiritual meanings and are known as God's special colors. "Blue" means heavenly, "scarlet", or red means life or blood and "purple" shows royalty. You see, all three have very important spiritual meanings. The spiritual meaning of "fine linen" is moral purity.

The Hebrew women were well-known for their weaving ability. This "goats' hair", probably was chosen for its strength and durability as were the "rams' skins" and "badgers' skins". Perhaps, it was chosen because of its water shedding ability as well.

Exodus 25:5 "And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,"

“Rams’ skins dyed red”: With all the wool removed and then dyed, it resembled Moroccan leather.

“Shittim wood”: A hard, durable, close-grained, and aromatic desert wood avoided by wood-eating insects. It was considered good for cabinet making, and could also be found in sufficient quantities in the Sinai Peninsula.

This "rams' skin dyed red" was probably because it could be seen inside the temple.

This "shittim wood" was chosen for its usefulness in making cabinets. Wood has to do with worldliness.

Exodus 25:6 "Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,"

“Spices”: For the many years of Bible history, Arabia was highly respected for the variety of balsams she exported.

The "oil for the light" was to be pure olive oil beaten. Olive oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit of God. Of Course, Jesus is the Light as well.

The "spices" for the anointing oil were myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus and cassia.

Exodus 25:7 "Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate."

“Onyx stones”: Sometimes thought to be chrysoprase quartz, a product known to the Egyptians and with which Israel was no doubt familiar. The LXX translated it as beryl.

"Onyx" is usually a black stone, today, and not a precious stone. The word that has been translated "onyx" indicates a bright precious stone. On these two stones (one for each side of the shoulder), were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The “ephod” was part of the garment of the High priest, this was his priestly robe. The color of the robe was blue. The "breastplate" worn over this robe had twelve precious stones set in it representing the twelve tribes of Israel. There was a pocket behind this breastplate next to the heart of the High Priest that contained the Urim and Thummim.

Some believe this was represented by a diamond engraved with the unspeakable name of God Almighty. "Urim" means lights, or fire and "Thummim" means perfections. These twelve stones on the breastplate were mounted in gold and there were four rows of three stones. Many of the precious stones were represented.

Verses 8-9: “Sanctuary ... tabernacle”: There are 50 chapters in the Bible devoted to the tabernacle: 13 in Exodus; 18 in Leviticus; 13 in Numbers; two in Deuteronomy; and four in Hebrews. The final 16 chapters in Exodus are primarily devoted to the instructions and

fashioning of the tabernacle. The amount of space devoted certainly demonstrates its importance to Israel's experience as a religious community. The above are two of the five different names or titles applied to the tabernacle in the Pentateuch. "Sanctuary" translates the Hebrew "miqdash". It derives from a root meaning "be holy," and may have come into use because of the two parts into which the facility was divided; the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

This reinforces the notion of holiness or separation. The sanctuary testifies to the holiness of God by more than its structure. Aaron, the chief minister of the tabernacle, wore a diadem with the engraving, "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36). This term lends an aura of the unapproachable and the distant. Though God was accessible to the people, the engraving reminded them that the tabernacle was no ordinary facility. The tabernacle was set apart and special to Yahweh. The second term, "tabernacle", translates the Hebrew "mishkan", "dwelling place." Notice that Yahweh says, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." It implies an active sense of dwelling.

When the tabernacle was completed, the signal that Yahweh had come now to inhabit it was the descent of the glory cloud (40:34-38). The ark was significant for more than being the depository for the law. The ark's cover represented the throne of God. Therefore, the ark was placed in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and symbolized God's presence. Also, the table of the bread of the presence (verse 30), on which were placed the 12 loaves, symbolized that the tribes were present before the Lord.

Exodus 25:8 "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

The predominate "type" of Christ in the Old Testament is the tabernacle. The New Testament authority for recognizing its typological significance is (Hebrews 9:1-24). Because the pattern for the tabernacle was designed by God, this has led some Bible scholars to conclude that even the minutest details of the tabernacle have a typological significance.

In describing the incarnation (John 1:14), John uses the word for dwelt, which has the idea of pitching a tent or tabernacle. The tabernacle was the sanctuary of God, described as His dwelling place (verse 8). Just as God lived in a tent in the wilderness, so the Son of God lived (and still lives), in a human body as the New Testament "tent." Today, the physical bodies of Christians serve as the temple (dwelling place), of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 16:19-20).

"I may dwell": The tabernacle, a noun derived from the verb "to dwell," was an appropriate designation for that which was to be the place of God's presence with His people. His presence would be between the cherubim and from there He would meet with Moses (verse 22).

"Sanctuary" means hallowed place or holy place. God's desire has always been to fellowship with His creation (mankind). God wanted them to build Him a place so He could be near them.

Exodus 25:9 "According to all that I shew thee, [after] the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make [it]."

"Tabernacle": The Pentateuch records 5 different names for the tabernacle:

- (1) "Sanctuary," denoting a sacred place or set apart, i.e., holy place;
- (2) "Tent", denoting a temporary or collapsible dwelling;
- (3) "Tabernacle," from "to dwell," denoting the place of God's presence (as well as other titles);
- (4) "Tabernacle of the congregation, or meeting"; and
- (5) "Tabernacle of the testimony."

The original (that the pattern was copied by for the tabernacle), is in heaven. The Lord opened Moses' eyes and allowed him to see this tabernacle. It really doesn't matter whether this was a vision or an actual sighting. The main thing is that the Lord allowed him to see the structure and the furniture. When Moses viewed the tabernacle, the Lord implanted in his mind a lasting picture so that he would make no mistakes in reproducing it here on the earth.

Verses 10-22: The most prominent furnishing in the tabernacle was a small wooden chest (known as the "ark of the covenant"), that would contain the two tablets of the Law as the Lord's "Testimony". The ark was placed in the Most Holy Place (40:17-21), and was to be transported on a "frame" with "rings" and "poles" (25:13-15). No human was to touch it.

Exodus 25:10 "And they shall make an ark [of] shittim wood: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof."

Arôn, the word here rendered "ark," is an entirely different word from that previously so translated (in Genesis 6:14; Exodus 2:3), which is tebah. Arôn is properly a chest or coffer of small dimensions, used to contain money or other valuables (2 Kings 12:9-10; 2 Chron. 25:8-11). In one place, it is applied to a mummy-case (Genesis 1:26). Here it designates a wooden chest three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches broad, and two feet three inches deep.

The primary object of the ark was to contain the two tables of stone, written with the finger of God, which Moses was to receive before he came down from the mount (see Exodus 24:12 and compare Exodus 20:16). Sacred coffers were important parts of the furniture of temples in Egypt. They usually contained the image or emblem of some deity, and were constructed so as to be readily carried in processions.

This ark (box), was covered by gold inside and out, because it stayed in the presence of God. God cannot look upon anything that is not pure; this was the purpose of the gold. The box being gold inside was because it would contain a piece of manna which fell from heaven. This manna is symbolic of Jesus, who is the Bread of life.

It will also, contain Aaron's rod that bloomed, and the two stone tables of the Ten Commandments (Decalogue). It would be certain death for anyone touching the actual ark after Moses sets it up.

Most people understand this cubit to be 18 inches. Using that measurement, this box was 45 inches long, 27 inches wide and 27 inches high.

Exodus 25:11 "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about."

“Pure gold”: The technology of the day was sufficient to refine gold.

Exodus 25:12 "And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put [them] in the four corners thereof; and two rings [shall be] in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it."

Though the ark was not to be carried in procession, like Egyptian arks, yet it would have to be carried when the Israelites resumed their journeying. The four rings were made to receive the two “staves” or poles by which the ark was to be borne at such times on the shoulders of the priests (Exodus 25:13-14).

"In the four corners thereof": Literally, at the four feet thereof. The rings were to be affixed, not at the four upper corners of the chest, but at the four bottom corners, in order that the ark, when carried on men’s shoulders, might be elevated above them, and so be in no danger of coming in contact with the bearers’ persons. The arrangement might seem to endanger the equilibrium of the ark when carried; but as Kalisch observes, “the smallness of the dimensions of the ark rendered its safe transportation, even with the rings at its feet, not impossible.”

Exodus 25:13 "And thou shalt make staves [of] shittim wood, and overlay them with gold."

Of the same wood the ark was made of (see Exodus 25:5), and overlay them with gold; cover them with plates of gold, so that they appeared to be all of gold, the wood not to be seen.

Only designated people would be able to touch the shittim wood poles covered with gold that the ark would be carried with. Picture in your mind, a box nearly four feet long, a little over two ft. wide, and two ft. high. These poles were longer than the ark and they hung in these gold rings attached to the sides of the box.

Exodus 25:14 "And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them."

This shows for what use the rings were; namely, to put the staves into them and the use of the staves thus put was.

"That the ark might be borne with them": Which staves overlaid with gold, and put into golden rings, figured the ministers of Christ, enriched with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, and possessed of the truths of the Gospel, more precious than gold and silver. Who bear the name of Christ, and carry his Gospel into the several parts of the world.

Exodus 25:15 "The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it."

The staves were to remain always in the rings, whether the ark was in motion or at rest, that there might never at any time be a necessity for touching the ark itself, or even the rings. He who touched the ark imperiled his life (see 2 Samuel 6:6-7).

Exodus 25:16 "And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee."

“The testimony”: This designation for the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments which were placed inside the ark explains why it was also called “the ark of the testimony” (verse 22), and shows why it was appropriate to call the whole structure “the tabernacle” or “the tent of the testimony.” “The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth” (Joshua 3:11), and “the holy ark” (2 Chron. 35:3), were alternative designations.

God was just telling Moses to leave the carrying poles in the rings on the side of the ark and later God would tell him what to put into the ark.

Verses 17-22: The “mercy seat” (Hebrew “to cover over, to make propitiation”), was the ark’s lid, made of “pure gold.” Here, within the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies), between the cloud of the Lord’s glory and the stone tablets of the Law, was the place of atonement where the Lord also promised to “speak with” and reveal His will for the people through Moses (29:42; 30:6, 36; Num. 7:89; Psalm 91:1). Today, God’s people have access to God’s presence through Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19-25), our “mercy seat” (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Because of Christ’s shed blood, the throne of God is the believer’s throne of grace.

Exodus 25:17 "And thou shalt make a mercy seat [of] pure gold: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof."

“Mercy seat” probably derives from the root meaning “to cover,” or “to conceal.” Thus, a covering of sin was symbolized until it was dealt with in fact by the atonement of Christ. But there is evidence that the verb is derived from a noun meaning “ransom,” since it is parallel to the “redeem” (*pada*) (in Psalm 49:7). The idea of “mercy seat” is incorrect, for the word is not related to mercy and of course it was not a seat. Further, the translation “mercy seat” does not sufficiently express the fact that the lid of the ark was the place where the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. “Place of atonement” would perhaps be more expressive. Note that the Septuagint is usually “hilasterion”, “place or object of propitiation,” a word applied to Christ (in Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10).

The lid or cover of the ark was the “mercy seat” or the place at which atonement took place. Between the Shekinah glory cloud above the ark and the tablets of law inside the ark was the blood-sprinkled cover. Blood from the sacrifices stood between God and the broken law of God!

This seat was an exact cover for the box called the ark. Again, this was pure gold because it would be in the presence of God. This slab of pure gold that made up this seat would weigh 750 pounds or more. Gold is troy weight, so this slab had 9000 ounces of pure gold. That was not all of the gold in the Holy of Holies; this was just the mercy seat.

Exodus 25:18 "And thou shalt make two cherubims [of] gold, [of] beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat."

"Cherubims": Forged as one with the golden cover of the ark were two angelic beings rising up on each end and facing one another, their wings stretching up and over forming an arch. Cherubim, associated with the majestic glory and presence of God (Ezek. 10:1-22), were appropriately woven into the tabernacle curtains and the veil for the Holy of Holies (26:1, 31), for this place was where God was present with His people. Scripture reveals them as the bearers of God's throne (1 Sam. 4:4; Isa. 37:16), and the guardians of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24).

"Cherubim" in the Strong's Concordance means imaginary figure. These Cherubims were symbolic of the holiness of God, and they being on each side seem to indicate that these winged figures' duty was to guard the holiness of the ark. They faced each other overlooking the ark, but with bowed heads. Cherubims were mentioned (in Genesis 3:24) guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden. Whatever these figures were, they were of heavenly nature and their purpose seems to be to protect something. These were not normal images of a man because they have wings. God dwells above them and between them. It was indicated (in Ezekiel 10:14-16), that these living creatures called Cherubims had four faces (symbolic of the four gospels).

Exodus 25:19 "And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: [even] of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof."

The meaning seems to be that the Cherubims were not to be detached images, made separately, and then fastened to the mercy seat, but to be formed out of the same mass of gold with the mercy seat, and so to be part and parcel of it.

We do not know absolutely for sure what they were. We do know they are godly (made of gold). We do know they served God and in this case hovered over the mercy seat. If you think about it; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do protect the teaching of the mercy of God.

Exodus 25:20 "And the cherubims shall stretch forth [their] wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces [shall look] one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be."

From whence it appears they were in the form of winged creatures, as the seraphim in Isaiah's vision, and the living creatures in those of Ezekiel and John. And their wings did not hang down by them, or on the side of them, but were stretched out upwards towards the heaven above their heads. Thus, denoting the readiness, agility, and swiftness of the ministers of the word to do the work and will of Christ, as well as their expectation of all the supplies of gifts and grace from him to enable them to do it.

"Covering the mercy seat with their wings": Which reached each other; though, as Jarchi says, between them and the mercy seat there was a hollow of ten hands' breadth; so high were they stretched upwards, though they met each other.

"And their faces shall look one to another": And which is expressive of the harmony, concord, and agreement of the true and faithful ministers of Christ one with another. Who all agree in preaching Christ, and him crucified, and in the several momentous and important doctrines of the Gospel.

"Towards the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be": As before observed, it may denote their directing souls to Christ as the only way of salvation, keeping always in all their ministrations this great truth in view, atonement and satisfaction by the blood and sacrifice of Christ, and salvation alone by him. Which they make the rule of their ministry, and from which they never swerve, taking care not to deliver anything contrary to it, or which may serve to cast a veil over it.

These little cartoon drawings we see of cherubs are not correct. These figures, whatever they were, were awesome in appearance. As we said earlier, these two Cherubims (one on each end of the mercy seat), were to protect the mercy seat. This was a very Holy place, in that the presence of God was here. It seems their faces (although looking across the mercy seat toward each other), were bowed as well. We are not told if these figures were standing or sitting, but we do know that they had wings that covered the mercy seat.

Exodus 25:21 "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee."

"The testimony" quite clearly designates the two tables of stone on which the Ten Words (Ten Commandments) were written (24:12; 31:28; 32:15; 34:29). These two tables represented God's covenant with Israel (34:27-28), and as such are called the "tables of the covenant" (Deut. 9:9).

God's laws never change. God Himself looks over them and protects them. This shittim wood box was to keep them in. This is the first mention that the mercy seat was to be placed on the top of the ark. The dimensions were slightly smaller than the top of the ark, so we had already assumed this would be where it would be put. The "testimony" included Aaron's rod that bloomed and testified of his ministry and the manna which testified of God's miraculous provision for mankind. The manna was of course, symbolic of Jesus Christ (who is the Bread of Life). The Ten Commandments were the testimony as well. God cared enough about mankind that He would give us laws to determine how to live successfully on this earth.

Exodus Chapter 25 Questions

1. What did God ask of the people in verse 2?
2. What conditions were attached to this?
3. What does 2 Corinthians 9:7 teach us?
4. What three hard metals were they to bring?

5. What are blue, scarlet, and purple?
6. What three animals' skins were required?
7. What was the anointing oil?
8. What were the precious stones for?
9. Where would the gold be used and why?
10. What is the spiritual meaning of gold?
11. What is "silver" symbolic of?
12. What is "brass" symbolic of?
13. What three colors are known as God's colors?
14. What does each color mean spiritually?
15. What does "wood" symbolize?
16. What was the light made from?
17. What was the "Ephod"?
18. Describe the breastplate.
19. What did God ask them to build so He could dwell with them?
20. What does it mean?
21. What was it to be patterned by?
22. What did God allow Moses to see?
23. What was the ark to be made of?
24. How long, wide, and high was the ark?
25. Why was it to be overlaid in gold inside and out?
26. What three things will this ark contain?
27. What was the penalty for touching the ark?
28. What was the mercy seat to be made of?
29. What was about the minimum weight of the mercy seat?

30. Where were the Cherubims to be?
31. What does Strong's Concordance say that "cherubim" means?
32. What do we know for sure about the cherubim?
33. What shall the Cherubims cover the mercy seat with?
34. Why is this such a Holy place, where the ark is?
35. What does "testimony" indicate?