

Exodus 25:1-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-25/exodus-251-9/>

The LORD told Moses to collect a “contribution” from the people of Israel. These contributions were to include precious metals and other materials that were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle, which was to serve as the LORD’s “sanctuary” in the midst of His people.

It appears that this passage contained in [Exodus 25](#) through 31:11 skips over describing the law and Ten Commandments, which are detailed elsewhere, and zooms in on detailed instructions for building the tabernacle. The section begins, *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying*. Moses was on the mountain with God for forty days and nights ([Exodus 24:18](#)). Apparently a substantial portion of that time was spent with God detailing specifics on the tabernacle building project. It is likely that Moses wrote down all these instructions, or perhaps committed them to memory and wrote them later. At the very end of the description of his forty days and nights on the mountain we are told that God “... gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God” ([Exodus 31:18](#)). So clearly much of the time was also given to providing legal details, and we likely know much of that from what is recorded of the law in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. But what is provided in chapters 25 through 31 primarily deals with the tabernacle.

In order for the tabernacle to be built, the materials for its construction needed to be gathered. In verses 1 – 9, the LORD commanded Moses to tell the Israelites to *raise a contribution*, which would provide the necessary materials for building the tabernacle. The word for *contribution* (Heb. “terumah”) comes from the verb “rum” which means “to lift up” or “to offer.” It was used consistently to speak of that which was given voluntarily. This is underscored by the instruction to gather the materials *from every man whose heart moves him*. The collection was to strictly be based on willing hearts giving out of generosity. This approach is consistent with the self-governing structure for Israel outlined within God’s covenant with them. The principle is echoed in the New Testament, when Paul asserts “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” ([2 Corinthians 9:7](#)).

The *contribution* of the materials for the tabernacle that was to be raised from the people *whose heart* moved them, consisted of the following materials:

- *Gold* – the most valuable metal. It was to be used in the construction of the items placed in the Holy of Holies, such as the ark and the mercy seat.
- *Silver* – used to make “sockets” ([Exodus 26:19, 21, 25](#)).
- *Bronze* – used to make many of the “utensils” of the tabernacle and “sockets” ([Exodus 27:10](#)).
- *Blue, purple and scarlet material* – the “material” (not in the Hebrew text) probably refers to yarn that was used for the making of the curtains of the tabernacle.
 - *Blue*, made from shellfish, represented the sky or heaven. It signified where the LORD dwelt.
 - *Purple*, derived from the glands of snails, probably spoke of royalty.
 - *Scarlet*, made from the eggs and bodies of a species of worm, possibly representing humans and their frailty.
- *Fine linen* – Used to make the priestly garments and the ephod ([Exodus 28:4, 39:2](#)).
- *Goat hair* – long, usually black, hair that was used (with the linen) to weave the curtains of the tabernacle.
- *Rams’ skins dyed red* – Used to make a “covering” for the tent of the tabernacle.
- *Porpoise skins*—though some scholars relate the Hebrew word (“takhash”) to the Arabic word meaning “dolphin” or *porpoise* (found in the Red Sea), this meaning is unsure. Other versions translate it “badger” (NKJV) or “fine leather” (NRSV, NET). Regardless, the skins were used in a manner similar to the rams’ skins as an outer cover on the roof of the tabernacle.
- *Acacia wood* – a wood, plentiful in the Sinai Peninsula, that is quite hard and resistant to insects. It was used to build the ark ([Exodus 25:10](#)), the poles used to carry the ark ([Exodus 25:13](#)), the altar ([Exodus 27:1](#)), and other items used in the tabernacle. This made it ideal for the columns and beams that comprised the frame of the tabernacle.
- *Oil for lighting* – of the lamps used in the tabernacle.
- *Spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense* – these were designed to make the oil fragrant.
- *Onyx stones* – a sea-green colored stone used to decorate the ephod ([Exodus 28:9](#)) and the *breastpiece* ([Exodus 28:20](#)).

The *ephod and breastpiece* were part of the priests' clothing ([Exodus 28:4](#)).

- *Setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece* – the other precious stones used with the onyx stones ([Exodus 28:6 – 25](#)).

Where would fleeing slaves get such valuable materials? From the Egyptians. Moses instructed the people to ask the Egyptians for these valuables just before they left Egypt. The Egyptians were so anxious for the Israelites to leave that they gave all that they asked ([Exodus 12:25-26](#)). It is likely this collection served Israel in many ways, one of which was that it provided materials for the tabernacle.

Following the request for a voluntary *contribution*, the LORD told Moses to command the people to *construct a sanctuary for Me* in order that He *may dwell among them*.

The word *sanctuary* (Heb. “miqdash”) is one of several words used to refer to the tabernacle. It is related to the word meaning “holy” (Heb. “qadosh”), so the emphasis is upon it being a sacred place for the LORD to dwell. Another is *tabernacle* (Heb. “mishkan”), meaning “dwelling place.” It speaks of the LORD’s abiding presence among His people. A third is “Tent of Meeting” (Heb. “ohel-moed”[Exodus 29:42](#)) which stresses the Suzerain (Ruler) LORD meeting and fellowshiping with His vassals (Israel).

The Tabernacle, said the LORD, was to be built *according to all that I am going to show you*. The LORD would specify to Moses and the people *the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture*. In response, they were to diligently follow these patterns to *construct it*.

Biblical Text:

¹ Then 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. ⁸Let 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*.