–Save This Page as a PDF–

The Call to Build the Tabernacle
25:1-2, 8-9 and 35:4, 20-21

The call to build the Tabernacle DIG: Why do these people give what they have? Are such gifts given impulsively, or would they have to go to some lengths to prepare them? What need has God for such riches? Will their offerings secure God's relationship? How so?

REFLECT: What is the motivation for your giving? Does God need your money? Then what is the purpose of giving? What joy do you get from giving to someone you love?

Parashah 19: T'rumah (Contribution) 25:1-27:19
(see my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click Af – Parashah)

The Key Person is **Moshe**, with **ADONAI**.

The Scene is **Mount Sinai**.

The Main Events include **ADONAI** telling **Moshe** how to make **the Ark of the Covenant**, **the Table of Showbread**, **the Lampstand**, **the Tabernacle**, **the Bronze Altar**, **the Altar of Incense**, **the Outer Court**, and **the Gate** – all according to **God's** pattern using precious materials offered by **the people** with willing hearts.

We have followed **the Israelites** from bondage to freedom. We saw how **God** redeemed **them**, washed **them**, and brought **them** to **Himself** at Sinai. We saw **His** proposal of a covenant relationship, **Isra'el's** acceptance. We heard **the Ten Commandments** and studied through the additional **mitzvot** spoken through **Moshe**. The very next day, **Moshe** built an altar and carried out the covenant ceremony. **He** wrote out **the commands** as a covenant document and **read them** aloud to **Isra'el**. Then, all **Isra'el** accepted the terms. **He** had **sacrifices** offered and marked **Isra'el** with **the blood**. Then **he** and **Aaron**, and **the tribal leaders**

ascended the foot of Mount Sinai and sealed the covenant with a shared meal in the presence of **ADONAI Himself**.

Following the marriage metaphor, it is as if **God** and **Isra'el** then had been legally married. The only thing that remained was to consummate the marriage. From the midst of the covenant meal, **YHVH** summoned **Moshe** to ascend even higher and receive **the tablets of the Covenant**. Those **stone tablets** were to serve as covenant tokens – a wedding contract (Hebrew: *ketubah*) of sorts. The end of **Exodus 24** describes how **the** Sh'khinah **glory** of **the LORD** rested atop Mount Sinai as a consuming fire. Moshe ascended the mountain and stepped into **the cloud of glory**.



No sooner did **Moses** enter into **the** Sh'khinah **glory** and into the presence of **Ha'Shem**, then **the Divine voice** gave **him** the directions concerning the construction of the **Tabernacle**. Seven times **Moses** was told to make it after the pattern that was shown to **him** on **the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 25, 40, 26:30, 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5)**. The first thing **Moses** was to do was to ask the people for a voluntary contribution to construct **the Tabernacle**. **ADONAI said to Moses, His** servant: **Tell the Israelites to bring Me a** free will **offering. The Tabernacle** was to be built from the willing contributions of **the children of Isra'el**. It was not to be an imposed tax. Only free-will **offerings** were to be accepted. As always, **the LORD** seeks after the willing heart.[489] **You are to receive the offering for Me from each man whose heart prompts him to give (25:1-2; 35:4). Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart was moved came and brought an offering to ADONAI for the work on the Tabernacle, for all its service, and for the sacred garments (35:20-21).** The ones whose hearts were moved acted *immediately*.

The various **materials** that **Moses** was to collect for the building of **the Tabernacle** all find **their** place and function in the coming chapters of **Exodus**. It is interesting to note that **the Torah** will now spend the next **twelve chapters** (essentially the last quarter of the whole book of **Exodus**) discussing the construction of **the Tabernacle** and **priestly attire**. Only the Golden Calf incident interrupts the list of **Tabernacle** details. One must wonder why **Moshe** chose to devote so much parchment and ink to the seemingly inconsequential details of **the Tabernacle's** construction. By way of contrast, the creation of the entire universe only received a short chapter. Would not a brief discussion of **the Tabernacle's** general layout and assembly be sufficient? Is it really necessary to know how many hooks and clasps there were or exactly how many cubits high **the bronze basin** was? We assume that **the Torah** doesn't waste words. Though we don't understand the reason **God** chose to relate the intricate details of **the Tabernacle's** construction, we know the details must be purposeful and significant. As we explore the rest of **Exodus**, we will seek out **its** purpose and significance.

The Tabernacle was to be built so that **God** could **dwell** in the midst of **the people**. **Then have them make a Tabernacle**, **literally *a place of holiness***, **for Me, and I will dwell among them (25:8).** The Hebrew word for **dwell** here is Sh'khinah, because it emphasizes **God's** visible **dwelling** among mankind. Thus, the name Sh'khinah is used to refer to **the Divine Presence** of **God**. **He** never said that **He** was going to *live* in **the Tabernacle** in the sense that **He** was restricted to a geographical spot. **He** did say, however, that **He** would **dwell** between the cherubim **(First Samuel 4:4; Second Samuel 6:2; Second Kings 19:15** and **Isaiah 37:16)**.

Paul echoed this concept when **he** wrote: **For we are the temple of the living God – as God** said: **I will house myself in them . . . and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Second Corinthians 6:16). Paul** repeatedly symbolizes both the individual believer and the Congregation of believers as **the temple of God** with **the Ruach dwelling** within. **Peter** also uses **the "living temple"** analogy **(First Peter 2:5)**. As we begin to understand **the Tabernacle** and **Temple** as **the dwelling** place of **YHVH**, we can see how apt this metaphor was to describe the believers. Just as **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** dwelt in **the Tabernacle** and **Temple**, so too **His Spirit** had come to dwell in believers. Understanding this, we can better appreciate the significance of the First Century Shavu'ot. On the anniversary of the day on which **ADONAI** had entered into a covenant with **Isra'el** at Sinai, the believers gathered together in **the**

Temple, **the Dwelling Place of God**. There, in **the Temple** courts, **the Spirit of God** descended just as at Sinai and came upon individuals (see the commentary on **Acts Al – The Ruach Ha'Kodesh Comes at Shavu'ot**). The believers became dwelling places, little tabernacles inside of **the Temple itself**. This is a good picture of **the People of God**. We are **temples** within **the Temple**, members of **His Body.**

A covenant is a fragile thing. It must be kept. It must be guarded, protected and preserved. It can be broken, and once broken, it needs to be repaired. A covenant is more than just a cold and impersonal contract; it is a living, breathing, dynamic relationship. Yet how was the Sinai Covenant to be preserved? How was it to be passed on from one generation to another? If broken, how was it to be renewed? Was **Isra'el** to return to Mount Sinai for regular covenant maintenance? No! In order for the Covenant to be celebrated, maintained and renewed, it was necessary for **Isra'el** to take Mount Sinai with **them**. **The Tabernacle** was the means by which they could perpetuate the Mount Sinai experience. The effectiveness of **the Tabernacle** in this regard can be seen in the fact that **the Israelites** never made pilgrimage back to Mount Sinai. **The Tabernacle,** in effect, became a portable Mount Sinai.

The bridal chamber: Recalling the metaphor of betrothal and marriage between **ADONAI** and **Isra'el** at Mount Sinai (**to see link click Dg – Under the Chupah**), we see the **Jewish** custom of a special bridal chamber prepared for the bride and the groom. The marriage ceremony was consummated within the bridal chamber. In the same way, the covenant at Mount Sinai was followed immediately by the instructions for the building of **the Taberncale**. As we will see, **the Tabernacle** would be the place where the covenant between **God** and **Isra'el** was celebrated and renewed. Since the covenant offer can be spoken of as a betrothal, and the covenant ceremony can be spoken of as a wedding, then **the Tabernacle** can be spoken of as the wedding chamber.[490]

Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you (25:9). As we go through this study of the **Tabernacle**, we should be sensitive to the amazing detail that **ADONAI** provides. When **Moses** was up on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, **he** evidently got a complete briefing on how to build **God's** dwelling place. The book of **Hebrews** tells us that the earthly **Tabernacle** was patterned after the heavenly **Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Br – The Insufficiency of the Former Tabernacle**).

How interesting that **God** made giving to the **Tabernacle** a voluntary gesture. **He** does not demand, or command, how much a person is to give, or even that a person must give. **He** leaves it to the heart of the individual person (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do – When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**). There is a story of a woman who unexpectedly received a large inheritance. She immediately gave a tenth of it to her church. Later, after her death, an entry was found in her diary for the day that she received her inheritance. She wrote, “Act quickly, before my heart gets hard!” She acted *immediately* like the Hebrews of old. May **the Holy Spirit** work upon our hearts so that we may give abundantly to **God’s** work. May **He** make our hearts of stone, soft for **Him**![491]