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## The Materials for the Tabernacle

### 25:3-7, 35:5-19, 22-29, 38:21, 24-31 and 36:3b-7

**DIG:** What kind of building materials were needed for this building project? What impresses you about them? Why did the giving exceed all expectations?

**REFLECT:** What do you bring to God when you worship Him? How is it like the precious items brought by the Israelites? Which are you more willing and able to contribute to a project for God? Your time? Manual labor? Leadership skills? Money? How would your community of believers react if the people gave too much this year? Can you imagine your pastor asking people to stop giving?

#### **Parashah 23: P'kudei (Accounts) 38:21-40:38**

**(In regular years read with Parashah 22, in leap years read separately)  
(see my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)**

**The Key People** are Moshe, the Levites, Ithamar, Bezalel, Oholiab, the Israelites, Aaron and his sons.

**The Scene** is the wilderness of Sinai.

**The Main Events** include inventory of **Tabernacle** materials; **priest's garments**, according to the commands of **ADONAI**; **Moses blessing people**; **God** ordering the **Tabernacle** set-up, arrangement of furnishings, and the consecration and instruction for **priests** to **wash, dress**, and be **anointed**; **Moshe** raising the **Tabernacle** on the **first day of the first month of the second year**; **lamps lit, incense burnt**, offerings made for worship; the **bronze basin** set up for **washing**; all work finished; **cloud** covering the **Tabernacle**; the **Sh'khinah glory** filling the **Tabernacle**; and **cloud/fire** guiding **Isra'el** through her **wilderness wanderings**. Parashat P'kidei is the final **Torah** portion in the book of **Exodus**. It is a brief one, concentrating only on the completion of the **Tabernacle** and concluding with the presence of **YHVH** taking **His** place with **His children**.

**All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to God freewill offerings for all the work ADONAI, through Moses, had commanded them to do (25:3a; 35:5a;**

**35:29). These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, which were recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest (38:21). There were seven groups of materials listed.**

**The first group contained the precious metals.** All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their offerings of gold, silver and bronze to the Lord (25:3b, 35:5b, 35:22). They are listed in descending order of value. In the Tabernacle, the closer you got to the Most Holy Place, the more valuable the metal used in its construction.

**The total amount of the gold from the wave offering used for all the work on the Tabernacle was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the Tabernacle shekel (38:24).** A talent equaled 3,000 shekels, so the entire amount of gold donated was 87,730 shekels if they were gold. Because of the different shekel systems in use in the Hebrew culture at the same time, we are not exactly certain of the weight of the shekel. Any estimate of the amount of gold used in building the Tabernacle would be a mere guess. The gold was collected during the offering described in 35:22.<sup>498</sup>

**The silver obtained from those of the community who were counted in the census was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the Tabernacle shekel (38:25).** That would be one beka per person, or half a shekel, according to the Tabernacle shekel, from everyone who had crossed over to those counted, twenty years old or more, a total of 603,550 men over the age of 20 (35:26). The 100 talents of silver were used to cast the bases for the Tabernacle and for the curtain - 100 bases from the 100 talents, one talent for each base (38:27). They used the 1,775 shekels to make the hooks for the posts, to overlay the tops of the posts, and to make their bands (38:28).

**The bronze from the wave offering was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels (38:29).** They used it to make the bases for the entrance to the Tabernacle, the bronze altar with its bronze grating and all its utensils, the bases for the surrounding courtyard and those for its entrance and all the tent pegs for the Tabernacle and those for the surrounding courtyard (38:30-31).

*When the Tabernacle was finished being built it would consist of approximately 1.25 tons of gold, 4.25 tons of silver and 4 tons of bronze. They did indeed pillage Egypt. The gold would point to Christ's divine glory, the silver represented redemption or blood, and the bronze was symbolic of judgment or wrath.*

**The second group consisted of dyed weaving materials. Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn brought them (25:4a, 35:6a, 35:23a, 35:25).** The order is also important here. They are listed from the most expensive to the least expensive. The manufacture of the **blue yarn** involved extracting dye from shellfish found in the Mediterranean Sea. It was a very expensive process because of the labor involved and the scarcity of the dye. The word translated **scarlet** literally means *worm of scarlet*, revealing that the dye was taken from a specific type of worm. It was not as difficult to make as the **blue** dye.



**The third group was covering materials for both the Tabernacle and the priests.** Both **fine linen** and **goat hair** was also given as a free will offering. **Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun - fine linen and black goat hair (25:4b; 35:6b, 35:23a and 26).** The term used for **fine linen** was an Egyptian term that referred to a garment of outstanding quality. It was in garments made of this material that Pharaoh had Joseph clothed following his sudden rise from prisoner to prime minister of Egypt (**Genesis 41:42**). The **fine linen** was used in making the curtains for the **Tabernacle** and clothing for the priests. The **hair** of a **goat** was much less costly and was readily available.<sup>499</sup>

**The fourth group included the skins of animals. Everyone who had ram skins dyed red or hides of sea cows brought them (25:5a; 35:7a, 35:23b).** The **sea cows**, or *dudong*, are marine animals resembling a seal. They grow to about ten to twelve feet long and have a round head and a divided tail. They are often found among the coral rocks of the Red Sea.<sup>500</sup> Those **skins** would provide the covering for the **Tabernacle (26:14)**.

**The fifth grouping named the specific wood that would be used. Everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. Acacia wood** was the most common **wood** in the Sinai Peninsula and the **wood** used in the construction of the **Tabernacle**

**(25:5b; 35:7b, 35:24b).** It is a hard, durable, close-grained **wood**. Very heavy, it was suitable for the construction of the framework and furniture of the **Tabernacle**. It grows remarkably well in dry climates, sometimes growing to a height of twenty feet.

**The sixth requirement was oil and spices.** They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense (25:6 and 35:8 and 28). The next requirement was for **olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense** used in the different ceremonies in the sanctuary. The **olive** tree was common in the region around the Mediterranean Sea. Burning **olive** oil gives off an exceptionally bright light.

**The seventh and last group was precious stones and gems.** The leaders brought **onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece (25:7, 35:9 and 27).** There is some uncertainty as to what the **onyx** stone was. The Septuagint translates it beryllion here, but it could be **chrysoprase (Revelation 21:20).** Chrysoprase is a type of quartz, a variety of chalcedony, which is found in soft green rocks. Its color ranges from blue-green, to yellow-green and apple-green. It is more rare than most other quartz varieties, and because of its color and scarcity it was highly valued. The Egyptians were familiar with **chrysoprase**, so the Israelites probably brought them from Egypt.<sup>501</sup>

**And the people continued to bring free will offerings morning after morning (36:3b). So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work and said to Moses their leader: The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work God commanded to be done (36:4).** This is the only place in the Bible where the people had to be asked to stop giving. They brought a great deal more than was necessary to build and furnish **the Tabernacle**.

**Then Moses gave the order and sent word throughout the camp: No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the Tabernacle. And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they had already had was more than enough to do all the work (36:5-7).** This was really amazing in the light of the fact that they had just come out of slavery. They gave joyfully, and that's how **God** wants us to give. Some people think that **ADONAI** wants them to, "Give 'til it hurts." But **God** says, "If it hurts, don't give." Our worship of **God** should be with joy, and so should our giving.<sup>502</sup> **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. "Test Me in this," says ADONAI Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10).** If we give like that we will surely be blessed.

It may seem like a mundane remark to say that offerings given to **God's** work must be accounted for. Records must be kept, and what happens to every penny needs to be seen. We need to be careful, for money is a great temptation, and can be an idol that masters its servants. The people in charge of **God's** work here on earth must be above reproach in the area of finance - this is a great witness to the world and keeps them from condemning us for hypocrisy. The builders of **the Tabernacle** gave an account of every **shekel**, and it was so that they could not be accused of using the offerings for **God's** work for their own gain.<sup>503</sup>