

The Tabernacle from God's Perspective

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The Tabernacle was very important to God – it was the focal point of his dealing with Israel for many years (Exodus 24:15-18, 25:1-2a, 8-9). The Tabernacle is described in twelve chapters of the Bible (Exodus 25-39, 35-39) – a significant portion of Holy Scripture. But, ***in the end it was just a physical object created for a purpose.***

The Construction of the Tabernacle: the entire sanctuary consisted of a “**fence**” made of cloth partitions hung between posts which surrounded the “**tent**” which was the Tabernacle. The “fence” was secured by **guy ropes** on the posts. The tent comprised two rooms: the first room, the “**Holy Place**”, is frequently referred to as “**The Tent of Meeting**”. The second room was the “**Most Holy Place**” – it contained the “**Ark of the Covenant**”. The top of the Ark was called the “**kapporeth**”, the “place of atonement”; it was symbolically where God resided. **Cherubim** were positioned at each end of the “**kapporeth**”. The furniture in the “**Holy Place**” comprised a **Lampstand**, a **Bread Table**, and an **Incense Alter**.

Moving the Tabernacle: Priests and Levites were assigned various parts of the Tabernacle. The **Aaronic Priests** carefully wrapped each piece of furniture, which were then carried by the **clan of Kohath** (Numbers 4:15). The **clan of Gershon** carried all the fabric: tents and curtains (Numbers 4:21-28). The **clan of Merari** carried all the wood and metal: frames, posts, bindings, and bases (Numbers 4:29-33). Gershonites and Merarites were assigned **wagons to carry materials**, but Kohathites had to **carry on their shoulders** (Numbers 7:1-9). Moving the camp took many hours – the Ark set out first and was probably at least a day ahead of the last groups to break camp; hence, **travel day and night was necessary** (Exodus 40:36-38, Numbers 10:14-28, 33).

In the Promised Land: the Tabernacle was first set up at **Shiloh** where it remained for many years (Joshua 18:1, 19:51, 22:19, 29, 1 Samuel 1:1-3). Apparently, there was a more permanent “**Temple**” constructed at Shiloh, either in conjunction with the Tabernacle or the Tabernacle was taken down and stored (1 Samuel 1:7-9, Jeremiah 7:12-14, Psalm 78:59-60). Other possible locations of the Tabernacle: **Bethel** (Judges 20:26-27), **Nob** (1 Samuel 21:1-6), and **Gibeon** (2 Chronicles 1:3, 1 Kings 3:4-5, 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, 16:39-40, 21:29).

Prophets and Kings: four times in the “appendix section” of the Book of Judges it is stated that **there was no king in Israel** (Judges 21:25, 17:6, 18:1, 19:1). **The period of the Judges had been a failure:** Israel had not fulfilled YHWH's requirement to be a Holy Nation. **Samuel was the last Judge of Israel and the first official prophet** (since Moses). God was ready to move on to the next phase of his working with Israel, through the institution of Kingship: this implied changes also in the cult – **the Tabernacle would be deprecated in favour of a Temple.** At the Battle of Ebenezer God removed his presence from the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 4:1-12). **God would never again “dwell with Israel” in the Tabernacle.** The final disposition of the Tabernacle was a storeroom in the Temple built by Solomon (1 Kings 8:1-4, 2 Chronicles 5:2-5). Over the years, as the Temple was looted on various occasions (See 1 Kings 14:25-26, 2 Kings 12:17-18, 16:17, 18:13-16, 24:10-13), all the precious metals used in the Tabernacle would have been removed. Finally, the wood and fabrics would have been **burned in the destruction of the Temple in 586BC.**

An Object Lesson: The Tabernacle was extremely important to God – it was his dwelling place among Israel for many years. **The Plan of God is inexorable** – God will accomplish his purpose: when it was time to move on to the next phase of the Plan, **God moved on from the Tabernacle.** God does not leave loose ends – the Tabernacle was appropriately stored in its replacement, the Temple, and only finally destroyed with the Temple. **We cannot cling to physical things:** our possessions, our position, or **even our lives** – **we are not called to succeed in this life** but to **prepare to teach people once we are granted entry in the permanent Dwelling Place of God.**

This sermon is based on the paper “*The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle*” located at: <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>