

THE TABERNACLE

Tribe of
Reuben
(South)

Tribe of
Simeon
(South)

Tribe of
Gad
(South)

The families of
Kohath
(Numbers 3)

The families of
Moses
Aaron
Nadab
Eleazar
Ithamar

Tribe of
Issachar
(East)

Tribe of
Judah
(East)

Tribe of
Zebulun
(East)



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16

Tribe of Ephraim (West)

Tribe of Manasseh (West)

Tribe of Benjamin (West)

The families of Gershonites (Numbers 3)

The families of Merarites (Numbers 3)

Tribe of Dan (North)

Tribe of Asher (North)

Tribe of Naphtali (North)

1.c
1.b
1.a
3
7
8
10
1.d
1.f
1.e
4
5
6
9

2.g
2.h
2.f
2.d
2.e
2.c
2.b
2.a
2.i

KEY TO THE TABERNACLE

1 The Tabernacle (Enlarged to show detail)

(Ex. 26:1-37) (The new holy temple; Eph. 2:19-22)

30 cubits long x 10 cubits wide x 10 cubits high

(45 ft x 15 ft x 15 ft or 13.8 m x 4.6 m x 4.6 m)

The general appearance of the tabernacle was that of a rectangular box. It was divided into two sections—the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies).

- a. Goats' hair covering with linen beneath (Ex. 25:4; 26:7)
- b. Ram skin covering dyed red (Ex. 25:5; 26:14)
- c. Badger, porpoise, or sea cow skin covering (Ex. 25:5)
- d. Boards (48 boards, Ex. 26:15-25)
- e. Sockets (100 total, 96 silver sockets for the boards, four under the pillars of the veil)
- f. Bars (Ex. 26:26-29)
- g. Pillars, hooks (Ex. 26:32-37; 36:36-38)
- h. Curtains at the entrance (Ex. 26:1-6)

2 The High Priest and His Holy Garments

(Ex. 28:1-43; 39:1-31) (A great high priest; Heb. 4:14-15)

- a. Embroidered coat (Ex. 28:4; Ps. 132:9)
- b. Robe with golden bells and pomegranates (Ex. 28:34)
- c. Ephod and girdle (Ex. 28:4)
- d. Breastplate and the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30)
- e. Stones in the breastplate (12 tribes of Israel) (Ex. 28:17-21)
- f. Shoulder stones of onyx (Ex. 28:9-12; 39:6-7)
- g. Mitre (Ex. 28:4, 39)
- h. Turban or Holy Plate or crown (diadem) of gold inscribed, "Holy to the Lord" (Ex. 28:36; 29:6)
- i. The Censer of burning coals (Lev. 16:12-13; Heb. 9:4)

3 The Holy Place

(Ex. 26:33; Heb. 9:2, 6)

10 cubits wide x 20 cubits long (15 ft x 30 ft or 4.6 m x 9.2 m)

The priests entered into the Holy Place daily to minister to the Lord. The table of showbread (bread of the presence) stood on the right. The seven-branched golden lampstand stood on the left. The altar of incense stood in the Holy Place right in front of the veiled Most Holy Place.

4 The Golden Lampstand (Candlestick)

(Ex. 25:31-40)

The lampstand was made of pure, hammered gold, one solid piece. It had a central shaft with six branches, three on each side, making it a seven-branched lampstand. Each branch had knobs, flowers, and an almond-shaped bowl to hold pure olive oil. It was part of the priests' ministry to keep the lamp burning perpetually.

5 The Table of Showbread (Bread of the Presence)

(Ex. 25:23-30; Heb. 9:2)

2 cubits long x 1 cubit wide x 1 1/2 cubits high

(36 in x 18 in x 27 in or 92 cm x 46 cm x 69 cm)

The table of showbread was made of shittim (acacia) wood. It was overlaid with gold and had a crown or frame of gold around it that was as wide as a man's hand. A ring of gold was put on each of the four legs, to put the carrying poles through. The carrying poles were made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. Also made of pure gold were the dishes, pans, pitchers and bowls. Twelve loaves of bread were placed on the table, six in a row. Fresh bread was placed there every Sabbath.

6 The Altar of Incense

(Ex. 30:1-10; Heb. 9:2)

1 cubit long x 1 cubit wide x 2 cubits high

(1 1/2 ft x 1 1/2 ft x 3 ft or 46 cm x 46 cm x 92 cm)

The altar of incense was made from shittim (acacia) wood. Its four corners each had a horn made from one piece. Its top, sides, and horns were overlaid with gold, with a crown or molding all around the top. Aaron, the high priest, burned incense upon it every morning and evening. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the horns of the altar were sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering.

7 The Veil

(Ex. 26:31-33; Heb. 10:19-20)

A woven veil of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, with designs of cherubim embroidered on it, was hung on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Four gold hooks were put in four sockets of silver. The veil was hung from these, and was a divider between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

8 The Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)

(Ex. 26:33-34; Heb. 9:3)

10 cubits long x 10 cubits wide (15 ft x 15 ft or 4.6 m x 4.6 m)

Also called the Holy of Holies, here resided the ark of the covenant. It was exactly one-half the length of the Holy Place. The shekinah glory of God rested upon the lid of the ark (mercy seat). The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for his sins and the people's sins.

9 The Ark of the Covenant

(Ex. 25:10-16; Heb. 9:4)

2 1/2 cubits long x 1 1/2 cubits wide x 1 1/2 cubits high

(45 in x 27 in x 27 in or 115 cm x 69 cm x 69 cm)

The ark was made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with gold, inside and out. A gold crown or molding was set around the edge of the top. Four gold rings, one in each leg were placed for the carrying poles. The poles were acacia wood overlaid with gold. The mercy seat was set on top of the ark.

10 The Mercy Seat

(Ex. 25:17-22; Heb. 9:5)

2 1/2 cubits long x 1 1/2 cubits wide (45 in x 27 in or 115 cm x 69 cm)

The mercy seat was made of pure gold. It had a winged cherub on each side, facing each other with wings outstretched above them, toward each other. The mercy seat was beaten or hammered from one solid piece of gold. It was placed above the ark.

11 The Gate of the Court

(Ex. 27:16; 38:18-19; John 10:9)

20 cubits wide x 5 cubits high (30 ft x 7 1/2 ft or 9.2 m x 2.3 m)

The entrance to the court was made with:

- a. Hanging curtains (blue, purple, scarlet, white) (Ex. 27:16; 38:18)
- b. Four pillars of brass (Ex. 27:14-16; 38:14-15)
- c. Sockets of bronze (brass) (Ex. 27:14-16)
- d. Hooks and fillets (claspers) of silver (tops of pillars) (Ex. 27:10-11)

12 The Offerings

(Lev. 8:3; 9:11-14, 18-22; 10:1-4)

- Burnt offering (bull, sheep, goats or birds) (Lev. 1:1-17)
- Grain offering (Lev. 2:1-16)
- Peace offering (goat or lamb) (Lev. 3:1-17)
- Sin offering (bull or lamb) (Lev. 4:1-35)
- Trespass offering (female of the flock, lamb, goat kid, or bird or grain) (Lev. 5-6)

13 The Court Fence (Not shown to scale)

(Ex. 27:9-18; 38:9-17; 40:33)

100 cubits long x 50 cubits wide x 5 cubits high

(150 ft x 75 ft x 7 1/2 ft or 46 m x 23 m x 2.3 m)

The court fence was the outer border of the tabernacle site. It consisted of the following:

- a. Linen curtains (white) (Ex. 27:9-16; Rev. 19:8)
- b. Pillars, sockets, hooks, and fillets (tops and rods) (Ex. 27:11, 17)
- c. Pins of bronze (brass) (Ex. 27:19; 38:20)

14 The Bronze Altar (Brazen Altar)

(Ex. 27:1-8, 40:6, 10, 29)

5 cubits long x 5 cubits wide x 3 cubits high

(7 1/2 ft x 7 1/2 ft x 4 1/2 ft or 23 m x 23 m x 1.38 m)

The bronze altar was made of shittim (acacia) wood. It was square and covered with bronze (brass). The four corners had horns overlaid with bronze. Also there were pans to receive ashes, shovels, basins, fleshhooks (forks), and fire pans, all of bronze. A bronze grate with a bronze ring in each corner was put under the brazen altar. Staves (carrying poles) were made of shittim wood covered with bronze to carry the altar.

15 The Bronze Laver (Basin)

(Ex. 30:17-21; 40:7, 30-32; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22)

A large laver (basin) of bronze, in which the Aaron and his sons washed their hands and feet, was placed between the bronze altar and the tabernacle. The Lord said if they did not wash when they came near the altar to minister, they would die.

16 The Cloud and the Pillar of Fire

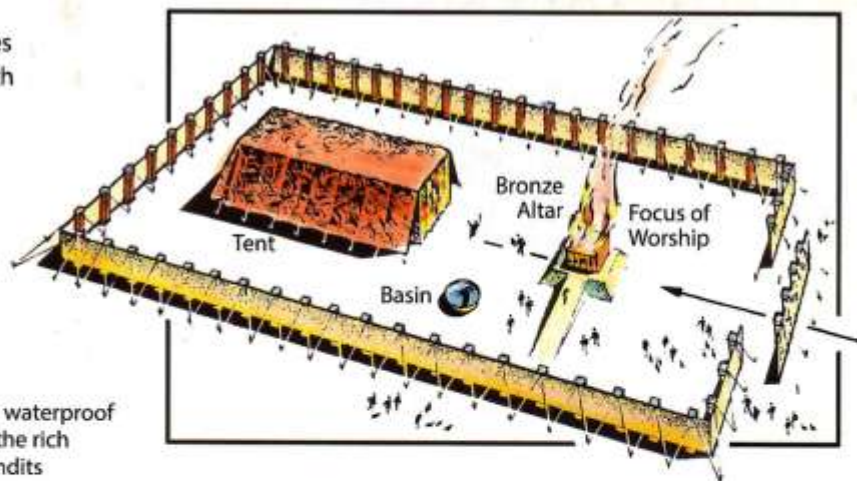
(Ex. 25:8, 22; 29:43; 40:34-38)

The Lord manifested his presence with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It would rest above the tabernacle, directly above the mercy seat. When the cloud or pillar of fire moved, the children of Israel followed it. Wherever it stopped, they camped there until it moved again.

THE TABERNACLE

The new religious observances taught by Moses in the desert centered on rituals connected with the tabernacle, and amplified Israel's sense of separateness, purity, and oneness under the Lordship of Yahweh.

A few desert shrines have been found in Sinai, notably at Serabit el-Khadem and at Timnah in the Negev, and show marked Egyptian influence.



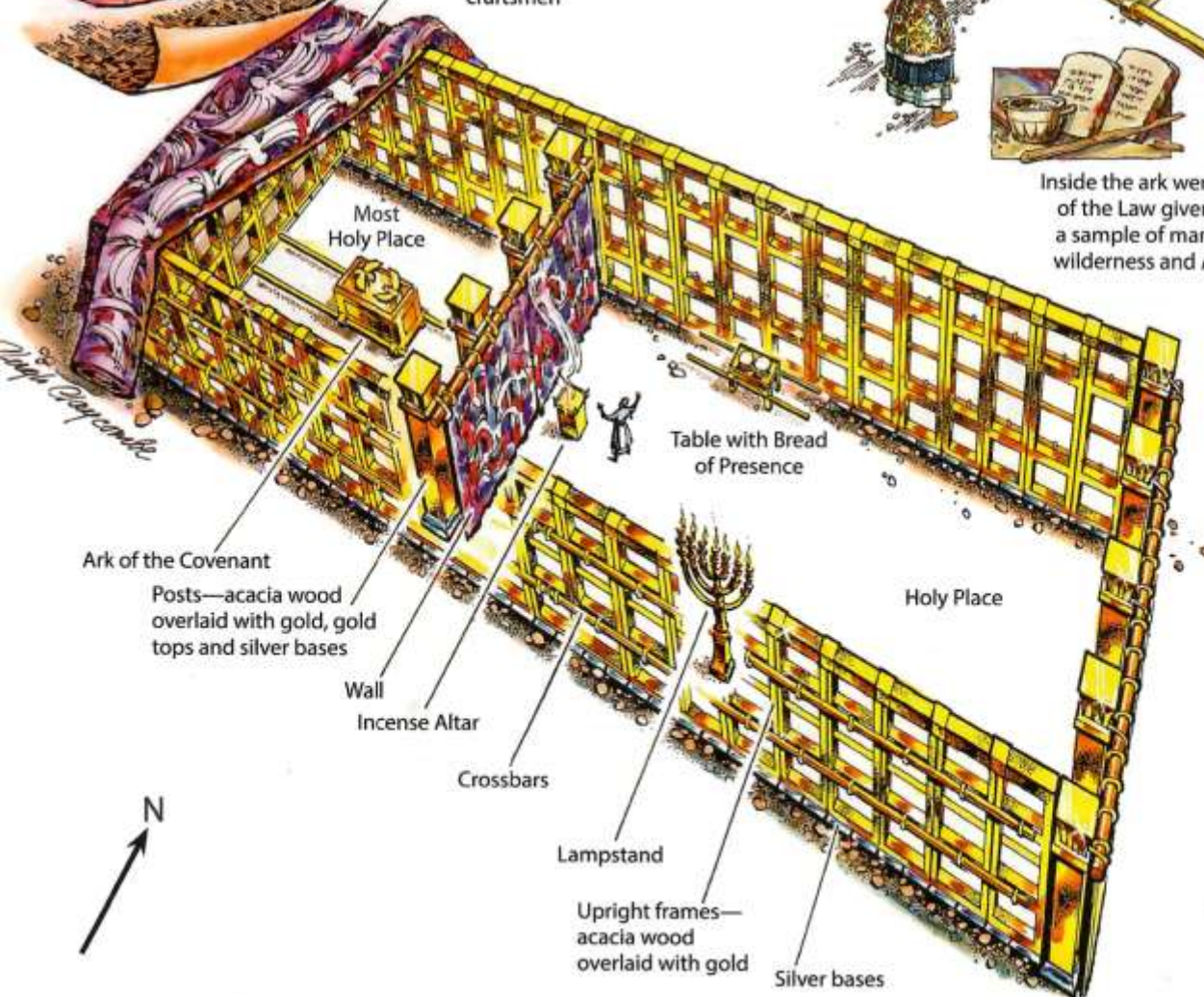
Hides of sea cows providing a waterproof covering and "camouflaging" the rich interior from enemies and bandits



High priest approaching the ark of the covenant



Inside the ark were the tablets of the Law given to Moses, a sample of mana from the wilderness and Aaron's rod.

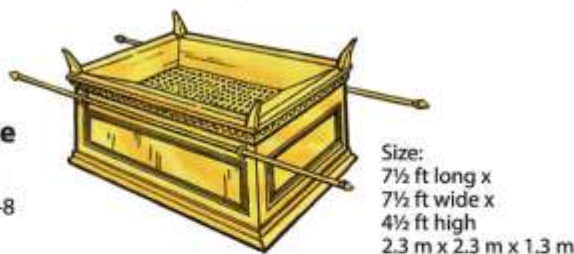


THE TABERNACLE: PATTERN OF WORSHIP

1

The Bronze Altar

Ex. 27:1-8



Size:
7½ ft long x
7½ ft wide x
4½ ft high
2.3 m x 2.3 m x 1.3 m

God wanted to dwell among his people. How does a holy God dwell among sinful people? First God required the people to sacrifice a perfect animal for their sins (Lev. 17:11). The blood of the animal was important to justify the people before God. Only the finest animal—a perfect one—was good enough. Sacrifices needed to be offered on a regular basis (Heb. 9:25).

The person bringing the offering would put his hand on the head of the lamb while it was killed. This symbolically put the person's sins onto the animal, and the animal died in his place.

To think about:

- Jesus is our perfect sacrifice and shed his blood for our sins. (John 1:29; Rev. 13:8; Heb. 10:10; Rom. 4:25.) Jesus was not only the perfect sacrifice, but his sacrifice covered all sin—past and future. No more sacrifices are required.
- In Romans 12:1, we are told to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. What does this mean to you?

2

The Bronze Laver

Ex. 30:18; 38:8



Size: None indicated

The next step was for the priests only. In fact, the rest of the work was performed by the priests on behalf of the people.

After making the sacrifice, the priest washed himself at the bronze laver. This washing purified the priest and prepared him to enter the tabernacle. In Exodus 30:20, God says they must wash so that they do not die when they enter the tabernacle.

The bronze laver was made from brass mirrors donated by the women. The Bible does not describe the laver completely, but perhaps it had a shiny mirrored surface which would help the priest wash thoroughly and to remind him that the Lord sees past the outward appearance, straight into the heart.

To think about:

- Even though we Christians have accepted Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf, we too need to be cleansed.
- Read 1 John 1:8-9. How would Jesus' disciples understand this verse?

3

The Golden Lampstand

Ex. 25:31-40; 26:35



Size: Dimensions are unknown

From the laver, the priest passed through a veil into the Holy Place. The room he entered had three objects: a golden lampstand on the south, a table on the north, and an altar of incense to the west just before the veil to the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies).

The unique lampstand was beaten from a single piece of gold. It was not pieced together. Scripture tells us it was fueled by oil, not wax. It had lamps at the top of each branch, not candles.

Its purpose was to provide light in this otherwise dark room. Trimming the lamp wicks to keep them burning brightly was an important job for the priest.

To think about:

- Jesus called himself the light of the world in many places in the Bible (John 12:46).
- Christians are called to be lights. See Acts 13:47. How are we lights?

4

The Table of Showbread

Ex. 25:23-30



Size:
3 ft long x
1½ ft wide x
2¼ ft high
92 cm x 46 cm x
69 cm

On the table of showbread, Aaron and his sons placed twelve loaves of bread (bread of the presence) made from fine flour. These twelve loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel. The table with the loaves was a continual reminder of the everlasting promises, the covenant between God and the children of Israel, and a memorial of God's provision of food. The bread was eaten by Aaron and his sons and was replaced every week on the Sabbath.

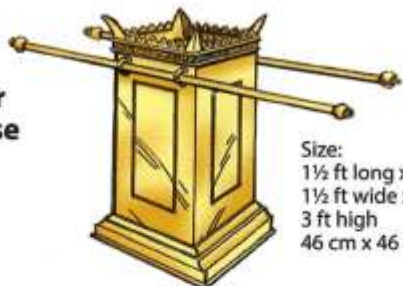
To think about:

- Jesus called himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 51). He said that those who came to him would never hunger again. Physical bread—even the special bread of the tabernacle—is consumed. But the spiritual Bread of Life, Jesus, gives eternal life.
- Hebrews 8:6-7 and 10:16 tell of a better covenant through Jesus, one superior to the Old Testament covenant to Israel. The law would be written on people's hearts, not on tablets of stone.

5

The Altar of Incense

Ex. 30:1–10



Size:
1½ ft long x
1½ ft wide x
3 ft high
46 cm x 46 cm x 92 cm

The Lord required that special incense be burned constantly on the altar of incense. It was a special sweet incense, a mixture of spices to be used only for the tabernacle (Ex. 30:35–37). God specifically required this recipe. None other was to be burned on the altar. It was a matter of life and death, as Leviticus 10:1–2 clearly shows us, when two of Aaron's sons offered a "strange fire" before the Lord and were struck dead. In the New Testament, the priest Zechariah was in the Holy Place when an angel appeared near the altar of incense (Luke 1:5–13). The angel announced that God had heard his prayers and he and his wife would have a son (John the Baptist).

To think about:

- Incense represents the prayers of the faithful. There are several references to this in the book of Revelation (5:8; 8:3–4).
- Are our prayers a sweet incense toward God?

7

The Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat

Ex. 25:10, 14–16;
25:22; Heb. 9



Size:
3¾ ft long x 2¼ ft wide x 2¼ ft high
1.15 m x 69 cm x 69 cm

The central focus of the entire tabernacle was the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) where God spoke to the high priest above the mercy seat—the area where the winged cherubim face each other. Annually, the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of all the people.

God's purpose and desire is to dwell among his people and to commune with them. The layout of the tabernacle, along with the steps of sacrifice, cleansing, and remembering God's promises, is designed to bring sinful mankind to a loving and holy God.

To think about:

- Christianity is not a religion in which humans reach to know God. It is God who approaches his creatures and makes it possible for them to know him (John 6:44; Eph. 2:8–9).
- Our efforts to be "good people" are not enough to approach God. Jesus alone is the Way to God (John 14:6; Heb. 10:19–23).

6

The Veil

Ex. 26:33; 30:10



Size:
At least 15 ft
wide 4.6 m

The veil separated the holy place from the most holy place where the ark of the covenant was kept. It was a barrier between God and humans. Once a year, Aaron would enter the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) through this veil. The veil was a heavy woven cloth stretching for ten cubits (15 ft or 4.6 m). There was no separation in the middle. The high priest had to go around the side to enter the most holy place. Later when the temple was constructed, it followed a similar design. The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died. This symbolizes the ability of every believer, not just a high priest, to approach God through the death of Jesus.

To think about:

- For hundreds of years, the Israelites needed a human high priest to represent them before God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1; 9:11; 10:11–12). Name a few ways in which Jesus is a better high priest than Aaron.

Israelites Communed with God through the Tabernacle

Christians Commune with God through Jesus

1. Bronze altar for sacrifices	Christ's sacrifice
2. Bronze laver for washing	Cleansing through confession
3. Lampstand	Enlightened by the Holy Spirit
4. Table of showbread	Fed by the Living Word
5. Altar of incense	Prayer, communication, intercession
6-7. Through the veil into the Most Holy Place	Entering God's presence boldly through Christ
8. Priests and the garments	Service to God and others

Why is the tabernacle important today?

1. Today, we are God's dwelling place. (1 Cor. 6:19)
2. God's holy presence is among us. (Ex. 40:34–38)
3. As believers, we are part of a priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5–9; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; Heb. 4:16)
4. The tabernacle shows a pattern of worship prescribed by God. (Heb. 10:19–25)

THE GARMENTS OF THE HIGH PRIEST

- The priest dressed first in a tunic and mitre (a turban) of fine linen.
- The mitre had a gold plate (or crown) inscribed with the words "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" just over the priest's forehead. The Hebrew words can also be translated "Set Apart as Holy to the Lord." This was worn in the Lord's presence so that the people's sacrifices would always be acceptable to God.
- The priest wore a blue robe with the ephod (a vest or waist coat) with stones on each shoulder bearing the names of the sons of Israel.
- Over the ephod, the priest wore a gold breastplate that was set with twelve precious stones carved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. This was worn over his heart and was to continually remind the Lord of his people.
- The Urim and Thummim were kept in the priest's pocket over his heart as objects used to determine the Lord's will for his people.

To think about:

Our service to God is to be holy and set apart. As we pray for others and bring their names and burdens to God, we remember that God loves his children with deep affection. (Read Jer. 31:3.)

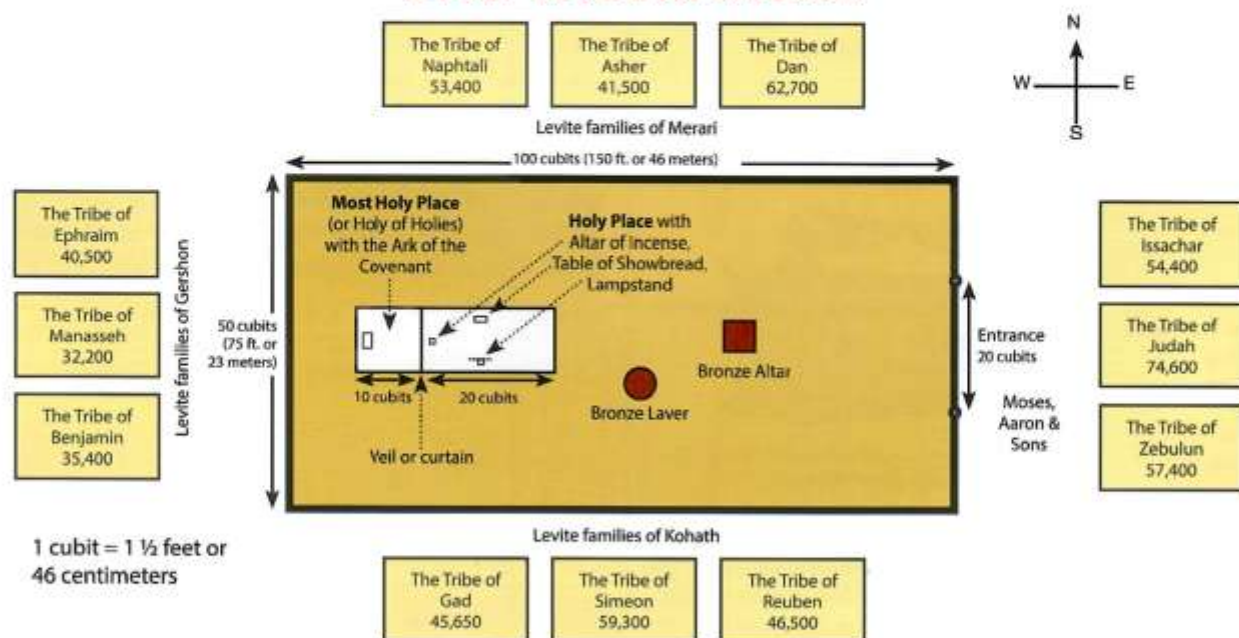
Christ is our example as high priest: he is righteous and merciful. He was willing to sacrifice his life for us and now lives to intercede for us (Matt. 20:25-28; Heb. 7:25).

Ex. 28:4-42

The high priest's life was dedicated to serving the Lord and representing the people before their God. The design of the priestly garments was an expression of God's righteousness and merciful love for his people.



THE TABERNACLE



What is the Tabernacle?

The tabernacle was a moveable "tent of meeting" that God commanded Moses to build (Ex. 25:1-2; 25:8-9). God wanted to dwell among his people, the Israelites. He wanted to have fellowship with them and be able to communicate with them (Ex. 25:22).

The tabernacle and its courtyard were constructed according to a pattern set by God, not by Moses. We study the tabernacle to understand the steps that the Lord laid out for a sinful people to approach a holy God. The tabernacle became the place that God dwelt with his people for 400 years: from the exodus until the time of King Solomon when the temple was built.

The tabernacle was in the center of the Israelite camp. The 12 tribes of Israel were encamped around it. The figures in the boxes refer to the number of males age 20 or over in each tribe (Num. 1-3). The total would be 603,550.

Fascinating Facts about the Tabernacle:

- There are 50 chapters in the Bible that discuss the tabernacle.
- The tabernacle would have fit in half of a football or soccer field.
- The tabernacle of the Old Testament was a "shadow" of things in heaven. Hebrews 8:1-5 tells us that the real tabernacle is in heaven. This is where Jesus himself is our high priest.
- The tabernacle was built using many expensive materials: gold, silver, bronze, precious woods, and rare cloth. In modern terms the cost would exceed \$1 million. Offerings from the Israelites paid for the materials (Ex. 35:22-36:3).
- The Israelites were so generous they gave more than was needed. Moses had to command them to stop giving (Ex. 36:6).

SACRIFICES IN THE TABERNACLE

SACRIFICE

MEANING TODAY

Sin Offering and Guilt Offering (Lev. 4–6; Num. 15:1–12)

Sin offerings and guilt offerings focused on paying for sin. The sin offerings atoned for sins against God. The guilt offerings addressed sins against others, and included paying damages with interest. Various animals were offered, depending on the person's position and income. Priests and leaders, as examples to others, had to offer larger sacrifices for sin, while the poor offered what they could afford. Blood was sprinkled on the altar, the parts of the animals were burned, often with wine poured on them (drink offering). Other parts were roasted for the priests. Since the priests were full-time tabernacle workers, sacrificed animals were their main source of food.



Christ's Offering

Isa. 53:10; Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21

Paying for Damages

Matt. 5:23–24; Luke 19:1–10

Poor

Luke 2:2–24; 21:1–4

Leaders as Examples

1 Tim. 3:1–7; 5:19–20

Providing for Christian Workers

Phil. 4:18; 1 Cor. 9:13–14;
1 Tim. 5:17–18

Burnt Offering (Lev. 1)

This sacrifice represented complete dedication and surrender to God. The animal, usually an unblemished male, bears the worshiper's sins, and dies in his/her place. After the blood was sprinkled on the altar, the animal was completely burned up. None of it was roasted for eating.



Surrender

Ps. 51:16–17; Matt. 26:39; Rom. 12:1

Dedication

Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6–7

Grain (Meal) Offering (Lev. 2)

This offering was given to God in thankfulness. The people brought fine flour, unleavened cakes, or roasted grain to the priests. The priests burned a symbolic handful at the altar, and could partake of the rest. There was very little ceremony involved.



Giving

Matt. 26:6–10; 2 Cor. 9:7–11

Praise

Ps. 100; Heb. 13:15–16

Thankfulness

Ps. 147; Phil. 4:6

Fellowship (Peace) Offering (Lev. 2; 7:11–21)

This offering symbolized fellowship and peace with God through shed blood. After some meat was ceremonially waved and given to the priests, worshipers and their guests could share in the feast as a meal with God.



God's Peace

Col. 1:20; Acts 10:36

God's Feast

Luke 14:15–24; 1 Cor. 11:17–26;
Jude 1:12; Rev. 3:20

Ark of the Covenant



The ark of the covenant was the place where God met and talked with Moses (Ex. 25:22). It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold.

The tabernacle (the “tent of meeting”) was built to house the ark. The ark was the first item of furniture constructed after God told Moses to build the tabernacle (Ex. 25:10–22).

The ark was intended to be the central focus of the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and later the temple (Ex. 40:1–21). The ark rested in the Most Holy Place which was separated from the Holy Place by a thick veil (Ex. 26:31–33). The heavy veil in the temple was torn from

top to bottom at the moment of Jesus’ death (Matt. 27:50–51). The torn veil symbolizes the free access believers have through Christ to the presence of God (Heb. 6:19–20; 10:19–20).

God set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark and stand before him, to serve him, and to bless his name (Deut. 10:8). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place once a year (Lev. 16) on the Day of Atonement, to sacrifice and to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat (the top of the ark where the winged cherubim face each other) to atone for the sins of the people (Ex. 37:6–9; 2 Sam. 6:2; Ps. 99:1).