

Entering the Tabernacle

1 Gate of the Court

First, a person would enter the gate of the court to offer a sacrifice for sin or thanksgiving.

- Hanging curtains (blue, purple, scarlet, white)
- Four pillars of brass
- Sockets of bronze (brass)
- Hooks and fillets (clasps) of silver on the tops of the pillars)

Exodus 27:10-16; 38:14-19; John 10:9
20 cubits wide x 5 cubits high
(30 ft. x 7.5 ft., or 9.2 m x 2.3 m)

2 Court Fence

After passing through the gate, the person would come into the court. The court fence was made of a long piece of linen held up by posts that surrounded the tabernacle. Only priests from the tribe (family) of Levi were allowed to touch the tabernacle, so the fence protected people from coming too close accidentally.

- Linen curtains
- Pillars, sockets, hooks, and fillets (tops and rods)
- Pins of bronze held the linen curtains in place

Exodus 27:9-18; 38:9-20; 40:33
100 cubits long x 50 cubits wide x 5 cubits high
(150 ft. x 75 ft. x 7.5 ft., or 46 m x 23 m x 2.3 m)

3 Bronze Altar

God wanted to dwell among his people.

How does a holy God dwell among sinful people?

First God required the people to offer a sacrifice for their sins. God told Adam and Eve that the result of their sin was death. God, however, had mercy on humankind and provided them with a way to temporarily cover their sin. Instead of immediately requiring their own blood (death), God allowed the blood of an animal to atone or take away sin, making it possible for the worshipers to enter into God's presence.

Only the finest animal—a perfect one—was good enough. God asked them for a perfect, flawless sacrifice because:

- The animal represented an undeserving recipient of a deserved punishment.
- God wanted people to trust in his provision, so he asked that the sacrifice be valuable.
- The perfect animal foreshadowed Jesus, the perfect sacrifice who atones for sin once for all.



Because these sacrifices only temporarily covered the sins of the people, they needed to be offered on a regular basis.

The people would bring the offering and would put their hand on the head of the animal while it was killed. This symbolically, yet temporarily, put their sins onto the animal, and the animal died in their place.

The altar was made of acacia (shittim) wood and covered with bronze. The four corners had horns. There were bronze shovels, basins, fleshhooks (forks), and fire pans to collect ashes. A bronze grate with a ring in each corner was put under the altar. Carrying poles made of acacia wood covered with bronze were used to carry the altar.

Genesis 2:17; 3:21; 4:3-7; Exodus 27:1-8, 40:6, 10, 29; Leviticus 1; 16:1-2, 16; 17:11; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; Hebrews 9:25; 10:10, 26-31
5 cubits long x 5 cubits wide x 3 cubits high
(7.5 ft. x 7.5 ft. x 4.5 ft., or 2.3 m x 2.3 m x 1.38 m)

4 Offerings at the Altar

Several offerings were offered at the altar:

- Burnt offering of bulls, sheep, goats, doves, or pigeons
- Grain offering of cakes or wafers of fine flour
- Peace offering of a goat or lamb
- Sin offering of a bull or lamb
- Trespass offering of a female from the flock: a lamb, goat kid, dove, pigeon, or grain

Leviticus 1-6; 7:11; Hebrews 8:3; 9:11-14, 18-22; 10:1-4

5 Bronze Laver

The rest of the steps were performed by the priests on behalf of the people. After making the sacrifice, the priest washed himself at the laver. This washing purified the priest and prepared him to enter the tabernacle. The Lord said that the priest must wash so that he would not die.

The laver was made from brass mirrors donated by the women. It may have 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.

Exodus 27:1-8; 40:6, 10, 29; 30:17-21; 40:7, 30-32; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:22

Size unknown



The Pattern of Worship in the Tabernacle

6 Tabernacle

The priest entered the tabernacle through the curtains at the entrance. The tabernacle was divided into two sections—the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)—which were made of:

- Goats' hair covering with a linen covering beneath
- Ram skin covering dyed red
- Badger, porpoise, or sea cow skin covering
- 48 boards
- 100 sockets (96 silver sockets for the boards, four under the pillars of the veil)
- Bars
- Pillars, hooks
- Curtains at the entrance

Exodus 25-26
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)

7 Holy Place

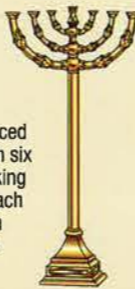
Every day the priests entered into the Holy Place to serve the Lord. Inside were the table of showbread, the seven-branched golden lampstand, and the altar of incense in front of a veil that separated the Holy Place from the smaller area, the Most Holy Place.

Exodus 26:33; Hebrews 9:2, 6
10 cubits wide x 20 cubits long
(15 ft. x 30 ft., or 4.6 m x 9.2 m)

8 Golden Lampstand

The lampstand provided light in this otherwise dark room. The priests trimmed the wicks to keep them burning brightly. The lampstand or candlestick was made from a single piece of gold. It was not pieced together. 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.

Exodus 25:31-40 Size unknown



9 Table of Showbread

Table of the Bread of Presence

On the table of showbread, the priests placed twelve loaves of bread made from fine flour, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The loaves were a continual reminder of the everlasting

promises 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. The table of showbread was made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with gold and had a crown or frame of gold around it. Gold carrying poles were put through rings on the corners of the table. There were also gold dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls.

Exodus 25:23-30; Hebrews 9:2
2 cubits long x 1 cubit wide x 1.5 cubits high
(36 in. x 18 in. x 27 in., or 92 cm x 46 cm x 69 cm)



10 Altar of Incense

The high priest burned incense on the altar of incense every morning and evening. The four corners of the altar each had a horn; and a crown, or moulding, on the edge. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the horns of the altar were sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering.

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. God specifically required this recipe. None other was to be burned on the altar. The incense 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. The altar of incense was made from acacia wood covered with gold.

In Luke 1:5-17, the priest Zechariah was in the Holy Place when an angel appeared near the altar of incense. Zechariah fell down with fear. The angel announced that God had heard Zechariah's prayers and that he and his wife would have a son named John (the Baptist) who would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

Exodus 30:1-37; Hebrews 9:2
1 cubit long x 1 cubit wide x 2 cubits high
(1.5 ft. x 1.5 ft. x 3 ft., or 46 cm x 46 cm x 92 cm)



The Pattern of Worship in the Tabernacle

11 Veil

The veil was a divider between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place where the ark of the covenant was kept. It was a barrier between God and man. Only the high priest would enter into the Most Holy Place. The veil was made of heavy woven cloth. There was no separation in the middle. The high priest had to go around the side. 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.

Later when the temple was constructed, it followed a similar design. The thick veil of the temple tore 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.

Exodus 26:31-33; Hebrews 10:19-20
10 cubits x 10 cubits
(15 ft. x 15 ft., or 4.5 m x 4.5 m)



12 Most Holy Place

The high priest entered the Most Holy Place only once a year, the Day of Atonement. The focus was the ark of the covenant. The glory of God rested upon the lid of the ark (mercy seat). The high priest entered to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for his sins and the people's sins.

Exodus 26:33-34; Hebrews 9:3
10 cubits long x 10 cubits wide
(15 ft. x 15 ft., or 4.6 m x 4.6 m)

13 Ark of the Covenant

Ark of the Testimony

The central focus of the entire tabernacle was the ark, in the

Most Holy Place, 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. Then the friendship between God and his people was restored. God reached out and made it possible for people to know him.

The ark was made of acacia wood. It was overlaid with gold, with a crown or molding around the edge. Carrying poles were placed through the four gold rings. The poles were wood overlaid with gold. The mercy seat was placed on top of the ark.

The contents of the ark included:

- The stone tablets with the Ten Commandments ("the Testimony") given by God. The law given by God reminded the people that God would protect them if they were obedient to him.
- A jar of manna reminded the people that God constantly provides for them.
- Aaron's rod, which budded and bore fruit, proved that Aaron was chosen by God. The rod also reminded the people that God has the power to bring life from death.

John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8-9; Exodus 25:10-16; Hebrews 9:4
2.5 cubits long x 1.5 cubits wide x 1.5 cubits high
(45 in. x 27 in. x 27 in., or 115 cm x 69 cm x 69 cm)

14 Mercy Seat

The mercy seat was symbolic of God's divine throne and presence. With the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat, the judgment of God is transformed into grace and mercy.

The mercy seat was made of pure gold. Two winged cherubs facing each other with their wings outstretched towards each other were on it. The mercy seat was beaten or hammered from one solid piece of gold. It was placed above the ark.

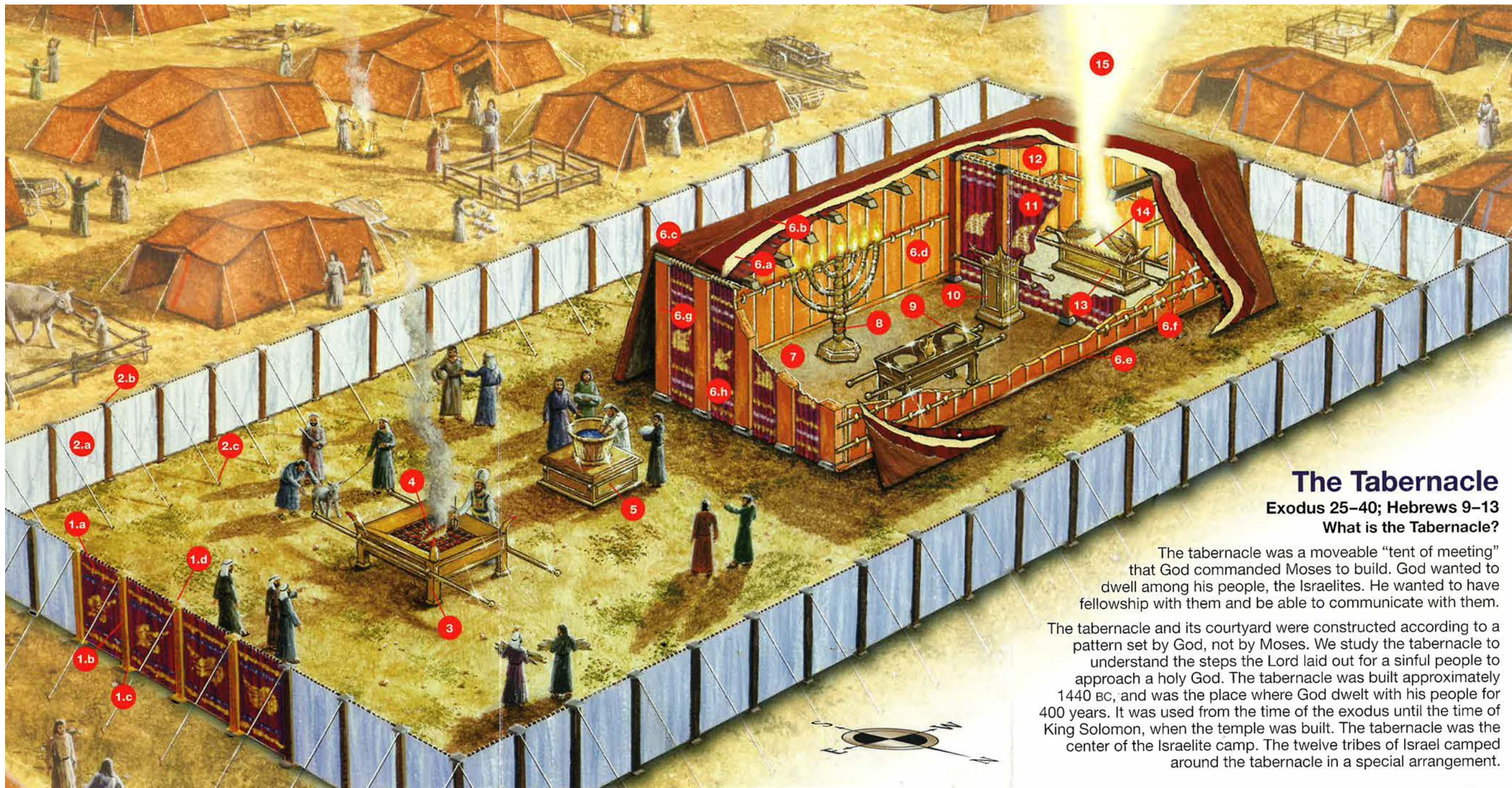
Exodus 25:17-22; Hebrews 9:5
2.5 cubits long x 1.5 cubits wide
(45 in. x 27 in., or 115 cm x 69 cm)



15 Cloud and Pillar of Fire

The Lord manifested his presence with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This cloud or pillar of fire 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.

Exodus 25:8, 22; 29:43; 40:34-38



The Tabernacle

Exodus 25–40; Hebrews 9–13

What is the Tabernacle?

The tabernacle was a moveable “tent of meeting” that God commanded Moses to build. God wanted to dwell among his people, the Israelites. He wanted to have fellowship with them and be able to communicate with them.

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 the Lord laid out for a sinful people to approach a holy God. The tabernacle was built approximately 1440 BC, and was the place where God dwelt with his people for 400 years. It was used from the time of the exodus until the time of King Solomon, when the temple was built. The tabernacle was the center of the Israelite camp. The twelve tribes of Israel camped around the tabernacle in a special arrangement.