

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

LESSON #14

DATE: December 15, 2019

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: The Tabernacle and Its Furniture

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 25:1-40; 26:1-14, 31-37; 27:1-19; 30:1-10, 17-21

AIM: As shown by the example of the tabernacle being built, we should have a heart to follow God's instructions carefully and be willing to offer what we have.

SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSES: 1 Samuel 16:7b (For *it is* not how man sees *that matters*; for man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart.); 2 Corinthians 9:7b (...God loves a cheerful giver.); Isaiah 66:1 (Thus says Jehovah, Heaven is My throne, And the earth the footstool for My feet. Where then is the house that you will build for Me, and where is the place of My rest?); Exodus 35:29 (The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to Jehovah, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Jehovah had commanded through Moses to be done.)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 2 (Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me); 146 (I Want the Lord to Have the First Place in my Heart); 152 (What Can I Give Jesus?); 7623 (Why Was a Cup Made?); 8321 *Bible Story Songs Moses Vol. 2, Song 21* (Look! There on the East Side); 9213 *BSS David, Song 13* (For the Lord Sees Not as Man Sees); 9521 *BSS Vessels Unto Honor, Song 1* (V-v-v-vessel); 79 (Into My Heart)

CRAFT IDEAS: Draw a map of the tabernacle including the Outer Court, Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and furniture. We can preprint the furniture for the tabernacle for the children to glue on. For older kids, building a 3-D model might be an option.

NOTE TO SERVING ONES: This lesson contains some details of the tabernacle and its furniture. There are even more details in the Bible which we did not include. In the attached Appendix, we provide additional details so that the serving ones can have a better understanding and appreciation. Please fellowship concerning how much of the lesson to cover for your age group. It is strongly recommended that we use visual aids, e.g., pictures or replicas. In this way, we can keep the children's attention and make the lesson more interesting.

APPROACH: Ask the children: If you were going to build a house, what kind of materials would you use? What kind of furniture would you put inside? In today's lesson, we'll find out what kind of home God told Moses He wanted in the Old Testament times.

BACKGROUND: In addition to giving the Ten Commandments, God also gave Moses many detailed rules or guidelines for the children of Israel (Exodus 21-23). All the things He told Moses, including the Ten Commandments and all the guidelines, are a part of what is called the Law. But God was not finished after giving the Law. God had more to tell Moses. What do you think it was? God, the mighty Creator of the whole universe, wanted a home, a dwelling place on the earth. Why would God want this? God wanted to be with His people and be very close to them. So God told Moses about the home that He wanted. He specified all the materials, the measurements, and the furnishings. He gave Moses the pattern, or the plan, for His house so that Moses and the people could build it exactly the way God wanted it.

At this time, the children of Israel were not yet in the land which God had promised them, so this house, called a "tabernacle" or "tent of meeting" was temporary and portable (movable). The tabernacle served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert. The temple was built later on, replacing the tabernacle. The temple was built in Jerusalem on the land which God had promised.

CONTENT:

The Materials for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-7). The first thing God told Moses was the materials He wanted the tabernacle to be made of. What kind of materials do you think God wanted? We might say wood and bricks and cement. No. God's house was to be built with very special materials—things like gold, silver,

and bronze. And blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine linen. And goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood. God also wanted precious stones such as onyx and topaz. This was indeed a very special home.

But where would God get all these special materials? Well, we might say that He could just create them and give them to Moses. But God wouldn't be happy doing that. He wanted His people to provide the materials and to willingly offer these materials to Him. He would never force anyone to offer to Him.

The Structure of the Tabernacle and the Arrangement of the Furniture (Exodus 26-27). What did the tabernacle look like? *Show a picture or a replica.* There were three main parts: the outer court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies:

- The **outer court** was rectangular and had a fence made of bronze pillars and curtains of fine twined linen. Close to its entrance at the east side was the altar of burnt offering. Further in was the laver.
- The **Holy Place** was made of acacia wood boards covered with gold, and was divided into two rooms. A veil separated the two rooms. The first room was called the Holy Place. In the Holy Place were the Lampstand, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, and the incense altar.
- The innermost room was a very special place called the **The Holy of Holies** or the Holiest Place. This was where the ark was kept, and this was where God's presence was. Only one person, the High Priest, could go into this room. And he could go in only once a year.

The covering of the tabernacle was also special. It had four layers. The *first layer* was made of linen, and was like a large sheet, which covered the tabernacle and overlapped at the side and the rear. The *second layer* was made of goats' hair and completely covered the first layer. The *third layer* was made of rams' skins dyed red. And the *fourth and final layer* was made of waterproof porpoise skins. The entrance of the tabernacle, also called the **screen**, had a covering made from the same materials as the first layer.

The Furniture in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25, 27 and 30). God also told Moses what kind of furniture would be in the tabernacle. What kind of furniture do you think God would want? Maybe a bed or couch? No. This furniture was very special. The first item of furniture that God told Moses about was the **ark of testimony**, something like a chest or a big box. God was specific. The ark was made of acacia wood, which is very hard, very heavy and insects cannot harm it. It has a fine, beautiful grain. The ark was completely covered with gold inside and out! It had a cover made of pure gold. Inside the ark would contain the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them. The ark with the cover was the most special piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle. Why? Because that's where God would be, and where man could meet God.

Another piece of furniture for God's house was a table called the table of the **bread of the presence**, or the showbread table. It was also made of acacia wood covered with gold. And on top of the table there would always be the bread of the Presence, a kind of bread made with unleavened flour. The tabernacle also had a **lampstand** made of one talent (about 100 pounds) of pure gold. It had six branches and seven lamps. The Bible does not tell us the exact measurements but only its weight. Back then, there were no electric lights, so this lampstand provided light fueled by olive oil. In addition, the tabernacle had the **Altar of Burnt Offering**, a big piece of furniture made of acacia wood, but it was covered with bronze, not gold. This altar was for the sacrifice of animals as offerings to God. There was a smaller altar called the **Golden Incense Altar** where incense was burned, and a **laver**, a basin made of bronze where the priests would wash their hands and feet.

So the tabernacle was a pretty special house like no other!

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- **We need to be willing to give.** God did not force His people to build a home for Him. The materials used to build the tabernacle were offered by God's people willingly. We can willingly give our time and energy (clean the meeting hall, help tidy our children's meeting room, offer some money that we have been

given, help our parents, grandparents, teachers or siblings when we see there is a need). Today, as then, He will not force anyone. We can pray that the Lord would keep our hearts soft and willing.

- **We need to be thorough and careful in following instructions.** God gave very specific instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle. What if those helping to build the tabernacle wrongly measured one side of a table, or miscounted the number of wooden boards needed? The tabernacle or its furniture might be crooked and not function properly. When our parents or teachers ask us to do something, we should do it until it is complete and do it carefully.
- **We should be beautiful on the inside.** From the outside, the tabernacle was not much to look at. Actually, porpoise skins are rough and tough and not very beautiful. But on the inside, God's house was very lovely with much gold and beautiful blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen. We should not be so concerned with our physical beauty and dress. Of course, we should be neat and well-groomed, but we should not care excessively, and perhaps even covet what other people have. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). If we please the Lord, caring for things and people that matter to Him, we will be beautiful on the inside.
- **God wants a home in our hearts.** Today there is no more tabernacle or temple. But God still desires a home. Where is God's home? Today, "the Lord dwells not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24; 7:48-49; 2 Chronicles 2:6). At that time when the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness, God was happy with the tabernacle and He did dwell there. It was the closest that He could get to His people. But He really wanted to be much closer and still does. Today the Lord wants to make home in our hearts.

Adapted from *Bringing Children from Adam to Christ in God's Economy*--Vol. 4, *The Travels of the Chosen Children of Israel*, Lesson 6, and from the Church in New York City's Children's meeting lessons: 9/25/88, 12/10/95; 12/21/03; 12/20/09; 12/15/19

APPENDIX

NOTE TO SERVING ONES: These details are provided so that we can have a better understanding and appreciation of our God and the tabernacle. The outline parallels the lesson, but it is more detailed. It is not intended that we share everything with the children, but if the Lord leads, we can share some more details, especially with the older children.

I. The Materials for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-7)

God's house was to be very special and had to be built with very special materials—things like gold, silver, and bronze, and acacia wood. It had blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine linen. And goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins (porpoise is a kind of sea animal). God also wanted stones, precious stones like onyx and topaz, and emeralds (actually used for the ephod and breastplate). The materials were offered by God's people, willingly from their hearts.

II. The Structure of the Tabernacle and the Arrangement of the Furniture

A. The Outer Court (Exodus 27:9-19)

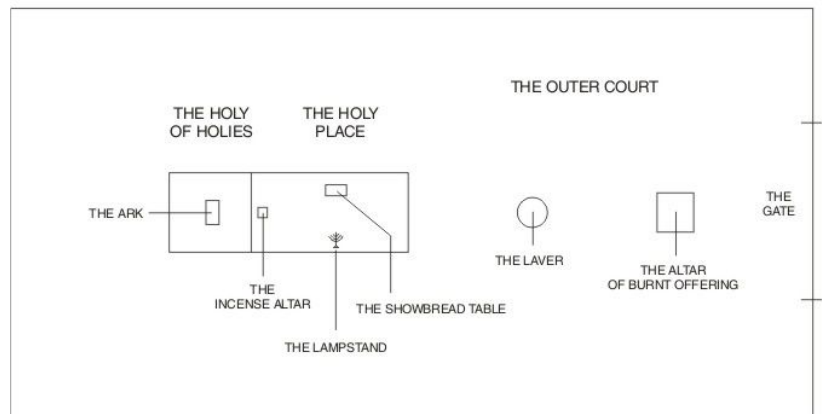
The tabernacle was surrounded by what was called the court of the tabernacle, or the outer court. The outer court had "walls" of pillar made of bronze and hangings (curtains) of fine twined linen. It was 100 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 5 cubits high (about 150' long, 75' wide, and 7 ½' tall). Close to its entrance at the east side was the altar of burnt offering. Further in was the laver.

B. The Holy Place (Exodus 26:31-35)

The actual tabernacle was made of boards (acacia wood covered with gold) and was divided into two rooms. A veil of blue and purple and scarlet strands with embroidered cherubim separated the two rooms. The first room was called the Holy Place. In the Holy Place were the Lampstand on the south side, the Table of the Bread of the Presence on the north side, and the incense altar on the west side.

C. The Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33-34)

The inside room was called the Holiest Place or the Holy of Holies. This was where the ark would be kept and where God's presence would be. Only one person on the entire earth could go into this room. This person was the High Priest. And he could go in only once a year. *Diagram from Life-Study of Exodus, Message 147*



D. The Covering of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-14). There were four layers of covering for the tabernacle.

1. The first layer was made of ten curtains of fine twined linen. They were made of blue and purple and scarlet strands, with cherubim embroidered on them. They were like a large sheet, which covered the tabernacle and overlapped at the side and the rear (not at the entrance).
2. The second layer of the covering was made of eleven curtains of goats' hair. They completely covered the first layer (it was a bit larger) and protected it.
3. The third layer of covering was made of rams' skins dyed red. This was even stronger than the goats' hair and provided even more protection.
4. The fourth and final layer of covering was made of porpoise skins. This was the final, best protection. Water may be able to penetrate rams' skins, but not porpoise skins.

E. The Screen (or entrance) to the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:36-37)

The entrance of the tabernacle (at the east end) is referred to as the screen. It was made of the same material as the first covering, i.e., of blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen of embroidered work.

The first covering of the tabernacle, the inner veil separating the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and the screen were all made of the same lovely material.

III. The Furniture in the Tabernacle

A. The Ark of Testimony (Exodus 25:10-16)

The first item of furniture that God told Moses about was the ark of testimony (something like a chest or a big box). The ark was to be made of special wood called acacia wood. The wood is very hard and very heavy and insects cannot harm it. It has a fine, beautiful grain. The ark was to be 2½ cubits long, 1½ cubits wide and 1½ high (about 45” long, 27” wide and 27” deep). And it was to be completely covered with gold! Inside and out. It would have a rim of gold around the top and four rings of gold at its corners. It would be carried on poles (put in the rings) made of acacia wood and gold. God also told Moses what He wanted to be put inside the ark. God was going to give Moses two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them. They were to be kept inside the ark. At this point, the Bible does not mention Aaron’s rod—it budded at a later point. Nor is the pot of manna mentioned here. So we do not need to mention these things.

B. The Expiation Cover (Exodus 25:17-22)

The ark needed a cover or lid. It was to be of pure gold, with two cherubim (a kind of angel) on top of it. They would face each other from each end of the cover. Their wings would stretch forth, covering the expiation cover. The ark with the expiation cover was the most special piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle. God told Moses, “There will I meet with you, and I will speak to you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony...” Here is where God would be. This is where man could meet God and where God could meet man.

C. The Table of the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:23-30)

The next item of furniture for God’s house was a table called the table of the bread of the presence, or the showbread table (about 36” long, 18” wide, 27” tall). It was also to be made of acacia wood covered with gold. There would be a rim of gold around the top of it. The table also had four rings of gold and poles by which to carry it. It would have plates, cups, pitchers, and bowls made of pure gold. And on top of the table there would always be the bread of the Presence. This was a kind of bread made with unleavened flour. Twelve loaves were baked which were to be eaten on the Sabbath by the priests only. Fresh loaves, which had been prepared overnight, replaced them.

D. The Lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40)

The lampstand was made of one talent (about 100 pounds) of pure gold. It had six branches and seven lamps. The Bible does not tell us the exact measurements but only its weight. Of course, it was not an electric lampstand. Back then, there were no electric lights, so this lampstand provided light. The lamps were fueled by olive oil. Tongs (used to pull up the wicks) and firepans (used to carry live coals) were needed; they also were made of pure gold.

E. The Altar of Burnt Offering (Exodus 27:1-8)

This was a big, square piece of furniture. It was 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide and 3 cubits high (about 7 ½’ square and 4 ½’ tall). It was made of acacia wood covered with bronze, not gold. There were “horns” on each corner. There was a grating of bronze, which had four rings in the corners and poles (covered with bronze), for the altar’s transport. The altar was used for the sacrifice animals as offerings to God.

F. The Golden Incense Altar (Exodus 30:1-10)

This was another altar but it was much smaller, 1 cubit wide, 1 cubit long and 2 cubits high (about 18” square and 36” tall). On this altar, incense was to be burned. Incense is a compound of spices, which gives off perfumes when burned. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold. It had a rim of gold around the top and four horns on the corners. There were two rings and two poles to carry it.

G. The Laver of Bronze (Exodus 30:17-21)

The laver was like a basin. It was to be used by the priests to wash their hands and feet. It was made of bronze but we don’t know how large it was or how it was shaped. It had a “foot” or base at the bottom, which was also made of bronze.