

What is the book of *Exodus* about? You may say Moses, the plagues, the exodus of the Hebrews through the Red Sea. That's about one-third of *Exodus*. It's about Mount Sinai, the Golden Calf, the Ten Commandments, and other commandments. That's about another one-third of *Exodus*.

What is the remaining third about? Even excellent Bible students usually can't answer this. God allots as much space to this overlooked item as the other well-known parts, so it must be just as important.

The remaining one-third of *Exodus* is about a tent and its furnishings. The most famous tent in history! How famous? More than three thousand years after Moses, books and movies about this tent and its furnishings will be best sellers and blockbuster hits. Wars will be fought over the furnishings of this tent. If any part of it existed today, the pieces would auction for millions and millions of dollars.

God lived in this tent for more than forty years. Well, not full-time, but he did live in it part-time. He made sure that the tent and its furnishings were made precisely to his instructions. And, he did not miss out on a single detail. I should know. I designed and supervised the construction of the tent and its furnishings. Do you know the tent...the Tabernacle?

My name is Bezalel ben Uri ben Hur. Just call me Bezalel. I am of the tribe of Judah, the same tribe as King David and Jesus.

I know what you are going to ask first... "Bez, where are a bunch of ex-slaves going to get the cash and materials to build an extravagant tent? Here's where. During the tenth plague, virtually all of the Egyptian families had firstborn sons that died. They wanted the Hebrews gone. In order to hasten the departure, these Egyptian families showered money and other goods on the Hebrews.¹ The Bible says the Hebrews "plundered" the Egyptians.

Next, you are going to ask, "Bez, where did a bunch of ex-slaves get the skills to build the Tabernacle?" And...you are asking that question to the right guy. God filled me with his Spirit, and filled me with skill, ability, and knowledge of all sorts of artistic crafts...from metalwork to jewelry to woodwork. God also gave a friend of mine named Oholiab, and me, the ability to teach others to be master craftsmen of any skill needed.

¹ Exodus 12:36

Now your question is probably, “Why do I need to learn about the Tabernacle? It no longer exists, and it has no bearing on my life.” The first part of that question is true...kind of. There is no record of the Tabernacle existing after the time of King David. However, many of the furnishings existed for more than a thousand years, most notably the Ark of the Covenant. Some believe the Ark still exists today. Like I said, blockbuster movies.

Even though the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple, and even though the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the Tabernacle’s meaning still has relevance today. It demonstrates how important it is to have God’s house be pure and as perfect as possible, even if that house is you! God lives in you, you are his house.

There is another very important reason to know about the Tabernacle, I’ll save that until later. And, you will be glad you listened carefully to my description of the tent and its furnishings first.

As you approach the Tabernacle from the east, you see a 75 feet wide curtain in front of you. This curtain runs 150 feet deep to the west. The area that this curtain surrounds is known as the Outer Courtyard. It is about one-quarter the size of a football field.

As you enter from the east, you see in front of you the Altar of Burnt Offerings, and behind it the Brazen Laver, a bronze basin. Behind the Brazen Laver is the Tabernacle itself. The Tabernacle is 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 45 feet deep,

From the east, you enter the first compartment known as the Most Holy Place. It is 15 feet wide, 15 feet high, and 30 feet deep. It comprises two-thirds of the tent. On your right is the Table of Shewbread, special Sabbath bread, and on your left is the Candlestick. In front of you is the Altar of Incense, and behind it is the Curtain.

Behind the Curtain is the space named the Holy of Holies. It is a cube that is 15 feet wide, high, and deep, a cube. It contains the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat, that’s the cover of the ark that has the cherubim on it...Yes? No? Go watch that blockbuster movie, it’s in there. All of this is a very brief description of the Tent and its furnishings. In addition to this are the garments that the priests wear. The brevity of my description completely understates the magnificence of everything. Let me give you an idea of the scale of the whole structure and its furnishings.

In total, the project uses one ton of gold, three and three-quarters tons of silver and two and one-half tons of bronze. Adding in the cloth and workmanship, the tabernacle today would cost about \$50 million dollars. However, the people were so generous, Moses had to command them to quit bringing offerings to build it.

And from those weight numbers, you can imagine how hard it is to set up, take down, and transport. It’s portable, but not by your standards. And we don’t have semitrucks. God gave very specific instructions to the Levites on how to move it and set it up. You may remember

that the Levites are given special privileges to serve God because of how they supported Moses during the debacle of the Golden Calf.

Let's go back to how the Tabernacle is made. You approach the Outer Court from the east. The Outer Court is made of a curtain of finely twisted linen, with silver and bronze hooks and bands. It stands about seven and one-half feet high, and covers a periphery of 450 feet. It surrounds an area about one-quarter the size of a football field.

As you enter the Outer Court, the Altar of Burnt Offering is in front of you. It's made of bronze covered acacia wood. All of its implements are made of bronze. It is about four feet high, and almost eight feet wide and deep.

Behind the Altar of Burnt Offering is the huge Brazen Laver for priests to wash their hands. It is made of bronze from the mirrors of women who serve at the entrance to the tent of meeting.²

As you walk past the Brazen Laver, you enter the Tabernacle from the east. Tabernacle... 15 feet wide, 15 feet high, and 45 feet deep. And it's covered with ten curtains made of finely twisted linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn which are embroidered in very intricate patterns. Each curtain is about 42 feet long and 6 feet wide. The curtains that separates the Holy of Holies and the entrance are made of the same materials.

Over the tent, is a layer of goat hair, covered by red ram skins, covered by hides of sea cows. All fabrics are held up by acacia wood frames and posts, with gold, silver, and bronze loops, stands and bases.

As you enter the Tabernacle from the east, the Table of Shewbread is on the right. It is made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It had loops of gold with poles of gold-covered acacia wood to carry the table. All of its plates, bowls, and dishes were made of gold.

The Candlestick, or lampstand, is on your left. It is made of about 75 pounds of gold. It has seven lamps, and everything is intricately crafted into exceptional, distinct designs.

In front of you is the Altar of Incense. It was about one and one-half feet wide and deep, and three feet high. It was made of gold covered acacia wood.

Behind the curtain is the space known as the Holy of Holies. Inside of it is the Mercy Seat and Ark of the Covenant.

The Mercy Seat is the lid for the Ark of the Covenant. It is made of gold, and is about four feet long and over two feet wide. On this are two cherubs made of gold. The cherubs are placed at each end, facing each other, with wings upraised. The Mercy Seat is where God appeared to meet with Moses.

² Exodus 38:8

The Ark of the Covenant contains a gold jar of manna from the exodus trip, Aaron's staff that budded, and the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from the Mountain.³ It is about four feet wide, and a little over two feet deep and high. It is made of acacia wood overlaid with gold inside and out. It has gold rings for poles of acacia wood that are gold-covered and used to carry the Ark.

Solomon placed the Ark in the Temple, but at that time, it only contained the two stone tablets.⁴ The last specific mention of the location of the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible is when it is placed in the Temple built by King Josiah.⁵

In addition to the tent and its furnishings, God gave very specific instructions about how to make the garments for the priests, including the ephod, the sleeveless garment they wore, and breast piece.

After the Tabernacle's completion, Moses inspected it in fine detail before approving it, and then he blessed it and presented it to the Lord. The Lord had us set it up, and the most amazing thing happened.

The cloud descended and covered it, and the glory of the Lord filled it. For a while, even Moses could not enter it to meet with the Lord. It was too much power and glory for a human being to withstand. From that time on, whenever the cloud would lift, we Levites would pack up the tent and all that gold and silver and bronze, and follow the cloud. Whenever the cloud settled on the tent, we Levites would stay put with the rest of the people.

The cloud of the Lord was over the tent by day, and fire was in the cloud at night. This was in sight of all of all Israelites throughout all of our travels.

So, what could possibly be the very important reason to know about the Tabernacle. According to the writer of *Hebrews*, the Tabernacle is a shadow and copy of what is in heaven. That's why Moses was warned to build it *exactly* to the specifications in the instructions God gave him on the mountain.⁶ It was heaven on earth.

I assure you, I built the Tabernacle exactly according to those instructions. Heaven on Earth.

³ Hebrews 9:4

⁴ 1 Kings 8:9

⁵ 2 Chronicles 35:3

⁶ Hebrews 8:3-5