

The elders and Aaron and sons, along with Moses and Joshua, ate in the presence of the LORD. Moses and Joshua were called up the mountain and, after waiting six days, Moses was called into God's presence. The Israelites saw the presence of God as a devouring fire, but Moses saw it as a cloud of glory. Thus began Moses 40 days with God. We can read about it in the next seven chapters, but obviously a lot more took place those 40 days than what was recorded. What was recorded were the essential instructions that God gave to Moses, and those instructions dealt mostly with the Tabernacle.

It begins with God inviting the people to make a contribution for God. ¹ *The LORD said to Moses,* ² *"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.*

Does that strike you as strange? How can we contribute anything for God? (Acts 17:24-25) It is really giving back to God the things that He has given into our care. Everything we have is really God's anyway. It seems to me that it is grace that calls it a contribution. Who was it that convinced the Egyptians to give them all these treasures? It was all God. God gave it all to them not that many days earlier. He knew what materials He would ask for and that is what the Egyptians gave to the Hebrews as they left Egypt.

Notice how graciously God puts it, *From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.* He doesn't demand what is His, but asks for people to give according to their heart. That is the same wording the Apostle Paul uses for his collection for the impoverished saints in Jerusalem. (2Corinthians 9:6) Give according to how God moves your heart. We have the opportunity to make a contribution for God! That is incredible grace. It is God's way of allowing us to participate in what He is doing, (Ephesians 2:10) and yet it all comes from Him.

We'll find out seven chapters later that there had to be some serious discipline (Exodus 32:33-35) before they are given this opportunity, but when they are (Exodus 35:4-5), the response is overwhelming. (Exodus 36:5-7) They had to be restrained from giving. They had generous hearts and they responded to the stirring of God within them. May that ever be true of God's people when it comes to contributing for the things of God!

⁸ *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.* That is the whole purpose of the collection and the following instructions. God desired to give them a portable Sinai experience. He would manifest His presence consistently in this tent they were to build. "Let them make me a **mishkari**" – a

Commented [Paul Wall1]: Acts 17:24-25 (ESV)
24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,
25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Commented [Paul Wall2]: 2 Corinthians 9:5 (ESV)
5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

Commented [Paul Wall3]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Commented [Paul Wall4]: Exodus 32:33-35 (ESV)
33 But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.
34 But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them."
35 Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

Commented [Paul Wall5]: Exodus 35:4-5 (ESV)
4 Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "This is the thing that the LORD has commanded.
5 Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze;

Commented [Paul Wall6]: Exodus 36:5-7 (ESV)
5 and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do."
6 So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing,
7 for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

holy place, a place set apart for the holy God to be with His people. "A place that He can *shakan*" – live among them. That is where we get the term Shakina glory, the dwelling glory, to describe that ball of light that hovered under the wings of the cherubim over the atonement cover.

This is all about God being with man again. You can think of atonement as "at one meant". That intimacy of walking with God was lost in the Garden of Eden. Through Abraham there was a glimpse of the restoration of that relationship. (Genesis 48:15; James 2:23) Now in Abraham's descent, leading the people to the land God promised to Abraham, there is plan of restoration. Build the tent and make it a holy place (sanctuary) and God will be manifest among you. He is everywhere, but He will be uniquely present in this tent.

God in a tent! There is another amazing thought. But then again, isn't **that what every believer in Jesus becomes?** It is how Jesus described Himself. The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.

⁹ Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. As we go through the furniture in the Tabernacle, we'll see that a lot of the details are missing. We really have to guess at what certain things looked like and how they functioned. This instruction filled in the details for Moses. God showed him the details. A picture is worth a thousand words, well, Moses was sure to understand after God showed him.

I think we should keep in mind that **there is 25 times as much information on how to build a tabernacle for God than there is on how God made a universe for man.** There must be some profound significance in every detail. We'll just touch the surface, but when we get to heaven, I think the intricacies of spiritual reality embedded in the design will blow our mind.

God begins His descriptions from the inside, where He will dwell. He begins with the Ark of the Covenant in the small innermost room called the Holy of Holies. This box was made of acacia wood, a tree still common in the region. It is a very dense wood and resists decay. The wood was covered inside and out with hammered, or plate, gold. **Gold represents the holiness and purity of God as well as His kingly authority.**

On top of the box is the lid of pure gold called the Atonement Cover (a better translation than Mercy Seat). Each end of the cover had an angel called a cherub, the plural is cherubim. Their wings met over the top of the cover. Under their wings was the shekina glory. (2Kings 19:15)

You will recall that when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden, two cherubim with flaming swords kept them out from re-entering the Garden. (Genesis 3:24) It could be said that Cherubim protect the holiness of God. They

Commented [Paul Wall7]: Genesis 48:15 (ESV)
15 And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day,

Commented [Paul Wall8]: James 2:23 (ESV)
23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"— and he was called a friend of God.

Commented [Paul Wall9]: 2 Kings 19:15 (ESV)
15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.

Commented [Paul Wall10]: Genesis 3:24 (ESV)
24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

are not little baby angels or women with lovely hair, but massive warring angels that scare the beeebees out anyone that encounters them. There were also embroidered images of the cherubim on the curtains that entered the Tabernacle and the one that divided off the Holy of Holies.

Within the box are the tablets written with the finger of God. (Exodus 31:18) In that part of the world, covenants were made in duplicate so that each party had a copy. We often see pictures of commands 1 through 5 on one tablet and 6 through 10 on the other. It is much more likely that the entire set was on both stones. They were both in the box for God was living with His people. The Israelites guarded their copy by leaving it in the safest place possible, the Ark of the Covenant. God kept His copy there as well. Next week we'll address the other items in the Ark.

Commented [Paul Wall11]: Exodus 31:18 (ESV)
18 And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

The poles that were used to carry the Ark were also of acacia wood covered in gold and were to always remain in the rings attached to the ark. Unlike our model and many pictures, the poles were on the sides, behind the cherubim. We know this because 1Kings 8:8 tells us the poles stuck out into the Holy Place. They had long poles so that a large number of Levites could carry the weight of the gold involved in the Ark. When it was moved it was covered with waterproof hides so that it was not visible.

Commented [Paul Wall12]: 1 Kings 8:8 (ESV)
8 And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day.

Over and over we see this conflict of a holy God with sinful people. Again, we get the picture of **God being like anti-matter on evil. He annihilates it!** So this dwelling place is among the people and yet separated from them by multiple tents, the smoke of the incense, and permission for only one person a year to enter in after cleansing and sacrifice rituals. There is great desire by God to be with us and yet without ignoring the horror of our sinful condition.

The next piece of furniture described is the Table of Presence/Showbread. It too was of acacia wood and covered with gold and was in the outer room called the Holy Place. The table held two stacks of bread six high, twelve in all. They represented the tribes. Each week they were to be replaced with fresh bread and the priests were to eat it.

In other religions of the East, people would bring food as an offering to their gods. The showbread was not about feeding God, rather about God being the Great Provider for His people.

The table was also the place the golden bowls, pitchers, and plates were kept. The pitchers were for drink offerings, the bowls for the blood of the sacrifice, and the plates for incense.

In the same room on the opposite side was the Lampstand, the menorah. Hammered out of 75 pounds of pure gold and made to look like almond

branches with leaves and buds, with the seven wicks, one at the end of each branch. Some believe they were to always stay lit and others that they were only lit at night with the exception of the innermost flame that always stayed lit. The specially prepared olive oil for fuel was added daily and the wicks were trimmed each morning.

The idea was that just as the tents of Israel had evening lamps, so God's house had an evening lamp. The difference was that He never sleeps, so unlike the lamps in the tents of Israel that were put out before sleeping, His lamp stayed lit throughout the night. (Psalm 121:3-4)

There was one more piece of furniture in the Holy Place, the Altar of Incense. We have to skip over to chapter 30 to get a description of it. I do not know why the description was set aside until the final details were given. If you have an idea please share it with me.

It was also of acacia wood and covered with gold. It was much smaller than the other pieces but carried in the same way with gold covered acacia poles. Only sacred incense according to God's formula was to be used in this altar, nothing else. Once a year on the Day of Atonement the priest anointed the horns of the altar with the blood of the sacrifice.

It is commonly believed that the incense represented prayer going up for God's people. (Psalm 141:2) It was to be tended each morning when the priests cared for the Lampstand so that incense was always kept burning upon it.

The tent that covered these two rooms was hung over acacia frames (panels) covered in gold and set on silver bases. Silver came from the redemption money of the firstborn males. (Exodus 13:15) Since they were spared the last plague in Egypt, and since the firstborn males were the Lord's, they paid a five silver coin fee to redeem them so that they could enter another form of work. (Numbers 18:16) Since the Levites serve in the Temple they were not required to pay this. We could say then that the tabernacle rests on a basis of redemption. The foundation of God's presence among them was redemption. He desires to redeem fallen man so that relationship can be restored, so that the distance and barriers are no longer required.

Now back to chapter 27, and in the outer court where the common person was allowed, there was the great brazen altar. This was the largest of all pieces seven and a half foot square and over 4 foot high. It was made of acacia wood, but covered with bronze. Bronze was a symbol of strength, but also of judgment.

A screen is described but we don't know if it was on one side to allow the ashes to pour out or in the inside to hold the sacrifice above the flames. The inside was

Commented [Paul Wall13]: Psalm 121:3-4 (ESV)
3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Commented [Paul Wall14]: Psalm 121:3-4 (ESV)
3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Commented [Paul Wall15]: Exodus 13:15 (ESV)
15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

Commented [Paul Wall16]: Numbers 18:16 (ESV)
16 And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

hollow but many believe it was filled with uncut stones as described in chapter 20. (Exodus 20:25) The tools that were to be used were also to be of bronze.

Commented [Paul Wall17]: Exodus 20:25 (ESV)
25 If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it.

A ramp of earth was made for the priest to ascend when offering a sacrifice. (Exodus 20:26) There were not to be steps so that the nakedness of the priest was not exposed. That may sound strange, but when we understand that the priests of Baal often sacrificed while they were nude and their worship included lewd acts, we can see why God made a distinct difference in the way sacrifice was carried out.

Commented [Paul Wall18]: Exodus 20:26 (ESV)
26 And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.'

The outside perimeter was of linen which hung on seven and a half foot high bronze poles set in bronze bases. Bronze was the strongest metal of that time before the iron age. The stakes that anchored the posts and tent were also bronze. But again, remember that bronze represents judgment. **Everything in the outer court reminds the people that justice must be served.** The altar is about justice, not about feeding god as in other religions.

Finally we have the laver or bronze basin. Made from the bronze mirrors the women brought out of Egypt, (Exodus 38:8) it was a water container that was for the priests to wash hands and feet before entering the holy place or after preparing animals for sacrifice.

Commented [Paul Wall19]: Exodus 38:8 (ESV)
8 He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

The bronze basin stood between the bronze altar and the tent. The tent became known as the Tent of Meeting, for Moses would go within and talk with God. We suppose he was at the inner most curtain and God spoke from over the Atonement Cover through the curtain.

This is how God described His tent home. The people lived in tents, so God too would live among them in a tent. There are times in Scripture when the text uses the common Hebrew word for tent (*ohel*) to describe the Tabernacle.

This is how God comes to meet us, how He deals with our sinful condition. Just like at Sinai, He puts a boundary around Himself and warns us that if we break into His presence it will mean justice and the penalty for sin is death. So He keeps His distance and separates Himself from us. He is everywhere and all knowing, but **mercy puts a barrier between Himself and us that we dare not breach.** That was represented in the Atonement Cover on the Ark. God was above it and the Law below Him, yet in between is the atonement cover. The blood of the sacrificial goat on the Day of Atonement would be sprinkled first on that cover symbolizing the sacrifice that would one day atone for the sins of the world.

Think of the presumption of sinful man breaking through that mercy barrier into the presence of a holy God. That is what killed Uzzah. The priests weren't even to touch the ark and that is why the poles always remained in place.

It wasn't simply that Uzzah broke the rules, but that he thought he was protecting God from dirt! What is filthier than sin? The dirt isn't vile in God's sight, man is! Dirt has no will of its own to rebel, only men and fallen angels have such audacity. Uzzah's sinful nature came uncovered into the presence of the holiness that annihilates evil. (2Samuel 6:6-7)

Commented [Paul Wall20]: 2 Samuel 6:6-7 (ESV)
6 And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.
7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.

So first is the inaccessible inner tent with cherubim on the entrance curtain and over the ark like a warning to any who would enter. Yet, just outside that curtain is the altar of incense, prayer going up to Him. Prayer is closer to Him than anything else in the tabernacle. Through prayer He becomes the light that illumines our darkness. Through prayer we find that He meets our need and gives us our daily bread. His grace brings Him out from behind the curtain into the Holy Place touching the lives of the sanctified ones. But until He goes all the way to the altar there can be no sanctified ones to enjoy His light and provision. (1Samuel 2:2; Leviticus 20:8)

Commented [Paul Wall21]: 1 Samuel 2:2 (ESV)
2 "There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

In Jesus, He went all the way out to the outer court in the veil of a human body. He came into our world and yet He was still separate from the outer world like the outer tent set off this area from the rest of the camp. (John 9:5) He came out to be the sacrifice, the perfect once and for all sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:26) He tabernacled among us. (John 1:14)

Commented [Paul Wall22]: Leviticus 20:7-8 (ESV)
7 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.
8 Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

Once He has met us there at the altar, He then washes us at the brass basin. Some think we must wash first and then come to the altar, but no, we will not be washed until we go first to the altar. (Titus 3:5) Once washed we can go back in with Him and experience why He came out, so that fellowship with Him might be restored.

Commented [Paul Wall23]: John 9:4-5 (ESV)
4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.
5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

He came out to bring us in. This is the "from the inside out" message of the Tabernacle. God came to us. (John 16:8) He left the glory of heaven, the Holy of Holies, and tabernacled among men to end the tension of the holiness of God and the sin of man by making a way for our sins to be removed. He is the light of the world and the bread of life. He came all the way out to the altar of the cross and meets us there where our sin meets the justice we deserve. He came from the highest of heights heaven to the lowest of depths of this world to remove the distance between us. There He washes us clean and invites us in to fellowship with Him forever.

Commented [Paul Wall24]: Hebrews 9:26 (ESV)
26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Commented [Paul Wall25]: John 1:14 (YLT)
14 And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.

Commented [Paul Wall26]: Titus 3:5 (ESV)
5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Commented [Paul Wall27]: John 16:28 (ESV)
28 I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

Don't stop at the altar. That is only the beginning of why He came all the way out. Be washed. Be enlightened. Partake of the bread of the presence. Let your prayers rise with the incense, and enter through the torn veil of His flesh and meet Him within. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Commented [Paul Wall28]: Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV)
19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,
21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Questions

- 1 How can we contribute anything to God?
- 2 What two Hebrew words describe the purpose of the offering?
- 3 What does it mean to be a *Mishkan*?
- 4 Where does God begin the description and why?
- 5 What was on top of the Ark of the Covenant? Symbolize?
- 6 Why were there so many barriers between man and God?
- 7 What are the pieces of furniture in the Holy Place? Significance?
- 8 What was the furniture in the outer court? Why Bronze?
- 9 Why did Uzzah die?