



## THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND TABERNACLE

*Exodus 25:8–16, 22, 40; 40:34–38*

The tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments were a visible sign of God's covenant with the people of Israel. That is why they were of special value to the people. On Mount Sinai God Himself gave Moses the commission to make a valuable box for their safekeeping. He gave precise instructions concerning its size and shape. Since the sign of the covenant was kept in this box, it received the name ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant was approximately 1.3 m long, and approximately 80 cm wide and high. Both the interior and exterior were overlaid with gold. On the sides there were rings overlaid with gold into which long wooden poles were inserted. When the people of Israel were going from one camp to another, the priests carried the ark of the covenant on their shoulders in front of the people.

According to God's directive, Moses was to have a 'sanctuary', constructed in the middle of the Israelites' camp, within which God wanted to dwell. The ark of the covenant was also to be placed there. This sanctuary was put together with boards and poles and covered with curtains and animal skins. When the people moved to another camp, the sanctuary was dismantled and reassembled at the new location.

In the Holy Scripture this sanctuary is also called the tabernacle of meeting or tabernacle.

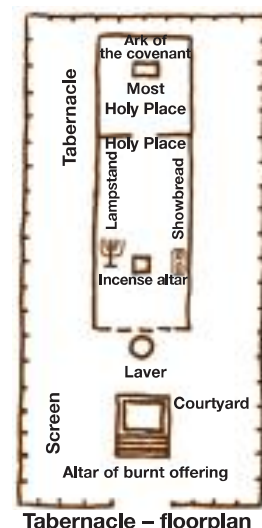
In addition to directions about the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle, Moses received precise instructions from God about how it was to be used.

Men from the tribe of Levi were responsible for dismantling, transporting, and reassembling the tabernacle during the journey through the desert. There were set rules for this procedure.

Whenever the Israelites made camp, the tabernacle was erected first. The Levites and priests lived in its immediate vicinity surrounded by the remaining tribes.



Ark of the covenant



Tabernacle – floorplan

## PRIESTLY SERVICE IN THE OLD COVENANT

*Exodus 28–29, Numbers 18; 28*



God instructed Moses to take Aaron and his sons from the tribe of Levi and ordain them as priests. They were to render the service in the tabernacle. In the Old Covenant the priesthood was restricted to Aaron's descendants.

For the service, the priests received special garments and precise instructions as to how the sacrifices were to be prepared and offered.

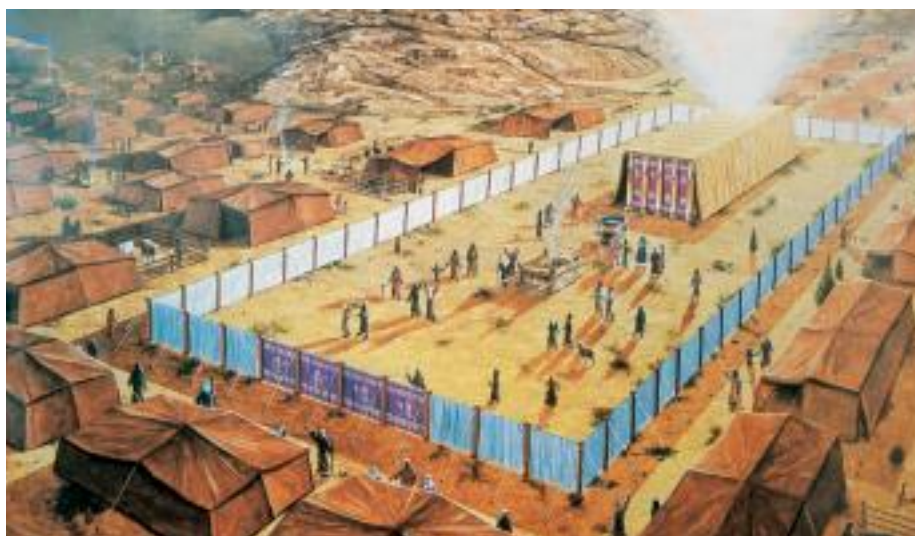
It also was their task to

- maintain and clean the tabernacle (except for the Most Holy Place),
- advise about the sacrificial animals,
- maintain the fire on the altar of incense,
- instruct the people about the laws, and
- to serve as judges in cases involving difficult decisions.

Every day the priests offered sacrifices. This constituted the actual divine service in the Old Covenant. They observed the instructions given by God concerning the different offerings.

Once a year only, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest—Aaron at the time—entered the Most Holy Place. In a special ceremony he was to ask the Lord for forgiveness for the sins of the people and for himself. Access to the Most Holy Place was forbidden otherwise.

The Levites had certain privileges among the tribes of Israel. They were supported by the tithes (the tenth part) of the people. Of this tenth the priests again received the tenth.



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## PRIESTLY SERVICE – TABERNACLE

### EXERCISE 1



Moses received precise instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, including the material to be used, and how it was to be built. You will find out something about these details when you look up the cited Bible passages. Complete the exercise (1 talent is 35 kg, 1 cubit about 50 cm).

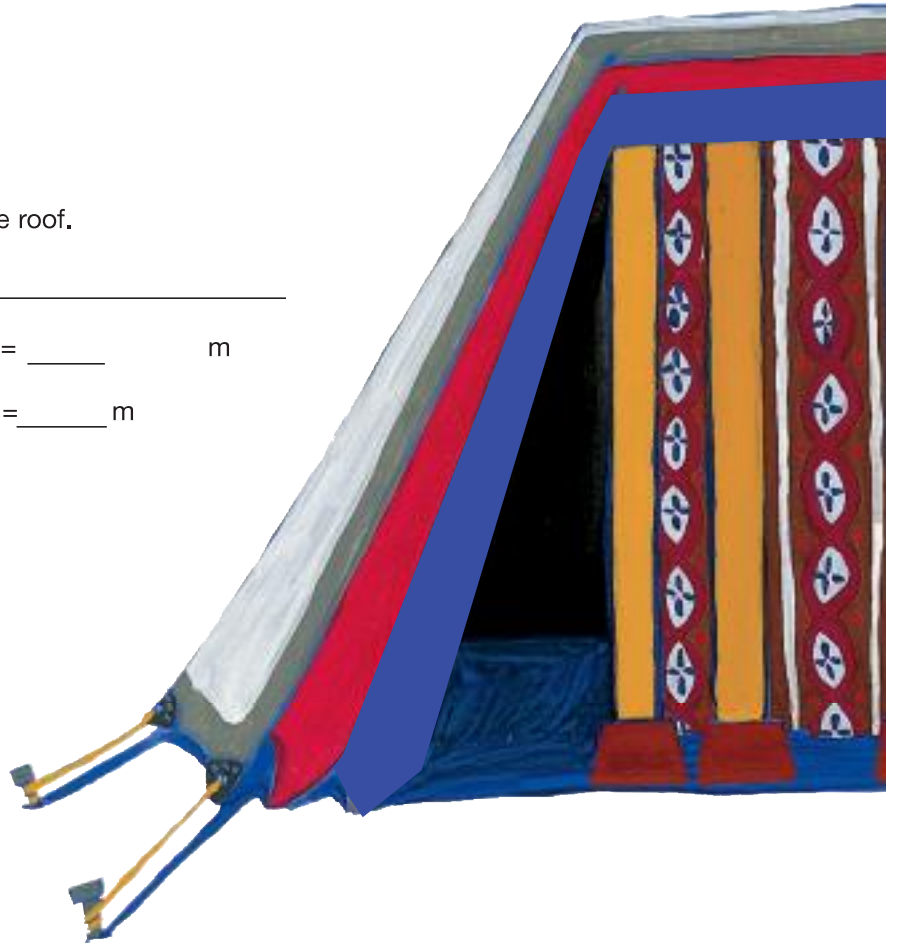
**Curtains** were woven to drape over the roof.

The colours of the curtains: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of the curtains: \_\_\_\_\_ cubits = \_\_\_\_\_ m

Width of the curtains: \_\_\_\_\_ cubits = \_\_\_\_\_ m

Exodus 26:1, 2





The **wooden boards** used for the exterior were bolted together.

The material used for the boards:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Length of the boards: \_\_\_\_\_ cubits = \_\_\_\_\_ m

Width of the boards: \_\_\_\_\_ cubits = \_\_\_\_\_ m

Exodus 26:15,16

**Silver sockets** were cast to hold the boards together.

Each socket weighed \_\_\_\_\_ talent(s) = \_\_\_\_\_ kg

There were 100 sockets which in total weighed

\_\_\_\_\_ talent(s) = \_\_\_\_\_ kg

Exodus 38:27



### EXERCISE 2



#### The priests of today

In the following, check either “true” or “false”. The letters in the fields you have checked will result in a sentence, if put together in the correct order.

Statement	True		False	
Priests have a special origin.	HE	<input type="checkbox"/>	PRI	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priests conduct divine services.	ESTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	IS	<input type="checkbox"/>
They receive the congregational offerings.	ON	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARE	<input type="checkbox"/>
They rule on matters of law.	FROM	<input type="checkbox"/>	SER	<input type="checkbox"/>
They give advice when brethren have questions.	VANTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	GI	<input type="checkbox"/>
They dispense Holy Communion.	OF	<input type="checkbox"/>	VING	<input type="checkbox"/>
They advise about sacrificial offerings.	THE	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOD	<input type="checkbox"/>

Solution:

2. List additional tasks of priests: