

The People Build a Tabernacle

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Scene Summary

The People build a Tabernacle presents the fascinating story of the making of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Scenes include: Moses tells the people about the plan for the Tabernacle...the people bring gifts...workmen are appointed...making curtains and covering...the ark and mercy seat...the table and its vessels...the candlestick...the altar...the brass laver...the Tabernacle is erected...God's Presence rests upon it. Story based on Exodus 35:4-40:38

Scripture

(Exo 35:4-29 NIV) Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: {5} From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze; {6} blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; {7} ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; {8} olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; {9} and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. {10} "All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded: {11} the tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; {12} the ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it; {13} the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence; {14} the lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light; {15} the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle; {16} the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand; {17} the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; {18} the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes; {19} the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary--both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests." {20} Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, {21} and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of

Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. {22} All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD. {23} Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or hides of sea cows brought them. {24} Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the LORD, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. {25} Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun--blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. {26} And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. {27} The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. {28} They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. {29} All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the LORD freewill offerings for all the work the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do.

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Moses** – Played as an older person, with much strength of character, yet humble.
- **Person 1, 2, 3** – More people can be added as needed, they give what that have for the building of the Tabernacle and it’s furnishings.
- **Bezaleel** – (**Bee**-zale-el) Always has a tool in hand and working on a design project.
- **Aholiah** – (**A**-hoe-la) This artisan carries yarn, (safety) scissors and cloth.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- Tools for Bezaleel.
- Sewing items such as yarn, thread, (safety) scissors for Aholiah.
- Offerings for the people, such as cloth and jewelry.

Script – The People Build a Tabernacle

Moses: [speaking to the people] God wants us to build a tent church. We will need gold, silver and many lovely things for the tent church.

Person 1: [nodding] We will give what we have.

Narrator: The people returned to their tents and soon the people returned with bracelets and earrings that were placed before Moses.

[The people leave, then return with items they want to give.]

Person 2: [happy] I have brought linen

Person 3: [smiling] Here are some warm firs.

Person 1: [holding it up] and I want to give this fine brass mirror.

Bezaleel: I will teach you how to melt the gold, silver and brass to make other things for the tent church. I can also show you how to make chairs and other furniture.

Aholiah: I know how to sew cloth. I can teach you how to sew beautiful patterns of red, purple and blue on large curtains. We can make thread by twisting long goat hairs into strong yarn that was woven into heavy clothe.

Narrator: Everyone helped. Some dyed rams skins red. People were happy while they worked on the tent church. Everyday they brought more things for the house of God.

Bezaleel: [looking at all the items that the people had brought] Moses, tell the people not to bring any more. There is plenty to finish the work.

Narrator: Everyone wanted to give something and many wanted to help with the work.

[All of the people begin to work about, moving things, arranging items as the narrator completes this following description of their activities. Note: this section is optional, providing a word picture of what is being constructed.]

Narrator: The men cut long boards and covered them with gold. They set them in silver sockets to form the tabernacle wall. Gold covered wooden bars helped to hold the bars upright. Carefully the people worked to build a house for God. Bezaleel worked on a beautiful chest call The Ark. He covered it with gold. The lid was also covered with gold and called The Mercy Seat. On each end of the lid, Bezaleel made two cherubims facing each other, looking down at the center of the Mercy Seat, following the plan that God had given to Moses. He made a table and covered it with gold. There was a boarder around the top that looked like a crown, this was

called the Table of Showbread. He also made rings and poles so that the table and the Ark could be carried. The people would carry the tabernacle and all of the furnishing when they started on their trip again to Canaan. Bezaleel and his helpers made a beautiful, large candlestick with seven branches. It was pure gold. A bowl on each branch would hold oil for the lamps. The golden candlestick would stand inside the tabernacle. God had given a design to Moses for an altar to burn incense. Bezaleel made the altar out of wood and covered it with gold. It had a horn at each corner and a beautiful crown around the edges. Everything for God's house was beautiful. Bezaleel directed as a large square altar that would stand in front of the tabernacle. They covered the altar with shining brass. They made tools for the altar out of brass, shovels, grates, bowls and pots. They made a large bowl called a laver to hold water. The laver was created from the brass mirrors. In the sunlight, the laver would be dazzling. The laver was placed outside the tabernacle, near the large altar. Moses watched as the men placed fence boards into brass sockets. Carefully they hung fine linen over the boards to make a cloth wall around the tabernacle called a courtyard. There was one door and this entrance was beautiful embroidery of red, purple and blue. Inside the courtyard, the gold boards were covered with curtains that were embroidered with beautiful patterns of red, purple and blue. Over the tabernacle, they placed coverings of goat's haircloth. Over these, they placed ram and badger skins dyed red.

[The people stop their activities and come together on stage.]

Narrator: When everything was ready, the people came to worship God. Over the tabernacle, they saw the special cloud, a sign that God was with them. When God sent fire to burn the sacrifice that Aaron had prepared, then the people knew that they had pleased God. They bowed and worshiped God, thanking Him for His care.

The End

Supplemental Information

In early Old Testament days, there was not one special place to worship God. There were no churches or synagogues. When a person wanted to worship God, they built an altar by piling up stones.

When the Hebrew people came out of Egypt to Sinai, God told Moses that He wanted the people to build a tabernacle or house for God. God gave Moses specific plans for the tabernacle. God gave exact measurements for the structure and the furniture. God showed Moses what the tabernacle should look like. God told Moses what materials should be used. The people would worship God together at the tabernacle. God wanted it to be a beautiful place and God wanted it to be an example of the tabernacle in heaven.

Moses asked the people to bring offerings for the tabernacle. They needed gold, silver, brass, fine linen, jewels, wood, and other materials. Gladly the people gave what they had for the building of the tabernacle. These would be made into a beautiful place to worship God.

Bezaleel and Aholiah had been given special talents. They were skilled craftsmen that knew how to make lovely things from gold and silver. They knew how to embroider beautiful designs for the curtains. They were also teachers, showing others how to do these things.

The tabernacle had to be made so that it could be taken down and carried with the people as they walked toward Canaan. The furniture was made so that it could be carefully carried on poles that fitted through rings in the sides.

We do not know exactly the sizes of the items in the tabernacle because we do not know exactly length of the “cubit.” Some scholars believe that the cubit was about 17 ½ inches. Others believe that the cubit was 21 inches. If the cubit was about 1 ½ feet, then the tabernacle walls were 15 feet high, 15 feet wide and about 45 feet long. It was divided into two rooms, the Holy Place, about 15 by 30 feet, and the Holy of Holies, about 15 feet square. Boards forming the walls were covered with gold and set in silver sockets. Inside the walls were covered with fine linen that was embroidered with beautiful patterns of red, purple and blue. Dividing the two rooms was a special curtain or veil that was beautifully embroidered with figures of cherubim or heavenly beings.

In the Holy of Holies was placed The Ark. This was a chest, about 4 feet long, 2 feet wide and 2 feet high. It was made of wood and completely covered with gold. The lid was called The Mercy Seat. It was made of pure gold. At each end was a cherub, a winged heavenly being. The cherubim faced each other and spread their wings over the Mercy Seat.

On the other side of the veil stood a small altar, about 2 feet square and three feet high. It was made of wood and covered with gold. Golden horns were placed on each corner and a crown of gold was made around the top. At this altar, the priest burned incense. On the right, or north side of the Holy Place stood another table that was also covered with gold. It was about 2

feet high, 3 feet wide and 1½ feet deep. On this table were placed 12 loaves of bread, one for each Hebrew tribe. Golden plates, bowls and spoons were placed on the table. On the south wall, opposite the table, stood the beautiful Golden Candlestick with seven branches. At the top of each branch there was a bowl to hold the oil for the seven lamps. About 60 pounds of gold was needed to make the Golden Candlestick.

The tabernacle, or tent church, was completely covered with a thick cloth made of goat hair. This is the same kind of material the Hebrews used for their tents. The covering was called the tent of the tabernacle. Over this was two other coverings, one made of rams skins that had been dyed red, and then finally, on top, a layer of badger skins. The skins kept out the rain and also blocked all the sunlight.

Outside the tabernacle stood the large laver, filled with water. It was made from the shiny brass mirrors donated by the women. Farther from the tabernacle was the large altar. This was about 7 ½ feet square and about 5 feet high. It was covered with brass or copper. Here the priests made the animal sacrifices.

Around the tabernacle was a courtyard. Poles that supported linen curtains made the courtyard. They were 7 ½ feet high.

God also gave Moses the plans for worship in the tabernacle. God told Moses the designs for the priest's garments as well as rules for the priests.

When all was completed, the special cloud stood above the tabernacle to remind the people that God was with them.

Extra time

To help your students better understand how the tabernacle looked, create a simple model out of a shoe box, cut to the same proportions, three times as long as it is wide. Cut out one end and remove the top. Spray with gold paint. Cut a piece of white cloth and hang it one-third the distance from the closed end. Cut another piece of white cloth to cover the inner walls and the ceiling. Draw designs with red, purple and blue crayon or ballpoint pens. Over the tabernacle, place a dark gray, tightly covered cloth, then a piece of cloth that has been tinted red. Finally, place a black piece of cloth to cover the entire box. The open end of the box is the entrance. Cover this with a white cloth, keeping the other "roof" covers from the entrance.

The Tabernacle

God gave to Moses specific plans for making the Tabernacle – a House for God. The people followed these plans in making every part of the tent-church and its furnishings. Wood boards were covered with gold and fitted into silver sockets to form the walls of the Tabernacle. Covering the walls and ceiling were fine linen curtains that were embroidered with cherubim and

other designs in blue, purple and scarlet. Dividing the Tabernacle into two rooms was a veil or curtain of the same material. The larger room was called the Holy Place. In front of the veil stood the incense altar. Against the north wall stood the table of showbread. The great golden candlestick stood against the south wall.

The inner and smaller room was called the Holy of Holies. Here was placed the Ark of the Covenant – a chest in which a pot of manna and Aaron’s budding rod were placed. Covering the Ark was the Mercy Seat, which was made from pure gold and featured two cherubim facing each other. Over the Tabernacle was a covering made of woven goats’ hair. Over this were coverings of rams’ skins dyed red and badgers’ skins to make the Tabernacle waterproof.

Surrounding the Tabernacle was a courtyard, fenced off by linen hangings. Inside the gate was the large altar covered with brass. Between the altar and the Tabernacle, the brass laver was placed.

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