



## Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

# Short Study 026: The Tabernacle

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Read Exodus 25:8-9 and Hebrews 9:1-7.

When the escaped Hebrew slaves were journeying to the Promised Land, their leader – Moses – was instructed by the Lord to build what might be described as a portable temple, in which God would show His presence with His people. The design of the tabernacle and the items it was to contain were to be strictly in accordance with God's instructions, for every part had a meaning. It will be impossible in a short study like this to fully explore the symbolic meaning of every part and its associated ritual, but we shall look at how the tabernacle plan signifies not only God's presence but also the gulf that exists between a sinful man and a Holy God, and how that gulf is to be overcome.

**1. The Three Divisions.** Consult the Tabernacle Plan on the next page. The Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies) represented the dwelling place of God, Notice there were three sections, separated by veils. Moving East to West (right to left), priests could enter the Outer court, but they could not proceed to the two Holy sections without sacrifices and ritual cleansing. Only those with the duty of tending the lamp and renewing the bread could enter the Holy Place. Only one man – the High Priest – could enter the Most Holy Place, and that on just one day of the year – the Day of Atonement. What, do you think separates men and women from God?

**2. The Four Stages of Approaching God.** (Here follow the numbers 1 to 4 on the Plan).

*Stage 1: Sacrifice.* Animals had to be slaughtered and burnt, in whole or in part, on the altar. In the process of slaughter, blood was shed. With what was the shedding of blood associated (read Hebrews 9:22, then Hebrews 9:13-14)?

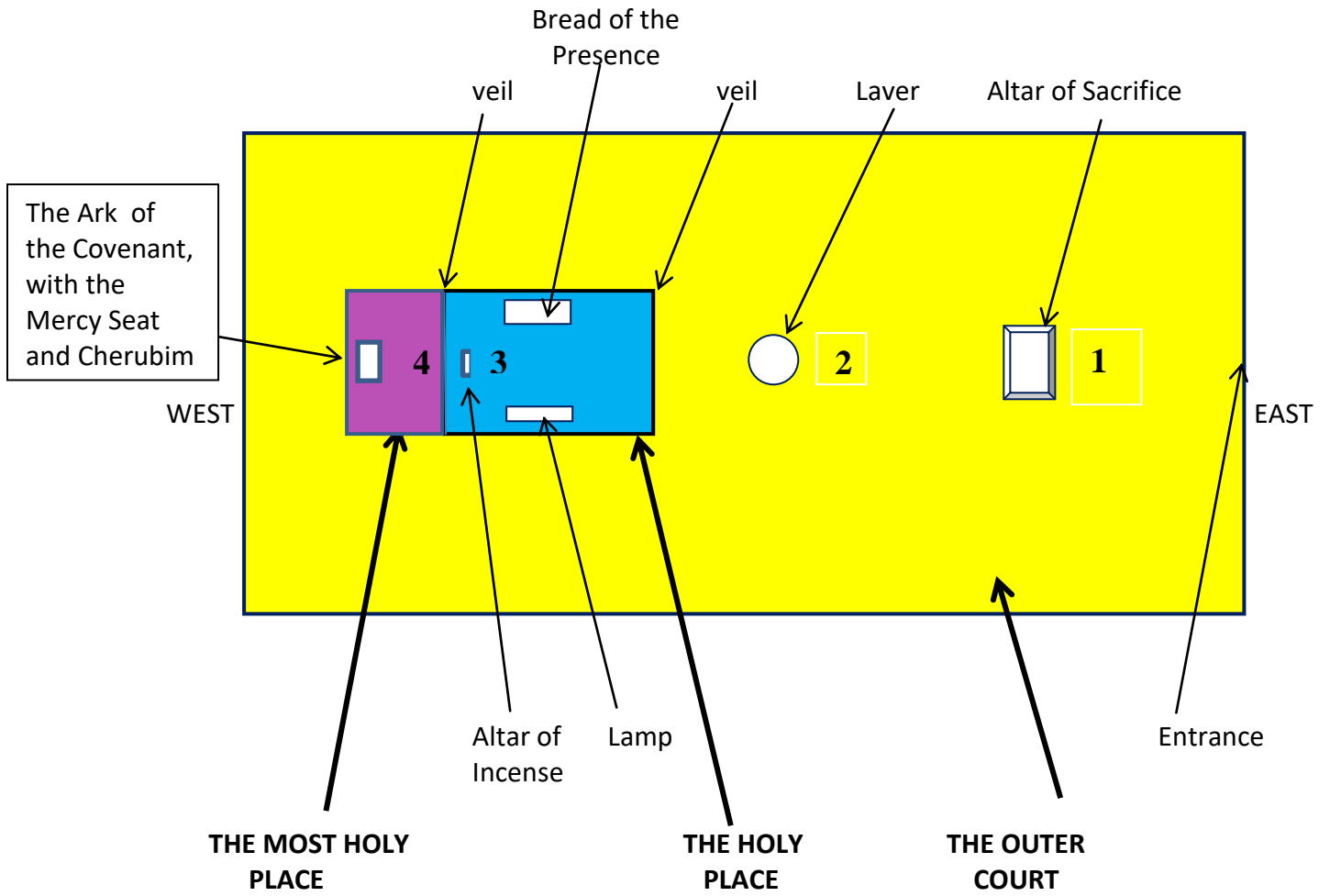
*Stage 2: Cleansing.* Priests must then wash their hands and feet with the water contained in the laver (basin). The washing stands for purification. They would be handling holy things and walking on holy ground and must not come with the taint of the unholy world upon them. Read Hebrews 10:22 and James 4:8.

*Stage 3: Prayer.* Burning Incense sent smoke heavenward, representing prayer to God. God is not to be approached – and His forgiveness is not to be sought – presumptuously, but penitently. Read Psalm 141:2 and Rev 5:8.

*Stage 4: Blood of Atonement.* The High Priest (alone) sprinkled blood from the sacrifices on to the Mercy Seat (Atonement Cover) which covered the Ark of the Covenant. Do you remember what you read in Hebrews 9:22? The sacrificial blood had now been brought to God to make atonement, i.e. to restore relationship with God, and He would forgive the sins of His people.

**To Think About:** The point of all this was to foreshadow (represent in advance) how Christ, the 'Great High Priest' (Heb 4:14) made atonement for sinners. Read 1 Pet:3:18 & Matt 20:28; Heb 4:15; Isaiah 53:12; Matt 26:28 & 1 Pet 1:18-19 and think about how the Tabernacle procedures were fulfilled by Christ.

**To Dig Deeper:** There is a great deal more to be discovered about the meaning of the Tabernacle and approaching God for forgiveness. Read all you can on these subjects in Bible reference books, especially in Bible commentaries.



## THE TABERNACLE – Plan View (Exodus 25)

(Not to scale)