

Mishkan

The Mishkan (literally “Dwelling Place”) refers to the Tabernacle that was a portable dwelling place for Hashem during the time of the Exodus and the settlement of Israel before the First Temple was constructed. The Mishkan accompanied the Hebrews on their wanderings throughout the wilderness and their conquest of the Land of Israel. It was erected in Shilo after the Land was conquered and the Mishkan was eventually placed in the First Temple. It is not mentioned again after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The beginning of the Mishkan description begins with G-d telling Moses to ask for gifts from the people for the Mishkan. The gifts are to include gold; silver; copper; blue, purple, and crimson wool; linen and goat hair; ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense; shoham stones and filling stones for the ephod and for the choshen. Using these gifts, the Hebrews were to build a Mishkan and all the vessels for G-d to “dwell” in their midst.¹

The Aron HaBrit (Ark of the Covenant) was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The tablets of the Aseret HaDiberot (10 Commandments) are to be placed inside the Aron HaBrit. G-d told Moses that He would talk to him from between the Cherubim that are on top of the lid to the Aron HaBrit. The Lechem HaPanim (Table of Showbread) was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. All of its utensils are made of pure gold. Showbread is to be continually placed upon the table. A six-branched menorah and its utensils are to be made of pure gold and the lights kindled within the Mishkan.¹

The Mishkan is to be made with ten curtains made of linen and wool with cherubim woven into the curtains. The curtains are to be hung upon golden clasps. A curtain of goat hair was to be made for a tent over the Mishkan and attached with copper clasps. A covering for the tent is to be made from tachash and ram skins. The planks and bars of the Mishkan are to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. A dividing curtain made of linen and wool is to be placed upon pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold and attached on silver hooks. The dividing curtain is used to separate the Holy of Holies and the Holy. The Lechem HaPanim (Table of Showbread) is to be placed on the outside of this curtain on the north side of the Mishkan and the Menorah was to be placed opposite of the Lechem HaPanim. A screen for the entrance of the Mishkan is to be made of linen and wool and placed upon pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold using copper sockets.²

An altar with four horns on its corners is to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with copper. All its utensils are to be made from copper. The courtyard of the Mishkan is to be surrounded by linen hangings hung from pillars of copper with hooks of silver. The gate of the courtyard is to be made of linen and wool.³

An altar of incense with four horns on its corners is to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The altar is to be placed in front of the dividing curtain. A copper washstand is to be made for Aaron and his sons to purify themselves. Holy oil made of olive oil, Myrrh, cinnamon, cane, and cassia is to be used to anoint the Mishkan, Aron HaBrit, and all the utensils contained therein as well as anointing oil for Aaron and his sons.⁴

Levitical Mishkan (Tabernacle) Responsibilities:

Gershonites – The Tent, its cover, and the screen for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the

hangings of the courtyard, the screen at the entrance to the courtyard, which is around the Mishkan and the altar, its ropes, as well as all the work involved (Numbers 3:25-26)

Koathites – The ark, the table, the menorah, the altars, and the holy utensils with which they would minister, and the screen and all the work involved (Numbers 3:31)

Merarites – The planks of the Mishkan, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets, all its utensils, and all the work involved, the pillars of the surrounding courtyard, their sockets, their stakes, and their ropes (Numbers 3:36-37)

Post-Conquest Use:

The Mishkan was erected in Shiloh after the conquest of the Land of Israel. It remained there during the 300-year period of the judges. After the Aron HaBrit was captured by the Philistines, King Saul moved the Mishkan to Nob (I Samuel 21-22) but after the priests were murdered on

Saul's command, the Mishkan was moved to Gibeon (I Chronicles 16, 21; II Chronicles 1-6). Solomon finally brought the Mishkan and its furnishings to Jerusalem to furnish and dedicate the Temple (I Kings 8.4).

¹Exodus 25

²Exodus 26

³Exodus 27

⁴Exodus 30