

LESSON 8

THE ARK AND THE TEMPLE

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: A HOUSE FOR GOD (1 KINGS 5-8; 2 CHRONICLES 2-8)

- **SACRED STORY**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES**
- **PIECES: TEMPLE, FURNISHINGS, SOLOMON, SCROLL**
- **UNDERLAY: USE A SOLID-COLORED RUG**

BACKGROUND

When God gave the People of God the Ten Best Ways to Live (the Ten Commandments), God also told Moses how they were to be kept. On their journeys, the people were to remember the Sinai experience by taking the tabernacle with them. The tabernacle complex included both the ark and the tent of meeting. Inside the ark were the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Best Ways.

The wandering people experienced their God as nomadic and free, walking with them in unconfined, holy time. When the People of God came into the promised land, they settled down and their experience of God changed. The tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, but it was lost to the Philistines in the battle of Aphek (1 Samuel 4). The Philistines returned it, when they experienced one trouble after another. There was much sickness, and the statue of their god Dagon fell on its face!

The People of God brought the ark to Kiriath Jerim and kept it at the house of Abinadab who lived on a hill. The ark remained there for twenty years until King David brought it into Jerusalem, dancing at the head of the procession as it was carried into the city (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13-16).

King David set up the ark and the tent of meeting inside the wall of Jerusalem. He wanted to build a house for God, a temple, but through the prophet Nathan, God told David that David's son would build the temple (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17).

When the temple was finally built it reflected a new way of thinking about the experience of God's presence. God now sat in a house of cedar, built by people, thus restricting God's location. Now God was measured out to people in liturgical acts and prayers by an organization of priests. This marked a shift from conceiving of God in terms of holy time to holy space. The theology of the presence of God changed from a theology of God's name (a primarily auditory experience) to a theology of God's glory (a primarily visual experience). The nomadic transitoriness of presence becomes a cultic presence of proximity. God no longer sojourns but abides. Meeting God with openness shifts to an expanding need for certainty about God's presence.

When the priests carried the ark into the temple and placed it in the Holy of Holies, a shining cloud suddenly filled the temple with the dazzling light of God's presence (1 Kings 8:1-13; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14). God was in that place, but there is no place that can contain God. All of God is everywhere. When King Solomon prays at the temple's dedication he gives voice to this tension, but the tendency to think of God as being only in the temple will grow and distort the people's search for the true, living God.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

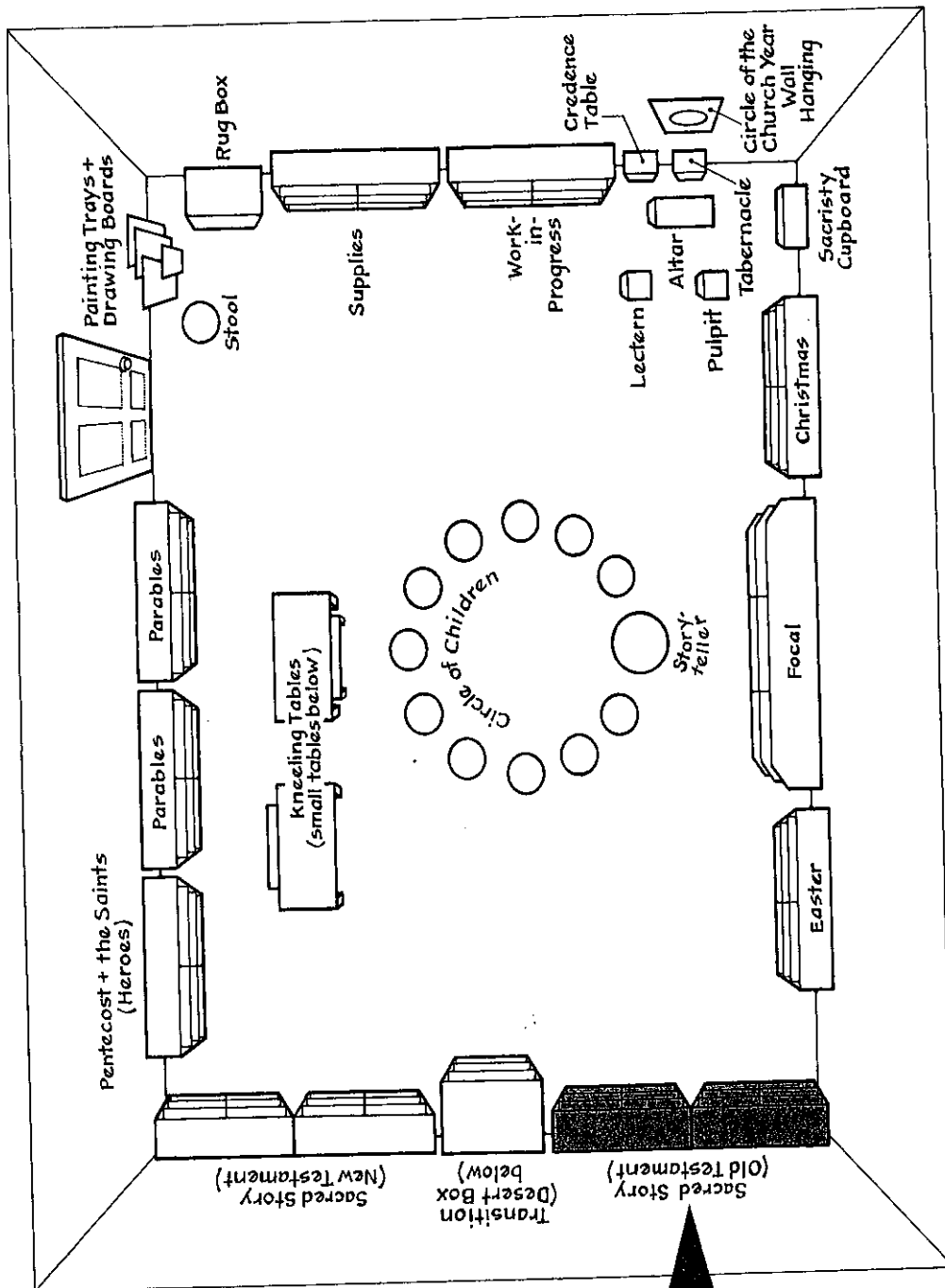
Use a rug to present this lesson. (The People of God are no longer wandering in the desert.) On a tray between the materials for the Ark and Tent and the Exile and Return, you will find the material for the Ark and the Temple. The tray holds a wooden model of the temple together with a small box containing the temple furnishings. The tray also holds a figure of Solomon, mounted on a base so he will stand up by the outside altar during his prayer. The tray also holds a rolled-up text for the paraphrased prayer of Solomon. (See the storytelling tip under Special Notes, below.)

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling tip: In this lesson, you read aloud the prayer of Solomon used in dedicating the temple. Write this prayer onto a scroll, and roll it up. This gives more drama to the moment of prayer in the story. The whole prayer can be found in 1 Kings 8:22-53 and in 2 Chronicles 6:12-42, but this edited paraphrase is a good compromise for the lesson.

O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to thy servants who walk before thee with all their heart...

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication... (1 Kings 8:23, 27-28a).



MOVEMENTS

Get out the rug and bring it to the circle. Unroll it in the middle of the circle. Go to the sacred story shelf and get the material for this presentation.

Move your hand over the rug to show what it represents.

Place the ark in the middle of the rug and, by gesture, show the covering of the tent over it.

Put the base of the temple down on the rug.

Put the pieces of the temple material together on the base as you tell about its building.

Show the children the piece of cedar that covers the floor of the model.

Place the ark, incense burner, table of shewbread and the menorah as they are named.

WORDS

Watch where I go to get this lesson.

The People of God came into the promised land.

When David became king he collected all of the people of God from the north and the south into one group. He took Jerusalem from the Jebusite people and called it the city of David.

David and the People of God began to live in Jerusalem, but something was missing. It was the ark. David and his army went to get the ark.

When they brought the ark in through the great high gate, King David danced before it. They set up the tent of meeting and put the ark inside.

David was not allowed to build a house for God, because he was a man of war. His son Solomon would build the temple.

All of the people had to help build the temple. Some went to the north to Lebanon to cut down and bring home great cedar trees.

They cut stones out of the mountains nearby and prepared the wood and stone to begin.

The temple began to grow, and people were amazed. There was a great hall for people to come close to God, and an inner room, called the Holy of Hollies, which was for the ark. The High Priest entered only on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year. The temple was beautiful, with carvings of olive wood and gold.

The great timbers of cedar made it smell wonderful, like this.

Inside the temple were the same things that helped them get ready to meet God when they were in the desert. The ark was carried inside by the priests. Here is the incense burner. Fragrant smoke filled the temple as the incense burned. Here is the table with the bread for each of the twelve tribes on it. And finally, here is the menorah with its seven branches and lamps burning.

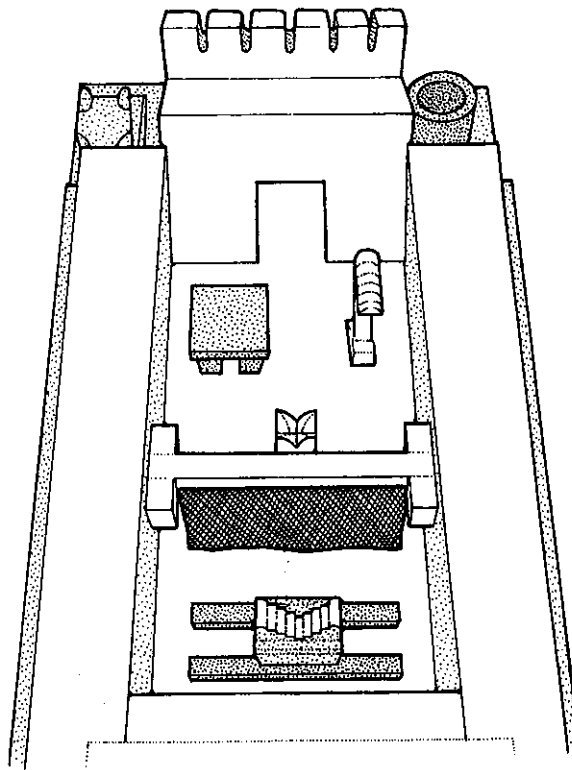
MOVEMENTS

WORDS

On the day the priests first carried the ark inside, a great cloud of dazzling light filled the temple. God was there.

Point to the altar and basin of water as they are named.

⇒ In front of the temple was the altar as it had been in front of the tent, but now it was bigger. The same was true for the great basin of water, the laver.



THE COMPLETED TEMPLE (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Place the King Solomon figure by the outside altar for sacrifices. Unroll the scroll to read the prayer of Solomon.

⇒ On the day all was ready, the King came before all the people and prayed. He said, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to thy servants who walk before thee with all their heart.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication." He asked God to allow God's Name to abide in the temple. He asked God to make this the place for people to come to pray and to find justice.

MOVEMENTS

Sit back and be silent for a moment. Reflect quietly about the story as you prepare for the wondering questions.

Sit back again. This is to introduce a special kind of wondering question.

When all the wondering is finished, put the materials away. Invite the children, one by one, to get out their work.

WORDS

Solomon ruled well and was wise. Some said he was wiser than anyone in the world. His father had been famous for his songs and war, but Solomon was famous for his wise sayings and the temple.

Finally, after being king for forty years, Solomon died and was buried in the city of David, where his father was buried and Solomon's son was made king.

⇒ Now, I wonder what part of the story you liked best?

I wonder what part of the story is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story? I wonder what part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we could leave out and still have the story?

⇒ When you go to Jerusalem today, the temple is gone. It was destroyed when the People of God were taken into exile. It was rebuilt but destroyed again and rebuilt again in Jesus' time by Herod. In 70 A.D. Herod's temple was destroyed by the Roman army. Only pieces are left today.

If the temple is gone and no one can find the ark, I wonder where the Ten Best Ways are kept today?