

## **LESSON 7**

# **THE ARK AND THE TENT**

### **LESSON NOTES**

**FOCUS: GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE TABERNACLE  
(EXODUS 25-31, 35-40)**

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

### **THE MATERIAL**

- **LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES**
- **PIECES: DESERT BOX, ARK, TENT AND COVERINGS, FURNISHINGS, PEOPLE OF GOD**
- **UNDERLAY: NONE**

### **BACKGROUND**

There are two Hebrew words that we translate into English as "ark." One word refers to the giant boat that Noah built. The other word refers to the ark of the covenant. This latter was a box or chest that contained at least the tablets of the commandments, and, according to some traditions, the rod of Aaron and a vessel of manna.

Moses experienced God's presence on the mountain, but also in the tent of meeting. In addition, God's presence was in—or more likely seated on—a throne above the ark of YHWH. The two traditions of the tent and the ark came together in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was so important that it was described in detail twice, first in Exodus 25-31, as what, on Mount Sinai, God told Moses to make, and secondly in Exodus 35-40, as a description of what was made following the directions given to Moses.

### **NOTES ON THE MATERIAL**

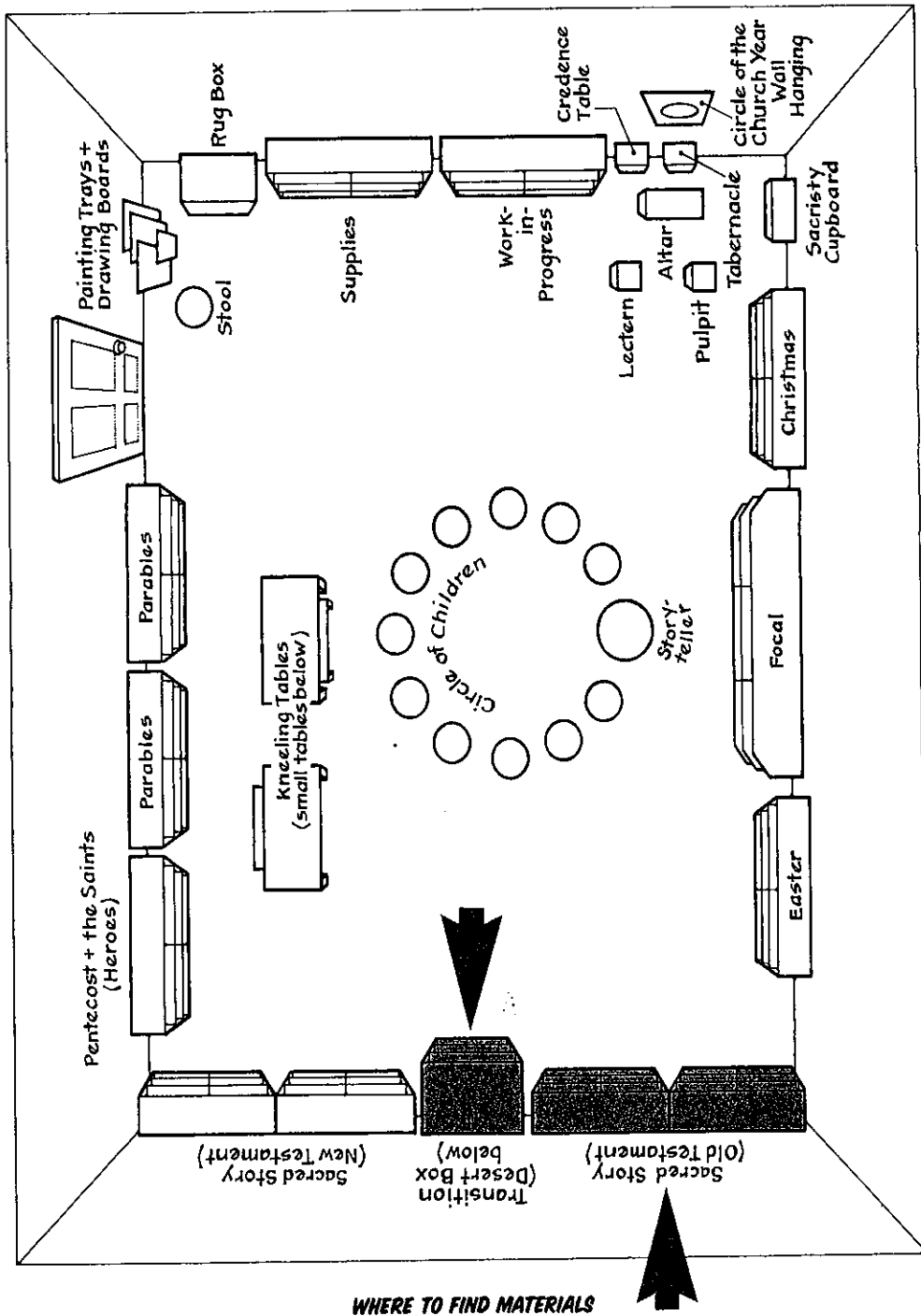
Use a desert box to present this lesson. You'll find a tray with the material for this lesson on the top sacred story shelf, to the right of the Ten Best Ways material as you face the shelf. On the tray, there is a basket that holds the ark, the incense altar, a seven-branched lamp and a table for the twelve pieces of bread.

You'll also find the tent and its furnishings: the walls of the tent, a wooden altar overlaid with bronze for sacrifices, a bronze laver for washing and four rolled-up cloths. The cloths represent the four coverings of the tent, placed on the tent in this order: blue linen (with purple and scarlet yarns and cherubim worked into it), goat's hair woven into a cloth, tanned ram's skins dyed red and goat skins as a leather outer covering.

Finally, you'll need the People of God figures used in the stories of Exodus and the Ten Best Ways.

### ***SPECIAL NOTES***

**Classroom management:** When you lay out this story, you won't put up all the walls provided in the material. The children, when working on their own, can build a complete tabernacle, but you will want to leave one side open, so that children can see what happens inside the tabernacle. In the same way, you won't put the four cloths completely over the tabernacle, but leave them partially rolled up so children can see into the tabernacle throughout the story.



## MOVEMENTS

*Bring the desert box to the circle. Go to the shelves and bring the tray with the materials as described.*

*Place the ark in the middle of the desert box.*

*Place one of the people in the sand and move it toward the ark, then away again.*

*Put down the altar of incense to your left of the ark.*

*Move the figure through the imaginary smoke, past the altar of incense, to the ark and then move the figure back to its starting place.*

*Put down the table of bread and the seven-branched lampstand.*

*Move the figure between the table and menorah, through the imaginary smoke, past the altar of incense, to the ark and then move the figure back to its starting place.*

## WORDS

☞ Watch where I go to get this lesson.

☞ When God gave the people the Ten Best Ways to live, they loved them so much that they wanted to have them always with them. God told them to build a box called an ark to keep them in and to cover the ark with gold. It had poles on the sides, so the people could always carry it with them wherever they went.

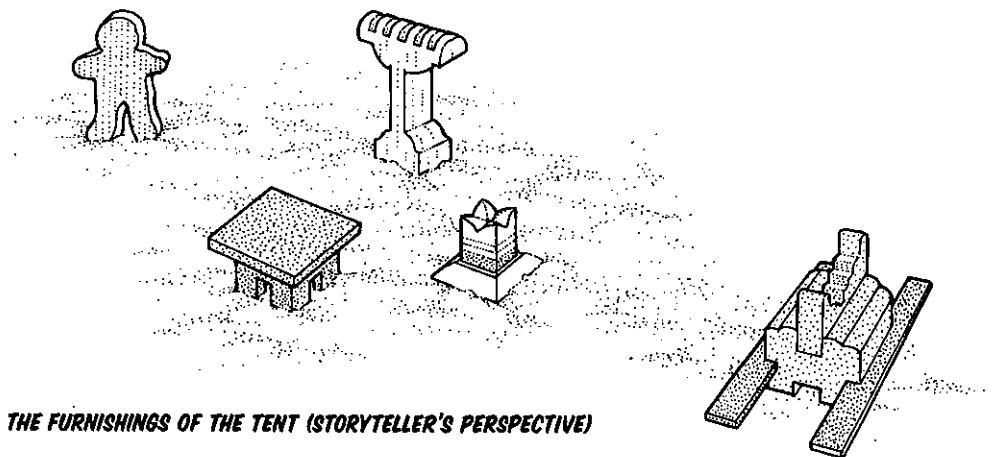
☞ You can't just walk up to something so precious as the Ten Commandments. You need some way to get ready. They wondered what they could do.

☞ God told them to put an altar of incense in front of the ark. They could burn the incense to make a good-smelling cloud of smoke.

☞ You could walk through the smoke and smell its aroma. That could help you get ready. But that was not enough.

☞ God then told them to put a table with twelve pieces of bread on one side and a seven-branched lampstand called a menorah on the other side.

☞ People would walk between the table with a piece of bread for each of the twelve tribes of Israel on one side and the menorah on the other side. That could also help them get ready, but that still was not enough.



THE FURNISHINGS OF THE TENT (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

## MOVEMENTS

*Build the fixed walls of the tabernacle, but leave open the side facing the children.*

*Put the wooden interior wall with a curtain to separate the Holy of Holies.*

*Put the four coverings over the fixed walls of the tent.*

*Place the figure outside the tent, standing in the sand.*

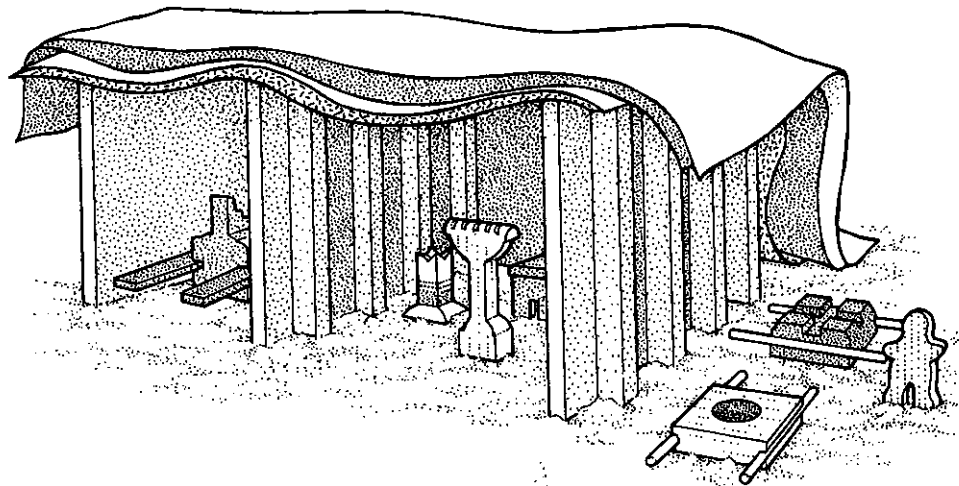
## WORDS

⇒ Next they decided to put the walls of a tent around the ark, the incense altar, the table and the menorah to keep this place set apart, to help get ready to come close to God's presence.

⇒ Inside the tent they made a place called Holy of Holies.

⇒ Over the roof they put four coverings. One was linen, with purple and red figures of cherubim woven into it. Another one was made from woven goats' hair. The third one was ram's skin dyed red, and finally the outer one was tanned goatskins. But that still was not enough.

⇒ Now only the priests could go inside.



**THE COMPLETED TENT (CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE)**

*Place the bronze altar and the bronze laver outside.*

*Trace with your finger the outline of a fence surrounding the whole complex.*

⇒ Next they put in front of the tent an altar covered with bronze for sacrifices. They also made a huge bowl of bronze that the priests could wash in to get ready for prayer, and put that in front too.

⇒ Then outside the whole tent and courtyard they put a fence made of cloth that could be rolled up and carried with them when they traveled. It marked the whole, special area, called the tabernacle.

## MOVEMENTS

*Point to the figure in front of the tent.*

☛ This was not all. The priests began to wear special clothes to help them get ready to go inside this special place.

When all of the tabernacle was finished, Moses blessed it. Aaron and all of his sons were made the priests, and they took the tent and the ark wherever the People of God traveled. The Levites helped them care for the tabernacle and conduct the worship there.

God gave Aaron and his sons these words to bless the People of God: "The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

*Sit back for a moment and enjoy the whole layout of the tabernacle. Then begin the wondering.*

☛ Now, I wonder what part of this story you like best?

I wonder what part of the story is most important part?

*The children, especially the girls, may already have spoken out, because the boys were the only ones who could go inside the tent. If they have not, leave plenty of room and feel the permission for them to speak, but let them make the discovery and reflect on its fairness. They will.*

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

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

*When the wondering is finished, take the tabernacle apart with care and place it on the tray. Return the tray to the shelf and take the desert box back to its place in the room. Return to the circle and begin to help the children decide what work they will get out today.*