



The Altar in the Courtyard

Exodus 27:1-19

Ambassadors Sunday School Class, January 18, 2026

THEME Ex. 27:1-19

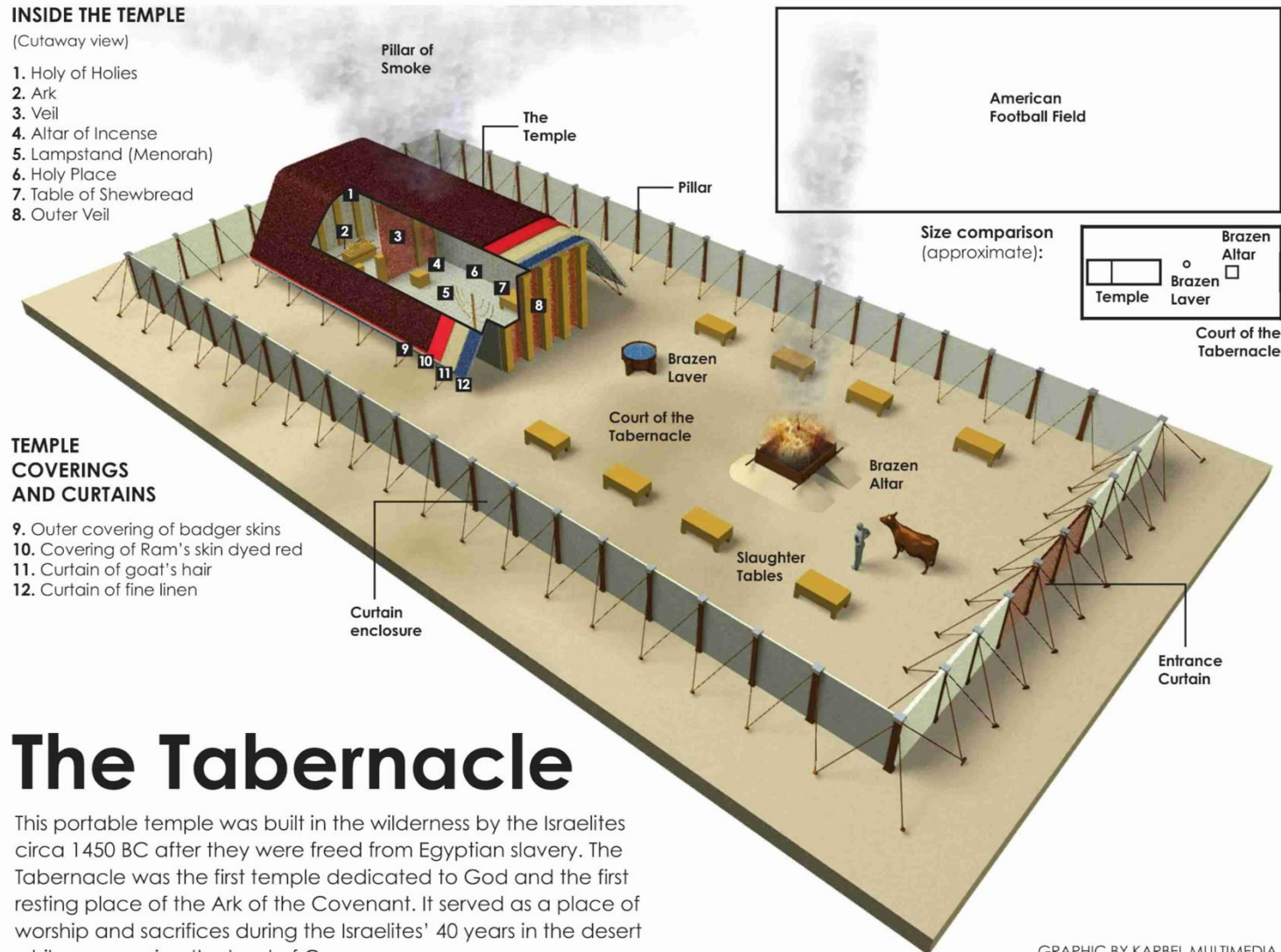
- Sinful man dare not approach God; but God approaches man as a sinner through Christ. The redeemed sinner is safe in the courts of God. (cf. Hebrews 9)

THE PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

(Cutaway view)

1. Holy of Holies
2. Ark
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Lampstand (Menorah)
6. Holy Place
7. Table of Shewbread
8. Outer Veil

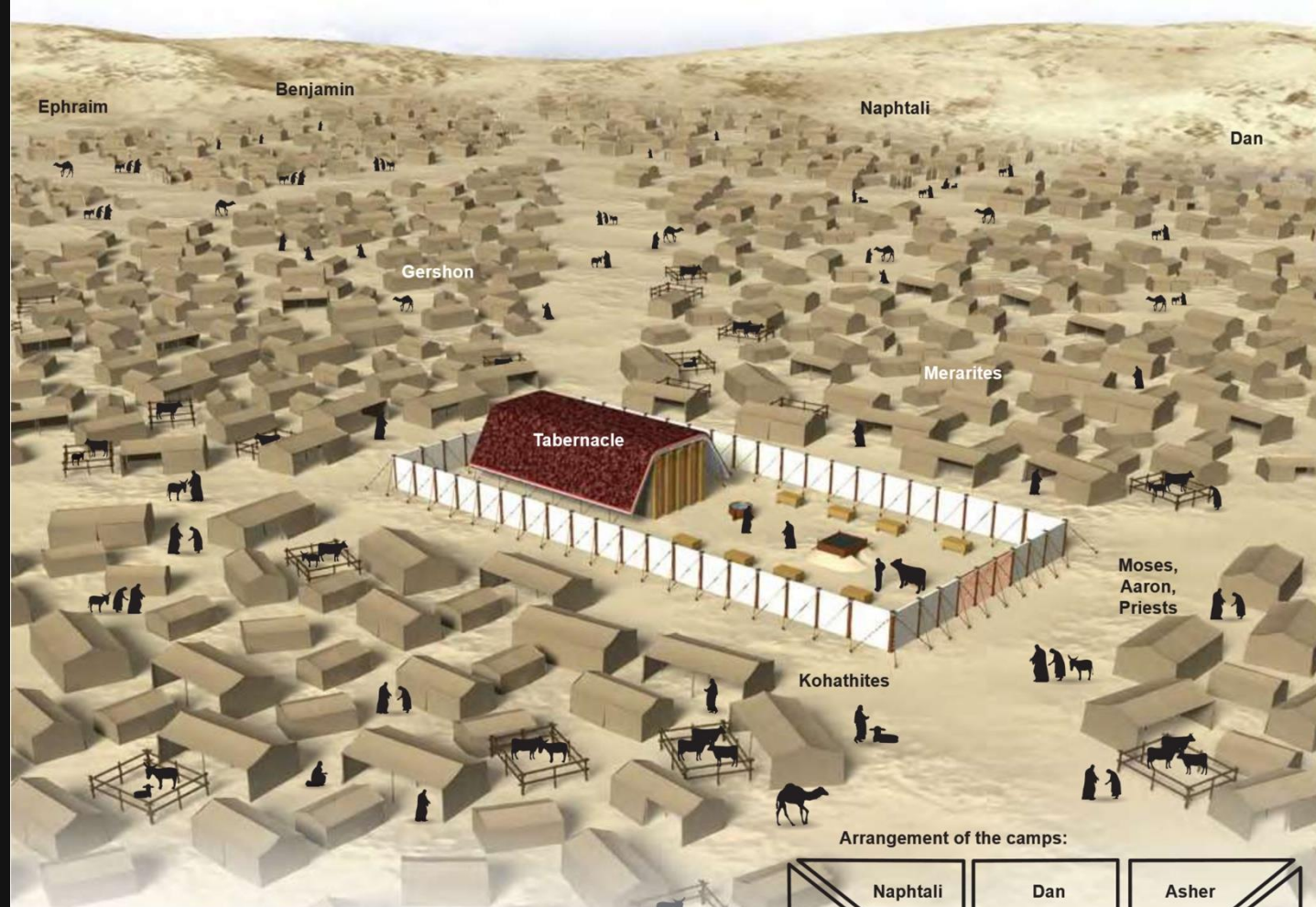


TEMPLE COVERINGS AND CURTAINS

9. Outer covering of badger skins
10. Covering of Ram's skin dyed red
11. Curtain of goat's hair
12. Curtain of fine linen

The Tabernacle

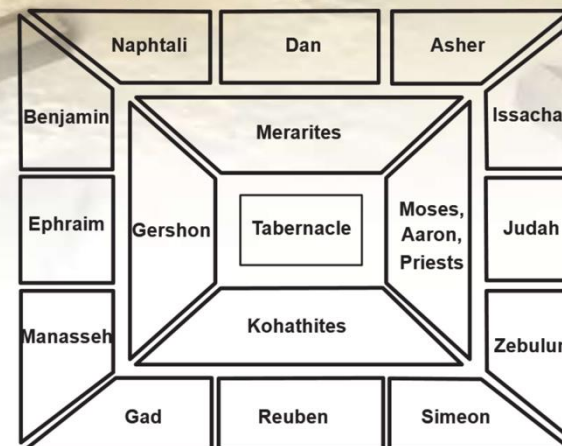
This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.



The Israelite Encampment

The Book of Numbers describes the layout of the encampment during Israel's 40 years of wilderness wanderings (2:1–34). The tribes encamped around the tabernacle, both in order to stay close to the tent of meeting and to defend it during attack. The four sides were surrounded by four groups, led by Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. The Levites—specially chosen to be close to God—camped around all sides of the tabernacle.

Arrangement of the camps:



THE ALTAR OF BRONZE (verses 1-8)



SITUATION OF THE ALTAR



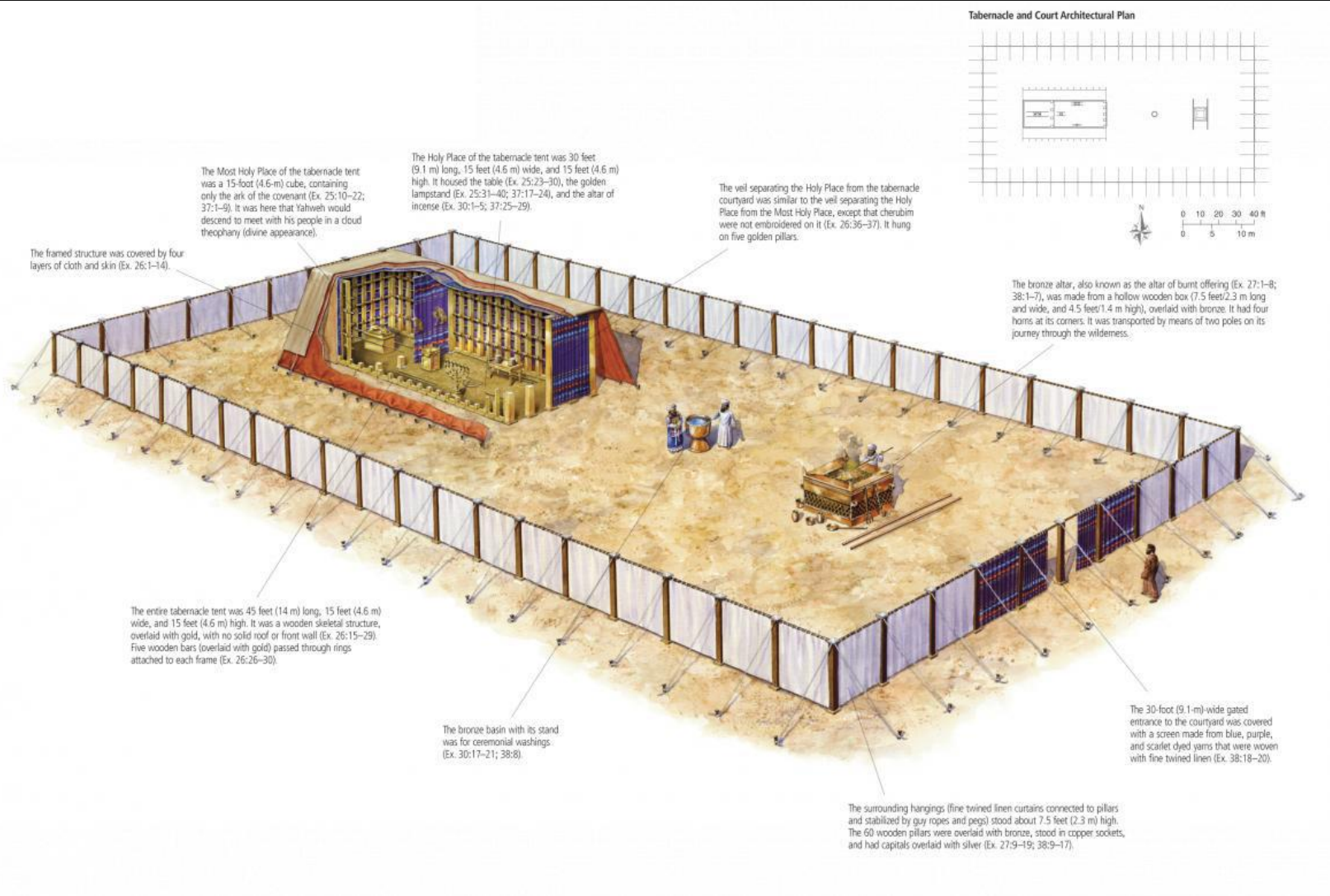
THE ALTAR OF BRONZE

- Moses is instructed to make a portable bronze-plated altar; a square hollow framework made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze.
- No one could approach the tent's entrance without being reminded of the important function of sacrifices in atoning for sin (see Lev. 1:1–7:38)
- Without such sacrifices no human could approach YHWH safely.

ENTERING THE COURTYARD



GOD'S COURTYARD (verses 9-19)



- Entry into the courtyard of God's dwelling place was not gained just generally and freely from all quarters
- Clearly there was only one way to enter this incredibly special place
- This courtyard creates a holy area, with only the tent in which God dwells being more sacred.

BY THE BLOOD

- In the Old Testament, the only place to gain access to God was the tabernacle, and later the temple. The first step was to walk through the entrance into the courtyard
- The most important reason the Israelites loved to enter God's courts—the one that put the song in their hearts—was that in the courtyard they received forgiveness (Ps 84:2, 100:4)
- Consider how significant this is for our understanding of what it means to have a relationship with God

BY THE BLOOD (continued)

- This is what God's justice requires, "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a), and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).
- God declares that there is justification by faith in Jesus "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiatory sacrifice [atonement] by His blood through faith". (Rom. 3:25a).
- If we trust in Jesus, then a sacrifice has already been made for our sin, and we have a relationship with the living God

THE Altar OF GOD

- There was one altar for the entire nation, and it was in almost constant use
- The five main kinds of required sacrifices are described in the opening chapters of Leviticus
- God said, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' (Lev. 17:11)

THE Altar OF GOD (continued)

- But it still wasn't enough! The people were always committing more sins, so there were always more sacrifices to make
- The Old Testament sacrifices were intended to overwhelm
- Scripture says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Heb. 10:4)
- What people need is a perfect sacrifice, one that does away with sin once and for all. (i.e. Jesus, see Heb. 9:24-26)

OUR ALTAR IS CHRIST

- The great Puritan theologian John Owen said, “The altar which we now have is *Christ alone*, and his sacrifice. For he was both priest, altar, and sacrifice, all in himself.”
- No more sacrifice for sin is needed: “Now where there is forgiveness of these things [sins and lawless deeds], there is no longer any offering for sin.” (Heb. 10:18)

ONE SACRIFICE WE CAN MAKE

- God no longer commands us to *bring* a sacrifice, but he does want us to *become* one!
- He says, “present your bodies a living [not dead on the brazen altar] and holy sacrifice [cleansed permanently through Jesus’ blood], acceptable to God [through faith in Jesus], which is your spiritual service [not under the Law but in His Spirit] of worship.” Rom. 12:1 [my additions]

STRIKING FACT

- In Jesus, God comes down in grace to the sinner. In Jesus the sinner is brought up in righteousness to God. This is our **only** grounds of standing before God, faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross.

NEXT WEEK

- Exodus 27:2 - 28:14
- Priest Dress Code Pt. 1