

The Ark and the Tent

Exodus 25–31, 35–40

Moses experienced God’s presence on Mt. Sinai, 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 (a box or chest that contained at least the tablets of the commandments, and possibly the rod of Aaron and a vessel of manna). The two traditions of the tent and the ark came together in the tabernacle, described in today’s story.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration on the back page and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today’s Godly Play presentation. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today’s story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or

her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today’s presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today’s lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying “Amen.”

The Presentation

When God gave the People the Ten Best Ways to live, they loved them so much that they wanted to have them with them. God told them to build a box called an ark to keep them in and to cover the ark with gold. The people carried it with them wherever they went.

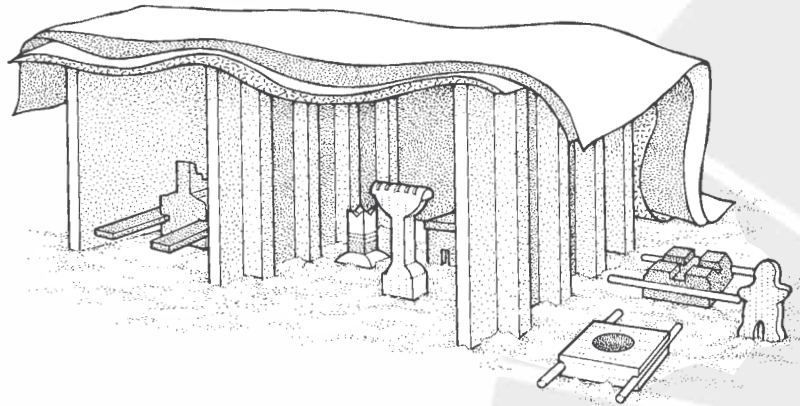
You can’t just walk up to something so precious as the Ten Commandments. You need some way to get ready. The People wondered what they could do. God told them to put an altar of incense in front of the ark. They could burn the incense to make a good-smelling cloud of smoke.

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.

Next they put a tent around the ark, the incense altar, the table and the menorah to keep this place set apart. Inside the tent they made a place called the *Holy of Holies*.

Wondering

- **I wonder** what part of this story you like best?
- **I wonder** what part of the story is most important part?
- **I wonder** where you are in the story? What part of the story is about you?



In front of the tent they put an altar made of bronze for sacrifices. They made a huge bowl of bronze for the priests to wash in and put that in front too.

Outside 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*.

This was not all. The priests began to wear special clothes to help them get ready to go inside this special place. Moses blessed the tabernacle when it was finished. Aaron and all of his sons were made the priests, and they took the tent and the ark wherever the People of God traveled.

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).

Godly Play Connections

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Children (and adults!) often make surprising connections in Godly Play. Themes come alive as children experience the stories of the People of God.

Over the years, many theme phrases have found their ways into Godly Play stories, repeated from story to story. Here are several examples:

- The desert is a dangerous place. People don't go into the desert unless they have to.

- They were on the same journey we are.
- There was once someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people followed him.

We experience these connections and themes in many ways, but perhaps with special force in the three larger themes around which Godly Play presentations are organized: *sacred stories*, *parables* and *liturgical actions*. In the next few Parent Pages, we explore each of these individually.