

## **The Ark of the Testimony**

### **Exodus 25:10-11**

Exodus 25:10-11 (NKJV) 10 "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. 11 And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around.

If we were to begin to describe the Tabernacle we would begin with the outside fence and the door that led to the courtyard. Then we would describe the altar and the laver. Then we could work our way inward to the Holy of Holies.

But when God describes the tabernacle He looks at it from His point of view. He begins with the Ark of the Testimony and then works His way outward.

So as God begins to tell Moses how the tabernacle is to be, He begins with the Ark of the Testimony.

#### I. The Ark of the Testimony - its names.

##### A. Ark of the Testimony.

1. First it is described as the Ark of the Testimony because it contained the Law of God written on tables of stone.
2. It was God's word to the Israelites that set them apart from the nations.
3. God had revealed Himself to their Patriarchs and now finally to the nation as a whole.
4. It was this written testimony that stood for the relationship with this new nation.
5. This term is used 13 times, 10 in Exodus, twice in Numbers and once in Joshua.

##### B. It is also called the Ark of the Covenant.

1. This is based on the covenant that God voluntarily entered into with the Children of Israel.
2. This term is used 41 times.
3. 39 times in Numbers - 2 Chronicles and once in Jeremiah and once in Hebrews.

##### C. It is also called the Ark of the Lord.

1. This is found 35 times, all in the historical books of Joshua - 2 Chronicles

##### D. It is also called the Ark of God 33 times over the same books.

## II. Description of the Ark of the Testimony.

- A. Exodus 25: 10 ¶ "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. 11 "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. 12 "You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. 13 "And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 "You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. 15 "The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.
- B. Based on an 18 inch cubit it would have been 45 inches long by 27 inches wide by 27 inches high.
- C. It was made of acacia wood and would that was impervious and would not rot.
- D. It was then overlaid with pure gold inside and out with a crown work around the top.
- E. On each corner there was to be a ring through which a pole of the same wood covered with gold could be passed and thus it was to be carried on the shoulders of the priest.

## III. The lid or the mercy seat.

- A. 17 "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. 18 "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 "Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. 20 "And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. 21 "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. 22 "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.
- B. This lid was called the lid of atonement until the days of Martin Luther who in his translation paraphrased it as the mercy seat. Our English translations have followed. See NET Bible footnote here.
  - 1. The noun is (kapporet), translated "atonement lid" or "atonement plate." The traditional translation "mercy-seat" (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) came from Tyndale in 1530 and was also used by Luther in 1523. The noun is formed from the word "to make atonement." The item that the Israelites should make would be more than just a lid for the ark. It would be the

place where atonement was signified. The translation of “covering” is probably incorrect, for it derives from a rare use of the verb, if the same verb at all (the evidence shows “cover” is from another root with the same letters as this). The value of this place was that Yahweh sat enthroned above it, and so the ark essentially was the “footstool.” Blood was applied to the lid of the box, for that was the place of atonement (see S. R. Driver, Exodus, 269–270). Biblical Studies Press. (2005). The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible. Biblical Studies Press.

- C. Unlike the Ark it had no wood but was pure gold.
  - D. The lid was the same size as the surface area of the ark.
  - E. It also had two cherubim, one on each end facing one another with their wings extended over the mercy seat.
  - F. It was here, between the cherubim that God would appear and communicate with Moses.
    - 1. Verse 22 makes it clear that the Ark was the meeting-place, the place of fellowship and communion, and the symbol of the presence of the covenant God in the midst of his people. It was the symbol which gave meaning to the whole Tabernacle structure. It taught that the only way in which God and man may commune is on the basis of obedience to God’s law and commandments. Campbell, I. D. (2006). Opening up Exodus (p. 106). Leominster: Day One Publications.
  - G. It was here that the blood was applied on the Day of Atonement, thus “lid of atonement” or “atonement lid”.
    - 1. In the time of the Tabernacle, the mercy seat was made a place of propitiation when the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on it once a year. The mercy seat, typifying the divine throne of God, was transformed from a throne of judgment to a throne of grace when it was sprinkled with the atoning blood. Today, sinners have a mercy seat in the blood-sprinkled body of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as an atonement to expiate sin. Levy, D. M. (1993). The tabernacle: shadows of the Messiah: its sacrifices, services, and priesthood. Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.
    - 2. The Ark contained the law which we all have broken.
    - 3. The mercy seat or lid of atonement is the place of atonement, or covering or our sins and forgiveness.
- IV. Everything in the tabernacle speaks of Jesus Christ.
- A. The ark was made of wood which stood for the humanity of Jesus.
    - 1. It was incorruptible as Jesus was sinless, harmless and undefiled.

- B. The gold represents His Deity, as God in the flesh.
- C. He is God who requires the sacrifice, the Priest who offers the sacrifice, as well as the sacrifice its self.
  - 1. Romans 3:23-26 (NKJV) 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Heb 9: 2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; 3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, 4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.