

TABERNACLE'S JOURNEYS

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Excerpt from Apples of Gold

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

1490 BC. Work on the Tabernacle began c.1 August 1491 BC: first erected at **Mt. Sinai** (Abib 1, Exo. 40:17, Sat. 4 April) 11½ months after the Exodus (Abib 15, 1491 BC, March 30).

1451 BC. Shortly before crossing the Jordan River, Moses granted the request of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to settle east of the river on the condition they would join the other tribes in taking the western side from the Canaanites (Num. 32). After crossing Jordan, the camp and Tabernacle were set up at **Gilgal** (Abib 10, Josh. 4:19, Thursday April 2nd). Being centrally located, Gilgal remained Israel's base camp the entire time they conducted a seven year war with the Canaanites (cp. Josh. 14:6).

1445 BC. The seven year war with the Canaanites ended near the end of this year and Joshua then began to divide the land on the west side of the Jordan by giving the tribes of Judah and Joseph (i.e., Ephraim and the rest of Manasseh) their portions (Josh. 15 & 16).

1444 BC. Early this year, the Tabernacle was moved to **Shiloh** (Josh. 18:1, 19:51; Judg. 18:31). The rest of the land west of the Jordan was then divided among the remaining 7 tribes (Joshua 11:23, ch. 15–17), and the men from the 2½ tribes east of the Jordan returned home. Before this, Israel had lived off the crops the Canaanites had planted, volunteer crops, and supplies from the 2½ eastern tribes (Josh. 5:12, 24:13, 4:12–13; cp. Num. 26:7, 18, and 34). This began their tillage; hence, from this year are reckoned the Sabbatic and Jubilee years (1444 – 49 = 1395 BC, the first Jubilee year; see Lev. 25:3, “six years thou shalt...gather in the fruit thereof”).

1444 to 1122 BC. The Tabernacle **remained at Shiloh** (1 Sam. 2:22) these **322 years** until, in the days of 98 year old Eli and the young man Samuel, the Philistines captured **the Ark** (which the Jews had carried into battle; 1 Sam. 4:11) and **razed Shiloh** (Jer. 7:12, 26:6; Psa. 78:60-61).

Though not directly recorded in Scripture, it is obvious that before the triumphant Philistines could travel from the field of combat to Shiloh, the Israelites had removed the Tabernacle to a place of safety. This we know, for it is recorded as being at Nob in the days of Saul and David and near the end of Samuel's life – some 57 years later (1065 BC).

1121 BC. After keeping **the Ark** of the Covenant 7 months (1 Sam. 6:1), the Philistines returned it to Bethshemesh. The men of Kiriath-jearim came and, with Shiloh destroyed, brought it to the **home of Abinadab** at Gibeah, where it remained for 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2; 2 Sam. 6:3).

1101 BC. Samson began to break the Philistine 40-year dominion by bringing down the house of their god and thereby slaying over 3,000 of their leaders (1 Sam. 7:3-14, 16:23-31). Soon after, and with **the Ark's** having been 20 years in the care of Abinadab's son Eleazar, Samuel gathered all Israel to Mizpah, judged their sin and brought them to repentance. The Lord responded with a mighty deliverance and completed breaking the 40-year dominion.

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1065 BC. We next find the Tabernacle at **Nob** (a priest town, apparently near Jerusalem, Isaiah 10:32). David fled there from Saul whereupon Ahimelech the high priest gave him and his men the showbread and Goliath's sword. As a result, Saul had 85 priests slain and Nob destroyed. But Ahimelech's son Abiathar escaped and came to David with the Ephod (1 Sam. 21:1-23:6).

1047 BC. Soon after becoming king over all the 12 tribes (in 1048), David sent to the **house of Abinadab** (located on *hill* Gibeah [cp. 1 Sam. 7:1] in Kiriath-jearim where **the Ark** had stayed for 74 years: 1121 – 1047 = 74). He intended to bring it into Jerusalem, his new capital city. However, instead of having the Levites transport it by its staves as Moses instructed (Exo. 25:14; Num. 4:15, 7:9), it was placed on an oxcart just as the Philistines had done. The oxen stumbled and when Uzza seized the Ark to steady it, God slew him (2 Sam. 6:1-7; 1 Chr. 13:1-10).

Fearing the Lord over the Uzza incident, David had the Ark placed in the house of Obed-edom, a Gittite, for three months (2 Sam. 6:9-11; 1 Chr. 13:12-14). When David saw that the Lord had blessed Obed-edom, he brought the Ark to Jerusalem in the way God had directed (2 Sam. 6:12; 1 Chr. 15:1-15, 25-28) and placed it inside the tent the king had pitched for it (1 Chr. 16:1, 37).

1047 BC. At this point, the **Tabernacle** was **divided**. **The Ark** was brought into **Zion** and put inside **David's tent** (i.e., the tabernacle of David; 2 Sam. 6:17, cp. Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16), but the Tabernacle itself and the brazen Altar of sacrifice were removed (from Nob?) to the high place at **Gibeon** (1 Chr. 16:38-40, 21:29; 2 Chr. 1:3-6, about six miles northwest of Jerusalem).

1004 BC. The Bible's last mention of the Tabernacle is when Solomon dedicated the Temple in **Jerusalem**. Having completed building the latter in the *eighth* month of his 11th year (Oct. or Nov., 1005 BC, 1 Ki. 6:38), the king dedicated it in the feast of the *seventh* month (1 Ki. 8:1-2; 2 Chr. 5:2-3: the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the 15th day of that month – Lev. 23:34, esp. note: 2 Chr. 7:8-10) of the *following* year (demanded as the dedication in the seventh month follows its completion in the eighth month of the narrative).

At this time, Solomon had the priests bring **the Ark** of the Covenant, the ancient wilderness **Tabernacle** and all its Holy vessels into the Temple where they were **rejoined** after 118 years (1 Ki. 8:3-11; 2 Chr. 5:4-14: separated in 1122 BC until 1004 BC = 118 years).

586 BC. In the 19th year of his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set Jerusalem as well as Solomon's Temple on fire and broke down the city walls on the seventh day of the fifth Hebrew month (9 August, Wednesday; 2 Ki. 25:8-10). Presumably, the Tabernacle perished at this time.

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Much speculation has been written over the years concerning the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant. Without going into any of these vacuous theories, the Word of God tells us that it is in the true Temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19). Furthermore, the Lord revealed through the prophet Jeremiah that when Messiah Jesus returns and establishes the Millennial Kingdom, the Ark will no longer be of any consequence to mankind. Although it pleased the Creator for Israel to use the Ark and learn of Him from it (as well as us today) for the 904 years from 1090 BC to 586 BC, the time will come when it will neither be spoken of, come to mind nor even be missed (Jer. 3:16-17). This is because the Lord of Glory Himself, of whom it spoke, will dwell among His people. The shadow will be replaced by the substance (Heb. 10:1, cp. 8:5).