

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God

Taken from **1Samuel 10** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#))

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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Since, Bethel is mentioned, it might be worth our while to follow the movement of the Ark and the Sacred Tent of God at this point. So that there is no confusion, the Tabernacle of God was really a fancy semi-permanent tent which Israel built out in the desert.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 1		
Scripture	Place	Pertinent Notes
Ex. 19:1 25–27 30–31:11	The desert near Mount Sinai.	The Ark and the Tent of God were planned for by God and the directions were given to Moses.
Ex. 33	Apparently from the beginning of movement of Israel and onward.	There appears to be a prototype Tent of God which Moses and Joshua used in order to meet with God. It is possible that this is the actual Tent of God, however.
Ex. 33:6 34:1–4 35:10–38:31 40	At the foot of Mount Sinai.	The Tent was completed and erected twelve months after leaving Egypt (Ex. 40:2, 17 Num. 33:3).
Ex. 40:34–38 Num. 1:48–53 33	With Moses and the Israelites in their desert travels.	The Ark and Tent would have logically traveled with Moses and the Israelites the land to the Land of Promise. When the cloud of glory would lift up above the tent, then Israel would move out in the direction of the cloud. The Levites were in charge of the Tent of God.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 1

Joshua 3	Crossing the Jordan River .	Although certainly both the Ark and the Tent crossed over the Jordan River with the Israelites, the Ark was in focus here.
Joshua 4:19 5:10 9:6 10:6, 43	Israel's temporary headquarters at Gilgal	Although the Tent of God is not mentioned in these passages, we may reasonably infer that prior to the conquest of Israel, the Tent had to be somewhere. Being at Israel's temporary camp in Gilgal is the only logical place for these things to be.

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The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark		The Tabernacle	
Scripture	Notes	Scripture	Notes
Joshua 6	The Ark was taken into battle when Israel invaded Jericho .	Joshua 4:19 5:10 9:6 10:6, 43	The Tent of God apparently remained in Gilgal (there is no reason for it to have moved).
None	It would be reasonable to assume that the Ark remained with the Tent of Meeting in Shiloh at this time.	Joshua 18:1 19:51	The Tent of Meeting was set up in Shiloh , a central location in Ephraim, after the land had been conquered.
Judges 20:26– 28	The Ark of the Covenant was located in Bethel of Benjamin for a portion of the time of the judges (this was actually early on in the period of the judges).	None	Given that Phinehas ben Eleazar, grandson of Aaron ministered before the Ark, it is reasonable that the Tent was there in Bethel as well.
None	Again, we would assume the Ark and the Tent would be together, even during this time of great degeneracy.	Judges 18:31	For most of the period of the judges, the Tent was located in Shiloh .
1Sam. 1:3 3:3 4:1–4	Both the Ark and the Tent were located in Shiloh .	1Sam. 1:3 3:3	Both the Ark and the Tent were located in Shiloh .
1Sam. 4	The Ark of God is taken into battle against the Philistines in Ebenezer and captured by the Philistines	None	There is no indication that the Tent of God was moved.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark		The Tabernacle	
1Sam. 5	Ashdod , then Gath and then Ekron (all cities of the Philistines).	None	There is no indication that the Tent of God was moved.
1Sam. 6	Beth-shemesh of Israel. The Israelites did not treat the Ark with proper reverence and, as a result, many Beth-shemites died.	None	There is no indication that the Tent of God was moved. It was probably still in Shiloh .
1Sam. 7:1–2	Kiriath-jearim , where the Ark apparently remained for a long period of time.	1Sam. 7:2 Psalm 78:60 Jer. 7:1, 12–15 26:4–6, 9	At some point in time, Shiloh was abandoned as the place of God; given the Israelite's mixed success/failure against the Philistines during the time of Eli and Samuel, and given Israel's success against the Philistines, beginning with Saul and continuing with David, it would be reasonable to suppose that this is the period of time that the Philistines destroyed Shiloh. Now I postulate that this destruction took place during the 20 year period alluded to in 1Sam. 7:2, if not immediately previous to this.*

*I covered this destruction of Shiloh in great detail in 1Sam. 7:2a, which was exegeted in 1Sam. 6.

Now, it is important, at this point, to note two things: (1) the Tent of God was not destroyed in Shiloh. In 2Chron. 1:3–4, Solomon will fetch the *original* Tent of Meeting from Gibeon. This means that, no matter what, the original Tent of Meeting survived the destruction of Shiloh. (2) The Ark of God never returned to Shiloh, but remained in the custody of Abinadab's family from the time of Samuel until the time of David (1Sam. 7:1–2a 1Chron. 15:1, 12 16:1). So, the Tent of God moved at least once from Shiloh to Gibeon after the destruction of Shiloh and the Ark moved exactly twice from Beth-shemesh to Kiriath-jearim and from Kiriath-jearim to Beth-shemesh. Wherever else the Tent moved to in between Shiloh and Gibeon is a matter of speculation.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark		The Tabernacle	
None	Still in Kiriath-jearim .	1Sam. 7:5–11	Samuel offers a burnt offering to God in Mizpah , after 20 years of oppression by the Philistines. Nowhere is the Tent of God mentioned.
None	Still in Kiriath-jearim .	1Sam. 10:3	Samuel tells Saul (Saul is not yet king over Israel) that he will run into three men who are going up to encounter God in Bethel . This would <i>imply</i> that the Tent of God was in Bethel at this time. However, bear in mind that in 1Sam. 9, Samuel presides over a sacrifice in his hometown of Ramah . Since the Tent of God cannot be in both places and since it certainly did not move from one to the other in this context, this allows for the fact that the Tent was neither in Bethel or Ramah .
None	Still in Kiriath-jearim .	1Sam. 10:8 11:14–15	Samuel will declare Saul king over Israel before the Lord in Gilgal . Sacrifices will be offered. The Tent of God is not mentioned, but the ceremonies herein imply that it could be here.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark

The Tabernacle

Now, it should be obvious, particularly when we exegete v. 3 and v. 8 (1Sam. 10) that the Tent of God could not be in Bethel and then Gilgal, because Samuel refers to these two places in almost the same breath. The Tent did not move overnight from one place to the other. The same holds true for Ramah and Bethel. Saul begins with Samuel in Ramah where a sacrifice is offered; then Saul travels to Bethel, where he will run into three prophets carrying three baby goats (obviously to be sacrificed). Therefore, we would not expect the Tent of God to be in Ramah and then in Bethel. What is the most reasonable suggestion is that Samuel chose not to set up the Tent of God again and he allowed the Ark of God to remain in Kiriath-jearim. Instead, Samuel set up altars in each of the four cities that he functioned as a judge in. So we would expect that he would offer sacrifices in Gilgal, Bethel, Mizpah and in Ramah. Now, with regards to Mizpah, Bethel, Ramah, Gilgal and Nob: there is no direct mention of the Tent of God; and with the first four, there is really no mention of the Levites or the priesthood of God. The passage to come concerning Nob almost definitely places the Tent in Nob, as David eats the consecrated bread there. If I were a betting man, I would bet that the Tent of God traveled from Shiloh to Nob to Gibeon during the time from Samuel to David (furthermore, I would guess that the tent was in some sort of semi-retirement in an undisclosed location—perhaps Nob).

I should add that all of these cities are relatively close together. They are all found in central Israel, mostly in Benjamin. Shiloh, which is located in central Ephraim, is the furthest away (Ephraim is on the northern border of Benjamin).

1Sam. 14:18	In this passage, Saul requests that the Ark be brought to him. However, we have no indication that this order was obeyed. If the Ark was removed from Kiriath-jearim , it must have been returned to there.	None	The location of the Tent of God is still uncertain.
None	Still in Kiriath-jearim .	1Sam. 21:1–6 1Sam. 22:11–22	David will go to Nob , the city of the priests, and eat consecrated bread, implying that the Table of Showbread is there (which would imply that the Tent of God was there as well). The ephod is also be found here, further indicating that the Tabernacle was set up and functioning in Nob , but without the Ark of God. Saul will later go there and execute the priests for feeding David.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark		The Tabernacle	
2Sam. 6–7 1Chron. 15:1–3, 12 16:1, 37 1Chron. 15:26	David fetches the original Ark from Kiriath-jearim, from the house of Abinadab (2Sam. 6:3–4), and brings it to Jerusalem . David does not bring the Tent of God, but pitches a tent for the Ark.	1Chron. 16:37, 39–40	At the time that the Ark was in Jerusalem, the Tent of God was incontrovertibly in Gibeon .

Although we are not told how the Tabernacle was taken to Gibeon, it is possible that Saul, in his paranoia, had it brought to Gibeon, near where he was, so he could keep an eye on things. Saul had previously killed all of the priests when the Tabernacle was in Nob. Saul may have brought the Tabernacle to Gibeon in sorrow for what he had done (he did appear to be bipolar). A new priesthood was instituted in Gibeon, since the only remaining priest was with David (a very young Abiathar). Although much of this is conjecture, it fits in well with the narrative of 1Sam. 21–22.

None	The Ark of God remained in Jerusalem .	1Kings 3:4 1Chron. 16:39 21:29 2Chron. 1:3	By implication and by direct statement, the Tent of God was in Gibeon and functioned as the Tent of God (i.e., it was not in storage). This was during the time of David and early on in the rule of Solomon.
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This suggests that the “House of Y^ehowah” in 2Sam. 12:20, which appears to be in Jerusalem, is probably the tent wherein the Ark of God was kept (2Sam. 6–7). Although there is the alternative view that David went to Gibeon, in this verse, that is highly unlikely. 2Chron. 1:3–4 seems to be pretty unequivocal that Solomon brought the original Tent (Tabernacle) of God from Gibeon to Jerusalem.

We may wonder, after David brought the Ark into Jerusalem, why he did not logically bring the Tabernacle there as well. There are five possible reasons: although David had read the Law of Moses and knew that they were both originally together by design, he had plans to build a permanent Temple in Jerusalem, so there would be no reason for the Tabernacle. God told him his son would build the Temple instead, which gave David a reason not to bring the Tabernacle into Jerusalem. Secondly, David had been the cause for all of the priests to be killed by Saul in Nob, so he may have felt some guilt in that regard and did not want to mess with the Tabernacle again. Thirdly, a new High Priest had been appointed in Gibeon, so even though there was no animosity between the two High Priests (they appear to have exchanged responsibilities in 2Sam. 15); David simply allowed things to continue with the Ark and Tabernacle in two places. (4) With the Tabernacle in Gibeon and the Ark in Jerusalem (where it had been placed in a tent), this provided two areas of worship for the Jews with two sets of priests. (5) The Ark and the Tabernacle had never been together during David’s lifetime.

The Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God Part 2

The Ark		The Tabernacle	
2Chron. 1:3-4	The Ark was already in Jerusalem , having been brought there earlier by David.	1Kings 8:4 2Chron. 1:3-4, 13	Solomon brought the original Tent of God, built by Moses, from Gibeon to Jerusalem
2Chron. 5:1	Solomon does not build another Ark of God, but moves the original from where David had it into the Temple.	2Chron. 2-7	Solomon builds the Temple for Jehovah in Jerusalem. He builds the furniture, and more of it, for the Temple.

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