

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CASE FOR THE MOSAIC TABERNACLE.

BY THE REV. F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, D.D.,
formerly Donnellan Lecturer, Dublin University.

III.

[*Synopsis of previous chapters.* In the March and April numbers of the *CHURCHMAN* this year the Mosaic Tabernacle was treated as a test case by which the Higher Criticism of the Wellhausen school, who treat this Tabernacle as a post-exilic accretion or invention, must either stand or fall. In the March number external proofs were given of the truth of the statements in the Pentateuch regarding this Tabernacle. Among the principal witnesses called were the Septuagint Version, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Apocrypha. In the April number evidence of an internal character was adduced from Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Jeremiah vii., xxvi., etc., all pre-exilic documents. In this and the following chapter the indirect evidence of the ark and David's tent of meeting and the provisional tent of Moses, on which the Higher Critical argument is largely founded, will be examined.—F. R. M. H.]

THE ARK AND DAVID'S TENT OF MEETING.

WE now come to the evidence of the ark in Deuteronomy x. 3: "And I made an ark of shittim (acacia) wood, and hewed two tables of stone." Many of the Critics agree that D. is pre-exilic. Here we have mention made of the ark in pre-exilic days.

Wellhausen¹ admits that according to the Law, "the Priestly Document" P., the Tabernacle is the inseparable companion of the ark—"the two things necessarily belong to each other." He also admits that there are traces of the existence of the ark toward the end of the period of the Judges, and that afterwards this ark of Jehovah was deposited in Solomon's Temple. Now it is quite plain that the Tabernacle was intended to house the ark, and if the ark existed in those early times, there must have been a tabernacle made for it, as we find in Exodus xxxvi. and xxxvii. 1—passages which are post-exilic, according to the Critics.

We shall now call the priestly writers of Exodus xxxvi. and xxxvii. into the witness-box. We want to find out from them how they came to record the fact that both the wood of the ark and the boards of the Tabernacle were from the same shittim wood, or acacia tree. We grant the possibility of getting the information

¹ *Proleg.*, Eng. Trans, pp. 41, 42.

from Deuteronomy about the wood of the ark, but how did they come to report that the wood of the Tabernacle was of shittim wood? Were these writers not aware of the fact that the Tabernacle was modelled after the Temple? And that being so, the boards of the Tabernacle should have been like those of the Temple, even of cedar of Lebanon (see 1 Kings vi. 16). This is a notable error. It proves either that the priestly writers made a grievous mistake, or that it is a mistake to imagine that such priestly writers invented the Tabernacle.

The ark met with a dire misfortune in the days of Eli. It was taken by the Philistines, and afterwards restored to the Hebrews, to the house of Abinadab, at Kirjath-jearim, where it remained for a long time, in apparent neglect. It was evidently considered desecrated by its residence among the Philistines. The whole country was in a state of confusion during this period. But David, after his capture of Zion, determined to convey it in state to his new city. "And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tabernacle (tent) that David had stretched for it; and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. . . . He blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to every one a cake of bread, and a portion of flesh, and a cake of raisins" (2 Sam. vi. 17-19).

There is a point to be noticed here. When it is said that Moses or David did a certain thing in connexion with the Ark or the Tabernacle, why is it taken literally in one place and not in the other? The principle is well known that in such cases the doer is the person who orders the thing to be done. *Quod facit per alios facit per se*. When it is said that "General Haig brought the cavalry into action," does it mean that he was the cavalry officer who executed the movement? When it is said in Exodus xl. 18, "Moses reared up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bar thereof, and reared up its pillars. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it," does it mean that Moses did all this himself? If so, he must have been an Hercules in strength. But the Higher Critics do not assert this. In fact, they have built an opposite kind of argument, a rather perverse one from their own point of view, upon this passage in Exodus. (See Driver's *Exodus*,

p. 426.) They argue that the transport supplies for the Tabernacle and the court was not sufficient—"only four wagons." But the Scripture says the "Kohathites bore it upon their shoulders" (Num. vii. 9). In this passage in Exodus (xl. 18), assigned by them to P., the Critics do not complain that "the priests and Levites are conspicuous by their absence." But they are not mentioned, and if we are to interpret the passage as they interpret parallel passages, we must infer that Moses performed this superhuman task of erecting the Tabernacle himself, and of doing so whenever required. See Exodus xxxiii. 7: "Now Moses used to take the tent, and to pitch it without the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting." This tent, of which more anon, is described as "an ordinary nomad tent, which Moses could himself carry and pitch outside the camp."¹ There is no need to say that he carried it himself, when he had a strong young man like Joshua to help, and the priests as well. But this the Higher Critics do not allow. Again, in the case of David's tent, they assume that "David himself erects a tent for the ark," and observe "the priests and Levites, even on this solemn occasion, are, as before, conspicuous by their absence."² So they would assume that because the priests and Levites are not expressly mentioned in 2 Samuel vi. 17 f., they were absent. David, then, is left to erect the Tabernacle himself, offer the sacrifices himself, and give a portion of bread, flesh and raisins to every individual, man and woman, with his own hands—another superhuman feat! Might one add that there is no need when reporting a Church Service to say "the clergy were present."

By the way, one objection to the Mosaic Tabernacle was that it was not large enough to accommodate all the host of Israelites standing before its door (Num. x. 3), as that would make a procession sixty miles long. This was Colenso's objection, which can be answered by saying it was a large and representative gathering only that is implied. But would not the same apply to David's tent erected to house the ark for a time? "And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to every one a cake of bread, etc." How could "the whole multitude of Israel" stand before the tent? And yet the Critics do not find fault with this tent, or question its existence. How could he with his own hands give his gifts to each one? If any

¹ McNeile, *Numbers*, p. 2.

² Driver, *Exodus*, p. 429.

occasion demanded the presence of priests and Levites, surely this was one, to offer the sacrifices, to marshal the people, to distribute the gifts. And when Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings at Gibeon (1 Kings iii. 4), "the priests and Levites are again conspicuous by their absence": they are not mentioned. So Solomon perforce had to do the work of at least two hundred men himself. That is the conclusion the Critics compel us to draw. Now let us turn to what is, according to them, the priestly account of this Tabernacle in 2 Chronicles i. 6: "And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the Lord, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it." Are we to infer from this that the Chronicler, writing about 330 B.C., long after P. had been drawn up by the priestly scribes, was not aware of the existence of priests and Levites, for we may say in the words the Critics use regarding 2 Samuel vi. 17, "the priests and Levites even on this solemn occasion are, as before, conspicuous by their absence."¹

This method of employing an argument or not employing it, whenever it suits their purpose, convicts those who so act of inconsistency, and proves that they are not restrained by scruples in their attempt to make the Scriptural records conform with their foregone conclusions. Repudiating passages that are against their theories as "interpolated," "glosses," or "not genuine," and putting an unnatural strain and an illogical interpretation upon others, may be the methods adopted by the Higher Criticism, but they are not sanctioned by logic, nor are they the methods of science. How would the study of psychology, medicine, surgery, electricity, advance, if such methods were followed?

There is no reason, then, to doubt the presence of priests and Levites on the occasion when David ordered his tent to be erected for the ark in his recently conquered capital, "the city of David." But why should he have prepared another tent if the Tabernacle was still in existence? This question is asked by Mr. Chapman,² and Driver answered it in this dogmatic way: "If this ancient and venerable structure had been in existence, David would hardly have erected a new and special tent himself for the ark."³

The country had been in an unsettled condition for some sixty or seventy years, ever since the ark had been taken by the Philis-

¹ Driver, *Exodus*, p. 492. ² *Introduction*, p. 194. ³ *Exodus*, p. 429.

tines, and Hophni and Phinehas had been slain. After a time it was sent back by the Philistines. This is Driver's account of what followed :—

“ After the ark was restored by the Philistines, instead of being taken to what, if it existed, must have been its only proper place, the Tent of Meeting of P., it was brought to the house of *Abinadab* near Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. vii. 1), *who*, though to all appearance an ordinary layman, *consecrated* one of his sons to keep it. (Where, it may be pertinently asked, were the priests of Aaron's line, who alone, according to Numbers, might touch the ark?).”¹

Our answer to this is that it is quite apparent that the ark was being conveyed back to its own tabernacle at Shiloh. It was brought by the milch cows straight from Ekron to Bethshemesh, and thence to Kirjath-jearim, lying on the direct road to Shiloh or Gibeon. At Bethshemesh it was received by Levites. “ And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, etc.” (1 Sam. vi. 15). This verse is both in the LXX. and the Hebrew. Yet the Critics call it an interpolation. The irreverent conduct of the men of Bethshemesh was punished. They send to the men of Kirjath-jearim to fetch the ark away. Why did they send there? Because it was the next stage in the journey of the ark. Then these people came, and took it to the house of Abinadab “ in the hill.” We are not told that he was a layman. He may have been a priest. And it is not said that *he consecrated* one of his sons, but *they consecrated*, that is, the man of Kirjath-jearim, among whom there may have been priests. Here the ark remained for many years. Why, we cannot tell. It was probably owing to the destruction of Shiloh. “ It was now, probably, that the destruction of the sanctuary of Shiloh referred to by Jeremiah (vii. 24 ; xxvi. 6, 9 ; cf. Ps. lxxviii. 60) took place.”² And it was thought advisable to keep the ark “ on the hill ” of Kirjath-jearim, under the safe guardianship of Eleazar. Years afterwards³ David, after taking Zion, desired to bring it to his city. But when doing so Uzzah was killed. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, “ How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me ? So David would not remove

¹ *Exodus*, p. 429. The italics are ours. *Kidd'shu*, the word is plural, כִּידִּשׁוּ Driver translates it as a singular !!

² Driver (*ibid.*).

³ 1 Samuel vii. 2 says the Ark remained in Kirjath-jearim “ twenty years.”

the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David : but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite " (2 Sam. vi. 10). This was clearly not David's original intention, as Driver implies. Three months afterwards he took it into his own city. It is apparent that David wished to have the ark *for himself*, and his intention to build a temple for it is explained at length in the next chapter, 2 Samuel vii. In the meantime he erected a temporary tent for it. After all its vicissitudes and its captivity in Philistia, it may have been regarded with askance, or its possession may have been a cause of jealousy.

But what of the Mosaic Tabernacle in the meantime? It too had had its vicissitudes. It had been removed from Shiloh just before or just after the destruction of that place. We find it in Nob. At least its presence is implied in what took place there, 1 Samuel xxi. And afterwards it was at Gibeon, El-jib (five or six miles N.W. of Jerusalem), where Solomon made his great offering and had his dream. The existence of this Tabernacle is doubtless implied in 1 Kings i. 39 ; ii. 28, where we are told that "Zadok the priest took the *horn of oil* out of the tent, and anointed Solomon," and that "Joab fled unto the tent of the Lord, and caught hold on the *horns of the altar*." There are two things to be noticed here.

(1) With regard to the anointing oil, it was kept in the Tabernacle, also known as the Tent of Meeting. For the contents of the Tabernacle, see Exodus xxxix. 38 : "The golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door, or opening, (*pethah*) of the tent, the brasen altar . . . the lamps and all the vessels thereof, etc." These things were not in the tent erected by David. See also Exodus xxxi. 11, where the candlestick with all its vessels, the garments for Aaron and his sons, and the anointing oil, and the incense for the Holy Place were kept in the tent of meeting. These were considered *the furniture* of the tent,¹ in Hebrew the same word as "vessels." When the tent of meeting is mentioned in 1 Kings viii. 3 : "And the priests brought up the ark of the Lord and the tent of meeting, and all the *holy vessels* that were in the tent," the mention of the *holy vessels* shows the notice must refer to P.'s Tent of Meeting, the Mosaic Tabernacle, and not David's tent, which housed the ark for a time, but in which these vessels could not be treasured.

¹ *K'le ha'ohel* (כֵּלֵי אֹהֶל).

This last passage, of course, is fatal to the Higher Critical theory, and Driver states: "The notice, if authentic, cannot refer to P.'s Tent of Meeting" ¹ on the ground that "if this ancient and venerable structure had been in existence, David would hardly have erected a new and special tent himself for the ark." Mr. Chapman,² seeing that it must refer to this Tent, treats the whole passage as a "scribal addition." Accordingly, we are justified in inferring that this oil was brought from the Tabernacle at Gibeon.

(2) With regard to the brasen altar, this was always in the Tent of Meeting, and could not have been in David's tent. The whole account of Adonijah's flight to the altar and his catching hold of its horns (1 Kings i. 50), and of Joab's similar flight afterwards to "the Tent of the Lord" (1 Kings ii. 29), and his station by the altar, whose horns he grasped, would be more in keeping with what we would expect if the Tent and its altar were some distance from the city. It was outside the city at Enrogel, which lies on the borders of Judah and Benjamin, that Adonijah gave his feast (1 Kings i. 9). It was here that David's spies hid during Absalom's revolt (2 Sam. xvii. 17). When Adonijah and his friends heard of the proclamation of Solomon, all his guests fled away, and Adonijah made straight for the altar. Now we can hardly believe he would have fled to the citadel of the city which was in the hands of his enemies, for that would have meant courting capture and death. But if the altar was at Gibeon, he would have had time to reach it before he was overtaken. Neither can we believe that after the death of David, when Adonijah made his conspiracy against Solomon and was seized, Joab would have rushed off to Zion, into the very arms of his foes. A brother conspirator, Abiathar, had been banished to his fields at Anathoth in Benjamin (1 Kings ii. 26), two and a half miles north-east of Jerusalem. And then we read "tidings came to Joab" (1 Kings ii. 28). Probably Abiathar on his flight from the city was able to send a messenger, or give the message himself to Joab, whose house was in "the wilderness" (v. 34), in the course of his own flight. It is most unlikely that Joab would have been in the city or ventured into it, when the cause of Adonijah was apparently lost, and the city was full of his enemies. Joab's

¹ *Exodus*, p. 429.

² *Introduction*, p. 194. "The reference here to the tent may be a scribal addition." He holds that this whole passage, vv. 1-11, has been largely interpolated.

house seems to have been to the north of Jerusalem, in what was then a somewhat wild country. From it he fled for refuge to the Tabernacle at Gibeon, and stood beside the brasen altar which was in it (Exod. xxxviii. 30), clasping its horns. Here Benaiah slew him, for a murderer was not protected by the altar (Exod. xxi. 14), and the word of the king was "that thou mayest take away the innocent blood which Joab shed from me and from the house of my father." The reference here is to Numbers xxxv. 33: "No expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." This is in P., as the Critics say, and therefore P. underlies the records of the Kings, and was, therefore, before Kings, not after, as the Critics assume. We also read that Joab was buried "in his house in the wilderness." Benaiah, who was ordered to bury him, would hardly have deemed it wise to have had his remains conveyed away to his residence if he had slain Joab in the citadel, as that would have seemed like giving a public funeral to a conspirator. But he might have done so, if Joab had lived near the tent of meeting at Gibeon.

Accordingly, these two references in 1 Kings i. 39, and 1 Kings ii. 28, are in favour of the traditional view, and not of the Higher Critical theory, with which they do not harmonise. *The tent of David was only a provisional abode for the ark, like the first tent of Moses*, which Joshua guarded for a time, until the tent of meeting was completed. The Critics deny this, and say that the "tent of meeting" mentioned in Exodus xxxiii. was the only Tabernacle that preceded the Temple of Solomon. The two different accounts in J.E. and P. are of the same structure, they assert. "It seems impossible to escape the conclusion that the Pentateuch contains two different representations of the Tent of Meeting."¹ It would be interesting to hear the evidence on this point from all the authorities concerned, who, on the contrary, seem to favour different accounts of different tents not different accounts of the same Tent or Tabernacle.

F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK.

(To be concluded.)

¹ *Book of Exodus*. (Driver), p. 427.