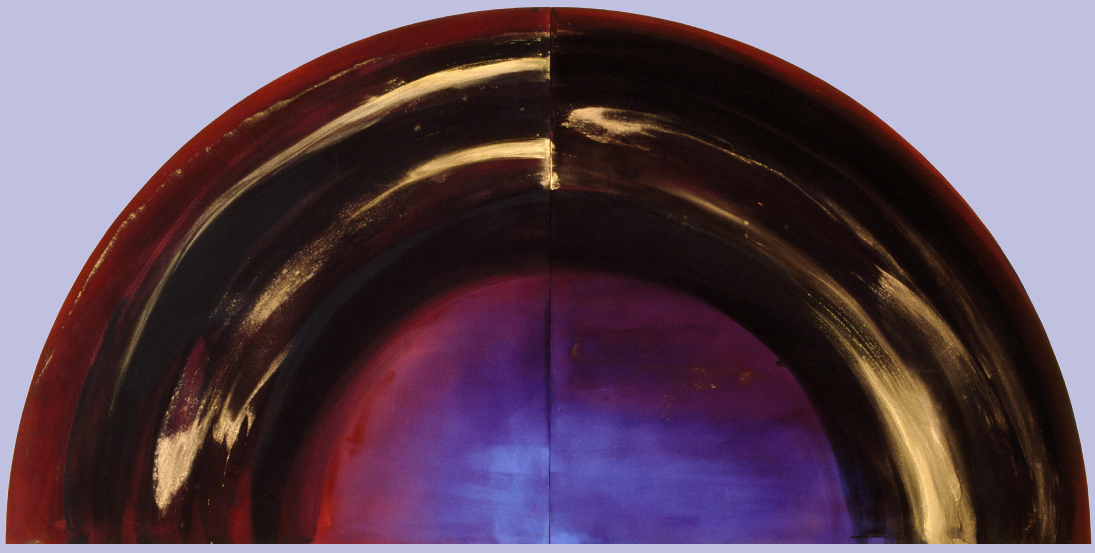
From Temple to Tent

From Real to Virtual World (Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28)



Sarah Hart

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Adelaide
2019

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Preface

The central biblical text for *From Temple to Tent* is Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28. The subject matter is the tabernacle tent with its altar and associated laws. In other words the theme of the text is Israelite cult. The biblical material presents Israelite cult in three ways—as Israelite cultic place in the form of the tabernacle tent, in Exodus 24:15–40:38, as laws associated with the tabernacle tent and Israelite cult in Leviticus 1:1–27:34, and the Israelites as the cultic people, the assembly of YHWH, in Numbers 1:1–10:28.

The text on the tabernacle tent crosses over three books of the Bible—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, wherein from a literary perspective, narrative and law passages are contained. Few publications in the last two hundred years cover a biblical text as extensive as that on the tabernacle tent (Ex 24:15–Numb 10:28). Observations on the tabernacle tent and its associated cultic world may be included in books such as introductions to the Pentateuch and commentaries. I write 'may be included' as sometimes the lengthy text on the tabernacle text is close to ignored. One extreme example of disinterest in the text on the tabernacle tent is Otto Eissfeldt's *Hexateuch-Synopse: Die Erzählung der 5 Bücher Mose und des Buches Josua mit dem Anfange des Richterbuches. In Ihre 4 Quellen Zerlegt* (1922). Eissfeldt makes no more reference than a mere ten short titles for the fifty nine chapters between Exodus 25 and Numbers 10. Thereby he omits the tabernacle tent from his synopsis of the Pentateuch followed by the book of Joshua.

From the early nineteenth century in Germany through to the latter half of the twentieth century, pentateuchal studies were influenced in the main by diachronic approaches such as the historical-critical

method. One of the legacies of the historical-critical method is the source hypothesis theory but the theory builds on what are deemed narrative passages. As a result, the Pentateuch is separated out into narrative and law sections. Western scholars tend to have less interest in the law passages. In the case of the text on the tabernacle tent, this means, for example, addressing the text on the tabernacle tent as Exodus 25–40 but without the associated laws of Leviticus 1–27, or, addressing the laws of Leviticus 1–27 without the people of Numbers 1–10, who are the addressees of the laws.

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, literary approaches to texts and themes within Pentateuch have added a synchronic dimension to the field of pentateuchal studies. Commentaries on each of the five books of the Pentateuch continue to be written but they address one biblical book in the main, not themes or subjects that cross two or more biblical books. Despite this wealth of approaches to the Pentateuch, no extensive work focuses on Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28, the tabernacle tent and Israelite cult associated with the tent. This is a lack in the field of pentateuchal studies which this book seeks to address.

The starting point for my work was the biblical text on the tabernacle tent. The length of the text suggests importance. Repetitions reinforce the sense that the text is significant and that considerable energy went into creating it. The deeper I went into describing the text the more it seemed to me that the text paints a mimetic picture of an Israelite quasi-cultic space into which the reader is invited. I propose that creation of a virtual Israelite cultic world via the medium of the word was the reason for the text. My research moved from description to mimesis to virtual world. This order is retained from chapter three to seven in the book. The first two chapters address the ancient Near Eastern context, literature on the tabernacle tent and associated laws. Material for this book draws on my doctoral thesis, 'From Temple to Tent: The Cultic World of Diaspora Israelites (Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28)', available online at http://repository.divinity.edu.au/1082/.

The idea of the text on the tabernacle tent as a virtual world is an extension of the concept of mimesis. Today, entry into a wide range of virtual worlds—from recreated historical periods to battle scenes for wars or science-fiction settings—is readily accessible in the form of computer games. Computer users can go on-line twenty-four

hours a day and enter any one of many virtual worlds. There they can immerse themselves in the chosen game and play the game within the virtual world for as long as desired. The games engage senses such as seeing, hearing, and touching. Choices and decisions, such as what action to take, need to be made in the course of the game. Calling the tabernacle tent a virtual Israelite cultic world is the most apt description possible for the biblical text, Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28, in my judgement. The receiver—listener or reader—is invited into the world of the tabernacle tent where their senses are engaged. They are called to be present in an atmosphere of holiness and to honour YHWH.

Unless stated, all biblical quotes in English are from the NRSV. The Hebrew is from the Leningrad Codex as used in the software program *BibleWorks 10*. Transliteration of Hebrew follows the academic style as set out in *The SBL Handbook of Style*.

I write of the text on the tabernacle tent as a word picture. A key sentence that inspired this idea is: 'You shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skilfully worked into them (Exodus 26:1)'. Gretchen Albrecht, New Zealand painter and sculptor, captures the intensity of colour in her art. I requested an image of one of her works for the front cover of the book. She has graciously granted permission that 'NOCTURNE' (1989), medium: acrylic on canvas, measurements: 153 × 305 cms, be reproduced for the cover.

Thanks are due to many people throughout the research and writing process. Dr Alice Sinnott rsm introduced me to biblical associations which I joined and where I could find colleagues who helped me hone my ideas. Dr Tony Campbell sj, Jesuit Theological College, Melbourne, Australia, made me travel a galaxy in conceptual development during my doctoral studies, then continued to encourage the next move from thesis to book. Family and friends, Terry Wackrow in particular who has critiqued many chapters of my work in various forms over the years, have influenced the contents of this book and supported me in a myriad of ways.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BRev	*Bible Review*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CaE	*Cahiers évangile*
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
COS	*The Context of Scripture*
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ER	*The Encyclopedia of Religion*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IESBS	*International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society, The Holy Scriptures (Old Testament), 1917
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
KJV	King James Version
MT	Masoretic Text
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*
NIDB	*The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society 1985
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version, The Holy Bible, 1989
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
OUP	Oxford University Press
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
ScrHier	Scripta hierosolymitana
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
URJ	Union for Reform Judaism
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Chapter 1
Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Context

The Tabernacle Tent in the Context of the Hebrew Bible

Temples are of a subject of great interest in the Hebrew Bible. Three temples that stand out are the temple of Solomon, Ezekiel's vision of a temple, and the temple-like tabernacle tent. The first two temples are well known as temples but not necessarily the temple-like tabernacle tent, the focus of this work. It is rare for a single subject to be written about at length and thematically sustained in the Hebrew Bible. However, temples are an exception to this rule.

The text on the tabernacle tent and the Israelite cult associated with it is of extraordinary length for biblical writing. Comparing the length of text on Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 5–8), four chapters, and the length of the text on Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 40–48), nine chapters, the text on the tabernacle tent (Ex 24–Numb 10), fifty three chapters, is exceptional.[1] This suggests that the tabernacle tent was a subject immensely important for the authors writing early versions of the text, for copyists in the early centuries who copied the text, and for the forums where it was decided what Hebrew works were canonical or not. The lengthy text has survived through all these stages.

Temples were the dwelling place of the national or a local God and centres of cult in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Greeks and Babylonians, for example, paid tribute to their gods by offering gifts such as animals and produce and visiting the temples where their gods dwelt. Remains of some sixth to fifth century Greek and Babylonian temples have been unearthed and are visible but there are no visible

1. A temple at Shiloh is described in 1 Samuel 1–4 but the temple is not the primary subject of the material.

remains of the First Jerusalem temple.[2] The Judean national and royal temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylonian forces in 586 BCE, though the importance of a national temple as a cultural and cultic focus remained in the consciousness of Judeans scattered in Babylonia, Egypt and Judah.

The temple-like tabernacle tent is where the presence of the God of Israel, YHWH, was, and still is. A visit to the tabernacle tent is a very different experience to visiting the remains of a Greek or Babylonian temple. The tabernacle tent and its cult are constructed of words, not of stones or bricks. Its form is as pristine today as the early days when the words were put together. It has not suffered physical decay like the baked bricks of the Babylonian temples and the marble masonry of the Greek temples. The tabernacle tent is a virtual world that can be visited and entered through the words of the text.

The biblical evidence for the tabernacle tent is Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28. I call this large block of writing, the tabernacle tent text. Firstly, for the reason that two terms, tent of meeting (אהל מועד *ʾōhel môʿēd*) and tabernacle (משכן *miškān*) recur throughout the text. Recurrence of the terms in the text gives a sense of unity to the whole; the two terms rarely occur in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[3] Secondly,

2. Refer, sixth century BCE temples in Babylonia such as the Ekur temple to Enlil at Nippur or the temple to Marduk in the old city of Babylon, or in Greece the temples to Apollo at Corinth and to Aphaia at Aegina.

3. Occurrences of tent of meeting (*ʾōhel môʿēd*) within Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28 are Exodus 27:21; 28:43; 29:4, 10f, 30, 32, 42, 44; 30:16, 18, 20, 26, 36; 31:7; 33:7; 35:21; 38:8, 30; 39:32, 40; 40:2, 6f, 12, 22, 24, 26, 29f, 32, 34f; 32 occurrences. Leviticus 1:1, 3, 5; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4f, 7, 14, 16, 18; 6:16, 26, 30; 8:3f, 31, 33, 35; 9:5, 23; 10:7, 9; 12:6; 14:11, 23; 15:14, 29; 16:7, 16f, 20, 23, 33; 17:4ff, 9; 19:21; 24:3; 41 occurrences. Numbers 1:1; 2:2, 17; 3:7f, 25, 38; 4:3f, 15, 23, 25, 28, 30f, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 47; 6:10, 13, 18; 7:5, 89; 8:9, 15, 19, 22, 24, 26; 10:3; 34 occurrences. (107 total occurrences). Further occurrences of the term tent of meeting in the Hebrew Bible—Numbers 11:16; 12:4; 14:10; 16:18f, 42f, 50; 17:4; 18:4, 6, 21ff, 31; 19:4; 20:6; 25:6; 27:2; 31:54; Deuteronomy 31:14; Joshua 18:1; 19:51; 1 Samuel 2:22; 1 Kings 8:4; 1 Chronicles 6:32; 9:21; 23:32; 2 Chronicles 1:3, 6, 13; 5:5.
Occurrences of tabernacle (*miškān*) within Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28 are Exodus 25:9; 26:1, 6f, 12f, 15, 17f, 20, 22f, 26f, 30, 35; 27:9, 19; 35:10, 15, 18; 36:8, 13f, 20, 22f, 25, 27f, 31f; 38:20f, 31; 39:32f, 40; 40:2, 5f, 9, 17ff, 21f, 24, 28f, 33ff, 38; 55 occurrences. Leviticus 8:10; 15:31; 17:4; 3 occurrences. Numbers 1:50f, 53; 3:7f, 23, 25f, 29, 35f, 38; 4:16, 25f, 31; 5:17; 7:1, 3; 9:15, 18ff, 22; 10:11, 17, 21; 27 occurrences. (85 total occurrences). Further occurrences of the term tabernacle in Hebrew Bible—Numbers16:9; 17:13; 19:13; 31:30, 47; Joshua 22:19, 29; 2 Samuel 7:6; 1 Chronicles 6:32, 48; 16:39; 17:5; 21:29; 23:26; 2 Chronicles 1:5; Lamentations 2:6; Judith 9:8

for the reason that the tabernacle tent is the constant setting for Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28. The people of Israel are camped round the tabernacle tent. All regulations and all descriptions of the people of Israel make sense in relation to the tabernacle tent. Location-wise the tabernacle tent is stationed at the foot of Sinai, in the wilderness, away from the rest of civilisation. This setting does not change. The tabernacle tent is the visual centre and stands for the entire text.

Furthermore, the historical-critical reasons for treating Exodus 24:15 and Numbers 10:28 as the textual perimeters of the text on the tabernacle tent are convincing.[4] Since Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), Exodus 19–Numbers 10 is known as Sinai material; it is regarded as made up of non-priestly material (Exod 19–24, 32–34) and priestly material (Exod 25–31, 35–Numbers 10). The priestly material pertains to the tabernacle tent and its cult. Like Wellhausen, Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971) and Martin Noth (1902–1968) treat the Sinai material as an independent literary unit, incorporated late into the Pentateuch.[5] More recently Antony Campbell pursues the idea that the sumptuous tabernacle is born at Sinai, gets assembled at Sinai and departs from Sinai but is never mentioned again in the form in which it is described in Exodus 25–Numbers 10.[6] The significance of

4. For classic analyses of the perimeters of texts in the Hebrew Bible such as non-priestly material and priestly material see, Samuel R Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (*International Theological Library*; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 60, 126–59 or Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981), 17–19 and 262–76; translation of *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1948).
5. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Charleston SC: Bibliobazaar, 2007), 376–77; reprint of *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (translated by J Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies, with preface by W Robertson Smith; Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885); translation of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (2nd edition; Berlin: G Reimer, 1883). Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 13–25; translation of *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1958) and 'The Divine Revelation at Sinai IV', in *Old Testament 187*–279; translation of *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, *Band. I: Die Theologie der Geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* (2nd edition; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957).
6. Antony F Campbell, *Making Sense of the Bible: Difficult Texts and Modern Faith* (New York: Paulist, 2010), 161–66. Antony Campbell and Mark O'Brien, *Rethinking the Pentateuch* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 91–92.

describing the Sinai material as an independent literary unit is that that the priestly Sinai material stood on its own, before it was combined with other texts to take some form similar to the Pentateuch/Torah as we know it today.

Set within Exodus 24:15–Numbers 10:28 are three chapters, Exodus 32:1–34:35, where the term tent of meeting (Exod 33:7–11) is used but in Exodus 33:7–11 the term refers to a tent of meeting with a very different function to that of the tabernacle tent. Two very different tents of meeting are therefore apparent—a cultic tent of meeting in the primary text amidst which are three chapters with what I call, a consultation tent of meeting.

The tent of meeting in the primary text is located at the centre of the Israelite camp. An altar stands before the tent. Israelites bring (קרב *q-r-b*) offerings to this altar at which priestly personnel serve. This tent of meeting has a cultic purpose as it has an altar and a system of cultic regulations. The tent of meeting is a cultic tent. Moses may not enter the cultic tent of meeting (Exod 40:35) as only priests may enter the tent and Moses is not a priest.[7] In contrast, the tent of meeting (Exod 33:7–11) of Exodus 32–34 lies outside the camp. People go out (יצא *y-ṣ -'*) to it to seek counsel and to seek YHWH. The tent of meeting is where God is sought (בקש *b-q-š*) and hence derives the idea that it is a consultation tent. An altar and priests are not mentioned. Moses may enter the tent outside the camp. The two tents are different. One tent has a cultic function—people bring offerings for YHWH. The other tent is associated with consultation—people seek YHWH and counsel of YHWH.

The story of the consultation tent set within the text on the cultic tent functions like a building plaque. A building plaque often records that a former building stood on the site of the new building. It reminds those that view the plaque of a tradition that continues on amidst new ways in a new place. The stories of Exodus 32–34, such as

7. The biblical text is not consistent regarding whether Moses may or may not enter the tent of meeting. For example, Moses anoints the tabernacle and all cultic furnishings within (Lev 8:10 supported by Numb 7:1). Moses explicitly enters the tent of meeting in Numbers 7:89. In Leviticus 1:1 YHWH speaks to Moses from (מן *min*) the tent of meeting yet in Numbers 1:1 YHWH speaks to Moses in (ב *bĕ*) the tent of meeting. However, it is understood that Moses facilitates the initiation of Israelite cult and once he has done this priests thereafter fulfil the priestly roles as prescribed.