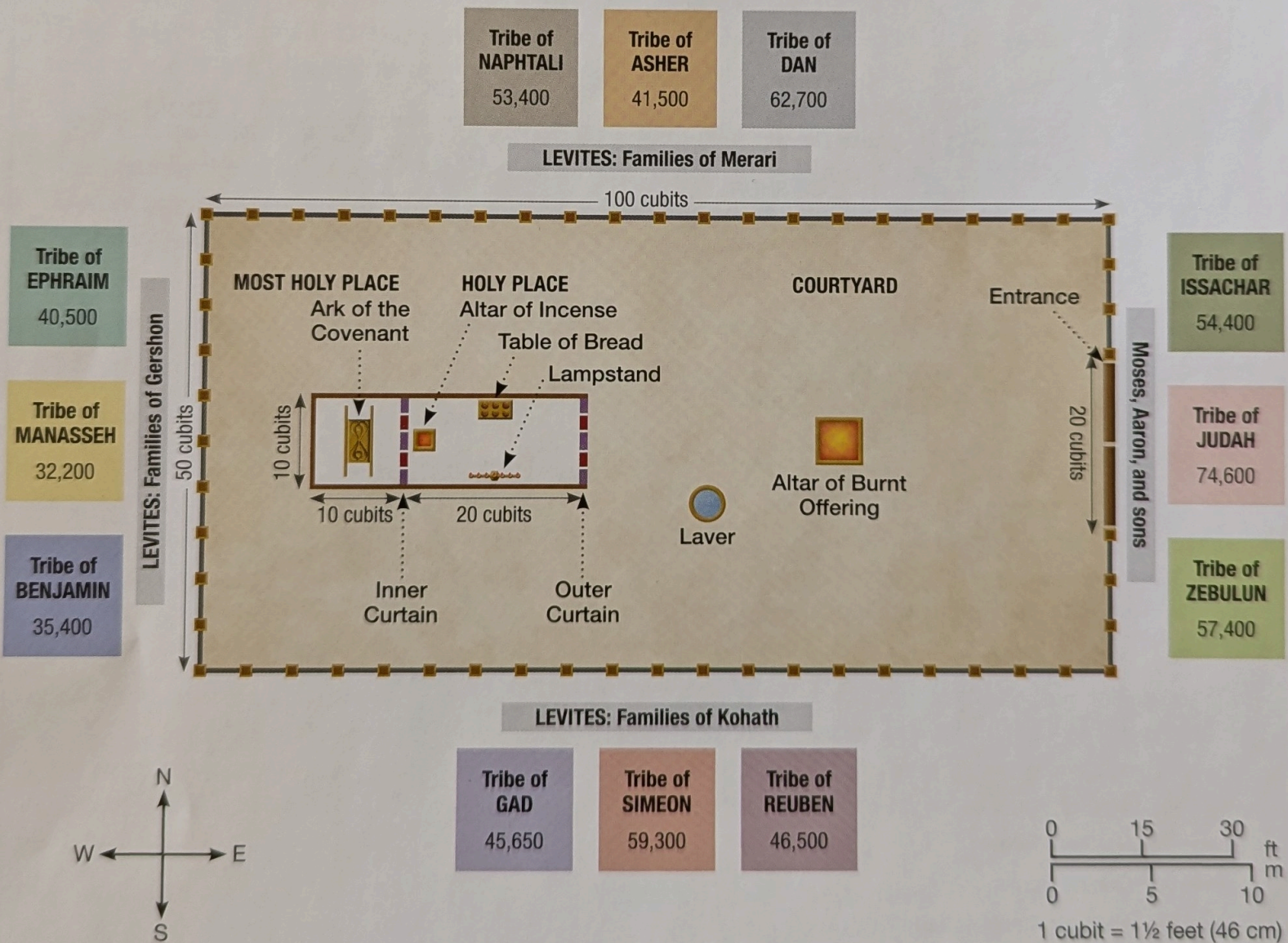


The Tabernacle

The tabernacle was a tent of meeting that God commanded Moses and the Israelites to build (Ex. 25–27, 30). They constructed the tabernacle at Mount Sinai and they took it with them as they journeyed through the wilderness. This sanctuary revealed how God desired to dwell among his people (Ex. 25:8). It was the place where the God of heaven met with the people of earth.

The tabernacle was always situated at the center of the Israelite camp, with the Levite families and the tribes camped around it—three tribes on each side. In the courtyard stood the altar of burnt offering, where priests offered sacrifices, and the laver, where priests cleansed themselves. The Holy Place contained three items: a seven-branched lampstand to provide light, a table with twelve loaves of bread representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and a small altar of burning incense. The Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) contained the most sacred item, the ark of the covenant.



The figures shown here refer to the number of males age twenty or older in each tribe at the time of the first census (Num. 1–3). Descriptions of the tabernacle appear in the Bible, but must be interpreted by each artist; no two illustrations will look exactly alike. Not all items drawn to scale.