

# Building the Mishkan - A Weaving Project

By Rabbi Emily Howard Meyer

Supplies:

Yarn (worsted weight and chunky weight)

Stretched Canvas

Red, Brown, and Black Crayons

Scissors

Cardboard

Brown Duct Tape or Packing Tape

Small safety pins.

Objective: In our world of fast fashion, trying to imagine the dedication and time it would take to build something like the Mishkan is hard to imagine. Through this project, students will have a better understanding of the time it took to build the Mishkan and the various parts of the main structure.

Preparation: Remove the canvas from the stretched stretcher bars. You do not need to pull out every staple. Just make sure there are no staples poking out that would hurt someone. Try to remove the canvas without tearing it. Each student will need a piece of canvas.

Explain that they will be making miniature models of the Mishkan and give a brief explanation of what the different parts look like. Review those sections in the Torah.

Opening Questions:

1. How long do you think this will take?
2. What part will take the longest and why?
3. Which part will be the most difficult and why?

Activity:

1. Tie one end of worsted weight yarn to the edge of the canvas stretcher bars. Begin winding the warp around the stretcher bars. Trying to keep the space between the warp strings even, tying off on the opposite side.



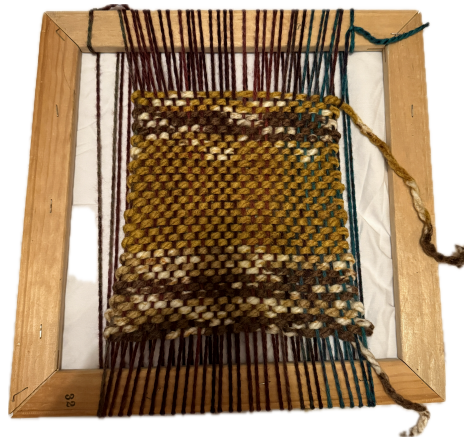
2. Cut a shuttle out of the cardboard.



3. Wind the yarn for the goats' hair canopy on the shuttle. This may be a dark brown, black, or whatever color you want on your shuttle. You can see a video on how to do this here:  
<https://youtu.be/WopKnJFTVbM?si=dOCsfykYNSxlv5IC>



4. Begin to weave the goats' hair canopy by picking up every other warp string and passing the shuttle through. Using a fork to pack the strings together. Make sure you are only weaving on the top layer of strings. Weave until you can no longer pass the shuttle through.



5. Turn the loom over and weave the Cherubim layer.



6. Cut off the weavings from the loom along the top and bottom of the stretcher bars. Tie overhand knots to finish.



7. Carefully even off the edge, cutting near the knots.
8. If your students are still excited about weaving, have them do it again. If they do two, each piece represents half of the layer. Use the safety pins to attach them (like the clasps.)
9. Measure the size of your weaving and create a rectangular base out of cardboard and tape. Make sure to leave an opening for the doorway. If your student is really into weaving, you can have them weave the door panels as well!
10. Place your base on a base of cardboard. Use the tape to affix it.
11. Place your two layers, the cherubim layer on the bottom. You may need to use extra yarn to create tie-downs to keep the layers on the structure, tying or taping them underneath the base.
12. Cut the canvas so that it will cover the two woven layers. Use the red crayon to color the canvas. I suggest crayons over paint because it takes longer to color the canvas than to paint it. Explain to the students that this would be a long smelly process where the leather would be dyed a red color.
13. If there is enough canvas left, use the brown and black crayons to color that. This would be the “dolphin” or “badger” skin layer. If there is not enough canvas left, find another material, such as faux leather or plastic, to cover the entire project.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What are your initial thoughts? What did you think about the process?
2. Was this easy or difficult?
3. Did you complete the project in the time you thought you would? Why or why not?
4. Where do you think the Israelites sourced the materials to make this structure?
5. What would it be like to make something like this in the desert? What problems do you imagine they had?
6. This was a massive undertaking. How long do you think it took them? What does the Torah and Rabbinic literature tell us about this? Do you think it was possible in that timeframe?
7. What do you think the Israelites were trying to convey to themselves and God through this process?

Modification: This project could be done with younger children, substituting paper weaving for the loom weaving.