



Tabernacle Lesson #7

SALVATION

“...stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today...” (Exodus 14:13)

Tabernacle Shadows and Types of the Return Journey

Israel, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, Proverbs 20:12, Matthew 13:14-16, was being taught about their Redeemer and Messiah through the Tabernacle, though in many cases it may not have been obvious to them, Isaiah 6:9-10. The punitive, rigid law of Moses had an elegant and inspiring nature about it for those who could see the echoes, shadows and types that it applied.

The progressive nature of the Tabernacle – its architecture from courtyard to the temple’s Holy Place and finally to the Holy of Holies; its furnishings from bronze to silver to gold; its rituals from simple meals in the courtyard to more elaborate ones at the Table of Shewbread, and its priesthood from priestly to high priestly garments and access – is a symbolic model of a soul’s journey back to God with the priority of increasing in holiness along the way to be “one” with Him, John 17:21-23.



His (God's) way is ancient and rich with symbolism. We can learn much by pondering the reality for which each symbol stands,”

Russell M. Nelson, “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” Ensign, May 2001, p 33

As each of the modules in this series demonstrates, symbolism is the divine language that teaches the who, what, why, and how we may return to our Heavenly Father because of His Son.

Symbolism takes many shapes and forms from sacred iconography, metaphor, allegory and code to ritual application, types, patterns, colors, signs and tokens. They enable us to give visual and conceptual form (as well as deepen our understanding and internalization) to ideas, covenants and feelings that may otherwise defy the power of words. Symbols can have many levels or layers of understanding based on an individual's context and preparation.

Most importantly, they safeguard sacred truths, allowing those who seek understanding through faith and humility to learn and partake, while preserving holiness from careless or irreverent use.

Because God is holy, we became estranged from His presence due to sin and transgression beginning in the Garden of Eden and throughout the mortal experience. To reconnect us to Him, Heavenly Father provided a divine sacrifice through His son to meet the demands of the law and apply the grace of His mercy.

Experiencing the Tabernacle was a roadmap reminder – one gate into the perimeter, brass Altar of Sacrifice, brass water-basin Laver, curtain into the Holy Place, gold Lamp Stand/Menorah, gold Shewbread Table, gold Altar of Incense, Veil into the Holy of Holies, and the gold Ark of the Covenant/Mercy Seat – of what the

Lord had done for Israel in their journey out of Egypt (past), what He did for them then (present), and how it also represented Christ and his church (future), 1 Corinthians 10:1-6 – using the principle of truth, D&C 93:24, pointing from the past to the present and ultimately to the future salvation, D&C 130:7.

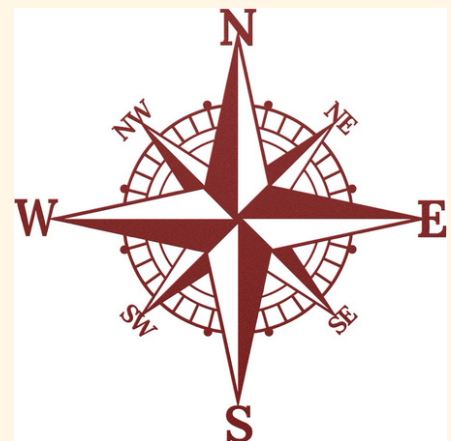


1

In leaving Egypt for the promised land, the blood of the lamb on the doorposts protected each family's firstborn and gave them their freedom/release from Egypt – similar to the lambs sacrificed on the Altar of Sacrifice and the blood that was sprinkled and smeared on it. The blood, Revelation 12:10-11, of the Lamb of God, John 1:29, saves all mankind, 1 Peter 1:18-19, if it is accepted and applied to one's life, Mosiah 4:2, 2 Nephi 9:21-23.

2

As the children of Israel departed Egypt, they headed east, symbolic of returning to the Garden of Eden. Similarly, the Tabernacle courtyard gate was on the east side of the structure. It is believed that Christ's tomb faced east, John 20:14, Matthew 24:27. When Mary Magdalene first saw him, he was east to where she stood, Ezekiel 43:2.





3

After traveling three days, the children of Israel had to traverse the Red Sea parted by the Lord – perhaps symbolic of the washing done with the Bronze Laver. Christ emphasized that one must be baptized to enter the kingdom of God, John 3:5.

4

The children of Israel were guided by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day – emblematic of the light of the gold Menorah and smoke of the gold Altar of Incense in the Holy Place. They are symbolic of Christ being the Light, John 8:12, that “lighteth every man that cometh into the world”, D&C 93:2, 3 Nephi 11:11, and his prayerful mediating on behalf of mankind, Psalm 141:1-2.



5



The manna that sustained the children of Israel in the wilderness was represented by the Bread of Presence or Shewbread located in the Holy Place. This was symbolic of Christ being the “bread of life”, the true manna from heaven, John 6:31-35, and may have foreshadowed the sacrament of his flesh and blood, John 6:51-58, essential for salvation.

6

The veiled barriers into the Holy Place and out of the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies may be synonymous with the barriers created by the Red Sea and the Jordan River, which Israel had to cross before entering the Promised Land where God would dwell with them forever. It is through Christ, the true veil from which we are able to enter the presence of God the Father, Hebrews 10:19-20.



7

The Mercy Seat or top of the Ark of the Covenant covered the tablets of the covenant, a pot of manna and Aaron's rod that were kept inside. Each of the items in the Ark represented God's covenantal, saving guidance – His law, salvation and authority – and Israel's missteps with each of them (tablets, Exodus 32:19, manna, Exodus 16:18-20, and Aaron's rod, Numbers 16:1-3) requiring divine judgment which was symbolically superseded or covered by the Mercy Seat. It foreshadows the mercy that Christ brings due to his eternal sacrifice for mankind, Alma 34:15-16, in "satisfying the demands of justice".



“The gestures of approach are vital to being in holy places because they symbolically cleanse and prepare worshippers for entry into and movement through sacred space as they transition from the profane world into the sacred temple”.

Jay and Donald Parry, Symbols and Shadows, p 22

Divine Fulfillment In Cutting A Covenant

Cutting a covenant was a term often used when a binding covenant between Israel and other peoples or with the Lord was established. In many cases an animal was sacrificed and divided with the covenantal participants walking between the split carcass(es) to both confirm the covenant, Jeremiah 34:18-19, and reinforce the gravity of the oath if it were broken.

Though Abram and Sarai were childless in their maturing age, they received a promise of vast posterity and a special (promised) land, Genesis 15:1-7. Abram asked the Lord how he might confirm this covenant, Genesis 15:8. God then had him take five animals – a three-year-old heifer cow, female goat, and ram, as well as a turtle dove and a young pigeon – and sacrifice them, dividing

their bodies in two halves (except for the birds), Genesis 15:9-11, and then wait on the Lord. As the sun went down, the Lord showed Abram what would happen to his posterity (from serving in Egypt to being freed to enter the promised land) and then solemnized the covenant by showing a “smoking furnace and burning lamp” passing between the split carcasses, Genesis 15:12-18.

This was emblematic of how the Lord would lead Abram’s posterity in the wilderness by a pillar of fire at night and cloud by day, Exodus 13:21-22, and also signaled to Abram how God, Himself, consummated or cut a covenant with him by walking between the divided

carcasses, Genesis 15:17, and "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness", Romans 4:3. Since God cannot swear by anything greater than Himself, Hebrews 6:13, His promise could not have been more sure, reminding one of the symbolism of the Lord's wounds in a sure place, Isaiah 23:23, ensuring the eternal covenant was fulfilled. It is further elaborated in Hebrews, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil", Hebrews 6:17-19.

As a perpetual sign or token of the Abrahamic covenant, all Israelite males were to be circumcised, Genesis 17:10-12, also demonstrating the process of cutting a covenant. The gravity of not being circumcised meant breaking the covenant resulting in the severe penalty of being "cut off" from the people, Genesis 17:14, echoing the ramification of one not fulfilling the promise of endless seed given to Abraham. It also implies greater significance to those who reject the Lord and His covenants as being uncircumcised of the heart, Deuteronomy 10:16, 2 Nephi 9:33, Helaman 9:21.

The Red Heifer Sacrifice Foretold of Christ

One of the ordinances the Lord directed Moses and Aaron to do to cleanse anyone who had come in contact with a dead body is the sin/purification offering of a red heifer. It required an unblemished red heifer that was taken outside of the camp of Israel by the High Priest along with those who had become defiled, Numbers 19:3. The animal's throat was cut by the one presenting the offering. Prior to burning the sacrifice, its blood was taken by the High Priest and sprinkled seven times before the Tabernacle, Numbers 19:4. The animal was then completely burned along with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool or thread, Numbers 19:6. After the ceremony, the priest was to wash himself and his clothes as well as the one who did the sacrifice, Numbers 19:7-8.



Another person who was undefiled was to gather the ashes and mix them with water and keep the mixture outside of camp as the "water of separation" for anyone else to wash themselves who may have come in contact with dead corpses, Numbers 19:9. That man was also to wash himself and his clothes before re-entering camp, Numbers 19:10. It is believed by some Jewish traditions that the mixture was a type of soap used to cleanse those who had been defiled.

The heifer was a shadow of Jesus, clothed in a scarlet robe, Matthew 27:28, and taken outside of the city walls of Jerusalem to be crucified with his blood shed within sight of the temple to ultimately sanctify the people, Hebrews 13:12. The clean man who gathered up the heifer ashes may also be a type of Joseph of Arimathea gathering up the body of Jesus, John 19:38-42, to ensure it

was properly prepared – with aromatic spices and oil – anointed and buried in fulfillment of Psalm 45:6-8. The red heifer ordinance was further referenced in Isaiah’s messianic verses, “...beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”, Isaiah 61:1-3, which Christ also used in announcing who he was and his mission, Luke 4:18-19.



The Oil Of Gladness

With the Messiah/Christ – the Anointed One – the very title suggests the significance of oil in reference to the Savior and reflects the ancient High Priest. Anointing is symbolic of being set apart, given authority, power, healing and sanctification. Just as king David was anointed, 1 Samuel 16:13, as the chosen one to replace Saul and later anointed by the elders of Israel to be their king, 2 Samuel 5:3, Jesus would be anointed by the Father with the Spirit or Holy Ghost, Acts 10:38. The oil anointing represented the bestowal of the Spirit as Christ noted with his messianic announcement, Luke 4:18-21, Isaiah 61:1-2, paralleling the Spirit that David received at his anointing, 1 Samuel 16:13.

The oil was a metaphor for the Holy Ghost that empowered and sanctified, 1 John 2:20, 27. The ancient Christians (early Church Fathers) believed the oil

symbolically came from the Tree of Life’s sap and, when bestowed, made them royal and priestly, enabling their light to shine, filling them with the Holy Ghost, and signaling the promise of eternal life or the resurrection. The Tree of Life was symbolic of the Savior or “the love of God”, 1 Nephi 11:21-23. As the sap of the Tree of Life, the oil’s salvific qualities were metaphorically referred to as the “Dew of Light”, Isaiah




26:19, “Balm of Gilead”, Jeremiah 8:22, and “Oil of Gladness”, Isaiah 61:3. The sap or oil was an impactful symbol of protection, healing and exaltation that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ.


In using the symbolism of the Tabernacle Menorah as the Tree of Life in the Holy Place, Jewish Tradition believed the oil was the divine light that never ceased (burning constantly) in the Menorah – and symbolic of the burning bush – reminding one of the Savior’s admonition to his followers (those that had been anointed by oil and subsequently the Spirit) to let their light shine, Matthew 5:16.



In making olive oil, olives were gathered and crushed into a paste by a heavy millstone rolled inside a stone basin to release the oils from every pore of the olives. It was then placed in a vat with hot water poured over it, forcing the blood-red oil to float to the top to be skimmed from the remaining mash. The mash was then scooped into mesh sacks and stacked under a press stone with heavy weights to extract any remaining oil. This refining process was reflected by the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane regarding the excruciating weight of the atonement he suffered there, Matthew 26:38-39, D&C 19:16-19, where the physical manifestation was bleeding from every pore, Luke 22:44, Mosiah 3:7, fulfilling the foreshadowing of the sacrificial blood that was used to both sanctify and covenantly bind the children of Israel and priests, as well as purify the Tabernacle and its vessels, Exodus 24:6-8, 29:20-21, Leviticus 8:30, Hebrews 9:19-21.



The purest oil was designated for Tabernacle service where Moses prepared it, Exodus 30:22-30, with a mixture of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia. It was often referred to as perfume, Exodus 30:37-38, signaling to all the sweet fragrance of the priesthood on the priests as Jehovah’s authorized representatives.



Beyond the correlation of the oil purification process, the other ingredients came from trees or bushes where the plant was wounded to bleed the sap out for the mixture, reminding all "...he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed", Isaiah 53:2-5. According to the Mishnah (compilation of Jewish oral traditions), the oil mixture was consecrated by Moses and kept in a sacred jar inside the Holy of Holies.



Olive oil in its various forms and mixtures was used for several aspects of the Tabernacle.



Sacrificial Offerings

In grain/meal offerings often oil was part of the sacrifice, Leviticus 2:1-10, signifying the setting apart for divine use.



Menorah

The light generated from the lampstand was due to the oil in its seven cups that burned perpetually, Exodus 27:20-21, Leviticus 24:2-4. It was symbolic of the burning bush and the Savior's teaching that he was the light of the world, John 1:4-1, 8:12, 9:5.



Consecrating and Dedicating

Because the oil was considered holy (consecrated by Moses), anything it was applied to or anointed became sanctified and holy, Leviticus 8:10-12. This applied to both royal and priestly anointings, as well. It dedicated the recipient to the Lord and the people, reminding one of the special anointing Mary gave to Jesus, Mark 14:3-5. It was part of making covenants and the Lord acknowledging one's purity or holiness, Psalm 45:7.



Progression of Holiness

In its application to various aspects of the Tabernacle, oil demonstrated increased holiness regarding each stage including pressed oil for meal sacrifices, Leviticus 2:1, 4, 7, 16, beaten oil for the lamp and higher sacrifices, Exodus 27:20, Leviticus 24:2, and perfumed oil for anointing and consecrating High Priests and holier vessels, Exodus 30:22-33, 40:10 – similar to various progressive applications of incense, bread, fire/light.



Healing

Due to the oil's symbolism of the Tree of Life's virtues and properties, an anointing by a priest would both protect and heal the sick or afflicted, James 5:14-15, Mark 6:13, which was derived from the cleansing anointing given for those with disease, Leviticus 14:14-18.

The oil and its symbolic connections to the Savior are made vivid in his experiences of the Garden of Gethesamene (blood from every pore), Golgotha (death on the tree), and the garden with the empty tomb (resurrection/eternal life).



The Cherubim And The Messiah

Because the Tabernacle was the place where God would dwell, Leviticus 26:11-12, many understood it to be emblematic of the Lord taking upon himself a tabernacle of flesh and blood in the future, John 1:14, Mosiah 3:5, 15:1-2. The Most Holy Place/Holy of Holies was considered the Lord's throne room with the Mercy Seat atop the Ark of the Covenant as his footstool, 1 Chronicles 28:2, Psalm 99:5, 132:7-8. The cherubim were representative of the heavenly hosts that both surround the throne of God to worship Him, Revelation 5:11, 1 Nephi 1:8, as well as protect/enforce His covenants with mankind, Revelation 12:7-12, 2 Kings 6:16-17, D&C 109:22.

The cherubim symbolically acted as guards to the most holy space, similar to the cherubim that guarded the Tree of Life, Genesis 3:24. They guarded the most holy space and only allowed those who were authorized with appropriate holy credentials/information to enter, Psalm 15:1-2, 24:3-6. When Ezekiel had his vision of the Lord's chariot, he saw the cherubim carrying or escorting God from the Temple to the heavenly realm, Ezekiel 10:15-20 (see also Psalm 18:10, 2 Samuel 22:11), symbolizing their role in both guarding and assisting in some type of ascension to the heavenly throne.

“Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.”

Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 2:31



On the day Jesus rose from the dead, Mary Magdalene and others had come to further prepare his body for permanent interment, Mark 16:1-2. When they discovered the tomb was empty, Mary ran to find Peter and John to tell them that Jesus' body had been taken, John 20:2.

After returning to the tomb and confirming it was empty, Peter and John went back to their homes, John 20:10, while Mary remained in great distress, John 20:11. Wanting to make sure, she looked one more time into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting at the head and feet of where Jesus had laid, John 20:12. The two angels were possibly the fulfillment of the symbolism of the two cherubim/angels that sat on either side of the Ark of the Covenant cover, Exodus 25:18-20. They may have been the Savior's escorts who had been with him as his spirit re-entered his resurrected body and

awaited his ascension to the Father, John 20:17.

The empty tomb with the two angels recalls the powerful Tabernacle imagery of the cherubim on the Mercy Seat of the Ark. To further layer this correlation, there are echoes of the Ark's cherubim/angels and the empty tomb scene in Egypt's burial of royalty where imagery of the spread wings of Isis and her sister, Nephthys (Egyptian goddesses who helped Osiris in his resurrection), were placed at the top and bottom of a sarcophagus to both symbolically protect the deceased from evil and assist in their resurrection.

With these correlations we find the Lord is teaching those with eyes to see and ears to hear what the heavenly realms may be about and how we can prepare for that experience.

“The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will extol him.”

Exodus 15:2 NIV translation

The Rock, Tree, Water And Messiah

The miraculous dividing of the Red Sea to save the children of Israel from the pursuing Egyptian armies signaled the importance of water to both empower and protect, Exodus 15:4-11, when harnessed by the Lord. The seas were considered places of chaos where only God could command and prevail, Psalm 77:16, and yet they (rivers, springs, rain that feed the seas) symbolized life.

The children of Israel were metaphorically baptized, cleansed or reborn through their crossing of the Red Sea, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. In contrast, the Egyptian armies were destroyed or prevented by that same water from following Israel to the promised land. The symbolism

of water had a role in the earth’s creation, Genesis 1:2, nurturing/sustenance, Isaiah 44:3, Psalm 1:3, life, Isaiah 44:3, death, Genesis 7:11-23, baptism and resurrection, Romans 6:3-5.

Through the practical and miraculous use of water, the children of Israel were taught many types and shadows of the salvation of the Lord, Exodus 15:2. Once beyond the Red Sea, Israel began to languish in the desert due to no water until they came upon the waters of Marah, Exodus 15:22-23, which were unfortunately bitter, amplifying the people’s thirst and murmuring. Under the Lord’s direction, Moses placed a tree/branch in the water and made it sweet to drink, Exodus 15:24-25, reminding all of the Tree of Life, symbolic of the love of God, 1 Nephi 11:25-26, and His saving grace through His son’s atonement and crucifixion, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Timothy 2:4-6. The Messiah is known as the Branch, Isaiah 4:2, 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15-16, Zachariah 3:8-9, 6:12, and he will save the people as the tree limb did so for the children of Israel.



Many believe the tree that made the waters sweet represented the cross on which the Savior was crucified, 1 Peter 2:24, making the bitter cup, D&C 19:18-19, sweet for all, Alma 36:21, who choose him, Hebrews 7:25. It recalls when Christ changed the water to wine, John 2:1-11, or Jehovah changing water to blood as a plague to the Egyptians, Exodus 7:14-25. The great "I Am", Exodus 3:14, that Jehovah identifies Himself as in the Old Testament was in fact Jesus Christ, John 8:58, D&C 38:1.

Moses and the children of Israel encamped at the oasis at Elim where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, Exodus 15:27, suggesting a shadow of the twelve tribes that would gather all the world (70 nations) to the waters of salvation, Isaiah 12:3. Two more times as Israel sojourned in the desert wilderness, they struggled to find water and subsequently murmured against God and Moses. At Rephidim/Horeb, Moses was commanded to take his rod (the same one used to taint the Nile with blood) and smite the rock in Horeb, after which water flowed, Exodus 17:1-7. Moses called the place Massah, Exodus 17:7, meaning the proving or testing of Israel, and Meribah, the strife or complaint with the Lord, Psalm 81:7. The second place was in Kadesh where Moses again with his rod tapped the rock and water flowed, Numbers 20:1-11. However, Moses did not acknowledge the Lord and tapped the rock twice, Numbers 20:11-12, and due to that he would not be permitted to lead Israel into the land of promise.



These incidents are rich symbolism in which the rock is the Savior, Helaman 5:12, Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 2 Samuel 22:2-3, and the water that flows from it is his nourishment and salvation, 1 Corinthians 10:4, Isaiah 44:1-3, John 7:37-38. The Samaritan woman at the well, indeed learned that Jesus is the source of "living water", John 4:10-14, where "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst".

Moses' rod was symbolic of the Lord's authority and power, Exodus 4:20, 14:21, 17:9. It represented God's "Word" or rule (emanating from a measuring device, a ruler) and reminds all of the term used to describe Jesus as the Word, John 1:1-3, as well as the voice of the Lord, Micah 6:9, Revelation 19:15. In Lehi's dream Nephi is told that the "rod of iron" represents the "word of God", 1 Nephi 11:25, 15:23-24. The Messiah in

Isaiah was described as a rod coming out of Jesse that would "smite the earth" in righteous judgment, Isaiah 11:1-4.

As the Lord taught the children of Israel who He was and what He would do for them through various events and symbols, he reminded them, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Exodus 15:26.



Women At The Tabernacle Gate

A brief mention in Exodus has women serving at the entrance of the Tabernacle, Exodus 38:8, who donate their bronze mirrors to plate the Tabernacle Laver. Later, another mention is made of women serving at the Tabernacle door, 1 Samuel 2:22. In each instance women are providing some type of priestly act for those entering or transitioning into holy space. Gates or thresholds are somehow connected to women as they take on the role of gatekeeper, Titus 2:3-5, Proverbs 31:31, whether it be for the Tabernacle or their own home.

Eve was instrumental in transitioning Adam into the mortal experience, Moses 5:11, which led to mankind coming to earth. Sarah is at the door of her tent when she hears the three angelic visitors tell Abraham she will have a son, Genesis 18:10. Rebekah is the one who prepares her son, Jacob – similar to a priest being prepared with a sacrifice and clothing – to be the family heir in place of Esau and receive Isaac's blessing and his covenantal inheritance, Genesis

27:6-17 – another type of transition. To claim her marriage right as part of Judah's clan after being widowed, Tamar disguised herself at the entrance to Enaim on the road to Timnah, Genesis 38:14, which ultimately led to her having posterity through Judah's line which eventually led to the birth of the Savior, Matt 1:1-16. Hannah pleaded with the Lord at the door of the temple to bless her with a son, 1 Samuel 1:9, which the Lord did.

As possible representatives of the gate/door or cosmic thresholds, women may be symbolic of sacred transitions from one life (pre-mortal existence) to bearing children for another life. The Egyptians understood this with their belief in a goddess who represented a tree of life who stood at the horizon of heaven for those who passed into the afterlife. Her image was noted at the entrance of temples and tombs to help the traveler prepare for their journey by symbolically pouring water over the traveler and clothing or feeding him. She was called the "Mother". Similarly, Nephi did not understand the "Tree" depicted in his father's vision until the



angel showed Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, 1 Nephi 11:9-21, who brought the Son of God into the world.

Female gate-keeper symbolism is further correlated with the anointing of Jesus's feet by Mary in preparation of his death, John 12:3, 7. Later, women were featured as standing near the cross as his spirit left his body (another threshold transition), John 19:25. Again, women came the morning after the Sabbath to further prepare Christ's lifeless body for permanent burial, Mark 16:1. It was Mary Magdalene whom Christ greeted first before ascending (another transition) to his Father in Heaven, John 20:16-17.

The power of transitions appears to be significant for women as they serve those who pass through one world or space to another including the Tabernacle door where patrons would leave ordinary life to enter into covenantal space. The book of Job notes that the "doors" of his mother's womb are not "shut up", Job 3:9-10. The female imagery is further used for the Church in which she is the wife of the "Lamb" and is instrumental for one's covenantal rebirth, Revelation 21:9.

Across many cultures and centuries a pattern appears – at the horizon of heaven, the gate of the city, the door of the temple, a woman stands at the threshold. She represents life, birth, continuity and the promise of seed. Because the journey into the presence of God includes multiple transitions or doorways, each can be described as a birth, and women are present.

The Serpent of the Lord

In Hebrew the word serpent is a derivative of the angelic word seraph or in the plural, seraphim. Seraphim were burning or fiery ones, referencing their glory and sometimes depicted as flying fiery serpents in ancient iconography. When Isaiah ascended to the heavenly Holy of Holies, Isaiah 6:1-4, and exclaimed his unworthiness due to his “unclean lips”, Isaiah 6:5, it was a seraph that provided atonement by touching his mouth with coals from the Altar of Incense, Isaiah 6:6-7.

Seraphim were depicted as celestial, six-winged divine beings that attended to the throne of God, Isaiah 6:2. Similar to other animals and things that might symbolize divinity or the purpose of God including the lamb, goat, calf, hen, dove, tree or stars, the serpent motif may have been symbolic of the high realm of seraphim that watched over the throne of God and would be considered the highest or closest to God Himself. As angels, the seraphim were considered sons of God and participants in the council of God, Job 38:4-7, Psalm 82:1, Abraham 3:22-24, as well as the host of heaven, D&C 38:1.



As implied in Isaiah’s experience, seraphim came to be used as symbols of both royal and divine authority and may also have been part of the cherubic images in the Tabernacle on the walls and veils. Certainly, the divine authority statement made through Aaron’s rod before the Egyptian priests’ rods in the form of serpents, Exodus 7:10-12, demonstrated the power and authority of God over Egypt in the context of serpents. This also has symbolic connotations with the “rod [coming] out of the stem of Jesse”, Isaiah 11:1.

Subsequently, many of the children of Israel would understand the divine implications of the “flying fiery serpents”, 1 Nephi 17:41, Isaiah 14:29, 30:6, punishing/destroying them for their murmuring in the wilderness, Numbers 21:4-6, Deuteronomy 8:15, and even more so, when Moses was commanded to make the life-saving, brazen serpent on a pole, Numbers 21:7-9, symbolic of the Son of God, Alma 33:18-19, being lifted up on a pole/tree, John 3:14-15, and saving those who would look to him.

According to Jewish tradition, the brazen serpent had wings further reinforcing the symbolism of the divine seraph. Unfortunately, many did not simply look up to the winged brazen serpent to be healed, rather they perished, Alma 33:20, Helaman 8:15. This seraph represented the greatest of God’s sons who would be the promised Messiah, who would be lifted up upon a cross, Helaman 8:14, for all mankind.



Due to the sacred nature of the brazen serpent, it was kept in holy space (most likely in the tabernacle and later in the temple), until King Hezekiah's reforms, 2 Kings 18:4, when he had it destroyed due to the children of Israel worshipping it rather than acknowledging its foreshadowing of the future "healer" who would have "healing in his wings", Malachi 4:2, 2 Nephi 25:13, 20, 3 Nephi 25:2, reminding all that "I am the Lord that healeth", Exo 15:26.

The serpent symbolism is further noted in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis, the "serpent" attempts to perform the role of God – to be God – in convincing Eve to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which was forbidden by God, Genesis 2:16-17. After being cast out of God's presence, Revelation 12:7-9, Moses 4:3, Isaiah 14:12-15, Satan – as a fallen seraph – tried to usurp God's power that was given to Jehovah/Yahweh, Moses 4:3-4, Abraham 3:27-28, to be in fact, God, Moses 4:12-13, Isaiah 14:14, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and do what God could do with an Adam and Eve in this world or possibly other worlds, Moses 1:33-39, D&C 76:22-24.

To confuse Adam and Eve, Satan may have appeared as an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14, though, as noted, he was a less-than angel of light (metaphorically referred to as a serpent without wings), Genesis 3:1, which implied a loss of power and glory, 2 Nephi 9:9, Moses 1:12-16. It sheds more light on the divine cursing Satan received of being lower than all the animals and from the "dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life", Genesis 3:14, suggesting symbolically that he will never be embodied and shall dwell in Sheol forever eating the dust that exists there, Isaiah 29:4. The fact that the "he" will "crush" or "grind" Satan's head, Genesis 3:15, according to the Hebrew, suggests one from Eve's posterity, the Messiah, will be the victor over Satan.

When seen through ancient understanding, the serpent symbolism reveals much more about divinity and how we can recognize key principles of truth being taught through ancient iconography.



The High Priest And The Bishop

Under the direction of the Lord, Aaron and his sons were ordained high priests by Moses, Exodus 28:1, 40:15, to serve the children of Israel more directly through the Lord's sanctuary – the Tabernacle and later the temple. This priesthood right was given by birth within the Levi tribe and specifically through Aaron's lineage regarding the High Priest role.

As Israel's high priest, Aaron, similar to Moses, was a type and shadow of the messianic Great High Priest, Hebrews 5:4-5. He represented Israel to God, to be their intermediary, thus the priestly "golden" robes he wore (except on the Day of Atonement when he wore white robes) symbolized humility, divine authority, responsibility for the tribes of Israel, and sanctification. The ancient High Priest presided over all sacrifices and related ordinances pertaining to the Tabernacle. Interestingly, Moses is represented as a god and Aaron as his prophet, Exodus 7:1, to the pharaoh,

reinforcing the mediator role that each played. The High Priest maintained the sanctity of the Tabernacle and its vessels as well as with the other priests. He taught the people God's laws and doctrine, and served as judge in Israel in maintaining ritual as well as individual (the children of Israel) purity.

In this last dispensation, God has called presiding High Priests in the role of Bishop to minister to a specific geographic area that encompasses covenantal members of the Church as well as by extension all other residents in that specified area. Similar to Aaron, the Bishop is ordained and set apart to preside over a congregation, D&C 20:67. He also has received the temple washing and anointing, endowment and sealing covenants, comparable to what Aaron and his sons went through in being set apart and

sanctified in the Tabernacle. This presiding High Priest/Bishop role and priesthood office mirrors what was also established in the ancient church of Christ, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:7.

The Bishop holds priesthood keys/authority for his congregation similar in principle to the greater keys given to Peter regarding all salvific functions of the Savior's church, Matthew 16:18-19. The keys for the Bishop meant he had the right and

responsibility to receive revelation to benefit his congregation, D&C 128:11 – to get vision for his flock in helping them to draw closer to the Lord. Similar to Moses' presiding relationship with Aaron, the Stake President is the presiding High Priest over a geographic area of Bishops to guide and help them with the President of the Church (and other Apostles) further reflecting the hierarchical authority of presiding over all Stake Presidents.

The Bishop has six basic responsibilities:



He is the presiding High Priest over his congregation, D&C 107:17, similar to Aaron being the presiding High Priest over the children of Israel regarding the Tabernacle, Exodus 16:9-10.



He presides over the Levitical/Aaronic Priesthood in his congregation, D&C 107:15, similar to Aaron presiding over the Levitical Priests that assist in the affairs of the Tabernacle, Numbers 3:32.



He is a common judge in Israel, D&C 58:17-18, 72:17, 107:69-74, similar to Aaron who was to “bear the judgment of the children or Israel” regarding their purity and sanctification with the Lord, Exodus 28:30.



He coordinates the work of salvation and exaltation within the congregation – the “steward of God” – Titus 1:7, D&C 20:29, 42:10-14, while Aaron was responsible for the work of salvation among the Israelites pertaining to the sacrifices and atonement done on their behalf in the Tabernacle, Leviticus 9:22-23, Numbers 18:1-7.



The Bishop is also responsible for the needy, D&C 84:112, 42:31-34, 107:68, in helping them to provide for themselves, similarly as the Lord commanded the children of Israel to provide for the poor and needy, Deuteronomy 15:7-11, Leviticus 19:9-10, 18, Matthew 25:40.



He oversees records, finances and the use of the church meetinghouse, D&C 72:9-19, just as Aaron and his sons (High Priests) did the same for all matters pertaining to the Tabernacle, Exodus 38:21-29, Numbers 3:47-51, 18:28.

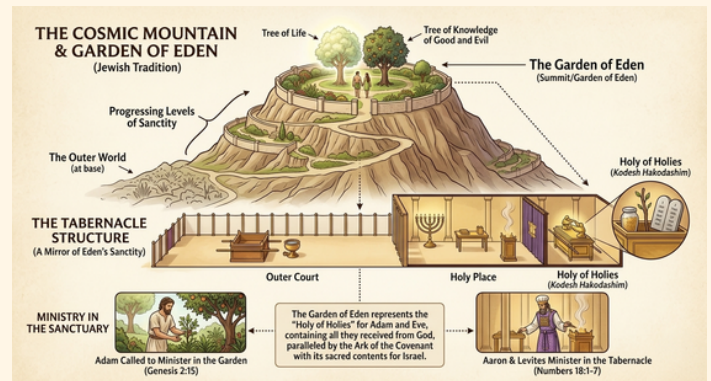


The High Priest bore the names of the twelve tribes on his breastplate (also on his shoulders), as well as the name of God on his headplate/gold band where he mediated between the Lord and Israel, Exodus 28:29-30, and maintained the Tabernacle and its ordinances to lift (make holy) and protect the children of Israel from violating their covenants. In these last days, the Bishop may metaphorically wear the names of the covenantal people in his ward/congregation as he guides them toward their Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ.

He directs the “ministering of angels” as to all who serve within the Aaronic Priesthood, D&C 107:20, 84:26-27, within the congregation regarding the preparatory gospel (faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins). They are considered angelic in their service. The Bishop, Stake President and greeter at the temple desk – gatekeepers for access to the temple – model the cherubim who symbolically protected the holiness of the tabernacle space at each juncture of entry. The Bishop provides vision, blesses and leads in humility and love according to the Spirit of God, D&C 121:36-46.

Sacred Space Teaches The Way

Throughout the New Testament the Savior taught in various forms the way back to God, so much so that early references to his church were “The Way”, Acts 9:2, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22. “The Way” was always taught from the beginning by the Lord through the patterns found in His sacred space. The Savior taught “I am the way, the truth and the life”, John 14:6, perhaps metaphorically reflecting the path through the Tabernacle courtyard, Holy Place and Holy of Holies.



In the Garden of Eden, at its center stood two major trees, Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Garden was separate from the rest of the world and rested on a cosmic mountain, according to Jewish tradition, with the outer world at the base of the mountain, suggesting three progressing levels of sanctity. This mirrors the Tabernacle’s outer court, Holy Place and Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant containing Manna, Aaron’s rod and the tablets of the covenant reflecting similarly that all Adam and Eve needed was in their “Holy of Holies” – the Garden. Adam was called to minister in the Garden just as Aaron and the Levites ministered in the Tabernacle.

Due to their transgression, Adam and Eve exited the sacred space from the east with cherubim protecting the Garden from re-entry. With the Tabernacle on Yom Kippur, the High Priest enters the courtyard from the east into the Holy Place. He passes the lit Menorah on his left, emblematic of the Tree of Life. On his right is the Shewbread table, emblematic of the wedding feast and the nourishment the Lord provides. The High Priest then prays in front of the veil decorated with cherubim while incense smoke and scent fill the room. He then enters the Holy of Holies on behalf of Israel – once to burn incense and two more times to sprinkle sacrificial blood in front and on the Mercy Seat of the Ark, Leviticus 16:12-17.

All of this will become a type and shadow for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who ascends up the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane leaving eight of his apostles behind. Peter, James and John continue with Jesus up to the Garden where he earnestly prays. He then leaves them and goes further into the Garden echoing the three divisions in the Garden of Eden and Tabernacle. He enters the Garden of Gethsemane three times, Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, while also sweating droplets of blood during his



“And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.”

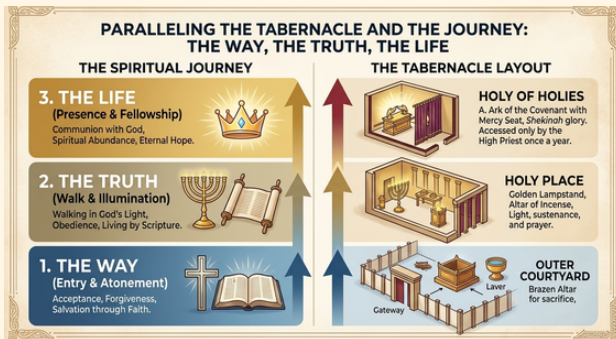
Alma 34:14

anguish, Luke 22:44, Mosiah 3:7, D&C 19:16-19, mirroring the High Priest’s service in the Holy of Holies.

Later, as Christ was crucified his spirit left his body and the temple veil tore into two from top to bottom, Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45. It symbolized giving access to all with the gulf of sin healed, Hebrews 10:19-20, and the cherubim symbolically stepping aside to open the “Way” to God’s presence. This is brought about by Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, who enters so all might enter who desire to return to his Father and our Father, John 20:17, once again to the metaphoric sacred space of the Garden.

The pattern of the “Way” in three progressing spaces/stages of holiness is present in the Lord’s temples today. Priestly men and women who affirm the righteous criteria to enter – similar to those who entered the Tabernacle, Psalm 15:1-2 – are clothed in white to partake in the covenants offered at each level allowing them to progress to the most sacred space representing the Father’s presence.

sacrificing a broken heart and contrite spirit, Psalm 51:17, 3 Nephi 9:19-20, applying the gospel of Jesus Christ, 3 Nephi 11:32-35, Matthew 5:3-7:27, 22:37-40, keeping the law of chastity, Matthew 5:27-28, and consecrating themselves to the Lord, Omni 1:26, D&C 42:30-36. The covenants related to these principles bind men and women to the Savior in helping them further walk in the “Way” back to the Father.



Great insight might also be gleaned by seeing the Plan of Salvation represented in the Tabernacle in leaving the Father’s presence (from a pre-mortal state) from the Holy of Holies and digressing to a mortal state by moving through the Holy Place into the courtyard and then, through faith, repentance and various ordinances returning to Him by progressing back through the stages through the enabling atonement of the Savior.

The Lord continues to teach those with a pure heart and clean hands, Psalm 24:3-5, through His temples today. Similar to the ancient priests, righteous women and men are washed, anointed and clothed in priestly apparel in preparation to receiving higher covenants. They learn the importance of obeying the commandments, John 14:15,



The substitute blood of animal sacrifices in the Tabernacle was emblematic of the real blood sacrifice that would be made by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. With blood being the “life of the flesh” and referencing the Savior’s eternal blood sacrifice, its symbolism of life – even eternal life – may also play a symbolic role in the eternal linkage of familial ties. The tokens of the Abrahamic covenant were circumcision and giving birth – a type of cutting a covenant that reminded Abraham and Sarah of

their posterity and fulfillment of the Lord’s promise. It is by blood that we come into this world and it is through blood that we are saved and bound to the Savior. Similarly, it is by blood we are linked to our ancestors and posterity and only through priesthood sealings is that bond solidified for the eternities. Through the symbolism of the blood, the Lord teaches us His plan and His rescue to bring us back to Him with our loved ones.

“Every divine ordinance or performance ordained of God, every sacrifice, symbolism, similitude; all that God ever gave to his people—all was ordained and established in such a way as to testify of His Son and center the faith of believing people in him and in the redemption he was foreordained to make.”

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ*, p 28

Summary

The Tabernacle and its ordinances were a type of the Lord's plan of salvation – the hope we received from the beginning. For the Israelites – in their present – it reflected what was established in the beginning with Adam and Eve – in the past – and what would ultimately occur through the promised Messiah – in the future.

As the Lord taught the saints of the restoration, truth is a knowledge of things past, present and future, D&C 93:24, and certainly was an applied principle for the children of Israel. The metaphors, analogies and symbolism throughout the ancient scriptures from the Garden of Eden scene, Genesis 2:15-23, to the prophecy of the Lord appearing at His temple, Malachi 3:1, center our gaze and understanding on the Savior and his fulfillment of every “jot and tittle”, Matthew 5:17-18, for our salvation.

“Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.’ And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord...”, Isaiah 62:11-12 ESV translation.



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