

In preparation for the Tabernacle display at Scentsy Commons, the Meridian Idaho North Stake Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints requested that several members of the Stake write research papers on various subjects relating to the ancient Tabernacle revealed to Moses in the Old Testament. The authors of these nine papers are not Bible scholars, but spent significant time, effort, and prayer as they studied their subjects and honed their messages. Their hope was to provide meaningful information for readers of all faiths and backgrounds who want to gain a deeper understanding of the doctrine and symbolism of Jesus Christ surrounding the Tabernacle. The authors' intent was for the writings to be from a Christian perspective, yet free from bias towards any one Christian religion. Further, the facts and opinions represented in these papers are the work of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the doctrine and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or its leaders.

We welcome your questions or feedback on how we can improve the content of these research papers:
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Symbols of Water, Oil, Incense and Bread

By Mark Miller

John the Baptist, in his witness of Jesus, mentions a dove. Most recognize that the dove has become a universal symbol throughout Christianity. John the Baptist declared, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). How did he know that Jesus was the Lamb of God? There are probably many reasons, but specifically John the Baptist mentions this symbol he compares to a dove: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a *dove*, and it abode upon him" (John 1:32). This act sparked a memory in John; of something he had been told by God before. Originally, John had been sent to baptize someone and was specifically told to watch for something, because John says afterwards, "he that sent me to baptize, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). And now because John's memory was jogged by what he now saw, he felt compelled to testify, "And *I saw* and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). This early witness for John, where he declares not only that he knows, but that he was an eyewitness (I saw), depended, in some respects, on the sign of the dove to remind him of what he had been taught before. In this case, the symbol was something that helped John remember. Connecting that memory to the current event John was witnessing, established in his heart a testimony; a connection that would forever make him one of the most important witnesses of Jesus. Symbols become a powerful means to jog our memory, to help us make associations we wouldn't otherwise easily make. They transcend time.

A symbol helps us remember. Because symbols often have levels of meaning, a symbol that has affected us or meant something to us as a youth, may later take on more meaning based on life's experiences that we have as adults. It then becomes a powerful reminder for us. In fact, Jesus when He broke bread at the Last Supper, used the symbol of the broken bread for the future memory of His disciples, "This is my body, which is given for you: this do in *remembrance* of me" (Luke 22:19). Symbols help us remember.

A symbol also invites us to contemplate, to think deeper about something. Jesus often captured the attention of his audiences with parables, where one event symbolized or meant something else. Because of the use of symbols, our experience in learning can require an effort on our part. "Seek, and ye shall find" (Luke 11:9). Symbols help us seek.

Following are a few symbols seen in the tabernacle: Water, Oil, Incense and Bread. They are also seen many other places in the holy scriptures. Their meaning runs deep, and helps the person viewing them deepen their understanding of God and what he teaches in a very personal way.

Because of the personal connection required, presenting the symbols, in some ways, becomes problematic. Therefore, the following descriptions of these symbols of the tabernacle and the scripture references that follow, are at best incomplete, and can only be completed by each person's individual experience. Even so, we are invited to learn, to explore and to understand in a very personal way what God taught His children in older times, and thereby understand better what He wants each of us to know today.

Water (Hebrew: mayim מַיִם)

Water as a symbol is found throughout the Old Testament and New Testament. Moses performed the miracle of causing the water to come from a rock. The New Testament refers to baptism in numerous verses. Anciently water was used in ritual purification ceremonies. Ritual cleanliness has its place in nearly every religion. At the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem there is an area for washing for those approaching the sacred space. Ritual washing in water would represent a spiritual cleansing, allowing a person to approach sacred space and come closer to God. It is to this type of ritual purification that was referred to in the New Testament when Jesus turned the water into wine at the marriage at Cana. “And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews ... Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water” (John 2:6-7).



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1. Ex. 30:17-21: Laver – Priests use to be washed clean
Ex. 40:12
2. John 3:3-5: New Birth
3. John 2:1-9: Water to Wine Miracle
4. Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13: Jesus is the Living Water
John 4:7-14 – not thirst again
5. Ex. 17:1-2, 6: Water from Rock
6. John 9:1-7: Pool of Siloam

Purifying Cleansing

Birth

Atonement

Living Water / Eternal Life

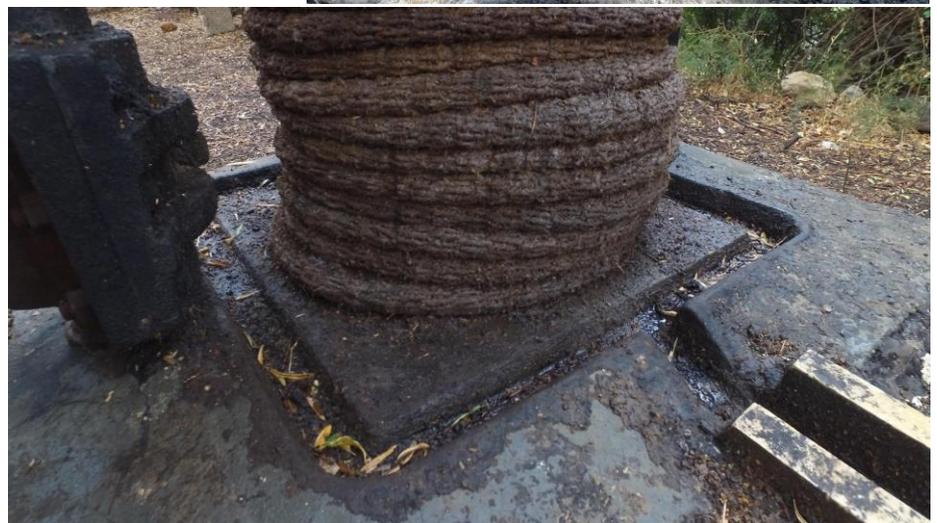
Source of living water

Healing -spiritually whole

Of note: The Pool of Siloam waters were used in an annual ritual at the temple. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Priests would draw water from the pool and there would be a procession up to the temple mount, where the water would be offered as an offering on the Altar of Sacrifice. The Talmud expresses: “He who has not seen the joy of the drawing of water at the Feast of Tabernacles does not know what true joy is.”

Oil (Hebrew: shemen שמן)

Oil, in this case olive oil, was a staple of life in ancient times: for religious purposes including anointing, and kingship ceremonies, as well as everyday life in eating and cooking. The process of making olive oil was laborious but familiar to nearly everyone of the day. Olives would be gathered or shaken from the trees in the harvesting season. Often nets were placed below the trees for the collection of the olives. Once harvested, large crushing stones would be turned to break open the pieces of olives, then they were transferred into a mesh basket for final pressing in an olive oil press, that under its extreme weight would force the small amounts of oil in each olive into a collection receptacle. Many of these types of presses would be located close to the groves of olive trees from which the olives were being harvested. It is to one of these places that Jesus retired to pray to His Father after the Last Supper during the night before his crucifixion (Gethsemane – which means Olive Oil Press).



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Of note in the section on the temple menorah, the menorah was the only source of light in the tabernacle proper. As such the seven basins for olive oil with their wicks would hold the olive oil that provided the fuel to keep the tabernacle lit. In fact, it was the only source of light in the structure. The tabernacle lamps were to be kept burning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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| 1. Lev. 8:10-12: Moses anoints tabernacle
Ex. 29:5-9; 40:12-13: Consecration | <i>Sanctification, Consecration</i> |
| 2. 1 Sam. 16:11-13: Horn of Oil-David anointed King
1 Kgs. 1:39: Horn of Oil in Tabernacle-Solomon
2 Kgs. 9:6; 2 Sam 12:7: Oil used to anoint a king | <i>King (anointing)
Christ means "anointed one"</i> |
| 3. Matt. 25:1-13: Ten virgins-oil in lamps
Matt. 5:14-16: Ye are the light of world | <i>Light</i> |
| 4. Luke 22:39: Jesus frequented Mount of Olives to teach
Mark 11:1: Triumphal Entry | |
| 5. Matt. 26:36-45: Gethsemane. Geth = press, shemen = Olive oil press
With intense pressure <i>bitter</i> olives to <i>sweet</i> oil | <i>Atonement</i> |
| 6. James 5:14: Blessings
Mark 6:13: Olive oil-Miracles | <i>Healing</i> |
| 7. Zech. 14:4: 2nd Coming-Mt of Olives, Zech. 13:6 | |

Incense (Hebrew: qetoret קְטֹרֶת)

Incense has been used in many religions of the ancient world. The use of incense stems from a need in certain climates to cover smells present in the heat, like sweat, which are common to hotter climates. In addition, however, many ancient religions from many of the world's regions use incense during their worship. One of the largest incense burners is currently regularly used in the Catholic Mass of St. James in the city of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. For many, it visually symbolizes the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven (Rev. 8:3-4). It is at the Altar of Incense that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was visited by an angel named Gabriel to announce the miraculous arrival of his son who he will call John, known to all as John the Baptist. Zacharias was responsible for burning the incense on the altar that day, representing the prayers of all Israel ascending to heaven. More personally, in that moment, Zacharias' prayers to heaven were also answered. This same Angel Gabriel would later visit a young virgin named Mary, to announce a miraculous birth to her.

1. Ex. 30:34-36 Frankincense (cp Jesus' Birth Matt. 2:11)
2. Luke 1:5-21 Zacharias, John the Baptist Birth
3. Rev. 8:3-4 Prayers of the Saints

Of note, many in their acts of worship close with a unified voicing of the word "Amen". This word literally means "truth" (or "verily" or "truly"). The scripture in Isa. 65:15 in English is translated as "God of truth"- as the Hebrew reads: "God of Amen". One of God's name is "Amen" (Rev. 3:14)

Bread (Hebrew: le-hem לֶחֶם)



Photo courtesy of Daniel Smith redeemerofisrael.org

Bread was part of nearly every meal in ancient times. Its existence as a staple of life and source of nutrition was part of the diet of nearly everyone, regardless of economic status, and regardless of social strata. Bread has been referred to since the beginning: “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Gen. 3:19). Variants of baked bread, leavened and unleavened with yeast, make their ways into worship services of many religions. The 12 loaves of shewbread sat on the table inside the tabernacle proper. It is to bread that Jesus repeatedly likened himself during his teachings.

1. Luke 22:19 This is my body *“Breaking” the bread – Christ’s broken body*
2. Ex. 16:14-15-32-35 Manna *Bread from Heaven – Lord has power to provide for ALL our needs*
Matt. 14:13-20 Loaves Fishes Miracle—*Miraculously the Lord feeds ALL of us*
3. Gen.41:54 Gen. 47:11-12 *Life and Salvation*
Joseph saves Israel from famine with bread
4. Ex. 12:5-8, 15-17, 27 *Protection (Physical & Spiritual)*
Passover & Unleavened Bread
5. John 6:31-35 Jesus is true Manna *Everlasting Life*
“Bread from Heaven”
John 6:47-51 “I am that Bread of Life”
(Bread of Everlasting Life)
6. Micah 5:2 Old Test prophecy *Symbol at Christ’s Birth*
That Savior would be born in Bethlehem
Luke 2:3-7 Jesus born in Beth---lehem, Beth=House of Lehem=Bread
Matt. 2:3-5 Herod asks Priests
7. Bread and Leaven
Mark 8:13-21 beware of world’s leaven *Pure Testimony – True Testimony*
1 Cor. 5:6-8 keeping clean from world *Keeping clean from world’s ways and philosophies*
Matt. 16:5-12 Leaven of Pharisees *Assure associations with the righteous*
8. Elijah & Widow of Zarepath *Blessings from following the Lord’s prophet, Obedience*
1 Kgs. 17:9-16 Elijah “Bring me bread”

9. Gen.3:19 by the sweat of thy brow *Work – Fruit/Product of our Effort/Labors*
Thou shalt eat thy bread

10. Lev. 7:13 Lev. 23:20
Bread is an offering *Our Life's work – our offering to the Lord*
Isa. 58:7 Bread an offering true fasting-Fast Offering
Ezek. 16:49 Sodom (fullness of bread) penalty of not sharing bread

11. John 6:48-56 he dwelleth in me & I in him *Becoming like Christ*

12. Matt. 7:9-11 Luke 11:9-13 *God's generosity and blessings offered via our prayers*
If a man ask for bread, will you give him a stone? The Father always gives good gifts to them that ask him.
Matt. 6:11 Lord's prayer – give us this day our daily bread