

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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Sacred Items: Tablets, Jar of Manna, Rod of Aaron, & Blood - Executive Summary

By Debbie Davidson

- **Tablets (10 commandments)**
 - The Tables of the Law, also known as, Tablets of Stone, Stone Tablets, or Tablets of Testimony (in Hebrew: לוחות הברית *Luchot HaBrit* ... is defined in English as, “the tablets [of] the covenant”) (Ex. 34:1).
 - To the ancient Israelites, the stone tablets, which were kept in the ark, were law given to them by God. Christians believe the tablets represent Christ; who Isaiah spoke of, who is the Lawgiver (Isa. 33:22); and the Word of God (Rev. 19:13).
- **Jar of Manna**
 - Manna was described as a small, round food substance with the taste of honey wafers (Ex. 16:14–31) or of fresh oil (Num. 11:7–8). Manna (or *man-hu* in Hebrew)—meant “What is it...?”—since they were unfamiliar with the substance and its origin (Ex. 16:15).
 - Manna, which saved the children of Israel temporally, was a reminder of God’s mercy and grace toward them. Christ himself testified that manna was a witness of Him: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven,” and then he promised, “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6: 31-58).
- **Rod of Aaron**
 - The children of Israel considered the blooming rod confirmation that the tribe of Levi was chosen to retain priesthood authority and power.
 - The blossoming of Aaron’s rod can teach several principles through its symbolism. The word “almond” in Hebrew is *shaked* and has alternate meanings of “watch” or “wake”
 - Regarding “watch”, the house of Israel would need to ever be watchful to their leaders.
 - Regarding “wake”, this is a symbol of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - For Christians today, the rod is also a symbol of Jesus – his chosenness, his regal power, his priesthood authority (Ex. 4:2-4; 7:9-20; Num. 17:2-10; Ps. 23:4). Christ is the “first fruits from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:20); who has ability to give life.
- **Blood**
 - Blood sacrifice was used in connection with repentance, to atone for sin and ritual impurity (Ps. 51:16-19). In general, sacrifice was a sign of faith and obedience therefore, this ritual symbolized giving the best to the Lord.
 - Every covenant that was made in ancient Israel focuses on the redemptive mission of the Messiah. The blood of the best animal (lamb, bullock, oxen, turtledove, etc.) in ancient Israel was shed to save the person who was part of that covenant. In other words, the blood of the best was shed to save those who were not the best, due to their sins.
 - The blood rituals performed were highly symbolic to the Children of Israel, who believed in a Messiah. It started with the blood of the Passover lamb that became a sign on the doors of the Israelites, so that the Jehovah would pass by and not kill the first-born (Ex. 12:13). However, the blood sacrifice may hold even more significance to followers of Jesus Christ as He became our Passover lamb, and His blood atones for us.
 - The Day of Atonement foreshadowed the work of Christ and has been fulfilled at the cross where He who knew no sin died for those who are

sinners (2 Cor. 5:21); the innocent dying for the guilty; the Perfect dying for the imperfect, and so He “entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

Sacred Items: Tablets, Jar of Manna, Rod of Aaron, & Blood

By Debbie Davidson

Perhaps the most recognizable artifact of Biblical times is the Ark of the Covenant. Mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments (Num. 10:33; Rev. 11:19), the ark and the items contained within are saturated in symbolism. These symbols had great meaning to the Children of Israel and still represent important symbolic teachings for Jew and Christian believers today. The ark was referred to as “Ark of the Covenant” (Num. 10:33) or “Ark of Testimony” (Ex. 25:22). The ark had within it “The Testimony” or the two tablets of stone wherein the Ten Commandments were inscribed (Ex. 25:21). The children of Israel covenanted with God that they would keep His commandments (Ex. 24:3,7). Both titles of the ark stand as evidence and reminders of the covenant they made. Along with the tablets the ark also included a pot of manna (Ex. 16:33-34) and Aaron’s rod (Num. 17:1-10; Heb. 9:4). In the Old Testament it is said of these that they were put or laid up “before the testimony” (Ex. 16:34; Num. 17:10). According to Deuteronomy, a scroll containing a copy of the law (Deut. 31:26) was placed beside the ark and the sacred items were placed inside the ark.

Rod of Aaron



Images by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

Aaron was the elder brother of Moses (Ex.7:7), a High Priest of the tribe of Levi (Ex. 6:16-20). He assisted Moses in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt by being his spokesman (Ex. 4:10-16, 27-31). A rod in the hands of Aaron, the high priest, was endowed with miraculous power during the several plagues that preceded the Exodus (Ex. 7:17; 8:5, 16-17; 9:23; 10:13; McCurdy, Ginzberg). In the ancient Israelite culture, a rod was a natural symbol of authority. The children of Israel were familiar with shepherds and their use of a rod or staff to correct or guide their sheep. Aaron’s rod represented authority of the “Good Shepherd” as in Psalms 2:9, Isaiah 10:24 and Ezekiel 20:37.

Aaron’s rod gained religious significance to the Children of Israel during the Exodus and during Korah’s rebellion against Moses’ proclamation of the tribe of Levi as the holders of the priesthood. Although Korah was a Levite, his duty was to assist the priests (Num. 3:3-5). However, Korah desired to be a priest. The entire congregation’s rejection of this appointment and subsequent rebellion resulted in a plague and ended only by the intercession of Moses and Aaron. In order to end the “protesting” of the Israelites, God commanded that each of the Twelve Tribes provide a rod with its tribal name on it. The twelve rods were then taken and placed before the Lord in the Holy of Holies. Moses had been told that, “the man’s rod, whom I (God) shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel” (Num. 7:5). Subsequently, when Moses went to the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, he found that Aaron’s rod represented the tribe of Levi, indicated by the statement

regarding the rod of Aaron, "put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds" (Num. 17:8). And the 11 other rods remained barren (Num. 17).

This miracle of the rods distinguishes differences between the duties of the priests and those of the Levites. The miracle of the rods also outlined a Priesthood hierarchy, with Aaron as the leader and the other supporting priesthood duties assumed by the tribe of Levi (McCurdy, Ginzberg).

This blossoming demonstrated the evidence of the exclusive right to the priesthood of the tribe of Levi. In commemoration of this decision it was commanded that the rod be put again "before the testimony" (Num. 17:10).

The blossoming of Aaron's rod can teach several principles through its symbolism. The word "almond" in Hebrew is *shaked* and has alternate meanings of "watch" or "wake"in the case of Aaron's rod producing an almond, it almost certainly has two meanings:

1. Regarding "watch", the house of Israel would need to ever be watchful to their leaders (alluding to Moses and Aaron) and the priesthood that they held. It was the duty of the priests and Levites to guard the nation spiritually to watch over them and teach the people of Israel.
2. Regarding "wake", this is a symbol of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as the almond tree is the first to bloom in the spring, Christ was the first to be resurrected. It was a seemingly dormant rod that bloomed and brought forth new life. The almond blossom is white. Which symbolizes purity, authority and divinity (Spiro).

The children of Israel considered the blooming rod confirmation that the tribe of Levi was chosen to retain priesthood authority and power. For Christians today, the rod is also a symbol of Jesus – his chosenness, his regal power, his priesthood authority (Ex. 4:2-4; 7:9-20; Num. 17:2-10; Ps. 23:4). Christ is the "first fruits from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20), who has ability to give life (Parts adapted from Donald W. Parry).

Tablets (10 commandments)



Images by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Tables of the Law as they are widely known, Tablets of Stone, Stone Tablets, or Tablets of Testimony (in Hebrew: לוחות הברית *Luchot HaBrit* ... is defined in English as, "the tablets [of] the covenant") (Ex. 34:1; Olson).

In the biblical narrative, there were two sets of tablets. The first, inscribed by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18), were broken by Moses when he threw them down after he saw the Children of Israel worshipping a golden calf (Ex. 32:19). And the second were later cut by Moses and the law written on them (Ex. 34:4, 28).

To the ancient Israelites, the stone tablets, which were kept in the ark, were law given to them by God. Christians believe the tablets represent Christ; who Isaiah spoke of, who is the Lawgiver (Isa. 33:22); and the Word of God (Rev. 19:13; parts adapted from Donald W. Parry).

Jar of manna



Images by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years, the Lord provided food for them, referred to as manna. It was described as a small, round food substance with the taste of honey wafers (Ex. 16:14–31) or of fresh oil (Num. 11:7–8). This fresh food, manna (or *man-hu* in Hebrew)—meant “What is it...?”—since they were unfamiliar with the substance and its origin (Ex. 16:15). It was also called “angels’ food” and “bread from heaven” (Ps. 78:24–25; John 6:31). Each morning, except for Sunday, when the dew was gone, there would be manna on the ground (Ex. 16:14-20). The children of Israel would collect enough sustenance for their use for the day. However, if left overnight, it would spoil. On Saturday they would collect a double portion and it would stay fresh through Sunday.

The gift of manna demonstrates God's concern for basic human needs. It reassures God's ultimate care for us. It also emphasizes the Scriptural principle that Sabbath rest is built into the fabric of creation. The preservation of a jar of manna, that was kept in the tabernacle, served as a reminder for future generations of God's constant graciousness, allowing us to reorient our lives according to God's ways (Spiro).

Manna, which saved the children of Israel temporally, was a reminder of God's mercy and grace toward them. Manna also represented Jesus Christ, the “living bread,” who saves his people everlastingly (John 6: 48-51; parts adapted from Donald W. Parry).

Christ himself testified that manna was a witness of Him: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven,” and then he promised, “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6: 31-58).

Blood Sacrifice



Images by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

The Ark of the Covenant was placed inside the tabernacle in the most sacred room called The Holy of Holies. Entrance to this structure, in the center of the enclosure, was prohibited to everyone except the High Priests. The children of Israel would bring animals to the tabernacle for slaughter. This act was symbolic of being cleansed from sin. These animal offerings, served as a prelude to Yom Kippur, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to perform a sacrificial ritual to cleanse all of the Children of Israel from sin. The use of the blood from the animal slaughter was an important part of the ritual. Blood is a universal representation of life itself, an element of mortality that functions within the

human body. The significance of blood is pointed out in Leviticus 17: "...for the life of the flesh is in the blood...for it is the life of all flesh." The rituals performed were all united through the sacrificial blood.

Blood sacrifice was a central element of temple or tabernacle worship in the Law of Moses. The Hebrew word for blood is "dam" which is the main part of the word "Adam". The name Adam is the same as the noun אָדָם (*'adam*), which is used to describe mankind. Thus, blood is not just "a" key element to mortality, but it is "the" key element to mortality.

Yom means "day" in Hebrew, while *Kippur* derives from a root that means "to atone" or "to cover". Yom Kippur is usually expressed in English as "Day of Atonement". Traditionally, Yom Kippur is considered the date on which Moses received the second set of Ten Commandments. It occurred following the completion of the second 40 days of instructions from God. At this same time, the Israelites were granted atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf; hence, its designation as the Day of Atonement (Spiro).

The full sacrificial system is described in Leviticus 1-7. An animal without blemish would be brought to the tabernacle, killed, and the priest would butcher it. Once butchered according to the Lord's instructions, the high priest would take the blood and "sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, even before the veil. And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar which is before the Lord, that is in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 4:17-18).

On the day of Atonement, the blood ritual would be extended. First the high priest would smear the blood on the four horns of the altar. Then he would enter the Holy of Holies to smear blood on the Ark of the Covenant or Mercy Seat. On the Mercy Seat, the High Priest sprinkled bull's blood (for his and his family's sins); and sprinkled goat's blood (for Israel's sins). After the blood ritual was completed as a sin offering, a peace offering was made by burning designated parts of the animal, or fattened choice meat, on the altar.

During that time, blood sacrifice was used in connection with repentance, to atone for sin and ritual impurity (Ps. 51:16-19). The blood sacrifice was highly symbolic for Ancient Israel. In general, sacrifice was a sign of faith and obedience therefore, this ritual symbolized giving the best to the Lord. So sacred is life before God that the blood of animals, representing life, was used in all offerings for sin as man's vicarious substitute (atonement) under the Mosaic law. The four horns of the altar were representative of God's power to bring forth salvation. The smearing of the blood on the Mercy Seat was a symbol of the reconciliation between God and his people. The word atonement literally represents the moment of reconciliation between God and his people.

The sacrifices offered at the altar symbolized covenants made before the Lord. The children of Israel covenanted with God that they would keep His commandments. The phrase "make a covenant," in Hebrew כרת ברית (*karat b'riyt*) literally means to "cut a covenant". Covenant is the Hebrew word (*b'riyt*) that is derived from the nouns ברות (*barut*), which mean "to select the best" (Benner). A covenant was instituted by two parties who would take a fattened animal, the best of the flock or herd, to "cut" into two pieces. Then the two parties to the covenant would walk between the pieces symbolizing their dedication to the covenant. This action demonstrated that, "If I do not hold to the agreements of this covenant, you can do to me what we did to this animal." This pattern of "making" a covenant is clearly recorded in Jeremiah 34:18-20.

Every covenant that was made in ancient Israel focuses on the redemptive mission of the Messiah. The blood of the best animal (lamb, bullock, oxen, turtledove, etc.) in ancient Israel was shed to save the person who was part of that covenant. In other words, the blood of the best was shed to save those who were not the best, due to their sins.

A greater symbolic significance of these rituals can be found when applied to the mission of Jesus Christ. Christ and his Atonement for the sins of the world are layered throughout the Tabernacle ceremony. The apostle Paul of the New Testament gives us a partial insight into why blood must be shed. While speaking of animal sacrifices under the Mosaic law and the redeeming powers of blood, he states: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but that heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23; Callister).

The blood rituals performed were highly symbolic to the Children of Israel, who believed in a Messiah. It started with the blood of the Passover lamb that became a sign on the doors of the Israelites, so that the Jehovah would pass by and not kill the first-born (Ex. 12:13). However, the blood sacrifice may hold even more significance to followers of Jesus Christ as He became our Passover lamb, and His blood atones for us.

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