

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 Space - Executive Summary

By Kathy Baker

- The Israelite tabernacle - the dwelling place of the Lord
 - The Lord's design of the tabernacle was based on a continuum of sacred space
 - The physical center reflected the symbolic spiritual center of the people
- The continuum of sacred space - zones from unclean to most holy
 - Unclean periphery outside of the Israelite encampment
 - Outer perimeter - 12 tribes camped in an enormous square, 3 tribes to a side
 - Inner perimeter - the tribe of Levi camped along all 4 sides of the complex
 - The tabernacle complex - graded spaces of holiness
 - The Courtyard - available to worthy Israelites
 - The Holy Place of the tabernacle - Priests may enter
 - The Holy of Holies - High Priest enters on the Day of Atonement
 - "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (Ps. 90:1)
- Boundaries of the tabernacle complex separated the zones of sacred space
 - White linen fencing around the complex - 7.5 feet barrier
 - Gate to the courtyard - white twined linen; blue, purple and scarlet wool thread
 - The symbols of the colors: purity, heaven, royalty, blood
 - Moving through the gate: transition from profane to sacred space
 - Christ is the gate (John 10:9)
 - Door of the tabernacle
 - Curtain attached to wooden pillars overlaid with gold.
 - Gold - stable and symbolic of the living God who abides forever
 - Door also made of white twined linen and blue, purple and scarlet wool
 - The Veil of the temple - the final boundary to the Holy of Holies
 - Made in the sacred colors and decorated with figures of cherubim
 - Addition of cherubim is another example of a continuum
 - The sanctity of the veil - the flesh of Christ through which we are consecrated (Heb. 10:16-17, 19-20)
- Tabernacle Structure - a continuum of sacred space
 - The Holy Place - two cubes 30'x15'x15'
 - The Holy of Holies - one perfect cube 15'x15'x15' (symbolizes truth)
 - Jesus is the true tabernacle (Heb. 8:2; 9:11)
- Other aspects of the tabernacle are based on a sacred continuum (see chart)
 - Priestly vestments, foods, persons, and rituals for approaching sacred space
- Temples of God throughout the Dispensations
 - Garden of Eden: Tree of Life - Holy of Holies; Cherubim at east end
 - Mount Sinai: the tabernacle: a horizontal Mount Sinai
 - Solomon's temple: Built on Mount Moriah - The place of sacrifice
 - The Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives
 - The further into the Garden the more holy it became
 - Matt. 26:30-39; Luke 22:42-44

Sacred Space

By Kathy Baker

One of the Lord's purposes for directing the Israelites to build a tabernacle was so that He could dwell among His chosen people (Ex. 25:8). The Israelites' *spiritual* center was the Lord and His tabernacle. To reinforce this concept, the Lord instructed Moses on Mount Sinai to build the Israelite encampment with the tabernacle at its *physical* center (Ex. 25-40). The Lord's design for His tabernacle was based on a continuum of sacred space.

Zones of Sacred Space

The goal of a continuum of sacred space was to present a holiest zone for Deity far away from profane and corruptible space, persons and objects. The Israelite encampment was comprised of a ceremonially unclean periphery outside of the camp where lepers and the ritually unclean dwelt (Num. 5:1-4), and then graded zones thereafter, from clean to most holy. In the outer zone, on the perimeter of the encampment, the Lord instructed the twelve tribes of Israel to camp on four sides of an enormous square, three tribes to a side (Num. 2:1-34). The inner zone of the encampment consisted of the tribe of Levi, which camped along all four sides of the tabernacle complex. Those who desired to enter the tabernacle complex had to literally pass by the bearers of the priesthood (sons of Aaron) at the eastern entrance to the tabernacle complex (Num. 1:53; parts adapted from Donald W. Parry).

The tabernacle complex also consisted of graded spaces of holiness (see Figure 1). First, the tabernacle courtyard was a place of worship for Israelites bringing sacrifices and offerings, fasting, singing and praying. Then the tabernacle structure itself was separated into two additional grades of holiness: the Holy Place, available to priests to perform sacred rites therein (Num. 3:7-8), and the Holy of Holies, the most sacred space of the tabernacle. This most sacred space, the dwelling place of the Lord, was entered just once a year by the High Priest of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-34).

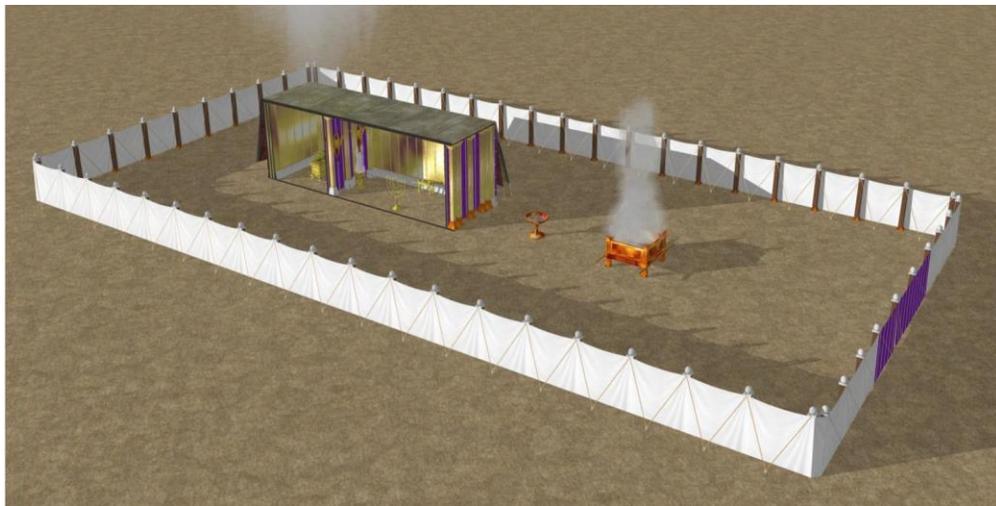


Figure 1. The tabernacle complex and its boundaries of sacred space; by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

Boundaries of Sacred Space

The boundaries of the tabernacle complex, separating the zones of sacred space, were made of materials rich in meaning. The 7.5 foot outer fence was made of fine, white linen (see Figure 1). The height of the fence was meant to shield the tabernacle complex from observation by ceremonially unclean individuals. White was a symbol of purity for the Israelites (Dan. 12:10).

The entrance gate to the tabernacle courtyard was a curtain made of white linen, plus three colors of woolen thread - blue, purple and scarlet (Ex. 27:16; 38:18; see Figure 1). The combination of wool and

linen was seen as a mark of holiness by the Israelites (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:11). The Lord specified all the colors to be used in the boundaries of sacred space. Blue is the color of the sky and thus was associated with heaven and divinity (Ex. 24:10). Purple in the ancient Near East was a token of sovereignty and royalty (Buckwalter). Scarlet is the color of blood and thus an appropriate representation of life and atonement (Lev. 17:11, 14).

Moving through the gate into the tabernacle courtyard represented the worshiper's transition from profane to sacred space. This gate symbolizes Christ as the only way into the tabernacle/presence of God and heaven: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

Across the east end of the tabernacle structure stood five acacia wood pillars overlaid with gold. Gold is used extensively in the tabernacle structure. One biblical scholar notes that gold is extremely stable and remains unchanged throughout the generations of time. In his view, it is therefore a fitting material for a structure that "represents the living God who abides forever" (Jenson). A curtain door, concealing the entire entryway (Ex. 26:37), was attached to the golden pillars. This curtain, like the one at the courtyard entrance, was made of blue, purple and scarlet wool thread plus fine twined white linen (Ex. 26:36; see Figure 1).

The final boundary was the veil to the Holy of Holies. Four golden pillars separated the space between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Attached to these pillars was the veil of most holy workmanship. The veil was made in the sacred colors blue, purple, scarlet and white and decorated with figures of cherubim (Ex. 26:31; see Figure 2). The addition of cherubim on the veil curtain is another example of a continuum. The tabernacle gate and door curtains, although fine in workmanship, were not decorated with figures. Throughout the Bible, cherubim are depicted as guardians of holy places (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:18, 22; 1 Kgs. 6:23-28; Ezek. 10; 11:22; Heb. 9:5).



Figure 2. The Veil of the Holy of Holies; by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

The writer of Hebrews describes the sanctity of the veil as the flesh of Christ through which we are consecrated: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more....Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:16-17, 19-20).

The fence and entrance gate of the tabernacle complex, the door of the tabernacle, and the veil of the Holy of Holies were rich in symbolism, turning hearts and minds to the Savior, and creating boundaries to varying degrees of sacred space.

The Tabernacle Structure

The tabernacle structure was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, with its dimensions 45 feet long, 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. The tabernacle space, then, was the dimension of three cubes of equal proportions, the first two cubes being the Holy Place: 30 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high, and the third being the Holy of Holies: 15 feet by 15 feet by 15 feet (Ex. 26 and 36). Thus, the most sacred space of the tabernacle complex, the Holy of Holies, was a perfect cube, which was the "symbol of truth, because, from whatever point of view it may be contemplated, it is always the same" (Farbridge). Throughout the scriptures, "truth" is listed as one of the primary qualities of the character of God (Deut. 32:4; Dan. 4:37; John 14:6).

Again, the writer in Hebrews likens Jesus to the tabernacle. He explains that Jesus is the “true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:2), and that Jesus is “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” (Heb. 9:11). The Lord directed the Israelites to build His tabernacle so that He could literally be their dwelling place. As Psalms 90:1 so beautifully states, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Additional Symbols of the Sacred Continuum

In addition to the graded continuum of space, the boundaries between those spaces, and the tabernacle structure itself, the sacred continuum also pertained to other aspects of the tabernacle, such as priestly vestments, foods, persons, and rituals of approaching sacred space (see chart below). As priestly officiants and worshippers moved from a profane world outside of the holiness continuum toward the most holy zone, the visible things around them (fabric, vestments, temple furniture, vessels, foods, and so forth) were of better quality and more elaborate workmanship. All of these things served as teaching devices that pointed to the physical and spiritual center where God himself dwelt (parts adapted from Donald W. Parry).

Gradations of Holiness (Parry)

(Listed in Descending Order from Most Holy to Very Unclean)

	Most Holy	Holy	Clean	Unclean	Very Unclean
Space	Holy of Holies (Ex. 26:33)	Holy place (Ex. 26:33)	Court (Ex. 27:9–19)	Camp	Outside of Camp
Persons	High priest (Lev. 21)	Priest (Lev. 21:18–20)	Levites (Num. 8:7–14), and Israelites	Persons with minor ritual impurities (Lev. 13–15)	Persons with major ritual impurities (Lev. 13–15)
Sacred Vestments	High priest (Ex. 28; 39)	Priest (Ex. 28; 39)	Levites who wash their clothes		
Food	Sacrifice—eaten by high priests	Sacrifice—eaten by priests	Sacrifice—eaten by non-priests; food permitted by Law of Moses	Impure Food (not permitted by Law of Moses)	Carcasses
Approaching Temple Space	High Priest (may enter Holy of Holies)	Priests (may enter holy place but not beyond)	Levites and Israelites (may enter court but not beyond)	Non-Israelites (forbidden entry to temple premises)	
Fabric Used in the Temple	Holy of Holies: highest quality material & workmanship; multi-colored with woven figures (Ex. 26:31; 36:35)	Holy Place: high quality material & workmanship; multicolored but with no figures (Ex. 26:36; 27:16)	Court: quality material & workmanship; one color with no figures (Ex. 26:7; 36:14)		

Temples of God throughout the Ages

The Israelite tabernacle was not the first temple of the Lord - nor the last. Throughout the ages there has been sacred space in which the Lord has dwelt.

The archetypal temple was the Garden of Eden, with the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9; 3:3). There, Adam and Eve lived, and were instructed by God. It is interesting to note, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, cherubim and a flaming sword were positioned at the east

end (Gen. 3:24). In similar fashion, the Lord instructed the Israelites to build the tabernacle with the door at the East end, and with cherubim woven into the veil to symbolically guard the way into the Holy of Holies.

Mount Sinai can also be considered a temple to God. Scholars believe there is a direct connection between the Israelite tabernacle and Mount Sinai. The horizontal layout of the tabernacle imitated the vertical layout of Mount Sinai. In other words, the tabernacle represented a mountain that had been laid out horizontally (see Figure 3).

Mount Sinai was divided into three separate zones, with the summit being the Holy of Holies. Only Moses, the Lord's prophet, was allowed at the summit of the mountain to meet with God and be instructed by Him. The second zone of the mountain was enveloped in a cloud, and the seventy elders of Levi ascended to this point, just as the priests were allowed into the Holy Place of the tabernacle. The base of the mountain was occupied by the Israelites worshipping at the altar, just as worthy Israelites were allowed in the courtyard of the tabernacle to sacrifice at the altar (Milgrom).

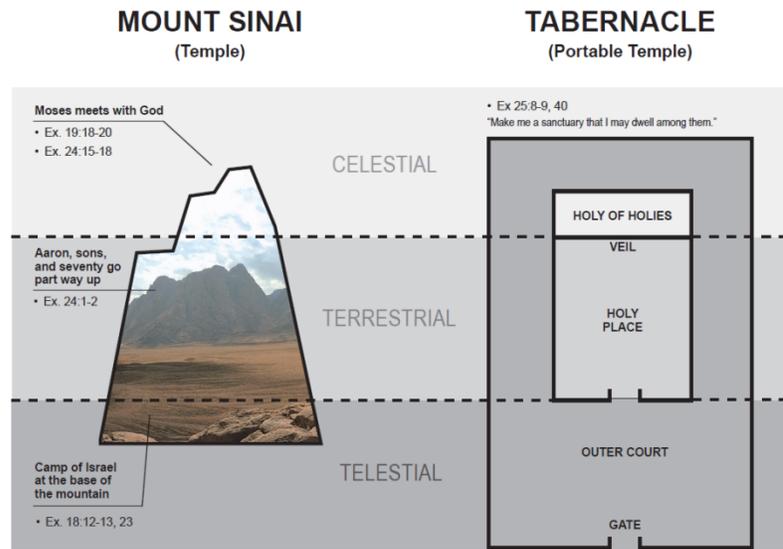


Figure 3. The Tabernacle as a horizontal Mount Sinai

Solomon's temple, too, was a sacred space, built to the Lord's specifications (1 Chr. 28:11-19). It was built on Mount Moriah - the place where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, in similitude of the Only Begotten Son (Gen. 22:2; 2 Chr. 3:1). The temple was also built on the principle of graded space, with workmanship and materials becoming increasingly fine as one progressed to the Holy of Holies (Hurowitz).

The Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives may also be considered a holy temple to God. On the night before his crucifixion, the Savior took the twelve apostles with him to the Garden of Gethsemane. When they had entered into the garden area, the Lord instructed the majority of his disciples to wait for him while he took Peter, James and John further into the garden. Then he instructed Peter, James and John to stay where they were while he alone "went a little further" into Gethsemane (Matt. 26:30-39; Mark 14:26-36). This pattern seems to coincide with the continuum of space so important to the Lord's tabernacle design (see Figure 4).

The Savior took his disciples (Levites and worthy Israelites) to the first place in Gethsemane to wait (the courtyard). He then took Peter, James and John (Levite priests) further on to a second waiting place (the Holy Place). The Lord himself (the High Priest) then went furthest into the garden (the Holy of Holies), where he prayed in agony to God, was visited and strengthened by an angel, and sweat "great drops of blood" (Luke 22:42-44). It was, of course, in the tabernacle/temple Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement that the final rite was performed to purge the sins of the Israelites with sacrificial blood (Lev. 16:15). In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord and Savior was the literal Lamb of God and performed the final, infinite sacrifice, to purge the sins of all mankind with his blood.

Christ the Great High Priest



Holy of Holies

“And he went a little further, & fell on his face”
(Matthew 26:39)

Holy Place

“And he taketh with him Peter, James & John”
(Mark 14:33)

Outer Court

Jesus tells 8 disciples:
“Sit ye here, while I pray”
(Mark 14:32)

Figure 4. Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane - A progression into the Holy of Holies;
by Daniel Smith from redeemerofisrael.org

Conclusion

The concept of sacred space was critical to the Israelite tabernacle, as it was to all of God's temples. From the unclean periphery to the Holy of Holies, the continuum of sacred space brought the Israelites to Jesus Christ, and taught them that the innermost zone of the tabernacle was the dwelling place of God.

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