

# “That I May Dwell among Them”: Liminality and Ritual in the Tabernacle

*Daniel L. Belnap*

For many, it can be difficult to discern the spiritual value of the rituals described within the Old Testament. This is certainly understandable, since the culture that performed these acts is separated from us by some three thousand years. Yet throughout the scriptures we are told that the Lord speaks to his children in their language and in their tongue, “that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24). Though the symbolism and imagery may be unfamiliar to us, we can trust that the symbols used and the rites performed by ancient Israel were meant to teach us familiar gospel principles and that Israel worshipped in Old Testament times as sincerely as we do today.

The term *worship* stems from the English word *worth*, suggesting that worship is the process by which we recognize the worth of God and in return receive revelation concerning God’s appreciation of our worth.<sup>1</sup> Just as we gain an understanding of these truths through our worship at the temple, so too ancient Israel understood the true natures of man and God, and the manner of the relationship they could have with God by their experiences in the temple and tabernacle. Though sometimes difficult to perceive, these truths lay at the heart

---

*Daniel L. Belnap is an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.*

of the tabernacle and the rites performed therein, and when we recognize that, it increases our own appreciation of their sublime nature.

### “And I Shall Dwell among My People”

Like the temple ordinances today, the significance of ancient Israel’s religious practice was enhanced by the symbolism incorporated into the spaces of their worship. For ancient Israel, this space was primarily the temple or the tabernacle.<sup>2</sup> As Latter-day Saints, we often consider the tabernacle and the temple as one and the same, differentiating them only by the mobility of the former. While it is true that the rites performed in both sacred edifices were apparently the same,<sup>3</sup> there were distinctive differences in the places themselves that may have taught Israel unique lessons as to whom and what they worshipped. Perhaps the first noticeable difference, besides the permanence of the temple versus the mobility of the tabernacle, was the scale, both in terms of architecture and furniture. The temple was noted for its grandiose, majestic nature. The building itself was approximately forty-five feet high.<sup>4</sup> Many of the temple items and furniture, such as the brazen sea, the altar, and the movable stands, were also striking because of their oversized dimensions.<sup>5</sup> Everything about the temple was oversized, making it difficult to imagine how the objects associated with it were used. A central purpose of the magnitude, however, seems to have been to serve as a reminder of God’s might and grandeur as creator and sustainer of the universe.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, recognition of God’s supernal nature was a necessary part of an Israelite’s spiritual understanding. The scriptures are filled with exhortations to remember the true splendor of God in order to instill a requisite humility. President Brigham Young reiterated the significance of understanding this splendor when describing how he would pray until he recognized the exact, awe-inspiring nature of the being who received his prayer.<sup>7</sup>

Yet if that was the purpose behind the sacred structures, then how does that explain the much more modest scale of the tabernacle? Unlike the temple, those entering the tabernacle did not encounter a roof that soared above them forty feet, but found instead a ceiling that stood only fifteen feet high and items and furniture that were much more life-sized.<sup>8</sup> The tabernacle was a much smaller, more intimate edifice, and this aspect would have highlighted a different dynamic in the relationship between the worshipper and God—a dynamic that emphasized the similarities between God and man. This is not to say that the tabernacle lacked cosmic symbolism. Like the temple, the

tabernacle represented the divine realm, and in fact it appears that the writers of Exodus deliberately invoked the Creation to describe the building of the tabernacle.<sup>9</sup> But where the temple accentuated the majestic and awesome nature of God, the tabernacle's more intimate setting accentuated the liminality of these sacred spaces; they were truly places where both God and man could come and interact.

The function of the tabernacle appears to be straightforward. In Exodus 25:8, God simply states, "And let them make me a sanctuary [literally, "a holiness"]; that I may dwell among them." Though the English translation suggests that the edifice was meant to be the actual dwelling place of God, the Hebrew term *shakan*, translated as "dwell," implies a nonpermanent residence.<sup>10</sup> In other words, while the verb can signify a long stay, it does not necessarily suggest an indefinite stay. In light of this, it may be more accurate to view the tabernacle as more of a meeting place rather than as a permanent dwelling place of God.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing the tabernacle as a meeting place suggests that the purpose of the tabernacle was to facilitate the interaction between the visiting parties, God and man, rather than as the permanent home of God. In this, then, the tabernacle space represented a place that was neither in the mortal world nor in the divine world but was specifically designed for interaction by parties from both worlds. Such spaces, neither fully in one state nor another but straddling both, are known as liminalities, or liminal spaces, so named from the Latin *limen*, meaning "doorway" or "threshold."<sup>12</sup> Significantly, these spaces are not meant to be permanent but are merely transition points where individuals can interact in ways not possible in "regular" space because of physical or social limitations, or prepare one to move from one social state to another.<sup>13</sup> Though the term *liminality* may be new to readers, if they are temple-attending Latter-day Saints they are quite familiar with the concept. When a Saint speaks of attending the temple as leaving the world temporarily in order to commune with God, and reemerging stronger and more powerful than before, such language reflects the liminal nature of the temple, both in practice and in space.

Just as with today's temples, many aspects of the tabernacle, both functional and symbolic, highlighted its liminal nature, though not always in an obvious way. For instance, all of the entrances associated with the tabernacle, such as the gate, the entrance into the tabernacle proper, and the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, were distinguished from the surrounding cloth by their coloration, having been dyed in blue, scarlet, and purple. Any explicit

meaning behind this selection of colors is unknown since the text gives no indication of their significance, but they clearly distinguished these spaces from other spaces in the tabernacle.<sup>14</sup> Besides the colors, these spaces also shared a similar function—to mark where one could enter and leave. This unique function (as opposed to other spaces) is the very definition of liminality. The color pattern set these spaces apart and highlighted their unique function. Blue, scarlet, and purple were also dominant in the clothing worn by the priest. The association of the priest with these colors suggests that the priest was a liminal figure, or one who moved between the different states and whose purpose was to facilitate such movement, which in fact, is exactly what the priest did.<sup>15</sup>

The same colors also appeared as part of the “roof” of the tabernacle, which actually surrounded the tabernacle. Made up of four layers of cloth, the innermost layer was fine linen colored in scarlet, blue, and purple and embroidered with gold filament in the image of cherubim (see Exodus 26:31). The presence of the same color scheme that was, as previously shown, associated with liminality, suggests that the rooms surrounded by this material were liminal spaces that differed from the “reality” that existed outside of the tent—spaces specifically dedicated to direct interaction between God and mortals.

Besides the color scheme, the types and functions of items found within the sanctuary may also have emphasized the liminal nature of the tabernacle proper. The sanctuary itself was divided into two rooms by the veil, of which the larger of the two possessed only three items: the menorah, the table of the bread of the presence, and the altar of incense, all three either made of pure gold or covered in gold (see Exodus 26:33–35);<sup>16</sup> and while all three may have had cosmic significance it is also noteworthy that each served a mundane, domestic function. Thus, while the menorah may have represented the cosmic tree, functionally its purpose was to provide light within the room like any other lamp.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the table of the presence, so named for the bread that was placed on the table and replaced every Sabbath, was, functionally, simply a table with food on it. Even the incense altar appears to have had a domestic analogue, as both texts and archaeological evidence suggest that private households used incense.<sup>18</sup> Another thing these items have in common is their association with rites of hospitality.<sup>19</sup> The concept of hospitality had an important social and cultural function in the ancient world, but since hospitality dealt with the relationship between the host and the guest, the guest being by definition an impermanent member of the household, its association

with the tabernacle specifically highlighted the temporary, liminal nature of the tabernacle.<sup>20</sup>

The implication of liminality continued as one moved beyond the Holy Place to the veil, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The veil was similar to the other cloth items, being made of fine linen embroidered with purple, scarlet, and blue thread. Yet, unlike the other cloth items associated with ingress and egress (the other “doors”), the veil also included images of cherubim similar to those on the innermost roof covering. Thus, when in the holy room, cherubim images could be seen on the ceiling and on the eastern “walls,” the western walls incorporating the same colors but lacking the cherubim design, while the Holy of Holies was completely surrounded by the non-cherubim-embroidered cloth and its symbolism.

While we are not told specifically why the cherubim were to be incorporated into these demarcations of space, cherubim are found elsewhere in the Old Testament, and their functions within these other texts may provide insight into their presence in the tabernacle. Their first function is to guard selected space. In Genesis, following the exile of Adam and Eve, cherubim are placed before the tree of life which itself appears to be in the most easterly portion of the garden. Thus the presence of the cherubim demarcates the garden into at least two sections: the most easterly, which possesses the tree of the life, and the rest of the garden. In essence, the cherubim are acting like the veil in the temple, separating the holy garden from its Holy of Holies equivalent, the tree of life.<sup>21</sup> Yet their function is not only to keep things out, but to allow them in as well. Similarly, the veil was not a one-way entry—it marked both ingress and egress.

Another function associated with the cherubim is that of movement. First Samuel 4:4 is the first reference to speak of God as sitting between cherubim, a concept repeated a number of times in the Old Testament, culminating in the writings of Ezekiel, where the cherubim are depicted not only as beings that surround God but also as those that bear him from place to place.<sup>22</sup> Not only did the cherubim serve to mark the space in which one could interact with God, but their presence also signified that the space was not permanent, thus the embroidered cherubim images on the veil would have indicated that liminal nature of the veil.

The verb used to describe the function of the veil itself, *hibdil*, appears to be a specialized term used almost exclusively in the “priestly” literature to describe

the separating or the ordering of the different elements of the creation: light from dark, upper waters from lower waters, day from night—which in turn reflected the creation of the social cosmos (the separation of man and woman, the separation of child from parent, the establishment of marriage, and the ability to discern or categorize between good and evil).<sup>23</sup> Each of these further advanced the cosmos, or the ordered state, from the chaotic state that existed prior.

The use of the verb suggests that the veil may have also represented the ongoing nature of the creation, as well as the distinction between mortal and divine spheres. Elsewhere in the scriptures, God’s heavenly abode is described as a tent, with the “curtains stretched out still” suggesting that the cosmos was architecturally represented by the tabernacle (see Moses 7:30; also Psalm 104:2–3; Isaiah 40:22, 42:5; Jeremiah 10:12). Yet the irony of this “separation” is that as the cosmos was divided it became more and more possible for man and God to interact more fully. Thus the separation of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies by the veil, a representation of the order and organization of the cosmos, also represents the coming together of the divine and mortal worlds.

The final element associated with liminality was the Holy of Holies itself. As in the Holy Place, the roof, which draped over the northern, southern, and western sides, was made of blue, scarlet, and purple cloth with cherubim embroidery, as was the eastern wall, or veil. Thus the Holy of Holies was completely surrounded by cloth marked with liminal symbolism, suggesting that the space within, the room itself, was wholly liminal space. In terms of furniture, the room possessed only the ark of the covenant, also known as the ark of the testimony, and the lid for the ark, or the mercy seat. The ark was a wooden box encased in gold, about two and a half feet in length and one and a half feet in both width and height. It contained the two tablets of stone upon which was written the law of God by God himself as well as a pot of manna.<sup>24</sup> The mercy seat consisted of two cherubim with wings that touched each other, thus creating an open-air enclosure on top of the ark.

As mentioned, one of the designations for the ark is the ark of the testimony. The Hebrew term translated as “testimony” in this case indicates the establishment of a relationship between two parties.<sup>25</sup> The two items placed in the ark emphasize this function in that they represent two items that God himself provided to facilitate the relationship between God and Israel. The tablets of stone contained the moral/ethical precepts by which Israel could be made holy and

therefore enter into his presence, while the manna represented the means by which God interacted directly in the livelihood of Israel.

The presence of the manna and the stone tablets—representing God’s contribution to the God-Israel relationship—coupled with the presence of the cherubim—representing the liminal nature of the space in the tabernacle—lead us to the supernal reason given as to why the Israelites should have a tabernacle: “that I may dwell among them.” God’s express desire to be in the midst of or “among” his people demonstrates a mortal-divine relationship not existing in other religions of the ancient Near East.<sup>26</sup> There, in the ultimate liminal space of the Holy of Holies, one confronted tangible symbols of God’s effort and desire to be among his people. The entire tabernacle structure and attendant items culminated in the revelation that God himself desired interaction with them, while the emphasis on liminality highlighted the reality of mortal-divine relationships, which in turn elucidated the true worth of God and humans.

### “To Make Atonement”

As important as the tabernacle symbolism is to our discussion on worship, we must still address the idea of worship as an action that one performs. For ancient Israel, worship involved the acts of sacrifice and initiation, rituals of the law of Moses. The instructions and descriptions of these rites make up sizeable portions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and for many are difficult to follow and appreciate. More often than not, the practice of these rites is associated with the phrase “letter of the law,” which refers to a state of worship where the enactment of these rites is emphasized, in contrast with the focus on intent (over action) that is present in the supposedly higher “spirit of the law.” Yet, for Latter-day Saints, a significant part of the Restoration of the gospel was the reinstatement of rituals that emphasized the relationship of mortals and deity and the performance of which spoke directly to what we could accomplish here and become eternally. The significance of these rites to our worship and to our understanding cannot be overstated. And just as we recognize the value of our own rites, we can recognize that the rites described in Old Testament texts were of great value to the ancient Israelites as well.

Ritual is, at the core, a social event; one that seeks to include, maintain, or exclude an individual or individuals from a given community. When looked at from this perspective, the rituals established in the law of Moses either initiated individuals or items into the community of God and Israel, or reconciled

and restored an individual to that relationship. Both functions stress the worth of God and humans; the worth of God in that these rituals teach us the value of God in their salvation, and the worth of mortals in that the performance of these rituals allows us to enter into the presence of God.

Our discussion of specific rituals will begin with those rites encompassing the second ritual function, reconciliation or restoration—the sacrificial offering system outlined in the first eight chapters of Leviticus. The first of the three offerings associated with reconciliation is the burnt offering, or the *olah* offering (derived from the Hebrew *‘alah*, meaning “to ascend”); the Hebrew designation reflecting the nature by which this offering ascends into the divine realm, and the English reflecting that the entire animal or offering is burnt.

The instructions concerning the performance of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1 began with the requirements for the offering itself. The ideal offering was a male bovine, without blemish.<sup>27</sup> The offering had to be offered voluntarily, meaning the offerer willingly chose to be a part of the ritual process and was not forced to participate. That the offerer was a willing participant in the ritual process is significant and suggests that the efficacy of the rite was tied to the willingness of all participants.

Upon presentation at the tabernacle, the offerer placed a hand on the head of the animal, an act repeated in each ritual offering, at which point the reader was told: “and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Leviticus 1:4). Some have suggested that the placing of the hand indicated that a substitution was to take place, the animal now representing the offerer; others believe that it simply indicated ownership.<sup>28</sup> The performance of this act recorded in Numbers 8:6–19 may give some insight into the act’s significance.

This particular section of scripture is about the Levites who were to work in the tabernacle precincts. Though Aaron and his children came from the Levitical tribe, the selection of the tribe as a whole was meant to represent the firstborn of all the tribes:

Thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together:

And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:

And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. . . .



For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.

For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, . . .

And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.

(Numbers 8:9–11, 16–19)

As the text makes clear, following the placement of Jacob's, or Israel's, hands on the heads of the Levites, this tribe was to "do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle . . . and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel," when Israel approached the sanctuary. Thus it would appear that the laying of hands on another was a tangible transfer of representation. In other words, the Levites now represented the firstborn of Israel, who were chosen initially to serve on the behalf of all Israel. The service they were to perform being "to make an atonement."

So what does it mean to make an atonement? The term *atonement* was first used in a theological sense by William Tyndale.<sup>29</sup> Literally meaning "at one with," the term was used to describe the reconciliation between God and humans. In the Old Testament, to make an atonement is the translation of the verb *kpr*, a term that is difficult to translate correctly. Noting the similarities between this verb and the Akkadian verb *kuppuru*, which means to cleanse by wiping off, many have suggested that the verb is expiatory in meaning.<sup>30</sup> This does appear to be the case when the term is associated with the sin offering, which is offered when offense or uncleanness has been experienced. Yet "to make atonement" is also one of the purposes behind the burnt offering, which is not offered as a direct result of sin or wrongdoing. In connection with sin offerings, the Hebrew *kpr* term is either preceded or followed by the explicit mention that the sin of offense is forgiven. Thus two types of atonement appear to be associated with the sacrificial rituals: (1) the atonement that is associated with the forgiveness of sins, reflected

in the sin offering, and (2) the atonement enacted not for sin or wrongdoing at all, such as in the case of the burnt offering.

One element that appears to have played a crucial role in the act of making atonement was the manipulation of blood; indeed, blood played a fundamental role throughout the sacrificial system. In Leviticus 17:10–14, we are told:

And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. . . .

For the life of all flesh is the blood thereof.<sup>31</sup>

As the verses above indicate, blood represented the concept of life—the dynamic element that made living things alive—and was, by virtue of that significance, a divine possession utilized by God to effect atonement. For example, in the burnt offering, following the placement of the hand, the animal’s blood could be used to make an atonement. The animal was slaughtered and divided into sections, and some parts were immediately put on the altar (the head and the fat), while others were first washed. The blood was collected and splashed on the sides of the altar, presumably effecting atonement.

Blood also played an important role in the rite of the sin offering. As in the burnt offering, following the placement of the hand and the slaughter of the animal, the priest gathered the blood. But instead of splashing it against the sides of the altar, in the sin offering the priest took the blood and daubed it on certain items throughout the tabernacle precinct. When performing this rite on behalf of the whole Israelite congregation, the priest splashed the blood seven times before the veil separating the Holy Place from the inner Holy of Holies. The priest then took the blood and smeared it on the horns or corners of the altar of incense in the Holy Place that stood before the veil, pouring the remaining blood at the base of the altar of burnt offerings outside.

The placing of the hand on the forehead, similar to the placing of the hand on the Levites as recorded in Numbers 8, would suggest that the animal was not a substitute but represented the individual, and thus its blood could be used to affect what atonement was necessary in a positive manner for the participant. If we consider the holy anointing oil to be representative of God, then the pouring of the life-representing blood onto items already anointed by the anointing oil was suggestive of contact made between God and the mortal. Furthermore, as the blood of the representative interacted with the oil on the surface of this most holy altar, it too became holy; thus the individual represented became holy as well—able to interact with God himself.

The term *holy* is actually translated from two related Hebrew terms: *qodesh* and *qadosh*. Unlike Indo-European languages, Hebrew does not have vowel letters, but derivations of the root, with subsequent nuances to the general meaning of the term, are demonstrated through the use of prefixes, suffixes and vowel sounds. So even though *qodesh* and *qadosh* stem from the same root, *qds*, the different vowel sounds suggest nuances between the two.<sup>32</sup>

Of the two, *qodesh* is much more common, used 468 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is used to describe a number of things, such as the clothing of the priests, the animals offered for sacrifice, and the instruments in the tabernacle. The term *qadosh*, on the other hand, is only used 106 times, and the items considered *qadosh* are much more limited. Chief among them is God, the holy one (*ha-qadosh*). Certain locations where God may be present are also *qadosh*, though the sanctuary itself is *qodesh*. But second to God, *qadosh* is most commonly used in exhortations that man should become *qadosh* as God is *qadosh*.

Though both terms stem from the same root, for the most part there is no overlap in usage. Instead, those things that are considered *qadosh* are differentiated from those that are *qodesh* in that *qadosh* items possess a unique dynamic quality: the “ability to move things (or people) into, or at least toward, the realm of the divine.”<sup>33</sup> It is for this reason that God is *qadosh*. As Moses clarifies elsewhere, God’s primary responsibility is to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), a process of moving individuals from a lesser state into the ultimate divine state. This dynamic quality lies at the heart of the term *qadosh* in the law of Moses; throughout Leviticus, precepts are established with the injunction that Israel be holy (*qadosh*), for, as the Lord says, “I the LORD your God am holy,” or *qadosh*.<sup>34</sup> In following the command to become *qadosh*, individuals in Israel were expected

to move others towards the divine state, like God himself did. The ordinances performed were not simply busy work given because the people were wicked, but were in fact meant to transform the people of Israel into “partakers of the divine nature.”

As significant as the use of blood on the altar appears to have been in atonement rituals, in some cases, it was not essential. In Numbers 16:46–47, Aaron made atonement between God and Israel by burning incense, while in Numbers 25, the priest Phinehas made an atonement for the children of Israel by killing (not upon the altar) an Israelite man and a Midianitish woman who profaned the sanctuary. Similarly, in Numbers 31, following a conquest against the Midianites, the military leadership of Israel brought gold and other war booty to the tabernacle “to make an atonement for [their] souls before the LORD” (Numbers 31:50). Unlike in the rituals of animal sacrifices, blood played no role whatsoever in the atonement process of these narratives, yet atonement was still achieved. Moreover, the act that replaced the function of the blood was different in each of these instances suggesting that there were at least four recognized ways of enacting atonement: the offering of blood sacrifice upon the altar, the use of incense, the killing of those who profaned sacred space, and the presentation of gold.

What are we to make of these four disparate ways of enacting atonement? First, the acts presuppose an already existing relationship between Israel and God. In other words, these acts do not highlight the entering into of a relationship with God; instead their purpose was to reconcile or renew an already existing relationship. Second, as those that required an item coming into contact with the altar demonstrated, we see the primary purpose of atonement was to make one holy and therefore like God. Third, in all cases the atoning acts were performed by mortals to bring themselves into a state where they could interact with God and receive his beneficence. This last point cannot be stressed enough. From the biblical texts, it appears that atonement required the actions of two parties, God and mortal, in which the latter was responsible to create a situation that allowed God to engage with him or her. Thus, in the liminal space of the tabernacle, acts of atonement made it possible for human and God, each one willing and desirous to engage with the other, to in fact interact directly.<sup>35</sup>

It is not hard to see the Christological symbolism inherent within each of these sacrificial acts. The Book of Mormon makes it quite clear that recognizing

Christ's supernal act of atonement was an essential part of the rituals of the law of Moses. In his discourse to the priests, the prophet Abinadi declared that the purpose of the law and rituals were to facilitate Israel's remembrance of God and their duty to him: "Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him" (Mosiah 13:30). Earlier, Nephi made clear that the law directed one towards Christ (2 Nephi 25:23–30). Nephi's father, Lehi, explained in particular the relationship between the atonement and the rituals of Moses, calling Christ's act a "sacrifice for sin," or in other words, a sin offering. Christ's sacrifice is certainly reflected in the sin offering, the explicit purpose of which is to bring on forgiveness through the individual's offering. Just as the blood of the sin offering covers certain items of the tabernacle, thereby reconciling to God the individual represented by the offering, Christ's blood covers us, reconciling us to his Father. Similarly, the burnt offering represents all that he offered in order to bring about reconciliation as well as what we are expected to offer for this reconciliation.<sup>36</sup>

But perhaps most importantly, Christ and the agency he expressed in performing the atoning sacrifice is an example to us that we too can have a direct relationship with the Father. Just as he offered up a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, so he has encouraged us to do the same, showing us that it is possible for us to achieve our ultimate goal of oneness with the Father.

Through their performance, Israel expressed their desire to be reconciled in their covenant relationship with God; a relationship that emphasized their divine nature and potential to become holy, just as God himself was; a relationship that is the very essence of worship.<sup>37</sup>

### "For the Anointing of the LORD Is upon You"

As important as the atonement rites were to Israel's worship, there was another category of rites that may have been equally as important—those performed when making the relationships in the first place. Such was the purpose of the rite described in Exodus 24, the anointing of the tabernacle and the priests as described in Exodus 40 and Leviticus 8, and the reintroduction of the leper described in Leviticus 14. Like the rites of reconciliation, while each rite of induction or inclusion differed from one another at points, there does seem to have been a common element that defined these rites as part of their

own classification, that element being the placement of blood, water, or oil on the individual being introduced or reintroduced into the society.

The first such ritual is described in Exodus 24 following Moses' reception of the law as written on the first sets of stone tablets. The occasion, as verse three suggests, is Israel's acceptance of the law: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do." According to the text, Moses then copied the law down onto another medium, rose up the next morning, built an altar, and erected twelve pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Since priests had not been ordained yet, he had young men of Israel, perhaps firstborn youth, offer both burnt and peace offerings, both of which included the splashing of blood against the sides of the altar.

But unlike in later burnt and peace offerings, in this account only half of the blood was used against the sides of the altar. The other half was splashed on the people following the reading of the law and the people's declaration that they would obey the precepts within:

And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. (Exodus 24:7–8)

In this case, the blood became the tangible symbol of the covenant made between God and Israel, and the splashing of blood upon the altar perhaps suggested that the altar stood as a symbol for God.<sup>38</sup> In other words, blood was splashed on the altar, which represented God, just as blood was splashed on the people—both parties were bound by blood and partook of the covenant experience.

Other inclusion rites incorporate the same symbolic system. In Exodus 40, following the instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle, instructions are given concerning the sanctification of the tabernacle and Aaron and his sons as priests. The setting up of the tabernacle began from the inside—starting in the Holy of Holies and moving in a clockwise fashion, from

the setting up of the table of the bread of the presence, to the menorah, to the altar of incense. It then moved to the outside and the setting up of the altar, followed, finally, by the placing of the laver. These items were then anointed with the holy anointing oil. Unlike other oil, the anointing oil was a scented oil, made according to a specific formula, to be used solely to sanctify the items within the tabernacle:

And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony,

And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense,

And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot.

And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.

And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (Exodus 30:26–30)<sup>39</sup>

It was with this oil that the tabernacle and the items were anointed, presumably following the same pattern as the setting up of the tabernacle: beginning in the Holy of Holies and moving outward until finished at the wash laver. Leviticus 8 tells us that the altar of burnt offering was splashed seven times as well as anointed, meaning that not only was the oil poured over the top of the altar, but it was also splashed on the sides. After that, Aaron and his sons were brought forward and washed. Moses then clothed Aaron and anointed him by pouring the oil over his head, which also sanctified him, meaning he was made into one who could minister. At that point, an ox was offered up for a sin offering, presumably on behalf of Aaron and his sons, the blood being daubed on the horns of the altar, as one would expect. This was followed by another sacrifice of two rams. The first of the rams was treated as a burnt offering, with the blood splashed on the sides of the altar. The second was slaughtered, but instead of splashing all of the blood on the sides of the altar, some of it was daubed on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of Aaron and his sons. The final rite of the sanctification process was to take the blood on the altar, which had mingled with the anointing oil, and splash it onto Aaron, and his sons, rendering him “hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments” (Exodus 29:21). As with the splashing of the blood onto the whole of

Israel in Exodus 40, the splashing of the blood and oil onto Aaron effected the establishment of the relationship between Aaron and God.

Unlike the atonement rites, the induction rites used to establish the initial relationship with God were not repeated. In other words, whereas all the atoning rituals were repeated often, the act of being anointed or splashed with the blood or oil, once done, was never performed again. Moreover, in the case of the tabernacle’s dedication, the process of anointing began from the inside out, from the Holy of Holies to the laver outside. The direction from which the anointing began, with the oil specifically designated as God’s own, and the single performance of the act, all suggest that the act was to be understood as if God himself were doing it. Just as individuals prepared themselves to enter into the presence of God, the anointing process seems to have suggested that God did not just wait but prepared the space and items so that such interaction was possible. In other words, just as mortals sanctified themselves and the space around them to reconcile themselves with God, so God participated in preparing the space and the individual so that reconciliation could happen. Unlike the acts of the mortal, however, which had to be repeated often, God’s anointing act only needed to be done once to transform the individual or item into a state of holiness.<sup>40</sup>

This transformation by God is expressed throughout Leviticus. Leviticus 21:10–12 reveals that the high priest is not allowed to act like the rest of society during the mourning process because “the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.” The same concept can be found earlier in chapter 10, where, following the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron and the remaining sons are told to “not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the congregation . . . and do not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you” (English Standard Version, Leviticus 10:6–7).

As the two passages suggest, the oil belonged to God himself, transforming that which touched it and making those items representative of him or able to interact with him. Aaron, having been anointed, is not allowed to engage in normal, profane behavior. The anointing allows Aaron to interact with the divine. In this case, though, the liminality is created by God himself. In other words, the anointing is a divine act, creating an environment that allows mortal acts to have efficacy. In essence, the anointing is the divine reaching out to mortals.



Thus the anointing rite is significant in that it is a divine action, a ritual enacted by God himself to enact the transformation of others into a divine state, even if the rite is performed through a mortal representative. His divine rite using his oil appears to be the allusion in Psalm 45:7, which describes the election of the righteous by God: “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” This in turn leads to Isaiah 61:1, 3 where the transforming nature of the anointing again comes to the fore as the anointed is empowered with the ability to change the environment of others, anointing them with the oil of joy, thus transforming them and allowing them to become part of the divine realm (v. 3):

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. . . .

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD that he might be glorified.

What is particularly pleasing about this rite of induction is that in many ways it is the complement to the atonement rites. Both sets of rituals present the performer, either divine or mortal, as one who wants to have a relationship with the other. In the case of the atonement rites, they emphasize an individual’s right to have a relationship with God, even the inherent right to become like God, while the initiation rites demonstrate God’s continuing work to bring that result about. And it is these truths that lie at the heart of true worship, for one cannot truly worship God without knowing both one’s own worth and the inestimable worth of God and that God knows these truths also, two principles taught richly and beautifully in the tabernacle and its rites.

### Conclusion

Though it is difficult for those of us living in today’s modern worldview to recognize the supernal truths of the gospel in what appear to be archaic and antiquated practices of ancient Israel, that does not mean the gospel is not there. The Apostle Paul compared the law and its attendant tabernacle and

ordinances to a schoolmaster. In truth, when one does begin to understand the rich symbolism and meaning, we can begin to see the value of those texts that describe in detail the tabernacle’s liminal architecture and the rites performed within. Not only do they reveal the manner by which ancient Israel demonstrated their devotion to God, but they also provide us the opportunity to understand more deeply the power of our own worship. Certainly we learn that the universal hope of exaltation, the end result of all true worship, was as real to them as it is for us.

---

## Notes

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, “worship.” Old English *weorðscipe*, later *wurð-*, *wyrð-*, northern *worðscipe*, < *weorð* worth adj. + *-scipe* -ship suffix. The formation is peculiar to English.

2. There is some indications in the Bible that there were other forms of sacred space (certain “high places”) that were viewed as legitimate sacred spaces, but these are few and far between. More common in both the prophetic writings and in the Deuteronomistic writings, only worship performed at the temple or the tabernacle was legitimate.

3. This assumption arises from the fact that certain offerings, such as the burnt offering and the peace offerings, are explicitly mentioned as being performed in both places. For other rites, such as the placing of the bread on the table of the bread of the presence or the daily lighting of the menorah, this is less clear, since no explicit mention is made of their performance. Yet the similarities in basic architecture and furniture suggest that these rites too were performed in both places.

4. First Kings 6 gives us the measurements of the temple, while Exodus 25–26 gives us the measurements for the tabernacle. The actual measurements described in the Old Testament utilize the cubit. The exact length of the cubit is complicated by the fact that there were a number of different “cubits” in the ancient Near East, and it is unclear as to which one meant when the authors of these texts used the term. In this paper, the author has used the cubit measurement provided in the Bible Dictionary, or a cubit as 17.5 inches. It is possible that the cubit actually used was the royal cubit, used in Egypt and elsewhere, in which case the dimensions provided would have been even larger.

5. The brazen sea that rested upon the backs of twelve bronze oxen, was between 7 to 9 feet deep, which, when coupled with the oxen, meant the entire structure stood at least 10 to 12 feet high. Carts and other moveable stands supposedly used for preparation stood at least 6 feet high. The altar was massive, measuring approximately 30 feet by 20 feet and 15 feet high. In the Holy of Holies the cherubim covering the ark were immense and awe-inspiring, measuring 15 feet in height with a wing span of 15 feet each (7.5 feet each wing). For more on the significance of these scales, see Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, who discusses the significance of these grand scales in her study “Solomon’s Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space,” in *Sacred Time, Sacred Space: Archeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 83–94.

6. Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple," 84–85: "Accordingly, the exaggerated size of the structures in the Solomonian Temple courtyard would suggest that they were not intended for human use but belonged to the realm of the divine. Lacking archeological remains of the bronze Molten Sea and stands or corroborating evidence of their size, one can only determine by faith whether or not they were cast to the biblical specifications. Superhuman-sized objects likely stood in the courtyard, conveying to ancient Israelites that they served a divine function. . . . Thus the courtyard objects conveyed Yahweh's enthronement in the royal chapel with the attendant empowerment of the king and divine blessings for all of Israel." Israel was not the only nation to use the temple architecture and structure to emphasize this nature of God. One particular site, the Ain Dara temple in Syria, possesses flagstones in which footprints were engraved. The footprints alternate so that it appears that they are the prints left by one walking into the temple. The footprints themselves measure three feet in length, suggesting that they represented the footprint of something or someone approximately sixty-five feet tall.

7. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 16:28: "If I did not feel like praying, and asking my Father in heaven to give me a morning blessing, and to preserve me and my family and the good upon the earth through the day, I should say, 'Brigham, get down here, on your knees, bow your body down before the throne of Him who rules in the heavens, and stay there until you can feel to supplicate at that throne of grace erected for sinners.'"

8. The altar of the tabernacle was about 7.5 feet by 7.5 and 4.5 feet high, and the only cherubim found in the Holy of Holies were those on the lid of the ark, which itself was the same length and width of the ark itself, approximately 3.5 by 2 by 2 feet.

9. Two recent studies have emphasized this relationship. See John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011) and L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Prefigured*, *Biblical Tools and Studies* 15 (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2012).

10. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), šakan, 692–702.

11. One of the terms for the tent itself, the *ohel moed*, or tent of meeting, emphasizes this function of the tabernacle.

12. Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep was the first to coin this term in regard to ritual and ritual space in his seminal study *Les Rites de Passage* (1939). But it was Victor Turner in his seminal work *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969) who suggested that liminal space created what he called "communitas," or the ability to engage in social relationships in a liminal space that would otherwise not be able to happen.

13. Thus rites of passage, marriage, puberty, birth, manhood, and womanhood, are performed in liminal spaces created for just that purpose.

14. While there is no explicit explanation to these colors provided in the text, they do appear elsewhere in the Bible. All three are noted as colors associated with clothing worn by well-to-do individuals, including royalty. They are also incorporated in cloth assigned to cover the items of the tabernacle when the camp of Israel was moving. According to Numbers 4, the ark was to be covered by the veil, then a layer of badger skin, then a cloth of blue; the table of shewbread was covered in blue, then scarlet cloth, then badger

skin. The menorah, the altar of incense, and the other items used in the sanctuary itself were covered in blue cloth, followed by a layer of badger cloth. The altar of burnt offering was to be covered in purple cloth then badger skin. Unfortunately, while it is clear what Israel was expected to do, why they were to do it in this manner or what the symbolism was in doing it this way it is not clear. It is intriguing that of the colors themselves, two of them, the red and the blue are primary colors, while the purple is a blend of both, but while it is fun to speculate on the theological nature of this relationship, to do so would simply be surmise.

15. According to the text, the priest was meant to act as the go-between for God and mortals, fulfilling a function like liminal space.

16. Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 106 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 103: “The predominance of gold in the Tabernacle can be related to its valued physical properties and great social significance. This is the basis for the analogies which are made between the human and divine spheres, and a close connection between gold, divinity, and holiness is evident throughout the ancient Near East. God is rare, desirable, and very costly, and fittingly represents the dignity and power of those who are able to possess it, to a pre-eminent degree, God.”

17. Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, ASOR dissertation series 2 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), explores both the symbolic and functional aspects of the menorah.

18. Whether the burning of incense in the home had religious meaning is unclear, though it does appear that at least in the sixth century BC some were burning incense to other deities in their houses. Yet other texts suggest that burning incense was not necessarily a religious act, but simply made the home a more pleasing place to be. See Seymour Gitin, “The Four-Horned Altar and Sacred Space: An Archaeological Perspective,” in *Sacred Time, Sacred Space*, 95–123, 108 specifically. Also, C. Houtman, “On the Function of the Holy Incense (Exodus XXX 34–8) and the Sacred Anointing Oil (Exodus XXX 22–33), in *Vetus Testamentum* 42, no. 4 (1992): 458–65: “As incense was burnt in the houses of the well-to-do to create a pleasant atmosphere, and as the purity of the aromatics and the exquisite character of the fragrance indicated the status of their residents, so the incense of the sanctuary also was a symbol of status” (463).

19. Hospitality rites included the preparation and presentation of food, the offering of shelter and rest, the washing of feet, and the offering of incense, all of which are also associated with the temple and its rites. For more on the role of incense in hospitality, see Béatrice Caseau, *Eudoia: The Use and Meaning of Fragrances in the Ancient World and Their Christianization (100–900 AD)* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994), 150–51: “Perfumes and incense were therefore on the shopping list of all respectable hosts. A shopping list preserved on a damaged third century papyrus is revealing on this aspect: ‘you know what hospitality requires, so get a little . . . from the priests and buy some incense.’ Nicostratus cited by Athenaeus, makes a list of what is necessary to insure a successful party: sweetmeats, perfume, wreaths, frankincense, and a flute girl. These traditions of offering perfumes and incense with giving a banquet were not a Greco-Roman innovation. Examples of similar practices can be gathered from ancient Egyptian or Mesopotamian

iconography. A Megiddo ivory dating from the twelfth century depicts a festive scene. Behind the king seated on a throne come two servants, one with a bowl, probably filled with wine, the other with a vessel filled with perfume, since he brings it to his nose. This ancient piece of art testifies on the perdurance of the use of perfumes in festive traditions. This was a common regional characteristic. A relief from the palace in Nineveh represents the king of Assyria feasting with his queen and surrounded by censers. The prophet Amos mentions the anointing of the guests during a banquet. These traditions were kept in Jewish houses, where incense and spices were burnt at the end of the meal, while perfumes were used to cleanse one's hands."

20. Ancient hospitality from an ancient Near Eastern perspective differs from our modern understanding of hospitality. While we tend to associate hospitality with service, or selfless acts by one party, rendered because of the individual's moral or ethical stance, ancient hospitality required reciprocity between the two parties to transform the unknown and therefore dangerous into a recognizable and therefore controllable state. In other words, hospitality was not expected to be a selfless act on the part of the host, but a ritualized process by which the guest was introduced into the family structure and rendered harmless, subjugated to the authority of the host, see T. R. Hobbs, "Hospitality in the First Testament and the 'Teleological Fallacy,'" in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 95 (2001): 3–30: "As a guest, a stranger is in a liminal phase, and may infringe upon the guest/host relationship: by insulting the host through hostility or rivalry; by usurping the role of the host; by refusing what is offered. On the other hand, the host may infringe: by insulting the guest through hostility or rivalry; by neglecting to protect the guest and his/her honor; by failing to attend to one's guests, to grant precedence, to show concern" (11). See also Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19*, Biblical Interpretation Series 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 155: "In nomadic societies of the ancient Middle East hospitality to a stranger was a sacred obligation, a manifestation of social graciousness that touches the deepest values. . . . The guest is sacred and it is an honour to provide for him." For more on ancient Near Eastern hospitality, see Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005); Jean-Jacques Glassner, "L'hospitalité en Mésopotamie ancienne: aspect de la question de l'étranger," in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archologie* 80, no. 1 (1990): 60–75; Michael Herzfeld, "'As in Your Own House': Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 75–89; Scott Morschauser, "'Hospitality,' Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1–9," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27, no. 4 (2003): 461–85; Robert C. Stallman, "Divine Hospitality in the Pentateuch: A Metaphorical Perspective on God as Host" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1999).

21. The verb used to describe the cherubim's function in the Garden of Eden is *shakan*, the root from which *tabernacle* is translated.

22. See all of Ezekiel 10. For more on the function of the cherubim, see T. N. D. Mettinger, "cherubim," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel Van

Der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van Der Horst (Leiden: Eerdmans, 1999), 189–192.

23. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 2, “*bdl*,” 1–3: “*bdl* is used in a typical way in the Priestly account of creation (Gen. 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18): the individual phases in creation are depicted as a separation of the different elements from one another. . . . The author uses the word *bdl* in order to emphasize a major idea in the Priestly account of creation, viz., that the creator-God is a God of order rather than a mythological procreator” (2).

24. Numbers 17:10–11 notes that Aaron’s blossoming rod, the indicator of his chosen status as high priest, was also placed in the ark. The rod is also mentioned in Hebrews 9:4, along with the tablets and a pot of manna.

25. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 6, *yáad*, 135–44. This is also the root for *mo’ed*, the term translated as tent of “meeting”, one of the designations for the tabernacle which highlights the function of the tabernacle as a meeting place rather than a dwelling place.

26. For the Mesopotamian perspective, see Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): “The divinity was never the object of an anxious, enthusiastic pursuit: “to seek out (*šē’û*) a god,” as was sometimes said, was out of a need for his protection, his assistance. It was not inspired by a desire to be close to him, to be in his presence, to have the peace or happiness of finding oneself in his company. Hymns professing a bottomless desire for a god’s presence indicate admiration (as in the case of the moon god, the splendid lamp of the night) and not an impatience to get closer to him. . . . One submitted to them, one feared them, one bowed down and trembled before them: one did not ‘love’ or ‘like’ them. . . . [Temples] were not only to shelter them but to isolate them in peace and allow them to lead, separately and among themselves, a peaceful and refined existence in a magnificent solemn place where their subjects knew they could be found and admire them, take care of them, and request their benevolent aid” (37, 115). For the Egyptian perspective see Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. John Baines (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982): “The first emotion that grips an Egyptian who encounters a deity or the image of a god is fear, mixed with wonder and exultation. . . . The gods created the world and ensure that not only mankind but all beings can live and grow in it. But to what end? What made the creator god call the world and all its creatures into being and keep them in being? No Egyptian text is known which gives direct, unambiguous answers to questions of this sort: the Egyptians evidently did not consider these to be serious issues. . . . The Egyptians believed that by performing the cult and presenting themselves before the god they were at least increasing his existence and presence, while also keeping his negative, dangerous side at a distance. Cult actions do not coerce but they do encourage the gods to show their gracious side—for the converse of a god’s love on mankind his violent aspect, which is always present beneath the surface and must be assuaged by means of appropriate cult services. . . . The Egyptians evidently never experience a longing for union with the deity. They keep their distance from the gods, whom no one can approach too closely without being punished” (197–8, 205, 207).

27. This applies only to the burnt offering. In the case of the sin offering, a goat was often used. But whatever animal was used, the unblemished nature of it was essential.

28. See Jacob Milgrom in *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 149–53, who discusses each approach and then presents his own.

29. See David Rolph Seely, “William Tyndale and the Language of At-one-ment,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 25–42.

30. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 7, *kipper*; *kappōret*, *kōper*, *kippurīm*, 290.

31. In Leviticus 3:16–17 we learn that both fat and blood are considered the Lord’s.

32. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12, *qdš*, 521–545.

33. E. Jan Wilson, “Holiness” and “Purity” in *Mesopotamia*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 237 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener, 1994), 87–88. For more discussion on the distinction of these terms, see Gaye Strathearn, “Holiness to the Lord’ and Personal Temple Worship,” in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 219–32.

34. Leviticus 19:2. This exhortation is found throughout Leviticus (see also 11:44–45, 20:7, 21:8, speaking of the priests), as well as Deuteronomy (see Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, 28:9).

35. Though one often recognizes only the role of the priest in the actualization of these acts, the instructions found in Leviticus highlight the role of the “average” Israelite in the initiation and preparation elements of the ritual as well.

36. Interestingly, “to make atonement” is not mentioned as a function of the third form of animal sacrifice, the “peace offering.” This may be because the peace offering is not offered to overcome a deficit or division between God and man, but instead to commemorate the fulfillment of a vow, or other blessed event, in which God’s hand is recognized. In other words, there is no need for atonement to be made because the peace offering recognizes that atonement, or reconciliation, is already present.

37. Biblical scholar Jonathan Klawans considers this in his article “Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel,” in *Harvard Theological Review* 94, no. 2 (2001): 135–57: “Jon D. Levenson. . . has argued that the biblical narrative of tabernacle (and temple) construction take on a cosmic significance. . . . In so doing, Levenson demonstrates that the priestly traditions understand tabernacle and temple construction as an act of *imitatio Dei*. If the building of the temple can be understood as an act of *imitatio Dei*, and if the process of preparation for the rituals that will take place there can be understood likewise, can this concept help us to better understand at least some aspects of ancient Israelite animal sacrifice?” (p. 145).

38. The concept of inanimate objects representing God is found elsewhere in the Old Testament. For instance, the ark of the covenant represented God when taken into battle against the Philistines. Likewise, both the Book of Mormon and New Testament Saints understood that the bronze serpent represented Christ.

39. We are told that Aaron was to cleanse, or make atonement, or make the tabernacle useful for reconciliation, followed by anointing it seven times in seven days and which point it is now most holy space, and whatsoever touches it will also be holy. What *holy* means will be discussed later. For now it is enough to recognize that the process is done, like a creation, for seven days so that atonement can be made there from then on.

40. That Moses is performing the rite instead of God is not a hindrance since he is more than a priest; he acts in the stead of God. For more on the association of Moses with God, see W. A. Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner, Numen Supplemental 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 353–59; also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology,” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3, no. 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996): 236–52. This principle is of course found in Restoration scripture: “And I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon” (D&C 36:2).