

# JOURNEY THROUGH THE Ancient Tabernacle

*As in modern temples, the symbolism in the tabernacle can teach us about our journey back to God's presence.*

**F**or thousands of years, temples have been a place where God uses priesthood ordinances and sacred covenants to teach His children eternal truths about His plan of salvation.

During their travels in the wilderness, the people of Israel were commanded to build a tabernacle so that God could “dwell among them” (Exodus 29:46). “*Tabernacle* literally means ‘place of dwelling’ and was so called in the belief that God literally lived within its sacred confines. When Israel camped, the tabernacle was set up in the precise center of the camp (symbolizing the idea that God was to be the center of his people’s lives).”<sup>1</sup>

Consider these items in the tabernacle and what they can teach us about our return to God’s presence.

## NOTES

1. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles* (1979), 390.
2. In Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews (chapters 8–10), the tabernacle is used to teach how the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (9:12). Because of this redemption, we are also able “to enter into the holiest [place] by the blood of Jesus” (10:19).



**Tabernacle:** The tabernacle consisted of three divisions through which one must pass to reach the presence of God: the outer courtyard, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies (see Exodus 25–30).



**Altar:** The law of Moses set forth the sacrifices to be offered here, foreshadowing the Savior and His “great and last sacrifice” (see Alma 34:10). Sacrifice can also symbolize our repentance—giving up our sins and offering a broken heart and contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:19–20; Guide to the Scriptures, “Sacrifice”).

**Laver of water:** Before entering the holy place, priests used the brass laver of water to wash their hands and feet (see Exodus 30:19–21), reminding us of our need to be clean as we prepare to return to the Lord’s presence (see 3 Nephi 27:19–20).



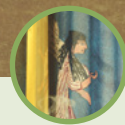
**Table of Shewbread:** Twelve loaves of unleavened bread were placed each Sabbath on the table of shewbread, a word meaning “bread of the presence” in Hebrew (see Exodus 25:30). The loaves were eaten in the holy place every Sabbath as “an everlasting covenant” (see Leviticus 24:5–9).



**Candlestick:** The seven lamps burned pure olive oil, providing light to the holy place (see Leviticus 24:2–4). This can remind us of the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the sources of spiritual light.



**Altar of Incense:** The priests burned incense each morning and night on an altar placed before the veil. The ascending smoke can represent prayers ascending to heaven (see Revelation 5:8).



**Veil:** The high priest entered the Holy of Holies through a veil. Cherubim, or angels, were embroidered on the veil (see Exodus 26:31–33; D&C 132:19). The veil can remind us that as we are now veiled from God’s presence, the great High Priest—Jesus Christ—can part the veil.



**Holy of Holies:** The high priest entered this most sacred part of the tabernacle once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Holy of Holies represented the presence of God and contained the ark of the covenant, the lid of which was called the mercy seat. “There I will meet with thee,” the Lord told Moses, “and I will commune with thee” (Exodus 25:22; see also Exodus 29:43; 30:36).<sup>2</sup> ■