

General Church Education



The Tabernacle Furnishings

Exodus 37:1-29; 38:1-8

Lesson 16

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

The Tabernacle Furnishings

Exodus 37:1-29; 38:1-8

For Parents and Teachers

The design of the tabernacle provides a pattern for worshiping the Lord and living a heavenly life. The ancient Israelites understood that they must follow the Lord's directions exactly in order for Him to bless them and protect them. Because of the Writings, we now know what all these particulars represent in a good life. In this lesson each piece of furniture in the tabernacle is described and a simple application to the life of a child is given.

The spiritual significance of the furnishings can be found in the *Arcana Coelestia*. For example, the ark represents our heart. It is the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies. The laws of the Lord should be written in our hearts so that they become the very center of our lives. This happens when we build an ark of spiritual acacia wood, "the good of righteousness." It begins when we turn to the Lord and acknowledge that everything good comes from Him and not from ourselves. The ark of our life is covered with spiritual gold, or pure, unselfish love. The mercy seat stands for being cleansed of our sins by the Lord. And the golden cherubim picture the Lord's protection or His providence guarding over us. This comes through a genuine life committed to our conscience which is formed by truth from the Word.

Ideas for Children

- When we do something good, we need to remember that it is from the Lord working through us.
- The furnishings of the tabernacle followed a careful plan given by the Lord, just as He has a careful plan for us.
- Our life will be good when we follow the Lord's careful instructions in His Word.

From the Writings

Spirits and angels are always present with a person. Through them a person is linked to the Lord. In this way the human race and heaven are kept in being. From this one can see the purpose served by the representations and ritual observances of the Church among the Israelite nation. One can also see the purpose served by the Word, in which all things in the sense of the letter correspond to Divine realities in heaven, thus in which the objects mentioned are representations and all the words used carry a spiritual meaning. This links a person to heaven, and through heaven to the Lord. Without that link a person would have no life.

All of the tabernacle represented the whole angelic heaven, the lowest part of it being represented by the court, the middle part of it by the dwelling-place where the priest ministered, and the inmost by the dwelling-place inside the veil where the ark containing the Testimony was. See *Arcana Coelestia* 9481 and 9485

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Exodus 37:1-29; 38:1-8

Words to Understand

mercy seat—the gold covering of the ark of the covenant

utensils—a tool or instrument needed for some activity

molding—a decorative edge on an object

hand-breadth—the width of a human hand

ornamental—something that serves as a decorative or beautiful effect

incense—something that makes a pleasant smell when burned

grate—a frame or screen of metal bars

hallow—to honor something as sacred or holy

The Tabernacle

The Israelites had a moveable tent or tabernacle for worship because they were traveling through the wilderness. It was patterned after a tabernacle in heaven and was a holy place for worship. It was kept in the center of the children of Israel while they traveled and when they stopped to camp. This is because worshiping the Lord should be at the heart of all we do. This lesson is about how the furniture in the tabernacle and court were used for worship. **Read Exodus 37:1-29; 38:1-8**

The Ark of the Covenant

The most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle was the ark, a sacred chest, that was kept in the Holy of Holies. It held the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. How long is a cubit? (The length from the elbow to the end of the fingers or about 18 in. (45cm).) The ark was two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide and high. There were rings on the ends through which long wooden poles covered with gold were put in order to carry the chest. The ark had a crown of gold around the top edge. It was made of acacia wood covered with pure gold inside and outside. It had a lid of solid gold, called “the mercy seat.” On the



mercy seat were two gold cherubim. It was here upon the mercy seat, between the wings of the cherubim, that the Lord spoke to Moses. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year.

Each of us must have an ark in our lives. It is built in our minds. The Lord speaks to us there in our conscience. And we can hear the Lord

in our conscience when we think about what is right and wrong. Our conscience needs to hold the treasure of the Ten Commandments. That is why it is so important to learn the commandments and try to live by them. Our conscience gains strength with every truth we learn and try to live.

The Table of Showbread

In front of the Holy of Holies was the Holy Place, the room of the tabernacle where the priests came everyday to perform worship rituals. Three pieces of furniture were in it. First there was a table that held holy bread. It was called the “table of showbread.” Fresh unleavened bread was always on this table. It was made of acacia wood covered with gold. It also had a border or crown around the top of it and four rings in which poles were inserted to carry it. The dishes that held the bread were made of gold. The unleavened bread stands



for the Lord’s love and the good that comes from Him each day. The table stands for our willingness to receive this good from the Lord. We need to receive new love from the Lord each day, just as the priests put fresh bread on this table daily.

Lampstand

The second thing in the Holy Place was a large lampstand made of solid gold. It had seven branches and on each branch was a gold oil lamp made of gold which gave off a glowing light. The people brought the finest olive oil and the priests trimmed the wicks and lit the lamps every evening so that the Holy Place would stay lit until morning. Oil stands for love. We are like lampstands when we love the Lord and learn truths from the Lord’s Word. The “light” or truth comes from the Lord alone and will show us the right path to take in our life.

The Altar of Incense

The third thing in the Holy Place was the altar of incense. It was made of acacia wood covered with gold. It had a crown of gold around it and four horns, one at each corner. It had rings and poles of gold so it could be carried. Sweet-smelling incense was burnt upon it both in the morning and in the evening. This altar stands for our worship of the Lord. When we worship the Lord and say our prayers to Him, it is like the gentle smoke of incense rising up.

The Altar of Burnt Offering

The entrance at the front of the tabernacle was covered with a curtain of blue, purple, scarlet and white linen. The court yard was large. Its walls were white linen curtains hung on poles. The en-

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trance to the court yard faced east. Here, the priests led the people of Israel in worship to the Lord. People brought animals to be sacrificed. The priests would offer these on the big altar of burnt offerings. Furniture in the outer court was made of brass or copper. The altar of burnt offering was a large altar and the top of it was a brass grate. It had four horns, one on each corner, and rings so that it could be carried with poles. When people brought animals to be offered on this altar, they were thanking the Lord for all He had done for them. Burnt offerings were made every morning and evening.

The Laver

Another important thing in the court yard was a large laver or basin to hold water. The priests washed their hands and feet at this laver so that they would be clean when they went into the tabernacle or when they offered burnt offerings on the big altar. The laver was also made of brass. The water in it stands for the Lord's truth. We use the Lord's truth to make our minds clean. As we read the Lord's Word, we put clean or good thoughts into our minds and He washes away the bad ones.



Pattern for a Heavenly Life

Did you notice that each part of the tabernacle could be taken apart and carried by the priests of Israel? The tribe of Levi was put in charge of worship, so the priests were called Levites. Many precious things were used to build the tabernacle. Emanuel Swedenborg was once allowed to see a tabernacle in heaven. It was exactly like the one the Lord commanded Moses to build. This beautiful tabernacle is like us when we are doing our best to do what is right and allow the Lord to lead us. Then we too will have a spiritual tabernacle built in our minds where the Lord can be with us and protect us from evil.

Discussion Ideas

- The Lord gave the Ten Commandments so they could be “written on our hearts” and be at the center of our lives. Discuss how the commandments are to be obeyed when making decisions in daily life.
- Our conscience is strong if we build it on the laws of the Lord. Discuss conscience and the important part it plays in our lives.

Activity Overview | The Tabernacle Furnishings

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. Exodus 25:2

Songs

Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-worship-the-lord-in-the-beauty-of-holiness/>

How Good are Thy Tents O Jacob

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-how-good-are-thy-tents-o-jacob/>

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Make a Model of the Ark
- Activity 2 | Furnish the Tabernacle
- Picture to color—The Tabernacle (Exodus 37,38)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch a video showing a faithful reproduction of tabernacle and its furnishings; *The Tabernacle Model at Glencairn Museum* (Bryn Athyn, US) at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-tabernacle-of-israel/>. The narrator explains the parts of the tabernacle and how the tabernacle was used for worship.
- Go to <https://visualunit.me/tag/tabernacle/> for models of the tabernacle furnishings ready to cut out and assemble.
- Use an air-drying clay to make a holder for a tea light candle that is in the shape of an oil lamp.

Activity 1 | Make a Model of the Ark

The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies—the most sacred space in the Tabernacle. The high priest was the only person allowed to enter the space. The Ark contained the Ten Commandments.

Materials Needed

1 piece of gold or yellow stiff paper

Ark Template (next page)

scissors

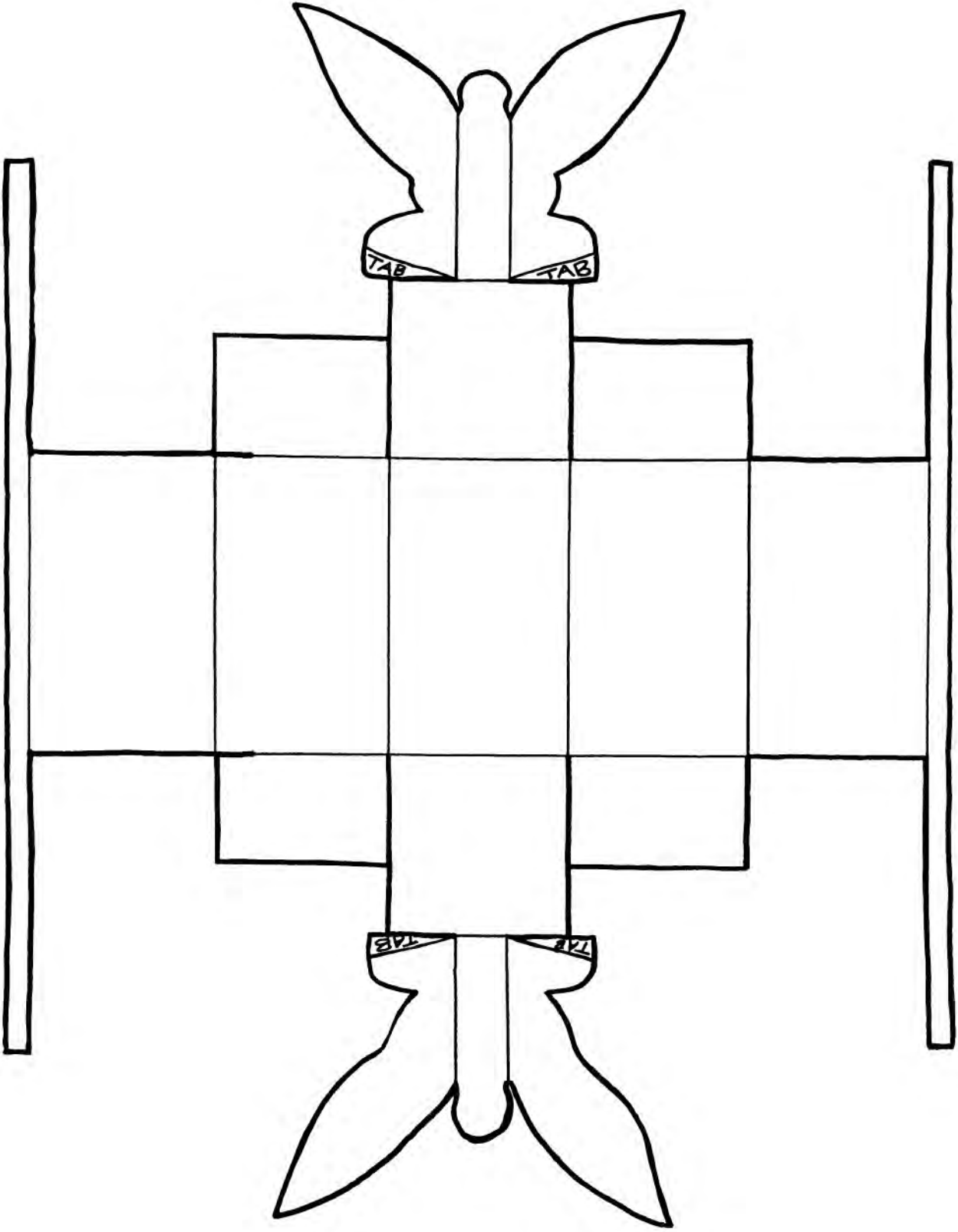
tape

option: gold spray paint to use in a well ventilated space

Directions

1. Print the *Ark Template* on to stiff paper.
2. Cut around the template on the heavy black lines, including the slits on one side of the ark.
3. Fold the ark down on each of the lighter black lines. When the ark is folded, the two end tabs will overlap each other at each end.
4. Tape the ends together.
5. Fold one top side down so the pole fits into the slits.
6. Fold the other top side down and tape the other pole to the side.
7. *Option:* spray the outside of the ark gold in a well ventilated space.





Activity 2 | Furnish the Tabernacle

Cut out pictures of the furnishings built for the tabernacle and glue them to a map where they were placed in the tabernacle.

Materials Needed

Tabernacle Map (Option: make a larger map like the one provided so pictures are more to scale)

Tabernacle Furnishings pictures

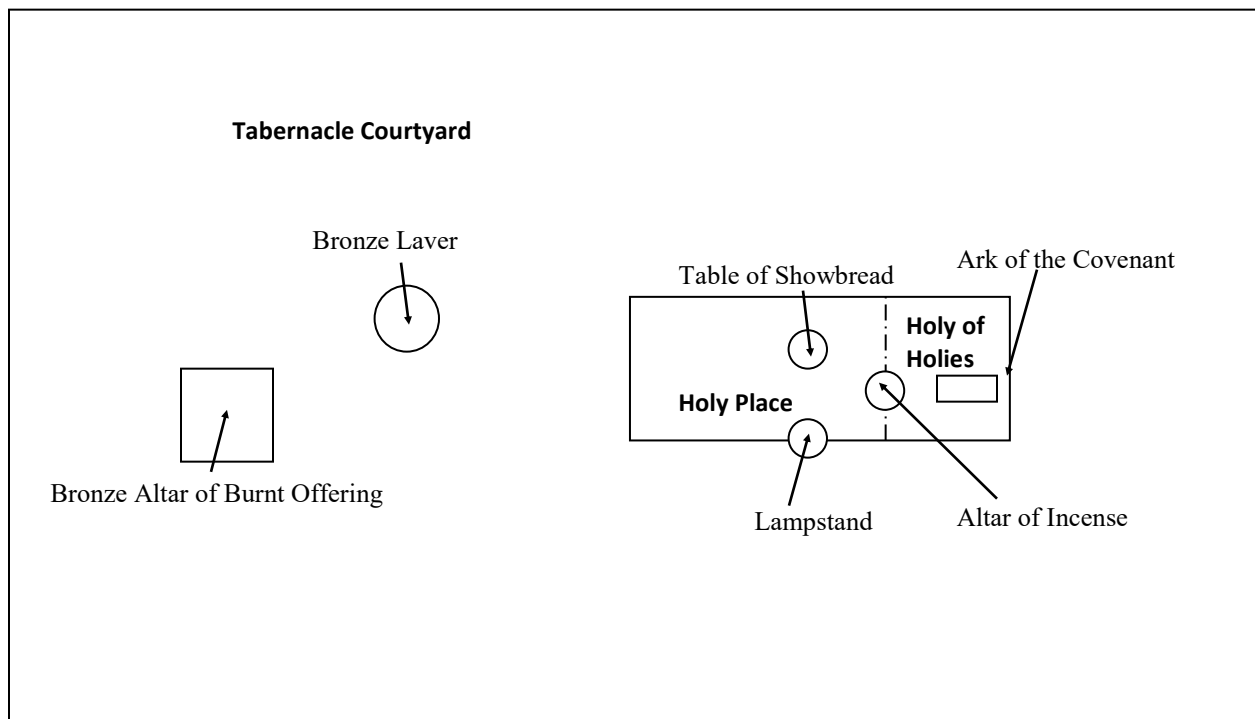
scissors

tape or glue

Directions

1. Cut out the *Tabernacle Furnishings* pictures. Note: the pictures and tabernacle map are not to scale. The furnishings are larger than life size.
2. Place the pictures you have cut out in the correct places on the *Tabernacle Map*.
3. Check to see that the furnishings are in approximately the right place (see below), then attach using tape or glue. If furnishings cannot fit in the right place, draw an arrow to where each furnishing belongs.

Tabernacle Furnishings Placement



Tabernacle Furnishings

Ark of the Covenant (Gold)



Lampstand (Gold)



Altar of Incense (Gold)



Table of Showbread (Gold)



Laver (Bronze)



Altar of Burnt Offering (Bronze)



