

General Church Education



Family Lesson: Leviticus 10

The Tabernacle

of the Lord

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Family Lesson 3 - A

Tabernacle of the Lord
Leviticus 10

Family Talk:
NADAB AND ABIHU

Rev. Donald Rose

When the Lord gave the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, He also gave instructions for building the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was a simple tent made of beautiful materials with the Ten Commandments kept inside. The people were told just how to build this tabernacle and what should be done with it. It had just two rooms. One – the “holy of holies” – had the Ten Commandments in it inside a golden ark. The other – “the holy place” – had three pieces of furniture, one of which was the altar of incense. Incense burned on this altar sent a sweet smell upwards toward heaven. Only certain people were allowed to enter this holy place.

The High Priest and his sons were allowed into this holy place. One of their jobs was to offer incense on this altar. Two of Aaron’s sons, instead of doing exactly what they should have done burned “strange fire.” This means that instead of lighting the incense with fire that was kept burning on a larger altar outside the temple, they used other fire.

Why was what they did so wrong that they were put to death? They were the only ones out of thousands of people who were allowed to do something so important. They had a sacred responsibility. And they knew just what they were supposed to do. They knew that if they brought in the strange fire, they would be going directly against the Lord’s command. Sometimes when people do something wrong, they are not to be blamed. It might be by accident, and we cannot tell how much wrong was in the heart. In this case it was wrong both in action and in the intention of the heart.

Each of us has a tabernacle with a holy place in it and an altar on which to burn incense. Each person has a tabernacle in a spiritual sense, that special part of the mind where we keep our thoughts of the Lord. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them. The prayers of each person are like the sweet smell of incense going up toward heaven.

Prayer is speech with God. It is very clear to us that when we pray, the Lord can see exactly what we are thinking and feeling. The Psalm says this about prayer:

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” (Psalm 66:18)

The Writings make it very clear that the Lord looks upon the heart of one who is praying (Arcana Coelestia 10143:4). In the Sermon on the Mount, we are told to pray in the privacy of our room to our heavenly Father “*who sees in secret*” (Matthew 6:6).

Suppose someone was to pray to the Lord in a completely selfish way, even praying that bad things happen to other people. One could compare this to the bringing of “strange fire” or “bad loves” into the place of prayer. Well, there are people who have tried that. Swedenborg met some in the other world who complained that “the Lord did not hear their prayers,” and who said that the Lord doesn’t help people. But they were told that their purpose in praying had been a purpose of hatred. They were against the human race. They were told that:

“When they pray in this manner, heaven is closed, for those in heaven pay attention only to the purpose of those who are praying” (Arcana Coelestia 4227:4).

Although they had not admitted it, this was absolutely true, and so they said no more.

How might this apply to us? The Lord once said that if you come to the altar and there remember that someone has something against you, to go and first be reconciled with that person and then come to the altar to offer your gift (Matthew 5:23,24). We can live up to this without an “altar” or without coming to an altar and then going away from it. We live up to this when we make it part of our worship to say our prayers in a spirit that puts away feelings of hatred and selfishness.

The fires of selfishness are not the fires to be brought into our prayers. Indeed, it is part of the Lord's prayer that He may deliver us from evil. We do not go to the Lord pretending that we don't have any evil or selfishness. But we can go to the Lord with the sincere wish that we can be delivered from selfishness. A sincere intention is what the Lord looks for. We are not saying that our loves are pure “*...but it is the intention that is regarded by the Lord*” and He keeps on making the love ever more pure in those who sincerely desire it (Conjugal Love 71).

The Lord is present with everyone, and He wishes to be received. Our prayer to Him may rightly be compared to the altar in the Holy Place, and we can say as the Psalm says:

*“Let my prayer be set before You as incense,
The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.
Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips”* (Psalm 14:2,3).

Tabernacle of the Lord Leviticus 10

LEVEL 1 – THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE ARK

MATERIALS NEEDED

10” x 8” piece of cloth - striped or cream - colored
Crayons

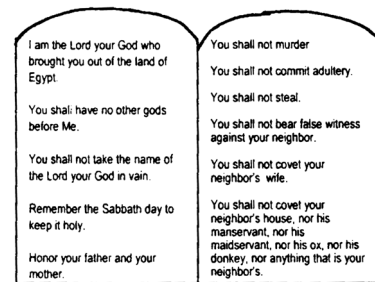
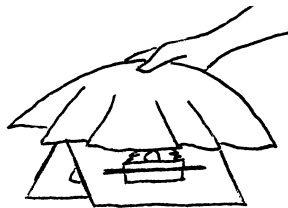
**The Ten Commandments were kept
in the Ark.**

The Ark was kept in the Tabernacle.

Project

1. Fold page 2 carefully in half. Cut out the Ten Commandments from this page, and glue them on the backside of page two, so that you can see them through the Ark.
2. Have your child color on the cloth square with red, blue and purple crayons. The inner covering of the Tabernacle was red, blue and purple stripes. Your child may make scribbles rather than stripes, which is perfectly okay. Or you can leave it blank to represent the outer cover, which was cream-colored.

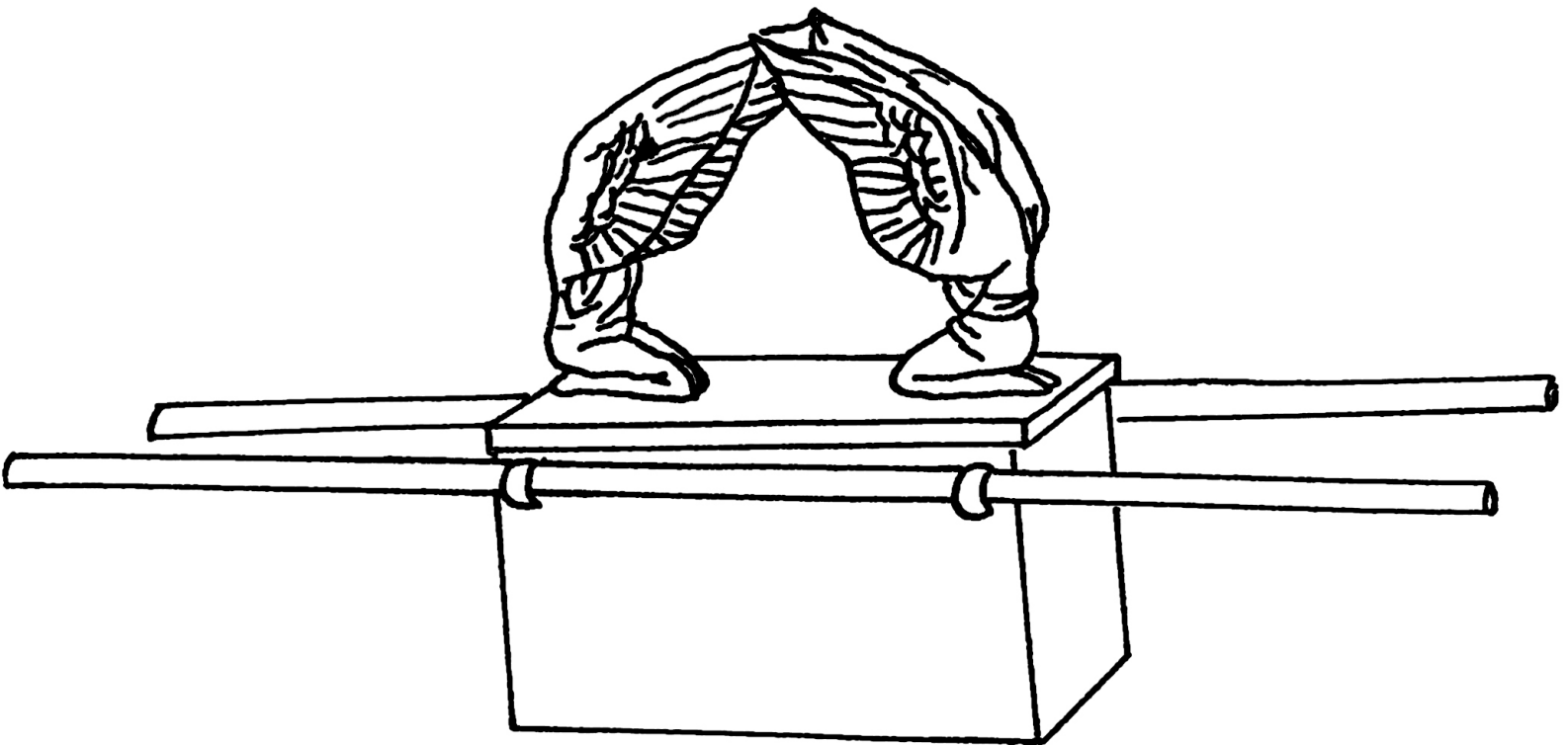
Drape the cloth over the folded paper.



Your child can open the “curtain” and then the first page of this project as many times as he/she wants, each time repeating:

**“The Ten Commandments are in the Ark.
The Ark is in the Tabernacle.”**

At this age, this is the important thing for a child to learn from this story.



Tabernacle of the Lord

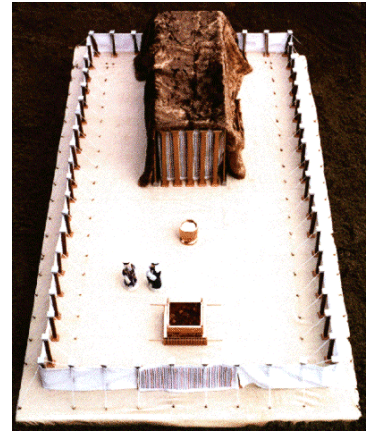
Leviticus 10

LEVEL 2 – TWO SPECIAL ALTARS

MATERIALS NEEDED

Scissors
Glue

TWO SPECIAL ALTARS



On Mount Sinai, the Lord gave Moses something very special—the Ten Commandments, written on two large flat stones. Then the Lord told Moses how to build a special place to keep them in. It was called the **Tabernacle**. It was sort of like a beautiful big tent. The people gathered around it and worshiped at it, so it was like their church.



In the most special part of the Tabernacle, they kept a beautiful gold box with angels on it, called the **Ark**. The Ark was the most beautiful and special thing in the Tabernacle. The Ten Commandments were inside.

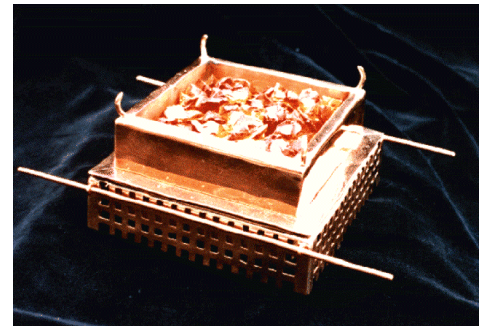
Project

There were other special things in the Tabernacle, and still more things outside of it. For your project you will build models of two of those things. Both are altars.

The Altar of Burnt Offering

The large altar was called the Altar of Burnt Offering. This altar was in the courtyard of the Tabernacle, in front of the door. It was made of brass.

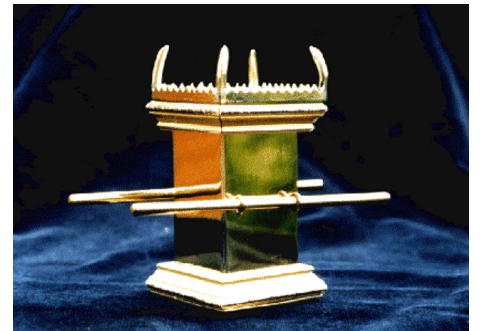
On top of it the priests burned the sacrifices people gave to the Lord. When people saw the smoke going up to the sky, they knew their sacrifice was going up to the Lord in heaven.



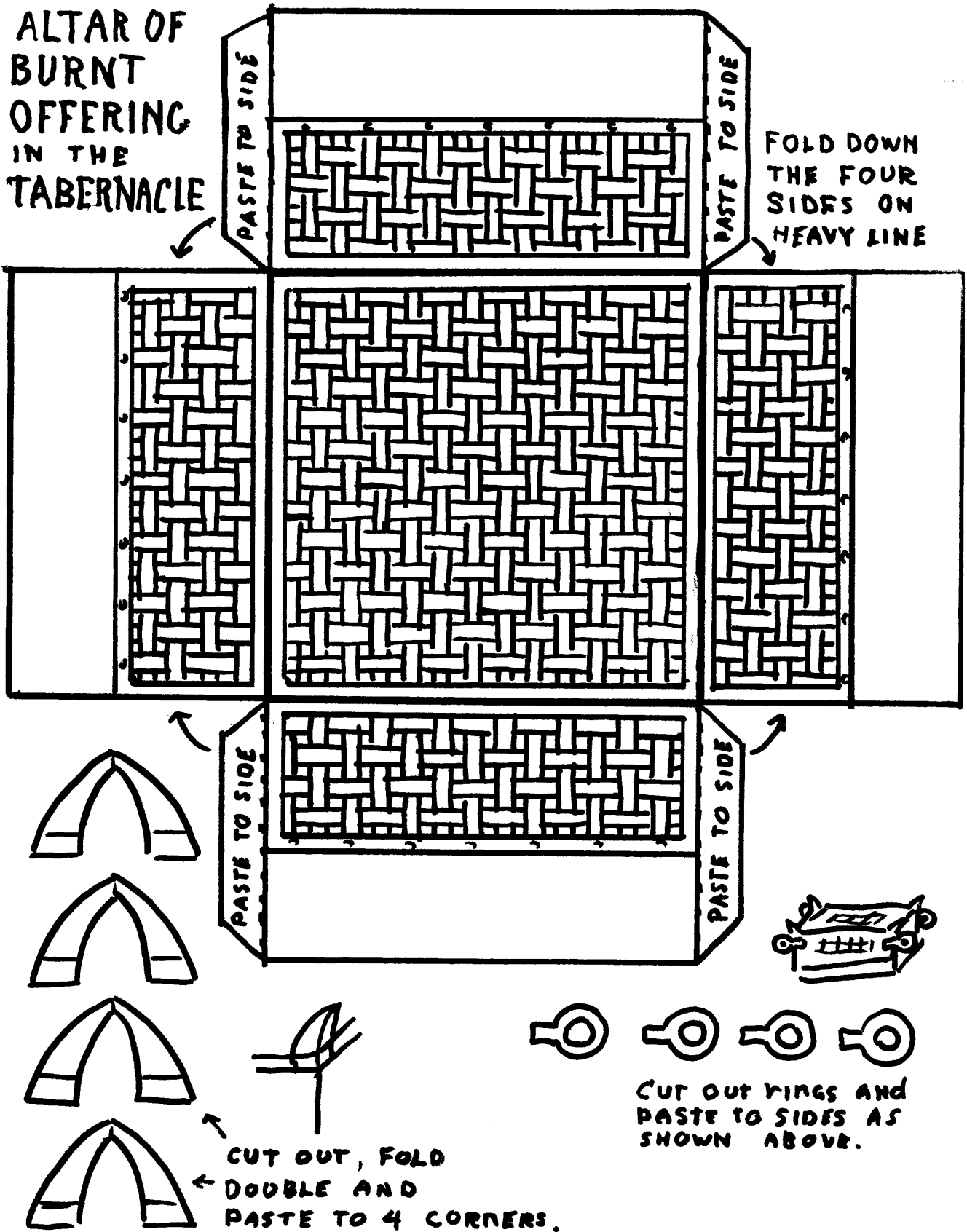
The Altar of Incense

The other altar was much smaller. It was called the Altar of Incense. It was kept inside the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. It was covered in pure gold.

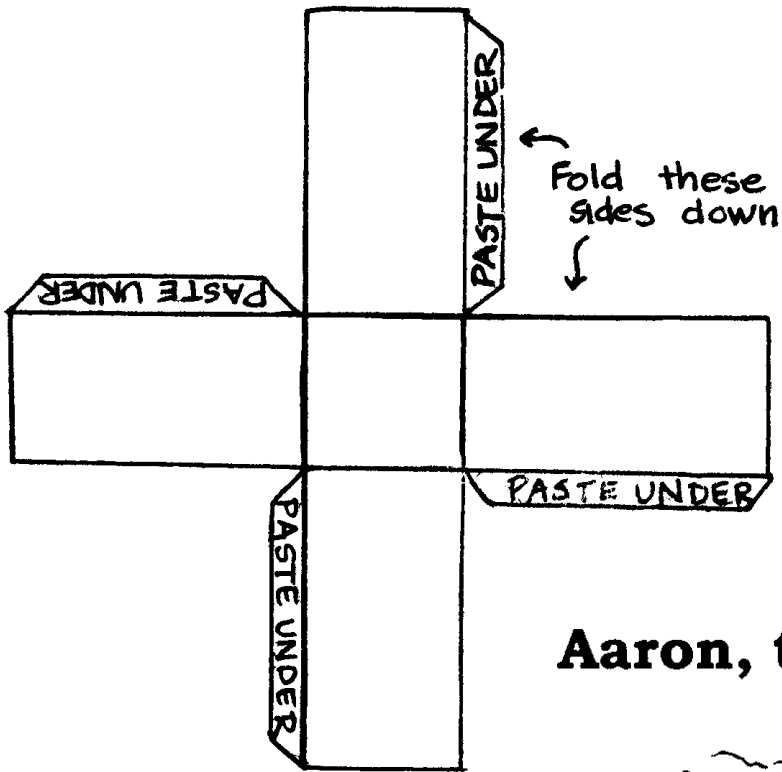
The priest brought fire from the Altar of Burnt Offering in the courtyard to the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place. On this little altar they burned special incense which smelled very sweet. Its smoke went up to the Lord, and the people knew the Lord heard their prayers.



Cut out and fold the models of these two altars (on the next 2 pages). Cut out the figure of Aaron the High Priest. You can pretend he walks from the Altar of Burnt Offering to the Altar of Incense, carrying special fire in his little pan.



The Altar of Incense



Aaron, the High Priest



Tabernacle of the Lord
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LEVEL 3 – NADAB AND ABIHU

MATERIALS NEEDED

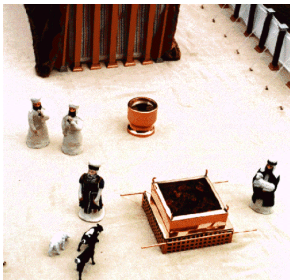
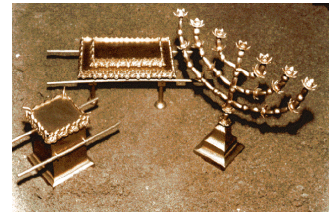
Crayons, markers or Colored pencils

Enclosed you will find a picture of the Tabernacle. It was built in a very detailed way commanded by the Lord. There was a tent in the middle and a surrounding courtyard.

The Tent in the Middle

There were two sections in this tent:

1. The **Holy of Holies** was at the back of the tent, In it the tablets with the Ten Commandments rested in a beautiful Ark. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies.
2. **The Holy Place** was in the front part of the tent. It was separated from the Holy of Holies by a curtain. In the Holy Place was:
 - a) an altar of incense
 - b) a seven-branched candlestick, and
 - c) a table of shewbread.



The Courtyard

In the outer courtyard was:

- a) a laver (wash basin) made of bronze
- b) an altar of burnt offering made of bronze

The Fire on the Altar

There was always a fire on the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering. Each day priests were supposed to take fire from this outer altar and carry it into the Tabernacle to make incense offerings to the Lord.

Strange Fire

Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's older sons. They were priests. We are told that they "offered strange fire before the Lord" – they disobeyed the Lord and took fire from outside the Tabernacle.

The Word tells us that they were "consumed by fire." The beautiful tabernacle needed to be served by priests who obeyed the Lord.

This seems like an awful punishment from the Lord who loves us all, doesn't it? But the Word tells us that it was because "holy things were being profaned." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 748)

If we turn away from the Lord it is like we lose our *real* life inside ourselves. When we laugh at Him, scorn Him and deny Him. Only grownups can really profane, since their minds are old enough to choose freely to love Him or "burn strange fire" by loving themselves or the world better.

Project 1

1. On the enclosed picture of the Tabernacle (page 4), color the **altar of burnt offering** and the **laver** (wash basin) bronze (or orange with brown colored over it).
2. Color the **boards of the Tabernacle** gold.
3. Pulled back from the boards, you see several **coverings**. Usually these are pulled over the boards.
 - a. The first covering is white, blue, purple and red stripes.
 - b. The second covering is white wool.
 - c. The third covering is red.
 - d. The outer covering is cream kidskin.
4. Color the **large banners** of the different tribes blue.
5. Color the four **smaller banners** of the Levites purple. They belonged to the priests.
6. Color the **pillar** with chalk or gray for cloud.
7. Finish the rest—the sky, mountain and tents.

Project 2

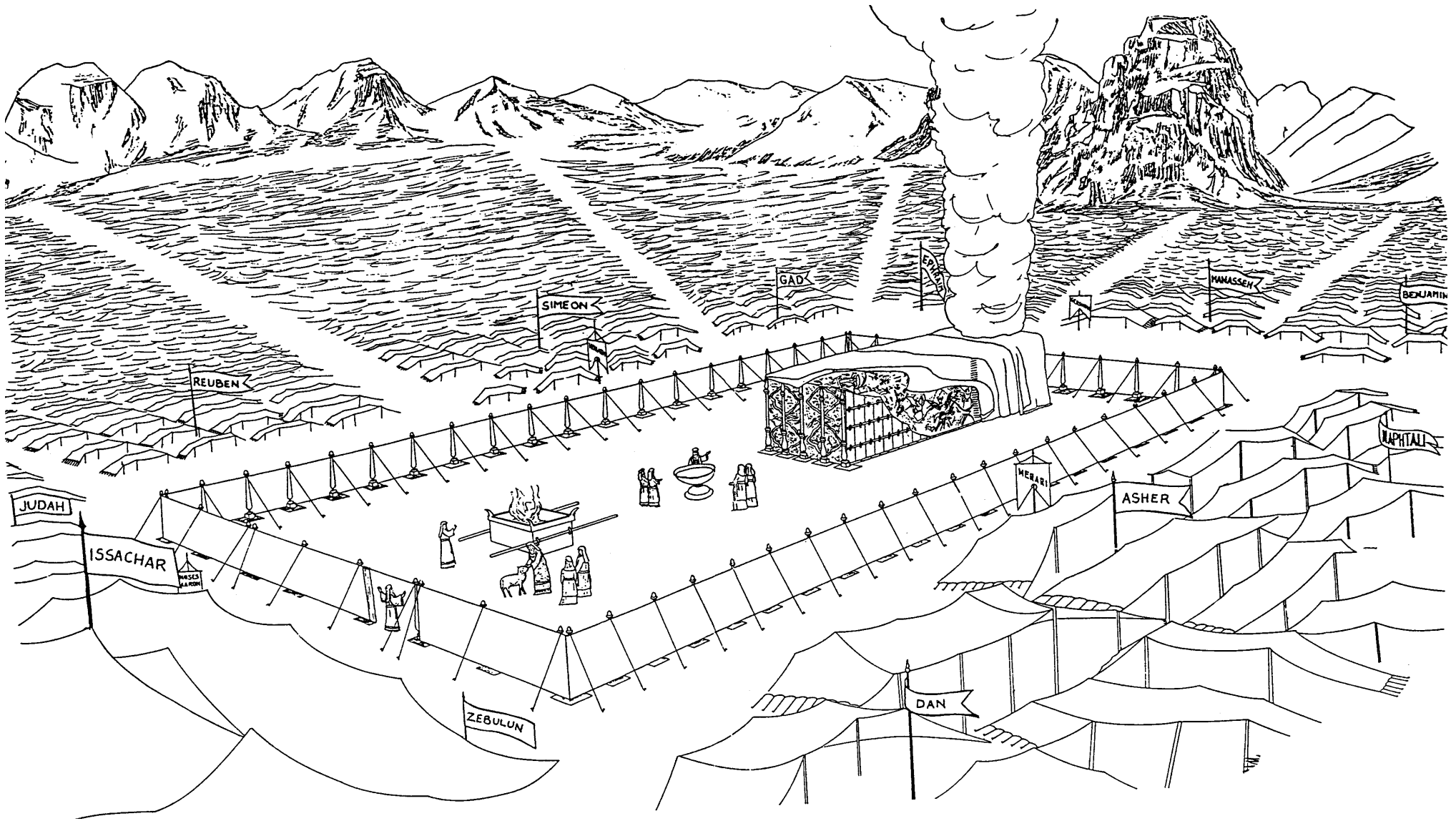
Here are the names of the twelve sons of Israel. Later these became the names of the tribes of Israel that you see encamped around the tabernacle. The tribe of Benjamin was divided into two—Ephraim and Manasseh.

Learn to recite the names of the twelve sons in order. Cut out the cards on page 3 and use them to help you practice. Then time yourself putting them in order. How fast can you do it?

<p style="text-align: center;"> Reuben Simeon Levi Judah Dan Naphtali Gad Asher Issachar Zebulun Joseph Benjamin </p>
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The Twelve Sons of Israel

Reuben	Simeon
Levi	Judah
Dan	Naphtali
Gad	Asher
Issacher	Zebulun
Joseph	Benjamin



Tabernacle of the Lord
Leviticus 10
LEVEL 4 – USES AND ABUSES

The Tabernacle

After the Lord gave Moses and the Children of Israel the Ten Commandments, He told them how to build a beautiful Tabernacle to keep them in. This was a movable tent-like church. All their worship, and so all their life, centered around the Tabernacle.

The Worship of the Children of Israel

The Lord also gave them very detailed laws about how they were to live and how they were to worship. Their worship was led by Levites—the people of the tribe of Levi—who were set apart by the Lord to be priests. The book of Leviticus contains the laws for the Levites. It also contains this strange story of Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, the high priest.

Nadab and Abihu Disobey

The rules about what the priests were to do were very exact. Nadab and Abihu chose not to obey the rules. Instead of using the holy fire from the altar of burnt offering, they decided it didn't matter, fire was fire. They took fire from an ordinary fire to carry into the Tabernacle and use on the Altar of Incense. For this disobedience to the Lord's law, they died.



Our Own Worship

Why was it so bad to take ordinary fire that Nadab and Abihu had to die? In this story the Lord is teaching us about our own worship. He is warning us that we must not decide that we know better than His laws, or we too will die spiritually.

The Tabernacle represents our own place of worship, the special part of our own hearts and minds, where we keep the Lord's Commandments. Fire is our love. If it is fire from the Lord's Altar, it is love of the Lord. But if it is ordinary fire, it is ordinary loves of something else. If we let ordinary loves rule the place or worship in our mind so that they crowd out love of the Lord, good things in us can die.

Uses and Abuses of Fire:

There are natural rules about using fire which we all need to learn. You started learning them when you were very young. One of the first rules your parents taught you was, "Don't touch fire." It was hard to obey, because fire is so exciting. But if you disobeyed, you were burned by the flames.

Application #1

**Check USE or ABUSE next to these acts
to show if each act is using or abusing fire:**

ACTS	USE	ABUSE
Boiling an egg		
Burning rubbish		
Grilling steaks		
Lighting birthday candles		
Arson (burning a building for money or from hatred)		
Setting a bonfire for camp		
Starting a forest fire by carelessness		
Igniting the Olympic torch		
Putting a candle in a jack-o-lantern		
Building a fire in the living-room fireplace		
Shooting fireworks off for a celebration		
Burning leaves		
Destroying good books in fire		
Burning your fingers		
Baking a cake in an oven		
Burning a cross on someone's lawn		
Dropping incendiary bombs on innocent people		
Playing with matches		
Burning incense in worship		
Destroying criminal evidence by burning it		
Arranging lit candles on an altar of worship		
Shooting a rocket into space		

Notice the **“uses”** are ways to help others, or to show love.

The **“abuses”** make us think of hatred or hurting others.

Some people expect hell to be a fiery place because in a negative sense fire represents hate.

Application #2

Fire is very dangerous, yet our lives depend on it. It is a precious possession when we learn how to handle it well. And, of course, the highest use of fire is when we offer it in worship to the Lord. If Nadab and Abihu had respected the rules they were taught, they would have been safe from harm.

Because fire represents love, you will see it mentioned in various stories of the Word. See how many stories in the Word you can recall which involve fire. Decide whether the correspondence of fire in each story might be good or evil. You could have a family discussion at dinner time or family worship and see how many stories you can recall together. *(on the next page are a few examples)*

Story from the Word	Correspondence of fire in the story – Good or Evil

THE FIERY FURNACE

THE PILLAR OF FIRE

THE BURNING BUSH

THE PLAGUE OF HAIL AND FIRE

EZEKIEL'S FIERY VISION

JOHN'S VISION OF THE LORD WITH EYES "FLAME OF FIRE"

THE PARABLE OF BURNING TARES

Tabernacle of the Lord
Leviticus
LEVEL 5 – PLAYING WITH FIRE



Spiritually, fire is a picture of love, or its opposite, hate.

A good correspondence

Fire serves many uses in the natural world. It can be used to warm the body, to warm our homes, to cook our food, to create energy, and many other uses. The fire of the sun makes our world habitable and productive.

A good spiritual love is like a good fire—it warms our spirits and motivates us to serve our neighbor.

A bad correspondence

Fire can also be destructive. In the natural world it can hurt and destroy. Even the fire of the sun can cause harm if it is misused. Evil loves burn like a bad fire, seeking to destroy what is good. Hell is often represented as a place burning with fire.

When we use the expression “playing with fire,” it is obvious that we are talking of a negative correspondence or something dangerous, something which opposes what is good, or something from hell.

Nadab and Abihu

Nadab and Abihu ignored the Lord’s law and offered “strange fire” in the Tabernacle. Allowing “strange fire” to fill the mind is a danger we need to guard against throughout our lives. The spirits of hell delight in destroying that which is good and innocent.

“Playing with fire”

People are often struck with remarkable accounts of near-death experiences. The results are very good, as they make people more thoughtful and more open to the thought of where life is leading.

However, the thought arises with some: “If there are people living in another world, can’t we try in some way to contact them?” Ouija boards and spiritualistic seances have long been known. And it is not uncommon to find that people who take an interest in the Writings may also wonder about playing around with spirit contacts.

The Writings, of course, say this is dangerous. Hell wants to communicate and so enslave people here. Contact with spirits will most likely be with evil spirits that will fill your mind with their strange fire.

Contact with the Spiritual World

Read the following notes from historical documents about Swedenborg:

Baron von Hatzel's strange request

In the year 1760, a German Baron named von Hatzel tried to write a letter to the man who wrote the Writings. But how could he? Although six books of the Writings had by that time been published (including *Heaven and Hell*), people in Europe did not yet know who the writer was.

You see, this was four years before Swedenborg's identity as the writer became known; and it was eight years before he actually put his name on a book of the Writings.

The Baron had learned that the Writer was a Swede, so he wrote to an important man in Sweden asking if he knew the writer, and if so, whether he would deliver a letter to him. (The letter is included as *Document number 215* on page 228 of *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*. If you have ever seen these documents, you know that they fill three volumes.)

What was the letter asking? The Baron was excited by the discovery that “the Almighty” had given extraordinary insight to someone. He spoke in the letter of “the writings which you have published in London, some of which I have read with amazement.”

He had a request to make, and to win favor he even promised to translate books of the Writings into French and German. His request was to be told in which two verses of the Bible “lies the power of entering into consort with spirits.” (A footnote in the *Documents* points out that “the idea that there are two verses in the Sacred Scripture by which man receives the power of holding congress with spirits has been widely spread among necromancers (spiritists) of all ages.”)

Well, the Swedish gentleman did know that the writer was Swedenborg, and he did deliver the letter. And how do you suppose Swedenborg answered the question? (*Pause here and think this over before reading further.*)

Swedenborg's reply

Swedenborg did not write directly to von Hatzel, but instead used the Swedish gentleman as a go-between.

In his answer, Swedenborg said there were not two special verses in Scripture that had this power more than others—but the Word does bring about unconscious communion with angels.

“It has been granted me to perceive that when I read the Word in the sense of its letter, a communication with the heavens was effected, now with this society there and now with that...”

Swedenborg also gave a clear warning that trying to contact spirits was dangerous in ordinary circumstances. It would bring devils, not angels. He added that in his special case, that of being a revelator, “I am protected by the Lord Himself...” (*Documents* p.232)

A warning

In the Writings we are frequently warned of the danger of communication with spirits. Here is one of the warnings:

“At the present day to talk with spirits is rarely granted, because it is dangerous.” *(Heaven and Hell 249)*

When we realize what power there is in the Word and the way it conjoins with heaven, we are not surprised that there would be people who might want to try to do things with that power, maybe just to play games with it!

It is said in the Writings that there were some in the other world of this nature—some spirits below the heavens who

“abuse the communication by reciting certain passages from the sense of the letter of the Word, and immediately observing and noting the society with which the communication is effected.” *(True Christian Religion 235, Doctrine of Sacred Scripture 64)*

Application

Think about some of the ways young people your age may sometimes be “playing with fire.” Why do you think people want to do that? What kinds of consequences are there? Can you think of any teachings in the Lord’s Word that may help us to make different choices? Write down some of your thoughts, or discuss the ideas with your family.

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