



Good day Worthy Knights, in this Part 101, the Tabernacle 1 of 4.

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## Approach

The writers of the Old Testament Books were influenced by an oral tradition of at least eight thousand years, and contain the narrative of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how God revealed himself to his people, through the prophets - those who spoke on behalf of God - and through the kings, the priests, and the followers of God.

In ancient Hebrew and in Aramaic, the name of a thing is considered to be the thing described - not merely a device, a symbol, or a representation of the thing being described. So, in the Old Testament, particularly in the Pentateuch (the five Books of Moses) and in the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible), God is described by use of the Tetragrammaton, an unpronounceable name containing no vowels - YHWH - written in English as Yahweh.

This is an attempt to approach a fuller understanding of the meaning of the word **Tabernacle** in the Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine. Let us consider the usage and the importance of the word Tabernacle as it appears in Judaic traditions, and then as it appears in Christian traditions. Finally, we shall evaluate if any conclusion may be drawn at the end of this journey of discovery.

## Tabernacle in English Usage: definitions and example sentences

Tabernacle derivation into Middle English via French from Latin, tabernaculum, tabernaculi, n., a **tent**. (Diminutive Latin form, taberna, tabernae, f., a wooden hut, a small shop, a stall, a booth, a tavern).

- A fixed or movable dwelling, typically of light construction, mostly in Biblical usage  
“During this festival, the Hebrews dwelled in booths or **tabernacles** made of branches, which symbolized God's protection during their wilderness travels.”
- A **tent** used as a sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant by the Israelites during the Exodus and until the building of the Temple  
“Leviticus is a rigorous laying out of the law especially in regard to the **tabernacle**, temple, and cultic practice”.
- A meeting place for worship used by some Christian denominations, like Latter-day Saints (Mormons)  
“When I want consciousness expansion, I go to my local **tabernacle** and I sing”.
- In Catholic churches, an ornamented receptacle or cabinet in which a pyx containing the reserved sacrament may be placed, usually on or above an altar  
“The enormous crucifix fixed on the wall behind the altar and above the golden **tabernacle** portrayed the death of Jesus Christ, the son of the Lord God, in a solemn and very sacred manner”.
- Archaic: a canopied niche or recess in the wall of a church.  
“Above are four statues of the queen, set in elaborate canopied **tabernacles**”.
- A partly open socket or double post on a sailing boat's deck into which a mast is fixed, with a pivot near the top so that the mast can be lowered to pass under bridges.

## Judaic Tradition and the paradox of the number eight

In Judaism, every number carries a specific meaning and an ascribed religious importance. Shmini is the Hebrew word for eighth. It appears as the third word, and the first distinctive word, in the Parashah – the section of the Torah (Five Books of Moses) used in the Jewish liturgy during a particular week. In the 26th weekly Torah portion, the third excerpt from the Book of Leviticus. "Eighth" refers to the eighth day following the seven days of the inauguration of the **Tabernacle**.

The number seven appears throughout the Torah: there are seven days of creation, with seven representing the natural order of things, with the seventh day being the day of rest; the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, Tishrei, is the month of festivals; there are seven-year cycles, et cetera.

The number eight, however, indicates the power of holiness, which is greater than nature. When the number eight is encountered in the Torah, it serves as a signal to alert the reader that the topic under discussion is one that transcends the natural expectation. It is the power of infinity.

Upon fulfillment of G'd's commandment, there was a seven-day inaugural celebration.

"And they shall make me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst," Exodus 25, 8.

During each of the seven days, the tabernacle was erected, and sacrifices were offered. Yet, throughout the seven days of inauguration, there was no sign of the divine presence: it is beyond the natural ability of a human being to draw down a divine revelation into this world (of spiritual concealment) of his own accord.

Only on the eighth day, the day representing the infinity of G'd, did the divine presence reveal itself in the Mishkan, the **tabernacle**. As the Torah describes:

" And it was on the eighth day . . . and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people . . . And fire went forth from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fats upon the altar, and all the people saw, sang praises, and fell upon their faces."

See Leviticus 9, 1-24 for the full text.

The number eight seems to contain conflicting elements. On the one hand, the number eight represents G'd's presence, separate from the cycle of nature. On the other hand, the number eight is a continuation of the counting system, after seven, a continuation of the natural order. This apparent paradox, explain the (Jewish) mystics, captures the mystery of God revealing himself to his people.

While the supernatural, divine energy cannot be drawn down by human volition, history shows that G'd chooses to reveal himself, to reveal the energy of the number eight, the energy of infinity, only after people invest themselves in achieving the work involved in the number seven. So, only after the people celebrated the seven days of inauguration, representing the culmination of human achievement, did G'd reveal the eighth dimension, that which transcends nature and could be expressed by the will of G'd alone.

