

THE ROOTED WAY

PODCAST

EPISODE 7

SHOW NOTES & SCRIPTURE COMPANION

THE TABERNACLE

Priesthood, Sacrifice & the Way Back to God

Main theme: The Tabernacle was not merely a tent for Israel's worship. It was God's gracious provision for dwelling among a sinful people—and it ultimately points us to Jesus Christ, our perfect High Priest, final sacrifice, and the new and living way into the presence of God.

Rooted Truth Ministries

"And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."
Podcast show notes, Scripture references, and episode resources
Exodus 25:8

www.rootedtruthministries.org/podcasts

Episode Overview

THE BIG QUESTION

How can a perfectly holy God dwell in the midst of a sinful people without abandoning them or consuming them?

That question sits underneath the furniture, curtains, garments, sacrifices, washings, and priestly rituals. The Tabernacle is God's Old Covenant answer to that problem—and the New Testament shows us that the final answer is Christ.

PRIMARY PASSAGES

Exodus 25–31; 35–40

Leviticus 16

John 1:14

Matthew 27:51

Hebrews 7–10

Revelation 21:3

Important caution: Bible first, Mishnah second

In the episode we draw from **Mishnah Yoma** and **Mishnah Tamid** because they preserve interesting historical details about later Jewish Temple practice. That can be helpful background, but it is **not inspired Scripture**.

Simple rule: If Exodus or Leviticus says it, that is God's Word. If the Mishnah says it, that may be historically interesting, but we do not treat it as doctrine.

What is the Mishnah?

The Mishnah is the earliest major written collection of rabbinic oral tradition, organized into six orders (*Sedarim*) and then tractates (*Masechtot*). **Yoma** focuses especially on the Day of Atonement, while **Tamid** focuses on the regular daily Temple service.

The Tabernacle: God Determines the Way

1) The Tabernacle was not Solomon's Temple

The Tabernacle was the **portable sanctuary** Israel built in the wilderness under Moses. God gives the instructions in **Exodus 25–31** and Israel builds it in **Exodus 35–40**. Centuries later, Solomon's Temple becomes the permanent structure in Jerusalem.

2) God was incredibly specific

The repeated theme in Exodus is essentially: **“just as the LORD commanded Moses.”** Dimensions, materials, furniture, priestly garments, incense, oil, and ritual practice were all given by God. Israel did not get to invent the terms of access to God.

Key takeaway: God determines the terms on which sinful people approach Him.

3) Bezalel and Oholiab

God specifically appointed Bezalel and Oholiab to oversee the work (**Exodus 31:1–11**). Bezalel is described as being **filled with the Spirit of God** for craftsmanship. One of the first Spirit-filled men explicitly mentioned in Scripture is not preaching a sermon—he is building sacred furniture.

4) Israel had to be told to stop giving

The people brought gold, silver, bronze, yarn, skins, wood, oil, spices, and stones so generously that Moses had to tell them to stop (**Exodus 36:5–7**). Probably the only capital campaign in history where leadership said, “We have enough.”

Walking Toward God's Presence

The Tabernacle's layout teaches theology

The sacred space is arranged in increasingly restricted access:

- **Outer Courtyard:** bronze altar; bronze basin
- **Holy Place:** lampstand, table of the Bread of the Presence, altar of incense
- **Most Holy Place:** the Ark of the Covenant and the *kappōret*—the mercy seat/atonement cover

Any Israelite could enter the courtyard to bring an offering. Only priests entered the Holy Place. Only the High Priest, and only on the Day of Atonement according to God's prescription, entered the Most Holy Place.

The architecture says something: God is near, but God is not casual.

A note on symbolism

Hebrews does tell us that the Tabernacle and sacrificial system are a **copy and shadow** that find fulfillment in Christ. But we should be cautious about creating a full “decoder ring” where every color and material is assigned a meaning Scripture never gives.

- If the New Testament makes the connection, we can make it confidently.
- If the biblical storyline strongly suggests a connection, we can present it modestly.
- If it is merely an interesting possibility, we should not build doctrine on it.

The veil, the Ark, and the mercy seat

The veil guarded the Most Holy Place and signaled restricted access to God's presence. When Christ died, **the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51)**. Hebrews then interprets the meaning: through Christ, believers have a new and living way into God's presence.

At the center of the sanctuary sat the Ark, and over it the mercy seat—the place associated with atonement and God's meeting with His people (**Exodus 25:22**).

The Priesthood, Garments, and the Day of Atonement

The priests

Aaron and his sons were appointed to offer sacrifices, tend sacred space, handle holy food, teach Israel, and distinguish between the holy and the common and between the clean and the unclean.

The garments

Exodus 28 says the priestly garments were made “**for glory and for beauty.**” The ordinary priests wore tunics, sashes, head coverings, and linen garments. The High Priest wore the ephod, breastpiece, shoulder stones, robe, turban, and a gold plate engraved:

HOLY TO THE LORD

He also carried the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart as he ministered before God.

Myth-buster: no ankle rope

The famous story that the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place with a rope tied around his ankle is not found in Scripture and not found in Mishnah Yoma’s description either.

Leviticus 16: the Day of Atonement

On Yom Kippur the High Priest washed, put on the prescribed garments, offered a bull, dealt with two goats, brought incense, applied blood, and made atonement for himself, his household, the people, the sanctuary, and the altar.

Important observation: the High Priest needed atonement too. That becomes one of the key contrasts between the Levitical priesthood and Christ.

Historical Background from Mishnah Yoma & Tamid

HELPFUL BACKGROUND, NOT DOCTRINE

Preparation for Yom Kippur

- The High Priest was separated ahead of Yom Kippur for preparation.
- A **backup High Priest** was designated in case he became ritually disqualified.
- Rabbi Yehuda even argued that a **replacement wife** should be designated in case the High Priest's wife died, since he interpreted "his household" in Leviticus 16 to mean "his wife." The other rabbis rejected the idea as taking contingency planning too far.

Do not let the High Priest fall asleep

Mishnah Yoma says the younger priests were responsible for keeping the High Priest awake the night before Yom Kippur. If he dozed off, they snapped their fingers in his face and urged him to get up and stay alert. Not a Bible verse—but it is memorable.

The race for the ashes and the finger lottery

One priestly duty was removing the ashes from the altar. At first, if multiple priests wanted the honor, they **raced up the altar ramp**. After one priest shoved another and broke his leg, the practice was replaced with a **lottery**.

How the finger lottery worked: the priests stood in a circle and each extended one or two fingers. An official chose a number, then counted around the circle finger by finger. When the count landed, the priest attached to that finger received the assignment. **No thumbs** were allowed, since a separated thumb could create the illusion of an extra participant and skew the count.

Bathroom detail and ritual washing

The Mishnah even preserves practical details: a closed door meant the bathroom was occupied; an open door meant it was empty. It also uses the language of "**sanctifying**" the hands and feet for the priestly washings.

That is not the same thing as New Testament sanctification, but it provides interesting background for themes of cleansing, consecration, and service.

Washing, Atonement, Azazel, and the Two Goats

Priestly washing and “sanctifying” hands and feet

Exodus 30:17–21 required the priests to wash before ministering. Mishnah Yoma expands on later Temple practice using “sanctification” language for repeated washings and immersions. That does not define Christian sanctification, but it does create striking biblical resonances with:

- **1 Corinthians 6:11** — “you were washed... you were sanctified...”
- **John 13** — Jesus washing the disciples’ feet
- **Hebrews** — hearts sprinkled clean and bodies washed

There is a difference between ritual consecration and Spirit-wrought sanctification—but the imagery rhymes.

The sacrifices were more varied than many Christians assume

Leviticus includes burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, purification/sin offerings, and guilt/reparation offerings. Not every sacrifice served the exact same purpose.

What atonement does in Leviticus 16

Atonement in Leviticus 16 is not merely “someone dies instead of me.” It also involves **purging pollution from sacred space**. The altar, sanctuary, and tent receive atonement because Israel’s sin and impurity have defiled the place where the holy God dwells among His people.

The two goats

Lots were cast over two goats. One was **for the LORD** and was slaughtered for the purification rite. The other was sent away after the High Priest confessed Israel’s sins over it. Together the goats portray two complementary truths:

- **Sin is dealt with before God.**
- **Sin is carried away from God’s people.**

Azazel: a caution zone

The exact meaning of **Azazel** is debated. It may refer to removal, a wilderness place, or possibly a proper name. The ritual’s meaning is clearer than the word’s definition: the goat bears away the sins of the people.

Caution: Later literature such as *1 Enoch* develops Azazel into a rebellious supernatural figure associated with the Watchers. That may be interesting historically, but it is **not** what Leviticus explicitly teaches. Protestants do not treat *1 Enoch* as canonical Scripture, and we should not import its speculation back into Moses as though Leviticus had clearly taught it.

Likewise, later tradition says the scapegoat was pushed off a cliff. That is later Temple tradition, not the prescription of Leviticus 16, which simply says the goat was sent alive into the wilderness.

The Fulfillment: Christ as Better Priest and Better Sacrifice

Old Covenant High Priest	Jesus Christ
Needed to be washed	Holy, innocent, undefiled
Needed atonement for his own sin	Had no sin
Brought the blood of another	Offered Himself
Entered again year after year	Entered once for all
Died and needed replacement	Holds His priesthood permanently

Hebrews is the interpretive key

Hebrews shows us that the repeated sacrifices could never bring the final cleansing and perfect access to God that Christ secures. The Old Covenant system kept saying, “*More is still needed.*” Christ says, “**It is finished.**”

John 1:14 and Revelation 21

John says that the Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us—the Greek term carries tabernacle language. Revelation closes the storyline by announcing that God’s dwelling is with humanity. The Bible moves from Eden, to exile, to the Tabernacle, to Christ, to the final dwelling of God with His redeemed people.

Bottom line: The Tabernacle is not ultimately a story about strange furniture, elaborate garments, or complicated rituals. It is the story of a holy God making a way to dwell among sinful people—and that way finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Recommended Scripture references from the episode

Exodus 25:8–9; 25:10–22; 26; 27:1–8; 30:17–21; 31:1–11; 35–40; 36:5–7; 28

Leviticus 16; Leviticus 6:2–5; Numbers 5:6–7

John 1:14; John 1:29; John 6:35; John 8:12; John 13

Matthew 27:51

1 Corinthians 6:11

Hebrews 7–10

Revelation 21:3

Prepared for **The Rooted Way** by Rooted Truth Ministries. Historical material from Mishnah Yoma and Tamid is included for context only and is not treated as inspired or authoritative Scripture.