

Resource: Key Terms (SRV)

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Key Terms (SRV)

T

tabernacle, tabernacle, teacher, teacher, teachers of the Law, teachers of the Law, temple, temple, tenants, tenants, tomb, tomb, tongues, tongues, tunic, tunic, Tyre, Tyre

tabernacle

The **tabernacle** was a tent where the Israelites worshiped God. Another name for the tabernacle is "tent of meeting," because this tent was the place where the Israelites could meet God.

Several thousand years before the birth of Jesus, God had freed the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt. The leader of the Israelites was Moses. God gave Moses instructions about what was the right way for the Israelites to worship God. Because God is holy, and people are sinful, people can not just come to God as they are. God cannot stand sin, and any person who would come to God directly would die. But God made it possible for people to come to him, at that time, through sacrifices and other rituals that made people clean. When people were ritually clean, that meant they were acceptable before God.

God told Moses to make a special tent that would be the place where people could meet God safely. This was the tabernacle. People made the tabernacle with wooden panels that were covered in gold. On top of the construction they placed beautiful pieces of fabric. Whenever the people traveled, they took the tabernacle apart and carried the parts of the tabernacle with them on their shoulders. When they came to the next place, they put it together again.

Priests were special people who worked in the tabernacle. Priests made it possible for people to come before God and to have a good relationship with God. The priests did this by offering sacrifices on behalf of the people and by teaching people how to live.

In front of the tabernacle was a courtyard. In the courtyard was an altar, which is a place where the priests brought offerings to God.

The tabernacle itself was divided in two parts. The first part was called "the holy place." Only priests could enter that place. Inside this place was a table with 12 loaves of bread that the priests replaced every week, an oil lamp that was always kept burning, and a small altar on which the priest burned sweet smelling spices. All these items were symbols, or pictures, of some bigger meaning. The priests ate the loaves of bread, probably as a symbol for having a meal together with God; this showed the good relationship that people can have with God. Oil in the Bible is often a symbol for the Holy Spirit, for the power of God. The oil lamp therefore was a symbol of God being present with the people. And the sweet smelling spices were a symbol of the prayers that people offered to God.

At the end of the holy place hung a heavy curtain. Behind this curtain was "the most holy place." Inside this most holy place stood the ark of the covenant. This was a wooden chest that was completely covered with gold, inside and out. On top of the chest were two creatures with wings that represented a special kind of angel. This chest symbolized the throne of God.

This was the most holy place, because God himself was in this place. Only the high priest-the most important priest-could enter this place, and he could enter only once a year. The high priest entered on the "day of atonement"-the great day of forgiveness. Even though the Israelites asked God for forgiveness for their sins every day, once a year the high priest would ask forgiveness for all the sins that all people had unknowingly done in the past year. The sins that people did made the tabernacle unclean, or unfit for service to God. One of the things that the high priest did on the great day of forgiveness was to enter this most holy place and spread blood over the ark of the covenant. This symbolized that the temple was made clean again of all the sins that the people had committed.

Much later, when the Israelites were settled in the land, they replaced the tabernacle with a

permanent building, the temple. The temple had the same function as the tabernacle had, and had the same structure with a courtyard, a holy place, and a most holy place.

tabernacle

Audio Content

teacher

A **teacher** in the Bible is always a **religious teacher** someone who explains the Scriptures to people. The word that the people used for a teacher like this is in their language "Rabbi," and therefore some translations will say "teacher," and others will say "Rabbi."

When you are translating "teacher," be careful about the following things:

You can use a word or phrase in your language that means "teacher." But the word should not be a word that is only used for a teacher of children in a school.

teacher

Audio Content

teachers of the Law

Teachers of the law were a group of religious leaders who were experts on the law of God.

The law means the set of instructions that God gave the people of Israel in the first five books of the Old Testament, but teachers of the law also taught all the Scriptures, not only the part of Scriptures that talked about the law. Scriptures refers to the part of the Bible that we now call the Old Testament.

Teachers of the law explained the Scriptures to the people. They did not write down their explanations but told them to their students. Their students memorized their explanations, and taught these explanations to the next generation. People kept adding more and more explanations and discussions about explanations. In the time of the New Testament, these memorized explanations had become very important to the people, maybe

even more important than the Scriptures themselves.

In the time of the New Testament, teachers of the law were very important people in the community. People showed them great respect and often called them "Rabbi," a title used for important religious teachers. There were also teachers of the law in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious court.

Teachers of the law are sometimes called **scribes**. A scribe means someone who can write. Many people in the times of the Bible were not able to read or write themselves. If people needed to write something, like a letter, they would hire a scribe to write for them. Scribes also copied Scripture so that the text of the Scripture would not get lost. The Scriptures were not written down on paper, the way people do now. Books and paper did not yet exist. Instead, people wrote Scriptures on long strips of papyrus or parchment. Papyrus is a thin sheet that is made from the fibers of a certain plant, and parchment is made from the skin of an animal. Because those sheets were very long, people rolled them up. The name for such a sheet is a scroll. Scrolls could become damaged quickly, especially those scrolls made of papyrus. Therefore scribes were always busy copying the text from one scroll to a new scroll, so that the text would not get lost.

However, when the Bible talks about teachers of the law, the focus is on their knowledge of the religious law, and not on their writing skills.

When you are translating "teachers of the law," be careful about the following things:

You should not use a phrase that makes your listeners think that these people are teaching the law of a country. Maybe you can use a phrase like "teachers of the religious law," or "experts of the religious law," or "experts of the Scriptures."

teachers of the Law

Audio Content

temple

A **temple** is a place where people worship God. The temple in the Bible is the place where God meets with people. Another name for the temple is **the house of God**.

The people groups that lived around Israel worshiped many different gods, and had many temples. But God allowed the Israelites to worship only him, and to have only one temple. This temple was in Jerusalem, the most important city for the Jews.

Several thousand years before the birth of Jesus, God had freed the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt. The leader of the Israelites was Moses. God gave Moses instructions about what was the right way for the Israelites to worship God. Because God is holy, and people are sinful, people can not just come to God as they are. God cannot stand sin, so any person who would come to God directly would die. But God made it possible for people to come to him through sacrifices and other rituals that made people clean. To be clean means to be acceptable before God.

God told Moses to make a tabernacle—which means a tent—that would be the place where people could meet God safely. This tabernacle was like a portable temple. Wherever the people traveled, they took the tabernacle with them.

Much later, when David was king over Israel, David wanted to replace this portable temple, the tabernacle, with a fixed building. God did not allow David to build a temple for him, because David had been a soldier and had killed people. But God told David that David's son could build this temple for God. And God allowed David to give his son instructions about how exactly to build this temple.

King Solomon, David's son, did indeed build a splendid temple for God. Even so, Solomon realized that God is much too big to really live in the temple; he said that even heaven was not big enough for God! And so, the fact that God was willing to come down to earth and call a small place like the temple, in the middle of sinful people, his home, was proof of how much God loved people.

Much later, the enemies of the Israelites destroyed this temple. God had allowed this to happen because the Israelites had been unfaithful to God and had begun to worship other gods. The Israelites were deported to other countries and the worship in the temple was over.

But after many years, God allowed the Israelites—who by that time were more often called Jews—to come back to the land. The Jews built a new temple for God. This temple was much smaller than the first one.

About 20 years before the birth of Jesus, a ruler named king Herod began to rebuild that small temple into something very big and impressive. He did this because he wanted to make the Jews happy so that they would support his rule. At the time of Jesus, the work on this temple was still going on.

All these temples, and the portable tabernacle as well, had the same basic structure, and the same rituals took place. There was a courtyard in front of the temple. This is where priests and the Levites worked to perform the sacrifices that the Israelites made. Levites are descendants of Levi, who was one of the great-grandsons of Abraham. God had set the Levites apart to take care of God's temple. Priests were Levites with the special task to perform the sacrifices. Sacrifices are gifts that people give to God in order to thank him or to ask for forgiveness for sin. A sacrifice could be an animal that was killed and burned, or it could be sweet smelling oil, or food of some sort—this depended on the reason for the sacrifice.

The temple building itself was divided in two parts. The first part was called "the holy place." Only priests could enter that place. Inside this place was a table with 12 loaves of bread that were replaced every week, an oil lamp that was always kept burning, and a small altar on which the priest burned sweet smelling spices. All these items were symbols, or pictures, of some bigger meaning. The priests ate the loaves of bread, probably as a symbol for having a meal together with God—this showed the good relationship that people can have with God. Oil in the Bible is often a symbol for the Holy Spirit, for the power of God. The oil lamp therefore was a symbol of God being present with the people. And the sweet smelling spices were a symbol of the prayers that people offered to God.

At the end of the holy place hung a heavy curtain. Behind this curtain was the most holy place. Inside this holy place stood the ark of the covenant, which is a wooden chest. This was the most holy place, because God himself was in this place. Only the high priest—the most important priest—could enter this place, and that only once a year. This happened on the "day of atonement," the great day of forgiveness. Even though Israelites asked God forgiveness for their sins throughout the year, once a year the high priest would ask forgiveness for all the sins that all people had unknowingly done in the past year. The sins that people did made the temple unclean, or unfit for service to God. One of the things that the high priest did on the great day of forgiveness was to enter this most holy place and

spread blood over the ark of the covenant. This symbolized that the temple was made clean again of all the sins that the people had committed.

The temple stood in Jerusalem, the most important city of Israel. Jewish people would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate important festivals and rituals in the temple. In the time of Jesus, there were several courtyards around the temple. If you were a *foreigner* visiting the temple, you could only come as far as the outer courtyard. Jewish *women* could enter into the next courtyard as well. Jewish *men* could go one courtyard further. Only the priests could enter the courtyard where the sacrifices were made. In the Old Testament, we do not find these rules about courtyards. These were rules that the Jewish people had made themselves.

But even in the Old Testament, only the *priests* could enter the temple, and only the high priest could go through the heavy curtain into the most holy place. This all showed to the people how holy God was, and how different and separated he was from people. When Jesus died on the cross, something very strange happened inside the temple. The book of Matthew tells us that the curtain of the temple was torn in half-from top to bottom! This showed us that because of Jesus's death this great separation between God and people disappeared. Jesus's sacrifice made it possible for people to now approach God without fear and hesitation.

About 40 years after Jesus went back to heaven, the Romans destroyed this temple. The Jewish people had rebelled against the Romans, who were ruling over them, and because of that the Romans burned down Jerusalem and completely destroyed the temple. After this, the Jews never were able to build the temple back up again.

Paul in his letter told the people that the church, the believers who are now in Jesus together, are now the temple of God. The community of believers is the place where God lives on earth, and where people can meet God.

In the book of Revelation we hear that when Jesus will come back to rule the earth, there will not be another temple. There will be no need for a temple, because God will live in the midst of the people-without any separation!

We find other phrases in the Bible that are used for temple, such as:

- the house of God
- a house of prayer
- a house of sacrifice
- and Jesus called the temple the house of his father.

The Bible also mentions some temples that are dedicated to gods that other people were worshiping, such as the temple of Dagon in the book of Judges or the temple of Artemis in the book of Acts. These temples were very different from the temple in Jerusalem and always contained an idol, a statue of these gods. The temple of God did not have a statue, because God had forbidden the people to ever make an image of God.

When you are translating "temple," be careful about the following things:

Your language may have a word that is used for a place of worship that is dedicated to a specific god in your culture. This word may not be right for the word temple in the Bible, unless you give some explanation about the difference. You could maybe say "temple of God" to make clear that it is different from the temples in your community.

Other possible names for the temple are:

- house of God
- house of sacrifices
- special house of God
- house of prayer

Remember that you will also need a different word for tabernacle.

Also, be careful that people do not get confused with the word that you are choosing for synagogue. A synagogue was a place where Jewish people met for prayer and for the study of God's word. People did not offer sacrifices in a synagogue. There were many synagogues, but there is only one temple.

Look at the pictures of the temple in the Bible video dictionary.

Use objects that you have easily available to make a small model of the temple. You could make an outline of the temple with the courtyard, the holy place, and the most holy place with rocks, rope, or other material.

temple

Audio Content

tenants

Tenants are people who take care of land or fields for an owner who does not live on the property. The tenants give part of the harvest from the field to the owner as payment for use of the property.

tenants

Audio Content

tomb

A **tomb** is the name for a place where people bury a dead person. In the Bible, this could be a natural cave in a rock, or it could be a hole that people cut out of rock. Wealthy people could have a large tomb carved out of rock with many decorations. Poor people might be buried inside a natural cave, or even just buried in the sand.

People wrapped a dead body in cloth and placed it directly inside the tomb.

More than one person could be buried in the same tomb. A family could have a tomb in which they buried all their dead family members. Inside the tomb could be shelves for the different bodies.

People closed the opening of a tomb with a pile of rocks, or with one large slab of rock. This rock would be round so that people could roll it away. The rock would be so heavy that it would still take several people to move it away.

Look in the Bible video dictionary for a picture of a tomb.

tomb

Audio Content

tongues

In the Bible, the word **tongue** is used as another word for language. So, people who speak a foreign tongue are people who speak a language that you don't understand.

But someone who speaks "a tongue" or who speaks "in tongues," can also mean a person who has a special gift from the Holy Spirit. When people speak in tongues like this, they normally do not themselves understand what they are saying. The Holy Spirit is making these people speak in a language that they do not know themselves. In this unknown language, the people are praising God or speaking some truth about God. Sometimes the people who listen to this are able to understand the words; sometimes because they happen to know the language, or sometimes because the Holy Spirit is giving them the explanation. For instance, when the Holy Spirit came on the new believers at the time of Pentecost, the people began to speak in tongues. The believers who were speaking these languages did not themselves understand these languages, but everybody in the crowd could understand what the believers were saying, even though the people in the crowd came from all over the world and spoke many different languages!

The gift of speaking in tongues is one of the gifts that the Holy Spirit can give to believers. Other gifts can for instance be having special knowledge, or wisdom, or the ability to perform miracles.

tongues

Audio Content

tunic

A **tunic** is an item of clothing that both men and women wear. It is a shirt that reaches to the knees, or to the ankles. People could make tunics from wool or from linen. People usually wore a waistband tied around their waist outside of the tunic. Men might put their swords in the waistband of their tunics. People wore a tunic underneath outer clothing like a robe or a cloak.

You can look in the visual dictionary for a picture of a cloak.

tunic

Audio Content

Tyre

Tyre is a city in Syrian Phoenicia, or Phoenicia, a region that is north of Israel. Tyre is located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Today, this city is part of the country we now know as Lebanon. During the time of Jesus, Tyre was an important city in the region because the people in Phoenicia were good at building ships and in sailing to other countries in their ships for buying and selling goods. Tyre was not part of Israel, and the Jewish people knew that the people of Tyre were immoral and did not follow God's laws. Israelite prophets prophesied against Tyre. However, Jesus said that the Jewish towns who rejected him would receive even greater punishment when God judged them than Tyre would!

Tyre

Audio Content