

TESTIMONY

The English word “testimony” first appears in the Bible in Ex. 16:34. The Hebrew people had just come out of Egypt and God gave them manna from heaven to eat. God told Moses to take an omer of manna and to keep it for generations to come **“so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt” (Ex. 16:32)**. Then Moses said to Aaron: **“Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.” (Ex. 16:33)**. The next verse explains **“As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept” (Ex. 16:34)**.

In summary:

- God commanded manna to be kept for generations to come so that the people could see the bread they ate when they came out of Egypt.
- The manna was to be put in a jar and placed “before the Lord”.
- As the Lord commanded Moses this jar was put “in front of the Testimony”.
- This, as you know, was before the Tabernacle was constructed.

The next use of the word “testimony” is in Ex. 25 where it occurs 3 times. This chapter begins the instructions regarding the Tabernacle and its furniture. In verses 10 - 22 we find instructions regarding the ark of the covenant and it is in this context that the word “testimony” occurs.

- **“Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.” (Exod 25:16).**
- **“Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.” (Exod 25:21)**
- **“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (Exod 25:22)**
- Two times we are told that the “Testimony” was to be placed in the ark.
- Next the ark is called “the ark of the Testimony”.

In Ex. 26 the word “testimony” is found two times and in both instances it is the “ark of the Testimony” (Ex. 26:33, 34).

In Ex. 27 instructions are given regarding a lasting ordinance among the Israelites. They were to keep lamps burning “before the Lord” from evening until morning. These lamps were: **“In the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain that is in front of the Testimony, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.” (Exod 27:21)**

- Note that these lamps were “in the tent of meeting, outside the curtain which was in front of the Testimony.
- Note also that this location was “before the Lord”.

Next the word “testimony” is found four times in Ex. 30.

- **“Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony-- before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony-- where I will meet with you.” (Exod 30:6)**
- **“Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony,” (Exod 30:26)**
- **“Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you.” (Exod 30:36)**

- In vs. 6 we are told that the atonement cover was “over the Testimony”.

The next 2 references to the “testimony” are in Ex. 31. Vs 7 merely refers to the “ark of the Testimony”, but verse 18 makes a specific connection between the “testimony” and the two tablets of stone: **“When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” (Exod 31:18)** While we may have assumed this before, this is the first time this information is specifically stated in Scripture.

The same truth is stated again in chapter 32: **“Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.” (Exod 32:15-16)**

The same truth is stated again in chapter 34: **“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.” (Exod 34:29)**

In Ex. 38:21 we have a new application for the word “testimony”. We have found that it referred specifically to the two stone tablets that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. We have found that it referred to the ark where these tablets were kept. Now we discover that the word “testimony” also is used to describe the whole tabernacle: **“These are the amounts of the materials used for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which were recorded at Moses’ command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest.” (Exod 38:21)**

There are 5 more references to the “testimony” in the book of Exodus (39:35; 40:3, 5, 20, 21) Ex. 40:20 is of specific interest: **“He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it.”** Moses placed the “Testimony” in the ark. This obviously referred to the two stone tablets, the Ten Commandments” which are also called the “Tables of the Testimony”.

SUMMARY - The word “testimony” occurs 21 times in the book of Exodus. It is first used in Ex. 16:34 when Moses and Aaron were commanded to put the manna “in front of the testimony”. The next references with new information are in Ex. 25:16, 21 where we are told that the “testimony” was to be placed inside the ark, and then in Ex. 25:22 the ark is called the “ark of the Testimony”. Next we are told that the lamps were to be “outside the curtain that is in front of the Testimony” (Ex. 27:21). Next the Tabernacle is itself called the “Tabernacle of the Testimony” (Ex. 38:21). In the final references in Exodus (40:20, 21) Moses “took the Testimony and placed it in the ark” and then brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung a shielding curtain before the “ark of the Testimony”. Based on these references in Exodus the word “testimony” was not applied to the pot of manna - only to the two tablets of stone. Chronologically speaking it was much later that Aaron’s rod budded (See Nu. 16).

The question just occurred to me “did the ark glow”? Was this why it was wrapped? Possibly, but we must remember that the other furniture of the Tabernacle was also wrapped. I Jn. 1:5 states that God is Light and James 1:17 calls God the Father of lights. In heaven there will be no need of the sun or moon for the glory of the Lord will lighten it (Rev. 21:13). Note that God appeared

to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed (Ex. 3:3,4) God guided His people through the wilderness as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire (Ex. 14:24). When Moses returned from meeting God on the mountain his face was shining. When Luke described the angel appearing to shepherds at the birth of Christ he wrote that the “glory of the Lord shone round about them” (Lk. 2:9). When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John his face shined like the sun (Matt. 17:2) and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning (Lk. 9:29). When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus He did so as a light from heaven that flashed around him (Acts 9:3). All three accounts of Saul’s conversion reference the blinding light. This is of particular interest inasmuch as this happened about noon (Acts 22:6). John wrote that Jesus tabernacled among men and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14). Not only is God Light but Jesus is the “radiance of God’s glory” (Heb. 1:3). The Hebrew people came to describe the presence of God with the word “shekinah” (that which dwells). Even though this word is not found in the Bible it seems that the idea is. The word came to represent the “glory” or “presence” of God. In the Jewish Talmud and Targums the presence of God was associated with light. (The name “Talmud” means “to learn” and refers to a collection of rabbinical laws and comments upon the Law of Moses. The word “Targum” means “translator” and refers to several early paraphrases of portions of the O.T. Scriptures into Aramaic.)

LEVITICUS

The word “testimony” is found two times in the book of Leviticus.

- **“He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die.” (Lev 16:13)** This reference involves the actions of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. God promised to “appear in the cloud over the atonement cover” (Lev. 16:2). Apparently to shield the High Priest from the presence of God, when he entered “behind the curtain” he was to put incense on a censer full of burning coals.
- **““Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.” (Lev 24:2-3)** This reference offers a new dimension to that which was associated with the Testimony. We read first of the “ark of the Testimony” (Ex. 25:1). Next the Tabernacle of the Testimony (Ex. 38:21). Now the “curtain of the Testimony” (Lev. 24:3).

NUMBERS

The word “testimony” occurs nine times in the book of Numbers.

- There are 3 references in chapter 1 and each one refers to the “tabernacle of the Testimony” (1:50, 53, 53).
- Nu. 4:5 and 7:89 refer to the “ark of the Testimony”.
- In Nu. 9:15 we are told that on the day that the tabernacle, or “tent of the Testimony” was set up a cloud covered it.
- In Nu. 10:11 we are told that on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year the cloud lifted from the “tabernacle of the Testimony”.
- In Nu. 17:4, and 10 we have referenced for the first time Aaron’s rod that budded. For your convenience here is the entire passage: **“The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their**

ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. On the staff of Levi write Aaron's name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites." So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron's staff was among them. Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the Tent of the Testimony. The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each man took his own staff. The LORD said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die." Moses did just as the LORD commanded him." (Num 17:1-11)

- I have taken the liberty of underlining the words that help us understand the location where Aaron's rod was placed. Note that it was:
 - "in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony".
 - "Before the Lord in the Tent of the Testimony"
 - This same terminology is used in Ex. 27:21 to describe the location of the lamps that Aaron and his sons were to care for daily.
 - It was a place where Moses could enter.
 - Once Aaron's rod budded it was to be "put back" in front of the Testimony.
 - This leads me to conclude that Aaron's rod that budded was at this time in the Holy Place and not "inside" the Holy of Holies or the ark of the covenant.

The word "Testimony" is not found in the book of Deuteronomy.