



Exodus - Chapter Twenty Six

II. Exodus 19:1-40:38 - The Covenant at Sinai (continues)

II.d Exodus 25:1-31:17 - Instructions for the tabernacle (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Six

This chapter provides precise design instructions needed to construct the frame of the tabernacle and all the curtains needed to cover the framework. In addition, a further curtain was required to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place so that no one, except the High Priest, could see what was inside the Most Holy Place.

II.d.v Exodus 26:1-37 - Tent of the tabernacle

This section describes the curtains, frames, and bars (vv.1-30) that would make up the tabernacle, which was divided into two sections internally, i.e. the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place (vv.31-34), with a screen for the entrance (vv.36-37). The tent's external dimensions were 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high, or 13.8m by 4.6m by 4.6m. It was surrounded by a screened courtyard 50 yards by 25 yards, or 45.7m by 22.9m; refer to 27:9-19.

II.d.v.1 Exodus 26:1-14 - The tabernacle

These verses provide detailed design instructions for the curtains that will form both an inner and outer skin for the tabernacle. The internal curtains provide for a beautiful interior, while the outer ones are designed to withstand the various elements of the weather.

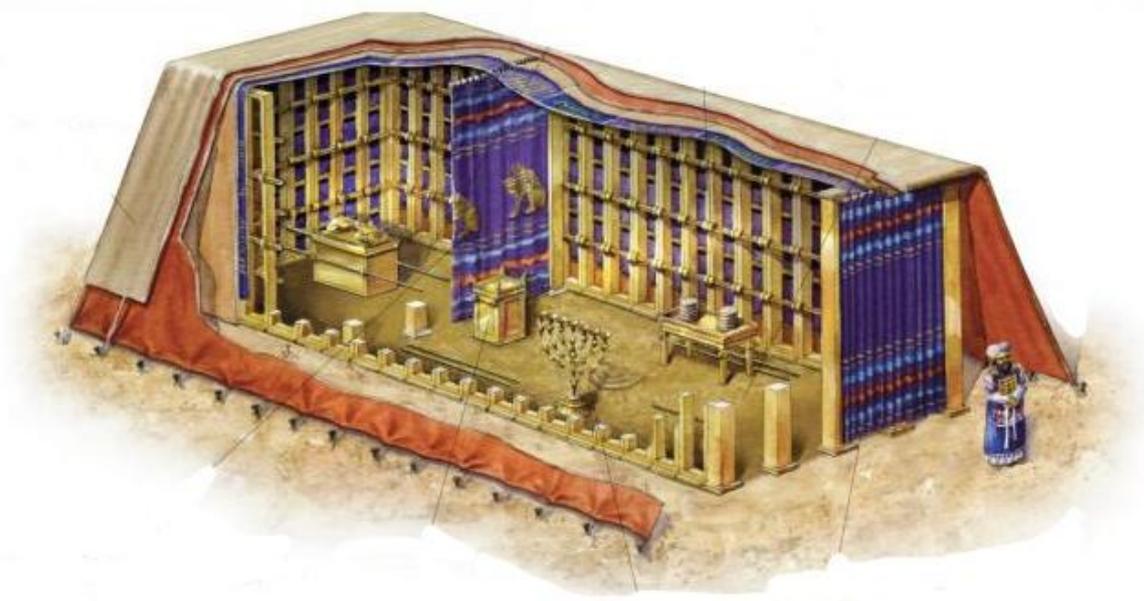
¹ Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skilfully worked into them. ² The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four

cubits; all the curtains shall be of the same size. ³ Five curtains shall be joined to one another; and the other five curtains shall be joined to one another. ⁴ You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; and likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set. ⁵ You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. ⁶ You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be one whole.

Exodus 26:1-6

You shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen. The tabernacle was a tent with a frame and a series of elaborate coverings. This section describes the first covering, the one seen from the interior of the tabernacle. It appears that the plans for the tabernacle were revealed to Moses from the inside out, starting with the interior furniture and then working outwards. The sanctuary is approached from the outside in, but God builds the sanctuary from the inside out. He works within his people according to this same pattern.

The entire tabernacle was 45 feet or 13.7m long, 15 feet or 4.6m wide, and 15 feet or 4.6m high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (vv.15-29). Five wooden bars, overlaid with gold, passed through rings attached to each frame (vv.26-30).



The tabernacle

The sources of the colours for the blue, purple, and crimson yarns were discussed in 25:3-7.

You shall make them with cherubim skilfully worked into them. The designs on this covering were visible only from the inside of the tabernacle. Therefore, on the inside of the tabernacle, one saw cherubim all around, just as one would see in heaven: *<<Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!>>* (Psalm 80:1-2); *<<O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth>>* (Isaiah 37:16), and: *<<Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court>>* (Ezekiel 10:3).

The cherubim are likely included in the design to signify that the tabernacle is the place on earth where the God of heaven has chosen to dwell with his people Israel. When Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, cherubim are placed at the entrance to ensure that the couple did not eat from the tree of life in their fallen state (Genesis 3:22-24). Since the cherubim are incorporated on the curtains of the tabernacle and on the veil that separates the Most Holy Place where God will be present (v.31), they may represent a similar warning.

Five curtains shall be joined to one another. The fine linen curtain was made by sewing together five curtains, each one 42 feet or 12.8m long and 6 feet or 1.8m wide. They were first joined in sets of five, and then joined together for a covering 42 by 60 feet or 12.8m by 18.2m.

You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps. The sets of five curtains were not to be sewn to each other, but joined by a system of loops on the fabric and gold clasps to link the loops from one set of five curtains to the other set of five curtains.

So that the tabernacle may be one whole. The spiritual principle illustrated with this method of joining the curtains is unity in diversity. Paul provides a similar illustration for the church: *<<so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another>>* (Romans 12:5).

⁷ You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains. ⁸ The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains shall be of the same size. ⁹ You shall join five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and the sixth curtain you shall double over at the front of the tent. ¹⁰ You shall

make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set. ¹¹ You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and put the clasps into the loops, and join the tent together, so that it may be one whole. ¹² The part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half-curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. ¹³ The cubit on one side, and the cubit on the other side, of what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and that side, to cover it. ¹⁴ You shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather.

Exodus 26:7-14

In addition to the fine linen curtains that make up the inner part of the tabernacle, there are also curtains of goats' hair, a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather or goatskins that cover the tabernacle, forming a protective barrier against the elements.

Join the tent together, so that it may be one whole. The set of five strips and the set of six strips were joined together with a series of loops and bronze clasps. The inner covering or curtain used gold clasps, but this second covering used bronze.

The part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half-curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. Since the goats' hair layer was six feet or 1.8m longer than the fine linen layer, the extra length covered over the rear portion of the tent.

The cubit on one side, and the cubit on the other side. Since the goats' hair covering was wider by 3 feet or 1.8m, this layer completely covered over the fine linen layer. Therefore, as well as providing a weather-proof shield, the fine linen layer - the heavenly set of coverings - was completely obscured and overlapped by the dark covering of goats' hair. It was not open to observation, even in part. Heaven remained hidden to all except those who entered in through the door of the tabernacle.

You shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins. The covering of ram skins was like fine leather dyed red. No specific size or arrangement is mentioned for the assembling of this covering.

An outer covering of fine leather. The outer covering of probably badger, porpoise or sea-cow skins was a durable and water resistant outer covering. It was not particularly beautiful to look at, but it was extremely comfortable. When

these four layers of curtains were laid on one another, the result was a very dry and very dark tent. The only light came from the lampstand as described in the previous chapter.

II.d.v.2 Exodus 26:15-30 - The Framework

These verses describe the acacia wood framework of the tabernacle onto which the above curtains or coverings were to be fixed.

¹⁵ You shall make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle.
¹⁶ Ten cubits shall be the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the width of each frame. ¹⁷ There shall be two pegs in each frame to fit the frames together; you shall make these for all the frames of the tabernacle. ¹⁸ You shall make the frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side; ¹⁹ and you shall make forty bases of silver under the twenty frames, two bases under the first frame for its two pegs, and two bases under the next frame for its two pegs; ²⁰ and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side twenty frames, ²¹ and their forty bases of silver, two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame; ²² and for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six frames. ²³ You shall make two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear; ²⁴ they shall be separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring; it shall be the same with both of them; they shall form the two corners. ²⁵ And so there shall be eight frames, with their bases of silver, sixteen bases; two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame.

Exodus 26:15-25

You shall make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each upright was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Each upright was approximately 15 feet or 4.5m high and 2 feet 3 inches or 0.7m wide.

Twenty frames for the south side. The north and south sides of the tabernacle had twenty uprights each. The back, i.e. westward facing side, was six uprights wide with two corner uprights, for a total of eight uprights across the back. Scholars debate whether the surrounding uprights made a solid wall around the tabernacle, or were more of a frame with the fabric coverings providing the wall. The idea of a solid wall seems more likely.

Joined at the top, at the first ring. Each upright was joined together by a system of **pegs** with **bases** or sockets, through which ran bars. Each upright had four rings

through which the bars ran, and the corner uprights had eight rings, four on two sides to accommodate the corners.

And so there shall be eight frames, with their bases of silver, sixteen bases.

Each upright rested on two bases of silver, each base made with one talent of silver. Therefore each upright rested on a base of 264 lbs or 120 kilos of silver.

Silver is the metal associated with redemption and payment for sin, as indicated by Exodus 21:32, Leviticus 5:15, 27:3 and 27:6, Numbers 18:16, and Deuteronomy 22:19. Jesus was betrayed for silver (Matthew 26:15). The tabernacle's foundation was silver, pointing to the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the dual nature of the foundation had to do with the two sources of revelation, i.e. the Old and New Testaments. The silver of redemption also separated the tabernacle from the dirt of the desert floor. This is an illustration of the truth that Jesus' redeeming work separates believers from the world.

²⁶ You shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the side of the tabernacle at the rear to the west. ²⁸ The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall pass through from end to end. ²⁹ You shall overlay the frames with gold, and shall make their rings of gold to hold the bars; and you shall overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰ Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.

Exodus 26:26-30

You shall make bars of acacia wood. Each bar was made of acacia wood and overlaid in gold. Seemingly, the bars ran the entire length of each side, linking together each upright into one system.

The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall pass through from end to end.

Four bars ran horizontally on each side, linking each upright. One bar - the middle bar - was invisible, running through the middle of each upright. This speaks to both the visible and the invisible unity among God's people. The system of linking bars was both visible and invisible.

The details given here, as well as for other elements, are not exhaustive, which is also indicated when the Lord repeats the command that Moses shall follow the pattern or plan that he was **shown on the mountain.**

II.d.v.3 Exodus 26:31-37 - The Curtain

These verses provide the pattern of design for the inner curtain or veil that would be used to separate the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place.

³¹ You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skilfully worked into it. ³² You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, which have hooks of gold and rest on four bases of silver. ³³ You shall hang the curtain under the clasps, and bring the ark of the covenant inside, within the curtain; and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy.

Exodus 26:31-33

You shall make a curtain. The curtain, made of fine linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarn, with artistic design of cherubim, hung on four pillars made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, set on silver sockets. The colours and design of this curtain are the same as the curtains of the tabernacle itself.

The ancient Jews said the later veil of the temple was as thick as four fingers, so that no one could possibly see into the Most Holy place.

It shall be made with cherubim skilfully worked into it. From this, it is known that the interior of the tabernacle was filled with gold and the pattern was of cherubim.

The curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy. The curtain separated the tent into two compartments. The first compartment was the holy place, which was the larger room, first entered, with the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense. The second compartment was the Most Holy place, a smaller room with the Ark of the Covenant.

This veil was a barrier, and no priest could go beyond the veil into the Most Holy place except the high priest. He could only enter once a year, and that on the Day of Atonement. Spiritually speaking, in dying for the sins of humankind with his own blood, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption, as described in Hebrews 9:12.

In the temple, this veil was torn from top to bottom at the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:51), showing that through his death, there is no longer a barrier to the Most Holy place. Now the Most Holy Place is open to all who believe in Jesus: *<<Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)>>* (Hebrews 10:19-20). The

torn veil of Matthew 27:51 also symbolises the broken body of Jesus, through which believers have access to the Most Holy Place.

In 63BC the ancient Roman general Pompey pushed aside the priests and walked right into the Most Holy place of the temple and was astonished to see there was no idol or statue (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 14:4).

³⁴ You shall put the mercy-seat on the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. ³⁵ You shall set the table outside the curtain, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table; and you shall put the table on the north side.

Exodus 26:34-35

The Most Holy Place will contain only the Ark of the Covenant, separated by a curtain or veil from the Holy Place (v.33), which will include the altar of incense (30:1-10) in addition to the lampstand and table already mentioned.

The furniture in the holy place spoke of three great obligations of walking with God: prayer (the altar of incense), fellowship (the table of showbread), and to receive illumination (the lampstand).

³⁶ You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework. ³⁷ You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.

Exodus 26:36-37

You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent. The same colour scheme, blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, was used to make a covering for the east entrance of the tabernacle. This was the only way to enter the structure.

Five pillars of acacia. The screen hung from hooks on five pillars. Each pillar was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and set on a foundation of bronze. Since bronze or brass must be made with a refining fire, it pictures purity and endurance through trial. The entrance to the tabernacle hung on a symbolic foundation of what Jesus did for humankind.