

Exodus Chapter Twenty-Six

Read **Exodus 26:1-6** – The Ten Curtains

v.1 “MOREOVER YOU SHALL MAKE THE TABERNACLE *with* TEN CURTAINS OF FINE WOVEN LINEN AND BLUE, PURPLE, AND SCARLET *thread*; WITH ARTISTIC DESIGNS OF CHERUBIM YOU SHALL WEAVE THEM.”

This chapter begins the description of the contents of the “Mishkan” or the Tabernacle; the dwelling place of God within the nation of Israel. Here we have God calling for ten curtains or more appropriately ten breadths of material, or panels, that would be sewn together to make two very large curtains. According to the NKJV the “ARTISTIC DESIGNS” or “CUNNING WORK” of the cherubims was to be worked or woven into the curtains at the time that the cloth was woven. The KJV and the ASV do not give us any clarification of the actual method of manufacture and the some contend that the imagery was to be embroidery work on the fabric of the curtains rather than woven into the material. We will see more about that at the end of the chapter.

v.2 “THE LENGTH OF EACH CURTAIN *shall be* TWENTY-EIGHT CUBITS, AND THE WIDTH OF EACH CURTAIN FOUR CUBITS. AND EVERY ONE OF THE CURTAINS SHALL HAVE THE SAME MEASUREMENTS.”

Each panel was to be 28 cubits or 42 feet long and 4 cubits or 6 feet wide, giving them the ability to cover an area of forty-two feet tall by sixty feet wide, not accounting for folds that we see in modern day drapes. This gives us a beginning idea of the size of the tabernacle.

v.3 “FIVE CURTAINS SHALL BE COUPLED TO ONE ANOTHER, AND *the other* FIVE CURTAINS *shall be* COUPLED TO ONE ANOTHER.”

The panels were to be “COUPLED” or sewn together to make two forty-two foot curtains, thirty feet wide.

v.4 “AND YOU SHALL MAKE LOOPS OF BLUE *yarn* ON THE EDGE OF THE CURTAIN ON THE SELVEDGE OF *one* SET, AND LIKEWISE YOU SHALL DO ON THE OUTER EDGE OF *the other* CURTAIN OF THE SECOND SET.”

Each six panel curtain was to have loops of blue fabric on the edge of the curtain on, the selvedge. Who can tell me what the selvedge is? It is the edge of the woven fabric that has been finished so as to not ravel or fray. See Picture.

v.5 “FIFTY LOOPS YOU SHALL MAKE IN THE ONE CURTAIN, AND FIFTY LOOPS YOU SHALL MAKE ON THE EDGE OF THE CURTAIN THAT *is* ON THE END OF THE SECOND SET, THAT THE LOOPS MAY BE CLASPED TO ONE ANOTHER.”

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The curtains were to be clasp together using these loops. It appears that the loops were each anchored to the other, making possible a continuous closure top to bottom.

v.6 “AND YOU SHALL MAKE FIFTY CLASPS OF GOLD, AND COUPLE THE CURTAINS TOGETHER WITH THE CLASPS, SO THAT IT MAY BE ONE TABERNACLE.”

The curtains were to be closed with clasps of gold.

Read **Exodus 26:7-30** – The Tabernacle Tent

v.7 “YOU SHALL ALSO MAKE CURTAINS OF GOATS’ *hair*, TO BE A TENT OVER THE TABERNACLE. YOU SHALL MAKE ELEVEN CURTAINS.”

This verse is interesting because of the distinction that is made between the tent and the tabernacle. As we noted in verse one the Hebrew word for tabernacle is Mishkan, meaning a dwelling place and when coupled with the definite article “THE” in Hebrew means the dwelling place of God. The word translated tent is simply the Hebrew word for tent, regardless of material or purpose.

As we noted in an earlier study the goat’s hair was a very fine hair, nearly equal in quality to the finest wool.

v.8 “THE LENGTH OF EACH CURTAIN *shall be* THIRTY CUBITS, AND THE WIDTH OF EACH CURTAIN FOUR CUBITS; AND THE ELEVEN CURTAINS SHALL ALL HAVE THE SAME MEASUREMENTS.”

Each of these curtains or pieces of material were to be thirty cubits or forty-five feet long and four cubits or six feet wide.

v.9 “AND YOU SHALL COUPLE FIVE CURTAINS BY THEMSELVES AND SIX CURTAINS BY THEMSELVES, AND YOU SHALL DOUBLE OVER THE SIXTH CURTAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE TENT.”

These curtains or pieces of fabric were to be linked together, five in one curtain and six in the other. The sixth panel of the second curtain was to be doubled over or draped over the front of the tent. Cook in the Baker Commentary contends that this covering was to double over both the front and the back. As we continue through the chapter we will see if there is some indication of that requirement.

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v.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 OF THE SECOND SET.”

This set of curtains or coverings were to have loops just like the others so that they could be closed together. The goat hair coverings were to go over top of the fine linen curtains or coverings providing the second layer of protection for the contents of the tabernacle.

v.11 “AND YOU SHALL MAKE FIFTY BRONZE CLASPS, PUT THE CLASPS INTO THE LOOPS, AND COUPLE THE TENT TOGETHER, THAT IT MAY BE ONE.”

Whereas the interior layer of covering of the tabernacle was to use clasps made from gold, the next layer, or first layer of the tent uses bronze. Note that the scripture speaks of coupling the tent, not the tabernacle, indicating that the tent-cloth is the subject of these instructions.

v.12 “THE REMNANT THAT REMAINS OF THE CURTAINS OF THE TENT, THE HALF CURTAIN THAT REMAINS, SHALL HANG OVER THE BACK OF THE TABERNACLE.”

Again we see the balance of the covering being allowed to hang over the back of the structure to protect and close what would be the back of the Most Holy Place, or the abode of God. This will become clearer when we get down to about verse 18.

v.13 “AND A CUBIT ON ONE SIDE AND A CUBIT ON THE OTHER SIDE, OF WHAT REMAINS OF THE LENGTH OF THE CURTAINS OF THE TENT, SHALL HANG OVER THE SIDES OF THE TABERNACLE, ON THIS SIDE AND ON THAT SIDE, TO COVER IT.”

When the scripture here speaks of the “SIDES OF THE TABERNACLE” here it is not speaking of the finished structure but rather the extent that the goat hair curtain would extend beyond and cover the tabernacle covering of fine linen. In other words the goat hair curtain would be a cubit longer than the interior linen covering on each side.

v.14 “YOU SHALL ALSO MAKE A COVERING OF RAM SKINS DYED RED FOR THE TENT, AND A COVERING OF BADGER SKINS ABOVE THAT.”

So as our picture shows the ram skins would go over the goat hair curtains, and then the badger skins over that.

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v.15 “AND FOR THE TABERNACLE YOU SHALL MAKE THE BOARDS OF ACACIA WOOD, STANDING UPRIGHT.”

The word boards in this verse, which also appears in earlier versions, is interesting. The Israelites obviously had the means, the skills and the tools to make lumber. The acacia wood or acacia nilotica is reported to grow in abundance in that region so the wood was readily available but I don't think that most folks realize that hewn planks or boards were even known at this point in man's history.

v.16 “TEN CUBITS *shall be* THE LENGTH OF A BOARD, AND A CUBIT AND A HALF *shall be* THE WIDTH OF EACH BOARD.”

Each board was to be ten cubits or fifteen feet long and twenty-seven inches wide. That is a rather wide board. In my experience about the only native tree that could be expected to yield a finished board that wide would be an old growth sycamore.

Mr. Clarke, in his commentary, has these board at seventeen and one half feet long and thirty-two inches wide. Obviously he is using a different cubit than we are using; one that is 21 inches long rather than 18 inches as my study Bibles show.

v.17 “TWO TENONS *shall be* IN EACH BOARD FOR BINDING ONE TO ANOTHER. THUS YOU SHALL MAKE FOR ALL THE BOARDS OF THE TABERNACLE.”

The mortise and tenon joint has been used for thousands of years to join two pieces of wood together and is still used by craftsmen today. God has a little different purpose in mind than we normally see in woodwork because the tenon isn't going to fit into a mortise in another piece of wood but rather a socket of silver as we will see in verse 19.

v.18 “AND YOU SHALL MAKE THE BOARDS FOR THE TABERNACLE, TWENTY BOARDS FOR THE SOUTH SIDE.”

Twenty boards for the south side of the tabernacle at 27 inches each would indicate a length of about 45 feet. This agrees with the dimensions given by Cook in the Baker Commentary where he records a width of 15 feet. Considering that the tabernacle and the temple face east the right side, or left to the person entering, was the south side. This is confirmed by Josephus in his histories.

v.19 “YOU SHALL MAKE FORTY SOCKETS OF SILVER UNDER THE TWENTY BOARDS: TWO SOCKETS UNDER EACH OF THE BOARDS FOR ITS TWO TENONS.”

Each board was to have two tenons, so now we have forty sockets, two for each board for the boards to rest in and the tenons to hold them in place.

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v.20-21 “AND FOR THE SECOND SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, THE NORTH SIDE, **there shall be** TWENTY BOARDS AND THEIR FORTY SOCKETS OF SILVER: TWO SOCKETS UNDER EACH OF THE BOARDS.”

The structural material for the north side of the tabernacle would be the exact mirror image of the south side.

v.22-23 “FOR THE FAR SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, WESTWARD, YOU SHALL MAKE SIX BOARDS. AND YOU SHALL ALSO MAKE TWO BOARDS FOR THE TWO BACK CORNERS OF THE TABERNACLE.”

The “FAR SIDE” or west end of the tabernacle would be framed with six boards, plus one board each for the back corners. All of the boards were to be cut and worked to the same dimensions.

v.24 “THEY SHALL BE COUPLED TOGETHER AT THE BOTTOM AND THEY SHALL BE COUPLED TOGETHER AT THE TOP BY ONE RING. THUS IT SHALL BE FOR BOTH OF THEM. THEY SHALL BE FOR THE TWO CORNERS.”

The corner boards were to be “COUPLED” or fastened together with a ring at the top and at the bottom. Mr. Cook, in the Baker Commentary, notes that this would add about 18 inches to the width of the tabernacle, bringing to the 15 foot dimension that he quoted earlier.

v.25 “SO THERE SHALL BE EIGHT BOARDS WITH THEIR SOCKETS OF SILVER—SIXTEEN SOCKETS—TWO SOCKETS UNDER EACH OF THE BOARDS.”

So the end of the tabernacle was made up of eight boards sitting in silver sockets just like the boards on the sides.

v.26-27 ” AND YOU SHALL MAKE BARS OF ACACIA WOOD: FIVE FOR THE BOARDS ON ONE SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, FIVE BARS FOR THE BOARDS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, AND FIVE BARS FOR THE BOARDS OF THE SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE, FOR THE FAR SIDE WESTWARD.”

These boards would be held in place by bars of acacia wood designed and made for that purpose. There would be five bars on each side and five bars on the end.

v.28-29 “THE MIDDLE BAR SHALL PASS THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE BOARDS FROM END TO END. YOU SHALL OVERLAY THE BOARDS WITH GOLD, MAKE THEIR RINGS OF GOLD **as** HOLDERS FOR THE BARS, AND OVERLAY THE BARS WITH GOLD.”

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The wood of the boards and the bars that support them were to be overlaid with gold, probably gold leaf as Mr. Clarke contends, since anything thicker would made the wood very heavy to transport. The bars were to pass through the midst of the boards or more appropriately through the gold rings and thus support the outer wall of the tabernacle.

v.30 “AND YOU SHALL RAISE UP THE TABERNACLE ACCORDING TO ITS PATTERN WHICH YOU WERE SHOWN ON THE MOUNTAIN.”

Again we see that God reinforces his commandment to do these things exactly in accord with the pattern that He is giving Moses. We might remind those apostate brethren who ridicule us for practicing “pattern religion” that God has always given men patterns or detailed instructions in matter of importance.

Read **Exodus 26:31-37** – The Veil For the Ark

v. 31 “YOU SHALL MAKE A VEIL WOVEN OF BLUE, PURPLE, AND SCARLET *thread*, AND FINE WOVEN LINEN. IT SHALL BE WOVEN WITH AN ARTISTIC DESIGN OF CHERUBIM.”

Like the interior curtain or covering for the tabernacle frame the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, the meeting place with God was of the finest linen done in royal colors and woven with cherubim. In Herod’s temple the veil was torn from top to bottom, symbolizing the opening of the abode of God to mankind.

Matthew 27:51 “THEN, BEHOLD, THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN IN TWO FROM TOP TO BOTTOM; AND THE EARTH QUAKED, AND THE ROCKS WERE SPLIT,”

The Hebrew word translated veil literally means separation and the rending of the veil at the death of Jesus emphasizes the new relationship between man and God because man could now be free from sin and acceptable to God.

v.32 “YOU SHALL HANG IT UPON THE FOUR PILLARS OF ACACIA *wood* OVERLAID WITH GOLD. THEIR HOOKS *shall be* GOLD, UPON FOUR SOCKETS OF SILVER.”

The veil would be carried by four pillars of acacia wood, overlaid with gold sitting upon sockets of silver. The hooks that held the veil would also be made of gold.

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v.33 “AND YOU SHALL HANG THE VEIL FROM THE CLASPS. THEN YOU SHALL BRING THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY IN THERE, BEHIND THE VEIL. THE VEIL SHALL BE A DIVIDER FOR YOU BETWEEN THE HOLY *place* AND THE MOST HOLY.”

As we remember the mercy seat on the ark was the place where God came to meet with Moses and the High Priest of Israel. So the ark, here called the Ark of the Testimony, was to be kept behind the veil. The veil was to be the divider between God who cannot even look upon sin and sinful man. Man, the High Priest, was allowed enter once each year on the day of atonement. Christ, likewise, entered into the veil of death once for all time for you and I as an offering for the sins of men.

Hebrews 10:19-20 “THEREFORE, BRETHREN, HAVING BOLDNESS TO ENTER THE HOLIEST BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS, BY A NEW AND LIVING WAY WHICH HE CONSECRATED FOR US, THROUGH THE VEIL, THAT IS, HIS FLESH,”

Hebrews 9:24 “FOR CHRIST HAS NOT ENTERED THE HOLY PLACES MADE WITH HANDS, *which are* COPIES OF THE TRUE, BUT INTO HEAVEN ITSELF, NOW TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US;”

v.34-35 “YOU SHALL PUT THE MERCY SEAT UPON THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY IN THE MOST HOLY. YOU SHALL SET THE TABLE OUTSIDE THE VEIL, AND THE LAMPSTAND ACROSS FROM THE TABLE ON THE SIDE OF THE TABERNACLE TOWARD THE SOUTH; AND YOU SHALL PUT THE TABLE ON THE NORTH SIDE.

The ark and mercy seat are separate pieces and the mercy seat sat on top of the ark. So the ark with the mercy seat was to go inside the veil and then the showbread table outside on the north side of the tabernacle and the candlestick or lampstand outside the veil on the south side of the tabernacle. Both the table of showbread and the lampstand or candlestick were outside of the Holiest of Holys were God dwelt and in the Holy Place that the priests could enter to perform their duties.

v.36-37 “YOU SHALL MAKE A SCREEN FOR THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE, *woven of* BLUE, PURPLE, AND SCARLET *thread*, AND FINE WOVEN LINEN, MADE BY A WEAVER. AND YOU SHALL MAKE FOR THE SCREEN FIVE PILLARS OF ACACIA *wood*, AND OVERLAY THEM WITH GOLD; THEIR HOOKS *shall be* GOLD, AND YOU SHALL CAST FIVE SOCKETS OF BRONZE FOR THEM.”

The door of the tabernacle, that area that separated the Holy Place from the courtyard, was to be made of the same materials with the same royal colors and designs as the interior curtain and the veil. It was to be hung on five pillars made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold and set in five sockets of bronze.

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When we looked at verse one we noted that the design of the cherubim was to be woven into the fabric. Taking our cue from the wording of the NKJV which says that they would be woven into the fabric. The ASV says they must be the "WORK OF SKILLED TRADESMEN" and the KJV they shall be "CUNNING WORK". However, when we get to verse 36 the NKJV says that the curtains are to be the work of "A WEAVER". The KJV says they are to be "WROUGHT WITH NEEDLEWORK" and the ASV says that they "ARE TO BE THE WORK OF AN EMBROIDERER."

So were the cherubim woven in the fabric or embroidery work? The translators have left us an interesting question that I don't think we can answer. It is not of any great significance but it is something that an unbeliever could challenge as a contradiction or discrepancy in the scripture.