

February 25, 2018 - Ex. 26:1-30 - Tabernacle Boards and Coverings
Torah Reading: Exodus 26:1-30 - Tabernacle Boards and Coverings
Psalm 60
Haftarah: Isaiah 66:1-10

The description of the Tabernacle begins from the inside - starting with the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat where God will reside and commune with Israel - and then proceeds outward.

Our approach to God, in contrast, begins outside, first with a sin offering to even get in the door, then after entering the courtyard, with sweet savor offerings, burnt offerings and peace offerings, during which we can commune with God. And on one day a year, the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies on behalf of all Israel to sprinkle sacrificial blood toward the mercy seat.

The previous chapter described the Ark and the furnishings of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. This chapter describes the coverings that constitute the tent itself and its coverings, the veil and the entryway to the Tabernacle and the boards, pillars and sockets that make up the Tabernacle walls.

NOTE: Many of the insights in this study are taken from a book on the Tabernacle called "The Law Prophesied" by R. H. Mount Jr. Mount built one of the first modern traveling replicas of the Tabernacle. He brought it to a Bible study that my parents attended in 1964 when I was 14. Mount's whole book on the Tabernacle can be read here: <http://thewildernesstabernacleofwitness.com/bookthelawprophesied.html>

Hidden within the details of the Tabernacle is everything we need to know about the Messiah and His atoning blood. Our self-seeking flesh is always opposed to a grace that doesn't need our self-effort.

Interesting fact: The enemies of God hate the Tabernacle and the story it tells:

Revelation 13:6 - And he (the Beast) opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, **and his tabernacle**, and them that dwell in heaven.

It's a Tent (Exodus 26:1-6)

Exodus 26:1 - "The tabernacle itself you are to make with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet; you are to make them with cherubim that are the work of an artistic designer."

"The Tabernacle" is equivalent to these 10 curtains of linen, colored white, blue, purple and scarlet.

The Tabernacle is called the "tent of meeting"

Exodus 29:43-44 - "I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God."

tent = *'ohel* - "a nomad's tent" is the first definition listed for this Hebrew word. The same word is used to describe the Patriarchs pitching their tents during their travels in Genesis.

Historically, Bedouin tents have consisted of 10 or more pieces of goat's hair material sewn together, having a pitched roof to shed rain (there is rainfall in the Sinai during the winter months). Its loosely woven material lets air come in and the smoke out, so the tent is pleasant in summer; however, when it rains, the fibers get swollen and the tent becomes waterproof. Bedouins usually have nine poles, three on each side and three in the middle of the tent, but the number can vary - sometimes just two in the middle.

Tent poles, rope ties, and a pitched roof are not mentioned in the Torah text. They are simply implied by the nature of a "tent."

The Tabernacle Itself

Two sets of five curtains each are to be sewn together, then the two sections are joined by connecting 50 loops on on the edge of each section with clasps.

"and it shall be one tabernacle." (verse 6) i.e. the two sections will both be considered as one unit called "the Tabernacle."

Three Additional Coverings (Exodus 26:7-14)

Over the linen Tabernacle, three more coverings are to be made: a goat's hair covering, a covering of rams skins dyed red, and a final covering of goat skins dyed blue. Each one slightly larger and overlapping the previous one.

No dimensions are given for the last two coverings. Josephus indicates some sections reached to the ground. These would have provided the sleeping quarters for priests and Levites, and where young Samuel slept.

What do these coverings represent?

The many colored Tabernacle recalls the rainbow sign of Noah:

Genesis 9:16 - "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

The rainbow even appears with God in Heaven:

Ezekiel 1:28 - "As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking"

Revelation 4:3 - "The One seated there looked like jasper and carnelian, and a rainbow gleaming like an emerald encircled the throne. "

It also is like Joseph's "coat of many colors."

But the colors themselves contain deep meaning.

Symbolic Colors

WHITE - The white linen is the righteousness of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:21 - "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

Revelation 19:8 - "For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. She was given clothing of fine linen, linen bright and pure. For the fine linen she wears is the righteousness of the saints."

Jesus displayed this righteousness on the Mount of Transfiguration, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (**Matthew 17:2**).

Compare **Daniel 7:9** - "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." (also **Revelation 1:14**)

The Mishna (Yoma 4:2), says a crimson thread tied to the altar would turn white when the scapegoat for 'Azazel reached its destination on Yom Kippur. (It also says this ceased 40 years before the destruction of the Temple - which would be at the time of Jesus' crucifixion)

PURPLE - Associated with royalty because it was so difficult and expensive to make. The purple dye was made from the Bolinus brandaris sea snail, and extracting this dye involved tens of thousands of snails and substantial labor. The color did not easily fade, but instead became brighter with weathering and sunlight.

Jesus was rejected as Israel's King, but was forced to wear this color of royalty before his crucifixion:

John 19:5 - "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe."

John 19:14 - "Behold your King!"

Altar as Christ's Body on the Cross

A purple cloth was used to cover the altar before it was moved.

Numbers 4:13 - "And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon:"

Hebrews 13:10 - "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century and spiritual father of St. Augustine, took the image of Christ-as-altar for granted in his treatise *De Sacramentis*, where he writes (without much explanation) that "the altar is a type [i.e. sign] of the body [of Christ]" (Book IV, 7) and then again almost as an aside, "for what is the altar but the type of the body of Christ?" (Book V, 7)

RED/SCARLET

The goat's hair covering - probably brown or black (like the Bedouin "tents of Kedar") represented humanity's sin, and calls to mind the scapegoat at Yom Kippur. It was placed directly on top of the multi-colored Tabernacle tent.

Isaiah 53:6 - "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

But then the rams skins dyed red completely covered over the goats hair tent of sin. Red standing for Christ's blood shed on the cross, which completely covers our sin. No dimensions are given for this covering, because there is no limit to His saving grace.

Hebrews 8:12 - "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

This picture was acted out every time the Tabernacle was erected.

Red represents sin itself, the blood shed to atone for sin, and the blood shed through God's wrath against sinners at the Last Day.

Isaiah 1:18 - "...Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Jesus will also return in judgment as "He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of

God Almighty" at the end of time:

Revelation 19:13 - "He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is The Word of God."

This is foreshadowed in the blessing to Judah:

Genesis 49:8-12 - "He washes his garment in wine; His robe in the blood of grapes."

As stated above, the Mishna (Yoma 4:2), says a crimson thread tied to the altar would turn white when the scapegoat for 'Azazel reached its destination on Yom Kippur. Crimson threads appear in a number of significant places- in the birth of Zerah and Perez, and the story of Rahab. It's also used in the cleansing rituals for leprosy.

BLUE - The Blue color represented the Heavens, from which He came to become one of us.

This blue was a specific kind, and like purple was also made from a related sea snail, probably the Hexaplex trunculus. The actual identity of the source of the dye was lost after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. (See a discussion here: <https://buff.ly/2CDQ9HE>)

Philippians 2:8 - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Blue was also the color of the Tribe of Judah. These tribal colors and designs were used in a couple's wedding ceremony, and kept to be incorporated into the traditional swaddling bands for a firstborn son. As a newborn, Jesus was probably swaddled in the color blue.

Blue and White were the royal colors of Judah.

Esther 8:15 - "When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration."

Although Mordecai is described as a Benjamite, that tribe had effectively been incorporated into Judah. Around 930 B.C., the Tribe of Benjamin joined the Tribe of Judah as a junior partner in the Kingdom of Judah, or Southern Kingdom. When the captivity ended, the official distinction between Benjamin and Judah was lost in favor of a common identity as Israel. (Though Paul still describes himself as "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." (**Philippians 3:4**))

Jesus ascended, returning to Heaven to confirm his work:

Hebrews 10:12-14 - "He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are

sanctified"

In the Talmud (Menahoth 43b): "The tekheleth [blue thread] resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the heavens, and the heavens resemble God's Throne of Glory."

The High Priest wears a robe entirely of blue. The tekheleth/blue tassels (tzitzith) worn in the traditional Jewish prayer shawl allow each Israelite to remember that he is part of a "nation of priests" (**Exodus 19:6**).

In the Shema:

Numbers 15:38 - "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue"

When the Tabernacle is disassembled for travel, they were to cover the Lampstand, the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense and the Brazen Altar with blue cloth, and then to cover that with a covering of "badger's skins," actually goats' skins dyed blue. (**Numbers 4**)

The Boards, Sockets and Bars of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:15-29)

The Boards

Each of the shittim wood boards had two pegs or "tenons" that snapped into silver sockets that acted as their base and foundation (like Legos). The wall of boards was held steady by a series of bars passing through u-shaped rings projecting from the boards.

There are 48 boards in the Tabernacle. These correspond to the 48 cities given to the tribe of Levi in the Promised Land.

The six Levitical cities of refuge correspond to the six boards mentioned that form the back wall of the Holy of Holies.

Exodus 26:22 - "And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards."

Those running for refuge into one of those cities must remain until the death of the High Priest. Believers now have access to boldly enter the throne of grace into the Holy of Holies to the asylum of those six boards, and our High Priest lives forever.

Hebrews 7:24-25 - "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The Veil - His Flesh

The veil in the Tabernacle was not the thick veil of Herod's Temple. It was thin like the other hangings and coverings. Embroidery of Cherubim decorated its surface.

The only way a guilty sinner could pass to the other side of the Veil into the Holy of Holies and live was by way of the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice, and that was only the High Priest on one day a year.

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (**Hebrews 9:11-12**)

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (**Hebrews 10:10-14**).

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (**Hebrews 10:19-20**)

Christ's flesh was torn and at the same moment the veil of the Temple was torn top to bottom. (**Luke 23:45**)

Dimensions of the Holy of Holies

No length dimensions are given. The reason is that when the Tabernacle was taken down for travel, the priests would take the Veil, and without viewing the Ark, would walk forward and cover it. In effect, the Holy of Holies was reduced to just the size of the Ark itself. (**Numbers 4:5**)

Pillars

The Veil that shielded the Holy of Holies was to hang from four pillars of shittim wood, overlaid with gold and resting on sockets of silver.

Another veil was serve as the entrance into the Tabernacle, but drawn up so as not to impede the people's view into the Holy Place. It was to hang from five pillars similar to the first four, but sitting on sockets of brass. Brass represents judgment, and these pillars were facing the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard, also of brass.

The Pillars guarded the entry to both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Other pillars

supported the entryway into the court and supported the linen hangings that served as a wall around the whole courtyard.

The pillars are pictures of the apostolic office, offering entry but guarding the purity of the doctrine of grace:

Galatians 2:9 - "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

In fact, all believers are represented as pillars and boards in God's Holy Place:

Revelation 3:12 - "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple (*naos* - holy place) of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

Ephesians 2:20-22 - "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple (*naos* - holy place) in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Silver = Redemption by Christ's Blood

Every board and pillar, except the five pillars at the Tabernacle entrance, rested on sockets of silver.

The silver represented redemption, because the silver was obtained from the redemption money required of every firstborn after the blood of the lamb caused the Death Angel to Passover, and later from every Israelite above the age of 20.

Exodus 30:12-16 - "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD ... half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. ... And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls."

Exodus 38:25, 27 - "And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary ... And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket."

The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were literally separated from the earth by silver, a picture of Christ's blood holding up the board and pillars.

The silver served as the Tabernacle's foundation:

1 Corinthians 3:11 - "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is

Jesus Christ."

There is also a reference in **Numbers 31:50-54** of atonement by gold taken from the five Midianite kings. It was also placed in the Tabernacle as a memorial.

Thus in **1 Peter 1:18-19** - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"