

Bible Study # 45 Exodus 26.15–37 03–30–2021

Having described the curtains, the text now sets out the framework of wood that was required on which the various coverings could be placed. The traditional rendering of the Hebrew word for ‘frames’ is ‘boards’, but it is much better to understand them as consisting of two longer pieces of wood with cross-bars.

This would have produced a ladder-like construction over which the various coverings could be stretched. They were to be constructed of acacia wood, and were to be stood upright. Each frame was ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Twenty such frames were needed for both the south and the north sides, this being the first indication of the orientation of the Tent of Meeting.

The fact that forty silver bases were to be provided, with two bases for each frame (v. 19), suggests that the ladder-like picture of the frames is correct. Six frames were needed for the western end, plus two frames for the corners, possibly for additional support. Since there was only one single ring at the top this may mean that the frame was narrower there than at the bottom.

Again, gold was to be used as overlay on the frames and crossbars, as were the rings to hold the crossbars. All these components of the Tent of Meeting must have been of considerable weight, and the Merarite clan of Levites was allotted the task of transporting them (Num. 3:36–37; 4:29–32).

This verse confirms the instruction already given in 25:9: ‘Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you’ (see also v. 40). However, the terminology differs in that instead of ‘the pattern’ Moses was told to build it according to ‘the specification’ (or ‘plan’) shown him on the mountain. The word normally means ‘a judgment’ or a ‘legal decision’. However, it is used in 1 Kings 6:38 in noting that the temple in Jerusalem was built according to its ‘specification’ or ‘plan’, and this meaning fits well here.

This statement is a re-iteration of the command to build just as was revealed on the mountain, and the New Testament statements confirm that the Tent of Testimony was built according to a divinely given pattern (Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5).

To separate between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place a veil was placed between them. The purpose of the veil was to create a marked division between the two (v. 33), for only the high priest could penetrate the veil and appear in the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:1–7). It was composed of ‘blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen’, though no indication is given of the significance of the colors.

The same instruction as was given concerning the curtains of the tent (26:1) is repeated, with skilled craftsmen to incorporate cherubim worked into it. Once the veil was in position, hanging on four posts of acacia wood, the ark was to be placed in the Most Holy Place, with the atonement cover on it (cf. 25:17–22).

The table was then to be put on the north side of the Holy Place and the lampstand opposite on the south side. The innermost sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, had no artificial light (cf. Solomon’s reference in relation to the temple, 1 Kings 8:12), but later was filled with the light of God’s presence (40:34–38).

The final instruction regarding the Holy Place concerned the curtain that was placed at the entrance. Only the priests entered in beyond it: ‘the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry’ (Heb. 9:6). It is designated by a different Hebrew word than the veil at the entrance to the Most Holy Place.

Like the veil, this curtain was also of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, but no cherubim were worked on it. Instead of silver bases as with the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, for this curtain bronze bases were sufficient.

This was another expression of the principle that the most special metals (gold and silver) were used in connection with the Most Holy Place, and then progressively moving outward from it the less precious ones.

We will continue our study with Exodus 27:1–8.