

# Exodus 26:7-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-26/exodus-267-14/>

*In order to protect the curtains of the tabernacle, the LORD commands that another set of curtains be made. These curtains were to be made of more weather-resistant materials such as animal skins and furs.*

The curtains were precious because they symbolized the LORD and His presence, and thus they needed to be preserved from the elements such as storms and the desert sun. To do this, another layer of curtains needed to be made in order to cover the first curtains. The details of these other curtains are as follows:

They were to *make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle*. The *goats' hair* would have been black and was used as a weather-resistant external covering. Visitors can travel to this same area and see people who still dwell in black goat hair tents just like this. There were to be *eleven curtains in all*. The dimensions of the curtains were *thirty cubits* (45 feet or 13 meters) long and *four cubits* (6 feet or 1.8 meters) wide (v. 8), and all *eleven curtains shall have the same measurements*. These were longer than the first curtains, since the external structure would be larger, and would touch the ground, providing total protection of the inner curtains and the items inside the tabernacle.

The craftsmen were to *join five curtains by themselves and the other six curtains by themselves*. They were also instructed to *double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent*.

There were to be *fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the first set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set*. Once again, these loops were used to connect the curtains together.

They were to join these curtains with *fifty clasps of bronze*, not gold like the clasps which joined the curtains of blue, purple, and scarlet (v. 6). The craftsmen were to *put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together so that it will be a unit*. This is similar to the joining used for the inner curtains. It would be secure as well as portable.

Because these curtains were bigger than the wool & linen ones, there would be an overlap. Verses 12 – 13 describe how to manage it. Here, *the overlapping part that is left over in the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that is left over, shall lap over the back of the tabernacle. The cubit on one side and the cubit on the other, of what is left over in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall lap over the sides of the tabernacle on one side and on the other, to cover it*. This overlapping strategy gave added protection to the tabernacle and its contents.

Finally, there were to be two outer coverings over the tabernacle. The first one was to be made of *rams' skins dyed red*. The other outer covering was to be made of *porpoise skins above*. Some believe that the translation *porpoise* (Heb. “takhsh”) is not correct. The translation *porpoise* is

based on a derivation from an Arabic word with a similar root. Since a *porpoise* would have been considered unclean, this seems unlikely. Therefore a better translation would simply be “leather” (as it is in the NIV, NET, and NRSV).

No dimensions are specified for the *rams’ skins dyed red*, so it is unknown the extent to which they covered the tabernacle. A twelfth century rabbi who is one of the most relied upon commentators in Jewish thought, who is generally known by the acronym “Rashi,” says of the *rams’ skins dyed red* and the *porpoise* “These two hides covered only the roof of the tabernacle and did not extend into the thickness of the side walls.” Rashi also stated that the nature of the *porpoise* is unknown, and might have been an animal that no longer dwells in the area. He further states it was unknown if these leathers were sewn together used to form one covering or whether there were two layers of “roofing.”

Some have seen these outer coverings as symbolizing the separation of the sinful world from the holy presence of the LORD. The goat skins represented the daily sacrifice of goats (Numbers 28:15) and the “scapegoat” that symbolized the removal of the sins of the people. The *rams’ skins* that were *dyed red* brought to mind the cost of consecration to a holy priesthood.

Given the dimensions of the curtains, the tabernacle was probably about 45 feet (13 meters) long, 15 feet (4.5 meters) wide, and 15 feet (4.5 meters) tall. Inside, the Most Holy Place was a cube of 15 feet (4.5 meters), while the Holy Place was 30 feet (9 meters) long by 15 feet (4.5 meters) wide and 15 feet (4.5 meters) tall.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>7</sup>“Then you shall make curtains of goats’ *hair* for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains in all. <sup>8</sup> The length of each curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains shall have the same measurements. <sup>9</sup> You shall join five curtains by themselves and the *other* six curtains by themselves, and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent. <sup>10</sup> You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the *first* set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain *that is outermost in* the second set.**

**<sup>11</sup>“You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and you shall put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together so that it will be a unit. <sup>12</sup> The overlapping part that is left over in the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that is left over, shall lap over the back of the tabernacle. <sup>13</sup> The cubit on one side and the cubit on the other, of what is left over in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall lap over the sides of the tabernacle on one side and on the other, to cover it. <sup>14</sup> You shall make a covering for the tent of rams’ skins dyed red and a covering of porpoise skins above.**