

# The Ark of the Covenant

Scripture	Main Theme	Description/Notes
Exodus 25.10-22	The Ark of the Covenant	
Exodus 26.1-6	The Curtains of Blue, Linen and Scarlet	
Exodus 26.7-13	The Curtains of Goats Hair	
Exodus 26.14	The Coverings of Rams Skins and Badgers Skins	

## Exodus 25.10-22: The Ark of the Covenant

**Construction:** The Ark was 2.5 cubits long (1.1m, 3.75ft) and 1.5 cubits in breadth and height (0.7m, 2.25ft). It was made from shittim wood and overlaid within and without with gold. On the four corners were rings through which the staves were put to carry the Ark. The Mercy Seat was a slab of pure gold which formed the lid of the Ark. Beaten out of the same piece of gold were two cherubim, located on either side of the Mercy Seat with their wings outstretched towards each other.

**Contents:** The Ark contained the testimony (the Ten Commandments on the two tables of stone, Exodus 40.20) and at a later date the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded (Hebrews 9.4). These had been removed by 1 Kings 8.9.

**Location:** The Ark was located in the Holy of Holies. There was no light here but it was lit of the brilliance of the glory of God. The Ark formed the base of the throne of God for He dwelt between the cherubim (Psalm 99.1). Aaron was only allowed to enter this throne room once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) contrasting the privilege we have to approach unto God on a regular basis (Hebrews 10.19).

**Significance:** The pure gold of the Ark signifies the deity of the Lord Jesus; the incorruptible shittim wood, his sinless humanity. The Ark particularly pictures Christ as the Man in heaven. If it was particularly Christ on earth it would be gold overlaid with wood (deity veiled in humanity!).

The Ten Commandments were placed within the Ark. These tables contained God's righteous demands of man. However, man could not meet its demands resulting in the penalty of death (2 Corinthians 3.7). There was, however, one Man who did keep the Law (Psalm 1.2). He could be exposed to the full demands of the Law and yet not be subject to its penalty.

The manna signifies the Lord Jesus as the Bread of God come down from heaven (John 6.33). He is the food of His people and to feed on Him brings spiritual health essential for God's people. Aaron's rod which budded speaks of resurrection. From a dry, dead rod there came forth abundant life (Numbers 16)!

It is also to be noted that when the people journeyed the Ark was to be carried in the midst of the company (Numbers 10.11-28). Christ must ever find central place in the life and worship of God's people today. Occasionally the Ark went before the people (Numbers 10.33) signifying Christ as the One who leads and guides His people.

**Mercy Seat:** The Mercy Seat means 'covering'. It was the place where God and man met. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood, once on and seven times before the Mercy Seat (Leviticus 16). It is important to note that the Mercy Seat was not where propitiation was made; that was on the Altar where the



sacrifice was slain. The Mercy Seat is the place where the abiding value of the shed blood was placed before the very eye of God and was left as a witness that a sacrifice had been made and divine claims had been met.

Christ is identified as the Mercy Seat in Romans 3.25. He is the One who has made propitiation. On this basis God is able to forgive sins and declare righteous the unrighteous. As the Mercy Seat rested upon the Ark, so it speaks of God resting in and finding complete satisfaction in the shed blood of His Son (Hebrews 9.12).

*Romans 3.25: Whom God hath set forth to be a mercy seat through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*

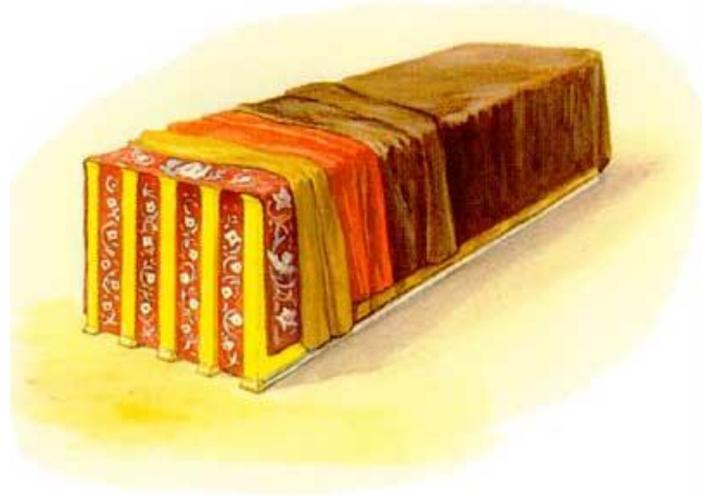
#### Exodus 26.1-14: The Coverings of the Holy Place

The Tabernacle had two curtains and two coverings. There were curtains of fine twined linen (vv.1-6), curtains of goats' hair (vv.7-13), a covering of rams' skins dyed red (v.14) and a covering of badgers' skins (v.14).

#### **Badgers' Skins**

The curtain of badgers' (or even dolphins') skins was black or dark brown. It was the outer skin of the Tabernacle and therefore needed to be impervious. It had no ornamentation or attraction.

*Isaiah 53.2: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*



The impervious skins indicate separation from the things of the world. *Hebrews 7.26: For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*

#### **Curtains of Fine Twined Linen**

On the inside were ten curtains of fine twined white linen upon which were embroidered cherubims with threads of blue, purple and scarlet. All this speaks of Christ. Cherubim declare and demonstrate the righteousness of God (Genesis 3.24) as has Christ (Romans 3.25). The fine, white linen speaks of His righteousness (Revelation 19.8), the blue speaks of the Lord from heaven, the purple His regal dignity and the red His precious blood (amongst other things).

The outside might appear dull, but certainly not the inside!! The onlooker saw nothing of the beauty of the inside. Likewise, an appreciation of Christ is only possible for those who enter into the Holy Place as priests.

#### **Curtains of Goats' Hair**

The goats' hair curtain (no skin) woven together would be a dark, smooth cashmere. Garments of goats' skin were the dress of the prophet or man of God (Hebrews 11.37). This speaks of Christ as the Prophet of God. There was no roughness about Him, just a fineness of character and words. Note that this set of curtains (along with the rams' skins) was hidden from sight. There is a sense in which the faithfulness of this Prophet and his character was only fully seen and appreciated by God.

#### **Rams' Skins Dyed Red**

The rams' skins were dyed red. The ram speaks of consecration ('fill the hand') and all the priests had to be consecrated before they could serve (Exodus 28.3).

*Leviticus 8.23: And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.*

During this ceremony the blood of the ram of consecration was placed upon the right ear, thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons. This speaks of the total devotion of the priests to the work of God. He obeyed God's will and word (ear); he fully devoted himself to God's service (hand) and sought to demonstrate the character of God in his walk (toe). How true is all this of Christ!

*Isaiah 50.5: The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*

*John 4.34: Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

Note again that this curtain was hidden. This true devotion and consecration was only fully seen and appreciated by God Himself.

*"Empty your hands of whatever you have taken up from the world, and then hold up these emptied hands to God. And as surely as God is holy, as surely as He is loving, as surely as He is gracious, He will fill your, even your, hands with Christ."*

**Henry W Frost**