
THE DAY OF ATONEMENT – PT. 1

Leviticus 16:1–19



“During the course of the year it was difficult for people to account for every defilement and every sin. Regular worship left too many things unresolved. And so here was a chance to have a general atonement for people, priests, and places of worship.”

ALLEN P. ROSS, COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS

“No matter what had happened during the year, on this day all their sins were carried away, all the barring defilements were purged, and they were free to enter the sanctuary and commune with the Lord.”

ALLEN P. ROSS, COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS

WHY IS LEVITICUS 16 IMPORTANT?

The annual Day of Atonement *temporarily* dealt with the nation of Israel's sins and pointed forward to the *permanent* dealing of sins in the one-time atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

2 PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS FROM LEVITICUS 16

- The Day of Atonement was to happen every year with no established end date (Lev. 16:34). And the sacrifices on this day provided a temporary provision for the nation's sins.
- Christ's sacrificial death happened once (Heb. 10:12). And His sacrifice provided the permanent, eternal removal of the sins for all who believe in Him (Heb. 10:17; Jer. 31:34).

MAJOR OUTLINE FOR LEVITICUS

- I. The Institution of the Sacrificial System (1–7)
- II. The Ordination of the Priesthood (8–10)
- III. The Prescriptions for Cleanliness/Purity (11–15)
- IV. The Instructions for the Day of Atonement (16)
- V. The Commands for Holy Living (17–27)

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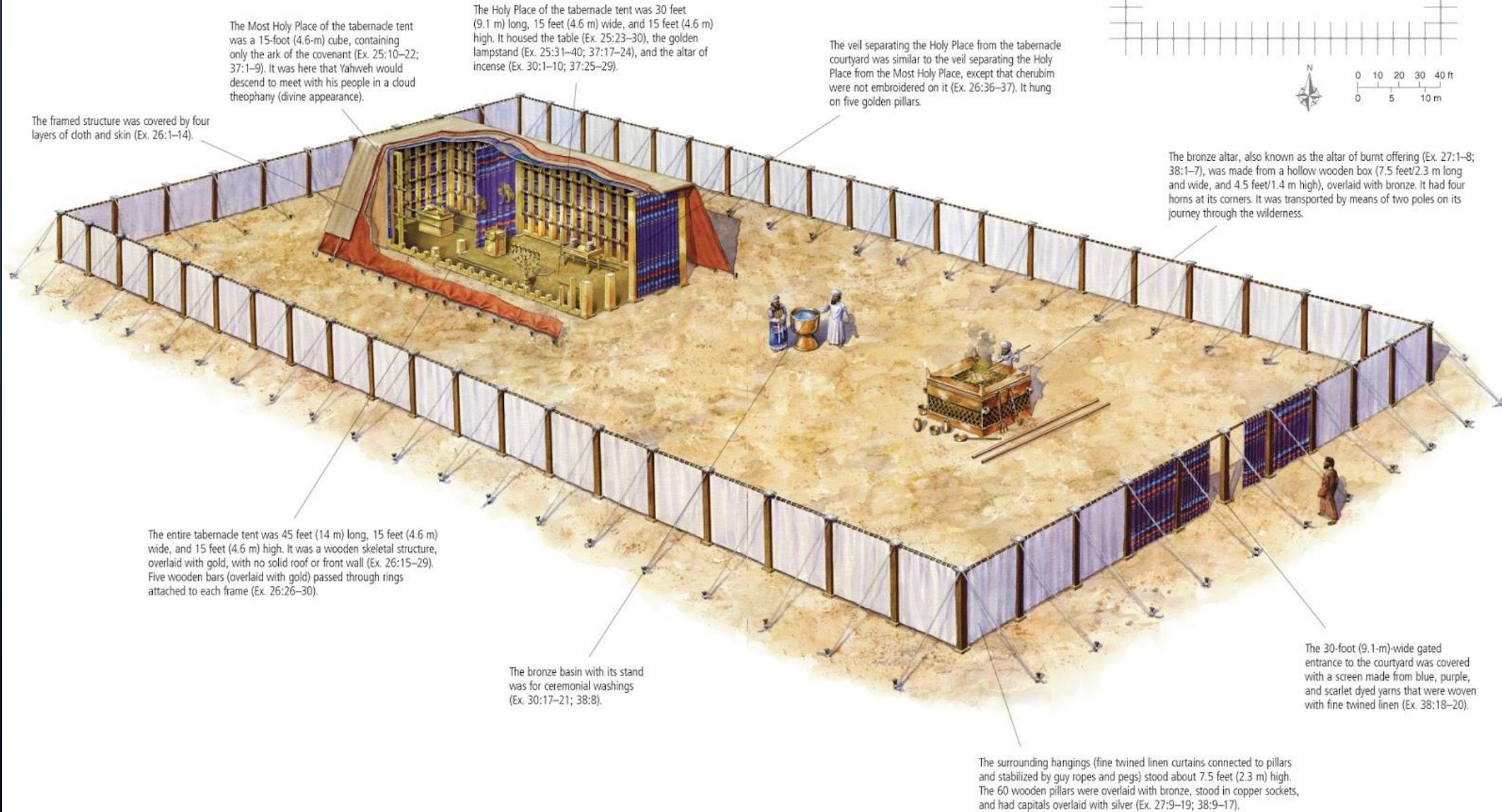
LEVITICUS 16:1–19

- I. An Explicit Warning: Why the People Can't Enter the Holy of Holies (1–2)
- II. The General Instructions: How the High Priest Enters the Holy of Holies (3–10)

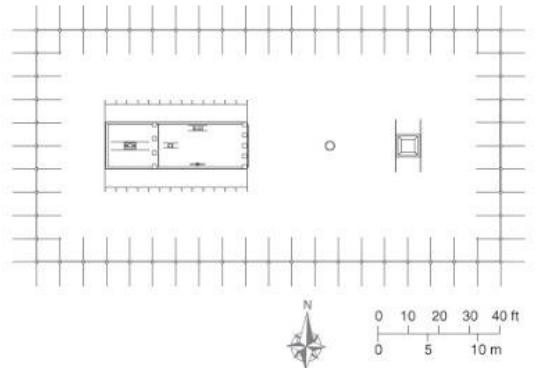


THE TABERNACLE AND COURT

The tabernacle was a portable temple—a “tent of meeting”—within a movable courtyard (Exodus 25:31; 35:40). It was constructed after the pattern that Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was assembled in the desert as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. For an enlargement of the tent itself, see p. 186. The tabernacle courtyard was 150 feet (46 m) long and 75 feet (23 m) wide, totaling 11,250 square feet (1,045 square meters).



Tabernacle and Court Architectural Plan



The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1–14).

The table for the bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:23–30)

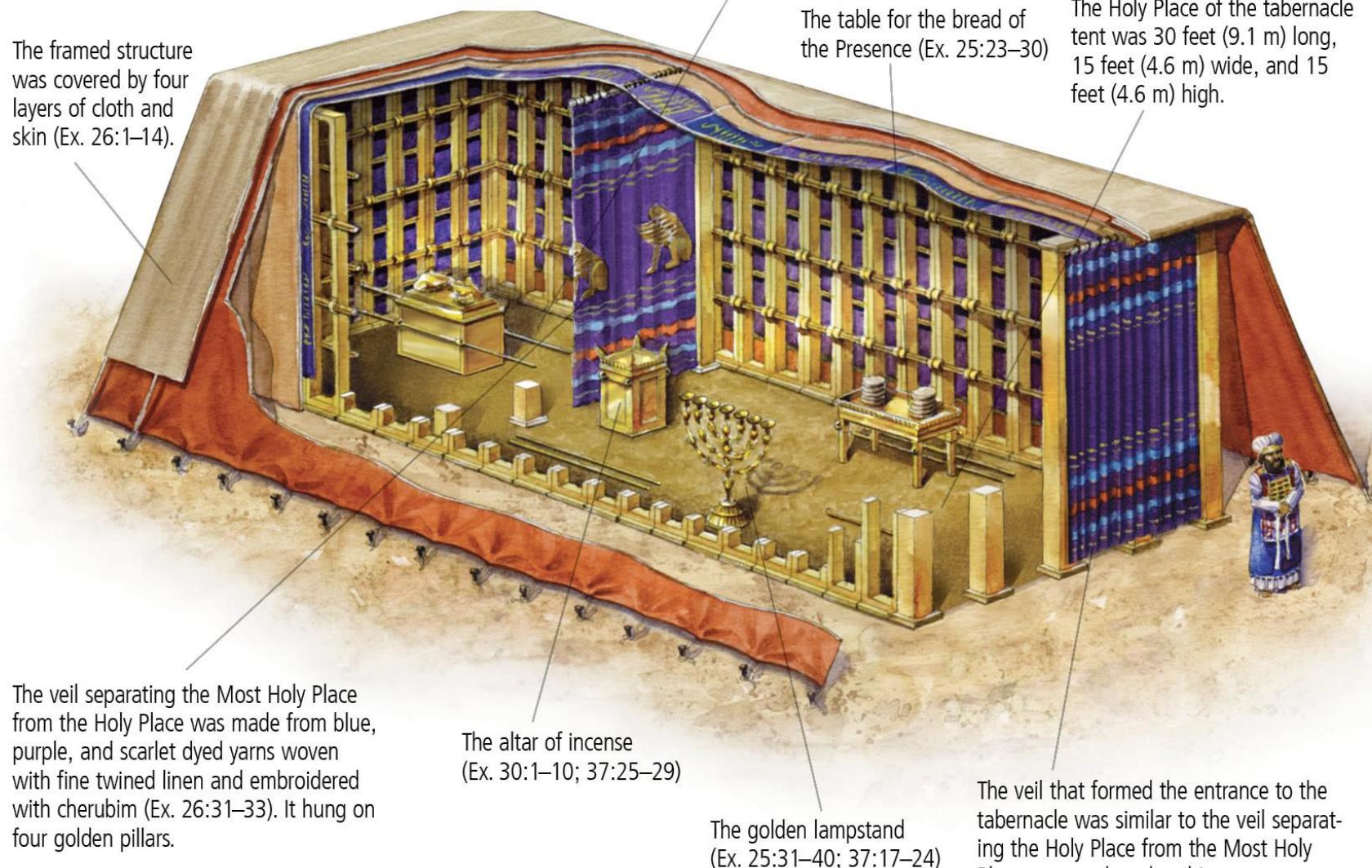
The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high.

The veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns woven with fine twined linen and embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31–33). It hung on four golden pillars.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1–10; 37:25–29)

The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24)

The veil that formed the entrance to the tabernacle was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it. It was suspended on five golden pillars (Ex. 26:36–37).



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- II. The General Instructions: How the High Priest Enters the Holy of Holies (3–10)
 - A. Gather the basic animals (3)
 - B. Collect the proper clothing (4a)
 - C. Take a needed bath (4b)
 - D. Gather the additional animals (5)
 - E. Make atonement for himself and his household (6)

“O God, I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee, I and my house. O God, forgive the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house, as it is written in the Law of thy servant Moses.”

JEWISH MISHNAH

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 - D. Gather the additional animals (5)
 - E. Make atonement for himself and his household (6)
 - F. Make atonement for the people (7–10)

“The releasing of the goat indicated that the sins of the Israelites had been removed never to visit them again.”

MARK ROOKER, COMMENTARY ON EXODUS

“The overall function of the goat remains clear: to make atonement on the Israelites’ behalf by bearing their sins far away.”

JAY SKLAR, COMMENTARY ON EXODUS

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- III. The Specific Instructions: How the High Priest Handles the Sacrifices (11–19)
 - A. Make atonement for himself and his family—sacrificial bull (11–14)
 - i. Sacrifice the bull (11)
 - ii. Prepare the incense (12–13)

“The purpose of the incense was either to conceal the atonement cover and thus protect the high priest, who would be standing close to the mercy seat (*kappôret*), or, alternatively, to keep the high priest from seeing God (Exod 24:15–18; 33:18–21; Lev 16:13).

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A. Make atonement for himself and his family—sacrificial bull (11–14)

i. Sacrifice the bull (11)

ii. Prepare the incense (12–13)

iii. Sprinkle blood on the mercy seat (14)

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 - B. Make atonement for the people—sacrificial goats (15)
 - C. Make atonement for the tabernacle—sacrificial bull *and* goat (16–19)

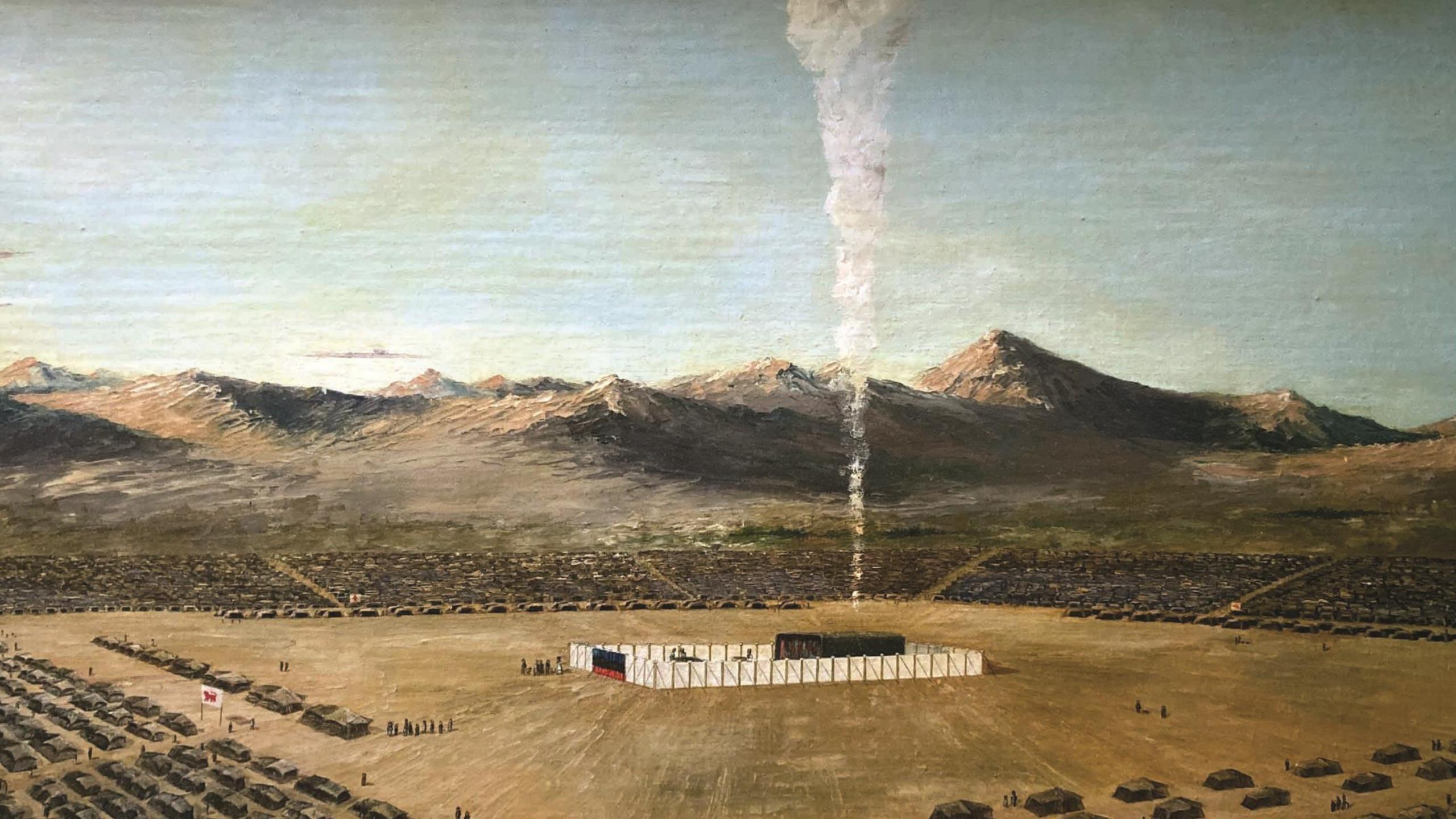
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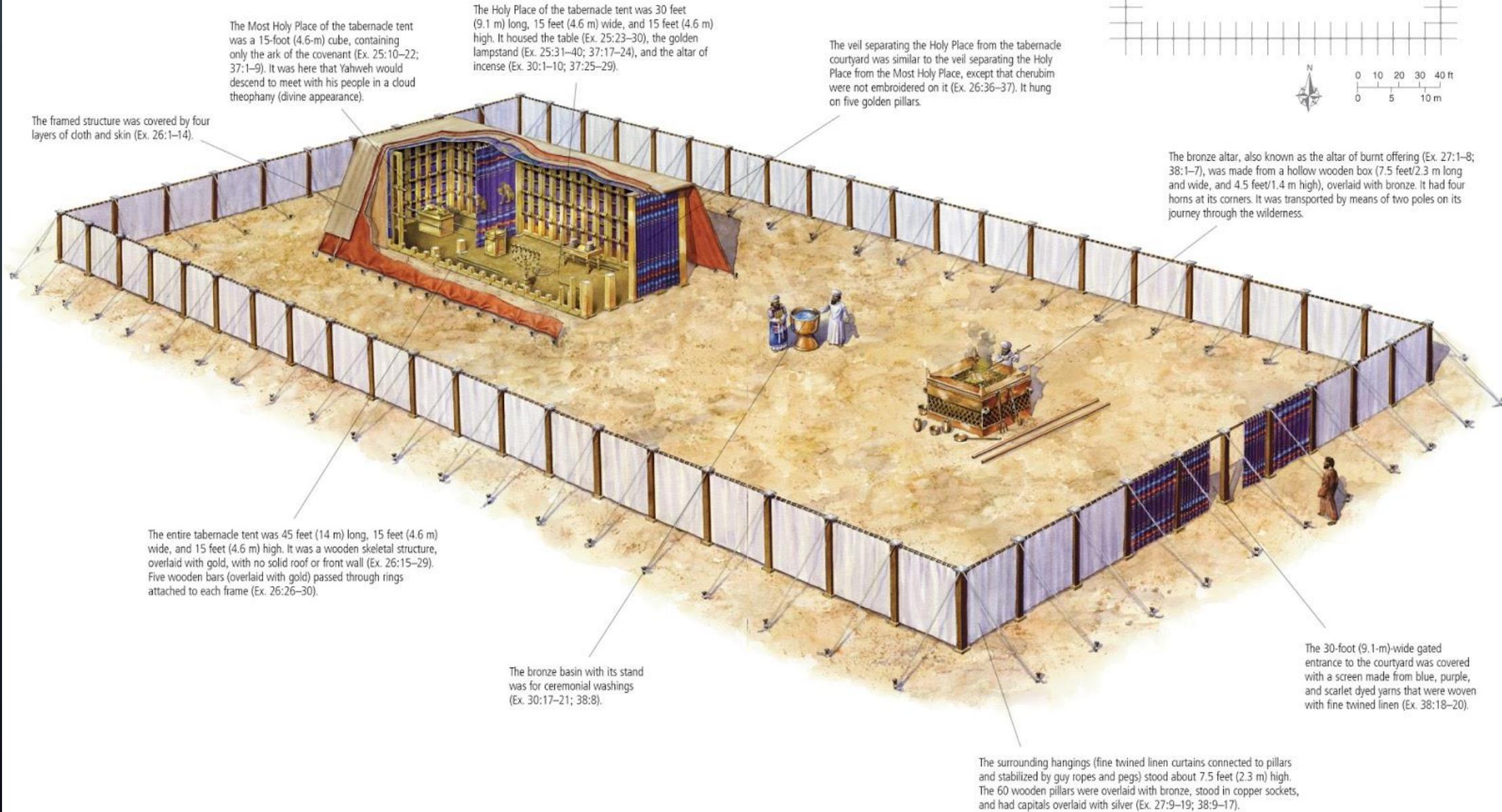
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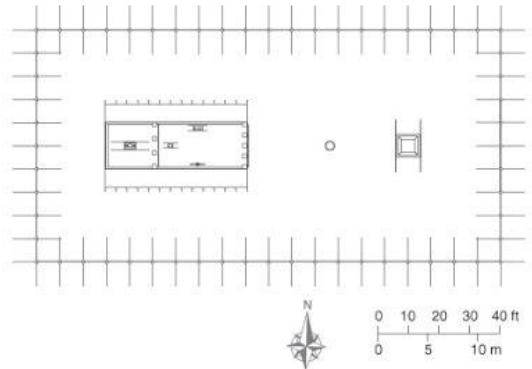


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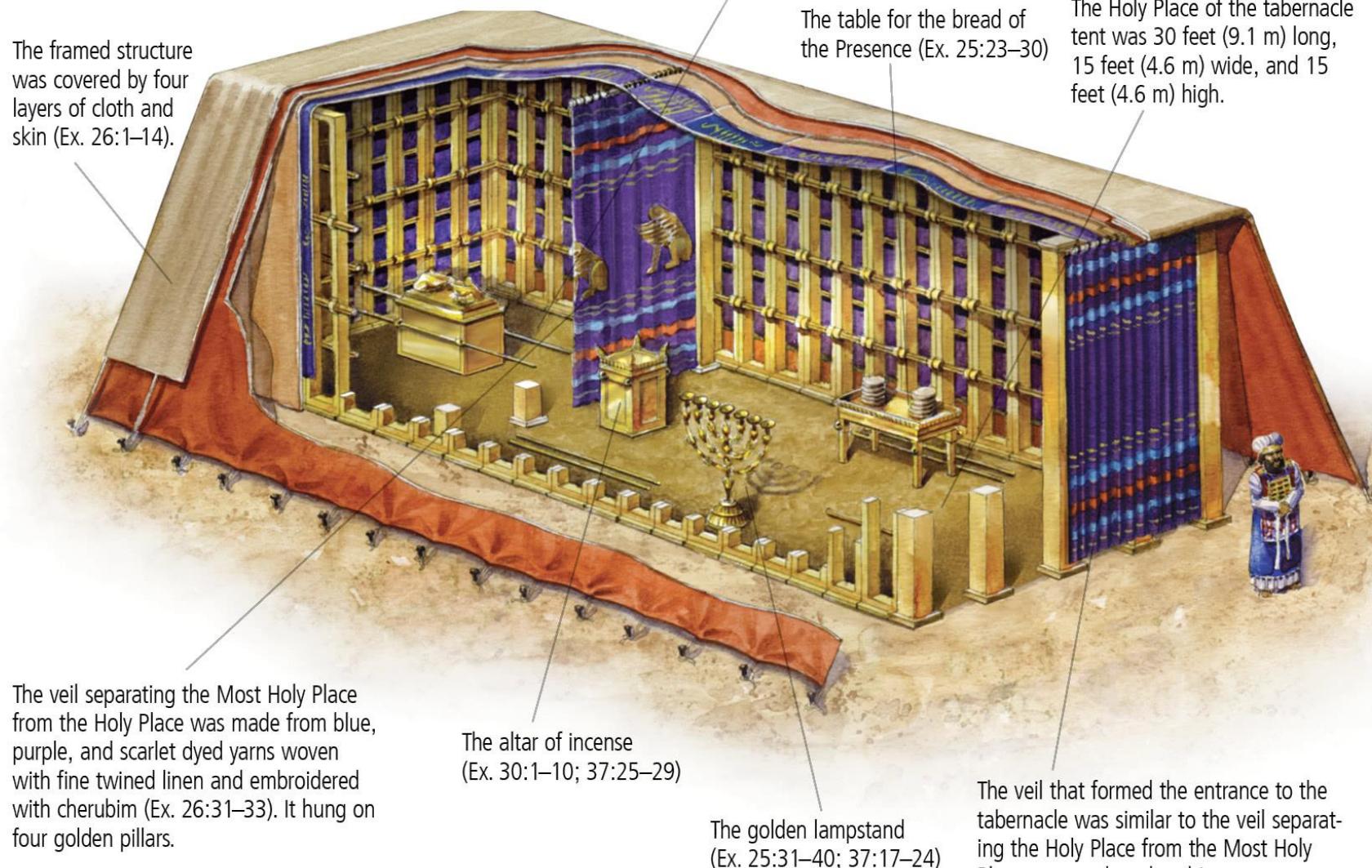
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