

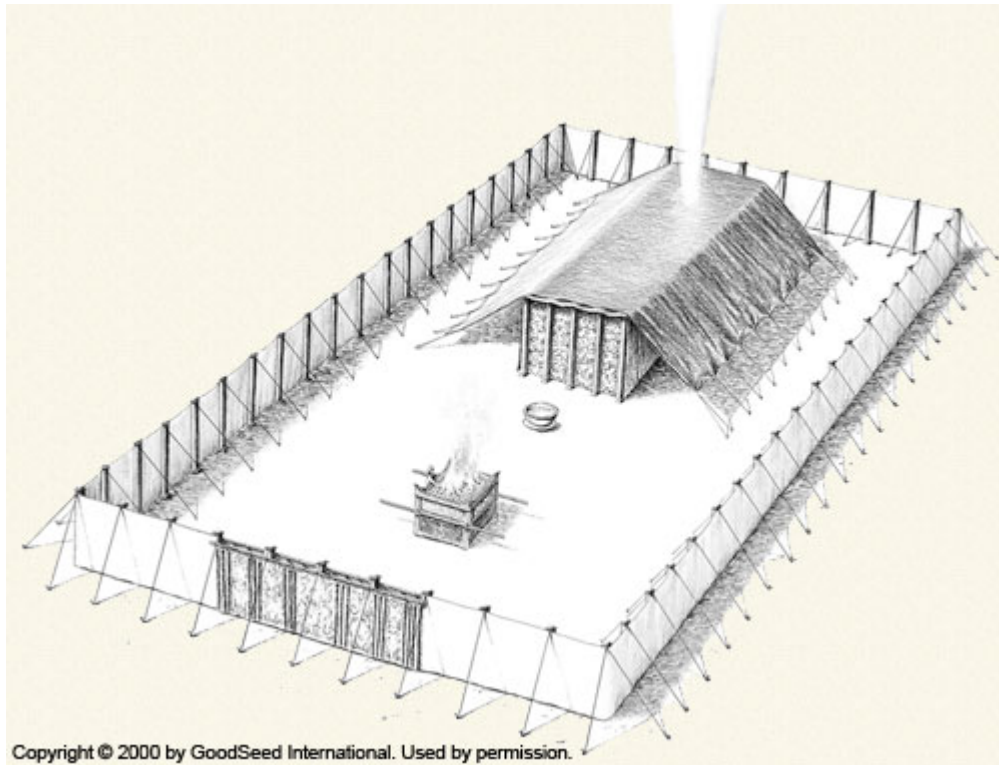
Lesson 2: The Basic Layout of the Tabernacle and the Gate

Read: Exodus 26:1-30, 27:9-19

To summarize this long passage, the tabernacle consisted of a tent-like structure (the tabernacle proper) covered by rug-like materials for a roof, and an external courtyard. The whole compound was surrounded by a high fence. The fence was made of linen hangings held by pillars.

The tent – the tabernacle proper – was divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The tent was made of acacia wood boards overlaid with gold and fitted together to form the walls (45 by 15 feet). On top, four layers of curtains acted as a roof to shield the tabernacle from sun and rain: The innermost layer was woven with fine linen and embroidered with figures of cherubim (angels), the second layer was made of goat's hair, the third layer was made of rams' skins dyed red, and the outermost layer was made of porpoise skins. The curtains were pinned to the ground with loops and clasps.

The whole compound (150 feet by 75 feet) was surrounded by a high fence (7 feet in height) with only one entry way (30 feet wide). The gate was located directly in the center of the outer court, always on the east end. It was covered by a curtain or screen made of finely twisted linen in blue, purple and scarlet.

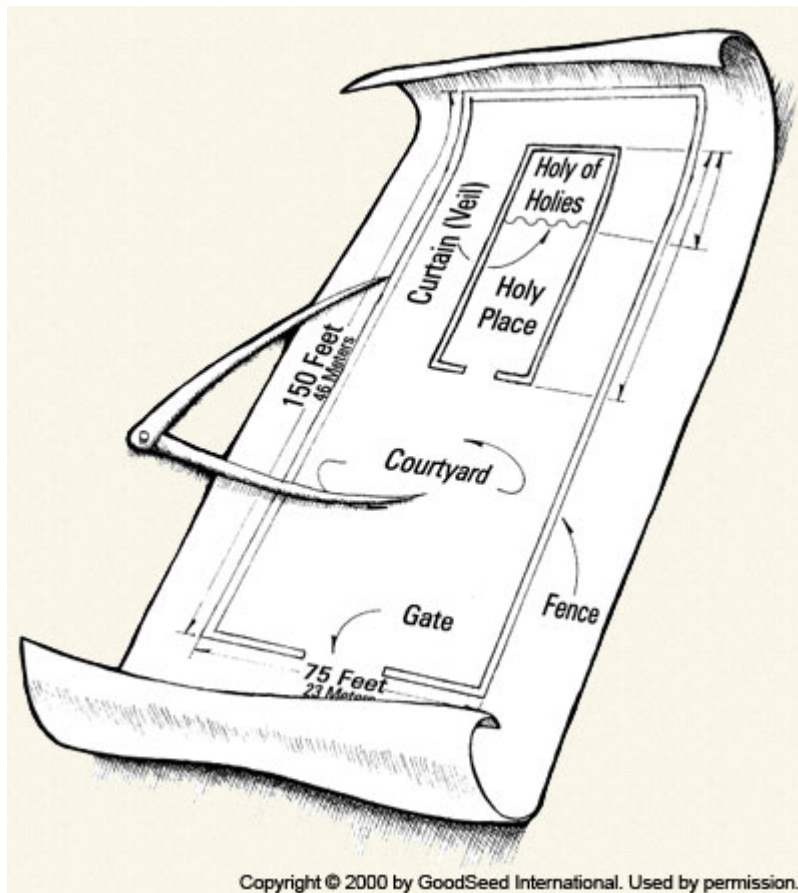


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Discussion:

1. Draw your own two-dimensional sketch of the tabernacle blueprint. Include in your sketch the courtyard, tabernacle proper, fence and gate.

Use this as a reference:



2. The Bible tells us that there is only one gate to enter into the tabernacle. What would be the significance of this to the people in Moses' time?

A person could not simply come from any direction into the tabernacle as he pleased — he had to enter through the one gate. Since the tabernacle courtyard was surrounded by a high fence, people could not go over it, let alone peer over it. They had to come to the gate and enter through it. This illustrated that for man to approach God, he had to come in God's prescribed way, and no other way.

3. What is the importance of the act of *entering* the gate?

The act of entering the gate is a choice that a person can make to come into God's presence. If someone does not enter, he is remaining outside the tabernacle. But by entering, he can find forgiveness of sin and fellowship with God.

4. What was the significance of the gate always being on the east? (Hint: Which direction does the sun rise from?)

When people entered the tabernacle, they were facing west — a direct opposition to the pagan sun worshippers of the day who always faced east (see Ezekiel 8:16-18 for an example of this form of idolatry).

5. Read John 10:9 and 14:6, two of Jesus' famous "I am" statements. How did the tabernacle gate point to Jesus Christ?

The gate is a representation of Christ as the one and only way through which one could enter into fellowship with God and worship Him. There is no other way. Jesus provided access to God through His redemptive work on the cross. To approach God, one must enter in through the only gate — put one's faith in Christ and no other thing.

6. The significance of the tabernacle's layout was not only in the fence and the gate, but also in the way the pieces of furniture were arranged. We will look at one of these components to begin with: The first thing that someone saw upon entering the gate was the brazen altar, where he was to present his animal sacrifice. What do you think was the implication of this arrangement to Israel?

God wanted to remind the Israelites that in order to be in fellowship with Him, the first thing they needed to do was to recognize their sinfulness and present a blood sacrifice to atone for their sins. The brazen altar served as an illustration of this. (More about this will be covered in the next lesson.)

Optional further reading: The Israelites camped around the tabernacle in a specific way. For more information on the layout of the camp, read Numbers 2. Draw a diagram of how the tribes were arranged around the tabernacle. The layout resembles a cross (or small letter "t"), with the tabernacle in the center. This signified God's dwelling always in the center of His people.