*Ministério Seara Ágape*
*Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

https://www.searaagape.com.br/estudoevangelicosobreotemplodeherodes.html
E-mail: msearaagape@gmail.com

# BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – EVANGELICAL STUDY ABOUT THE TEMPLE OF HEROD

Author: Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti – June 2026 / revised October 2026

In this study we will talk about the 2nd temple (Zerubbabel and Herod's).
Related topic: Temple of Solomon.
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## The Second Temple – Zerubbabel

Construction of Solomon's Temple began in 966 BC (the second month of the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 970–930 BC) and was completed in the eighth month of the eleventh year of his reign (959 BC). And it lasted until its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC, that is, 373 years from the completion of its construction.

After the exile in Babylon, the Jews returned in 538 BC with the vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezr. 1: 7-11). They started the construction of the new Temple in 536 BC but stopped until 520 BC, and finished in 516 BC (Ezr. 1: 1-11; Ezr. 3: 2-3; 8; 10). Therefore, this temple (under Zerubbabel) took four years to be built [520-516 BC – 2nd to 6th year of Darius I (r. 522-486 BC): Hag 2: 10; 18; Ezr 6: 15] and lasted longer than that of Solomon.

It was invaded by Pompey, a Roman general, in 63 BC, but it was not destroyed [Josephus, 'Antiquities' xiv.iv. § 4]. In 19 BC, Herod the Great tore down much of the ancient construction and began its restoration; after 46 years (Jn. 2: 20 – 27 AD) it was still not finished. It was finished in 64 AD, in the time of Agrippa, son of Herod Agrippa I. This temple of Herod lasted until 70 AD, with the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Titus.

Thus, "Second Temple" is a designation used for both the temples of Zerubbabel and Herod. In total, the Second Temple (Zerubbabel and Herod) lasted 586 years (516 BC to 70 AD).

The duration of each of them varies greatly according to the dates of the Jewish calendar of Seder Olam Rabbah ('The Great Order of the World' – a chronology in Hebrew from the 2nd century AD that details the dates of biblical events from creation to the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great); it also varies according to the Christian calendar introduced in the 8th century, known as Anno Domini ('Year of the Lord'),

separating the events that occurred before and after Christ (BC and AD, the latter also called CE – Common Era), and even according to the dates provided by some historians of Antiquity using another dating system, such as Josephus, for example, who in his historical works often makes use of the Seleucid era counting (also known as the Year of Alexander) to mark important events, as well as the Olympiad era.

The Second Temple led by Ezra

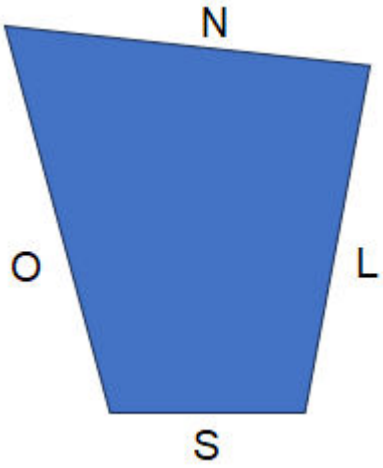
Ezra returned from Babylon in 480 BC to minister in the new temple. According to scholars, this temple was 60 cubits (the cubit of 51.8 cm) long (31.08 meters) and 30 cubits high (15.54 meters), and also had warehouses around it and chambers for the priests (Ezr. 6: 3). The Ark of the Covenant had disappeared and was never recovered or replaced (Jer. 3: 14-18). So, the second temple was smaller and less sumptuous than the first. That's why many of the people cried by seeing the building of the second temple: Ezr. 3: 8-13 (with focus on verses 12 and 13) and Hag. 2: 1-9. In the place of Solomon's lampstands it was built another menorah of seven lamps, along with the table for the bread and the altar of incense. These objects were again taken from the Israelites by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV, also called Antiochus Epiphanes, around 168-166 BC (Period of Seleucid dominion over Israel), placing there a pagan statue ('the abomination that causes desolation' – Dan. 11: 31; Dan. 12: 11; or 'the desolating sacrilege' – Matt. 24: 15, NRSV). Under the leadership of Judah Maccabee, the temple was cleansed, and at the end of 164 BC its furnishings were replaced. The Jews turned that place into a so powerful fortress that withstood the siege of Pompey (63 BC) for 3 months.

When Pompey arrived in Jerusalem, his first action was to inspect the city. Josephus writes: "And when he was come to the city, he looked about where he might make his attack; for he saw the walls were so firm, that it would be hard to overcome them; and that the valley before the walls was terrible; and that the temple, which was within that valley, was itself encompassed with a very strong wall, insomuch that if the city were taken, that temple would be a second place of refuge for the enemy to retire to." [Josephus, The War of the Jews i.vii. §1.1].

The Second Temple in the times of the Maccabees

**'Herod's temple' or the Second Temple restored by Herod**

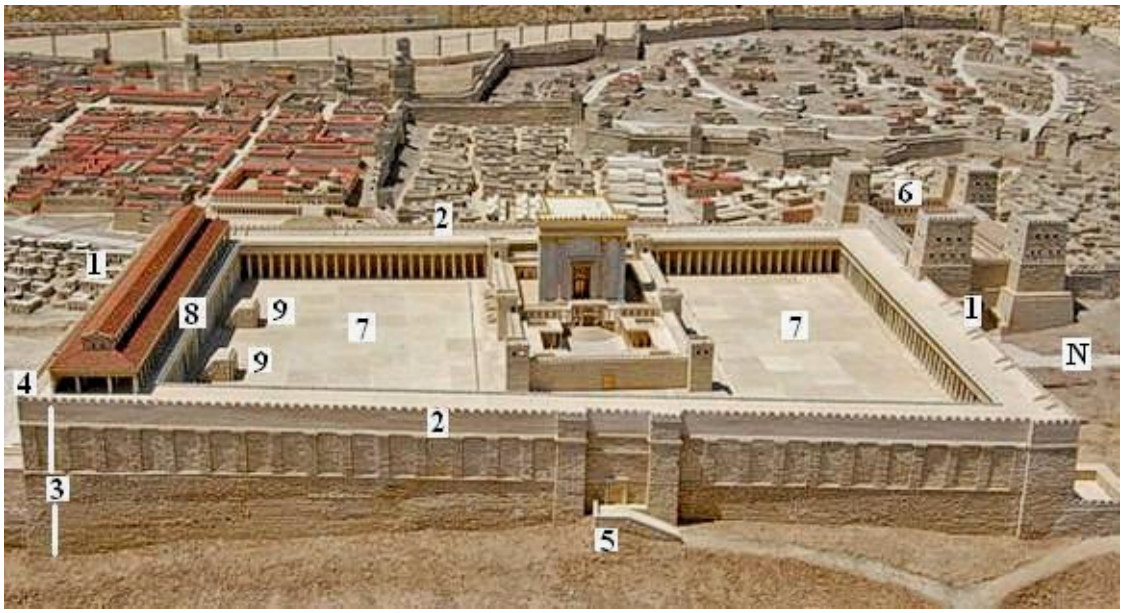
Herod the Great began the restoration of the temple in 19 BC but continued with its repair by Agrippa, sin of Herod Agrippa I, until 64 AD. Titus completely destroyed it in AD 70. Thus, Herod's Temple stood for about 89 years. When completed, the Temple Mount was a walled platform shaped like a scalene trapezoid, 1,500 feet (472 m) from north to south **(1)** and about 1,000 feet (304 m) from east to west **(2)**. It measured about 57 square miles (144 km²) [Source: BYU Religious Studies Center New Testament History, Culture, and Society; Lincoln H. Blumell, Editor]. Its walls were built of huge stone blocks 2 feet (60 cm) high and 16 feet (5 m) long (Mark 13: 1) [J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995], although Josephus mentions: "Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong: and each of their length was twenty-five cubits (13,00 m); their height was eight (4,2 m), and their breadth about twelve (6,3 m). The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself." [Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews', Book 15, chapter 11.3]. This account by Josephus is consistent with recent archaeological finds of a stone in the southwest wall of Herod's temple. It measures 13.6 meters (45 ft) long, 3.5 meters (11 ft) high, and 4.5 meters (15 ft) wide. The east wall was 466 m long. The south wall was 278 m. The west wall was 485 m long and the north wall extended for 316 m [Source: Bible-Scenes.com / www.freebibleimages.org]. The measurements vary slightly from one source to another depending on the value used for the sacral or mosaic cubit (51.8 cm), which was used in its construction; therefore, the rounding may be upwards or downwards, but there is not a large discrepancy. It would look something like this:




The trapezoid format of the platform of Herod's Temple

**Time of construction of Herod's Temple**

According to Flavius Josephus, the temple itself was built in a year and a half (by the priests instructed by Herod himself, because Gentiles could not build the holy courts). The porticoes and surrounding courtyards were built in eight years (Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews' xv.xi.§ 5; 6). However, the construction of the entire complex continued for more than eighty years from the time it was begun and was not completed until AD 64 (Antiquities xx.ix.§ 7), a total of 83 years. Most scholars believe that the cubit used in the construction of the temple was the long cubit, known as the sacral cubit, primitive cubit, or Mosaic cubit, mentioned in Ezekiel 43: 13 (51.8 cm, one cubit plus four fingers).



Pinnacle of the temple

On the southeast, facing the Kidron Valley, the inner court of the temple was about 50 meters above the rock, not counting the descent to the base of the Valley **(3)**, which can confirm Josephus' writings about an immense height if we count the base of the valley and the top of the Royal Stoa: "And this cloister *(He was speaking of the Royal Portico or Stoa)* deserves to be mentioned better than any other under the sun. For while the valley was very deep, and its bottom could not be seen, if you looked from above into the depth, this farther vastly high elevation of the cloister stood upon that height: insomuch that if any one looked down from the top of the battlements, or down both those altitudes, he would be giddy: while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth." [Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews' xv.xi.§ 5]. Some historians hypothesize 167 m. Perhaps the parapet above this edge was the pinnacle **(4)** of the temple (Matt. 4: 5), as archaeologist Benjamin Mazar considered.

So there was a ramp **(5)** that led the worshipers from this level until the level of the temple court. At Northwest of the temple was the Fortress of Antonia **(6)**. The outer court of the temple, also called Court of the Gentiles **(7)**, in the south had a building within the walls, which was called the Royal Portico or Stoa **(8)**. In front of it there were two passages **(9)** to the southern wall of the temple, which opened to the city through the Huldah Gates **(10)**.

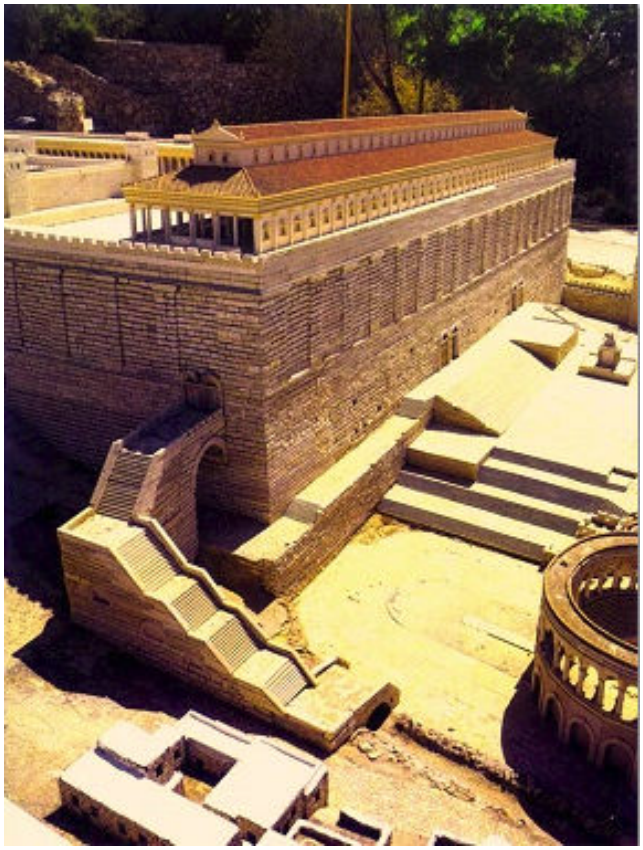
**The Antonia Fortress**

To protect the Holy Temple, Herod built the Antonia Fortress on the northwest wall of the same, over an ancient fortress of Hasmonean kings and high priests; and they called it the tower (Baris), "in which were reposited the vestments of the High Priest, which the High Priest only put on at the time when he was to offer sacrifice." Those garments King Herod kept in that place; and after his death they remained in the power of the Romans until the time of Tiberius Caesar. When Herod the Great fortified it, he named it in honor of Mark Antony, the triumvir, who was his friend and the Roman ruler of Judea; hence the name of the tower: Antonia. The "walls were square, and

strong, and of extraordinary firmness." [Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews', xv.xi.§ 4]. The Antonia Fortress was the residence of the Roman procurator when he was in Jerusalem and it was built by Herod the Great to protect the temple. The Roman garrison was there. From the top of the towers the soldiers observed the temple and through one or two doors they could walk on the wall that surrounded it. There was an underground passage from the Antonia Fortress to the interior of the temple and it opened into the women's court on the eastern side [Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews', xv.xi.§ 7]

**The Royal Portico or Royal Stoa**

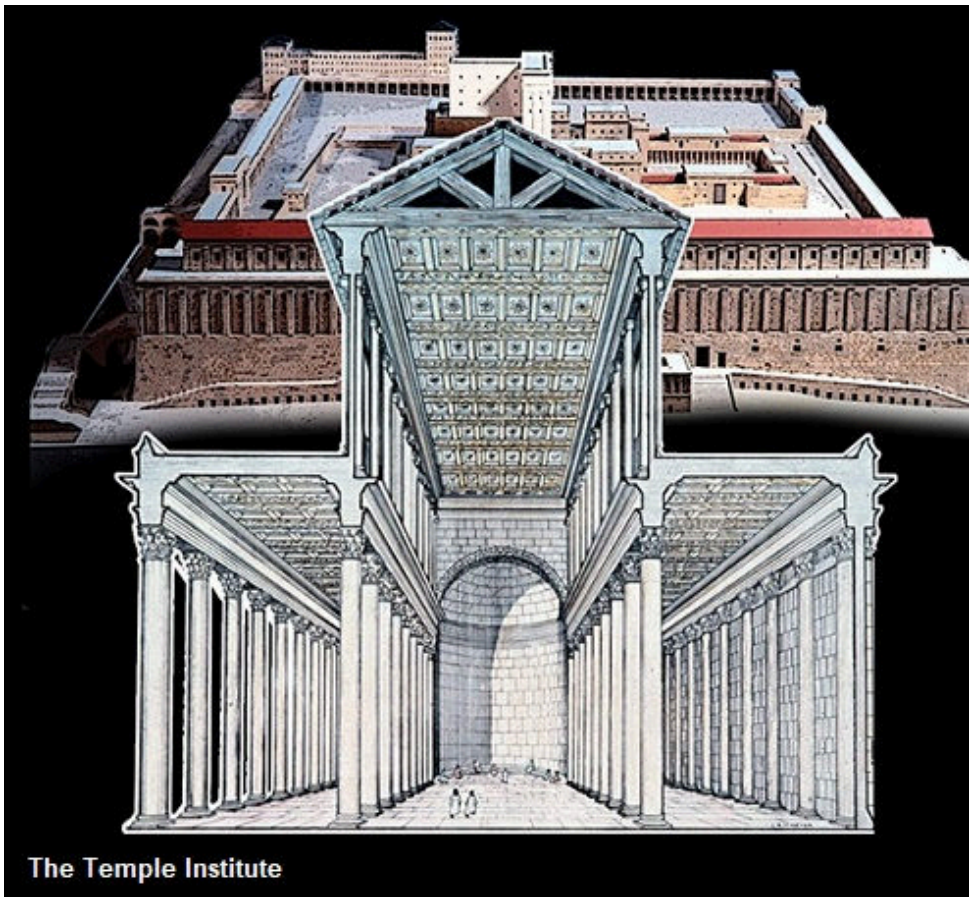
The Royal Stoa (8) (Ha-stav ha-Malkhuti; הסטיו המלכותי, also known as the Royal Colonnade, Royal Portico or Royal Basilica – not to be confused with the Colonnades or Solomon's Portico) was also constructed by Herod the Great. It was a basilica. In Ancient Roma, a basilica was a large public building with multiple functions, usually built alongside the town's forum. It corresponded to an element of Greek architecture that consisted of a wide corridor or covered portico intended for public use, with the roof supported by columns or pillars. Stoa, in Greek is written as Στοά; stoá; lit. 'portico' or 'colonnade'; pl. stoai. The Stoa was a center of public and commercial activity (it was used for banking, courts and other commercial transactions). Its southwest corner was the place where a priest would blow the ram's horn to announce the beginning of the holy days to the people of the residential and commercial districts of Jerusalem. Until the 30s AD, the Portico served as the seat of the Sanhedrin. Some ancient historians believe that Herod's Royal Stoa served as a 'mint', administered by the priesthood.



Royal Portico or Royal Stoa on the south wall

The historian Flavius Josephus in his work “Antiquities of the Jews” praised the structure of the building for its beautiful construction and wrote that the Basilica had four rows of columns along its length, each row consisting of 40 columns; therefore, it had three parallel halls, the central aisle being 13.5 meters wide and the two lateral ones 9 meters wide. Each column was approximately 1.5 meters in diameter and 15 meters high. The central aisle was twice the height of the aisles, probably about 30-33 meters high. The Israeli archaeologist Ehud Netzer estimates that the Royal Stoa was approximately 33 meters wide and 240 meters long, although Josephus gives its length as that of a Roman stadium (185 meters).

The ceiling was decorated with wooden sculptures, representing all kinds of designs. Josephus also describes two more columns, totalizing 162 columns in the building, and it is thought that they were probably at the eastern end of the central nave, as this type of Greco-Roman architecture usually had a semicircular eastern finish with the last 2 columns, and at the western end there was a door.



Images above:
1) Hypothetical drawing of the interior of the Stoa
2) Portico or Royal Stoa – Reconstruction (Israel Museum in Jerusalem)

**Outer gates of the temple**

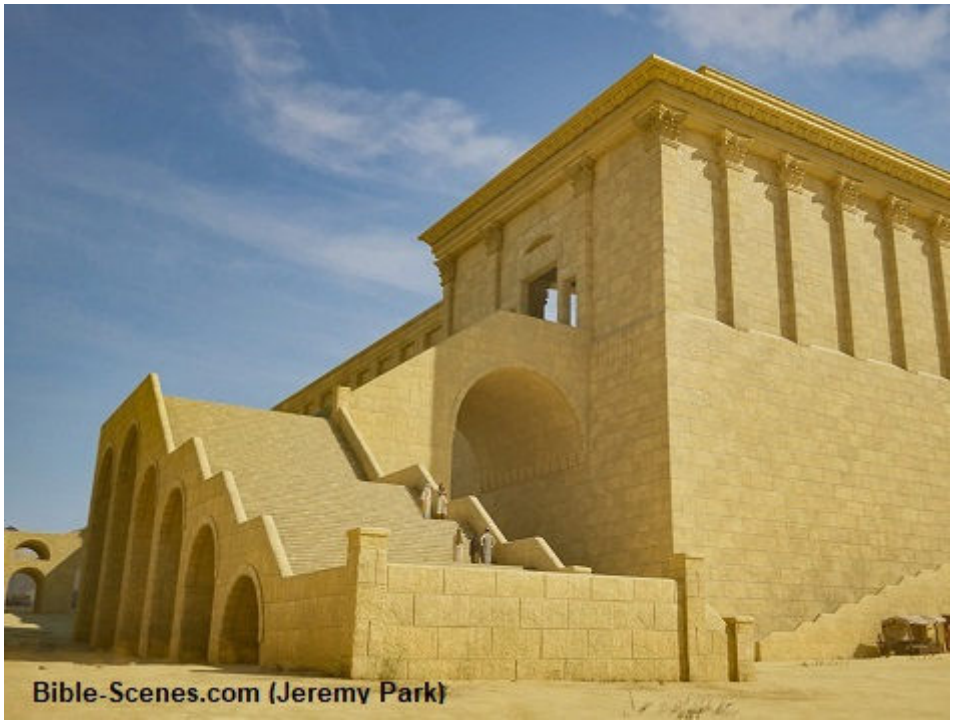
Flavius Josephus, in his description of Herod's Temple, mentioned a total of 22 or 23 large gates throughout the temple. Some sources may mention different numbers of gates, due to different interpretations of Josephus' sources or the inclusion of smaller gates or openings in the dividing walls. In fact, we can accurately count ten gates in the inner courts: In fact, we can count exactly ten gates in the inner courts: the four on the north and south sides of the sanctuary, the Beautiful Gate and Nicanor's (not counting the two smaller ones next to Nicanor's main gate and the two secondary side entrances in the Women's Courtyard, but which have no name = fourteen) and eight in the outer walls leading into the city. That would make a total of 22 doors, in fact.

Archaeological evidence has determined that there were the following outer city gates to the Temple Mount: one on the east (Golden Gate), two on the south: the Double Gate and the Triple Gate of Huldah, which we see in the image below **(10)**, four on the west: Robinson's Arch, Wilson's Arch, Barclay's Gate, and Warren's Gate (which we will see next). The Northern Gate, near the Antonia Fortress, which many refer to as the Sheep Gate (or Tadi Gate, according to the Mishnah), is a lesser gate (but of the same size as the other gates) and was not used as an entrance for pilgrims.

The most common entrance for pilgrims coming to the Temple, and passing through the mikveh (ritual bathing pools), were the two splendid southern gates, the Double Gate and the Triple Gate of Huldah, at the front of a staircase of 30 steps, about 210 feet (64 m) long. The steps were grouped 2 by 2, and ended in a group of 4 at the top. The Huldah Gates led through corridors beneath the Stoa, up to the Temple square, and served as the main entrance to the Temple complex for worshippers. These two entrances **(9)** you can see above in the panoramic image of the Temple.

South view of the temple – Huldah Gates

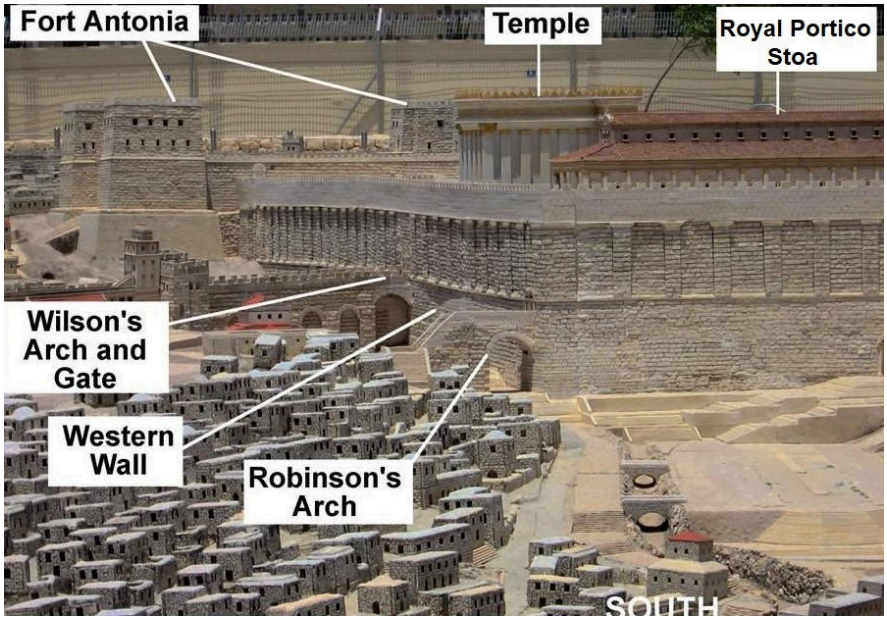
Detail of the Monument of Huldah or Huldah's tomb

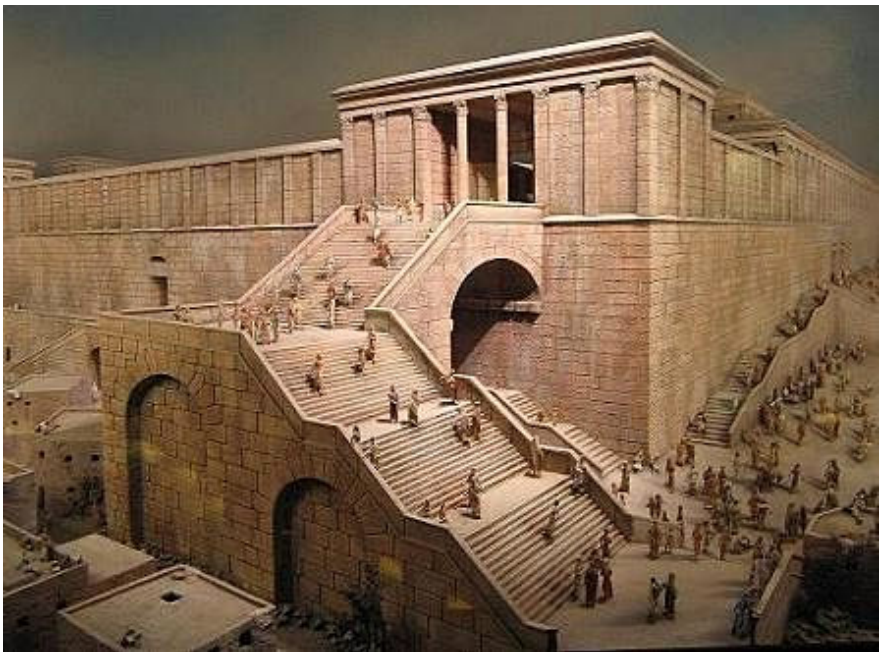



The staircase and the arch is what we call today **Robinson's arch**. Robinson's arch is the name given to the remains of an arch (or bridge) on the southwest side of the temple in Jerusalem. It was built by Herod the Great, at the end of the first century BC (20 or 19 BC) and destroyed after the first Jewish-Roman war (66-70 AD). Robinson's arch was so named in honor of the American biblical scholar Edward Robinson, who identified its remnants in 1838. His work was focused on Biblical Geography and Biblical Archaeology. Robinson's arch was built to connect Tyropoeon valley with Royal Portico Stoa **(8)**, located in the southern part of the temple. The door opened into the Royal Portico in the Outer Court of the Temple. Robinson's arch was one of the four gates along the western wall of the temple, next to another arch known as **Wilson's Arch** (to the north of Robinson's arch). Robinson's arch was about fifteen meters long

and three meters and a half wide, starting from twelve meters to north of the southwest corner of the wall, and with a height of about sixteen meters (other researchers say twenty-three meters) above the street level that ran parallel to the western wall (The Wailing Wall), a site planned for prayers of the faithful Jews and Gentiles who visit Jerusalem. In the days of Herod there were very beautiful houses in the west hill in Jerusalem.

Wilson's Arch is the modern name for an ancient stone arch in Jerusalem, the first of a row of arches that supported a great bridge connecting the Temple Mount with the Upper City on the Western Hill and leading to the King's Palace ("Now in the western quarters of the enclosure of the temple there were four gates. The first led to the King's palace, and went to a passage over the intermediate valley." – Flavius Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," Book 15; Ch. 11:5). According to Josephus, south of Wilson's Arch, between it and Robinson's Arch, was a third gate in the Western Wall (Barclay's Gate); and north of Wilson's Arch, before reaching the northern area of the temple, was a fourth gate, called Warren's Gate. These two gates no longer physically exist, but the area where they once stood (the Western Wall) is today a sacred site in the Western Wall.





The remains of Robinson's arch

Today, in the Western Wall, there is a passage leading to Wilson's Arch on the left, under which the Jews built a synagogue

Western Wall, with the passage leading to Wilson's Arch on the left
– photo from 2006

Northeast view of the temple – Golden Gate

The Golden Gate today

The Golden Gate **(12)** or the Mercy Gate (in Hebrew, שער הרחמים – Sha'ar Harahamim). In Arabic is known as Gate of Eternal Life, Gate of Mercy (Bab al-Rahma – the southern one) and Gate of Repentance (Bab al-Taubah – the northern one). Of all Gates in Jerusalem's Old City walls, it is the oldest of them and used in Ancient times that offered direct access to the Temple. It is located at the north third of the eastern wall of the Old City. The current Golden Gate may have been built by Emperor Justinian I in 520 AD, on the ruins of other buildings in Jerusalem. Some historians believe it was built in the 7th century by the Umayyad Caliphate. However, the Mishnah refers to it as the 'Gate of Shushan' (or Susa in English), since it is related to an eastern gate of the Second Temple in Jerusalem when the exiles returned from Babylon; hence its name. The Jews are said to have carved an image of the city of Susa on the gate as a

token of gratitude to the Persians for building the Second Temple [Source: The Temple Institute]. Other sources in Hebrew literature say that it was Cyrus himself who ordered the builders to carve an image of the skyline of Susa over the main entrance, for he was concerned about the possibility of a Jewish rebellion and to remind his Jewish subjects that they were still subjects of the Persian Empire. According to rabbinical sources, including Josephus, the gate of Herod's time was the same as all other gates, measuring twenty cubits high and ten cubits wide (10 meters x 5 meters), with square lintel doors and gold overlays. The current structure has no Herodian characteristics. Rabbis say that a bridge connected it to the Mount of Olives, over the Kidron Valley, and through it the priests entered and left the temple for their rituals, such as releasing the scapegoat into the desert (she'ir l'azazel (שעיר לעזאזל) as atonement on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) [Source: The Temple Institute].

The current Golden Gate was rebuilt over of the ruins of the earlier gate where Jesus entered the city on Sunday before Passover (Palm Sunday) and was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. Seeing it from within the Mount we can notice that it has two vaulted halls which lead to the Gate of Mercy (Bab al-Rahma, the southern one) and the Gate of Repentance (Bab al-Taubah, the northern one). This gate has undergone many interventions: it was closed by Muslims in 810, reopened in 1102 by the Crusaders and walled by Saladin after recovering Jerusalem in 1187.

As Jerusalem was plundered in 1244 by other followers of Islam (the Khwarazmian Tatars) and between 1250 and 1517 the Mamlukes destroyed the sacred places of Christians on Mount Zion, it is assumed that the previous wall was opened again where the gate was. It was rebuilt by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (In Turkish, Süleyman or Kanunî Sultan Süleyman – 1494-1566) in the 16th century (1541) together with the city walls but sealed it with great stones and they stay this way until today. This archaeological evidence was found by archaeologist James Fleming in 1969, when he fell into a pit filled of bones at that location and discovered the arch of a door, engraved in the stone of the pit, in the same shape as the door above him, probably from the time of Jesus or Solomon. However, his investigations could not proceed because a Muslin cemetery was built in that place. According to information of some researchers the Sultan blocked the Gate with stones so that the Messiah could not enter the city and thus the prophecy was not accomplished; the prophecy that the Messiah will enter this door at His second coming. The Muslin cemetery built there would also bar His way. There may be also a defensive reason why he did that.

According to Jewish tradition this is the gate through which the Messiah prophesied in the OT would choose to enter Jerusalem, because for them the Divine Presence always appeared by the east, from the side of the sunrise (Ezek. 43: 4: "As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east…"). And will appear again when the Anointed One (Messiah) comes. The east was the side from where salvation would come, the Messiah. In Ezek. 44: 1-2, it is written: "Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. The Lord said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut." Although they think that a new gate will be open to Him in that place, we Christians can see this prophecy already fulfilled, by the fact of Jesus having entered through it (Lk. 19: 28-40; Ezek. 44: 2) and it's sealed today. We can also affirm this too by the words of Jesus Himself (Lk. 19: 39-40): "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'" Ezekiel wrote that this gate would remain shut and should not be opened, and indeed it is shut. Jesus said that the stones would shout out if His disciples were silent, and indeed the

stones that are there proclaim the veracity of His words; they show there was a gate in that site by which the Messiah entered Jerusalem

[Source: Rodrigo Silva – Programa: Evidências NT – 033 A Porta Dourada (Série Evidências) – Novo Tempo – YouTube, Feb.1st, 2013].

Also on the outer side of the northern wall, next to the Antonia Fortress, there is another gate, called "**Tadi Gate**". The Tadi Gate was little used (J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995). It is mentioned in the Mishnah as the northern gate closest to the Place of the Hearth and the Priests' Immersion Chamber within the Court of the Priests in the Temple area. This gate, consequently, did not serve as an entrance for pilgrims, but was used only by the Temple priests who had become impure and were immersed in the ritual bath of purification in the pool. They entered and left through a special tunnel directly to the gate. Some believe that the name was not Tadi, but Tari, which indicates the special doorpost of the gate, built of two stones, one supported by the other, forming a triangle – 'tri' in Greek [Source: The Temple Institute]. Like all the gates of the Holy Temple, the Tadi Gate 20 was cubits high (10 meters) and ten cubits wide (5 meters). There is no reference to it in the work of Flavius Josephus, only in the Mishnah.

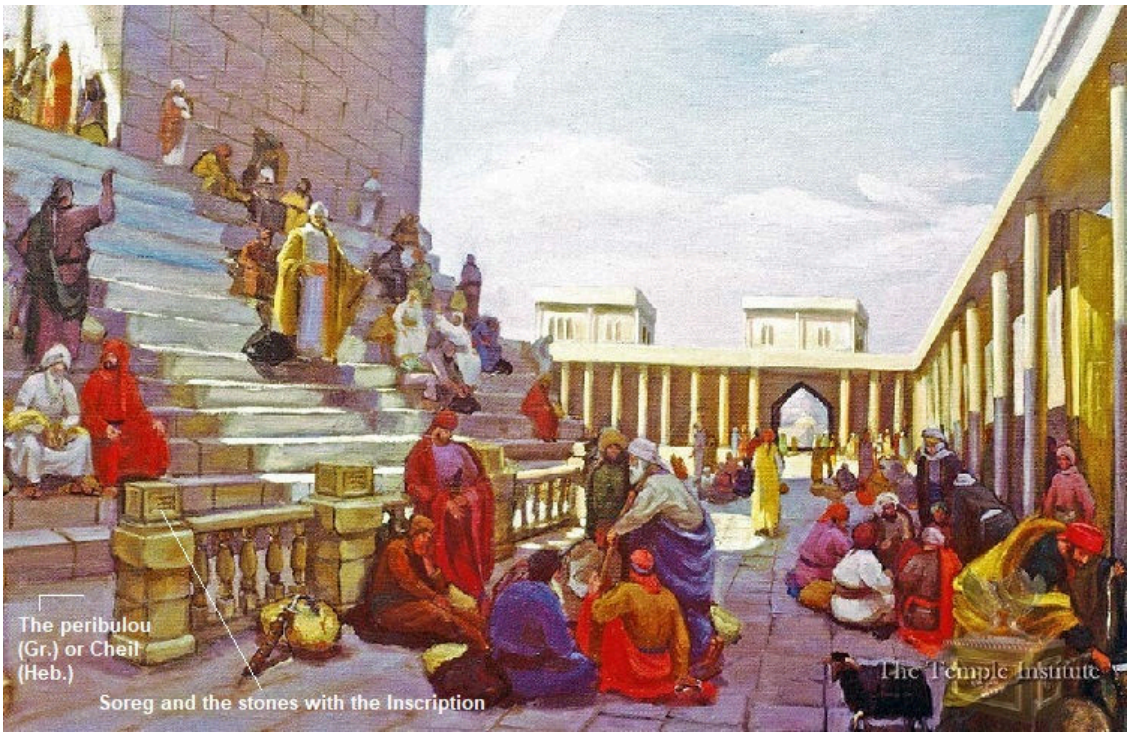
In the image below, you can see a Model of the Fortress and Tadi Gate (with triangular top) – wikipedia.org

**Solomon's Portico or Solomon's colonnades**

Solomon's Colonnade or Solomon's Portico extended throughout the eastern side (Jn. 10: 23; Acts 3: 11; Acts 5: 12). It opened to the East side of the walls through the Golden Gate. It was under these colonnades that scribes kept their schools and their discussions (Lk. 2: 46; Lk. 19: 47; Mk. 11: 27), and in front, in the court of the Gentiles, is where merchants and money changers had set up their tables (Jn. 2: 14-16; Lk. 19: 45-46). Do not confuse it with the Royal Portico or Stoa, which served as the Sanhedrin and other commercial and political affairs for the priests and leaders.

**The Balustrade of Soreg and the Court of the Gentiles**

As I mentioned before, the outer court of the temple was also called the **Court of the Gentiles**. The place was basically a bazaar, with merchants selling many things, especially sacrificial animals and edible products for offerings in the temple during the feasts. Currency was also exchanged: Roman currency was exchanged for Tyrian money (Greek currency) and even for the temple shekel, especially when Jerusalem was full of Jewish pilgrims coming for Passover. It was there that Jesus drove out the money changers and sellers as a sign of indignation against commerce in the House of God. Everyone knew that the worshipers should present a sacrifice considered without blemish by the priest. They knew that those who went there should pay the tax per capita, using the currency of the temple (the shekel of the sanctuary), for the priests refused to accept foreign currency (Roman and Greek). Their money-changers were there to exchange money. They just could not acknowledge that they did this for exorbitant rates and that they rejected any animal that was not bought in the temple by these inflated prices. It was a great hypocrisy disguised as appropriate worship to God. That's why Jesus was angry. The holy and the profane walked there together in the House of His Father. This bothered Him too much: the lack of reverence to God, exploitation, theft, hypocrisy, falsehood, injustice and sin.




The inner area was slightly higher than the Court of the Gentiles, and was surrounded by a balustrade (It means a series of balusters; balustrade is a small ornamental pillar or column, forming a handrail, parapet or railing) called the balustrade of Soreg (סורג, Soreg, in Hebrew means 'gate', 'railing'). To go up to the Court of Israel, inside the balustrade of Soreg, there was a staircase of 14 steps, as Josephus wrote in his work 'The War of the Jews': "For that second [court] of the temple was called the sanctuary, and one ascended to it by fourteen steps from the first court". According to Josephus, the Soreg was 1.57 m high.

The area between the Soreg and the Court of Israel is called the Cheil ('rampart'). The width of the Cheil was ten cubits (1 cubit = approximately 50 centimeters, or 20 inches) around the entire Courtyard, therefore, 5 meters. Only Jews who were pure (of the spiritual impurity due to the contact with a corpse) were permitted to enter.

**The Soreg Inscription or Temple Warning Inscription**

In 1871, the French archaeologist Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau discovered a stele near a courtyard on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and identified it as the 'Temple Warning Inscription', also known as the 'Temple Balustrade Inscription' or the 'Soreg Inscription.' The stone is 90 centimeters long by 60 centimeters high and 39 centimeters deep. The Soreg Inscription is an inscription that warned gentiles not to enter the sacred precincts of the Temple, where Jews were accustomed to access the inner area, i.e. the Court of Israel.

The inscription was in Greek uncial script, which is a style of capital writing with simple, rounded, uniform strokes, used for the study of ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts, especially ancient books on parchment. The engraving of Greek capital letters must have been done by a very skilled stonemason. The inscription writes, in Greek, in seven lines:

ΜΗΘΕΝΑΑΛΛΟΓΕΝΗΕΙΣΠΟ (No stranger is to enter)
ΡΕΥΕΣΘΑΙΕΝΤΟΣΤΟΥΠΕ (within the balustrade round)

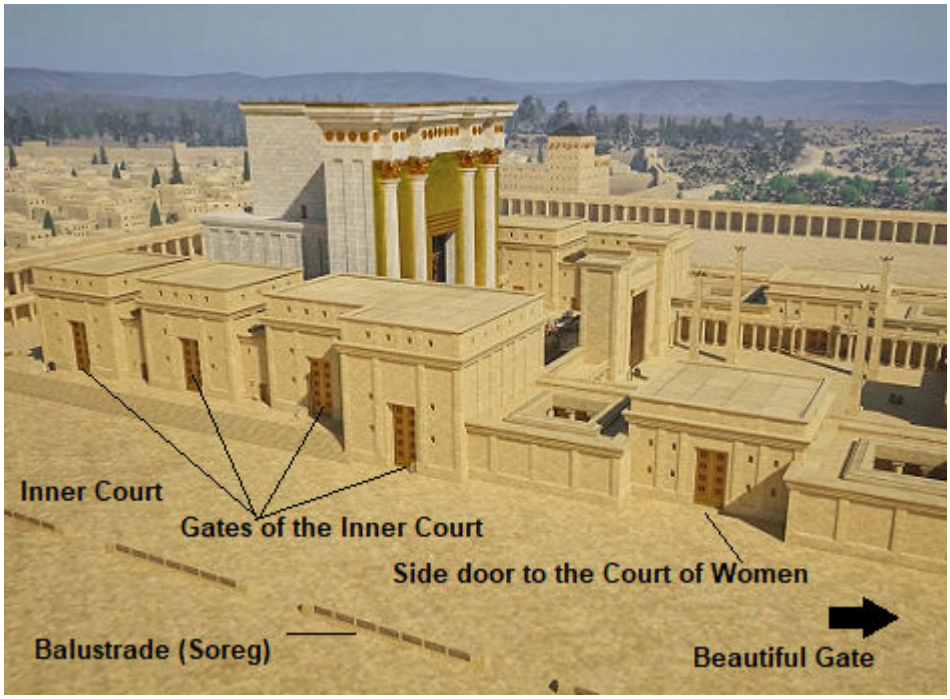
ΡΙΤΟΙΕΡΟΝΤΡΥΦΑΚΤΟΥΚΑΙ (the temple and)
ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΥΟΣΔΑΝΛΗ (enclosure. Whoever is caught)
ΦΘΗΕΑΥΤΩΙΑΙΤΙΟΣΕΣ (will be himself responsible)
ΤΑΙΔΙΑΤΟΕΞΑΚΟΛΟΥ (for his ensuing)
ΘΕΙΝΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ (death)

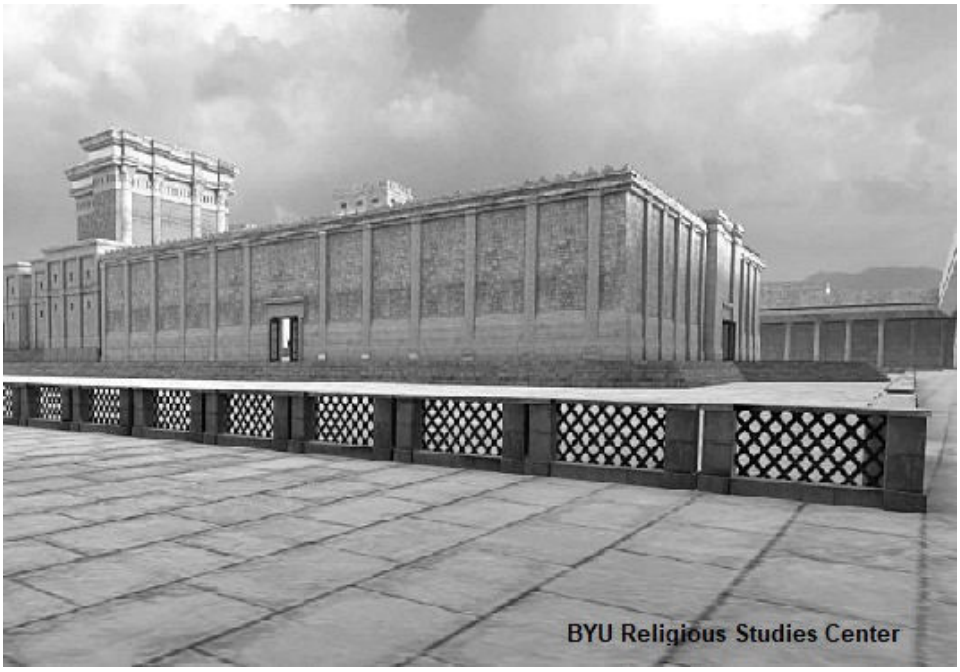
The translation is: "Let no foreigner enter within the parapet (The Balustrade, a stone barrier in the outer court; in Greek, Tryphaktou, τρύφακτος) and the partition (a wall enclosing the sacred terrace within the outer court, called peribola; Peribolou, περίβολος) which surrounds the Temple precincts ('the Holy Place', the sacred area to which the court led, called 'the hieron,' 'To hieron,' To ἱερόν). Anyone caught [violating] will be held accountable for his ensuing death."

After the discovery of the inscription, it was taken by the Ottoman authorities, and it is currently in the Istanbul Archaeology Museums, a group of three archaeological museums located in Istanbul, Turkey. In 1935, a partial fragment of a copy of the inscription was found by J. H. Iliffe outside the Lions' Gate in Jerusalem; it is on display in the Israel Museum.

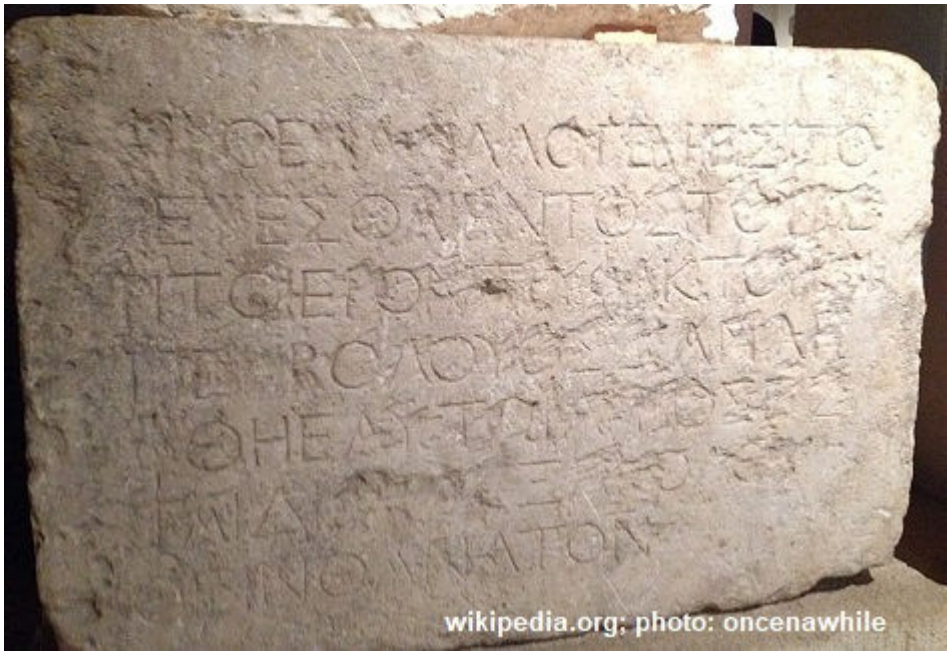
The historian Flavius Josephus mentions the existence of several stelae in Greek and Latin, erected at equal intervals, forbidding foreigners from crossing the sacred precincts. Since the warning was for foreigners and not for Jews, it was not written in Hebrew. It served to protect only the inner courtyard of the Temple. In fact, it was not the Jews who had the authority to carry out the death penalty, particularly against non-Jews, but this would come from the hands of God.

Since Herod wrote the inscription, it is assumed that this warning did not apply to Gentile converts, for Herod was an converted Idumean (or Edomite) and was unlikely to exclude himself or his descendants. Some scholars, however, say that it referred to all gentiles. Josephus says in 'Antiquities of the Jews' xv.xi.§ 5 that Herod entered the Soreg, but didn't enter into the separate place belonging to the altar, nor into the court of the priests; nor into the holy house itself.






Detail of the Balustrade



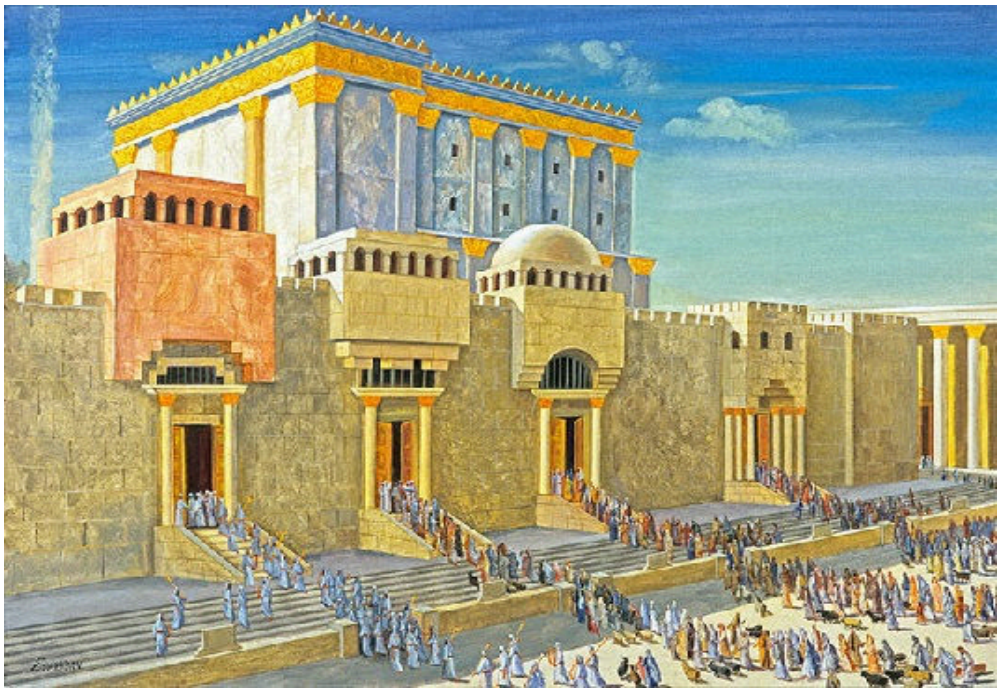

The Temple Warning inscription (Soreg Inscription) in Istanbul Archaeology Museums

A partial fragment of the inscription that is found in the Israel Museum
Photo: Yoav Dothan – wikipedia.org

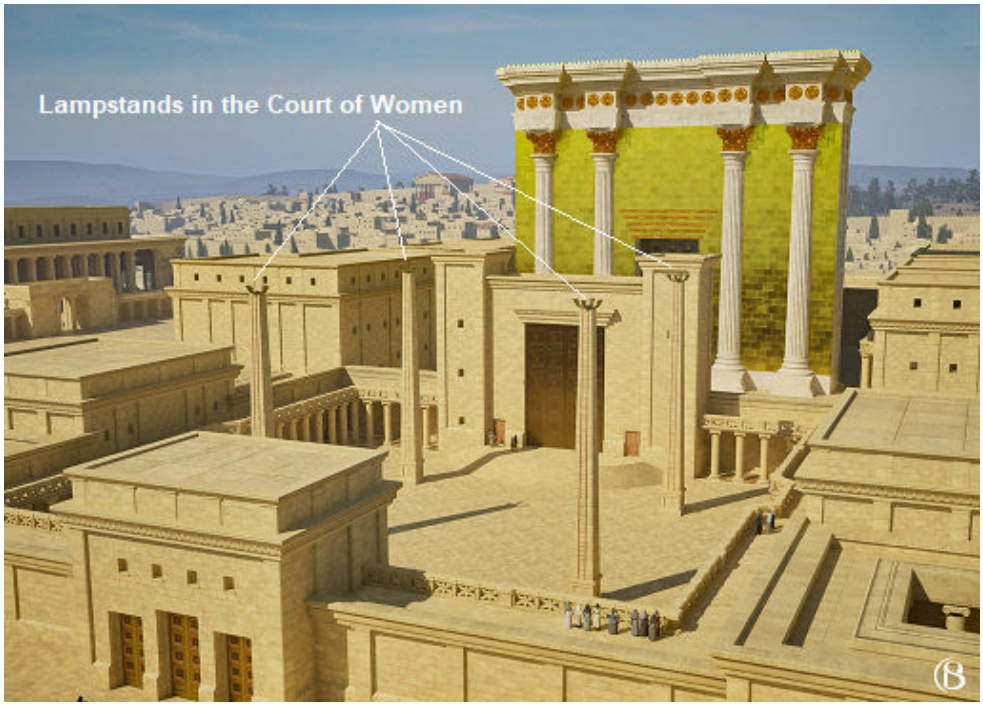
**Inner Gates of the Temple**

All the inner gates of the Temple were twenty cubits high (10 m) and ten cubits wide (5 m) and had a square lintel (with the exception of the Tadi Gate in the north wall of the Temple), and its doors were overlaid with gold and silver. But the Tadi Gate was also twenty cubits high (10 m) and ten cubits wide (5 m), like all the others.

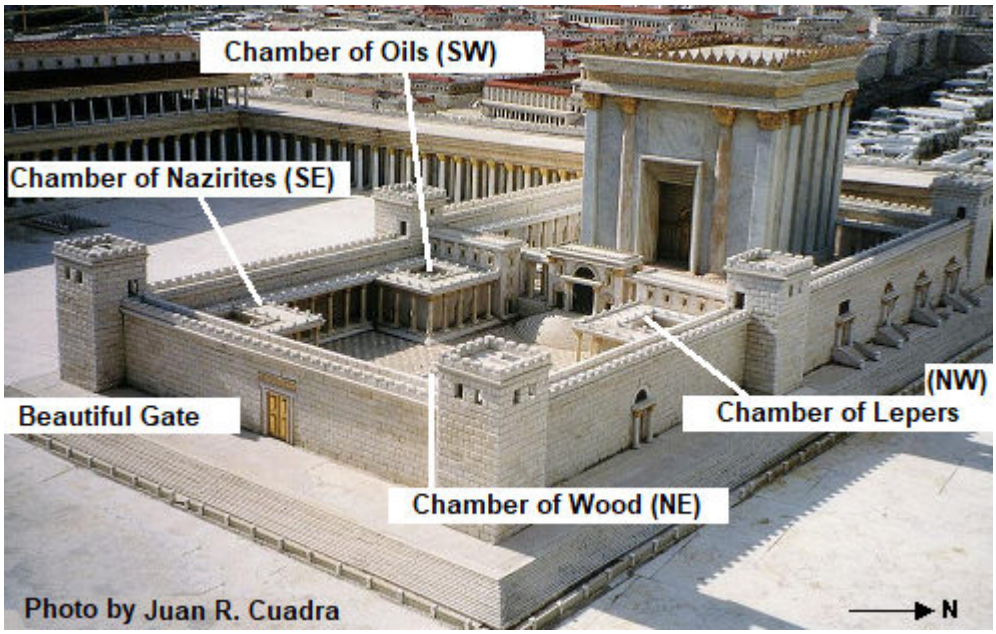
According to Flavius Josephus, there were ten entrances from the Court of the Gentiles to the inner courts: four gates gave access to the north and south sides **(1)**, and one gate gave access to the east side – the Beautiful Gate of the temple **(2)**. From the tower of the Antonia Fortress there was an underground passage to the Beautiful Gate (within the walls, in the Court of the Women). There was also one that led from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel, called the Nicanor Gate **(3)**. Therefore: there were ten gates to the inner courts (not counting the two smaller ones next to Nicanor's main gate and the two secondary side entrances in the Women's Courtyard **(4)**, but which have no name = fourteen). The most recent works and research show the two side doors to the Women's Courtyard ["O Templo Sagrado de Jerusalém", Rabino Yisrael Ariel, editora Sêfer]; the older sources do not.



The first court inside the temple (the Court of Women – **17**) contained the temple treasury (where the contributions of the worshipers were placed for the temple – Mk. 12: 41-44), just inside the Beautiful Gate. According to Flavius Josephus, four large lampstands were placed in this courtyard, each with four lamps, to light the temple, especially at the Feast of Tabernacles.




There were also four chambers: the Chamber of Wood (northeast), the Chamber of Nazirites (southeast), the Chamber of Oils (southwest) and the Chamber of Lepers (northwest).




Men were allowed to enter the Court of Israel **(18)**, raised above the level of the Court of Women **(17)**, and at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles they could enter the inner court (the Priests' Court – **19**) to walk around the altar of burnt offering. From the Court of the Women, men and women could observe the sacrifices through the Nicanor Gate.

The Nicanor Gate **(20)** separated the Court of Women from the Court of Israel (18), which only men entered and climbed 15 steps. According to Josephus, the gate was 25 meters high and 20 meters wide, requiring the efforts of 20 men to move. According to archaeological findings (Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1903), it was named after Nicanor, a Jew who belonged to a wealthy Alexandrian Jewish family. He is mentioned in the works of Josephus and the Talmud as the donor of the bronze doors of the Court of the Women in the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

**The Court of Israel and the Court of the Priests**

The Court of Israel and the Priests'

The Court of Israel courtyard was a long, narrow space, separated from the Court of the Priests by a line in the sidewalk. Israelites were allowed entry to pray or prostrate themselves. The Court of Israel measured 135 by 11 cubits (70m x 5,8 m). Impure individuals, as well as those who needed to bring an offering to complete the process of their purification, but had not yet done so were forbidden entry. Someone who was unclean for touching a dead person was allowed to enter the Temple Mount, but was not allowed to enter the Court of Israel [Source: The Temple Institute].

Outside the Sanctuary, in the Temple Courtyard (or Court of the Priests), three floors of rooms (23) surrounded the north, south and west sides, to a height of 40 cubits (20.52 meters). The gates and chambers were as follows:

**The side gates of the Temple Courtyard**

The Temple Courtyard (or Court of the Priests) had four gates on the south side, beginning with the southwest corner:

• The Upper Gate (Sha`ar HaElyon) - it received this name, perhaps, because it was situated on the ascent of the mountain or to be above the Women's Court.

• The Kindling Gate (Sha`ar HaDelek), where wood was brought in.

• The Gate of Firstborn (Sha`ar HaBechorot), where people offered the firstborn animals.

• The Water Gate (Sha`ar HaMayim), where a flask (waterskin) of water from the Shiloah Spring was brought up to the Temple, to be used for the water libation in the Feast of Succot (Feast of the Tabernacles). Above this gate there was a ritual bath the (High Priest's Immersion Chamber) in which the High Priest would immerse himself on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement).

On the north side, beginning with the northwest corner, there were four gates:

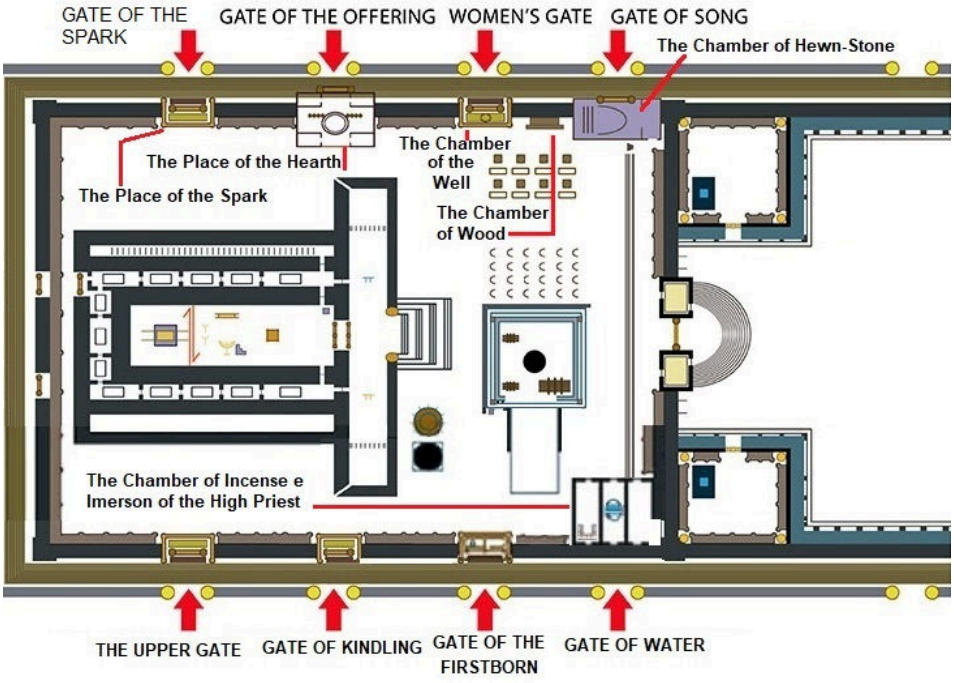
• The Gate of the Spark or Gate of Jeconiah (Sha`ar Yechonyah), where kings of the Davidic line entered (Jeconiah was the last one before the Babylonian captivity).

This gate was also called the Gate of the Spark because above it, there was the Place of the Spark, a chamber where the fire was kept burning and from which a spark was taken if the fire on the altar [‘mizbeach’ מִזְבֵּחַ] of the sacrifices was extinguished.

• The Gate of the Offering (Sha`ar HaKorban), where the most holy offerings were brought for slaughter, for the slaughter and collection of the blood were done to the north of the Courtyard. In other words, the offerings of devotion and worship, such as the burnt offering (‘ôlâ qorbân or oleh qorbân).

• The Women’s Gate (Sha`ar HaNashim), where women entered into the main courtyard (Azara) to pray, to give thanks or to offer their sacrifices, such as purification after childbirth, the guilt offering, their burnt offerings, etc.

• The Gate of Song (Sha`ar HaShir), where the Levites entered with their musical instruments.




**The chambers of the Temple Courtyard building**

Above the doors on the north side were chambers in the building, starting from the northeast:

• The Hall of Hewn Stones (Hebrew: לשכת הגזית Lishkat haGazit), also known as the Chamber of Hewn Stone, was the meeting place, or council-chamber of the Sanhedrin during the Second Temple period (6$^{th}$ century BCE – 1$^{st}$ century CE). The Talmud deduces that it was built into the north wall of the Temple in Jerusalem, and resembled a basilica, half inside the sanctuary and half outside, with doors giving access both to the temple and to the outside, through two entrances: one on the east and one on the west.

The Chamber of Hewn Stones – meeting place of the Sanhedrin

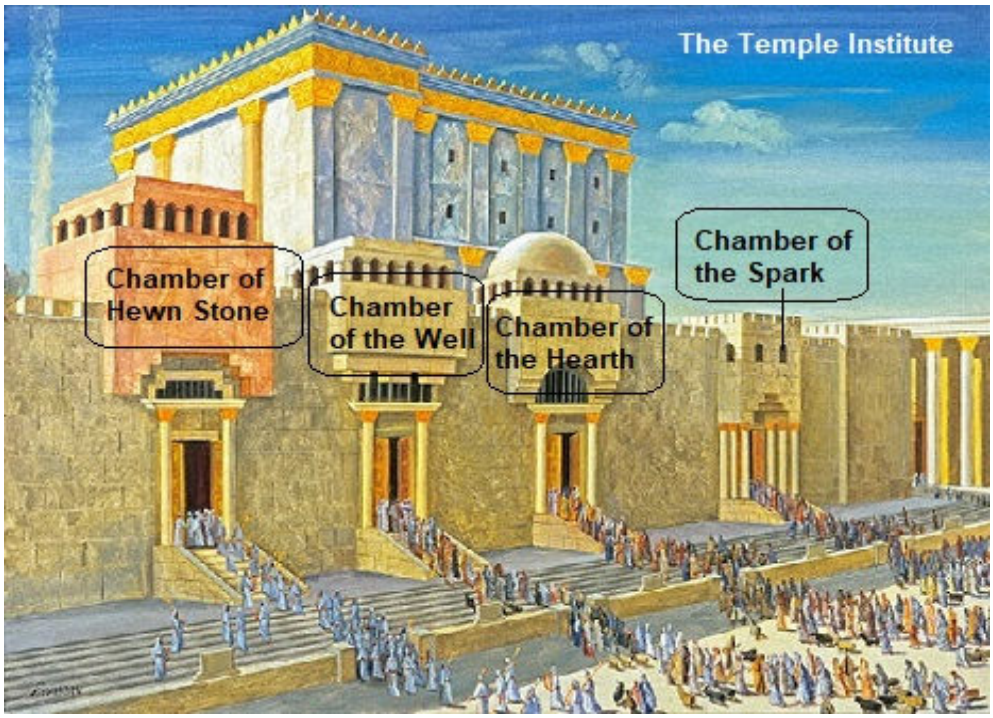
• The Chamber of Wood was the chamber of the high priest, where the Menorah was placed and where he stayed 7 days before the Day of Atonement.

• The Chamber of the Well. From this chamber, water was supplied for use in the Court. There was a wheel (In Hebrew, galgal) located within the chamber, that was used to draw the water from a pit in the ground.

The Priests' Immersion Chamber

• The Place of the Hearth had two entrances. One opened to the Court, and the second entrance opened to the Cheil (The Inner Courtyard within the Soreg). According to rabbinical sources, the priests who served in the Temple slept in a dormitory called the Hearth Room because of the fireplace that kept the sleeping quarters warm. The Hearth Room was built into the eastern part of the northern wall that surrounded the sacred precinct of the Temple itself (the Temple Courtyard or the Courtyard of the Priests). Within the sacred precinct, the priests were required to be in a state of ritual purity, so the dormitory had its own mikveh or ritual bath in a lower chamber outside the sacred precinct. In the four corners of the Place of the Hearth there were small chambers for the 'Approved Offerings' (lambs without blemishes), for the Chamber where the Showbread loaves were prepared, and the place where the priests descended through a spiral staircase into the Immersion Chamber.

• Still on the north side, further to the northwest, there was a final chamber, the Chamber of the Spark, above the Gate of the Spark (also called the Gate of Jeconiah), which was guarded by the priests; there, the fire was kept burning and a spark was taken from it if the fire on the altar ['mizbeach' מִזְבֵּחַ] of the sacrifices was extinguished.




In the southern part of the Court there were more chambers in the building, starting from the southeast:

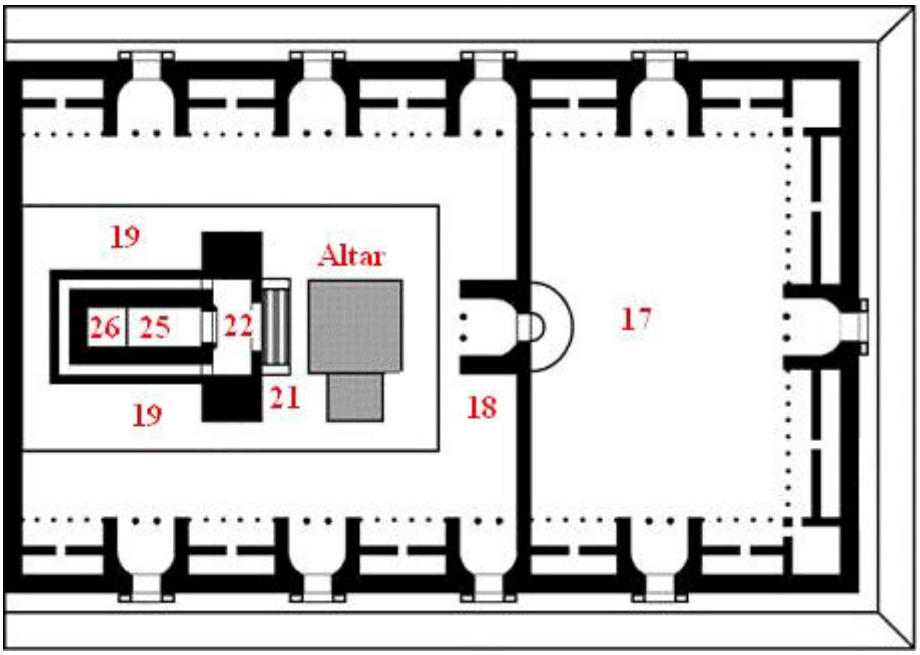
• Above the Gate of Water there were two chambers: The Chamber of Avtinas (The Camber of Incense), and adjacent to it the High Priest's Immersion Chamber. In the Chamber of Avtinas the sacred incense was prepared and stored. As reported in the Mishnah, the Avtinas family was the only family who knew the secret of how to prepare the incense. It's strange that they say there were 11 spices, when God only gave Moses 4 (Storax, Onycha, Galbanum and Frankincense), seasoned with salt.

• Above the Gate of Firstborn, where people offered the firstborn animals, probably there was another chamber.

**The Altar of the sacrifices**

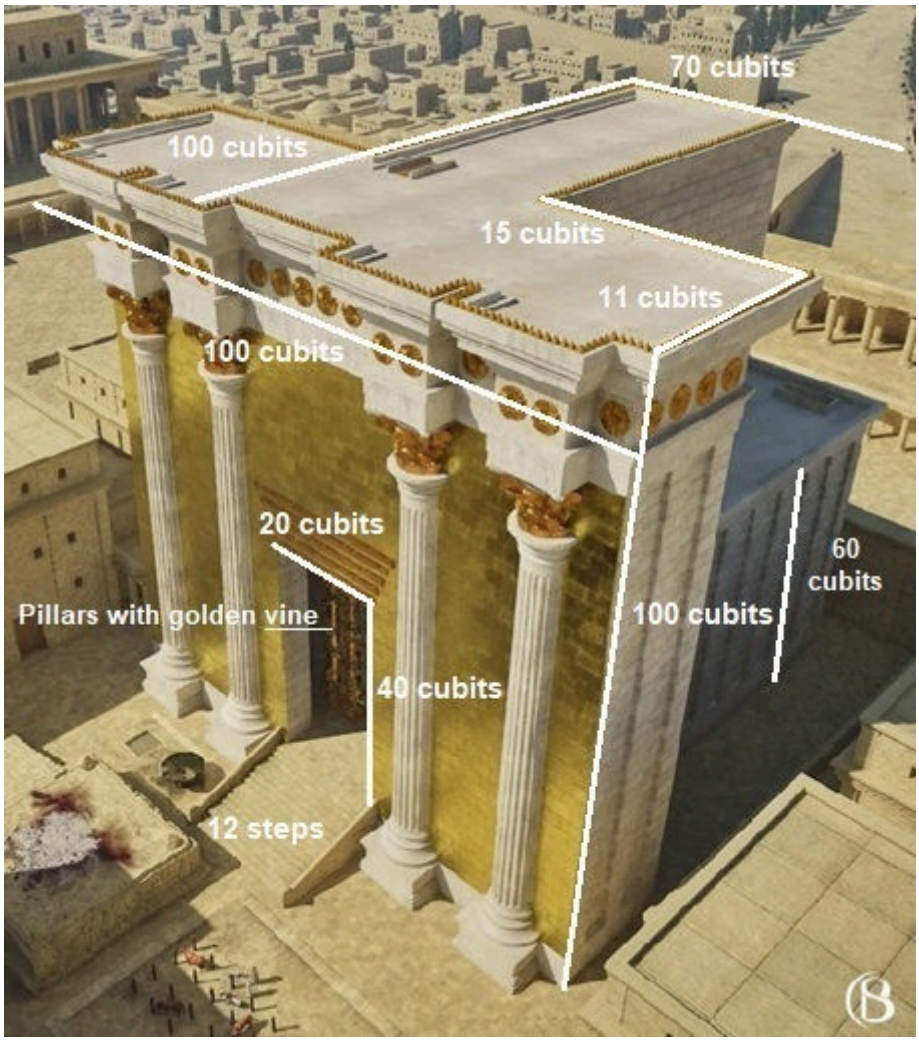
The altar was built with rough stones, not hewn, and was 22 cubits (11.40 meters) away from the portico of the sanctuary. There, only the priests and Levites were allowed to serve in the area around the altar. The stone altar measured 40 feet by 40 feet by 15 feet. A ramp led to the top of the altar, which had horns on all four corners. North of the altar was the Slaughter Place, where animals were sacrificed and skinned. Between the altar and the temple was a large bronze basin providing water for washing. Each of the priests washed his hands and feet before and after officiating in the temple (Ex. 30: 20-21).

The Altar and the Courtyard where the sacrifices were made – Bible-Scenes.com (Jeremy Park)




The plan of the sanctuary was a copy of Solomon's temple

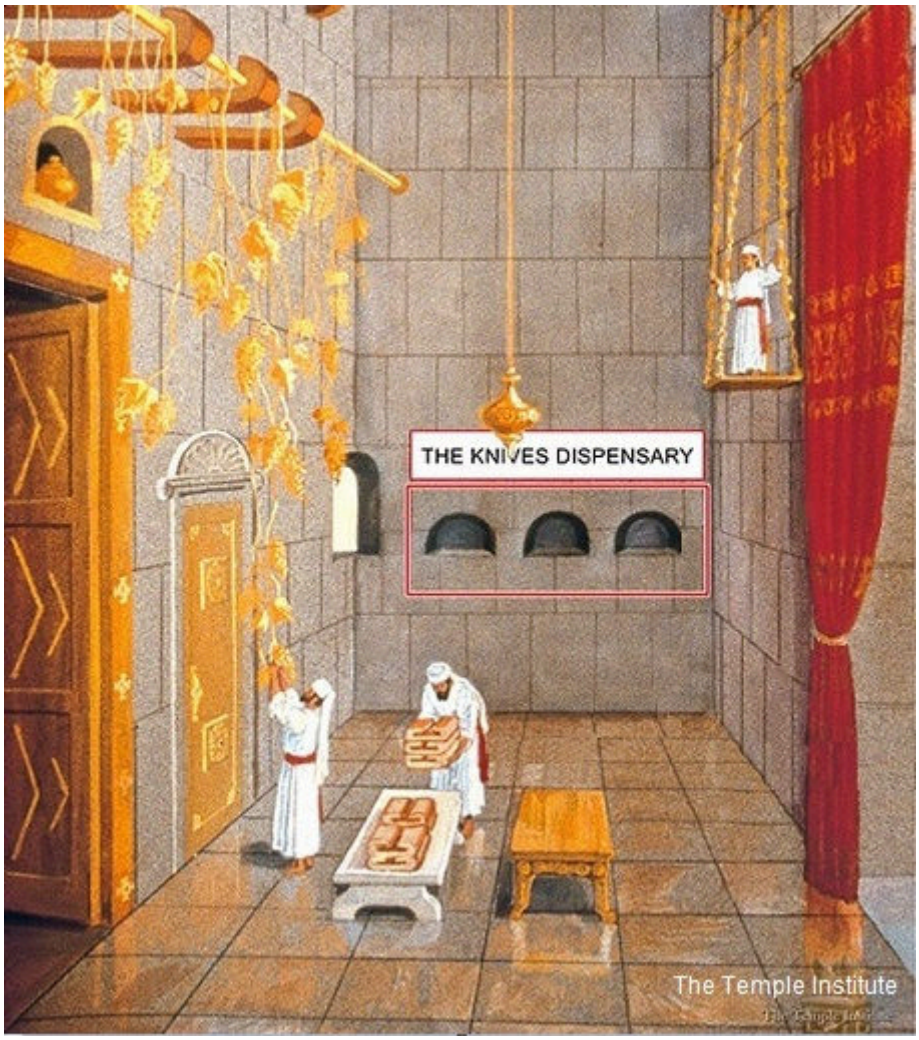
**The Sanctuary**



Twelve steps led up to the portico (21) or 'ulam', where stood four great marble columns. Each step of the stairs was one half a cubit high (25.9 cm). The entrance to the Ulam was the largest of all the Temple gates. It was forty cubits high (20.72 meters) and twenty cubits wide (10.36 meters). The other gates were twenty cubits high (10.36 meters) and ten cubits wide (5.18 meters). At the entrance to the Ulam, there was not a door but a curtain of fine linen, embroidered in blue, scarlet, and purple. Above the entrance of the Portico there were five decorative lintels made of oak wood.

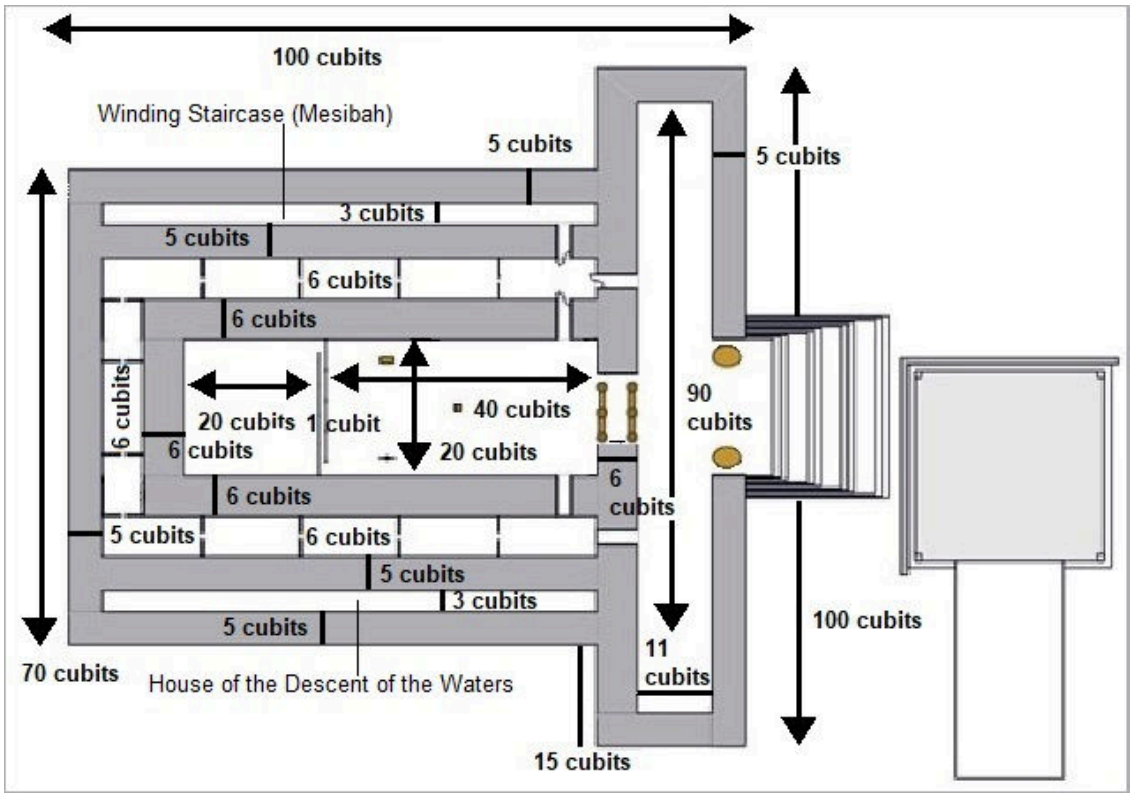
The Portico was 100 cubits long and 100 cubits high (51.80 meters), and 11 cubits (5.69 m) wide (deep) and its wall was overlaid with gold. It extended fifteen cubits to the north and fifteen cubits to the south, making it 30 cubits longer than the Sanctuary ('Naós'). This space, called the 'House of the Slaughter Knives,' was where the Levites used to store the knives for sacrifice. The space was therefore 11 cubits (5.69 m) wide and 15 cubits (7.77 m) long on each side.

There were gold spikes in the roof to prevent birds from settling there.




According to the Mishnah's explanation [Middot.4.7.2], Herod's temple was 100 cubits long (East-West) and 70 cubits wide (North-South) and 100 cubits high from the courtyard floor to gold spikes in the roof. As I said before, the Portico was 100 cubits long and 100 cubits high (51.80 meters), and 11 cubits (5.69 m) wide (deep) and

extended fifteen cubits to the north and fifteen cubits to the south, therefore, it was 30 cubits longer than the Sanctuary.




Notes:

• There were three stories of side chambers (tzla'ot), with a total height of 60 cubits (30 to 31.5 meters, considering the biblical cubit measurement of 50 cm to 52.5 cm). The width of the chambers increased with each story, varying from 5 to 7 cubits, due to the recessed steps in the outer walls of the temple.

• There was a space of 3 cubits (1.55 m) between the chamber wall and the outer wall of the temple on the south side intended for rainwater drainage, like a gutter. In Hebrew, this space is called Beit Horadat HaMayim, which literally translates as "House of the Descent of the Waters." In the Mishnah tractate called Middot (4:7), this space is also called Makom Horadat HaMayim, "the place of the descent of the water." The water then descended to the underground drainage systems and did not seep into the walls of the sacred chambers.

• On the north side of the Temple, there was also a similar space of 3 cubits (1.55 m) containing a "spiral staircase" or "winding stairs" used to access the building's roof. The biblical text of 1 Kin 6:8 (NIV: a stairway; KJV: winding stairs; NABRE: stairs) describes the side chambers of Solomon's Temple as having three stories, with "spiral staircases" (וּבְלוּלִים, u-ve'lulim = "... and winding stairs") that led the priests from the lower story to the middle one, and from the middle to the upper one.

The Hebrew Bible calls these "spiral staircases" lulim (Strong #3883), לולים, the plural of lul (לול), meaning "winding stair", "a spiral step", "to fold back." This is the only time the word appears in the Bible.

In the Targum, the corresponding Aramaic word is u-ve'mesibta (וּבְמִסְבְּתָא), which means "by way of a winding/coiling staircase." The Targums (in Hebrew, Targumim) are Aramaic works dating from the Second Temple period to the early Middle Ages; they provide translations of the Hebrew Old Testament (Tanakh), offer commentary on the Tanakh, the Mishnah (the oral law written down in the 2nd century CE), and the Talmud (6th century CE), and contain many secular Jewish traditions. Targum means 'translation', 'interpretation', or 'paraphrase'.

Thus, in the Second Temple the Hebrew word "mesibah" (מְסִבָּה) was used to designate a spiral staircase or a curved passage, as the term derives from the Hebrew root sabab (סָבַב, Strong #5437), which means: to turn, encircle, encompass, revolve, surround. The Jews used this word ("mesibah") to refer to any staircase or passage that curved, went around an area, or followed a spiral path. It corresponds to the Aramaic "mesibta", and describes a long spiral staircase or tunnel, lit by lamps, from the side chambers of the temple to an underground purification immersion pool [Source: Mishnah_Middot.4.7.2, i.e. the Work: Mishnah, the treatise: Middot chapter 4 paragraph 7 segment or line 2).

The Sages of the Mishnah explained that the mesibah of the Second Temple was intended for the purification of priests who found themselves impure due to a nocturnal emission (involuntary nocturnal discharge of semen) [Source: Mishnah Middot 1.9.1]. Upon becoming ritually impure, a priest had to leave the inner courtyard of the Temple immediately, without entering areas of greater holiness; this spiral staircase led him to the ritual purification pool.

The measurements are as follows:

- Length of the Temple (East-West): 100 cubits (51.8 m)

The wall of the portico – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
The area of the portico – 11 cubits (5.69 m).
The wall separating the portico from the Holy Place – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The Holy Place (Hekhal) – 40 cubits (20.72 m).
Space between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies – In the First Temple there was a real wall in this space, but in the Second Temple there were two curtains 1 cubit apart (51.8 cm).
Holy of Holies – 20 cubits (10.36 m).
The western wall of the temple – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The width of the chambers on the western side – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The width of the wall of the chambers on the western side – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
Total = 100 cubits.

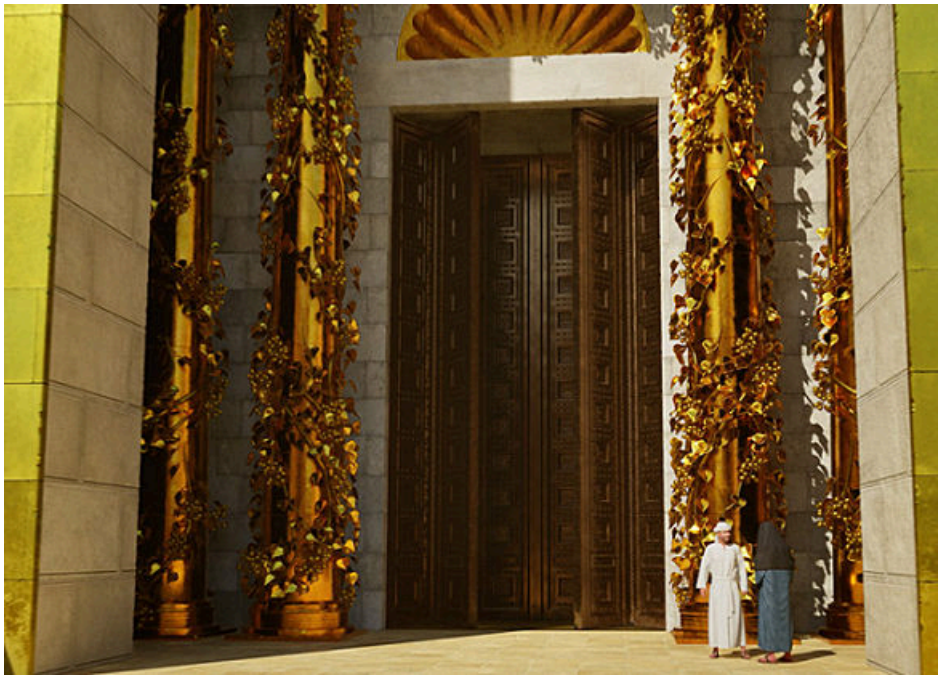
- Temple (width – North-South): 70 cubits (36.26 m)

The outer wall of the temple – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
The width of the mesibbah – 3 cubits (1.554 m).
The wall of the chamber – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
The chamber on the intermediate level – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The wall separating the chamber from the Holy Place (Hekhal) – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The Holy Place (Hekhal) – 20 cubits (10.36 m).
The opposite wall of the Holy Place – 6 cubits (3.108 m).
The south side chamber – 6 cubits (3.108 m).

The chamber wall – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
The House of the Descent of the Waters – 3 cubits (1.554 m).
The outer wall of the temple – 5 cubits (2.59 m).
Total = 70 cubits.

It is interesting to note that, of the seventy cubits, 32 were occupied by walls. The walls were numerous and very thick.

**The Sanctuary Gate**



The gate to the Holy Place was twenty cubits high (10.36 m) and ten cubits wide (5.18 m). The wall at the entrance was five cubits thick (2.59 m). It consisted of two sets of double folding doors. Each of the four doors (the door leaves) was five cubits wide (2.59 m) and ten cubits high (10.36 m). The two sides of the door were fixed on the outside, so that they opened inwards. They were also locked from the inside. Therefore, there was a side door inside the Portico adjacent to this entrance to the Holy Place, so that a priest could access it to lock it.

According to Flavius Josephus, beside this gate, in the Portico area, there were four columns, two on each side (as can be seen in images of coins and synagogues from that time). He also describes a golden vine hanging down from it, which was placed above the door and wrapped around the pillars: “The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven; and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done.” (“Antiquities of the Jews” xv.xi.§ 3). It was decorated with the expensive gifts brought to the temple. When someone donated gold for use in the Sanctuary, his donation was fashioned into the shape of a leaf or cluster of vine. Whenever necessary, some leaves of the vine where removed and the gold was

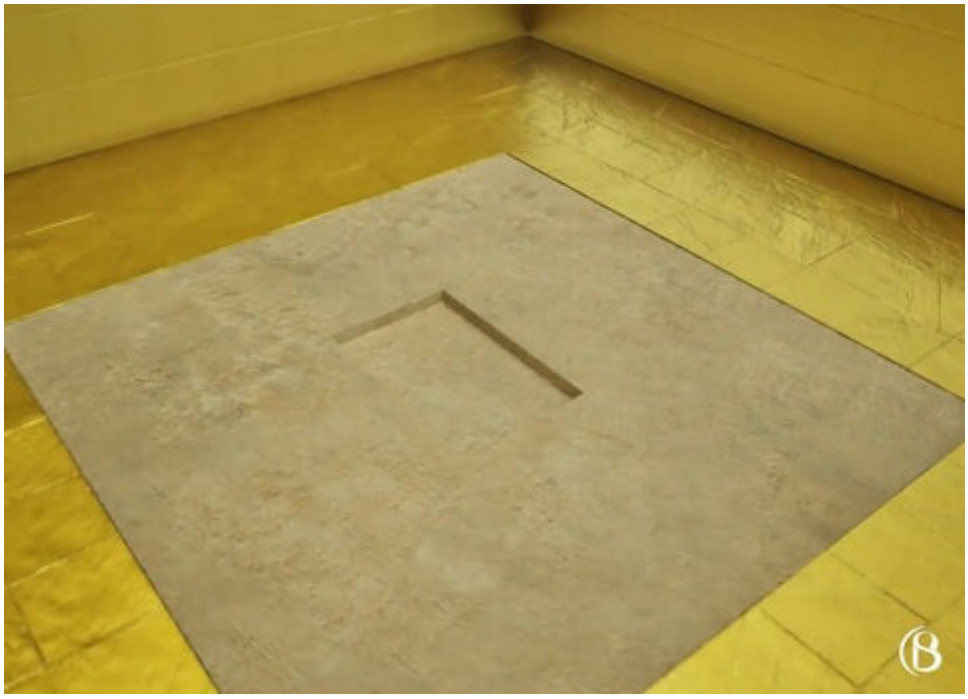
used to finance reforms. On these stairs the priests assembled daily to recite the priestly blessing over the people (Num. 6: 23-27). Behind these double doors was a large curtain of many colors before entering the Holy Place [source: BYU Religious Studies Center; New Testament History, Culture, and Society – LDS].

**The Holy Place**, like the **Holy of Holies**, was covered entirely with gold, and contained the Menorah, the table with the Showbread (or bread of Presence), and the golden altar. Only the priests were allowed to enter to light the lamps and burn incense (like Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist). The lamp was the only source of light in the temple. This Holy Place **(25)** was 40 cubits (20.72 meters) long, 20 cubits (10.36 meters) wide and 40 cubits (20.72 meters) high

A curtain divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place ('the curtain of the temple': Matt. 27: 51; Mark 15: 38 cf. 2 Chr. 3: 14— it was not placed the wooden door that there was between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place in the temple of Solomon). The temple veil consisted of two curtains hung about 1 cubit apart. The outer curtain was rolled up on the south side, and the inner curtain on the north side. They provided an aisle for the high priest to enter the Most Holy Place so that no one else could see into the room. And only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year [Source: BYU Religious Studies Center New Testament History, Culture, and Society – LDS]. And there was no Ark of the Covenant there, just an empty square [Bible-Scenes.com].

The Holy Place (Bible-Scenes.com)

**The Holy of Holies**



The Empty Place, without the Ark of the Covenant

The inner chamber (**the Holy of Holies – 26**) was 20 cubits (10.36 meters) square in the likeness of the Holy Place, and 40 cubits (20.72 meters) high. The interior was covered with hammered gold plates. An empty room above the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies rose to the height of the portico, 100 cubits (51.80 meters), thus making the roof leveled. This room was empty because the Ark of the Covenant was no longer there. A recess in the rock indicated where the Ark had once stood. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice, as was done in the OT, on the Ark of the Covenant.

This structure was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The Menorah, the table with the bread of Presence and other objects (for example, the silver trumpets, as it was said about the Arch of Titus) were taken to Rome in triumph.

**Conclusion – What I could notice from this study**

It is interesting to note that there was an 'addition of details', we can say, and consequently, a deeper spiritual meaning since the Tabernacle of Moses in the desert, Solomon's Temple and the second Temple restored by Herod. There was not only a material enrichment such as the gold and utensils placed in the building and the ornaments and gifts offered even by the Gentile kings. There was also a spiritual meaning to each of these Houses that the Lord separated and consecrated to be with His people on earth, also showing a greater anointing and a greater responsibility to each of His children.

The Tabernacle of Moses, although embellished and enriched with gold brought from Egypt, had a simple linen curtain separating God's people from the things of the world, and a bronze altar and a basin for washing, curtains and garments for those who

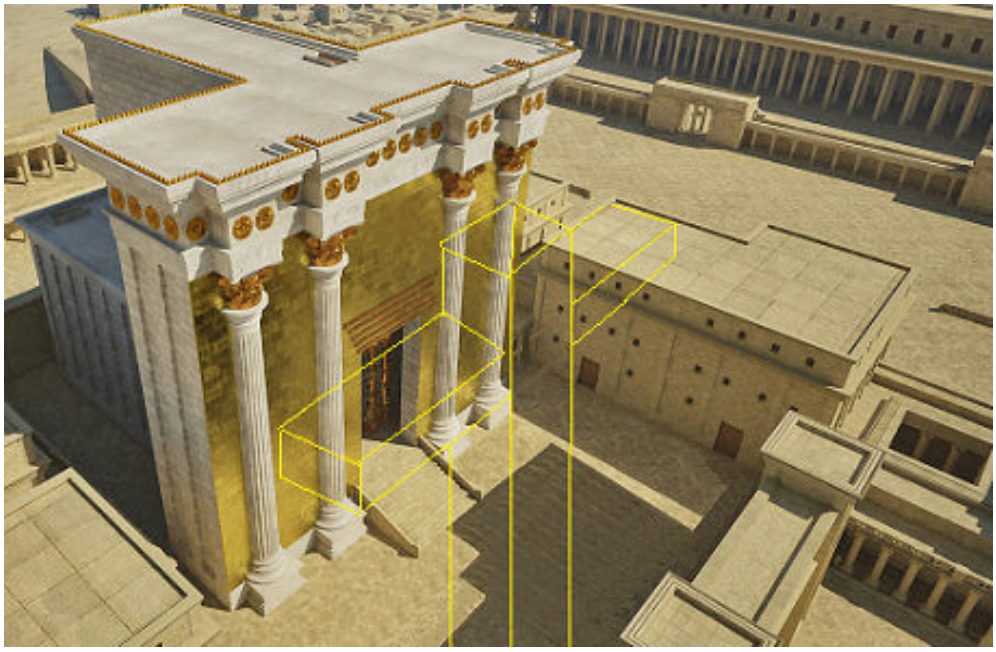
ministered to show what God wanted to show by 'holiness.' When Solomon built the temple, there was already a change: no more curtains, but doors, more gold and larger utensils. The three enclosures (the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place and the outer court) remained, but the Bible does not say that Solomon's Temple had walls around it. The Talmud names four enclosures: the Outer Court, where people gathered to worship (Jews and Gentiles who feared the God of Israel – 1 Kin. 8: 41-43; 2 Chr. 6: 31-32 – my note), the Inner Court or Court of the Priests, and the Temple building itself with the Holy Place (hekhal) and the inner sanctuary called the Holy of Holies or Kodesh HaKodashim or Debir.

When we look at Herod's Temple, for example, we notice a greater difference, not only in its more refined and more fortified structure with strong gates and walls, but also in the sense of greater separation between Jews and non-Jews. It is as if there were, spiritually speaking, more difficulty in reaching the Sanctuary itself, as if God were making it clear to us that there is a need for greater separation in order to approach Him and be His priests on earth.

The more we want to have intimacy with Him, the more we will have to separate ourselves from the things of the world and from sin. This completely changes our concept of Christian life, often leaving aside religious customs and without devotion, because they have become a sad routine, and we begin to seek God with greater intensity and surrender ourselves more to His will and His plan.

A thing that caught my attention in this study was the detail of the priestly service of that time, such as the specifications for gates, chambers, and the duties of each Levite; something so rigid and full of such minutiae, which Jesus condemned so vehemently, because it was not through human strength that one could achieve perfection or salvation. It was not through works that one achieved sanctification or pleased God, but through humility and the simplicity of surrendering to Him, accepting His lordship, His sovereignty, and His propitiatory sacrifice. And while I was meditating on this, an interesting image came to mind: I saw nothing else in the priests' courtyard, only a cross, and looking towards the Sanctuary, all that came to mind was

the memory of the torn curtain and the light of God's throne, available to all those who truly want to make their body, soul, and spirit a living sanctuary for Jesus to dwell in (Jn 2: 19-21; 1 Cor 3: 16-17; 1 Cor 6: 19-20).



Jesus made everything simpler

"Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to

raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body." (Jn. 2: 19-21, NIV).

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3: 16-17).

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." ( Cor. 6: 19-20).

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