


Visualising the Vision

A study of the plan of Ezekiel's temple

Konstantin Stijkel



Cover page: Ashlars of the Western Wall of the temple mount.
In the upper right corner an image of the floor plan of Ezekiel's temple.

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Visualising the Vision

A study of the plan of Ezekiel's temple

De visualisering van het visioen
Een studie naar het plan van Ezechiëls tempel

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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"Describe the temple to the house of Israel"
(Ezek. 43:10)

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Preface

In 2003, I made a study trip to the southern part of Poland. Together with a group of students under the guidance of prof. Simon Schoon, we had an encounter with Jewish life in Poland after the Shoah. Above all a visit to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau was unforgettable. The experiences during this study trip were crucial for my field of study.

Deeply touched by the harsh reality of the Holocaust, I started my study of the book Ezekiel. I saw an analogy between the Holocaust and Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, which he received in the sixth century BCE in Babylon. In the summer of 2007 I finished my Master thesis on the restoration of Israel, a text critical and exegetical study of Ezek. 36:16-37:28. Since then I have been looking for answers to the question on what follows the vision of dry bones in Ezek. 37.

A year later on a trip to Jerusalem and a visit to the famous Wailing Wall, I was impressed by the raw beauty of its massive sustaining walls constructed around the pristine temple mountain. The history and architecture of this huge structure fascinated me. How did it originate and continuously expand and would a temple ever be rebuilt on this very spot, I wondered. So I decided to investigate the history and architecture of the Jerusalem temple. It soon became apparent that the Jerusalem temple was not an isolated phenomenon. This temple is closely linked to the temple building cult in the entire ancient Near East.

My study shows that the plan and arrangement of the first and second temple in Jerusalem in many respects resembled architecture in the region. First I investigated temple building in the ancient Near East. Subsequently I compared it with Israel's Tabernacle, Solomon's, Zerubbabel's and Herod's temple in Jerusalem. After that I examined Ezekiel's envisioned temple on the basis of Ezekiel's vision account. My research shows that there are many similarities but also great differences, with both temple building in the ancient Near East and also preceding Israelite sanctuaries.

It was quite a challenge to investigate biblical sources, archaeological sources and religious concepts relating to temple building in the ancient Near East. A comparison of these data with the enigmatic temple of Ezekiel gives rise to new insights with respect to the plan and arrangement of Ezekiel's envisioned temple.

The title of the dissertation, "Visualising the Vision", indicates that imaging is essential for a proper understanding of Ezekiel's vision account. Text and images together create an overall picture. The vision account has been written as a kind of builder's specification and the distant reader needs illustrations to get a better grip on a text with many difficult architectural terms. Pictures bring vital evidence to light. The illustrations in my dissertation constitute an integral whole with the text. It has given me a better understanding of temple building in the ancient Near East in general and the description of Ezekiel's temple in particular.

During my study of the temple vision I realised that it can be related to the story of the three bricklayers and a person who happened to be passing by. He asked the first bricklayer: What are you doing? He answered: "I am stacking up bricks", the second bricklayer replied: "I am building a wall", and the third cried out: "I am building a cathedral for the glory of God". When I started my examinations of the text I was stacking stones, halfway there arose walls and at the end I became aware that in the vision account of Ezekiel the contours of a cathedral become visible.

It is a privilege at the end of this project to acknowledge those who have contributed to the encouragement, preparation, inspiration, undertaking and completion of the task.

My thanks go to my supervisors, prof. Klaas Spronk, prof. Dineke Houtman and prof. Eveline Staalduine-Sulman under whose tutelage I have learned so much. I am indebted to them for their inspiring and critical supervision but also for their generosity and friendly support. They have supported

me during the progress of writing my doctoral dissertation and helped me to navigate between the many pitfalls on my way. They also encouraged me in taking advantage of my professional expertise. In the last stage of my MA study I was already mentored by prof. Klaas Spronk during the period of writing my master thesis. After finishing my MA he challenged me to carry on studying, so I started my PhD study.

In the last stage of the PhD trajectory prof. Eveline van Staalduine Sulman took over from prof. Dineke Houtman. I am very grateful for her help and supervision in completing my examination.

My former fellow student Nelleke Yakubu-Jackson helped me by correcting my English and Hebrew texts. Her support and translation proposals were indispensable. I am most grateful for the help of them who made it possible to publish my dissertation.

My friend and partner in dialogue Richard Steunenberg took on the responsibility of the design and imprint of my dissertation and Cora Steunenberg-Bischop helped me with scanning pictures and photographs. Without their help I would not have been able to complete the book.

I would also like to mention Jascha Niehof who has helped me when digital problems arose.

I wish to express my gratitude to the former Theological University at Kampen which provided me with a good basis for the biblical study of the Old Testament. The lectures in biblical Hebrew by dr. Jan-Wim Wesselius were a prerequisite for the study of the Old Testament and the examination of the book Ezekiel in particular.

Warm memories I preserve of the discussions on Old Testament issues at the house of prof. Cees Houtman and prof. Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman. I will never forget their hospitality, cakes and soup.

Besides my supervisors and Nelleke Yakubu, many people have contributed to the completion of my dissertation with their remarks, suggestions and critical comments.

I am very grateful to the members of a number of study groups. They were the permanent link between the university and me. As an external PhD student I greatly appreciated them as a sounding-board and source of inspiration.

I also would like to thank the members of the PhD Seminar Biblical Studies, part of the NOSTER curriculum of the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (Nederlandse Onderzoeksschool voor Theologie en Religiewetenschap). This seminar provided the platform to present the first drafts of my research. My special thanks go to prof. Archibald van Wieringen who responded to my final presentation during the Spring PhD Conference in 2016.

Likewise my thanks go to prof. Henk Bakker and the members of the Baptist Seminary's Research-fellowship (Kenniskring) who read the first drafts of the chapters of my dissertation and related items. With their critical remarks they helped me to keep my focus. In this small-scale church family I felt at home, their encouraging support meant a lot to me.

Finally, thanks are due to my foster mother Johanna Maria Fousert-Bijloo who offered me a home, guided me through difficult times and paved the way to my future.

My deepest thanks go to my wife Martha for her consistent love and support over the years. During my studies she never doubted that I would finish successfully. She always stimulated and encouraged me to continue working on my research.

My two daughters Franka and Rita, my four grandchildren and my church family in Almelo have been my greatest fans counting the days of the completion of this project.

Above all I thank God, my heavenly Father who never lost sight of me and granted all I needed. Soli Deo Gloria.

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope of the study

1.1.1. Reading and imagining Ezekiel's temple vision

The topic of this study is the temple vision of Ezekiel with the focus on questions relating to the depiction and meaning of the temple vision. From early Christianity up till now one has tried to clarify the text of the vision account and attempted to reconstruct Jerusalem's temple in accurate pictures. Ezekiel's temple vision is a report that appeals to our imagination.

However, the imagery and eschatological conception of a future temple in a quite different geographical setting causes surprise, for the features of Ezekiel's temple do not correspond to either Solomon's or Herod's temple.

In rabbinical tradition, the difficulty of the book of Ezekiel is a common theme. Rabbi Clorfene argues: "Understanding Ezekiel's vision of a future temple has always been considered as an arduous task. Much of its imagery is obscure and ambiguous, as if the prophet intentionally concealed certain aspects to keep people from misusing the design of God's house".¹ Cognisant of the obscurities in the book, the Christian writer Jerome called it "a labyrinth of God's mysteries".²

So it will be quite a challenge to examine and to clarify some of the secrets of the temple vision. To get a clear picture only from a description of an architectural design is a tall order. The more than two and a half thousand year old text with its many obscure technical terms creates a great number of questions about the appearance of Ezekiel's temple. That is why Milgrom calls Ezekiel's visionary sanctuary "a riddle in spatial design".³

The scope of this study is to unravel some of the secrets of the spatial character of the temple vision. The title of this study "Visualising the vision" hopefully makes clear the purpose as well as the expected result of the research.

1.1.2. Envisaging the visionary character of the book Ezekiel

Visions play an important structural role in the book Ezekiel. The book is introduced as visions of God, **מראות אלוקים** (Ezek 1:1). These visions present not just visionary drama perceived by the eyes of the prophet, but also a distinctive worldview. So Ezekiel's visions may be both a scenic, visual communication and a more general prophetic worldview. The visions of Ezekiel communicate scenery like the vision of the valley of dry bones and the temple vision, but also a worldview encompassing the future of Israel and the nations.

From the beginning to the end of the book, Ezekiel's texts are punctuated with visions. By means of a vision God revealed his plan of the final temple and His return to the prophet. Ezekiel was shown the plan of the future temple and Israel's tribal apportionments around this temple and the New Jerusalem.

The temple vision can be regarded as the climactic scene of the book of Ezekiel. Nevertheless the temple vision is closely related to all preceding prophecies and visions in the book of Ezekiel, encompassing the entire history of Israel's fall, restoration and rise described by the prophet. The temple vision can only be explained and interpreted in the context of Israel's past, present (the exile) and future.

The temple vision is presented as visionary architecture. In this respect it is unique in the Hebrew Bible. For the construction of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon, tangible three dimensional building plans were given. The prophet Ezekiel on the other hand perceived the plan of the future temple as a two-dimensional concept with many open ends. As a result the conceptual dimension of the temple vision offers clues for a creative approach of the biblical text.

¹ Clorfene, *The Messianic Temple*, 12.

² Hieronymus, *Commentatorium in Hiezechielem libri XIV*, 3-4.

³ Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 41.

1.1.3. Architectural perspective of the study

Like many scholars, in studying Ezekiel's temple vision account, I soon ran into the difficulties of enigmatic texts and obscure architectural terms. Many scholars decided to emendate or delete difficult parts of the vision account. However, the text is the only available source of information we have, so we should not give up too soon to find clues to decipher difficult passages and technical terms.

Following Ezekiel in his footsteps and looking over his shoulder I try to see what was shown to him. By approaching the temple vision from an architectural perspective I try to shed new light on questions of translation, imagination and interpretation. Over the span of forty years I have acquired professional experience as a designer and town planner. This gave me insight into the design and development of spatial concepts and provided me with tools needed by depicting spatial conceptions and analysing architectural specifications. The possibility to combine theological knowledge and the professional experience of a town planner was a startling discovery.

Most studies on the book Ezekiel are focused on the text and its transmission (history of the text, redaction critical questions, composition, grammar and exegetical items). In addition to the literary aspects of the text, historical aspects also play an important role. The text becomes reality over and over again. The foundation of the state of Israel and the return of the Jews to their original homeland place recent history in a prophetic perspective. All kind of historical events are set in an eschatological frame of reference.

According to Stevenson we create our own answers, our own rhetoric to respond to our own questions, and to persuade others of our truth.⁴ Likewise we create images of Ezekiel's visionary temple based on our own contemporary perception. That creates the opportunity to reconstruct and depict Ezekiel's temple from an architectural perspective, to reconsider its plan and to achieve a better understanding of the nature and purpose of the temple vision.

1.2. State of the art

Ezekiel's Torah and envisioned temple was often regarded as a program for the post-exilic restoration of the nation of Israel in its own homeland. Some interpreted the passages of Ezek 40-48 as Solomon's temple reconstructed by Zerubbabel or as Herod's temple. Others conceived Ezekiel's temple of purely symbolic, representing the Christian church.

Gese interpretes the vision as a "Verfassungsentwurf" (constitutional draft) on behalf of the future Israel.⁵ Zimmerli envisioned in the constitutional draft "the complete fulfilment of the future which YHWH had promised for Israel".⁶ Years later, Konkel speaks of "Dimensionen eines Entwurfs" (dimensions of a design).⁷ Levenson and Greenberg, in the same line, understand Ezek 40-48 as a program of restoration, one to be grounded on earth.⁸ Others like Joyce and Tuell however, argue that Ezekiel's temple vision was a vision of a heavenly temple that was never intended to be built on earth.

By means of Ezekiel's report of his vision, the exiles could share in this extraordinary experience, seeing in their mind's eye the heavenly temple that Ezekiel saw. Though the earthly temple was no longer there, the heavenly temple will remain forever. Through Ezekiel's words the community of exiles was given access to this eternal, cosmic reality.⁹

Block remarks: "Since the post exilic community appears not to have made any effort to implement Ezekiel's program, many interpret the vision eschatologically". Nevertheless he believes that it seems best to interpret the chapters 40-48 "ideationally". Block uses this expression as opposed to Stevenson's

⁴ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 2.

⁵ Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiel*.

⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 328-329.

⁷ Konkel, "Dimensionen eines Entwurfs", 154-179.

⁸ Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, 161-163; Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration", 181-208.

⁹ Tuell, "Ezekiel 40-42 as Verbal Icon", 649-664.

“territoriality”. According to him, “The issue for the prophet is not physical geography but spiritual reality. As in his earlier vision, historical events are described from a theological viewpoint, and the interpreter’s focus must remain on the ideational value (forming ideas and concepts) of that which is envisioned”.¹⁰

Stevenson rejects both a literal approach that the vision was, in some sense a blueprint, and the view that understands it to be a literary symbol for the presence of God. She argues that a vision of a new social order has been presented, in which YHWH reigns as king over a temple state, and that this vision in its broad outlines was accomplished in the post exilic society.¹¹

The study of Strong challenges the commonly held view that Ezekiel sought to reform the theology of the Jerusalem temple cult, but argues instead that the vision account actually supports the royal or “Zion” theology. This study reasserts the views of scholars such as Levenson and Greenberg, who understood Ezek 40-48 to be a program of restoration in some sense. However, Strong argues that Ezek 40-48 was written for the purpose of being archived for later by the post-exilic community.¹²

Commentators as G. Ch. Aalders and more recently G. K. Beale have understood the vision account as a vision which is best interpreted symbolically. Aalders points out that the church in the New Testament is often referred to as God’s temple.¹³ In this vein, he refers to 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:20-22. In this view the features of temple worship with priests and sacrifices would be seen as spiritual and applied to our worship of God in the present time.

Another view of the vision account, commonly held among dispensationalists as A.C. Gaebelein and R. H. Alexander, is that Ezekiel’s temple will be established after the second coming of Christ and will serve as the worship centre for all people during the “Millennium”.¹⁴ On this view, the one described as the “prince” is often identified as Christ himself, ruling over the millennial kingdom. Alexander considers Ezek 40-48 as referring to the “Millennium” and Rev 21-22 to the eternal state.¹⁵

Despite the respectable amount of literature on the book Ezekiel in general and to a more limited extent the temple vision in particular, relatively little attention has been paid to the visualisation of the temple vision.

A major work in two volumes, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, by Th. A. Busink was published in 1970.¹⁶ This work offers detailed descriptions and architectural illustrations of Ezekiel’s temple and its predecessors.

More recent works, such as *The Quest, Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* by Leen Ritmeyer (2006) and *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era* by Michael Chyutin are focussed on the Herodian and pre-Herodian temples.

Works of Jewish writers, such as *The third Beis HaMikdash* of Shalom Dov Steinberg (5753 / 1993) and *The Messianic Temple, Understanding Ezekiel’s Prophecy* of Chaim Clorefene (2005) only describe Ezekiel’s temple.

Extensive comparisons of Ezekiel’s temple to its predecessors are missing in most commentaries, and in most works similar pictures of Ezekiel’s temple are presented in attached illustrations. In chapter 6.3.4.

¹⁰ Block, *The book of Ezekiel chapters 25-48*, 503, 505.

¹¹ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 149-151.

¹² Strong, “Grounding Ezekiel’s Heavenly Ascent”, 192-211.

¹³ Aalders, *Ezechiël II*, 251.

¹⁴ Dispensationalism is an interpretive system that considers biblical history as divided by God into dispensations or divinely appointed ages. Dispensationalism has two primary distinctives: a consistently literal interpretation of the Bible, especially prophecy, and a view of uniqueness of Israel as separate from the church in God’s program. Classical dispensationalism identifies seven dispensations in God’s plan for humanity.

Millennialism is identified as Christ’s 1,000 year reign on earth before the Last Judgment. The millennium is viewed as the seventh dispensation after the second coming of Christ.

¹⁵ Alexander, *Ezekiel*, 131.

¹⁶ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*.

(fig. 6.3a-6.3e) five representative pictures with the most notable differences in layout are shown. It seems that these pictures have then been copied time and again. With a fresh pair of eyes and from an architectural perspective, this study attempts to present a more nuanced picture of Ezekiel's temple.

1.3. Thesis and research questions

The thesis of this study is: The visualisation of the temple vision account will provide a better understanding of Ezek 40-48. The depiction of the concepts of sacred space and temple architecture in the ancient Near East and Israel is an important tool to produce insight in the plan and architectural features of the vision account.

The main research question in this study is: How should Ezekiel's visionary temple be visualised and clarified?

From the main research question the following secondary questions arise:

- What is meant by a vision?
- Does the temple vision present a blueprint of a future temple or does it have a different meaning?
- Why has the three-dimensional structure been described with two-dimensional instructions? Why does this temple omit vertical dimensions?
- What is meant by the guiding architectural principle of a square layout?
- Why are so many furnishings missing or not described in the vision account?
- What was the background of the increasing graduation of sacred space within the temple compound and the territoriality of the land?
- What can be learned from a comparison with preceding temples in the ancient Near East?
- Does the prophet predict that a real new temple will be built on that very spot in Jerusalem?

1.4. Outline of the study

The study consists of seven chapters with various research topics. The chapters 2, 4 and 5 are concerned with the actual research of the biblical text, literary sources and archaeological evidence. In chapter 6 the plan and arrangement of Ezekiel's temple will be reconsidered and chapter 7 contains the reflection on various questions which have been raised and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. In chapter 3 issues on imagination are addressed. To create a picture of Ezekiel's virtual temple we need illustration material. In order to visualise the vision, illustrations have been added where necessary.

Chapter 1. Introduction

After the remarks on the scope of the study, its thesis and research questions given above, the methodological route has been outlined. The present text has been approached from three different perspectives:

- The rhetorical approach of the text;
- The comparative approach of the layout and architecture of temples in the ancient Near East and Israel;
- The conceptual approach exposing our mental representation of Ezekiel's temple. These approaches are clarified in paragraph 1.5.

The chapter ends with a description of the prophet Ezekiel and the structure of the book bearing his name.

Chapter 2. The Vision report

The text of the vision report can be read as a tour conducted through Ezekiel's visionary temple, but much of the imagery seems to be mysterious and obscure. The meaning of some architectural terms is not clear to us. In many cases scholars have declared parts of the text to be corrupted and have made many proposals for emendation and deleted some clauses, being judged "incomprehensible".

In this study the text of the temple vision has been approached as a text in its *Letztgestalt*, in its last available version i.e. the Masoretic Text according to BHS. The text has been analysed and translated. Difficulties in MT are compared to LXX and in some cases to Targum without making an attempt to describe or analyse all texts variants or to determine a hypothetical *Urtext*.

A very interesting variant text is P⁹⁶⁷ in which Ezek 37 and 40-48 are directly interconnected. In some cases architectural and technical terms, used in the description of Ezekiel's temple, have been reinterpreted and some putative fallacies in the translations have been corrected. In this research an idiolect translation method is employed.

Chapter 3. On imagination

This chapter discusses the relation between vision and image, word and image, as well as imagination and imagery. By visualising the vision the text can be brought to life. The ability to form a picture, however, is preceded by imagination, by our perception and ideation. Our perception or mental image of Ezekiel's temple is the outcome of our representational and creative faculties in reproducing collective memories or new concepts. In the second part of the chapter a review of concepts of the temple displayed in Western history is given.

Chapter 4. Temple building in the ancient Near East

An overview is given of cultural, architectural and religious backgrounds of temple building in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Canaanite region. Different series of theological concepts and the corresponding spatial concepts will be discussed. After an examination of Ezekiel's vision account and a comparison of temple buildings in the ancient Near East and Israel, the various parts of the research can be merged providing an interpretive framework.

It will also be demonstrated that data of literary sources completed with the evidence of archaeological excavations offer clues for a reliable reconstruction of the layout and architecture of ancient Near Eastern temples. The results of this research expose common principles of temple building in the ancient Near Eastern region and Israel.

Chapter 5. Israelite sanctuaries

A description will be given of all Israelite sanctuaries from the Tabernacle to Herod's temple. An accurate investigation of all available biblical as well as extra biblical written sources and archaeological evidence offers fairly good insight into the development of temple building in Israel. Although only fragments of archaeological remains of the temple in Jerusalem are left, an abundance of scriptural and historical records as well as eyewitness accounts from ancient times are available. That enables us to get a view of the temple in its two major building phases to its destruction in two separate historical periods.

Temple building in Israel appears to be closely related to temple ideology, layout and architectural style of other cultures in the ancient Near East.

Chapter 6. Ezekiel's visionary temple

A detailed description will be given of the plan and arrangement of Ezekiel's temple, its architecture, furnishing and ornamentation of the courts, buildings and other structures. Drawings of a reconstruction of the temple building and its surrounding courts will provide a better understanding of the vision report. It will be demonstrated that much of the temple imagery was adopted from reminiscence of earlier sanctuaries, gatehouses and courts in the ancient Near East. The overall plan with its walls, gates, courts and the tripartite arrangement of the sanctuary is comparable to its Israelite predecessors and the current

style of temple building in the Ancient Near East. Therefore, Ezekiel's temple on account of the preceding chapters can be compared to Egyptian, Mesopotamian Canaanite and Israelite temple buildings. However, at the same time Ezekiel's temple differs in many respects from current temple building plans of that time. Some features of Ezekiel's (never built) visionary temple appear to be quite new.

Chapter 7. Ezekiel's temple the ultimate imagination

An interpretive framework will be presented. It will be noted that the temple vision creates dynamic imagination based on new temple ideology. The three approaches of a rhetorical reading of the vision account, a comparison of temple building history in the ancient Near East as well as Israel and a conception of a new temple converge in Ezekiel's temple vision account. The temple vision account provides a spatial concept for the purpose of a future temple. This plan is certainly not intended as a blueprint for a temple to be built in the short term.

Point of departure in the above mentioned three approaches is considering the vision account as a new temple ideology of sacred space in a quite new geographical setting. Ezekiel's temple is a sacred space par excellence after the return of YHWH. The temple as sacred space is embodied by its perfect square form and the consequent separation of the holy from the profane.

List of architectural and technical terms

In an appendix a list of architectural and technical terms used in the vision account has been added. The Hebrew terms are compared to the Greek equivalents. In some cases the Greek version is helpful to clarify uncertain Hebrew terms.

1.5. On method

In scholarly research of the book Ezekiel, the emphasis frequently was on a diachronic analysis, resulting in distinguishing several redactional layers of the text. On the other hand scholars like Greenberg favour a holistic approach advocating the unity of the text.

Between the extremes of the multi layer redaction history of the text proposed by Gese and Zimmerli on the one side, and the unity of the text under the authorship of Ezekiel proposed especially by Greenberg and Haran on the other side, I assume that the redactor(s) of the book Ezekiel not only produced an excellent literary masterpiece of prophetic oracles and visions, but presented also an argument within a specific rhetorical context.

I consider that the text of the vision account indicates an intentional purposive structure within the structure of the whole book. The focus of the rhetorical, the comparative, and the conceptual approach on behalf of the various parts of the research can be briefly summarised as follows:

1.5.1. Rhetorical approach

From the persuasive character of the vision account it is considered that it shows a purposive structure of the text. With respect to this purposive structure of the temple vision account a rhetorical approach, understood in its narrower sense as "the art of persuasion", is appropriate. The persuasive intention of the text takes into account the purpose of the author and the reception of the exilic and distant audiences, as well as the literary design of the text communicated.¹⁷ In this regard it should be noted that the arrangement of the text, its selection of some topics, its omission of other topics, its exact description of some details, and its silence about others are all part of a rhetorical strategy.¹⁸

¹⁷ Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book Ezekiel*, 3.

¹⁸ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 7.

1.5.2. Comparative approach

Additional information is needed to get a full picture of the visionary temple. The plan of Ezekiel's temple resembles in many respects other temples in the ancient Near East and Israel. Many images in Ezekiel's vision are probably taken from his memory of Solomon's destroyed temple.

The comparative approach focuses on the historical evidence of pre-existing temple sites in the ancient Near East and Israel in relation to Ezekiel's temple.

From cultural, architectural and religious backgrounds of temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel, we learn a lot about the layout, design and furnishing of Ezekiel's temple. So a variety of literary sources, completed with the evidence of archaeological excavations, are at our disposal.

By means of a comparative approach, an inventory of temple types and characteristic manifestations will be made to explore the differences and similarities between Ezekiel's virtual temple and earlier temples in the ancient Near East and Israel. The outcome of this part of the research is primarily focused on the representation of real temple sites in a purely reproductive way.

1.5.3. Conceptual approach

The conceptual approach focuses on concepts behind the layout and architecture of Ezekiel's temple. It studies the archetypical temple of Solomon and Ezekiel's virtual temple described in terms of an earthly temple, depicted in spatial dimensions with walls, gatehouses, courts and the temple edifice itself. In this perception the holy and profane are strictly separated.

With the concept of Ezekiel's temple a spatial graduation in holiness is intended, coupled with an increasing limitation of access, expressing the indwelling holiness of YHWH. Ezekiel's vision account provides many clues to this concept of a future temple which is expressed in vague contours on the one hand and in painstaking detail on the other hand.

The emphasis in these three approaches will be on questions about:

- the translation of the texts with special attention to architectonic terms;
- the literary setting of Ezek 40-48 and the interrelation with the whole book Ezekiel;
- the similarities and differences of Ezekiel's temple with respect to previous ancient Near Eastern and Israelite sanctuaries;
- the meaning of sacred space in new temple ideology;
- the art of imagination and the visualisation of Ezekiel's vision account in a reproductive, respectively creative way;
- the reconstruction and depiction of Ezekiel's temple, its courts and other structures;
- the purpose and interpretation of the temple vision.

1.6. Structure of the book Ezekiel

1.6.1. A well ordered, coherent piece of literature

In order to gain proper insight into the theological implications of the temple vision as the final view on Israel's restoration including its blessing to the nations, the concept and structure of the book Ezekiel as a whole and the last part in particular will be examined.

On account of the differences between text and composition of the Hebrew and Greek texts, variant editions of available texts will also be compared (see paragraphs 2.2.3. and 2.2.4.).

Examining the structure of the book Ezekiel, two tracks will be followed:

- The first one focussing on the entire book Ezekiel;
- The second one emphasising the layout and structure of the temple vision.

The most determining structural features are the dating schedule of the records and the cycle of three visions (Ezek 1-3, 8-11 and 40-48) which unify the prophecies of Ezekiel. These visionary chapters bear

witness to consistency and continuity in the structure, themes and language of the book. The book Ezekiel is unified in style and theme. Later chapters of the book establish a link with earlier ones, through quotations, allusions and even explicit references (e.g. Ezek 43:3 refers back to the chapters 1-3 and 8-11). According to Tuell its unity assumes a written text through which a reader can scan backwards and forwards.¹⁹

The book Ezekiel displays a well established and intentional plan. That is why Greenberg argues that the book is “the product of art and intelligent design”.²⁰ The book is arranged in a systematic and thematic fashion and its general thrust reflects continuity and structure. In the composition of the book Ezekiel, two structuring lines can be distinguished:

- The tripartite content of the text, moving from judgement on Israel, to judgement on the nations to hope for Israel;
- The chronological sequence in date references.

1.6.2. Tripartite content of the text

The book Ezekiel breaks down into the three major divisions of the chapters 1-24 (oracles of judgement dating from the period prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 within the call and preparation of the prophet in the chapters 1-3); the chapters 25-32 (oracles against the foreign nations), and the chapters 33-48 (oracles of hope dating from the fall of Jerusalem between 587 and 571).

The tripartite division into the chapters 1-24, 25-32 and 33-48, which is based mostly on the shift of the general content of the oracles, creates a coherent argument that the book Ezekiel has a significant rhetorical function. The book may be identified as a fitting rhetorical response addressing issues in the exilic community. I assume that the original book received its final shape in exile. However, that does not mean that no further questions can be asked about its design and arrangement. Emphasising the focus on the tripartite division of the book Ezekiel, does not perhaps take sufficient account of the final form of the book with its arrangement through surface level literary markers.

A distinction can be made between genre structure and text structure on the one hand, and between conceptual structure and surface structure on the other. The macro level question of the intent and general message of the book should be predominant in the case of a tripartite arrangement. Thus questions can be raised about the reading of the book as a whole, and about the placement of the various literary units in conversation with each other.

Evidently, the book presents itself as a prophetic composition with a highly structured form and an intentional compositional placement of units. Other important literary features, however, can be overlooked by emphasising the division of the chapters on a tripartite macro level. Structuring the book also requires attention to the unique, significant literary features of the text on the surface level, like the frequent use of formulaic expressions.

On the macro level the texts are structured considering their rhetorical purpose and on the surface level particular literary features testify to the unique qualities of prophetic visions and oracles.

With regard to the tripartite arrangement of the book there is another option, namely a fourfold division, distinguishing the chapters 1-3 dealing with the call and commissioning of the prophet prefacing the subsequent three major parts.²¹ On the basis of literary considerations the tripartite and fourfold division have their limitations, but using both approaches (on the macro level and surface level) complementary, we get a full colour picture of the intention of the book and its historical setting.

1.6.3. Chronological sequence of the text

The book Ezekiel is unique among the prophetic books by being arranged in almost perfectly chronological order. By attaching dates to several of his oracles we can follow the course of his ministry through the book. The book offers fourteen date references, thirteen sections created by 13 + 1

¹⁹ Tuell, *Ezekiel*, 2.

²⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 26.

²¹ Block, *Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 23.

supplementary chronological references, viz. Ezekiel 1:1, 1:2 (suppl.), 8:1, 20:1, 24:1, 26:1, 29:1, 29:17, 30:20, 31:1, 32:1, 32:17, 33:21, 40:1. Five of them in the period between the call of the prophet in 593 BC and the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, seven of them connected with his oracles against foreign nations and two final dates, dating the news of the fall of Jerusalem and dating the vision of the restored temple, land and city. Only one date is later than the last one in the book, i.e. the one relating to the collapse of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1).

The distinctive feature of accurate dating in the book Ezekiel might be attributed to the prophet's priestly background with its tendency to precision, but it also served intentionally in setting his prophecies in a historical timeline. That is why the chronological sequence of the prophecies also works effectively alongside the broader structuring of the book.

Many scholars have doubted this argument. Hölscher for example treated the chronological sequence as the device of a later redactor.²² Many after him followed in his redaction critical footsteps.

Cooke noticed that the arrangement of the literary material has not observed the order of time at all closely, rendering the tension between criteria of content and chronology. In his opinion the oracles against the nations do not stand in the chronological order of the book. Nevertheless the plot of the book would go back to Ezekiel himself. According to Cooke the original design was altered by its redactor(s) who collected and rearranged the text on a different plan. So it is not easy to discern whether content is the driving interpretive force in the arrangement of the book or historical / redactional concerns.²³

1.6.4. Chiastic pattern of the book Ezekiel

Within each major part of the book there are subsections which match. The book Ezekiel has a structure which reflects not only the chronological career of the prophet himself. His ministry fell into two phases: 1) The first five years between his call and the fall of Jerusalem, and 2) the fifteen years after that. Besides that we find another timeline in the book Ezekiel indicating judgement, restoration, and a new future. This timeline determines the message of Ezekiel's prophecies and visions and places the temple vision in a historical perspective of past, present and future.

The matching sub units of the book become visible in a chiastic pattern.²⁴ Macro structural analysis of the book Ezekiel reveals a chiastic arrangement for the book as a whole, with the schematic arrangement of A-B-C-D-E-D'-C'-B'-A'

- A. 1-11 YHWH comes to His defiled temple and departs from it
- B. 12-23 Oracles of judgement
- C. 24 Jerusalem besieged
- D. 25-28:10 Oracles against the foreign nations
- E. 28:11-19 Judgement on the prince of Tyre / the fallen cherub
- D'. 29-32 Oracles against the foreign nations
- C'. 33 Jerusalem falls
- B'. 34-39 Oracles of restoration
- A'. 40-48 YHWH comes to the new temple and makes it to His dwelling place

The hypothesis indicates that Ezekiel 40-48 is the counterpart to Ezekiel 1-11, forming the outer members of a detailed chiastic structure encompassing the whole book Ezekiel.

Whereas in Ezekiel 10-11 the destruction of the city and the temple has been described because of the sins of the people, in Ezekiel 40-48 a new plan is launched for a comprehensive restoration. This pattern and structural arrangement reflects Ezekiel's intention to link and counterbalance the chapters 8-11 and 40-43:12, thereby integrating the final vision within the larger framework of his prophecies.

²² Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch*, 108, 147.

²³ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel, XVII-XX*.

²⁴ Davidson, "The chiastic Literary Structure of the Book Ezekiel", 74-76.

Various scholars have pointed out the counterpart relation between the units of Ezek 1-3 and 40-48 and others have noted the same phenomenon between the units of Ezek 8-11 and 40-48. Regarding the phenomenon of chiasmus and the literary structure of the book, it can be noted that the whole unit Ezek 1-11 is distinguished as a discrete literary unit which counterbalances the book's section of Ezek 40-48. Not only the opening and closing sections of the book parallel each other, but other sections also follow an intricate chiasmic pattern.²⁵

It can be concluded that the literary structure of the book Ezekiel enhances the theological drifts in the book. The major focus of Ezekiel upon judgement / restoration is expressed in the literary arrangement of YHWH's investigative judgement, leaving the defiled temple versus renewed relationship entering the new temple (A-A'). Further development is found in chiasmic corresponding oracles of judgement and restoration (B-B'), making a pivotal transition at the siege and fall of Jerusalem (C-C') and looking beyond Israel, to the judgement oracles against her neighbouring nations (D-D').

Within this pattern the chiasmic apex is reached with the judgement upon the fallen cherub (E). But does the Edenic fallen cherub, form the climax of the book Ezekiel in its overall chiasmic structure? Then the inclusion of the foreign nations demonstrates the extension of God's rule and judgement over all the world and the prince of Tyre as the putative personification of the fallen cherub, the root cause of all evil.

With respect to the assumed central positioning of the figure of the king of Tyre it is also important to note that in Ezek 28:24-26, likewise in the centre of the book, a message of hope is inserted. Between the oracles of woe upon the nations sound words of hope. YHWH will show himself holy among the Israelites in the sight of the nations, "and they (the Israelites) will know that I am YHWH their God" (Ezek 28:25-26). That is the constantly recurring adage and the ultimate goal of the whole book of Ezekiel.

1.6.5. Literary framework of Ezekiel's visions

There is a close literary relationship between Ezekiel's visions, matching the chiasmic structure of the book. These are the inaugural vision with the vocation of the prophet (Ezek 1:1-3:15); the judgment of Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:1-11:25); Israel's restoration (Ezek 37) and the vision of the future temple (Ezek.40:1-48:35). For this reason reference is usually made to three related visions because these are termed by the formula **מראות אלהים** (Ezek 1:1; 8:3 and 40:2). Only in these contexts is the **רוח** "spirit" the subject of **נשא** "lift up" with the prophet as object (Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24: 43:5). In this regard Tuell speaks of the "interconnected network of three visions which stand as milestones of Ezekiel's ministry and as key points in the structure of his book".²⁶ These visions, however, are also preceded by another phrase **וּבֵא אֲתִי יְרִיחוּהוּ** (Ezek. 40:1) or **עָלֵי יְרִיחוּהוּ** (Ezek. 37:1).

Although Ezek. 37 is not introduced by the phrase **מראות אלהים** and a date reference like the others, it can also be qualified as a vision. According to the text Ezekiel was brought out by the Spirit of the Lord, indicating also a visionary experience. Consequently, Ezek. 37 is a foundational element of the literary framework of the book Ezekiel, knitting together the four visions in accordance with its overall chiasmic structure, counterbalancing the defiled and the new temple, as well as Israel's fall and restoration. The link between Ezek. 37 and 40-48 is particularly emphasized by P⁹⁶⁷ with its deviating chapter order (see paragraph 2.2.4.).

1.7. Structure of Ezekiel 40-48

1.7.1. The three major sections

The book of Ezekiel ends as it began: with a vision of the glory of YHWH. Like the other visions the last one opens with the entry clause: "the hand of YHWH was upon me".

²⁵ Davidson, "The chiasmic Literary Structure of the Book Ezekiel", 74-76.

²⁶ Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48*, 19.

As has been observed above, the chapters 40-48 are linked up with the chapters 1-3, 8-11 and 37. Not only theme, but also structure joins this vision to the others. The vision gives the precise date of the year, month and day. Also there is talk of "visions of God".

Together with the other visions Ezek 40-48 is the pinnacle of a connected plot line that ties the whole book together. The vision report begins when the hand of the Lord takes the prophet Ezekiel to the land of Israel and sets him on a very high mountain where he sees something that looks like a city (Ezek 40:2) and it ends with the description of a walled-in city called: "YHWH is there" (Ezek 48:35). Scholars in general agree about the three major sections of the chapters 40-48. Each of these three sections is bordered by a transitional unit as given below.²⁷

The visionary temple and its measurements (Ezek 40:1-42:20)

Transitional unit: The return of the glory (43:1-9)

The temple law (43:10-46:24)

Transitional unit: The life giving river (47:1-12)

Boundaries of the land and city (47:13-48:35)

As a whole, the view in Ezek 40-48 enlarges during the course of the vision, from the temple itself to the temple laws and finally the land. The prominence of the temple underscores its centrality to the restoration in the mind's eye of the book's compilers.

Remarkably Ezek 40-48 reflects the same structure that underlines the priestly narrative of the Pentateuch, which proceeds from the erection of the Tabernacle (Exod 25-40) to teaching about sacrifices (Lev 1-Num. 29) and concludes with "idealised" borders of the land (Num 34-35). Both corpora of the Pentateuch and Ezekiel deal with the same subjects.

1.7.2. The chiasmic pattern of Ezekiel 40-48

Just as in the arrangement of the book Ezekiel as a whole, the intricate chiasmic pattern in Ezek 40-48 also becomes visible with the schematic arrangement of A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A'.²⁸

A. 40:1-4 Introduction

B. 40:5-42:20 Survey of the temple complex

C. 43:1-9 Return of the Glory

D. 43:10-46:24 Law of the Temple

C'. 47:1-12 Course of the river of life

B'. 7:13-48:29 Survey of territorial allotments and borders

A'. 48:30-35 Conclusion

The vision report begins with the image of a structure like a city, and ends likewise with the image of a city with twelve gates. The measurement of the temple complex parallels the measurement of the boundaries of the land, and the presence of God manifest in Glory, parallels the life giving presence of God manifest through the river of life. At the centre of this literary structure, alone and unparallelled, is the law code in Ezek 43:10-46:24, called the law of the temple (Ezek 43:12).

The arrangement of Ezek. 40-48 gives a special emphasis to the legislation at its centre.

Notable in the legislative portion is the tension in Ezek 40:44-46 where a distinction is made between the Zadokite altar clergy and the Levite temple clergy. Ezek 44:10-14 explains why. "The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin... They are not to come near to serve me as priests...". Yet I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it". This underlines once more the Holiness of God and his new temple.

²⁷ O'Hare, "Have You Seen, Son of Man?", 3.

²⁸ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel, XVII-XX*.

1.8. Conclusions

In the search for an appropriate interpretation of the vision, most conservative scholars regard Ezekiel's temple as a blueprint for a real physical temple. As opposed to that, contemporary scholars advocate a symbolic reading of the vision account. Between these two extremes a middle ground can be found in the following threefold approach:

- A rhetorical approach of the text of the vision account;
- A comparative approach of temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel;
- A conceptual approach of Ezekiel's future temple.

The purposive well ordered and coherent structure of the text bears witness to the persuasive character of the vision account. The rhetorical expressiveness of the book Ezekiel becomes clearly visible in its overall structure viz. the chiasmic pattern of the book, the chronological sequence of the text, the literary framework of the visions and the repeated use of formulaic expressions.

2. The vision report

A text critical and philological exploration

“There is only one way that gives any hope of eliciting the innate conventions and literary formations of a piece of ancient literature, and that is by listening to it patiently and humbly” (Moshe Greenberg).²⁹

Before investigating the plan and arrangement of Ezekiel's visionary temple, a close examination of the vision report is a first prerequisite. The examination of the text proper consists of a text critical and philological exploration. A translation of the Hebrew text of the various parts of the vision report relating to the description of the plan and arrangement of the visionary temple has been given, supplemented with short notes on grammar and linguistic issues. In an appendix a list of architectural and technical terms has been given. Prior to the actual research of the text its structure and readings are investigated.

2.1. The character of the final vision

2.1.1. A narrative in visual language

The visionary conducted tour through a virtual temple presents itself as an autobiographical narrative, written by the prophet in the first person singular. The prophet Ezekiel made abundant use of visual language, for words only fail to describe the content and scope of Ezekiel's final vision. The way in which the vision has been described challenges our imagination. The expressive force of this vision is unprecedented. Nevertheless, the description of Ezekiel's temple also has been transmitted in a vision report wherein much is obscure and difficult.

The often cryptic descriptions, architectural terms and means of measurement complicate a keen understanding of the text. It is a text full of idiosyncrasies and pitfalls. To get a clear picture of the differences of opinion concerning the character of the temple vision the most significant positions are briefly summed up. Subsequently I put forward a vision from a different point of view. Several scholars assume that the vision is to be interpreted as a building plan in the common literal sense.³⁰ Others observe a wide range of interpretations causing the reader to wonder whether this section should be classified as a visual riddle or visual metaphorical speech.³¹ Still others argue that Ezekiel 40-48 combines both dream and reality.

According to Joyce, the interweaving of the richly visionary temple and the precisely mathematical in these chapters is striking.³² There are also scholars who interpret the temple tour in the vision report in a quite different direction, namely as a heavenly journey.³³ In all these readings one finds hermeneutical clues for an interpretation of the text but according to me, something seems to be overlooked.

What does the text really communicate to the exiles and the readers after them? There is no talk of a building plan, for the third dimension of the temple is missing, otherwise it is more than just a metaphor. It must be something in between.

In visual language the concept of a new temple has been revealed. This concept or first draft voiced in literary architecture describes the contours of a two-dimensional plan for a future temple. (see chapter 7). In many cases this special character of the temple vision has not been recognized sufficiently.

²⁹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 1-20, 21.

³⁰ Clements, *God and Temple*, 106; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 208; Greenberg, “*The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of restoration*”, 182.

³¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 494.

³² Joyce, “*Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40-48*”, 147.

³³ Tuell, *Ezekiel*, 295-296.

The textual form in which the temple vision has been transmitted cannot always be explained literally. With the book Ezekiel one enters the realm that captures imagination.

Related to that the writer C.S Lewis argues that we do not really grasp the meaning of any word or concept until we have a clear image that we can connect with it.³⁴ It was the power of Lewis' story telling that he provided just the right picture, image or metaphor to help the reader grasp the meaning of the argument. That is what we also recognise in Ezekiel's vision report. The desperate exiles needed belief in a new future, so their imagination should be mobilised. The visions of a reviving nation in Ezek. 37 and the concept of a new temple in Ezek. 40-48 were aimed to offer the exiles new hope and expectation. The imagery of Ezekiel's visions is the appropriate instrument for that.

2.1.2. A rhetorical narrative

First of all, it has to be said that the vision account may be considered as a purposely written document that can be labeled as a rhetorical narrative. Rhetoric is used here to effect persuasion. Argument is an important feature in the book Ezekiel. The author and redactor(s) of the book Ezekiel selected, structured and shaped various textual forms in order to carry out specific communicative objectives in relation to his / their intended audience.

The text of the conducted temple tour takes the form of a visual experience in which the narrator is accompanied by an "angelic" guide, i.e. a man with the appearance of bronze (see Ezek 40:3). Two introductory verses illustrate very clearly the reason for this guided tour: "tell" and "describe".

- Ezek. 40:4 "And the man said to me, Son of man, see with your eyes and hear with your ears and set your heart to all I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Describe all that you see to the house of Israel".
- Ezek. 43:10-11 "Son of man, describe the house of Israel the temple, and they may be ashamed of their transgressions and let them measure the plan and when they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrance, its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write in their sight its whole plan and all its instructions so that they keep its whole design and all its regulations by doing them".³⁵

The first speaker is the guide for the tour, the man with the appearance of bronze introduced in Ezek 40:3. The second speaker is YHWH, referred to in chapter 43:4-5 as "the Glory of the YHWH" entering the temple. The role of the narrator, according to the letter of the text the prophet Ezekiel, is to see (ראה) and to describe (כתב) what he has seen. The intended audience of the rhetoric is the house of Israel. The primary task of the narrator is to describe what was shown to him. The narrator is to write it down before the eyes of the House of Israel. This phrase emphasises the visual mode of the narrator's rhetorical task. "The task of the prophet is to produce a written document as the means of persuasion".³⁶

From the context of the temple vision we can infer that Ezekiel intended to teach that YHWH will be the creator, initiator and architect of the visionary temple. This proposition is rooted in the prophet's rhetorical strategy where Mesopotamian motifs could have been used in the process of indicting the nation for covenant violations and temple defilement. This strategy is anchored to Ezekiel's use of shame-honor principles tied to ancient Near Eastern temple construction protocols.³⁷ In order to shame Israel, Ezek 40:1-43:11 has been written to show the Israelites how their sins had not only defiled the

³⁴ Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays*, 265.

³⁵ The lexica translate נגיד variously as "proclaim", "tell", "declare". The primary mode, however, seems to be visual rather than oral, so I prefer "describe".

³⁶ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 14.

³⁷ Peterson, "Ezekiel's Rhetoric", 707-708; Odel *Ezekiel*, 483-484. Margaret Odel has also pointed out the possibilities of Ezekiel's use of ancient Near Eastern motifs when fashioning the temple vision, in particular Essarhaddon's rebuilding of Marduk's temple in Babylon.

Solomonic temple beyond apostasy, but has also dishonoured YHWH before the nations. In particular Ezekiel's reflection on these issues sheds light on the enigmatic passage of Ezek 43:10-11 where YHWH, through his prophet, tells the people to "measure" (גִּדְדוּ) the temple "plan" or "proportion" (תַּכְנִיית) in order that they might be ashamed (כָּלַם) for all their sin.

It can be concluded that the assignment to the narrator in Ezek 43:10 to describe the temple, has been given in order to produce two responses. The first is "to be ashamed" because of Israel's sins and the second is "to measure the proportion (תַּכְנִיית) of the temple". Ezekiel's purposely written rhetorical agenda is clear: "to transform his audience's perceptions of their relationship with YHWH and ultimately to change their behaviour. The rhetorical strategies reflected in the book Ezekiel are both aural and visual, all designed to penetrate the hardened minds of his hearers".³⁸

2.2. The text of the vision report

2.2.1. The text transmitted

The text of the temple vision is presented in the form of a clearly legible visual report, but the sting is in the tail. Ezekiel's temple vision appears to be a real headache file. Scholarship is critical about the coherence of the vision report; particularly the chapters 41 and 42 are under debate. Many readings include uncertainties and many architectural and technical terms are complicated or difficult to understand. Architectural and technical terms in the one case describe the purpose or function of built structures, and in the other the manifestation or shape of structures and ornamentations (function / use versus design / styling). Consequently, solving textual problems in some texts of MT is a tall order. Complexity and difficulty of the text, however, are not the only problems in reading the vision account. Some parts of the text seem to have suffered greatly in transcription and translation.

In frequent occurrences an appeal to the LXX and other versions has to be made for a plausible solution. LXX and Targum in some cases offer valuable additions to MT in elucidating architectural terms. However, we must account for equating the Hebrew and Greek text; a comparison uncovers significant differences.

There are certain divergences between the LXX and MT and also remarkable omissions. Two small sections (Ezek.12:26-28 and 32:25-26) and one large section (Ezek. 36:23c-38) are omitted in P⁹⁶⁷. Probably all three sections were lacking in the Old Greek translation as well as its Hebrew source.³⁹ These differences justify the assumption of two different literary strata or textual families. The Old Greek translation of LXX Ezekiel represents a Hebrew parent text that is (4-5%) shorter than MT.

According to Tov, "this shorter text was slightly expanded in M+ (combined evidence of Masoretic Text, Targum, Syriac Peshitta and Vulgate by various types of elements: exegesis, harmonisation, emphasis, parallel words and new material). Most of the plus elements are explicative-exegetical".⁴⁰ Striking are the differences in the rearrangement of the chapter order (37 before 40) in P⁹⁶⁷ with respect to MT and other LXX texts.

In order to gain insight into the plan and arrangement of Ezekiel's temple the text of the vision report is submitted to a critical examination since the text is our only source of information about this visionary temple. As a matter of course a synchronic approach of the text prevails in this research.

The textual evidence for the Hebrew Bible may be divided into two scribal traditions: the proto-Masoretic (exclusively consonantal) text and the Masoretic (vocalised) text.

³⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 15.

³⁹ Lust, "Major Divergences between LXX and MT in Ezekiel", (*IOSCS, Congres Series*), 5283-92.

⁴⁰ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 299.

The text on which my examinations have been based is the Masoretic Text (MT) in its final stage. The edition used here is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) 1977, edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Where necessary in this study, MT is compared with the non-Masoretic text forms and Greek versions.

The LXX and other versions are very helpful to reconstruct the text of the Masoretes and to correct possible errors in the transmitted texts. LXX Ezekiel is a fairly literal translation.⁴¹ For comparison of complicated texts or obscure architectural terms, A. Rahlfs' editions of the Septuaginta (1935, 2006) have been used.

Lilly suggests in her dissertation *Two Books of Ezekiel* (2012) that it is justified to regard MT and LXX of equal value, identifying a number of meaningful variant readings.⁴² I consider the reading of MT as a starting point, realising that the transmitted texts of MT and LXX show theological reflection at a very early stage. That must have influenced the drafting and translation of the texts.

2.2.2. MT text of Ezekiel

As is witnessed by the textual notes in BHS, many passages in the book Ezekiel are problematic. Characteristic for MT Ezekiel is its difficult Hebrew. That is why BHS has copious emendations. In order to understand the text with all its alterations and possible corruptions, it becomes necessary to examine the Versions and to compare them with the Hebrew text. Fortunately, excellent editions of Greek, Aramaic, Latin, and Syriac versions are at our disposal. In the past some scholars have given pre-eminence to LXX over MT, however, among contemporary scholars there is a decided preference for MT. Nevertheless, Block argues that one cannot assume uncritically that MT always reflects the correct reading. Moreover, we have to deal with many *hapax legomena* in MT.⁴³

The book Ezekiel contains over 130 words that do not occur anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. I have stayed with MT wherever possible, following the versions only when MT is puzzling. There are many unusual forms and some incomprehensible architectural terms. In those cases the versions are helpful for identifying the best reading. Reconsidering difficult terms from the angle of architecture also will give new impetus to a better understanding of the text.

The text of this study has been compared with LXX and in some cases with Targum and Vulgate. The pros and cons of these alternative readings have been weighed and explained. For the sake of meaning in some hypothetical instances I suggest an emendation. Special attention has been paid to Papyrus 967. It is assumed that P⁹⁶⁷ has a Hebrew Vorlage, earlier than MT.

Biblical Hebrew evolved in two successive stages, namely, pre-exilic or Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH) and post-exilic or Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH). But to what extent has that influenced the text of the book Ezekiel?

Rooker proposed that the language of Ezekiel is the best representative of the mediating link between pre-exilic and post-exilic Hebrew and hence the best example of Biblical Hebrew in transition. He analysed the language of Ezekiel, distinguishing between grammatical and lexical features which are due to natural evolution or change and those which are attributable to Aramaic influence.⁴⁴ The Aramaic influence would be particularly significant for the Jews living in the Babylonian exile and would have special relevance for the book Ezekiel. Yet the influence of linguistic changes in the book Ezekiel seems to be limited.

In a review article concerning Hurvitz's *Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew* (2014) this question is evaluated by Rezetko and Naaijer. About the question what is late in Hurvitz's linguistic dating they

⁴¹ Treballe Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 318.

⁴² Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel*.

⁴³ Greenberg, *Ezekiel, 1-20*, 23.

⁴⁴ Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, 177-179.

have a very short answer: “Not much”.⁴⁵ Considering late grammatical features in the book Ezekiel, linguistic changes from the EBH conventions are only found in the areas of orthography, morphology and syntax. Also, there are only a small number of Aramaic peculiarities in the grammar and vocabulary of the book Ezekiel. Rooker identified fifteen of them. But are these grammatical and lexical features LBH? It might even be possible that certain archaic Hebrew forms appearing in early biblical books reappeared in later texts as a result of Aramaic influence. Assuming that Ezekiel himself was the author of the book a late dating of the text would seem strange.

2.2.3. LXX text of Ezekiel

The most prominent uncial manuscripts of LXX Ezekiel are Codex Vaticanus (B) and Alexandrinus (A). In Codex Sinaiticus (a) Ezekiel is missing. B and A add up to the main basis for the text of Ezekiel in the edition of LXX by Rahlfs (1935, revised 2006).

For the clarification of the available Hebrew texts as well as the development of Ezekiel as a prophetic book, the importance of LXX is without question. It provides an abundance of evidence for continuing redaction and theological reflection.

As has already been noted in paragraph 2.2.1, the value of LXX has often been acknowledged in scholarly endeavours to reconstruct difficult clauses and technical terms in the Hebrew text of Ezekiel. Nevertheless, a haphazard use of LXX in an attempt to correct MT is often warned against.

Zimmerli, however, argues that LXX is useful to offer some help towards a recognition of corruptions that have entered into the original text later.⁴⁶ Several Hebrew words were preserved in LXX in their Hebrew or Aramaic form. Some Hebraised Greek words in LXX probably reflect Aramaic forms.

I suggest to treat MT and LXX as variant literary editions. My point of departure for the translation and explanation of the text is MT, using LXX and other versions in comparing difficult or obscure words or phrases.

2.2.4. Variant text of P⁹⁶⁷

The variant text of P⁹⁶⁷ is a very important one for the exegesis of the visions of Israel's restoration in linking these texts with the final temple vision. In the unique chapter order of P⁹⁶⁷ Ezekiel's chapter 37 does not follow chapter 36, but chapter 39. In that papyrus the transposition of chapter 37 means that the resurrection of Israel will take place after the victory over Gog. The majority of scholars cherish the chapter order of MT but others are in favour of P⁹⁶⁷.

The considerations determining their position are very diverse. Scholars like Zimmerli and Greenberg emphasise the compositional unity of the transmitted MT and Block speaks about it in terms of a “coherent program”.⁴⁷ In my view, the last section of chapter 37 presumably is a more fitting introduction to the chapters 40-48 than chapter 39. In Ezek 37:26 we read: “I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore”. On the basis of the last part of Ezek. 37, a correlation between the chapters 37:26-28 and 40-48 relating to the layout of a permanent dwelling place for YHWH can be defended. In this regard Greenberg calls the vision of the restored temple a “proleptic corroboration” of God's promises, found in Ezek 37:24b-29.⁴⁸

After briefly reviewing scholarly arguments about the (re)arrangement of ch. 37 before 40-48, I want to clarify my position weighing up the pros and cons of MT and P⁹⁶⁷.

Some scholars enter a plea for the unique character and significance of P⁹⁶⁷ because of its early date (pre-Hexaplaric) and its variant reading. According to Lust the sequence of the Gog battle before the vision of the valley of dry bones in P⁹⁶⁷ displays theological and literary coherence.⁴⁹ He specifically

⁴⁵ Rezetko, Naajjer, “An Alternative Approach to the Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew”, 38.

⁴⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 75.

⁴⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 498.

⁴⁸ Greenberg, “The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration”, 182.

⁴⁹ Lust, “Ezekiel 36-40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript”, 517-533.

demonstrates the significance of P⁹⁶⁷ as a variant edition of Ezekiel's eschatology. The chapter order 38-39-37 of P⁹⁶⁷ would be the more original. MT would display a later arrangement of these chapters, rejecting the idea that a resurrection followed the eschatological battle.

With the parabiblical 4Q Pseudo-Ezekiel in view important Jewish evidence has been added for the reading of Ezek 37 in eschatological terms of resurrection belief alongside prophetic restoration theology. Kreuzer argues that the transposition of chapter 37 is explicable. The rearranged chapter order of P⁹⁶⁷, in which chapter 37 has been inserted after the prophecies about Gog, must indicate an underlying new interpretation of the vision of resuscitation of the dry bones. In this scenario the battle of Gog describes the final battle with God's enemies. So the assumption of the resurrection of the dead has to be seen as the change-over from the period of struggle and disaster, to the new era of God's eternal salvation.

Lilly reviewed the work of Lust and Crane providing an important foundation for further understandings of P⁹⁶⁷ as a literary edition different from MT. Especially important in her opinion are Lust's conclusions about the different eschatological horizons and the apocalyptic versus historicising elements. Crane's literary analysis highlights important differences regarding Israel's restoration along with a stimulating discussion of Davidic "messianism".⁵⁰

The aforementioned authors defend their position on the basis of literary and theological arguments. As pieces of literature MT as well as P⁹⁶⁷ are editions in their own right. In MT a historicist apocalyptic reading with the battle of Gog seems to prevail, whereas in P⁹⁶⁷ the eschatological perspective of Israel's restoration and a new temple has been accentuated.

Concerning the rebuilding of the temple I support the eschatological reading. The chapter order of P⁹⁶⁷ illustrates the purpose of this reading, to shepherd and unify the people for the future building of the temple. I favour a reading in which the resurrection of Israel as a nation and the building of a new temple are linked in a complete program of restoration.

I conclude that Ezek 37:15-28 represents the prelude to the temple vision. The supposition of the interconnection between Ezek 37 and Ezek 40-48 sheds new light on the interpretation of Israel's restoration. In my opinion the two visions in P⁹⁶⁷ were purposely put together and visually interconnected.

2.3. Studying the text of the vision report

2.3.1. The text examined

The difficulties which biblical scholars face in translating and interpreting the temple vision are various. Translational activities almost inevitably are the result of many conjectures and emendations. Observing the differences between MT and LXX we also have to consider the Hellenistic environment in which the Hebrew text was translated into Greek. In view of this environment, translators interpreted many architectural and technical terms for architecture in their description of the temple in terms of contemporary Greek architecture, updating the world of the source text.

The temple tour of the prophet is a narration from the distant past. Therefore it has been described in this study in the past tense, in a narrative way. The description of the physical structure of the future temple and its measurements, however, have been described in the future tense, in a discursive way. After all, the prophet saw the concept of the contours of a promised temple to be built in times to come and there is still much food for thought concerning it.

The texts of the visionreport will be translated below and provided with short notes with special attention to architectural and technical terms. Not the whole temple vision in the chapters 40-48 has been

⁵⁰ Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel*, 4, 306.

examined. In particular, I have examined the four parts of the temple vision relating to the description of the physical structures shown to Ezekiel, viz.:

- Ezek 40:1-42:20; description of the temple compound in all its parts;
- Ezek 43:10-11; assignment to Ezekiel to tell the people about the plan and arrangement of the temple that was shown to him;
- Ezek 43:13-17; description of the burnt offering altar;
- Ezek 46:19-24; description of the cooking facilities for the benefit of the priests and the worshipping laity.

2.3.2 Translation principles

All translation principles of the biblical text fall somewhere between the opposites of a form-focussed “literal” rendition of the text and a meaning oriented “paraphrastic” version of the text (ad verbum versus ad sensum). We are faced with a choice between accuracy and readability.

It will be clear that in scholarly research a more literal, idiolect translation prevails, for we are acquainted with the original languages. Following M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig and in their footsteps the adherents of the so called “Amsterdam School” and the Societas Hebraica Amstelodensis, I favour an idiolect translation in which the form of the original text is rendered in English as closely as possible because of the relation between form and content.

As I have indicated above, the starting point in my study is the Hebrew text transmitted in MT, in principle without emendations. The currently renewed respect for MT among scholars such as Greenberg and Block is reflected in my attempt to translate difficult Hebrew passages rather than deciding on emendations or to consult an alternative reading in the ancient versions. In difficult cases the LXX and other sources will be consulted to shed more light on the text, or if necessary, to support a divergence from MT.

A translation of the MT into current English is necessary in order to compare the differences between all kinds of translations. In order to get a readable translation, the common English syntax is applied. Connecting or single explanatory words are added between round brackets. Critical observations have been made in short notes or annotations on the Hebrew text, in order to provide a deeper understanding into grammatical features and philological issues. For an overview of architectural and technical terms an appendix has been added. In this the Hebrew and Greek versions have been compared.

2.4. A text critical and philological exploration

2.4.1. Ezekiel 40:1-47

40:1

בעשרים וחמש שנה לגלותנו בראש השנה בעשור לחדש בארבע עשרה שנה
אחר אשר הכתה העיר בעצם היום הזה היתה עלי ידיהוה ויבא אתי שמה:

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, in the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day the hand of YHWH was upon me and He brought me there.

- LXX begins with an introductory *καὶ ἐγένετο* as in Ezek 1:1 and 8:1, “and it happened / came to pass”.
- A double date has been given, marked both by the years of the exile and by the years since Jerusalem’s fall. Referred is to “the beginning of the year” (*בראש השנה*). LXX reads *ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ μηνί* “in the first month”. We do not know for sure what is meant here. Does the text refer to spring, (the month Nisan), and so to 19 April 573 BCE, or to autumn, (the month Tishri) to 22 October? The date could refer to

Lev 25:9-10 according to which the Year of Jubilee was proclaimed by trumpet blasts on the tenth day of the seventh month.⁵¹

- "The hand of YHWH was upon me", which echoes less forcefully than the hand falling on him in Ezek 8:1. His conveyance (לְבִיאָה) to the site compares with 37:1 where he is carried off (לְדַצִּיאָה) to the valley of dry bones.⁵²

40:2

במראות אלהים הביאני אל־ארץ ישראל ויניחני אל־הר גבה מאד ועליו
כמבנה־עיר מנגב:

In visions of God He brought me to the land of Israel and He set me down on a very high mountain on which (was) something like a structure of a city on the south side.

- **בְּמַרְאֵי**, "in visions of God" (see also Ezek 1:1 and 8:3). LXX reads ἐν ὁράσει θεοῦ, sg. instead of pl.
- By the hand of YHWH, Ezekiel was brought to the land of Israel and set down on a very high mountain (because of Ezek 20:40 this seems to refer to Mount Moriah), on the southern slope (**מִנְגֵבָה**) (LXX ἀπεναντίας, opposite it) of which he noticed a city-like structure (**כְּמִבְנֵי־עִיר**, hapax legomenon). כְּ comparationis indicates that the prophet did not see a real city. Notably both toponymous sites are unnamed. According to Block the characterisation of the structure (**מִבְנֵי**) is intentional.⁵³ In my opinion the text expresses a visual experience, rendered in metaphorical speech referring to a future reality.

40:3

ויביא אותי שמה והנה־איש מראהו כמראה נחשת ופתיל־פשתים בידו וקנה המדה
והוא עמד בשער:

And He had brought me there, and see, a man whose appearance looked like the appearance of copper, with a linen cord in his hand and a measuring rod, and he stood in the gate.

The equipment of the man (functioning as angelus interpres) was a cord (**פְּתִיל־פְּשְׁתִּים**) for long measurements and a reed (**קֶנֶד, דְּמִדָּה**) like a carpenter's stick for shorter ones.⁵⁴

40:4

וידבר אלי האיש בן־אדם ראה בעיניך ובאזניך שמע ושים לבך לכל אשר־אני מראה אותך
כי למען הראותכה הבאתה הנה הגד את־כל־אשר־אתה ראה לבית ישראל:

And the man said to me: "Son of man, see with your eyes and with your ears hear and set your heart upon all that I am going to show you. For to show you, you have been brought here. Describe all that you see to the house of Israel.

- LXX opens the sentence with the question: ἑώρακας υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου "have you seen son of man". It ends with three times the verb δείκνυμι "to show" in stead of MT **ראה** and **נגד**, see and describe.

- **לְבִיאָה** "you have been brought here", is the only known occurrence of the hophal form of **בִּיאָה**. The LXX translated the hophal as a qal εἰσελήλυθας "you came in".

In visions Ezekiel has been brought from Babylonia to Jerusalem for he would tell the exiles what he has been shown. "You have been brought there to show you". The hophal refers back to the hiphil in the verses 1, 2 and 3. The comparison with the wording of God's command to Moses "all I am going to

⁵¹ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 110.

⁵² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 514.

⁵³ Block, *ibid.*, 514.

⁵⁴ Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 65.

show you" (Exod 25:9) is striking, except that Moses is commanded "so shall you do" whereas Ezekiel only is commanded "describe everything you see to the house of Israel".⁵⁵

40:5

והנה חומה מחוץ לבית סביב וביד האיש קנה המדה שש־אמות באמה וטפח
וימד את־רחב הבנין קנה אחד וקומה קנה אחד:

And see, a wall on the outside all around the house, and in the hand of the man a measuring rod of six cubits according to a cubit and a handbreadth, and he measured the width of the structure: one rod, and the height: one rod.

- The angelic interpreter / guide measured the wall with a *קנה* rod. Such a rod is 6 cubits long. In the text of the vision account the length of a cubit and a handbreadth is used to describe the long cubit.

The normal cubit (six handbreadths) has been estimated at 44.6 cm. Since the ratio of the normal to the long cubit was 6:7, the cubit used here approximated 52 cm. which is remarkably close to the Egyptian long or royal cubit of 52.3 cm.⁵⁶ This implies that the wall around the temple is 6x52 cm = 3.12m high and also 3.12m thick.

- *בית* "house", has various meanings in Hebrew. Sometimes the entire temple complex or temenos is meant, sometimes the temple itself or the temple house and its courts. In the text of vs. 5 *tyb* seems to refer to the entire temple complex. The complex is enclosed all around by a wall. Ezekiel calls it a *בנין*, a structure.

40:6

ויבוא אל־שער אשר פניו דרך הקדימה ויעל במעלותו וימד את־סף השער
קנה אחד רחב ואת סף אחד קנה אחד רחב:

Then he went into the gate which faces east (see fig. 2.1 a) and he climbed its steps and measured the threshold of the gate, one rod wide and another threshold, one rod wide (see fig. 6.10).

LXX does not render *וייעל* "and he climbed", LXX harmonises the text with vss. 22 and 26 by reading *ἐν ἑπτά ἀναβαθμοῖς* "seven steps". The outer court and its gatehouses are built about 4 cubits higher than the surrounding area.

40:7

והתא קנה אחד ארך וקנה אחד רחב ובין התאים חמש אמות וסף השער מאצל
אולם השער מהבית קנה אחד:

And the alcove (is) one rod long, and one rod wide and (the structure) between the alcoves, five cubits and the (second) threshold of the gatehouse beside the vestibule of the gate(house) on the inside one rod.

- The intervening structures between the alcoves are not rendered. There is no object in MT and in the translations of the KJV and NASB only a measurement has been given. In the translation of the NIV the word "space" has been added and in the NRSV translation "projecting walls". I think the intervening structures are to be understood as supports on a five cubits square foundation (see the note below about "splayed openings").

- The varying use of *אולם* in vs. 7 and *אולם* in vs. 10 is very disturbing. Cooke suggests a change in pronunciation which was coming into use, but I am convinced that there must be a visible difference. I suppose *אולם* or *אולם* is meant to be a vestibule and *אולם* or *אילים* (vs. 14) must be columns or supports.

⁵⁵ Milgrom. Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 65.

⁵⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 517.

In this way we get a comprehensible and meaningful translation. The LXX renders סף "threshold" as αἰλαμ, apparently confusing this structural feature with the אֵילִם, the columns of the vestibule in vss. 9-10.

- Are the alcoves flanked by side walls or something else? In vss. 10 and 16 columns / supports are mentioned. But what do they look like? According to Cooke the אֵילִם or intervening wall space between the alcoves should have "splayed openings".⁵⁷ Referring to vs.16 Targ adds a remarkable feature: "on the top of each support / column was a capital or crown."⁵⁸ MT 40:16 reads דַּמְנִיִּים, palmettes or palm trees. Targ however, reads hrtwk (> trtk). In NIDOTTE the Hebrew lexeme כַּתֶּרֶת is defined as an architectural term being the capital of a column and כַּתֶּר as an ornament or crown.⁵⁹

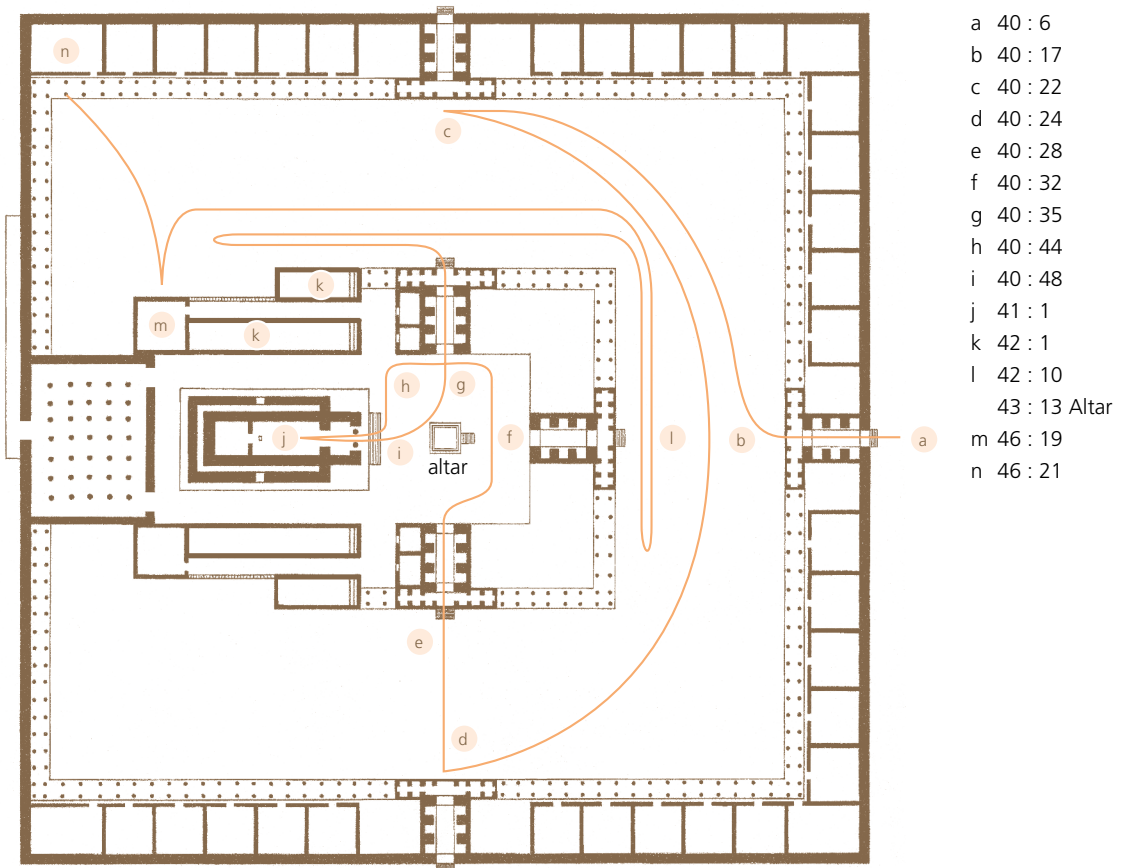


fig. 2.1 Ezekiel's temple tour, displayed in numbered order (Drawn by autor)

40:8
וַיִּמַד אֶת-אֱלֹהִים הַשַּׁעַר מֵהַבַּיִת קִנָּה אֶחָד:

And he measured the vestibule of the gatehouse, one rod.

⁵⁷ Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 432, fig.1.

⁵⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 517.

⁵⁹ Block, *ibid.*, 519; HALOT 506-507, NIDOTTE, 2, 744-745.

Intended are the measurements of the intervening walls that separate the gateway from the vestibule on the inside of the gatehouse.

40:9

וימד את־אלם השער שמננה אמות ואילו שתים אמות ואלם השער מהבית:

And he measured the vestibule of the gate eight cubits, and its supports two cubits and the vestibule on the inside.

In Ezek. 40:9 and 10 there is talk of *אֵיל* sg. and *אֵילִם* pl. of the porch / vestibule, derived from *אָל*. This lexeme has been translated in various ways as door post, and jamb (KJV; NIV) and even projecting wall. In my opinion these are incorrect translations, for doorposts or jambs are part of a frame. For that reason, we read *מַזְוִיזֹת* as in Exod 12:22 and Ezek 41:21, "doorposts" KJV; "doorframe" NIV; "pilasters" NRSV; All these instances give no unambiguous translation. *אֵילִם* from *אָל* mean gate posts or supports in the shape of massive cuboid columns.

40:10

ותאי השער דרך הקדים שלשה מפה ושלשה מפה מדה אחת לשלשתם ומדה אחת לאילם מפה ומפו:

And the alcoves of the gate eastward, three on this side and three on that side, all three of them (have) one measurement and also the columns on this side and on that side.

40:11

וימד את־רחב פתח־השער עשר אמות ארך השער שלוש עשרה אמות:

And he measured the width of the entrance of the gate, ten cubits and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.

אַרְכָּה usually denotes length, but here the full width of the gateway is intended.

40:12

וגבול לפני התאות אמה אחת ואמה־אחת גבול מפה והתא שש־אמות מפה ושש אמות מפו:

And (there is) a partition in front of the alcoves of one cubit, and one cubit is the partition on that side. And the alcoves (measure) six cubits on this side and six cubits on that side.

גְּבוּל in general means boundary / border. In this case *גְּבוּל* probably denotes a low ledge.

40:13

וימד את־השער מגג התא לגגו רחב עשרים וחמש אמות פתח נגד פתח:

And he measured the gate from the roof of the alcove to its roof, a width of twenty-five cubits, one entrance opposite to entrance.

מִגַּג הַתּוֹא לְגַג Lit. "from the roof of the alcove to its roof". The Hebrew word *גַּג* (roof) in LXX is rendered as *τοιχος*, (frequently translated as wall).⁶⁰ In my perception a more appropriate rendering because the measurements were apparently taken from the points at which the roof and the walls met, in other words from the eaves of the one side to the opposite side.

⁶⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 518.

פּוֹתָהּ נֶגֶד פּוֹתָהּ, "entrance opposite to entrance" is an explanatory note indicating the full width, alcove opposite to alcove, inside the gate building.

40:14

ויעש את־אילים ששים אמה ואל־איל החצר השער סביב סביב:

And he made the supports (of the vestibule), sixty cubits towards the support(s) of the court all around the gate(s).

- Interpreting *ויעש* loosely equivalent to *ויימד* which the context requires.⁶¹

- There is much confusion about the meaning of *אילים*. According to NIDOTTE the word *איל* is rare and is often difficult to identify precisely. In the Hebrew Bible *איל* was used as vocabulary for structures or architectural features. There has been a recent suggestion that *איל* refers to a portico in the temple.⁶² Block remarks that "ēlim" looks like a pl. of "ēl", (sg. cs. of *איל*, *איל*) "supports", but according to him this is difficult in the context.⁶³ Zimmerli and Gese delete the entire verse as a corrupt combination of elements from vss. 15 and 16. I think *אילים* could be derived from *איל*, an architectural term rendered by support, column, pillar of an archway.⁶⁴

A column, used in the context of the temple vision, is a massive cuboid support. A pillar, however, is a cylindrical support and a pilaster or pier is a column protruding from a wall. I prefer translating *איל* as "column" or "support". In vs. 14 the *אילים* are the columns of a broadened vestibule.

40:15

ועל פני השער היאתון על־לפני אלם השער הפנימי חמשים אמה:

...and from the face of the gate outside unto the face of the vestibule of the inner gate (is) fifty cubits.

The meaning of the hapax *דיארתון* is uncertain.⁶⁵ The context and LXX (ξῆθευ) suggest a reference to the outer side of the gatehouse.⁶⁶ According to Block it could be an architectural term, possibly a moulding or decorative frame.⁶⁷

40:16

וחלונות אטמות אל־התאים ואל אליהמה לפנימה לשער סביב סביב וכן
לאלמות וחלונות סביב סביב לפנימה ואל־איל תמרים:

And (there are) apertures at the alcoves and at their side walls inside the gate all around, and also the vestibules (have) apertures all around inward and on (each) support (are) palm trees.

- *חלונות אטמות* could be narrow openings / apertures, interpreted by Vulgate as *fenestra obliquas*, windows open to the inside, narrow on the outside (parapet openings or loopholes). The function of these apertures has been misunderstood (see paragraph 6.3.8). The gatehouses will not be built for defence purposes, consequently *חלונות אטמות* must be barred or latticed openings in the outside walls of the gatehouses, needed for allowing light into the alcoves.

⁶¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 518.

⁶² NIDOTTE, 1, 679-680.

⁶³ Block, *ibid.*, 518.

⁶⁴ HALOT, 40.

⁶⁵ HALOT, 382.

⁶⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 335.

⁶⁷ Block, *ibid.*, 519.

- *אלמות והלונות*, however, are to be characterised as the openings between the “pilastered” sidewalls inside the gatehouses, walls probably with small niches used for storage.
- “and on each support (are ornaments of) palm trees”. Targ adds: “and on the top on each support was a crown” (see remark to vs. 7).

40:17

ויביאני אל־החצר החיצונה והנה לשכות ורצפה עשוי להצר סביב סביב
שלשים לשכות אל־הרצפה:

And he brought me into the outer court (see fig. 2.1 b) and see, chambers and a pavement, made all around the court, thirty chambers on the pavement.

- Referring to 42:6 the *לשכות* “chambers” are halls shaped as “pillared” porticoes.⁶⁸ LXX reads: *περίστυλα κύκλω τῆς αὐλῆς*, referring to a roofed colonnade around the outer court.
- In 2 Chron 7:3 *רצפה* is used of the pavement upon which the people bowed down to honor YHWH. In Esth 1:6 it denotes a mosaic floor in the palace of the Persian king Ahasuerus.

40:18

והרצפה אל־כתף השערים לעמת ארך השערים הרצפה התחתונה:

And the pavement at the shoulder of the the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates, (is) the lower pavement.

- “The lower pavement” indicates that there must be also a higher pavement. That could be the pavement of the elevated inner court. Block’s suggestion that the term *רצפה*, “pavement” implies two levels in the outer court seems to me inaccurate.⁶⁹ I suppose the *רצפה* is not a platform, but the stone pavement of 100 cubits wide in the entire outer court. Many depict the *רצפה* as the (elevated) floor of the worshipper’s rooms flanking the outer court. Moreover, the outer court was measured from the wall of the outer court to the wall around the inner court.
- *אל־כתף השערים* “At the shoulder of the gates” means “at the side of”.

40:19

וימד רחב מלפני השער התחתונה לפני החצר הפנימי מחוץ מאה אמה
הקדים והצפון:

And he measured the width from the front face of the lower gate to the front face of the inner court outwards, hundred cubits (toward) the east and the north.

הקדים והצפון “(toward) the east and the north” is usually deleted as a marginal gloss. LXX harmonises the fragment with vs. 24 by reading the guidance formula “and he brought me (*καὶ εἰσήγαγέν με*) to the north.”⁷⁰

40:20

והשער אשר פניו דרך הצפון להחצר החצונה ממד ארכו ורחבו:

And he measured the gate facing toward the north (see fig. 2.1 c) from the outer court, its length and width.

⁶⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 524.

⁶⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 524.

⁷⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 524.

40:21

ותאו שלושה מפו ושלושה מפו ואילו ואלמו היה כמדת השער הראשון חמשים
אמה ארכו ורחב חמש ועשרים באמה:

And its alcoves, three on this side and three on that side, and its supports and its vestibule are like the measurement(s) of the first gate. Its length fifty cubit(s) and its width twenty-five cubit(s).

40:22

וחלונו ואלמו ותמרו השער אשר פניו דרך הקדים ובמעלות שבע
יעל־בו אילמו לפניהם:

And its apertures and its vestibule and its palm trees (have) the same measurement(s) as the gate facing towards the east and by seven steps one climbs up to it and its porch is in front of them.

- MT *מדת* "measurement" is not attested by LXX. Since there is no reference to the dimensions of the apertures and the palm trees of the east gate, the addition *מדת* seems according to Zimmerli meaningless from the point of view of content.⁷¹ I am not seeing the problem, the proportions of the vestibules and supports are equal in all gatehouses (see vs. 21). So we may assume that its apertures and ornamentations have also the same measurements. I concur with the text of MT.

40:23

ושער לחצר הפנימי נגד השער לצפון ולקדים וימד משער אל־שער מאה אמה:

And the gate to the inner court (lies) opposite the gate on the north and on the east, and he measured from gate to gate: one hundred cubit(s).

40:24

ויולכני דרך הדרום והנה־שער דרך הדרום ומדד אילו ואילמו כמדות האלה:

Then he led me towards the south (side) and see, a gate toward the south (see fig. 2.1 d) and he measured its supports and its vestibule corresponding to these measurements.

אילמו derived from *אלם* vestibule, also indicating a "columned" (*אילים*) vestibule.

40:25

וחלונים לו ולאילמו סביב סביב כהחלונות האלה חמשים אמה ארך ורחב
חמש ועשרים אמה:

And (there are) apertures in it and in the vestibule all around like the other apertures. The length (is) fifty cubit(s) and the width twenty-five cubit(s).

40:26

ומעלות שבעה עלותו ואלמו כלפניהם ותמרים לו אחד מפו ואחד מפו אל־אילו:

And seven steps go up to it and its vestibule in front of them with palm trees on it, one on this side and one on that side on its supports.

⁷¹ Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 339.

ומעלות שבה עלוהו is difficult; *עלה* never occurs elsewhere in this way. Aalders translates "opgang" (access / entrance).⁷²

40:27

ושער לחצר הפנימי דרך הדרום וימד משער אל־השער דרך הדרום מאה אמות:

And (there is) a gate on the inner court toward the south, and he measured from gate to gate toward the south: a hundred cubits.

40:28

ויביאני אל־חצר הפנימי בשער הדרום וימד את־השער הדרום כמדות האלה:

Then he brought me to the inner court in the south gate (see fig. 2.1 e), and he measured the south gate in conformity with the others.

In the second clause of vs. 28 LXX drops MT's דרדרים "the southern", probably the result of dittography.

40:29

ותאו ואילו ואלמו כמדות האלה וחלונות לו ולא־למו סביב סביב המשים
אמה ארך ורחב עשרים וחמש אמות:

And its alcoves, its columns and its vestibule (are) in conformity with the measurements of the others, and (there are) apertures in it and in its vestibule all around. Fifty cubit(s) (is) the length and the width twenty-five cubits.

In my opinion "its columns" (אילו) in the gatehouses can be interpreted as "pilastered" sidewalls. (see fig. 6.10).

40:30

ואלמות סביב סביב ארך חמש ועשרים אמה ורחב חמש אמות:

...and (the) vestibules all around (have) a length of twenty-five cubit(s) and a width of five cubits.

According to Block, vs. 30 is suspect for several reasons: (1) it is missing in LXX; (2) a counterpart is lacking in the description of the other two gates; (3) the pl. אלמות is inappropriate for the context; (4) the dimensions of the vestibules are inconsistent with previous statements.⁷³ Block suspects dittography. Vs. 30 looks like a parenthetical clause. It is also possible that, however, that אלמות refers to the columned vestibules of the three gatehouses to the inner court. So there is no need for deleting or emending this verse; admittedly the measurements are questionable. According to vs. 9 the width of the vestibule is 8 cubits. (Adding up the measurements in the length of gatehouse, these 8 cubits are needed to reach a total length of 50 cubits).

40:31

ואלמו אל־חצר החצונה ותמרים אל־אילו ומעלות שמונה מעלו:

And its vestibule faces the outer court and palm trees are on its supports and its flight of stairs has eight steps.

⁷² Aalders, *Ezechiël*, 2, 266.

⁷³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 528.

ויביאני אל־החצר הפנימי דרך הקדים וימד את־השער כמדות האלה:

Then he brought me into the inner court toward the east (see fig.2.1 f) and he measured the gate in conformity with the measurements of these.

In LXX אל־החצר הפנימי "into the inner court" is rendered in εἰς τὴν πύλῃν τὴν βλέπουσαν κατὰ ἀνατολὰς "to the gate facing east". The wording differs, but the intention is the same.

ותאו ואלו ואלמו כמדות האלה וחלונות לו ולא־למו סביב סביב ארך
חמשים אמה ורחב חמש ועשרים אמה:

And its alcoves, its supports and its vestibule (are) in conformity with these and (there are) apertures in it and in its vestibule all around. The length is fifty cubit(s) and the width twenty-five cubit(s).

וא־למו לחצר החיצונה ותמרים א־אלו מ־וּמ־פּוּ וּשְׁמֵנָה מַעֲלוֹת מַעֲלוֹ:

And its vestibule faces the outer court and palm trees (are) on its supports on this and on that side and its flight of stairs has eight steps.

In Targ חמשים is defined as כַּמֵּרֶת, an architectural term being the capital of a column (see the comment on vs 7). חמשים is also found in vs. 16 and 37.

ויביאני אל־שער הצפון ומדד כמדות האלה:

Then he brought me to the north gate (see fig.2.1 g) and he measured in conformity with these measurements.

תאו אלו ואלמו וחלונות לו סביב סביב ארך חמשים אמה ורחב חמש
ועשרים אמה:

Its alcoves, its vestibule and its supports (have) apertures all around it. The length is fifty cubit(s) and the width twenty-five cubit(s).

ואילו לחצר החיצונה ותמרים א־אילו מ־וּמ־פּוּ וּשְׁמֵנָה מַעֲלוֹת מַעֲלוֹ:

And its vestibule faces the outer court, and palm trees (are) on the columns on this and on that side, and the flight of stairs (has) eight steps.

ולשכה ופתחה באילים השערים שם ידיחו את־העלה:

And (there is) a chamber and its entrance (is) by the supports of the gates where they wash the burnt offerings.

- Block assumes that the requirements of the context (see vs. 39) and the sg. *לשכה* demand that MT *באילים השערים*, “into the jambs, the gates” be emended to *באלם השער*.⁷⁴ I consider *באילים* and *באלם* are synonymous in a way, since the vestibule is built up by columns. *אילים* is an architectural term and *אלם* a functional one. In addition, *אילים* is often translated by jambs or posts. Jambs are doorposts and not sustaining columns or supports. NRSV translates *באילים* as *אלם*, “vestibule” and NIV translates them as “portico”. In this case, however, the *אילים* are part of the roofed colonnade around the outer court (see paragraph 6.3.9).

- On the basis of the plural some apply the description *השערים* to all the gates.⁷⁵

- Keil relates *לשכה* to all three gates to the inner court.⁷⁶ Also Maarsingh does not exclude the possibility of a *לשכה* to all three gates.⁷⁷ I concur with the text of MT that only informs about a room beside the north and south gate.

40:39

ובאלם השער שנים שלחנות מפו ושנים שלחנות מפה לשחוט
אליהם העולה והחטאת והאשם:

And in the vestibule of the gate (are) two tables on either side, on which are to be slaughtered the burnt offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering.

LXX omits the clauses *מפו... מפו* “on either side” and *העולה* “burnt offering”.

40:40

ואל־הכתף מחוצה לעולה לפתח השער הצפונה שנים שלחנות ואל־הכתף
האחרת אשר לאלם השער שנים שלחנות:

And at the side going up to the entrance of the north gate (are) two tables and on the side of the vestibule of the gate two tables.

40:41

ארבעה שלחנות מפה וארבעה שלחנות מפה לכתף השער שמונה שלחנות
אליהם ישחטו:

Four tables (are) on this and four tables on that side of the gate, eight tables on which they slaughter.

40:42

וארבעה שלחנות לעולה אבני גזית ארך אמה אחת וחצי ורחב אמה אחת וחצי
וגבה אמה אחת אליהם ויניחו את־הכלים אשר ישחטו את־העולה במ והזבח:

And the four tables for the burnt offerings (are) of hewn stones. The length is one cubit and a half and the breadth one cubit and a half and the height one cubit. On them they lay the instruments with which they slaughter the burnt offerings and the sacrificial offerings.

LXX has a varying order of the dimensions of the tables, namely width, length, height. In LXX the length of the tables also differs: they are two and a half cubits in length.

⁷⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 530.

⁷⁵ Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 215-216.

⁷⁶ Keil, *ibid.*, 215.

⁷⁷ Maarsingh, *Ezechiël III*, 152.

והשפתים טפח אחד מוכנים בבית סביב סביב ואלה השלחנות בשר הקרבן:

And double hooks of one handbreadth (are) fastened in the building all around and on the tables the flesh of the offering (is to be laid).

The nature of the furnishings (שפתים) is problematic. What is meant with שפתים? Sym. renders as χηειλος (lip) and Vulg. as labia (lips). LXX reads γείσος λελαξεῖμῆνοι, "hewn cornice" or "rim" which could refer to small niches in the walls for storing utensils. Ledges are mentioned in the Temple Scroll. Targ reflects שפתים in a quite different way: "hooks". The use of the dualis could refer to double hooks.⁷⁸

ומחוזה לשער הפנימי לשכות שרים בחצר הפנימי אשר אל־כתף שער הצפון
ופניהם דרך הדרום אחד אל־כתף שער הקדים פני דרך הצפון:

And outside the inner gate (are) rooms of the singers within the inner court (see fig. 2.1.h) which is at the shoulder of the north gate facing toward the south: one at the shoulder of the east gate facing toward the north.

- LXX opens with a new visionary guidance formula καὶ εἰσήγαγέν με εἰς τὴν αὐλήν τὴν ἐσωτέρα, and reads "inner court" instead of MT שער דפנימי "inner gate".

- Passing the northern inner gate, the prophet observed several additional chambers opposite one another on either side of the gates. MT and LXX have a different reading. MT reads לשכות שרים "chambers of singers" and LXX reads δύο ἐξέδραι, "two chambers". Targum reads "chambers of the Levites". From the context one may assume two chambers, לשכות שרים. However, it could be that these chambers are intended to be used by officiating Levite singers.

וידבר אלי זה הלשכה אשר פניה דרך הדרום לכהנים שמרי משמרת הבית:

Then he said to me: this chamber that faces toward the south (is) for the priests (who are) in charge of the temple.

What is meant by שמרי משמרת "guarding the guardianship"? Scholars commonly assume that cultic service is meant. Among the most frequent uses of the verb to guard, the admonition to be careful and diligent in respect to religious and spiritual responsibilities seems a plausible explanation, while guard duty already has been performed in the outer gates.⁷⁹

והלשכה אשר פניה דרך הצפון לכהנים שמרי משמרת המזבח המה בני־צדוק
הקרבנים מבני־לוי אליהוה לשרתו:

But the chamber that faces toward the north (is) for the priests who are in charge of the altar. They (are) the sons of Zadok who among the sons of Levi may come near to YHWH to minister before him.

וימד את־החצר ארך מאה ורחב מאה מרבעת והמזבח לפני הבית:

⁷⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 531; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 222; Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 76; Maarsingh, *Ezekiel III*, 153.

⁷⁹ NIDOTTE, 4, 183.

And he measured the court, the length a hundred cubit(s) and the width a hundred cubit(s); (it is) square and the altar is in front of the temple.

2.4.2. Ezekiel 40:48- 49 and 41:1-26

40:48

ויבאני אל־אלם הבית וימד אל אלם חמש אמות מפה וחמש אמות מפה
ורחב השער שלש אמות מפו ושלש אמות מפו:

Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple (see fig. 2.1 i) and he measured the support(s) of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side and the width of the gateway (is) fourteen cubits en the supports of the entrance)* of the gate three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side.

- **א** is defectively written for **אי**, which LXX *αιλ* implies. According to Allen, mechanical assimilation to the earlier **אל־אלם** "to (the) vestibule" seems to have occurred.⁸⁰ Zimmerli suggests that the form **אי** was found in the Hebrew Vorlage of LXX.⁸¹ In my view the supporting walls of 5 cubits have protruding columns or pilasters.

- MT seems to have dropped a clause by haplography which has been preserved in LXX viz: *τοῦ θυρώματος πηχῶν δέκα τεσσάρων καὶ ἐπωμίδες τῆς θύρας*, "14 cubits and the supports (lit. "shoulders") of the gateway". In other words, the phrase regarding the fourteen cubits width of the gateway is to be added.⁸²

40:49

ארך האלם עשרים אמה ורחב עשתי עשרה אמה ובמעלות אשר יעלו
אליו ועמדים אל־האילים אחד מפה ואחד מפה:

The length of the vestibule (is) twenty cubit(s) and the width eleven cubit(s) and a flight of steps lead up to it and pillars by the supports, one on this side and one on that side.

- MT *עשתי עשרה* "eleven" is not possible in view of the total measurement according to Ezek 41:13. It should be corrected on account of LXX *δώδεκα* (12 cubits). LXX indicates a flight of ten steps.

41:1

ויבאני אל־ההיכל וימד את־האילים שש־אמות רחב־מפו ושש־אמות־רחב
מפו רחב האהל:

Then he brought me to the Holy room (see fig. 2.1 j) and he measured the supports, six cubits wide on this side and six cubits wide on that side, the width of the tent.

MT adds *רחב האהל* "the width of the tent", which does not fit in the sentence. Probably the clause is to be regarded as an early comparative gloss on vs. 2. It seems to refer to the width of the Tabernacle, which by deduction was 10 cubits.⁸³

⁸⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 223.

⁸¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 341.

⁸² Zimmerli, *ibid.*, 341; Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiël*, 23.

⁸³ Allen, *ibid.*, 223.

ורחב הפתח עשר אמות וכתפות הפתח חמש אמות מפו וחמש אמות מפו וימד ארכו ארבעים אמה ורחב עשרים אמה:

And the width of the entrance (is) ten cubits and the supports of the entrance five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side, and he measured the length, forty cubits and the width twenty cubits (see fig. 6.15a).

"The supports of the entrance five cubits" (see notes on 40:48).

ובא לפנימה וימד איל־הפתח שתים אמות והפתח שש אמות ורחב הפתח שבע אמות:

Then he went inward and he measured the supports of the entrance, two cubits, and the entrance six cubits, and the width (of the side walls) of the entrance, seven cubits.

The third verse is very confusing. What is meant by the mentioning of seven cubits? LXX has inserted the clause τὰς ἐπιωμίδαζ "the side walls" of the entrance. Probably in MT one has to read "וּכְתוּפוֹת" shoulders" or side walls. This word seems to have mistakenly dropped out of MT. Also the last segment may have dropped out of MT. In LXX after πηχῶν ἐπτά, MT "שבע אמות" "seven cubits", the clause εἴθθεν καὶ πηχῶν ἐπτά εἴθθεν "on this side and seven cubits on that side" has been inserted.

וימד את־ארכו עשרים אמה ורחב עשרים אמה אל־פני ההיכל ויאמר אלי זה קדש הקדשים:

And he measured its length, twenty cubit(s) and (its) width twenty cubit(s) at the face of the main hall and he said to me: "This is the Holy of Holies".

וימד קיר־הבית שש אמות ורחב הצלע ארבע אמות סביב סביב לבית סביב:

And he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits, and the width of the side rooms, four cubits around, all around the temple around.

והצלעות צלע אל־צלע שלוש ושלשים פעמים ובאות בקיר אשר־לבית לצלעות סביב סביב להיות אחוזים ולא־יהיו אחוזים בקיר הבית:

And (there are) side rooms, side room toward side room, thirty-three times, and (there are) offsets entering the wall of the temple for the side rooms all around to serve as supports, but the supports are not in the wall of the temple (itself).

- The text of vs. 6 is far from clear. MT "צלע אל־צלע שלוש ושלשים פעמים" "side room toward side room, thirty-three times" is difficult (many delete "ושלשים" as a gloss). LXX reads πλευρὸν ἐπὶ πλευρὸν τριάκοντα καὶ τρεῖς δὲς lit: "side room against (acc.) sideroom, thirty and three twice", which suggests two storeys, each with thirty-three diminutive cells.⁸⁴ Vulg reads "bis triaginta tria". Targ, however, reflects a three-storey construction with eleven side rooms per storey. According to 1 Kgs 6:7 the annexes of Solomon's temple had three storeys. Comparing Targ and the book Kings, I think the annexes of Ezekiel's temple have three storeys with 3 x 11 rooms.

⁸⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 545.

ורחבה ונסבה למעלה למעלה לצלעות כי מוסב־הבית למעלה
למעלה סביב סביב לבית עלי־כן רחב־לבית למעלה וכן התחתונה
יעלה על־העליונה לתיכונה:

And (there is) a widening turning around more and more upward to the side rooms for the corridor(s) of the house (rise) upwards more and more all around the temple, therefore the width of the temple (rise) upward and so one ascends from the lowest to the highest by the middle one.

- The width of the storeys are increasing from the bottom to the top floors by one cubit (see 1 Kgs 6:7 and fig. 6.15d).

- MT vocalizes **וַיִּדְהַבְהָ** as a verb, “to be / become wide” but a subject is lacking. KJV follows MT almost literally in translating this clause with: “And there was an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side rooms”. Targ reads a noun **רוּחַב** “width, widening”, with support from LXX (εὐρος) and Vulg platea.

- The use of the lexeme **בֵּית** is odd, but what is meant are **צִלְעוֹת**; side rooms including their connecting passageway or corridor. So NRSV translates in this way, reading: “The passageways of the side rooms widened...” and NIV “The side rooms all around were wider...”

- LXX drops **וַיִּנְסַבְהָ**. Targ reads “winding staircase”. The reading of Targ is confirmed by 1 Kgs 6:8. There we read that access was gained to the upper storeys through **לִילִיִם**, probably to be understood as interior (winding) staircases or “an architectural feature between the floors”.⁸⁵ Probably there are also winding staircases in Ezekiel’s temple, but that is not the issue in Ezek. 42:7. **וַיִּנְסַבְהָ** is a nif’al perf. from **סָבַב** “turn, go around, surround”.

- In b. Mid. IV 5 **מִנְסַב** has been described as “gallery”.⁸⁶ The small side rooms could be interconnected in the shape of or by way of a gallery or corridor.

וראיתי לבית גבה סביב סביב מיסדות הצלעות מלו הקנה שש אמות אצילה:

Then I saw at the temple a height all around, the foundation walls of the side rooms
a reed; six cubits to the armpit.*

- **גְּבַהַ** “height” means here a raised platform

- **מִנְסְדוֹת**, are “foundation walls”.⁸⁷ Evidently the walls function as a rampart around the **גְּבַהַ**, the raised platform sustaining the side walls of the annexes.

- *Most scholars are uncertain about the meaning of **אֶצִּילָה**, supposing that it might have been used as an unknown technical term. In LXX the translation of **אֶצִּילָה** is omitted. In most translations it is interpreted or not translated. The Dutch SV, however, translates very literally “de el tot aan de oksel toe” (the cubit up to the armpit). That means a full arm’s length being the full length from the wrist up to the armpit, expressing the length of the royal cubit of a cubit and a handbreadth. On the contrary, the Dutch NV interprets **אֶצִּילָה** as an architectural term: “tot de aansluiting” (to the junction). KJV and NRSV interpret **אֶצִּילָה** as length measurement, “a full reed of six great or long cubits”. NIV translates “the length of the rod, six long cubits; all three without translating **אֶצִּילָה**. In my opinion **אֶצִּילָה** must be translated as a geometrical term like SV does.

רחב הקיר א שר־לצלע אל־החוץ חמש אמות ואשר מנה בית צלעות אשר לבית:

⁸⁵ NIDOTTE, 2, 780.

⁸⁶ Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 377.

⁸⁷ HALOT, 557.

The width of the wall of the side rooms on the outside is five cubits and also the free space of the side rooms of the temple belonging to (the whole structure) of the temple.

- This is a very complicated verse that has caused troubles in understanding the text. First the meaning of *נִנְחָה* "which is left free" (lit: "and that which is left to rest") causes a lot of confusion. This verb, a hoph. part., has been derived from *נָחָה* "to rest", in hoph. "be left behind" (NIDOTTE, 3, 56). The common meaning of *נִנְחָה* is that of "coming to rest upon some place", or of "being caused to rest", or "being placed, in a certain spot". In the hiph. as well as in the hoph. the meaning of "set" or "place" has been expanded into the idea of "leave behind" or "permit to remain" or even "leave alone".⁸⁸ Block, suggests that the noun *xnm* indicates a free space around the temple building, following LXX that reads τὰ ἀπόλοιπα, "open space".⁸⁹ Many scholars and bible translations as the NIV and NRSV take vs. 9b in connection with vs.10, reading: "and the *נִנְחָה*, between the side rooms belonging to the house and between the (priestly) rooms was in breadth twenty cubits".⁹⁰ In my opinion the *נִנְחָה* could be designated as the five cubits broad free space or terrace around the temple and its annexes on the elevated temple platform.

Another question is the meaning of *בֵּית*, interpreted by Zimmerli as a corruption of the preposition *בֵּין*.⁹¹ Maarsingh emends *בֵּית* and reads also *בֵּין*, "between", supposing the whole space between the *צִלְעוֹת* "side rooms" and the *לְשׁוֹנוֹת* "rooms enclosing the temple court".⁹² Vs. 9, however, does not speak about *לְשׁוֹנוֹת* but about *צִלְעוֹת*. Moreover, the whole space between the *צִלְעוֹת* and the *לְשׁוֹנוֹת* is not 20 but 25 cubits including the five cubits wide free space on the temple platform. In MT the *נִנְחָה* "free space" and the *זָוֵה*, the "restricted area" around the temple platform are kept distinct, but LXX seems to identify them (altogether) and thereby throws the plan into confusion.

Opposing to this supposition, I think *בֵּית* must not be read as *בֵּין* "between" because in vs. 9 *בֵּית* is to be understood as house, structure or temple. The *נִנְחָה* surrounding the *צִלְעוֹת*, the side rooms of the house (*בֵּית*) is the five cubits broad free space on the platform with the temple and its annexes.

41:10

ובין הלשכות רחב עשרים אמה סביב לבית סביב סביב:

And between the (priestly) rooms (and the temple platform is) a width of twenty cubit(s) around, all around the temple.

There must have been some disturbance of the text. "... *ובין הלשכות*". A second subject is missing. Evidently this might be the surrounding wall of the temple platform. So the translation could be completed as follows: "between the (priestly) rooms and the wall of the temple platform was a space with a width of..."

41:11

ופתח הצלע למנח פתח אחד דרך הצפון ופתח אחד לדרום ורחב מקום המנח
חמש אמות סביב סביב:

And the entrance(s) of the side rooms on the free space (which is left to rest), have one entrance toward the north and one entrance toward the south and the width of the place of the free space is five cubits all around.

- In this case *לְ* in *לְמִנְחָה* must be understood spatially, expressing movement in a given direction "towards". Block notes: "The perspective of *מִנְחָה הַצֵּלַע*, the opening of the side chamber to the

⁸⁸ NIDOTTE, 3, 56-58.

⁸⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 546, 551.

⁹⁰ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel*, 446.

⁹¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 373.

⁹² Maarsingh, *Ezechiël III*, 160-161.

open space, is that of an observer on the inside looking out. Vs.11 continues the description of the relationship of the side chambers to the surrounding area".⁹³

- The clause *מקום דמנה נדדב* is very complicated. The text of the LXX, however, is even more difficult, reading *εὖρος τοῦ φῶτος τοῦ ἀπολείπου* "The width of that wat gives light to the free space". Instead of MT *מקום* "place" LXX has *φῶς* (that what gives light) "window". On account of LXX, *מקום דמנה* is interpreted as an opening in the outer wall of the side rooms that gives a window to the free space around the temple edifice.

41:12

והבנין אשר אל־פני הגזרה פאת דרך־הים רחב שבעים אמה וקיר הבנין
חמש־אמות רחב סביב ורכו תשעים אמה:

The building in front of the "restricted area" on the west side (is) seventy cubit(s) wide and the wall of the building (is) five cubit(s) wide all around and the length (is) ninety cubit(s).

- Nothing is said about the function of the *בנין*. LXX *διόρίζου* "that which separates", also does not offer clarity about it. With reference to 1 Chron 26:33 the *בנין* might be an enclosure of standing columns, an unroofed walled-in colonnaded court meant to store sacrificial animals. *בנין* is also an indication for built structures alongside the perimeter wall.

- The word *נדרה* derived from *נר* means "cut off".⁹⁴ In LXX *נדרה* is rendered by *ἀπόλοιπον*, "open space". In HALOT it is translated as "separated room / forecourt".⁹⁵ In conformity with Ezek 41:12 and 14 the *נדרה* has been situated on the west side behind the temple as well as the on the east side before the temple. I conclude that the *נדרה* refers to the open space of the entire temple court. According to Block (NICOT p.546) *נדרה* is a synonym for *מנה*. I think there is a demonstrable difference between them (see the explanatory note to Ez. 41:9).

41:13

ומדד את־הבית ארך מאה אמה והגזרה והבניה וקירותיה ארך מאה אמה:

Then he measured the temple, the length is one hundred cubit(s) and also the restricted area and the building and its walls are one hundred cubit(s) long.

What is meant here is the total length of the temple building, the restricted area on its sides and the building (*בניה*), including its walls. *בניה* is a fem. variation of *בנין*.

41:14

ורחב פני הבית והגזרה לקדים מאה אמה:

And the width at the face of the temple and the restricted area toward the east one hundred cubit(s).

41:15

ומדד ארך־הבנין אל־פני הגזרה אשר על־אחריה ואתוקיהא מפו ומפו
מאה אמה וההיכל הפנימי ואלמי החצר:

And he measured the length of the building facing the restricted area behind it and its galleries on this and on that side, one hundred cubit(s), and the inner part of the great hall and the porticoes of the court.

⁹³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 551.

⁹⁴ NIDOTTE, 1, 847.

⁹⁵ HALOT, 187.

Vss. 15 to 17 are complicated sentences, mixed up with quite different details. What is meant by **ארויך**? LXX reads τὰ ἀπόλοιπα, "open spaces". NIDOTTE and HALOT translate **ארויך** as "passage" or "gallery".⁹⁶ EHCOT translates "gallery" / "walks with pillars".⁹⁷ In the context of the vision report, **ארויך** (plene spelling, plene construct 3rd person feminine singular of **ארויך**) must be a gallery or corridor in the shape of a cloister or arcade inside the edifices (the binyan and priestly rooms) or roofed porticoes / colonnades sustained by pillars (**עמודים** see Ezek 42:6) around the outer and inner court.

41:16

הספים והחלונים האטמות והאתיקים סביב לשלשתם נגד הסף שחייף
עץ סביב סביב והארץ עדהחלנות והחלנות מכסות:

... the thresholds and the apertures and the galleries around on their three (sides). Opposite the threshold (are) panels of wood on all sides, from the ground up to the apertures, and the apertures (are) barred.

- After reporting the overall measurements of the building (binyan), the temple and the court, it seems that the enumeration of architectural details as **ספים**, "thresholds" and **הלונים האטמות**, "apertures" and **ארויכים** "galleries" do not fit in. Built structures and courts on the one side alternate with particular architectural features.

- According to Block, the antecedent of **לשלשתם** is unclear. In his view the most likely guess is that the **הלונים האטמות** had either three parts or three sides.⁹⁸ I think Block's guess is also obscure; "three" is not related to **הלונים האטמות**, but to **ארויכים**. The antecedent could be found in **ארויכים** for **לשלשתם סביב** is a coherent clause. Concluding from the text there are galleries / passageways on three sides of the **גדרה**, viz. the inner court in front of the temple. In vs. 16 **ארויכים** could be related to the galleries in the buildings on the elevated restricted area as well as to the porticoes around the inner court. It has been suggested that **ארויך** comes from a root which is in Akk. *etequ* "pass along", *metiqu* "passage" or "gallery".⁹⁹

- The hapax **שחייף** is cognate to Akk. *sihpu*, "overlay", which, according to Block, describes a veneering technique. It gives expression to the facing of walls with wooden boarding.¹⁰⁰

41:17

על־מעל הפתח ועדהבית הפנימי ולחוץ ואל־כל־הקיר סביב סביב
בפנימי ובחיצון מדות:

Up to the upper side of the entrance and to the inside and outside of the temple, on all the walls all round, on the inside and on the outside the measurements (were taken).

The noun **מדות** is difficult to understand in this context and causes disagreement among the translations. Several conjectures are proposed. It is dropped by LXX. Vulg and Syr convert it into a verbal form "And he measured inside and outside".¹⁰¹ Block suggests that an original **מדות** probably refers to a measured off area on the walls where the reliefs occur, or to the carefully designed nature of the reliefs themselves.¹⁰² Another explanation has been given on the basis of Jer 22:14. God denounces kings who accumulate material wealth, including a **בית מדות** "house of measure", i.e. a house of size, a mansion, without

⁹⁶ NIDOTTE, 1, 680; HALOT, 102.

⁹⁷ EHCOT, 183.

⁹⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 554.

⁹⁹ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel*, 454. HALOT, 102.

¹⁰⁰ Block, *ibid.*, 554

¹⁰¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 384.

¹⁰² Block, *ibid.*, 555.

practising righteousness or justice.¹⁰³ So *מדות* could give expression to the greatness and splendour of the temple. Most suppositions raise questions and are not convincing enough. Converting the noun into a verb is obvious, but maybe another verb has been dropped. Then it could be possible to translate "the measurements were taken".

41:18

ועשוי כרובים ותמרים ותמרה בין־כרוב לכרוב ושנים פנים לכרוב:

And (there are) made cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between a pair of cherubim and the cherub has two faces.

41:19

ופני אדם אליהתמרה מפו ופני־כפיר אליהתמרה מפו עשוי אלי־כליהבית
סביב סביב:

The face of a man was toward the palm tree on the one side and the face of a young lion to the palm tree on the other side. They (are) made all over the entire temple all round.

41:20

מהארץ עד־מעל הפתח הכרובים והתמרים עשויים וקיר ההיכל :

From the ground up to the upper side of the entrance the cherubim and the palm trees (are) made on the wall(s) of the Holy Place.

LXX has dropped דהיכל in Ezek 41:20 and 46:22. MT indicates dots or puncta extraordinaria above letters or words and in one place (Ps 27:3) also below them. The exact meaning of the dots is disputed. According to Tov these dots originally denoted the erasure of letters. They were traditionally explained as indications of doubtful letters.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless it will be clear that the temple itself is meant since in the preceding vs. 17 the temple (הבית) the house) is indicated and in vs. 21 דהיכל is rendered without dots.

41:21

ההיכל מזוזות רבעה ופני הקדש המראה כמראה:

The Holy Place (has) squared doorposts (in) the face of the Holy (of Holies), the appearance (of the one) is as the appearance (of the other one).

- *דהיכל* is missing in LXX.

- This sentence causes many problems in translation. In whatever way the text is corrected, the reference is to the square entrance of the Holy Place. Many scholars, following LXX, put the second half of the verse together with vs. 22, reading: "In front of the Holy (of Holies) was something like an altar of wood". In my opinion these squared doorposts correlate with the doorposts of the great hall.

- *קדש הקדשים* must be the same as *קדש הקדש* in Ezek 41:4.

- What is meant by *מזוזות רבעה*? The doorposts, as in Solomon's temple, had quadruple rabbeting.¹⁰⁵ Noth talks about "Vier-Staffelung".¹⁰⁶ Zimmerli also talks about doorposts in a fourfold gradation becoming narrower towards the rear of the door casing.¹⁰⁷

- *כמראה למראה* makes clear that the face / front of the Holy of Holies is similar to the face / front of the Holy Place.

¹⁰³ NIDOTTE, 2, 850.

¹⁰⁴ Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 233.

¹⁰⁶ Noth, *Könige 1*, 127.

¹⁰⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 2*, 1050.

המזבח עץ שלוש אמות גבה וארכו שתיים־אמות ומקצעותיו לו וארכו
וקירתיו עץ וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני יהוה:

The altar of wood (is) three cubits high and its length two cubits and its corner buttresses and its base and its sides (are) of wood. And he said to me "this (is) the table in the face of YHWH".

- A wooden altar is strange since altars of wood consume themselves together with the offerings. In the last clause of the verse the altar is compared with a table, that is a remarkable addition. It could be an altar-like table which evidently refers to the table for the showbread.¹⁰⁸ Block notes: "Either the table represents an altar with the Bread of the Presence functioning as a type of non burnt offering, or its structure resembled an altar".¹⁰⁹

- LXX includes *καὶ τὸ εὖρος πηχῶν δύο καὶ* "and its width two cubits" which must have been dropped out of MT by homoteleuton.

- LXX *ἢ βᾶσις* seems to be more appropriate in the context than MT *יארכו*, "and its length" in the second part of the sentence.

ושתים דלתות להיכל ולקדש:

And two (double) doors (have) the Holy Place and the Holy (of Holies) (see fig 6.16).

ושתים דלתות לדלתות תים מוסבות דלתות תים לדלת אחת
ושתים דלתות לאחרת:

Two leaves (have) the doors, two swinging leaves for the one and two leaves for the other one.

*Doors consisting of two swinging leaves, each of which was set in its own pivot hole next to the doorpost.*¹¹⁰

ועשויה אליהן אל־דלתות ההיכל כרובים ותמרים כאשר עשויים לקירות
ועב עץ אל־פני האולם מהחוץ:

And (there are) made on them, on the doors of the Holy Place, cherubim and palm trees like (are) made on the walls. And a wooden cornice (is attached) to the front of the porch outside.

There is much debate about the meaning of עב. I suppose it was a wall decoration in the shape of an ornamental moulding or cornice.

וחלונים אטמות ותמרים מפו ומפו אל־כתפות האולם וצלעות הבית והעבים:

And (there are) apertures and palm trees on this side and that side on the sides of the vestibule, and the side rooms of the temple and (it has) cornices.

¹⁰⁸ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 233.

¹⁰⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 559.

¹¹⁰ Block, *ibid.*, 560.

2.4.3. Ezekiel 42:1-20

42:1

ויוצאני אליהחצר החיצונה הדרך דרך הצפון ויבאני אליהלשכה אשר נגד הגזרה ואשר־נגד הבנין אליהצפון:

Then he led me into the outer court, the way toward the north, and he brought me to the room(s) opposite the restricted area and opposite the structure on the north side (see fig. 2.1 k).

*The two sets of rooms are composed of two blocks on either side of the temple. The longest block faces the restricted area and the shortest block the בנין in the outer court on the north, i.e. the wall including the buildings alongside the wall on the north.*¹¹¹

42:2

אליפני־ארך אמות המאה פתח הצפון והרחב חמשים אמות:

On the front side the length (is) hundred cubits, the entrance(s) (are) on the north and the width is fifty cubits.

- On the front side: This concerns the set of priestly rooms seen from the outer court. Targ paraphrases: "Along the length, which was one hundred cubits, there was a door that faced north".

- the clause פתח הצפון "entrance on the north side" is often deleted as a gloss. Others read "in the direction of", following LXX πρὸς βορρᾶν "to the north".

- And the width is fifty cubits. Here the width of the two sets of rooms including the passageway in between must be intended. The fifty cubits, however, suggest one building. It could be that both sets of rooms are interconnected by a covering or balcony above the passageway.

42:3

נגד העשרים אשר לחצר הפנימי ונגד רצפה אשר לחצר החיצונה אתיק אליפני־אתיק בשלשים:

Opposite the twenty of the inner court and opposite the pavement of the outer court (lay) gallery above gallery in threes.

- MT reads only העשרים, without object, "the twenty". I think cubits are meant, the distance between the temple platform and the priestly rooms.

- איתיק must be read as a collective sg. The galleries lay above each other in three levels. Block reads: "one on top of the other in three levels".¹¹²

42:4

ולפני הלשכות מהלך עשר אמות רחב אליהפנימית דרך אמה אחת ופתחיהם לצפון:

Before the rooms (is) a walkway of ten cubits (wide) on the inside, the way (is) one (hundred) cubit(s) (long) and their entrances are on the north side.

The question raised by MT is: a walkway inside of what? I think in between the two sets of rooms on either side of the temple edifice.

¹¹¹ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel*, 456.

¹¹² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 561.

דדך אמה אדת "the way is one cubit" is obscure. LXX reads πῆχεις ἑκατὸν τὸ μῆκοι "its length is hundred cubits". The walkway runs alongside the hundred cubits long sets of rooms.

42:5

והלשכות העליונות קצרות כייוכלו אתיקים מהנה מהתחתנות ומהתכנות בנין:

And the upper rooms (are) shortened, for the galleries take away space from them, more than from the lower and the middle (floors) of the building,

- The text is difficult to understand. Also there is a lot of confusion of thought about architectural terms. The description goes beyond our imaginative faculty. MT construed the verbal form from אכל qal ipf. 3 pl. "eat", indicating "take away space". כייוכלו אתיקים seems to be captured by Targ "The galleries take space away from them".¹¹³ LXX reads ἐξείχετο τὸ περίστυλον ἐξ αὐτοῦ, "the colonnade projecting out of them". The clause "from the lower and middle (rooms)" in 42:5 is omitted in Syr. whereas LXX give a distorted version.¹¹⁴

What is meant by אתיקים? HALOT translates אדניק as "passage" or "gallery".¹¹⁵ NIDOTTE translates אדניק into "gallery" - perhaps an open, elevated platform similar to a balcony.¹¹⁶

Most interpreters suggest priestly rooms in three stages, terraced in the length of the structures. Because of their limited measurements that would be very unlikely. Contrary to this assumption we must think of terraces at the head (the smallest side) of the buildings instead of terraces alongside the length of the sets of rooms. On the first and second floor the terraces are accessible via stairs.

- Vs. 5 ends with the first clause of vs. 6.

42:6

כי משלשות הנה ואין להן עמודים כעמודי החצרות עלכן נאצל מהתחתנות ומהתיכנות מהארץ:

...for they (are) in three. They (have) no pillars like the pillars of the courts. Therefore it (the upper floor) (is) taken in more than the lower and middle (floors) from below.

- "For they are in three" indicates that the buildings have three floors.

- MT reads ואין להן עמודים כעמודי החצרות "and not...pillars like the pillars of the courts", LXX however reads: στύλους οὐκ εἶχον καθὼς οἱ στύλοι τῶν ἐξωτερῶν, "they do not have pillars just as the outermost", however, also interpreting these as the pillars outside, surrounding the courts.

42:7

וגדר אשר־לחוץ לעמת הלשכות דרך החצר החצונה אל־פני הלשכות ארכו חמשים אמה:

And (there is) a wall outside along with the rooms toward the outer court in front of the rooms. Its length (is) fifty cubit(s).

- Vss. 7-11 form a sequence of continuing sentences which complicates a correct reading.

- A wall runs in line with the fifty cubits long set of rooms. Probably the wall is aimed as a screen to guard the sanctity of the complex in keeping the rooms out of sight from the view of lay worshippers in the outer court.

¹¹³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 561.

¹¹⁴ Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 457.

¹¹⁵ HALOT, 102.

¹¹⁶ NIDOTTE, 4, 680.

42:8

כי־אֵרַךְ הַלְשָׁכוֹת אֲשֶׁר לַחֲצַר הַחֲצוֹנָה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וְהָנָה עַל־פְּנֵי
הַהֵיכָל מֵאָה אַמָּה:

For the length of the rooms on the outer court is fifty cubit(s); and see, in the face of the temple (they are) hundred cubit(s).

42:9

וּמִתַּחַת לִשְׁכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הַמְּבֹאֵה מִהַקְּדִים בָּבֵאוּ לֵהֲנָה מִהַחֲצַר הַחֲצוֹנָה:

And from beneath these rooms, the access (is) from the eastside if one enters them from the outer court.
- "From beneath" means: from the level of the outer court.
- The access to the priestly rooms on either side of the temple is from the eastside

42:10

בְּרֹחַב גֹּדֵר הַחֲצַר דֶּרֶךְ הַקְּדִים אֶל־פְּנֵי הַגְּזֵרָה וְאֶל־פְּנֵי הַבְּנִין לִשְׁכוֹת:

In the width of the wall of the court toward the east in the face of the restricted area and in the face of the building (are) the (priestly) rooms (2.1. l)

After leaving the inner court on the north side and standing in the outer court on the east side of the temple with his back to the east, the prophet observed the priestly rooms in front. But what could be meant by the clause "in the width of the wall"? Many conjectures are made to appropriately interpret and translate this verse. Many commentators consider the text to be distorted or corrupted. However, there could be a solution for the problem, reading *בְּרֹחַב* with vs 12 and LXX *ἐν ἀρχῇ* instead of MT *בְּרֹחַב*. Also it could be a cryptic definition of the length of the wall. Standing in the outer court on the eastside of the temple platform the prophet perceived the full length of 200 cubits in front of him.

42:11

וּדְרֶךְ לְפָנֵיהֶם כַּמְרָאָה הַלְשָׁכוֹת אֲשֶׁר דֶּרֶךְ הַצִּפּוֹן כְּאֶרְכָן כֵּן רַחְבָּן וְכֹל
מוֹצֵאֵיהֶן וְכַמְשַׁפְּטֵיהֶן וְכַפְתָּחֵיהֶן:

...and the passageway in the face of them. (They are) according to the appearance of the rooms toward the north, according to their length just as their width and all their exits as well as their specifications and their entrances.

- Evidently vs. 11 is to be read as a comparative sentence. However, to what could the rooms and measurements on the north side be compared? According to vs.12 the rooms and measurements on the south side are equal.

- LXX reads *κατὰ τὰ μέτρα* "according to the measures" instead of *כְּמֵרָאָה* "according to the appearance".

42:12

וְכַפְתָּחֵי הַלְשָׁכוֹת אֲשֶׁר דֶּרֶךְ הַדְּרוֹם פָּתַח בְּרֹאשׁ דֶּרֶךְ דֶּרֶךְ בְּפְנֵי הַגְּדֵרָת
הַגֵּינָה דֶּרֶךְ הַקְּדִים בְּבֹאֵן:

And like the entrances of the rooms toward the south, (there is) an entrance at the beginning of the passageway, the way in the face of the wall toward the east by which one enters.

The meaning of the technical term *לִינִיָּה* is difficult to understand. LXX reads *διάστημα*, "interval" and

Vulg. vestibulum separatum. HALOT renders the stem נגן as "protect".¹¹⁷ דַּגְרֵת הַיְנִיעַ could be a kind of separation wall functioning as a screen (see vs. 7).

42:13

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לְשִׁכּוֹת הַצִּפּוֹן לְשִׁכּוֹת הַדְּרוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶל־פְּנֵי הַגְּזֵרָה הִנֵּה לְשִׁכּוֹת
הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר יֹאכְלוּ־שָׂם הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר־קְרוּבִים לִיהוָה קֹדְשֵׁי הַקֹּדְשִׁים שָׂם
יִנְחוּ קֹדְשֵׁי הַקֹּדְשִׁים וְהַמִּנְחָה וְהַחֲטָאתָ וְהָאֵשֶׁם כִּי הַמְּקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ:

And he said to me the: "The northern rooms (and) the southern rooms in front of the restricted area, (are) the holy rooms. There the priests, who approach YHWH, eat the most holy (offerings). There they deposit the most holy, the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering for the place is holy".

LXX harmonizes the reading of MT with Ezek. 40:46 and 44:15 by adding υἱοὶ Σαδδουκ "the sons of Zadok".

42:14

בְּבֵאֵם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְלֹא־יֵצְאוּ מִהַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־הַחֲצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה וְשָׂם יִנְחוּ בַּגְּדֵיהֶם
אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂרְתוּ בָּהֶן כִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הִנֵּה יִלְבְּשׁוּ בַּגְּדִים אֲחֵרִים וְקָרְבוּ אֶל־אֲשֶׁר לַעֲמ:

When the priests enter, they shall not go out from the holy into the outer court, but there they lay aside their garments in which they minister, for these are holy. They shall put on other clothes, to approach to that which is for the people.

לְעַם, "to that which is for the people" i.e the area for the people. Instead, LXX reads ὄταν ἄπτωγεται τοῦ λαοῦ, "before touching the people".

42:15

וְכֹלָה אֶת־מִדּוֹת הַבַּיִת הַפְּנִימִי וְהוֹצִיאֲנִי דֶרֶךְ הַשַּׁעַר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו דֶּרֶךְ
הַקִּדִּים וּמִדְּדוּ סָבִיב סָבִיב:

When he had completed the measurements of the interior of the temple, he led me out by the gate facing toward the east and he measured it all around.

- *What is meant by the suffix ך in יִמְדְּדֵי "and he measured it?" Taking the context into account it should refer to the 500x500 cubits of temple complex, but vs. 16, 17, 18, 19 speak about 500 rods. Could rods really be meant or should קִנִּים be deleted as a redundant gloss, like LXX does? KJV translates in conformity with MT, in contrast to NIV and NRSV which follow LXX. Most scholars adopt the last option, assuming that the unit of measurement is not meant here, but rather the instrument of measurement. I prefer the lectio difcilior and read "rods", referring to the Temple Scroll.¹¹⁸ According to this text the temple could have three courts, namely an inner, outer and an exterior court area outside the temple precinct proper.*

- *The "interior of the temple" is to be understood as the 500 cubits square temple precinct.*

42:16

מִדְּדָה רוּחַ הַקִּדִּים בַּקֶּנֶה הַמִּדְּדָה חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת קִנִּים בַּקֶּנֶה הַמִּדְּדָה סָבִיב:

He measured the easterly (direction of the) wind with the measuring rod, five hundred rods with the measuring rod around.

¹¹⁷ HALOT, 190.

¹¹⁸ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 36-42.

Noteworthy is the clause *רוּחַ דְּקִיָּים*, literally “the easter wind”, according to the text indicating the far greater distance of a remote perimeter wall in the easterly direction of the wind.

42:17

He measured the northerly direction of the wind, five hundred rods with the measuring rod around.

The text of the vss. 17 -19 regarding the north, south and west side of the temple site respectively are almost identical to vs. 16.

42:18

The southerly direction of the wind he measured, five hundred rods with the measuring rod.

42:19

Turning of into the westerly direction of the wind he measured five hundred rods with the measuring rod.

42:20

לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת מִדְּדוֹ חוּמָה לּוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיב אַרְךָ חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וְרֹחַב חֲמֵשׁ
מֵאוֹת לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ לַחֵל:

On the four sides he measured it, a wall is all around it with a length of five hundred and a breadth of five hundred to separate the holy from the profane.

- Ezekiel's reference to the four directions as the “four winds” (*לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת*) represents a rare use of the Hebrew *רוּחַ* “spirit, wind, breath”.¹¹⁹ Similar words are found in Ezek 37:9. *בָּא רוּחַ* “from the four winds (directions of wind), oh spirit come”

- Many scholars like Ewald, Smend and Block regard this wall as that of the outer court and change the “rods” into “cubits”. MT reads *חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת קִנָּיִם*, “five hundred rods”, LXX however reads *πεντακοσίους ἐν τῷ καλῶμα* “five hundred with the measuring rod”. Unfortunately, it does not inform us whether a rod or a cubit is meant. I think the wall is to be understood as an outer perimeter wall around the temple site, enlarged with a third court of 500x 500 rods (see vs. 15 and the Temple Scroll).

2.4.4. Ezekiel 43:10-11 and 13-17

43:10

אַתָּה בְּנֵי־אָדָם הַגֵּד אֶת־בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַבַּיִת וַיִּכְלְמוּ מֵעוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם
וַיִּמְדְּדוּ אֶת־תַּכְנִית:

You, son of man, tell the house of Israel about the temple that they will be ashamed because of their iniquities and let them measure the proportion.

In LXX *וַיִּמְדְּדוּ* “and let them measure” has been replaced by *δειξοῦντέην ὄρασιν*, “show ...the appearance”. Many consider the Hebrew clause to be obscure. In this sentence the meaning of *תַּכְנִית* is crucial. In contrast to *תַּכְנִית*, the model of a three-dimensional physical sanctuary described in Ex 25, the book Ezekiel shows a two-dimensional groundplan, the concept of an imaginary future temple.

43:11

וְאִם־נִכְלְמוּ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ צוֹרֵת הַבַּיִת וּתְכוֹנָתוֹ וּמוֹצְאָיו וּמוֹבְאָיו וְכֹל־צוֹרָתוֹ
וְאֵת כָּל־חֻקָּתָיו וְכֹל־צוֹרָתִי וְכֹל־תּוֹרָתוֹ הוֹדַע אֹתָם וְכָתַב לְעֵינֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ
אֶת־כָּל־צוֹרָתוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־חֻקָּתָיו וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתָם:

¹¹⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 570.

And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the shape of the temple, its proportion, its exits and its entrances, its whole shape and all its ordinances. Write in their sight its whole shape and all its laws so that they observe its whole shape and all its ordinances and do them.

- The vers opens with a conditional clause "And if they are ashamed..." According to HALOT it can be read as a realisable condition.¹²⁰

- Many scholars regard this verse being difficult in MT. In LXX the text has been emended and many scholars emend accordingly. However, by placing the clause **הַיָּדֹעַ אֵלֵיהֶם**, "make known to them" after **אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ** "all that they have done", we get a readable sentence (see NIV, NRSV). I have translated accordingly.

43:13

ואלה מדות המזבח באמות אמה וטפח וחקיק האמה ואמה־רחב וגבולה אל־שפתה סביב זרת
האחד וזה גב המזבח:

And these (are) the measurements of the altar in cubits, a cubit (being) a cubit and a handbreadth. The gutter (is) a cubit (deep) and a cubit wide and the border of the edge around (is) one span, and this (is) the foot of the altar (see fig. 6.14).

- **חֵיק** usually is translated as "bosom, lap" meaning a hollow space or gutter. LXX reads **βάθος ἐπὶ πηχυν**, interpreting the measurement as the depth of the **חֵיק** which is made for draining away the blood of the sacrificial animals.

- **גְּבֻלָּה** border / boundary / edge.

- **שֵׁפָה** lit. "its lip" but **שֵׁפָה** is often used in the derived sense of "edge".¹²¹

- **נֶבֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** Many read **נֶבֶל** with LXX **τὸ ὑψος** (NRSV, NIV) indicating a raised border or protrusion. I think a kerb or ledge at the foot of the altar is intended. The last clause of vs. 13 is to be understood as an introductory clause to vs. 14.

43:14

ומחיק הארץ עד־העזרה התחתונה שתים אמות ורחב אמה אחת
ומהעזרה הקטנה עד־העזרה הגדולה ארבע אמות ורחב האמה:

From the gutter on the ground up to the lower plinth (is) two cubits (high) and one cubit wide and from the smaller plinth up to the larger plinth four cubits (high) and a cubit wide.

The meaning of **עֲדָה** is obscure. According to Cooke in later Hebrew it has been used for the court of the temple. However, in Ezek 43:14 it seems to be applied to a plinth or hollow enclosure circulating around the upright compartments of the altar.¹²²

43:15

וההרואל ארבע אמות ומהאראיל ולמעלה הקרנות ארבע:

And the altar hearth (is) four cubits (high) and from the altar hearth (rise) upward four horns.

- The uppermost part of the altar is identified as the altar hearth, written in two different ways: **הַרְאֵל** "mountain of God" and **אֲרִיאֵל** "lion of God" The spellings are problematic. **הַרְאֵל** could be an architectural designation indicating the top of the altar. The lexeme **אֲרִיאֵל** is also found in Isa 29:2b and translated in NIV as "altar hearth".

¹²⁰ HALOT, 60.

¹²¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 592.

¹²² Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel*, 467.

- The height of the horns is not mentioned in MT. LXX has the following addition καὶ ὑπεράνω τῶν κεράτων πηχὺς. "The four horns will be a cubit high".

43:16

ו האראיל שתים עשרה ארך בשתים עשרה רחב רבוע אל ארבעת רבעיו:

And the altar hearth (is) twelve (cubits) long by twelve (cubits) wide, square to (its) four sides.

43:17

והעזרה ארבע עשרה ארך בארבע עשרה רחב אל ארבעת רבעיה והגבול סביב אותה חצי האמה והחיקלה אמה סביב ומעלתהו פנות קדים:

And the plinth (is) fourteen (cubits) long by fourteen (cubits) wide, a square with its four (sides) and the kerb around it (is) half a cubit (wide) and its gutter around (is) a cubit (deep) and its steps face toward the east.

2.4.5. Ezekiel 46:19-24

46:19

ויביאני במבוא אשר על־כתף השער אל־הלשכות הקדש אל־הכהנים הפנות צפונה והנה־שם מקום בירכתם ימה:

Then he brought me to the entrance on the side of the gate, to the sacred chambers of the priests facing north and see, there is a place on both sides to the west (see fig. 2.1 m).

- Zimmerli identifies the **מבוא** as the flight of steps (mentioned in 42:9) at the beginning of the separation wall, up to the priestly rooms on either side of the temple.¹²³

- The character and shape of the **מקום** is not described. Probably it is an open air facility like the kitchens in the outer court (see vs. 20). LXX reads καὶ ἰδοὺ τόπος ἐκεῖ κεχωρισμένος "and see, there is a separated place".

46:20

ויאמר אלי זה המקום אשר ישלוי־שם הכהנים את־האשם ואת־החטאת אשר יאפו את־המנחה לבלתי הוציא אל־החצר החיצונה לקדש את־העם:

And he said to me, this (is) the place where the priests cook the guilt offering and the sin offering, where they bake the grain offering without bringing (them) out into the outer court and to sanctify the people.

"To sanctify the people" is to be understood as transmitting the holiness of the offerings set aside for the priests.

46:21

ויוציאני אל־החצר החיצונה ויעבירני אל־ארבעת מקצועי החצר והנה חצר במקצע החצר חצר במקצע החצר:

Then he let me go out to the outer court and led me past the four corners of the court and see, a court in the corner of the court, a court in (each) corner of the court (see fig. 2.1 n).

¹²³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 501.

The last clause *הזנר במקצנע דהזנר* has been repeated. According to Zimmerli, an example of distributive repetition.¹²⁴

46:22

בארבעת מקצעות החצר חצרות קטרות ארבעים ארך ושלישים רחב מדה אחת לארבעתם מהקצעות:

In the four corners of the court (are) fenced-in courts, forty (cubits) long and thirty (cubits) wide, of one measurement in (all) four corners.

Many emend MT's seemingly incomprehensible *קטרות* to *קטנות* "small", like Zimmerli and NRSV do on the basis of LXX *ἀὐτὰ ἡ μικρά*.¹²⁵ m. Midot 2.5 reads: "without a roof". Nevertheless, I prefer MT *קטרות* "fenced-in" or "enclosed" on the basis of *lectio difficilior*.

46:23

וטור סביב בהם סביב לארבעתם ומבשלות עשוי מתחת הטרירות סביב:

A course (of stones) (is) around within them, around all four and cooking places are made below the courses around.

- The meaning of *טור* is obscure. *טור* could refer to a "row" or "course" of hewn stone and wood surrounding the courtyard of Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6:36).¹²⁶ According to Block "these rows of hewn stone appear to be associated directly with the structures used to prepare the food. One should probably imagine a series of ovens made of tiered stones, or a stone ledge around the inside of the enclosure under which the fireplaces are located".¹²⁷

- LXX varies from MT with the rendering *ἑξέδορα* "halls, cloisters" usually the translation of *לשכות*. The installations in the four corners of the outer court provide facilities for the laity where those who minister at the temple (*משדרני דבית*) prepare their sacred meals.

- "No counterparts to Ezekiel's temple kitchens are found in either the accounts of the Tabernacle ritual or the description of Solomon's temple".¹²⁸

46:24

ויאמר אלי אלה בית המבשלים אשר יבשלו־שם משרתי הבית את־זבח העם:

And he said to me these (are) the kitchens where those who minister in the temple cook the sacrifice(s) of the people.

2.5. Conclusions

The vision account is a purposely written autobiographical narrative in visual language. At first sight the vision account can be read as a building plan, but it should be noted that measurements of height are missing.

Scholarship is critical about the vision report, particularly chs. 41-and 42 are under debate. Many readings are uncertain and many architectural and technical terms are complicated or difficult to understand. Some parts of the text have suffered greatly in transcription and translation. The lack of sense in some texts of MT and the lack of understanding with regard to architecture in the ancient Near East occasioned much brain racking. Architectural and

¹²⁴ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 498.

¹²⁵ Zimmerli, *ibid.*, 499.

¹²⁶ *NIDOTTE*, 2, 359.

¹²⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 685.

¹²⁸ Block, *ibid.*, 685.

technical terms in the one case describe the character or function of built structures and in the other the manifestation or shape of structures and ornamentations. Consequently, solving textual problems in some texts of MT is a tall order.

Characteristic for MT Ezekiel is its difficult Hebrew. That is why BHS has copious emendations. Reconsidering difficult terms from the angle of architecture will give new impetus to a better understanding of the text, but the starting point for the study of the text must be MT.

In frequent occurrences an appeal to the LXX and other versions contributes to a good grasp of MT. LXX and Targum in some cases offer valuable additions to MT in elucidating architectural terms.

3. On imagination

“Have you seen it, son of man?” (Ezek. 47:6)

Because this study is devoted to the appearance of Ezekiel's virtual temple, I try to visualise my perceptions from Ezekiel's texts. In the process of reading and perception, imagination plays an important role. This chapter concentrates on the character of biblical visions, the meaning of imagination, the interpretation of sacred space, and ultimately the way in which Israelite sanctuaries are depicted in the course of western history of architecture.

3.1. The character of biblical visions

The prophet Ezekiel made abundant use of imagery in many of his texts including his temple vision, in order to help his fellow exiles and readers of generations after him, to understand and even to visualise the intended meaning as well as eliciting an appropriate response. Ezekiel's imagery may also lend particular emphasis to important items in the rhetorical narrative of the temple vision.

3.1.1. Receiving and reflecting visions

A close relationship can be distinguished between the phenomena of receiving visions and reflecting these visions in a process of creative imagination. Much has been written about imagination, but we are in the dark concerning the way in which prophets received a vision. Biblical prophecies only reveal that prophets had a vision, not how precisely it was transmitted to the prophets and how it was framed in their mind. Biblical visions were instruments of divine communication, but we do not know how the act of communication operated. Prophets heard, as it were, with inner ears and saw with inner eyes.

How does the distant reader receive and reflect on a transmitted visionary text? In the challenging process of reading the text of the temple vision, receiving and understanding its message, imagining and visualising what was shown to Ezekiel, all information can be combined. Reflection on this process creates our own contemporary concepts of a past or future reality. These conceptions and images arise from our individual perception or collective memory and worldview, as evidenced in the review of idealistic plans and architectural designs. Also, contemporary writers and architects of the 21st century in this way tap their creative abilities to picture Solomon's as well as Ezekiel's temple.

The ground plan of these temples served as a model for the design of plans for religious buildings as churches and monasteries, likewise a collection of ground plans for an ideal city, modelled after biblical examples, has been produced. In the perception of the designers the ideal city has a well balanced square geometrical form which is borrowed from the arrangement of the Tabernacle encampment, but above all from the descriptions of the New Jerusalem in the books Ezekiel and Revelation (see paragraph 3.5.1.).

In their concepts one perceives something of a desire for a perfect, orderly, well organised society. An earthly city as a heavenly vista against the backdrop of the imperfect overcrowded, unhealthy cities of the Middle Ages and the industrial cities of the 19th century. All these conceptions differ and represent the individual perception of the designer as well as the architectural characteristics of the time.

3.1.2. What is meant by a biblical vision?

In Scripture visions occur frequently as instruments of supernatural revelation. They are (audio)visual means of communication between God and an earthly recipient. The Old Testament terms for vision **מראה** and **חזיון** are derivatives from the verbs **ראה** and **חזה** meaning “to look” or “to see”. Both occur in the book Ezekiel. **מראה** for instance in Ezek1:1; 40:2 and **חזיון** in 12:27 and 13:16. **חזיון** is an Aramaic

loanword, used parallel to the Hebrew **נִרְאָה**. Revelatory visions portray scenery to the mind of prophetic recipients. In visions or dreams they were informed about dramatic and / or future events. The extensive use of the term “vision” in nearly all the Old Testament prophets, implies that visions were a normal medium for receiving the divine word. In visions not only were visionary scenes perceived by the inner eye but also a distinctive worldview or perception of reality that was proclaimed through the prophets. So a prophetic vision could be both a scenic, visual communication and a more general prophetic world view.

Visions are also central to the biblical literature known as apocalyptic. Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation are the biblical books that exhibit the traits of apocalyptic material most clearly. In these books details of future events are revealed to a seer or prophet. Scenes of these future events were often mediated and explained by an angelic interpreter.

Visions play an important structural role in the book Ezekiel. The book is even introduced as “visions of God” (Ezek 1:1). As a biblical visionary the prophet Ezekiel perceived the future temple in “visions of God” and reflected what was shown to him in an imaginative and creative way.

Evidenced by the list of important architectural details and wall decorations, the prophet must have seen the design of a three-dimensional temple on his guided tour. However, in the vision report he rendered it as a two-dimensional concept, displayed as an open ended ground plan. (Only the heights of the outer wall, the burnt offering altar and some pieces of furniture have been given).

3.2. Concepts of imagination in Western history

Through imagination we want to construct a picture, but that picture is largely determined by our culture and personal views about architecture. This will be shown in the subsequent historical review of the imagination of philosophers, writers and architects.

From this review the results of creative imagination will also become clear. I am aware that my own view is, likewise, time-bound and prejudiced. With respect to Ezekiel's future temple, presuming that it ever will be built, we may assume that it will not resemble the temple of Solomon in all respects. Instead, I expect a contemporary version in modern materials.

To gain some more insight into the concept of imagination, I have traced the varied uses of this concept in Western history in general. Traditional theories of imagination in Western history reach back to the classical Greek world of Plato and Aristotle.

Plato calls images copies of original creative acts. As the original corresponds with reality, copies must be deceptive. Aristotle, however, argued that artistic imagination is not simply portraying copies but showing more general truth about the world. He considered mental images to be the way we connect our perceptions of the world with our reason. Imagination and reason were stereotypically set in radical opposition to one another.

So “imagination remains largely a reproductive rather than a productive activity, a servant rather than a master of meaning, imitation rather than origin”.¹²⁹ The pure creative element of imagination initially loomed in the conceptions of Western culture. Imagination had, so to speak, become the cuckoo in its nest. What was left to imagination was merely fictional and artistic use.

During the Medieval period no other significant conceptions of the imagination inherited from the ancient Hebrew and Greek traditions are found. Egan argues that the classical view of imagination as primarily a kind of intermediary between sense perception and reason persisted until the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 113.

¹³⁰ Egan, “A very short history of imagination”, ierg.ca pdf (Imaginative Education Research Group. Conference Archives, 2014/04, (27-5-2020).

The Enlightenment period was characterised by a strong rationalism. Imagination was regarded only as a mimetic or ornamental faculty of the ancient and medieval worlds. Over the centuries the concept of imagination in Western thinking still shifted from a merely reproductive to a productive way of thinking.

It was not until the epoch of the Romantics that imagination was defined as being creative. One came to the understanding that creative imagination is most evidently found in the work of an artist. The function of this creative imagination never merely copies the world or translates perceptions; it is a constantly active and creative faculty that shapes the world we perceive and that uses our hopes, fears and other emotions in that shaping. The classical and medieval conceptions of the mind as a kind of mirror of the world changed dramatically.¹³¹ In more recent philosophy the linguistic turn has had a significant influence. The linguistic turn was a major development in Western philosophy during the early 20th century, focusing on the relationship between thought and language.

In the book Ezekiel, thought and language are quite imaginative with their abundant use of metaphorical language and imagery. Particularly in Ezekiel's temple vision, imagery would essentially take a visual form to enable our imagination to physically situate the "unseen", which stretches the very limits of our creative imagination.

The issue is raised, to what extent does biblical imagery and our creative imagination relate to each other. Prima facie imagery and imagination are intimately related. It can be said that a process of creative imagination set in after Ezekiel had received his temple vision. He wrote down the images he perceived and ultimately his images of a future temple were recorded in a biblical text. The images or pictures in Ezekiel's mind were transmitted in a text which still stimulates the imagination of the distant reader.

3.3. Imagination

3.3.1. What is meant by image and imagination in the Hebrew Bible?

Before outlining the ability to form a picture of Ezekiel's temple, we first of all need a definition of image and imagination.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes image as a visual representation such as the likeness of an object, a produced picture, a mental picture and a mental conception. It describes imagination as the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality.

The Cambridge English Dictionary shortly defines an image as a picture in your mind and imagination as the ability to form images or pictures in the mind.

In my own words an image is a representation of a real object, a graphic or picture and imagination is the ability to create images. Images trigger our imagination. So we respond to the images which are shown to us in biblical texts. I understand that by imagining Ezekiel's temple a mental representation is formed. However, a representation of structures, spaces and a variety of details as they actually are and presently did not exist.

One can use imagination to represent possibilities other than the actual, to represent times other than the present, and to represent perspectives other than one's own.¹³² That is what has been displayed by means of the vision report. Ezek 40-42 brings images to our mind of the layout of a virtual temple and challenges us to form a picture from that.

The first time that the word image appears in the Hebrew Bible, is an act of God. In Gen. 1:26 God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (דמוֹת דְּנָא צִלְמֵם) "and it was very good". When humans create an image it often gets a negative connotation in the Hebrew Bible. Referring to the lemma סְבִיתָ

¹³¹ Egan, "A very short history of imagination", ierg.ca pdf (Imaginative Education Research Group. Conference Archives, 2014/04, (27-5-2020).

¹³² plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/imagination/ (28-05-2020).

“cast image”, in Num 33:52, Deut 27:15, Isa 30:22, 2 Kgs 17:16 and *נִשְׁכֵּית* “image, sculpture”, in Prov 18:11 we get an impression of human imagination and its implications. Human imagination turns into pride and idolatry. Prov 18:11-12a says: “The wealth of the rich is their strong city; in their imagination (בַּנִּשְׁכֵּיתוֹ) it is like a high wall. Before destruction one’s heart is haughty” (NRSV). In Num 33:52 we find the lemma *נִשְׁכֵּית* with the same meaning: “...destroy all their cast images, and demolish all their high places”. In these texts a link has been made between image and idol.

Human imagination, trespassed the limits that God has set. Human imagination cannot be equated with God’s creative imagination. The consequences of human imagination are clearly displayed in Gen 11:6 that says: “Nothing will be restrained from them, which they have planned (זָנְמוּ) to do” (KJV); “nothing they have in mind to do will be beyond their reach” (NEB); “nothing that they propose to do” (NRSV); “nothing they plan to do” (NIV). The Hebrew *זָנְמוּ* from the verb *זָנַם* “think”, “plan evil”, demonstrates that human imagination can lead to unparalleled pride and rebellion.¹³³

Egan remarks, “The imagination in both ancient Greek and Hebrew traditions represent a rebellion against divine order, it disturbs the proper harmony between the human and the divine worlds, and it empowers people with a capacity that is properly divine”.¹³⁴ In the ancient world creativity is a prerogative of the divine. Humans attempt to imagine the divine world, but that seems inescapably bound up with attempts to usurp God’s creative power.

But would it be wrong to use our creative imagination to visualise the concept of Ezekiel’s temple vision? I think: Ezekiel’s vision actually challenges our imagination and creative abilities in order to communicate the vision to the contemporary distant reader. Then the limits of our imagination are only bound by the text. The vision account of Ezekiel asks the very best of our imagination in reproducing the appearance of the destroyed temple and producing an accurate picture of the future temple.

Looking through the eyes of Ezekiel our creative imagination may be stimulated by his description of what he saw (something like the structure of a city Ezek 40:2). He saw something like virtual reality. This phrase appeals to our imagination and artistic ability to visualise what was shown to Ezekiel.

3.3.2. Interrelationship between biblical visions and imagination

Many diverse ideas are associated with the phenomena of vision and imagination. Biblical visions can be briefly defined as the faculty of receiving revelations of God and imagination as the faculty to form a picture in the mind. Visions and imagination are interrelated phenomena. They are sent by God and received / reproduced by a prophet or seer. Thus visions and images as described in Ezekiel’s texts are scriptural renditions of the prophet’s mental reproductions. The reception and reflection of these visions follow a creative process.

Ezekiel received God’s revelations by way of visions by which Ezekiel’s imagination was fully mobilised. Ezekiel’s temple vision was received and reflected as an act of dynamic imagination, intertwining the prophet’s faculty to reflect images of the lost temple and the faculty to describe and depict a completely new temple which was shown to him and in which nevertheless much has changed with respect to its layout and cultic objects.

I am of the opinion that evoking images is part of Ezekiel’s rhetorical strategy to comfort his fellow exiles that Israel is not doomed to extinction on foreign soil and to convince them with the prospect of a future return to their ancestral homeland and the promise of a new temple. With a clear picture of the new temple Ezekiel opens a window to the future. That is why I am convinced that the distant reader of Ezekiel’s report gets a much better understanding of the envisioned temple by a visualisation of the vision. For that all our creative abilities to imagine Ezekiel’s temple must be mobilised.

¹³³ NIDOTTE, 1, 1112.

¹³⁴ Egan, “A very short history of imagination”, ierg.ca pdf (Imaginative Education Research Group. Conference Archives, 2014/04, (27-5-2020).

3.3.3. Dynamic imagination based on memory and creativity

From Plato to the present day, imagination has fascinated philosophers, writers and architects. To get an impression of the scope of imagination I refer to some experts in the field of imagination.

The contemporary Irish philosopher Kearney argues that the human ability to “image” or “imagine” something, has been understood in two main ways throughout the history of Western thought: as a representational and a creative faculty. The representational faculty being the memory of that which was already known and the creative faculty being an act of dynamic imagination.¹³⁵ The enigmatic description of the temple vision creates such a kind of dynamic imagination. On the one hand, we can revert to our frame of reference i.e. the description of Solomon’s temple and archaeological evidence and on the other hand, we are challenged to use our power of creative imagination.

Someone who possessed a fascinating and unrivalled imagination was the famous writer C.S. Lewis. Nevertheless, his concept of imagination was in line with the Western understanding of the term. As an author he used imaginative depiction to enable readers to see a particular object or truth more clearly. This approach of imagination will be used for the perception of the text of Ezekiel’s temple vision.

In his autobiographical work *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis outlines three finely graded distinctions of the imagination: 1. daydream or wish fulfilment, 2. invention, creating new images of realities around us, and 3. perception, observing realities beyond us.¹³⁶

In the context of this study two of Lewis’ definitions have an important bearing on the imagination of the temple vision, namely:

- Invention or the ability to depict images of the real world in a new way. Invention here intended as a creative process that enables us to see and clarify the world as it is or is envisioned (according to Lewis).¹³⁷
- Perception of realities beyond us, realities revealed by God or heavenly messengers, which calls upon our creative ability to form a picture of visionary experiences.

Outlining Lewis’ thoughts about imagination, Neal remarks in a quarterly of the C.S. Lewis Institute: “Stories and imaginative depictions bring the truth of the text to life in an appealing creative way and give an additional bearing on reality”.¹³⁸ Moreover, they lift our perception of reality as a work of art above the ordinary

Referring to myth stories throughout the ages, the educator Egan observed in this context that we can remember a set of vivid events plotted into a story much better than we can remember lists or sets of explicit directions. “The great power of the story is that it engages us effectively, as well as requiring our cognitive attention. The vividness and power of that turns on the way we are arrested by their images”.¹³⁹

It is the need to memorise things that stimulates and develops our capacity for imagination. I am convinced that this is also the case in the biblical narratives and visions. The more vivid the images are, the more easily and securely they are remembered. This observation formed the basis of all memorising techniques developed in the pre-historic, medieval and modern worlds.¹⁴⁰ Stories sustained by illustrations will reinforce our imaging even more.

¹³⁵ Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 15-16.

¹³⁶ Neal, “The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis”, *Knowing&Doing*, C.S. Lewis Institute htm pdf, 08/12/2016, (5-7-2020).

¹³⁷ The term “invention” in this regard may cause confusion. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary it means “to produce something for the first time through the use of the imagination or of ingenious thinking and experiment”. Inventive thinking has always played a vital role in the creative process. To invent is to see anew, envision a new idea, seeing it in their minds eye (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/invention>).

¹³⁸ Neal, *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Egan, “A very short history of imagination”, *ierg.ca pdf* (Imaginative Education Research Group. Conference Archives, 2014/04, (27-5-2020).

¹⁴⁰ Egan, *ibid*.

3.3.4. Ezekiel's vision account an example of biblical imagery

Imagery is language creating images in the mind of the reader. Imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language. The vision account of Ezekiel's temple evidently can be considered as imagery, for it reads as a visual report. Unfortunately, there are only written texts at our disposal, visualised impressions in the form of pictures are missing. One of the challenges of this study is to visualise the text by adding pictures and comparing Ezekiel's temple to its predecessors. By visualising the vision report we get a better understanding of the meaning of architectural terms, and it enables us to gain more insight into the whole design of Ezekiel's temple with all its details.

In Ezekiel's description we find many references to Solomon's temple and classic ancient Near Eastern architecture, but also quite new elements and modifications in its layout and architecture. Remarkably, the book Ezekiel displays only a two-dimensional picture of a three-dimensional temple. That exceedingly complicates the imaging of the envisioned temple and leaves much to our imagination. Moreover, the theological interpretation of Ezekiel's future temple is not without difficulties. The challenge is to integrate the structure of Israelite sanctuaries, including Ezekiel's temple, into the religious, aesthetic and political paradigms of their own milieu.

3.4. Symbolism and concepts of sacred space in the ancient Near East and Israel

3.4.1. Symbolism of sacred space

The symbolism of sacred space underlies the concepts of temple building. In chapter 4 and 5, seven categories of temple symbolism or temple ideology are listed: the temple as divine presence, heavenly abode, geographical centre of the world, as the embodiment of the cosmic mountain and primeval waters of creation, as the reflection of Paradise and as the physical manifestation of sacred space.

In the ancient world one believed that certain locations had gained sacred status as portals through which the gods traversed. The construction of temples was carried out to preserve the sanctity of the space.

"All the architecture of the temple was designed to represent and preserve the sanctity of the site, generally through the establishment of sacred zones, barriers between those zones and limited sight lines. The result of this architecture was that accessibility was limited so that nothing profane could approach".¹⁴¹

Israel shared in this ideology of sacred space. The conceptualisation of biblical sacred space, however, entails a wide range of categories that goes beyond the simple juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane.

3.4.2. The concept of sacred space

The first issue raised by this subject is how sacred space can be defined. The concept of sacred space in the ancient Near East and Israel was closely related to the religious cult in antiquity. There were also many similarities in the layout of the temples in the ancient Near Eastern region and in the way the gods were approached by the worshipping people. So religious cult and temple building culture had much in common.

"Models of sacred space used in the biblical texts reflect the manifestation of the special worldview that is governed by the concept of holiness and the particular concepts of God associated with the notions of divine dwelling presence, divine glory and divine rest. The Israelite model of sacred space also represents related transformations of the functions, meanings and significance of the concepts of sacred space. For instance, the establishment of the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem signifies the transformation of the legitimate place of worship in ancient Israelite religion, from a dynamic model to a permanent, static one".¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 118.

¹⁴² Kim, *The concepts of sacred space in the Hebrew Bible*, vii-viii.

The Hebrew Bible view of Israel's earthly temple is to be seen as a reflection of the model which was shown to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 25:9, 40). In the Jewish Enochic Pseudepigrapha of the second temple period, the thought of a heavenly counterpart arose. The heavenly counterpart imagery is found in particular in The Book of the Watchers. In 1 Enoch 14, Enoch's travel to the heavenly sanctuary is portrayed. However, it should be noted that the idea of an earthly sanctuary being a replica of the heavenly one makes its first appearance not in the text of the Hebrew Bible, but in early Mesopotamian traditions. There earthly temples are repeatedly portrayed as counterparts of heavenly realities.¹⁴³

The vision of the temple as sacred space has been described in bright colours and vivid imagery. Throughout the whole book, Ezekiel made use of metaphorical language or imagery. Ezekiel's temple vision account may be regarded as the pinnacle of prophetic imagery.

I have approached Ezekiel's perception of a future temple in terms of an image-paradigm being a guiding image developed in the mind of the prophet, aimed at evoking the same image in the mind of the exiles. An image paradigm is a means of communication, in this case between the prophet Ezekiel and his exiled people. It constitutes meaning to the exiles that gives form to a never before perceived temple.

An example of one of the most significant image paradigms in Christian tradition, is the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem which like Ezekiel's temple is not directly represented in a visible form. The description of Ezekiel's envisioned temple presents itself as imagery without real pictures.

3.4.3. Historical building or verbal icon?

Temples in general are of historical, theological and architectural importance, but the first temple of Jerusalem in particular is one of the most archetypical buildings in the history of architecture. The study of that temple has been approached in many ways. Though there is hardly any archaeological evidence of Solomon's temple left, scholars have tried to reconstruct its appearance using biblical descriptions and classical sources. A complicating factor is that multiple data relating to the appearance and measurements of Solomon's temple vary. In scholarly circles one has tried to reconcile all the apparently incompatible differences between the biblical texts. Their efforts were aimed at offering an interpretive framework for its appearance.

Quite another approach has been introduced by McCormick. He advocates an interpretation of the relevant biblical text about Solomon's temple without reference to the actual existence of the structure. He addresses the gap between the text and an actual temple "by approaching the text itself as a verbal icon that is the product of a society much later than the building it purports to describe".¹⁴⁴

On the contrary, I continue to approach the texts as documents reflecting real history. The history and description of the Israelite sanctuaries from Moses to Zerubbabel surely are embedded in the biblical narratives of the Old Testament rendering a real physical temple on Mount Moriah. The Hebrew Bible states that the temple was constructed during the reign of Solomon, but this is contradicted by scholars such as Finkelstein and Silberman.¹⁴⁵

Recent excavations affirm the existence of the first temple by findings of ostraca and inscriptions. Moreover, the Temple Mount Sifting Project has recovered numerous tiny artefacts dating from the 8th to the 7th centuries BCE indicating the existence of the first temple.

¹⁴³ Orlov, *The Greatest Mirror, Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, 7-10.

¹⁴⁴ McCormick, *Palace and temple*. 5-6.

¹⁴⁵ Finkelstein, Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 340-345.

3.5. Imitating and depicting biblical examples of sacred space

3.5.1. The perfect model

For centuries, scholars, writers and architects have displayed and transformed the arrangement of the Tabernacle encampment and the ground plan and architecture of Solomon's and Ezekiel's temple in various ways. Monasteries and palaces were built on the pattern of Solomon's or Ezekiel's temple.

In the nineteenth century reformers created visionary plans for the ideal residential settlements. In these plans the same square ground plan of Ezekiel's temple and the Holy City are recognisable. Contemporary, culturally charged architecture and ideas were often decisive for their imaging.

The most striking feature of biblical sanctuaries, settlements or cities is its square shape.

On four separate occasions, the Bible describes a model of sacred space and in each instance it has the form of a square. As an archetype of all biblical settlements the desert encampment around the Tabernacle was arranged as a square. The forty-eight cities described in Num 35 likewise seemed to be square. The temple of Ezekiel has a ground plan existing of three square courts.

The ultimate square city is the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, described by both the prophet Ezekiel and John of Patmos as a square walled-in city with twelve gates. A perfectly square city was not customary in the ancient Near East, where cities tended to be round or amorphous in plan. The square form was usually reserved for the temple or palace within the city wall.

Analysing the biblical texts and forming an image of temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel and visualising Ezekiel's visionary temple, we create our own perception of Solomon's and Ezekiel's temple. Consequently, I am also aware of my own biased view of the facts and my interpretation of Ezekiel's vision.

In the following overview of models, I want to give an impression of the impact of the arrangement of the Tabernacle encampment, the temple of Jerusalem and the ground plan of the New Jerusalem on later visionary architecture and models.

3.5.2. The arrangement of the desert encampment as a model for sacred space

The structure of the Tabernacle took a central stage after the making of the Covenant at Mount Sinai symbolising God's presence amidst his people. The blueprint of its layout recalls memories of Egyptian portable shrines but also pointed forward to Solomon's temple. The wilderness camp around the Tabernacle was set up in a special way. In the encampment layout of the Israelite tribes, Levi is encamped at the centre, directly around the Tabernacle with the twelve other tribes surrounding it in four encampments. This pattern is also recognisable in Ezekiel's temple vision. According to Ezek 48 the land of Israel will be distributed among the 12 tribes with the tribe of Levi settled in the holy portion with the temple in their midst.

The Jewish scholar and rabbi Jacob Jehudah Leon (Templo) gave a description of the Tabernacle, published in 1654 under the title *Retrato del Tabernaculo de Moseh*. He pictured the encampment in its fourfold symmetry with the twelve tribes of Israel positioned around a square and with the tribe of Levi around the Tabernacle in an inner square.

The presentation is pure fantasy, but in accordance with the encampment of the biblical account in Num 2. The use of the fourfold symmetry is characteristic for that time. This fourfold symmetry also corresponds to the ground plan of Ezekiel's temple.

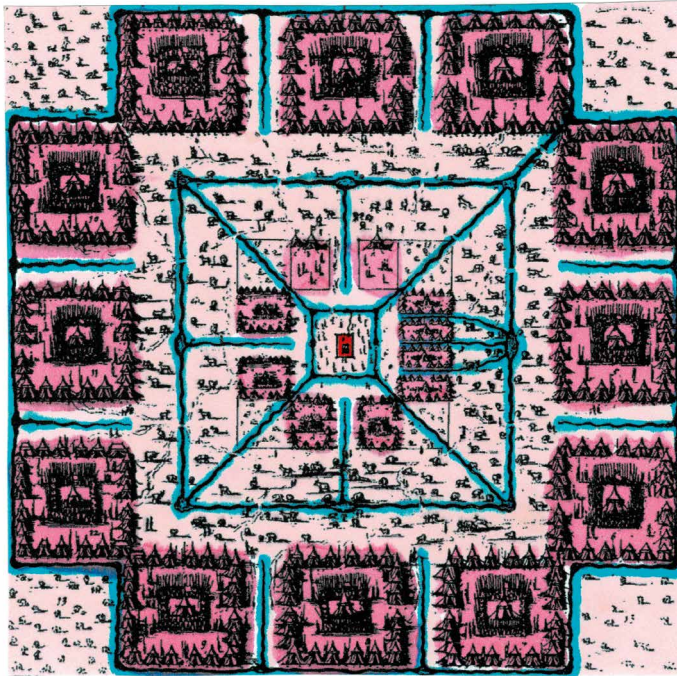


fig. 3.1 Engraving of the Tabernacle encampment of Jacob Jehudah Leon Templo, positioned in a double square (1654). (Adapted from Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Ros. A7-1, Universiteit van Amsterdam).

3.5.3. The temple of Solomon as a model of sacred space

A permanent dwelling place for the Name of God was built on Mount Moriah. This temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, was rebuilt by Zerubbabel and King Herod, who expanded it to twice its original size. These structures received a virtual counterpart: i.e. the temple in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel.

“On the one hand, Ezekiel’s version was a prophecy of a temple yet to come, but on the other hand the description clearly recalled Solomon’s divine and archetypical example”.¹⁴⁶ The layout of Ezekiel’s visionary temple and the Qumranic Temple City were regarded as concepts referring to the Tabernacle encampment, described in the Exodus narrative. The original concepts in the biblical accounts relating to the Tabernacle and the encampment around it, also formed the basis of a number of representations of the Jerusalem temple in the course of time.

In the beginning of the Christian era the focus was on the temple of Herod, described in the Talmud and by Josephus. The first schematic representation of Herod’s temple was given on a coin minted during the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans in 133-134 CE Distinctive are the four pillars in the front of the temple edifice (see fig. 5.28a and 5.28b). The fourfold representation of ground plans and architectural elements became a *Leitmotiv* in Western architecture.

In the eleventh century, Maimonides drew a schematic floor plan of Herod’s temple (see fig. 5.17). The descriptions and representations of Herod’s temple from Maimonides to the late Middle Ages are mainly rendered in a reproductive fashion. However, distinctive in the rendering of Maimonides is the division of the actual temple and its inner court into four spaces with a hierarchical order of holiness. Outside before it the court for women is located.

From the late Middle Ages up to now a renewed interest in the Jerusalem temple has developed. Scholars and architects have studied the temple anew. Most of their findings were displayed in a creative way in tetragonal (square or rectangular) plans and structures like the Tabernacle encampment.

Since the 16th century there has been a particular interest in the temple of Solomon. Not only theologians but also artists and architects have become involved and reconstructed the verbal temple visually in scaled drawings and models. “They not only translated words into images but in

¹⁴⁶ Goudeau, “Ezekiel for Solomon”, 89.

addition transferred certain characteristics of the temple to new buildings and - in part unintentionally - transferred characteristics of contemporary architecture to the temple".¹⁴⁷

A comprehensive and detailed reconstruction of Solomon's temple was developed by the Jesuit priest Juan Battista Villalpando (1556-1608) and his colleague Jerónimo Prado. From the layout one can deduce that this reconstruction was primarily based upon the prophetic temple of Ezekiel. He designed the layout of the temple as a grid of nine courtyards. "The monumental work of Villalpando and Prado would become the benchmark of temple literature".¹⁴⁸

The plan of Solomon's temple in Villalpando's book *In Ezechielem explanationes* (vol. II, 1604) was accepted as a proper representation of the historical temple up to the nineteenth century. The popularity of the plan was enhanced by its occurrence in the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* or *London Polyglot* of Brian Walton (1657). Villalpando's design remained a guideline for the times to come. As a result of his scientific approach he applied the principle of architecture to biblical buildings and created the "architecture of theology". *In Ezechielem explanationes* was a blend of science and religion.¹⁴⁹

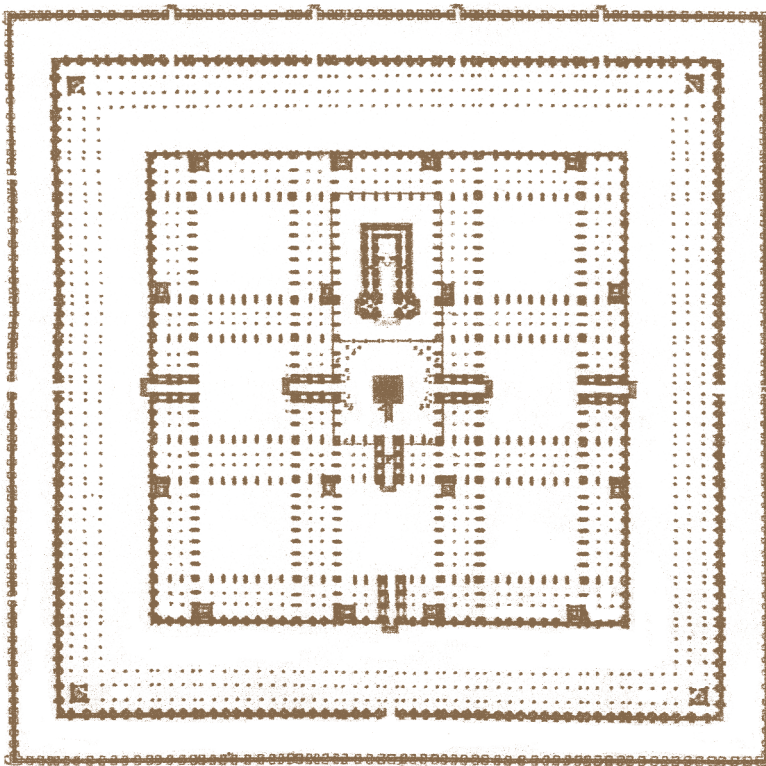


fig. 3.2 Reconstruction of the ground plan of Solomon's temple by Juan Battista Villalpando (1604). (Adapted from Van Asselt, *Ultimum Tempus Nobis Imminat. Eschatologische structuren van de theologie van Johannes Coccejus*. (NAK 76-1996).pdf (21-9-2015)

Rabbi Jacob Jehudah Leon (Templo) not only pictured the Tabernacle encampment, but also built a model of the temple based on the descriptions in the Hebrew Bible, the writings of Flavius Josephus and rabbinic literature. He also wrote a booklet on the subject in Spanish, *Retrato del Templo de Selomo*.

¹⁴⁷ Goudeau, "Ezekiel for Solomon", 90.

¹⁴⁸ Goudeau, *ibid.* 91.

¹⁴⁹ Kuo, *Reading the Landscape of Ezekiel 40-48*, 34.

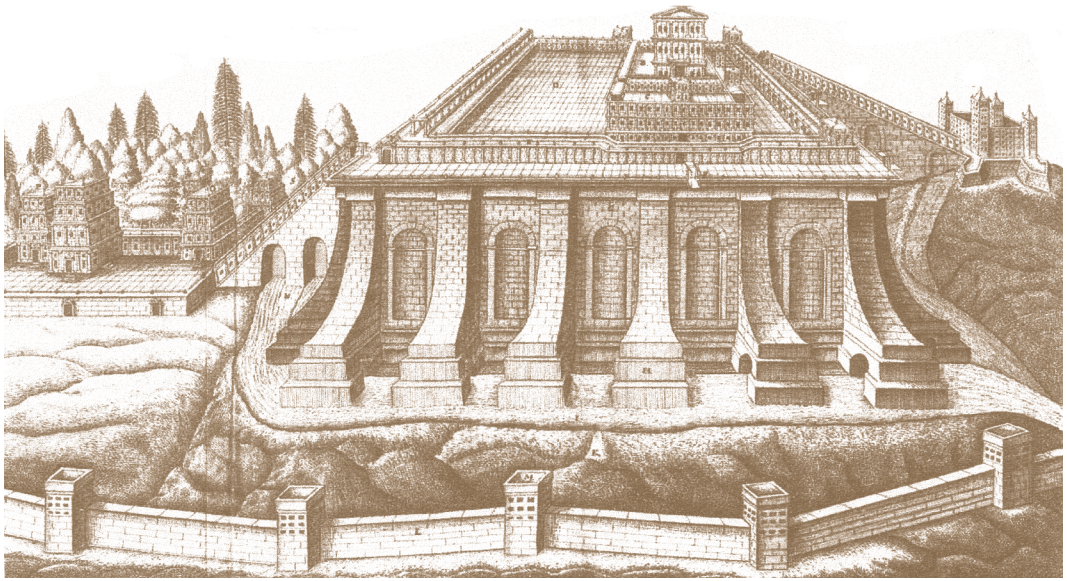


fig. 3.3 Model Solomon's temple according to Jacob Jehudah Leon (Templo). (Taken from *De Templo Hierosolymitano*, Libris IV, Hemstedt, 1665. With permission photographed in Bijbels Museum, Cromhouthuis, Amsterdam).

A good century later, Isaac Newton studied and wrote extensively on the temple of Solomon. In his book *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms*, he dedicated an entire chapter to his observations regarding the temple. Newton's primary source of information was the description of the structure given within the book 1 Kings.

In addition to scripture, Newton also relied upon various ancient and contemporary sources. Newton was interested in the sacred geometry of Solomon's temple, but he believed that the dimensions and proportions of the temple represented sacred wisdom; often termed *prisca sapientia*. To Newton the geometry of the temple represented more than a mathematical blueprint. The biblical texts in symbolic and mathematical language should conceal unknown knowledge that has to be deciphered.

During Newton's lifetime there was great interest in the temple of Solomon in Europe, due to the success of Villalpando's publications, and augmented by a vogue for detailed engravings and physical models presented in various galleries.¹⁵⁰ History shows a certain degree of development in the architectural imaging of the temple from the representation of the historical temple of Solomon to a more symbolic temple, creatively displayed in the architecture of the various times.

Since the temple was not completely measured, Newton assumed symmetry to complete the design, showing his interest in reconstructing an accurate and realistic re-creation of the temple and not just a prophetic hieroglyph.¹⁵¹ In Newton's reconstruction the creative aspect of imagination becomes visible. He developed his own 'mindscape' of the temple.

The diagrams of Villalpando, Newton and others were only creative representations of ideas about the layout and imaging of Solomon's temple, supplemented with data from the temple vision of Ezekiel. These artfully elaborated ideas, however, had great impact on architecture and landscaping through the ages.

¹⁵⁰ [wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton's_occult_studies](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton's_occult_studies). (12-2-2020)

¹⁵¹ Kuo, *Reading the Landscape of Ezekiel 40-48*, 40.

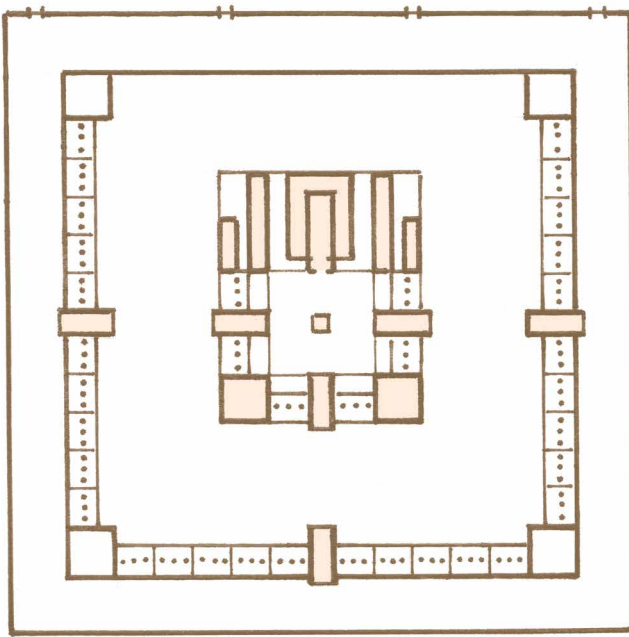


fig. 3.4 Isaac Newton's reconstruction of the ground plan of Solomon's temple, plate 1 of *The chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, published in 1728. (Redrawn by author after Isaac Newton's Temple of Solomon.jpg (12-2-2020).

A number of churches and synagogues and other structures have been designed to evoke the temple. A striking example of such a structure is the austere El Escorial palace monastery (1584) near Madrid, designed by the architect Juan Bautista de Toledo, a Spanish pupil of Michelangelo. The central axis reveals a pattern of a portico followed by a courtyard, followed by a second portico, ante room, and atrium, all flanked by arcades and enclosed passageways leading to the Sanctuary with the Holy of Holies. On either side of the entrance to the basilica, statues of David and Solomon are erected. The complex consists of an imposing rectangular compound constructed in a symbolic fourfold grid pattern. Its outer measurements are ample 220x150m.¹⁵²

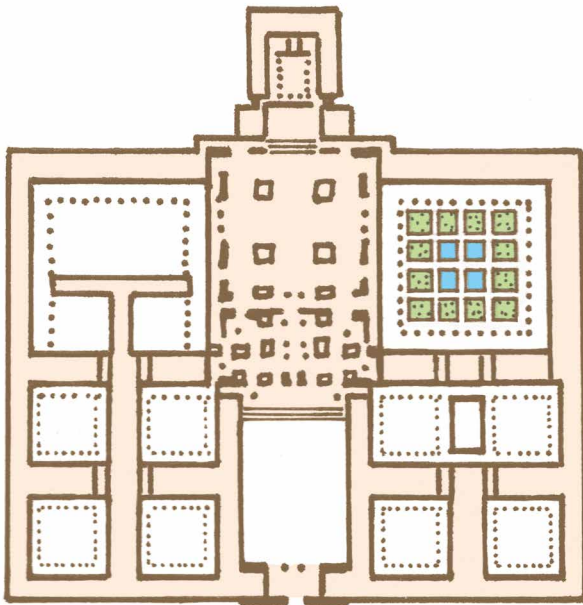


fig. 3.5 El Escorial Monastery (1584), based on the floor plan of Solomon's temple. Designed by Juan Bautista de Toledo after the layout of Solomon's temple. Stylized representation of the ground plan. (Redrawn by author after wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Escoreal (14-2-2020).

¹⁵² wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Escoreal (14-2-2020).

Today Solomon's temple is still a central symbol of Freemasonry and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Every Masonic Lodge possesses ritual objects representing the architecture of the temple. Mormon temples are also evocations of Solomon's temple.

3.5.4. Reconstructions of Ezekiel's temple

In early Christianity the temple image appears as a description of the church. Jerome's primary interpretation of the temple image remained ecclesiastical. Augustine and Gregory the Great also applied architectural imagery to the church. For Augustine the temple image represented unity; the unity of the individual with Christ, but also of all Christians with each other ¹⁵³

The eighth-century monk Bede declared that the temple once had been placed upon the earth, but that now the church is the temple of the living God.¹⁵⁴ He understands architectural details and descriptions of construction work as symbolic for the church.

Although during the Middle Ages an allegorical interpretation of Ezek 40-48 was advocated, there was also a movement in Christian exegesis towards a literal reading.

Richard of St. Victor interpreted Ezek 40-48 according to its "plain" sense and gave diagrams of Ezekiel's temple. In his illustrations the ground plan was the predominant feature.¹⁵⁵ From the twelfth century onwards, some Christian scholars such as Richard of St. Victor (1173), Nicholas of Lyra (1349) and Hartmut Schedel (1439) became increasingly interested in the way Jewish scholars read their texts.

In a fifteenth-century manuscript, the *Postilla in Prophetas* of Nicholas of Lyra a schematic diagram of the whole temple of Ezekiel is displayed. In his diagram he included in the depiction the flowing water from the temple according to Ezek 47.

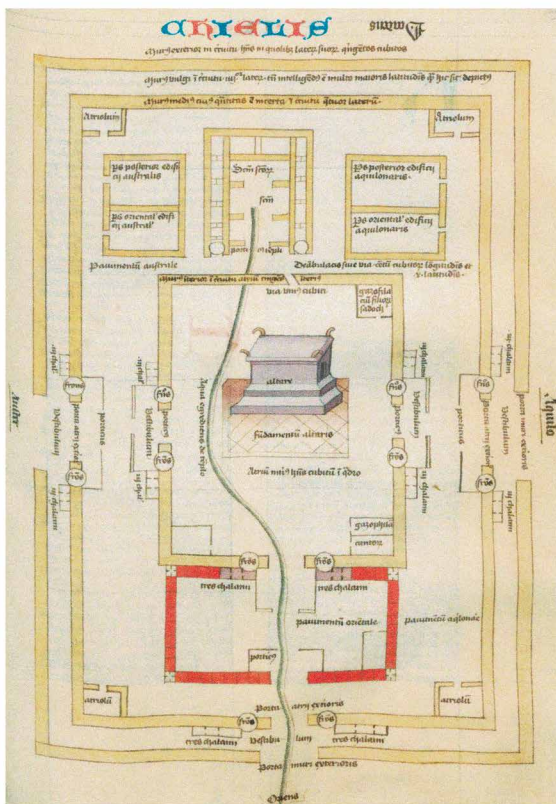


fig. 3.6 Temple of Ezekiel of Nicholas of Lyra (1423) *Postilla in Prophetas* Hs. 252-f. 209r University Library Utrecht. (Taken from [wikipedia.org/wiki/Handschrift_252](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handschrift_252)).

¹⁵³ O'Brien, *Bede's Temple, An Image and its Interpretation*, 41.

¹⁵⁴ O'Brien, *ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Kuo, *Reading the Landscape of Ezekiel 40-48*, 29.

With the slogan *ad fontes* the Reformation consciously returned to the biblical sources, but Luther commented on Ezekiel's prophecies as of the reign of Christ. There was no special interest in the physical appearance of Ezekiel's temple. At the same time the temple was recognised not only as the archetype of Christian church building, but was also a model for civic planning and a means of articulating the symbiotic relationship between church and state. King Philip II of Spain's self-identification with King Solomon shaped the design of his monastery-palace El Escorial in accordance with the temple.

In the seventeenth century the Dutch theologian Johannes Cocceius presented an actual reconstruction of the temple as contemporary architecture. With the help of Samuel Kechelius, he could solve mathematical problems and architectural questions. Cocceius' attempt to reconstruct Ezekiel's temple can according to him be understood as:

"Biblical criticism by visual means, in which text and image are closely intertwined. The engravings of the temple that accompanied his text can be understood as part of an architectural debate, parallel to theology and biblical chronology, conducted on another level and with other means, but within the same context of criticism".¹⁵⁶

With respect to the form of Ezekiel's temple Campegius Vitringa was engaged in a controversy with his former tutor Cocceius. According to Coccejus, Ezekiel's temple was six times larger than the one of Vitringa. Vitringa assumed that the temple was measured with the measuring unit of the ordinary cubit and Coccejus assumed that unit of the rod was used. Vitringa argued that the concept and measurements of Ezekiel's temple prove that it corresponds with the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel.

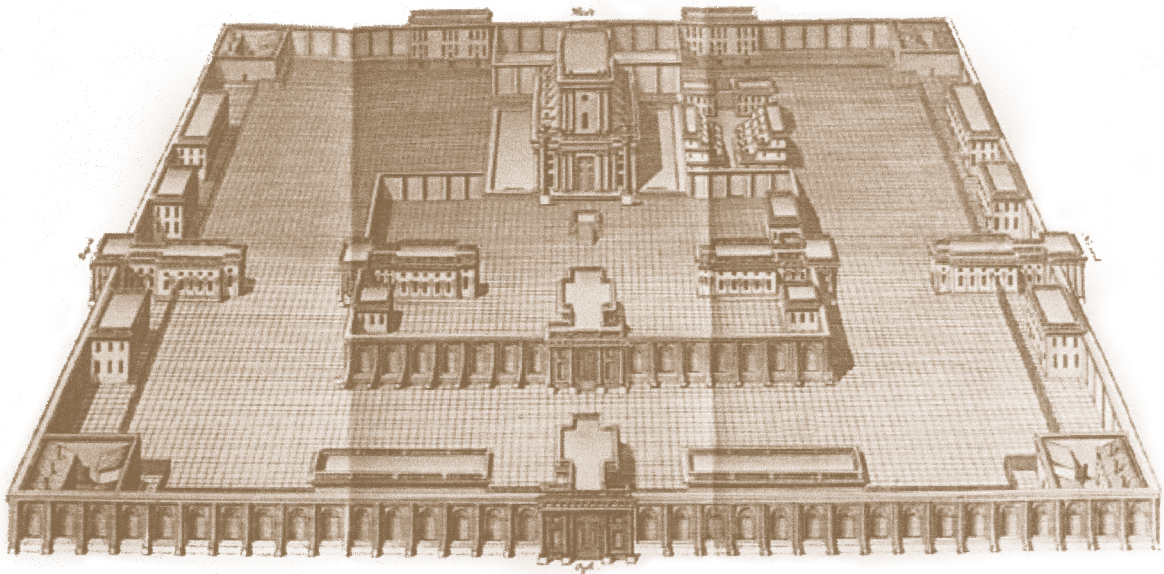
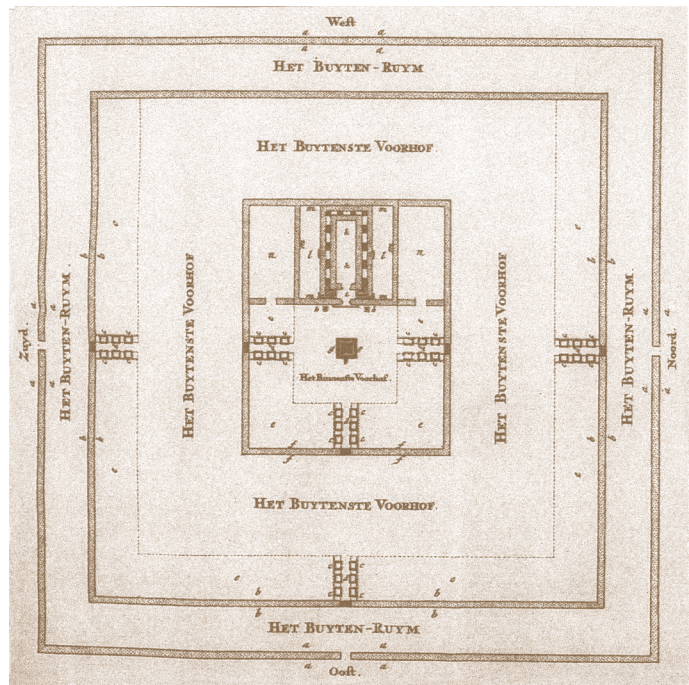


fig. 3.7a Bird's eye view of Ezekiel's temple by Johannes Coccejus, Amsterdam 1691.
(Taken from Tab. XVIII, Leiden University).

¹⁵⁶ Goudeau, "Ezekiel for Solomon", 88-89.

fig. 3.7b Campegius Vitringa, temple of Ezekiel (1687) in *Aanleydinge tot het recht verstant van den tempel van Ezechiël* (1687) in which is proved that the concept and measurements are comparable with the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel. (Taken from W.J. van Asselt, *Ultimum Tempus Nobis Imminet, Eschatologische structuren van de theologie van Johannes Coccejus*. (NAK 76-1996) pdf, (21-9-2015).



It is notable that from the Middle Ages up to now, creative representations of the layout and imaging of Solomon's temple are reflected idealistically. The plan and architecture of Solomon's temple were depicted over and over again with Ezekiel's temple in mind. All models have the fourfold geometric shape of Ezekiel's temple (see chapter 5 and 6).

In contrast to the reconstructions of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and Baroque periods, scholars and architects of the twentieth century have tried to reconstruct Ezekiel's temple very accurately according to Ezekiel's vision account.

3.6. Imitating and depicting the New Jerusalem

According to the biblical accounts, the ideal sacred city is modelled after a "heavenly" geometric archetype. The first example in the Bible of a settlement arranged in a quadrangle or square was the wilderness encampment described in Num 2.

On three other occasions the Bible describes a model city or settlement which is square. The ultimate imaginations of square cities are Ezekiel's city-like structure of a new temple as well as Ezekiel's Holy City, and the New Jerusalem described by John of Patmos. The forty-eight Levitical cities described in Num 35 were square likewise.

The temple of Jerusalem as a city-like structure and the plan of the New Jerusalem had a huge impact on Western architecture and town planning in the development of concepts for an ideal city.

3.6.1. Conceptions of the ideal classic and medieval city

Cities are either planted and gradually grown or they are planned and purposefully developed. Planted settlements are recognisable by an organic amorphous ground plan in contrast to planned cities with rational geometric city plans.

As a matter of course, the concept of what is called an ideal city is a well developed planned city. Ur, Nineveh and Babylon in Mesopotamia, Amarna in Egypt and the Greek city of Miletus were examples of early planned urban development. None of them were built according to biblical concepts. The geometrical layout of a classic ideal plan of a city is determined by military order, method and strict control.

In this regard the four urban components of a Greek city were: defence walls, acropolis or sacred temple precinct, colonnaded agora flanked by public buildings, shops and residential areas, tautly laced by a rectangular grid of streets in Hippodamian tradition.

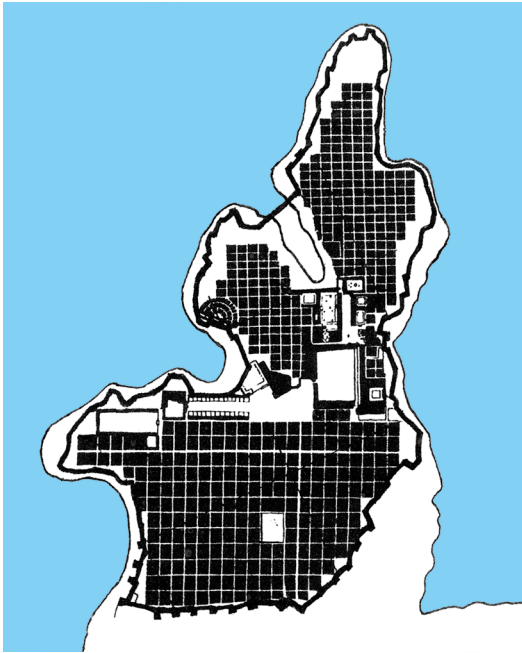


fig. 3.8a Geometrical layout of the 6th century BCE Greek town of Miletus with the checkerboard pattern of Hippodamus. (Redrawn by author from Honoré Rottier, *Stedelijke structuren*, 1978).

The Romans copied and adapted architectural styles and some important features of city planning.¹⁵⁷ Even though the city-like structure of Ezekiel's temple has not served as an example for these classical cities, nevertheless they display some similar characteristics, viz. the rectangular ground plan and rational orderly composition. The similarities in the ground plans of Ezekiel's temple and a Roman castrum or army camp are striking. Many Roman settlements and cities are designed on the same pattern.

A good example of rectangular grid patterned Roman settlements is the 100 CE Algerian city Colonia Marciana Traiana Thamugadi (Timgad). The orderly designed cities Colonia Ulpia Trajana (Xanten), one of the most important cities in the Germanic provinces of Rome in antiquity, and Augusta Treverum (Trier) have a similar grid patterned ground plan.

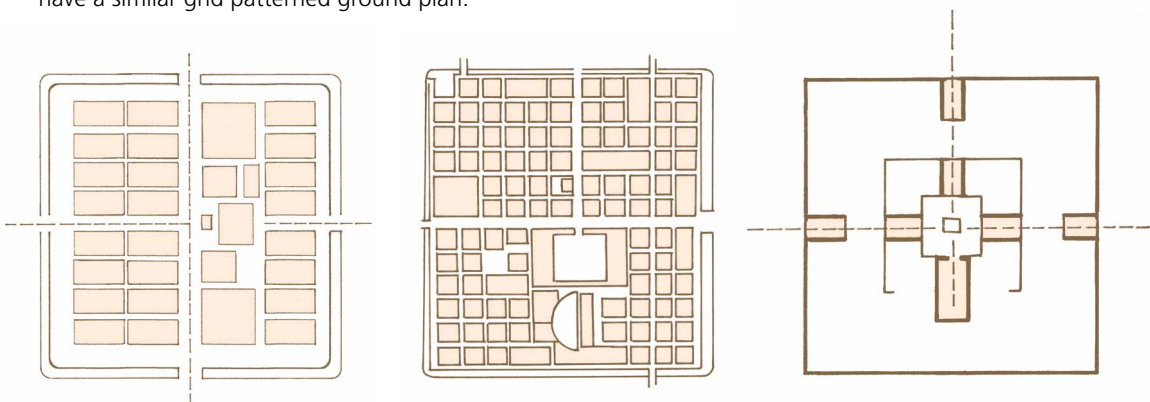


fig. 3.8b Diagram of a Roman castrum and city of Timgad compared with the plan of Ezekiel's temple. (Drawn by author).

¹⁵⁷ Burke, *Towns in the Making*, 14-25.

Medieval cities usually had a radial concentric structure. In the center was the abbey and its spacious square. The abbey, the city's axis mundi, was oriented to the east.

Likewise in Hartmut Schedel's medieval conception of Jerusalem, the ideal city had a radial concentric walled-in structure with the temple located in the centre. Contrary to the biblical description, the temple is depicted as a building with three domes, resembling a typical Byzantine church with basilica. The compact city layout recalls the image of medieval German castles.

fig. 3.9a The walled-in city of Jerusalem with the temple in the center. (Engraving from *Nuremberg Chronicle (Liber cronicarum)* by Hartman Schedel (1493). (Taken from commons.wikimedia. org/wik/File: Hartmann-schedel-hierosolima-1493 2-BW-1147x965.jpg), (25-2-2020).

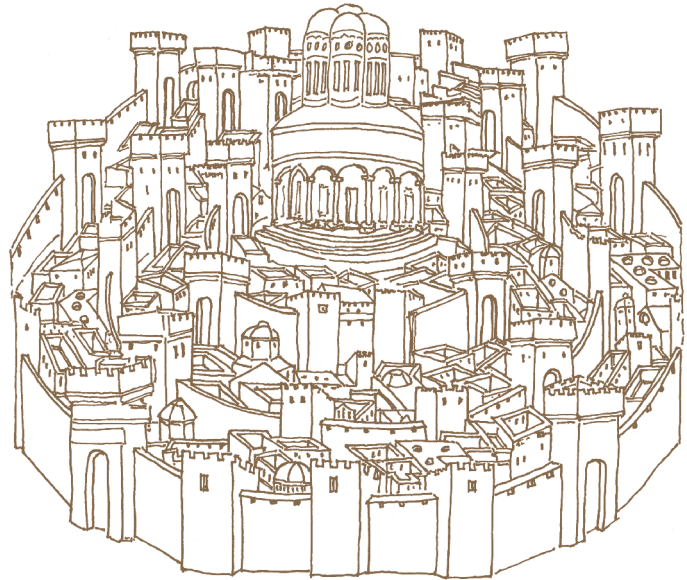
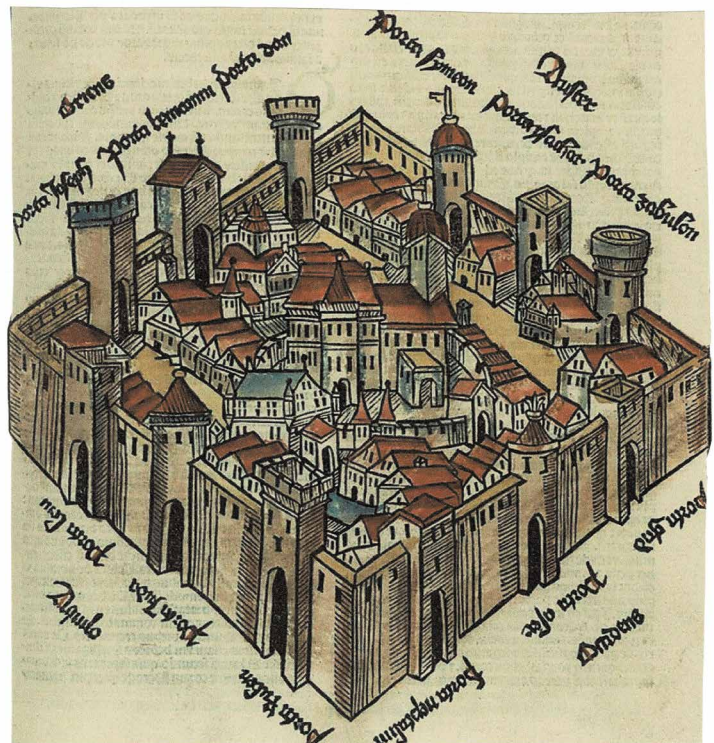


fig. 3.9b The New Jerusalem given in a manuscript of the Trinity College in Cambridge and a depiction in Nicholas of Lyra's *Postille*, (1485). (Taken from jewishvirtual library.org) (25-2-2020).



In the Middle Ages Jerusalem had also been depicted as the ideal geometric square city according to Biblical and Qumranic traditions. The illustration of the New Jerusalem is a mixture of a three and fourfold imagery, which found its roots in the early days of Christianity.

The New Jerusalem depicted by Nicholas of Lyra is given here as a square city with 4 x 3 gates. The gates resemble a Gothic style in concordance with the architectural style of that time. The New Jerusalem has the number association of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation with the $3 \times 4 = 12$ division as the main characteristic. The ground plans of the Dutch towns Zwolle and Oldenzaal for example, show the similarity of medieval walled-in cities with the church in the center, to Hartmann Schedel's conception of Jerusalem.



fig. 3.9c Historical Ground plan of the Dutch town of Zwolle (1580), atlas *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* by Braun and Hogenberg 1575-1593. (Taken from <https://oudelandkaarten.nl/Europa/item/zwolle-1580-braun-ehogenberg>) (27-2-2020).

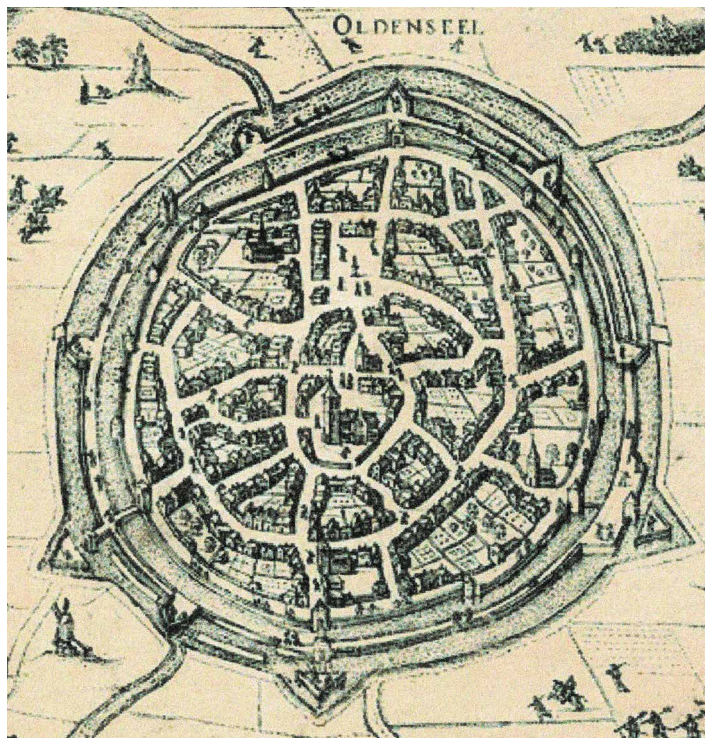


fig. 3.9d Historical ground plan of the Dutch town of Oldenzaal, edited by Frans Hogenberg (1605). (Taken from <https://oudelandkaarten.nl/Europa/item/oldenzaal-1605-inname-door-spinola-2>) (27-2-2020).

On the eve of the Renaissance, Italian humanists began to think about the perfect form for a city. Their first and most celebrated imaginary city was Sforzinda, the theocentric ideal city devised around 1465 by Filarete. It has a radial structure converging at a central square with the palace and cathedral. It expressed in physical terms the Renaissance vision of perfect government with the ruler and bishop at the centre from whom all power radiated outward.

It is suggested that the radial design was inspired by Augustine's *Earthly City* whose circular shape was divided into sections, each of which had its own vice and virtue.¹⁵⁸ The ideas of Filarete are reflected in the classic radial-concentric plan of Palmanova in the neighborhood of Venice. Palmanova, a small fortified city in the shape of a nine-pointed star was perhaps the most exquisitely realised of all the ideal cities of the Renaissance.

fig. 3.10a. Filarete's ideal geometric city of Sforzinda (1465). (Redrawn by author from Michael J. Lewis, *City of refuge*).

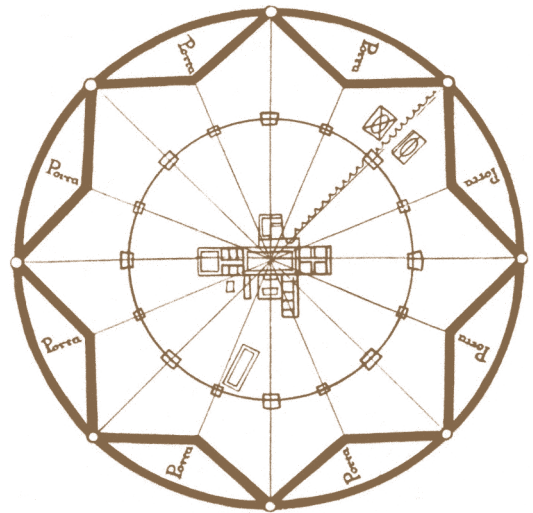
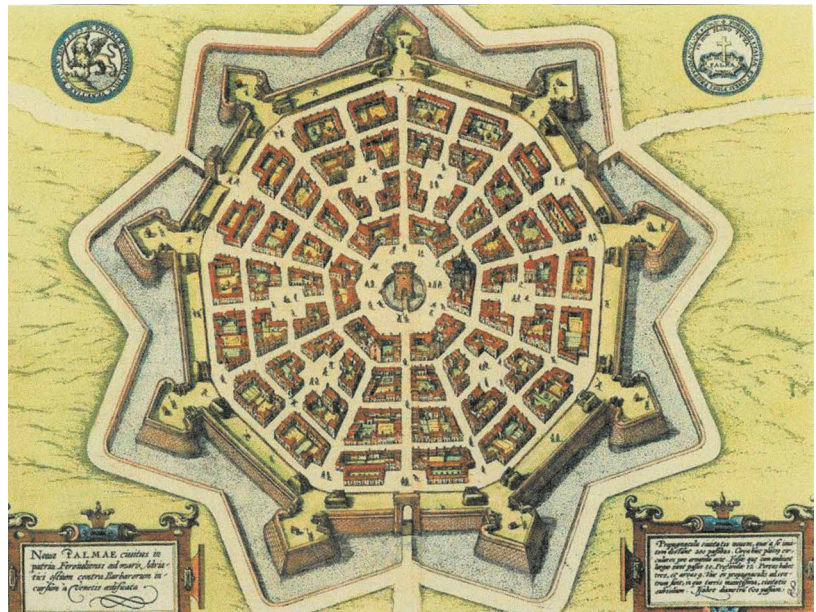


fig. 3.10b. Palmanova, designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, a plan based on the ideal geometric city of Sforzinda (1593). (Taken from Michael J. Lewis, *City of refuge*).



¹⁵⁸ [wikipedia.org/wiki/Sforzinda](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sforzinda) (18-2-2020).

3.6.2. Renaissance concepts of the ideal city

Friedrich I Duke of Württemberg established a town for religious refugees at the northern edge of the Black Forest. Freudenstadt, “city of joy” became the first physical emblem of a Protestant city sanctuary, built in 1599 for protestant refugees.

In contrast to the circular plan of Palmanova, the architect Heinrich Schickhardt designed a square plan composed of three lines of house lots around a huge public square and the citadel in the centre, the position most appropriate for the age of absolutism.

The plan of Freudenstadt was at the basis of a new Protestant Utopia. Johan Valentin Andreae adapted it as a model of ideal geometry named Christianopolis. The concentric tiers of the city increase in importance as they approach the centre, where they culminate in the college buildings around the square and the church in the centre, the only circular form in the entire complex.¹⁵⁹ In designing Christianopolis, Andreae referred to the idea of divine proportion dealing with mystic numbers where he argued that God, the supreme architect, incorporated harmonious measurements, numbers and proportions.¹⁶⁰

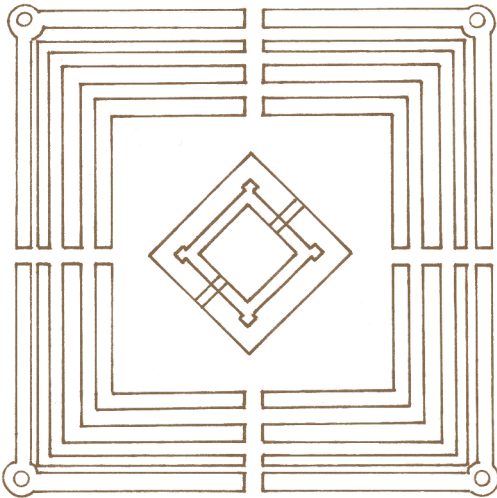


fig. 3.11a Freudenstadt, Heinrich Schickhardt's diagrammatic plan for a geometric protestant sanctuary town with a fortress in the centre (1599). (Redrawn by author from Michael J. Lewis *City of Refuge*).

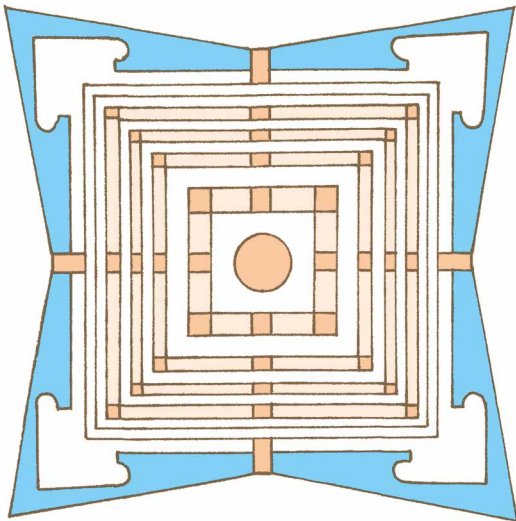


fig. 3.11b Christianopolis, Johan Valentin Andreae's protestant Utopia, a square city around a court and the church in the centre (1619). (Redrawn by author from Michael J. Lewis *City of Refuge*).

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, *City of Refuge*, 66-75.

¹⁶⁰ Andreae, *Christianopolis*, 89-90.

In the same period, the Dutch antiquarian Petrus Cunaeus (1586-1638) produced an exceptional ground plan of Jerusalem. Curiously in Cunaeus' map of Jerusalem elements from different times are intertwined in one picture. The map refers to objects of the Solomonic as well as the Roman period. The entire city structure follows the example of Villalpando with its grid structure. The irregular city consists of more or less square housing blocks. The public, religious and state buildings are placed on squares, and what is essential, they will have elementary geometric volumes. David's palace is situated in the centre of the circular fortress of his city, whereas the building itself is built on a square plan. Special attention should be given to the dominating cubic temple mountain with the square temple complex consisting of three concentric courts, like the new temple described in the Temple Scroll. Cunaeus' representation can be said to be the iconic image of the Holy City during the seventeenth century.



fig. 3.12 Map of Jerusalem, Petrus Cunaeus, *De Republyk Der Hebreeen*, Amsterdam (1682) after Villalpando. (Engraving, Tilburg University Library).

3.6.3. Concepts of the 19th century social utopia

In the industrial era of the nineteenth century, idealists came forward, who sought answers to the very question of the bad and unhealthy living conditions in the overcrowded cities. They drew on the example of their religious counterparts and drafted their social Utopia's or "Home Colonies".

Some examples are Robert Owen's "New Harmony" in Indiana and Buckingham's "Victoria". The spatial characteristics of the Tabernacle encampment, Ezekiel's temple and the New Jerusalem are also found here.

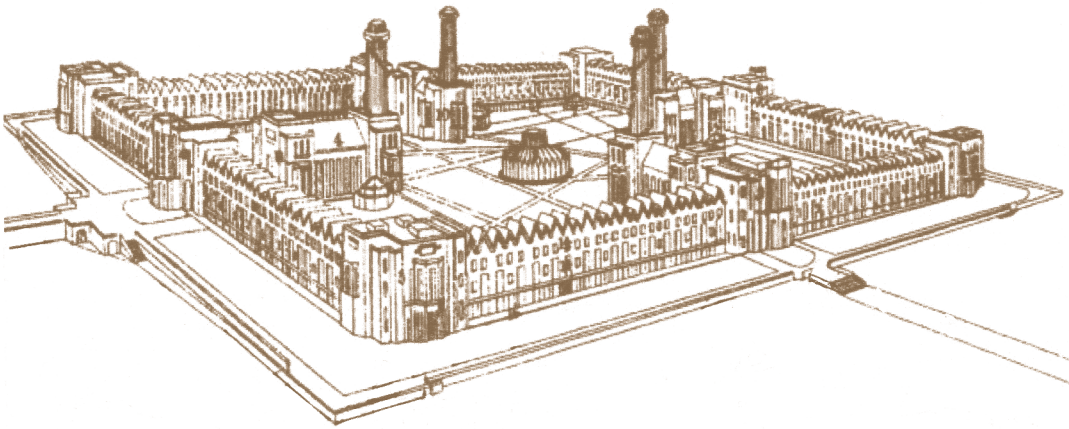


fig. 3.13a New Harmony Indiana USA, a sketchy impression of Robert Owen's "Home Colony" (1820).
(Adapted from Digital Collections Cornell University Library)

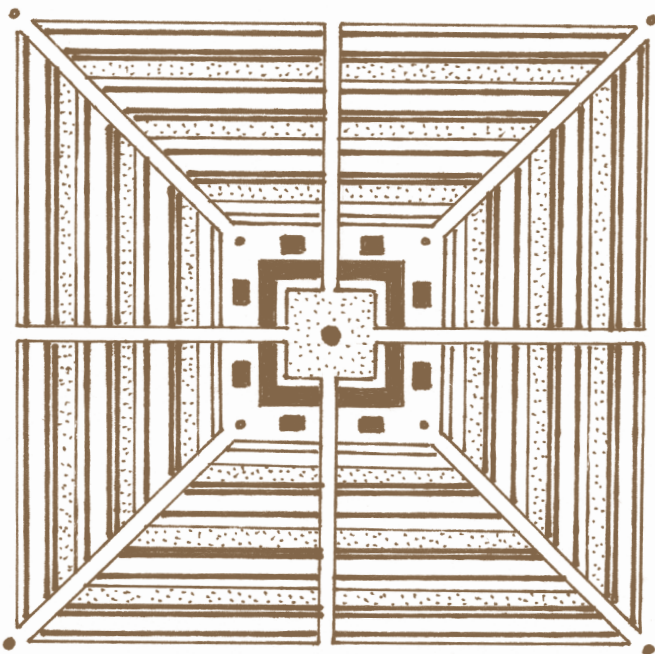


fig. 3.13b Victoria, diagrammatic plan of an ideal city from J.S. Buckingham's *National Evils and Practical Remedies* (1849). Residential zones are located around a central area with all public facilities. The central space would form the chief place of public assembling. (Redrawn after Michael J. Lewis, *City of Refuge*).

3.7. Conclusions

Forming an image requires imagination.

Receiving and reflecting visions occurs in a process of creative imagination. Supernatural visions as well as natural perceived images are mental representations or "mindscape" of a virtual or actual reality. Ezekiel's vision challenges our creative abilities to form a picture of the layout of a city-like temple structure. So we may use our creative imagination to visualise the new temple described by the prophet Ezekiel. The temple vision has been described in architectural language, which means that the vision literally may be approached from an architectural point of view. That will shed new light on Ezekiel's tour through the temple precinct and the meaning of various architectural details and terms.

Not only the image of a physical temple determines a keen understanding of Ezekiel's vision, but also its theological context. The symbolism and concepts of sacred space show the sacred status of the temple. The construction of the temple is intended to represent and preserve the sanctity of the space through its walls, gatehouses and various zones of holiness and increasing restricted access. From a spatial point of view, the temple vision can be defined as an image paradigm for the creation of sacred space.

The Tabernacle encampment was archetypical for all subsequent Israelite temples. The arrangement of the Tabernacle encampment served as a model for the new settlements of protestant refugees at the end of the 16th century.

Since the 16th century a growing interest in the temple of Solomon has developed. Designs of famous monasteries were based on the floor plan of Solomon's temple, often supplemented with characteristics of Ezekiel's temple. It is notable that from the Middle Ages up to now, creative representations of the layout and imaging of Solomon's temple are reflected idealistically. The plan and architecture of Solomon's temple was time and again depicted with Ezekiel's temple in mind. All models have the fourfold geometric shape of Ezekiel's temple. The distinguishing temple-palace symbiosis of Solomon's royal domain was completely abandoned in favour of a separated complex according to the principle of sacred geometry.

The geometric square ground plans of Ezekiel's temple and the New Jerusalem pre-eminently reflect the intended perfection of sacred space. The temple of Ezekiel, the culmination of biblical visionary architecture and the New Jerusalem as a model for the ideal city, have been the perfect models for architecture and town planning in Western Europe for centuries.

4. Temple building in the Ancient Near East

A historical and architectural overview

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. Common culture of temple building in the ancient Near East

Mankind has worshipped God or the gods from the earliest of times, leaving behind artefacts and structures representing their devotion. A lot of cult objects such as altars and portable shrines have been found and archaeological evidence of a variety of temple structures has been excavated. Archaeological remains of temples date back to very ancient times: to the 5th millennium BCE in Mesopotamia and to the middle of the 4th millennium in Egypt. When Solomon's temple was built around 1000 BCE it was already the product of a tradition of thousands of years of temple building in the ancient Near East.¹⁶¹

From excavations there is strong evidence to justify the comparison of the various temples of the ancient Near East. There are many parallels between them in the floor plan and architecture. One may conclude that some kind of continuity ran like a thread through the building history of the multitude of temple structures in the ancient Near East that influenced temple building in Israel. Temple building traditions were shared within a larger cultural sphere.

The period of kingship in Israel was preceded by a village based tribal community without any building tradition. In order to find an architectural model for the building of the king's palace and the temple on Mount Zion, the Israelites looked at neighbouring cultures and took advantage of their expertise and craftsmanship.

4.1.2. Etymology of the word "temple"

What is meant by a temple and in which way was it expressed and symbolised in antiquity?

First, the etymology of the keyword "temple" has to be examined and subsequently the motifs and concepts for temple building in the ancient Near East. In defining the concept of a temple, biblical as well as extra-biblical language employs various terms. The meaning of the keyword "temple" and cognate terms in biblical language use is closely linked up with ancient Near Eastern connotations.

The keyword *temple* has been derived from the Latin *templum*. A temple is a sacred, demarcated place, in general referring to an edifice for the presence of a deity, represented by an icon. A Greek cognate *temenos*, "precinct" denoted a piece of land marked off from common use and dedicated to a god; the term might also refer to the platform on which the temple stands, an architectural structure that separated the building off from common, everyday activities.¹⁶² It might also refer to the elevated base on which the temple might be built and which served as an architectural feature to further set the temple apart from less sacred adjoining structures.¹⁶³

The term used in Akkadian to designate a temple is *bitu* "house" and in Sumerian it is *egal*, "big house", from which has been derived the Akkadian *ekurru*, "palace", and subsequently the Phoenician *hkl*. The Hebrew *hechal*, denoted both "palace" and "temple" just like the Egyptian term *pr wr*. The temple to Marduk in Babylon was called *Esagila* "lofty house" and was accompanied by a *ziggurat*, known as *Etemenanki* "house of the foundation of heaven and earth", representing the concept of the cosmic mountain, a concept that early temples were designed to symbolise.¹⁶⁴ This concept of the cosmic mountain is often reflected in the names of such Mesopotamian temples.

¹⁶¹ Hamblin, Seely, *Solomon's Temple*. 9.

¹⁶² Lundquist, *The temple of Jerusalem. Past*, xi.

¹⁶³ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Palmer, *ibid.*, 19. See also de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:282.

4.2 Temple ideology

4.2.1. Temple ideology compared and displayed in seven interrelated concepts

Before describing the layout and architecture of temples in the ancient Near East it is useful to investigate the underlying ideological concepts and to compare them with Israelite ideological concepts.

Ancient Near Eastern temple building culture underlies a common temple ideology, which permeates temple building traditions throughout the Near Eastern region.¹⁶⁵ Temple ideology must also have been expressed in its physical manifestation. The ancient Near Eastern temple reflects a symbiosis of the human and divine sphere. In the temple heaven and earth, divine and human came together. "As the house of the divine, the temple had elements of the numinous, as a building in human space it had also elements of this world".¹⁶⁶

In ancient Near East temple building culture there were many similarities in temple ideology, use, situation, layout and structure. The situation, layout and arrangement of temples corresponded in many ways. Temples were often built on top of a hill and in many cases they were east-west orientated. Almost all temples from Egypt to Mesopotamia had a tripartite arrangement and the temple buildings were surrounded by one or more courtyards.

Temples in the ancient Near East have been typified as divine presence, heavenly abode, centre of the world, embodiment of the cosmic mountain, first fixed point in the primeval waters of creation, as garden sanctuary reflecting paradise and as sacred place.

These concepts and motifs can likewise be traced in the Hebrew Bible as well as throughout literature and excavated temple sites of the ancient Near East and Israel. Temple ideology and typology in the ancient Near East and Israel are seen as interrelated and are treated as such in the following two paragraphs. Biblical and extra biblical building stories and archaeological evidence concerning origin, plot, structure and purpose of the various sanctuaries in the ancient Near East and Israel and the underlying temple ideology are compared and evaluated. My findings result in an overview of corresponding theological and spatial concepts.

4.2.2. Concept of the temple as divine presence

In the ancient Near East gods were thought to be present both in heaven and on earth. The most common conception of the temple in antiquity was an abode of the gods. Temples can be characterised as the embodiment of divine presence.¹⁶⁷ "The presence of a god in a temple occurred through a cult object. A cult object could either be an anthropomorphic or a theriomorphic statue, a divine symbol or a cult stela. One might say that in Mesopotamia an image was equated with the god in question, whereas in Egypt gods and images were rather seen as separated. Moreover, it is clear that the presence of the gods in heaven and earth could be simultaneous."¹⁶⁸

There are many common features in the views on the presence or absence of God or the gods between the Israelites and surrounding nations. But there was one big difference in the way the gods were represented in temples. In pagan temples the gods were usually presented by an icon; by contrast, the Tabernacle and temple at Jerusalem were empty.

The notion of divine presence is expressed in the Bible in two different senses: (1) in the corporeal sense, i.e. the actual dwelling of God in his abode; (2) in the abstract sense, i.e. symbolic representation by means of calling or establishing his name upon the sanctuary or the people. According to the ancient view, God's presence is confined to the Tabernacle and after that to the temple. Other visible phenomena also served as the vehicles of God, such as the Ark, (called God's footstool 1 Chron 28:2; Ps 99:5) and the cloud enveloping God in his movements.

¹⁶⁵ Lunquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East", 53-76.

¹⁶⁶ Hundley, *God in dwellings*, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 42.

¹⁶⁸ Pitkänen, "Temple Building and Exodus 25-40", 259-260.

The presence of God in the sanctuary demanded a rigorous observance of all priestly rules concerning holiness and purity. This is emphasised again in Ezekiel's temple.

God and his appearance are associated with his *kavod*, a term underlying the imagery of the divine presence in the Bible and paralleling the term *shekhinah* in rabbinic literature. God's *kavod* entered the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-35) as well as Solomon's temple, accompanied by the cloud, up to the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 8:11). In contrast to the corporeal representation of the *kavod*, Deuteronomy promulgates the doctrine of the "Name". God has caused the temple to be called by his Name but He himself does not dwell in it; God's Name was put there (Deut 12:5, 1 Kgs 9:3).

4.2.3. Concept of the temple as a heavenly abode

The phenomenon of a heavenly temple as prototype or archetype of a dwelling place of the gods on earth is a commonplace in Near Eastern religions. Palmer remarks: "The ancients had a concept of a heavenly temple, and the earthly temple was considered to be a replica, a mirror, an exact image of the celestial structure".¹⁶⁹ The architectural plan must be revealed by the deity. The requirement to receive divine licence for a building project is alluded to in numerous sources.¹⁷⁰

The best known example of a divinely ordained plan in antiquity is the account of the building of a temple to the god Ningirsu in Lagash by the Sumerian king Gudea. He received the revelation that he should build a temple. He got a "blueprint" for how it should be built, for he was shown in a dream a lapis lazuli tablet with the temple plan on it, as depicted on a statue of Gudea.

Ancient Egyptian texts and temple reliefs also display the plan of a heavenly temple. The temple of Edfu, built between 237-71 BCE, contains a series of reliefs depicting a ritual which is known as "stretching the cord". In order to determine the exact floor plan of this temple, the king, acting in his role as the god Horus together with the goddess Seshat, "mistress of the ground plans and the writings", on a new moon night, "stretched out" the sky, determining its borders, then transferred the plan of the perfect temple in the sky down to earth, establishing the four corners of the temple's plan.¹⁷¹ Egyptian temples reflected heaven on earth. The names of various Egyptian temples portrayed their status as a link between heaven and earth. The temple of Heliopolis was called "Heaven of Egypt" and the temple of Karnak was called "Heaven on earth".¹⁷²

In addition, the concept of a heavenly temple appears in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. This concept has also been discussed in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Talmud and Midrash. The heavenly temple should be the counterpart of the temple on earth. It is this temple that provides the plan for how the earthly counterpart should be constructed. YHWH revealed the pattern (תבנית) of the Tabernacle to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 25:9) and the plans for Solomon's temple to David, recorded in a writing from the hand of YHWH upon him, containing all the details of the plan (1 Chron 28:19).

In the plan shown to Moses and David, Israel's earthly temple reflected the heavenly cosmic temple.¹⁷³ The temple is a micro-cosmos of the entire heaven and earth. "The broadest scale of the geographical forms of sacred space is that of the cosmos".¹⁷⁴

Most commonly in ancient Near Eastern and Israelite religion, the cosmos functions as the divine abode. In many primal religions "the skies" were understood as the residences of the deities. The existence of a heavenly temple is mentioned in a plethora of ancient sources. In the ancient world the earthly temple was considered to be a replica, a mirror image of a heavenly temple. According to the

¹⁶⁹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 85.

¹⁷⁰ Hurowitz, *Temple Building in Light of the Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings*, vi.

¹⁷¹ Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East", 10. See also Hurowitz, "I have Built you an Exalted House", 326-327.

¹⁷² McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 15.

¹⁷³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 31-36.

¹⁷⁴ Kim, *The concepts of sacred space in the Hebrew Bible*, 50.

Hebrew Bible likewise heaven was often considered the dwelling place of God.¹⁷⁵ The tripartite structure of many Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Canaanite temples was often considered to symbolise that of the cosmos. The Tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple were built on the same pattern.

Josephus observed that the fabric of the Tabernacle with all its furnishings was made to imitate and represent the universe (*Ant.* 3.7). The outer court represented the land, the inner court the sea and the Holy of Holies the heaven.

The thesis of Beale is that Israel's temple was also composed of three main parts symbolising the cosmos: (1) the outer court represented the habitable world where humanity dwelt; (2) the holy place was emblematic of the visible heavens and its light sources; (3) the Holy of Holies symbolised the invisible dimension of the cosmos, where God and his heavenly host dwelt.¹⁷⁶ From all available literature relating to the relationship between a heavenly and an earthly temple may be concluded that the concept of a heavenly temple touches on all notions of sacred space.

Earthly sanctuaries require architecture according to a model revealed by the gods. The idea of the heavenly plan being “measured” and thus transferred to earth, serving as the perfect model, is not only the case with the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon. The prophet Ezekiel was shown a temple as a city-like structure. He entered the envisioned temple, accompanied by an angelic guide with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. The apostle John was shown the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God in a comparable way.

In the ancient world it was believed that certain locations had gained sacred status as portals through which the gods traversed.¹⁷⁷ The temple was the primary point of intersection between human and divine. The choice of the site where Solomon would build the temple as a permanent house for the Lord, the threshing floor of Ornan, was a result of God's intervention. The temple at Jerusalem was not identical to the Tabernacle in the wilderness in terms of dimensions and materials, still both developed from a single sacred prototype concept of compartments viz. the Holy and the Holy of Holies.

In the period of the second temple, influenced by Ezekiel, the earthly temple was no longer considered as God's proper dwelling, the place where heaven and earth meet, but rather as a mere copy of the true temple located in heaven. It is the desecration of the earthly temple in favor of the heavenly that opens the way for Enoch's ascent in the book of the Watchers.¹⁷⁸

4.2.4. Concept of the temple as the centre of the world

In nearly all ancient Near Eastern and Israelite religious traditions one encounters the notion of the temple as the centre point from which the work of creation began. The concept of the temple as the geographical centre or navel of the earth, common in ancient Near Eastern religions, is not only found in neighbouring cultures but also in Jewish literature. From this sacred place at the centre, the *omphalos* or *navel of the world* arose a “gateway to heaven”.

This *axis mundi*, the link between heaven and earth which facilitates communication between the two spheres was symbolised in a number of ways e.g. a stairway, pillar or mountain.¹⁷⁹ In Canaanite tradition Mount Hermon was regarded as the *axis mundi*. The Babylonian sanctuaries of Nippur and Larsa were given the title *duranki* “link between heaven and earth”. Sacred places constitute the world centre with the altar as the axis.

The theme of Jerusalem as the centre of the world can be found in Biblical and pseudepigraphical literature as well as in rabbinical writings. For example: “Thus said the Lord YHWH: “This is Jerusalem which

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. Isa 66:1, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool”, and 1 Kgs 8:30, “Hear from heaven, your dwelling place”.

¹⁷⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 31-32.

¹⁷⁷ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 118.

¹⁷⁸ Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 21.

I have set in the centre of the nations, with countries round about her” (Ezek 5:5).¹⁸⁰ In the *Book of Jubilees* (8:19), Mount Zion is called the centre of the navel of the earth, and in verse 12 of the same chapter the land of *Sem* (Palestine) is called the centre of the earth. In these passages Jerusalem and Israel are said to be set in the centre or navel of the world.

A famous Midrash also proclaims: “Just as the navel is found at the centre of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the centre of the world. Jerusalem is at the centre of the land Israel, the temple is at the centre of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the centre of the temple, the Ark is at the centre of the Holy of Holies and the Foundation Stone is in front of the Ark, which spot is the foundation of the world” (*Midrash Tanchuma*, Kedoshim 10).

In the course of history, various depictions have been made of Jerusalem as the centre of the world. The oldest known example is a 12th century copy of Isidore of Sevilla’s *Etymologiae*. This “T-O map” of the world is a conceptual type of medieval cartography. The T is the Mediterranean, dividing the three continents Asia, Europa and Africa, and the O is the surrounding ocean. Jerusalem was generally represented in the centre of the map.

A few centuries later in 1581, Heinrich Bunting, a German theologian, wrote a book of woodcut maps entitled *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*. In this book we find a world map depicting the earth as a three-leaf clover, each leaf being a continent: Europa, Asia and Africa. The three are drawn together by a ring encircling a single city, Jerusalem as the centre of the world.¹⁸⁰

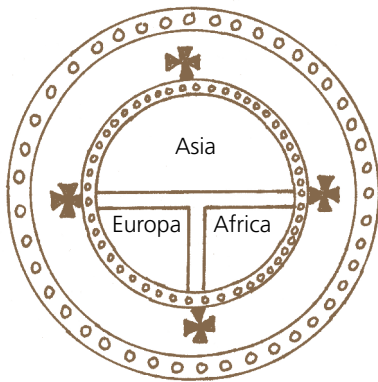


fig. 4.1a Diagrammatic “T-O mappa mundi”, map of the world with Jerusalem as the centre. 12th century copy of Isidore of Sevilla’s *Etymologiae*. (Redrawn after zienenweten.blogspot.com/2017/07/cartografie-haar-geschiedenis-deel-1.html) (15-3-2020).

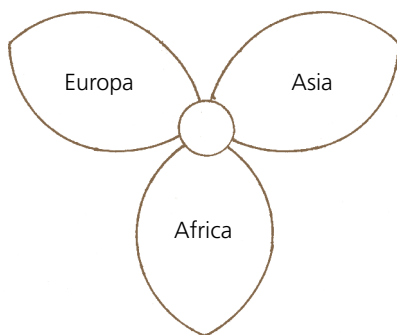


fig. 4.1b The earth as a three-leaf clover. The three continents connected by Jerusalem as the hub of the world. (Redrawn by author after Heinrich Bunting *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae* 1581. [Wikipedia.Org/wiki/Bunting_Clover_Leaf_Map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunting_Clover_Leaf_Map)), (15-3-2020).

A quite different notion of an *axis mundi* or “gateway to heaven” is found in one of the Jewish apocalypses from the third century BCE, i.e. 1 Enoch 14, a part of the so called *Book of the Watchers*. The vision of 1 Enoch 14 marks a crucial departure in the history of ancient Jewish literature. To a certain extent Enoch’s vision stands in the tradition of prophecy. It can be seen as a dramatic vision, comparable with Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot throne, to which it has some striking parallels. In the vision God

¹⁸⁰ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 29, 31.

commissioned Enoch to perform a prophetic task, to deliver a message of judgment to the fallen Watchers. But there is one central difference between Enoch's vision and the visions of the prophets, including Ezekiel's: unlike any of the prophetic texts in which a heavenly messenger descends to earth in order to communicate a message from God, Enoch ascends to heaven.¹⁸²

4.2.5. Concept of the temple as the embodiment of the cosmic mountain

Early temples often symbolised the cosmic mountain. Consequently, temples were built on mountains. In the ancient Near East temples were associated with natural mountains or high places and artificial mountains. "When possible, temple were built on high mountains in flat terrain on elevated platforms or ziggurats, as in lower Mesopotamia, designed to resemble mountains".¹⁸³ The universe itself was thought of as a gigantic world mountain stretching from the entrance of the subterranean abyss to the highest point of heaven, and embracing all the inhabited world.¹⁸⁴

The concept of divine government of the world from a mountain venue was universal in ancient times. A real mountain was therefore a fitting symbol for the gods. From the time of Sargon II onwards, the cult room in the temple of Assur was called *Ed Assur*: "House of the Great Mountain of the Lands".¹⁸⁵ If the attachment to sacred mountains may be regarded as valid, it must certainly also be applied to the great *ziggurats*, or stage towers of Sumer. These were an attempt on the part of men to build artificial mountains which could serve as divine dwelling places. They formed a transition stage between the veneration of real mountains as divine abodes, and the building of manmade temples.

In the Babylonian creation account *Enuma Elish* there is talk of a mound of earth, the primary mound of creation, where the deity first appeared. This mound out of the primeval waters of creation became transformed into the sacred mountain, the most holy place on earth, the archetype of the temple.

Lundquist states that in virtually all cultures, temples are either the architectural representation of the primordial mound, or of a world mountain, or some combination of the two.¹⁸⁶ Also the Egyptian Step Pyramid of Zoser was an architectural realisation of the primordial mound of creation, later modified into the true pyramid. The temple of Marduk in Babylon was called *Esagila* "lofty house" and was accompanied by a *ziggurat* known as *Etemenanki* "the foundation of heaven and earth".

The Hebrew Bible also contains clear allusions to the ancient Near Eastern notion of mountains as the dwelling places of the deities. Like high places and built structures in Mesopotamia, the temple in Jerusalem is like its regional counterparts built on an artificially elevated platform on Mount Moriah / Zion, the mountain par excellence.¹⁸⁷ For the Hebrew Bible cosmic mountain imagery is also a backdrop against which the special relationship between Israel and her own mountains as expressed in national mountain imagery can be seen. Many of the salient features of the cosmic mountain known from foreign sources appear in the religion of biblical Israel in connection with Mount Zion. The concept of the cosmic mountain, however, is derived from Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, the significant site of theophany, where YHWH appeared to Moses and his people.

The cosmic nature of Mount Sinai transferred to Mount Zion after David's wish to build a house for YHWH. These concepts of the cosmic mountain can also be applied to Mount Zaphon of the Canaanite

¹⁸² Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 9.

¹⁸³ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 49.

¹⁸⁴ Clements, *God and temple*, 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ Van Driel, *The Cult of Assur*, 34-36.

¹⁸⁶ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, xiii.

¹⁸⁷ The name Moriah appears for the first time in Gen 22:2 as "the land of Moriah". According to 2 Chron 3:1 the location Arauna's threshing-floor was on Mount Moriah and king Solomon built the temple over Arauna's threshing floor. The name Mount Zion has been used in the Hebrew Bible first for the city of David (2 Sam 5:7, 1 Kgs 8:1) and after that for the temple mount (e.g. Ps 48:2; 74:6; Isa 2:2-3; 8:18).

god Ba'al.¹⁸⁸ Among the northern Semites it was essential that the sanctuary should be a high place or, even better a mountain.¹⁸⁹ In Syro-Palestine the temple was the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain. The primary element of a sanctuary was the bamah, the "high place", the local counterpart of the cosmic mountain.

In ancient Judaism a foundation stone (אבן השתייה) in front of the Ark appeared in the place of the primeval mound (Midrash Tanchuma, *Qedoshim* 10). In the same way Mount Zion possesses all the prerogatives of the cosmic mountain. God would have built up the earth concentrically around this stone, the Navel of the Earth. The mountain and temple of YHWH have to be regarded as inseparable. In the perception of the Israelites the temple of YHWH was directly related to Mount Zion. Many examples are to be found in the Hebrew Bible (see Isa 2:2-3 and Ps 48:2). The Chroniclers imagined their heavenward reaching temple as standing on the top of a very special mountain.

The ancient notion that the interface between heaven and earth was on mountaintops is a familiar one.¹⁹⁰ 2 Chron 3:1 indicates that the temple of Solomon must be built on Mount Moriah. This designation connects this mountain with the story of Abraham in Gen 22:2 where God ordered him: "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you".

Even Ezekiel's future temple will be built on a "very high mountain". Ezekiel's vision begins when he is taken by the hand of God and set down on a very high mountain (Ezek 40:2). The designation of this mountain seems clear. Likewise in Ezek 17:22 there is talk of a high and lofty mountain and in Ezek 20:40 God calls this mountain "my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel". There the house of Israel will serve Him. This can only be Mount Moriah / Zion.

4.2.6. Concept of the temple as the first fixed point in the primeval waters of creation

Waters covering the face of the earth before creation is a common image in ancient Near Eastern cosmogony. In the ancient Near East the creation of the world out of the primeval waters and the construction of a temple were considered synonymous events.

The place of the sanctuary was regarded as the first fixed point in the chaotic waters. It was said to become the earthly seat of the world order, having its palladium in throne and altar. The foundation of the sanctuary, therefore, coincides with creation.¹⁹¹ The temple is often associated with the waters of life which flow forth from a spring within the building itself. The reason that such springs exist in temples is that they are perceived as the primeval waters of creation; *nun* in Egypt, *abzu* in Mesopotamia and *tehom* in Israel. The temple is thus founded upon and stands in contact with the waters of creation. The idea could have been adopted from the river that flowed from Eden.

A similar pattern is found in the descriptions of Ezek 47:1-12, Joel 4:18, Zech 14:8 and Rev 22:1. The benefits of waters issuing from underneath the temple will be that everything becomes fresh and where the river flows everything will live. The apostle John speaks about trees of life alongside the river, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2).

In Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Israelite traditions, purifying water in their temples was viewed as coming from deep springs of water originating in the *abyss*. In Jewish tradition, post biblical sources related the waters of *tehom* (תהום) trapped under the Foundation Stone (אבן השתייה) in the Holy of Holies of the temple to libation festivals.¹⁹² *Tehom* was that wild and unruly element expressed as *תהו ובהו* in Gen 1:2.

¹⁸⁸ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 50.

¹⁸⁹ Palmer, *ibid.* 54.

¹⁹⁰ Jarrick, "The Temple of David in the Book of Chronicles", 369-370.

¹⁹¹ Wensinck, "The Semitic New Year and the Origin of Eschatology", 82.

¹⁹² Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East", 53-76.

The Ugaritic-Canaanite and Israelite cosmic conceptions of the primeval waters have a great deal in common also. Clifford explains the motif of the cosmic mountain and of the “sacred stream”.¹⁹³ The Ugaritic god El is described as located “at the source of the Two Rivers” or “the pools of the Double Deep”, borrowed from old Mesopotamian poetry describing paradise, the source of life giving waters.¹⁹⁴

Likewise there is in Isa 8:6 talk of “the gently flowing waters of Shiloah”, presented as a token of divine fidelity. Isa 33:20-24 includes the notion of future healing; Zion will be a place of salvation, a token of regeneration. “Look upon Zion the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode....It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams”.

Against the background of the old tradition, elements of the miraculous streams of Zion in Ezek 47 are described as the river from the temple. The powers of the waters of Zion (Isa 55:1), at which Isaiah had only hinted, are here developed in great detail.¹⁹⁵ Just as Gen 2:10 says that “a river watering the garden flowed from Eden”, so the temple of Ezek 47 reports on “water coming out from under the threshold of the temple” that will grow into “a river that no one could cross”. Likewise, the book Revelation reports on “the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God” (Rev. 22:1).

4.2.7. Concept of the temple as garden sanctuary reflecting Paradise

Ancient Near Eastern temples often reflected a paradisiacal, divine garden through architecture, floral ornamentation, or by having actual gardens in the temple precinct evoking the memory of the archetypal garden. For example, the Sumerian god Enki built himself a house or temple in Eridu and planted a delightful garden, full of fruit trees and singing birds.¹⁹⁶

Temples in Mesopotamia were adorned with a sacred grove of trees, reminiscent of the hanging gardens of Babylon. Likewise, Egyptian temples were decorated with lush garden scenes. Ramses III of Egypt created ‘gardens’ in the deity’s ‘house’. The wall reliefs of Queen Hatshepsut’s palace (15th century BCE) depict the many exotic trees she collected from foreign lands to plant in the temple garden.¹⁹⁷ In Egyptian as well as Mesopotamian temples there are many examples of floral decorations: palm trees, floral rosettes, bud-and-blossom motifs, Lotus symbolism and sacral tree symbolism. Equally comparable motifs and ornaments serve as decorations of Solomon’s temple.

A garden like atmosphere as is found in Eden and Israel’s temple occurs in the entire ancient Near East. There one can find the combined mention of a temple, trees, rivers and subterranean waters. Among the archetypal expressions of sacred geography in the Hebrew Bible, the imagery of Eden is particularly dominant. Located in the primordial past, Eden is set on a mountain from which four streams flow to the quadrants of the earth.

In ancient Near Eastern temples various motifs that refer to a prehistoric paradisiacal era are found. The Garden of Eden would be the first dry land created in the midst of the primeval waters and so the temple was the centre of the created order. Eden as a primordial sanctuary may be considered as the precursor of all future sanctuaries and provides a conceptual framework for understanding their purpose.¹⁹⁸ Many have referred to Eden as a “temple garden”.

The significance of the garden temple can be explored in ancient texts and archaeology. In the Tabernacle and Solomon’s temple a number of images taken from the Garden of Eden can be seen recurring in different contexts within the Bible.

¹⁹³ Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, 158.

¹⁹⁴ Clifford, *ibid.*, 48-57.

¹⁹⁵ Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, 11-13.

¹⁹⁶ Hamblin, Seely, *Solomon’s Temple*. 12;

¹⁹⁷ Hamblin, Seely, *ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹⁸ Lioy, “The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple”, 25-26.

Echoes of creation and Eden permeate the descriptions of the Tabernacle and temple.¹⁹⁹ The temples of Solomon and of Herod continued to evoke themes of creation and Eden. Solomon's temple courtyard had a garden with palm, cedar, cypress and olive trees, and the interior was adorned with carvings of trees and flowers (1 Kgs 6:18; 29-33). The walls of the main room of the temple were decorated with golden palm trees and flowers, set with precious stones; the bronze pillars in front of the temple were decorated with pomegranate patterns and the great lamp was a stylised almond tree. All these ornamentations refer to the garden in Paradise.

According to Barker, Beale and others, the temple of Solomon was built in accordance with a heavenly plan to represent the garden of God on earth.²⁰⁰ Many items in Solomon's temple as well as in ancient Near Eastern temples have been described with botanical and arboreal imagery that gave them a garden-like appearance.

With regard to cosmic symbolism in the Hebrew Bible it can be noted that both Eden and Israel's temple refer to common tree-like images. In the light of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian and Syro-Phoenician evidence about columns in ancient buildings and temples having a tree-like appearance, the two large columns flanking the entrance of Solomon's temple probably represented giant trees.²⁰¹ Possibly these columns were the reminiscence of the two trees of 'life and 'knowledge' in the garden of Eden.²⁰² These two great bronze pillars, named Boaz and Jachin were adorned with lilies and decorated as two large trees being covered with pomegranates. Like the pillars, the Menorah in the Tabernacle and the lampstands in the Holy Place of the temple were envisioned as a tree. It had branches with flower-like cups, buds and blossoms.

Cherubim are also a constantly recurring motif of Eden. Cherubim were embroidered into the veil that separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In Solomon's temple two huge cherubim were put into the Holy of Holies. Further the doors that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies had carved cherubim. Winged creatures also occurred in Near Eastern mythology. The interior walls of the temple were also covered with cedar paneling decorated with carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. These carved palm trees can be explained as stylised sacred trees, resembling those in ancient Near Eastern iconography and recreations of the Garden of Eden.²⁰³

The relationship between the paradisiacal Garden of Eden and Ezekiel's temple, is also clearly expressed in "a river watering the garden" (Gen 2:10) and the water coming out from the temple in Ezek 47:

"...and I saw water coming from under the threshold of the temple towards the east....where the river flows everything will live. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on the banks of the river. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing".

Biblical prophets used the image of creation and the Garden of Eden as a metaphor for future divine renewal. Isaiah spoke of the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Isa 65:17) and the renewal of Zion "like Eden...the garden of YHWH" (Isa 51:3).

4.2.8. Concept of the temple as sacred space

The concepts discussed above could be regarded as "expressions of sacred space in all its qualities".²⁰⁴ Sacred space - the realm of the gods - always was separated from the surrounding profane space - the realm of the humans. The temple was sacred space par excellence; it was an *imago mundi*, symbolising the cosmos, the sacred order in which the temple was a celestial prototype that typified and defined the very act of creation itself.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 76.

²⁰⁰ Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 57.

²⁰¹ Beale, *ibid.*, 77.

²⁰² Bloch-Smith, "Whom is the King of Glory?" 183-194 endorse these findings of Beale.

²⁰³ Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space", 87.

²⁰⁴ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 4.

²⁰⁵ Palmer, *ibid.*, 4-5.

Temple architecture contained walls, courtyards, screens, veils or other markers that separated and created a system of concentric degrees of increasingly holy space. Whereas the ascent to the presence of the deity was dramatised by the ziggurat in a vertical way, a similar journey can be undertaken in a horizontal trajectory. In this way a pattern of various zones of sanctity toward the innermost sanctuary and the presence of YHWH was reflected in Solomon's temple.²⁰⁶ Generally ancient Near Eastern temples were built as places of heightened restriction.

Regarding the conception of sacred space, a mixture of sacred and profane activities within temple precincts indicating a degree of fluidity may be assumed. Pointing to a consistent architectural pattern in neo-Babylonian homes, temples and palaces, the arrangement of temple space was reflected in common conceptions regarding the function of public and private space.²⁰⁷ As befitting any home, the dwelling of a deity contained both public and private space, quite properly divided between the private residence and the public court where visitors were received.²⁰⁸

In Israelite sanctuaries the principle of separating the holy from the profane was emphasised. Comparisons with ancient Near Eastern temples may help to resolve the contradiction between increasing holiness and accessibility. However, the holiness or loftiness of temples does not mean that entry was forbidden. The spatial restriction which grants different degrees of access, emphasises distinction between people on the basis of sanctity.

In the temple of Solomon as well as in Herod's temple the Holy of Holies could be entered only by the high priest and the Holy Place by the priests. The laity's presence was restricted to the courtyard. It is likely that the court covered areas of different degrees of holiness, since the area of the altar, where the priests could officiate, seemed to be more holy than the rest of the court which the laity could access.²⁰⁹

4.3. Description of ancient Near Eastern temples

4.3.1. The model of ancient Near East temples

For comparison of Israelite sanctuaries and those of its surrounding cultures, the characteristics of Egyptian, Mesopotamian and the Syro-Palestinian region are described and depicted. Temple building cults in the ancient Near East in general and Israel in particular, show considerable consistency in layout and architecture. In attempting to relate architectural remains and transmitted texts from surrounding cultures, many similarities can be observed. By means of a comparative approach as a method of research, cultural continuities and discontinuities in temple building tradition in the ancient Near East and Israel can be traced.

In order to gain good insight into the progress of temple building culture, not only the manifestation, but also the date of the compared temple sites has to be taken into account. Temples were already built from the 4th millennium BCE. The Israelite temple building cult was embedded in a larger cultural inheritance. Solomon's temple, built around 1000 BCE, had the same tripartite floor plan as Egyptian temples from 3000 BCE.

The architectural development, however, diverged considerably. Much older Egyptian prototypes were more refined and elaborate than Solomon's temple. Nevertheless, many Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Syro-Phoenician and Canaanite influences were visible in the plan, arrangement and decoration of Solomon's temple. Moreover, within ancient societies temples served as a central institution, often constructed next to the palace in order to represent the shared interlocking authority of god, king and priest. Solomon's temple was likewise built adjacent to the royal palace (1 Kgs 6-7).²¹⁰ As a result of

²⁰⁶ Hamblin, Seely, *Solomon's Temple*, 11-12.

²⁰⁷ Castel, "Temples à l'Epoque Neo-Babylonienne", 169-182.

²⁰⁸ Odell, "The Wall is No More", 343-344.

²⁰⁹ Meziere, *The gates of the Ezekielian temple*, 14.

²¹⁰ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 319.

archaeological excavations many similarities in site plan, orientation, floorplan and architecture were unveiled.

From the Hebrew Bible we learn that the temple of Solomon was situated in a temple court next to the royal palace. The temple was oblong in shape, and could be characterised as a so called long room building in antis.²¹¹ It paralleled the design and arrangement of other ancient Near Eastern sanctuaries. It had a tripartite arrangement, consisting of three successive rooms; a vestibule, main room and innermost room. The building was straight axis (the entryway was in line with the innermost shrine).

For a first impression of the most eye catching manifestations of ancient Near East temples the tripartite floor plan of an Egyptian temple is shown. The tripartite arrangement is also a model for almost all temples in the Syro-Palestine region. Particularly in the Mesopotamian region temples were built on elevated platforms, artificial mountains, or stepped pyramids.

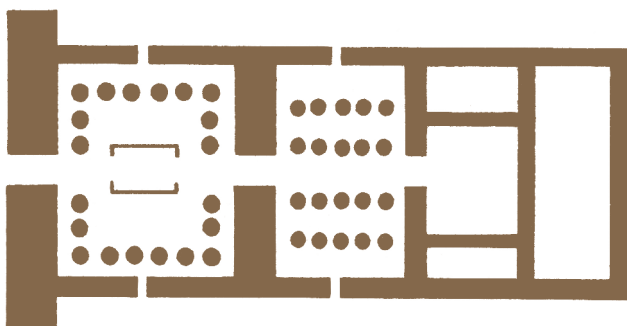


fig. 4.2a Schematic depiction of the floor plan of an Egyptian tripartite temple: i.e. the temple of Taharqa Tabo, a simplified version of the Khonsu temple at Karnak. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Space*).

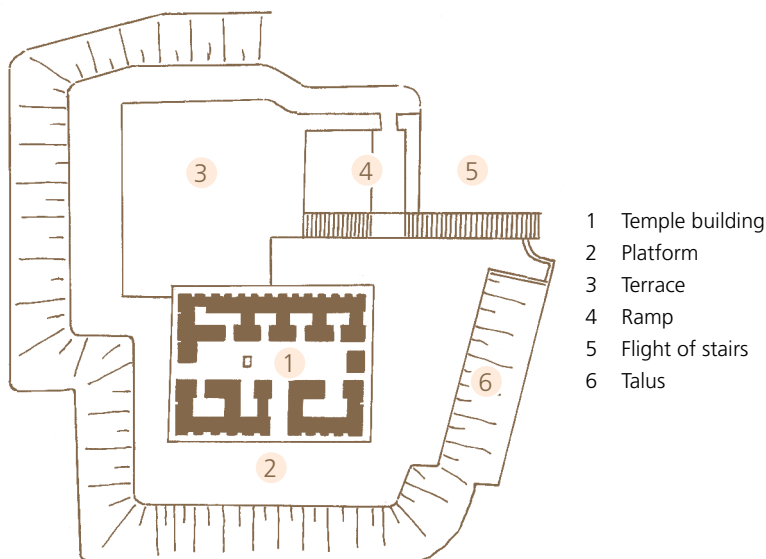


fig. 4.2b Layout pre-dynastic Sumerian White Temple of Anu at Uruk on an elevated single platform. (Redrawn by author after Perkins. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1949).

²¹¹ A temple in antis is a temple in which the antae, (columns or pillars) extend to form the side walls of a recessed portico at the front. See fig 4.23 9 (3) and fig. 5.8.

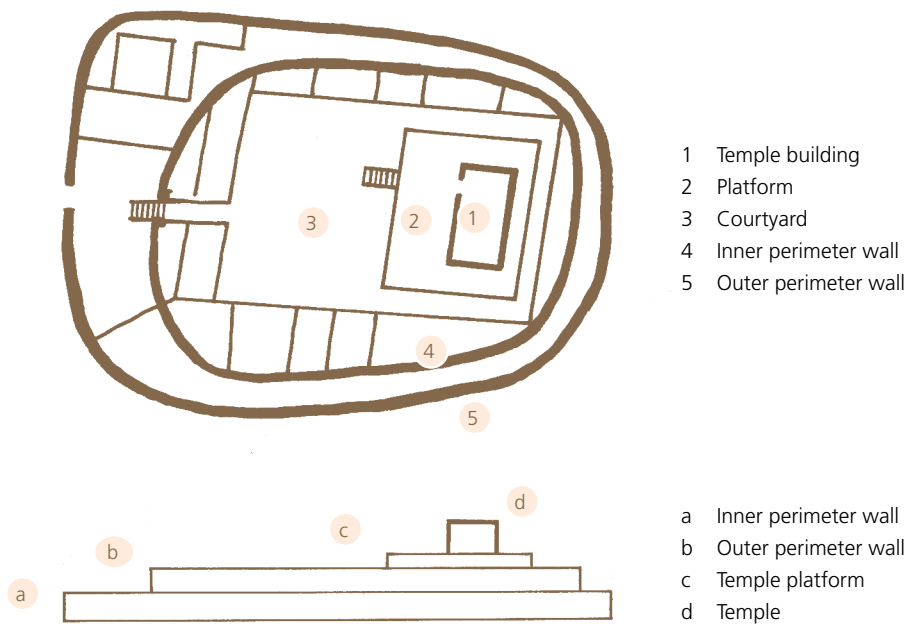


fig. 4.2c Layout of a Mesopotamian temple on an artificial mountain: i.e. the temple oval of Khafaje. (Redrawn by author after Pinhaz Delougaz, *The temple oval of Khafaje*, 1940).

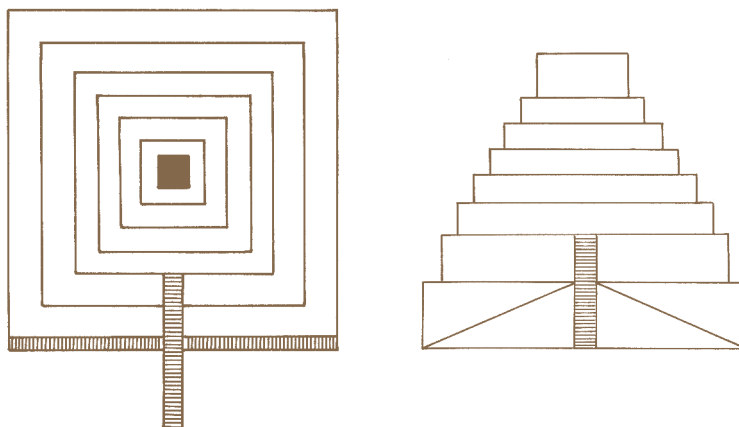


fig. 4.2d Schematic reconstruction of the floor plan of the dynastic famous ziggurat E-temen-anki at Babylon, a kind of stepped pyramid with multiple platforms. (Drawn by author).

4.3.2. Classification of temple cellae

Temples excavated in the whole Syro-Palestinian region can also be classified according to the means of access and the shape of the cella where the icon of the deity was erected:

- *Bent axis*, in which the cella with the shrine of the temple was indirectly approached by way of the principle entrance.
- *Straight axis*, in which the cella with the shrine was directly approached by way of the main entrance. It lay in a direct line with the shrine.
- *Broad room* temple in which the shrine lies in the middle of one of the long sides of the cella.
- *Long room* temple, in which the shrine lies in one of the short sides of the cella.

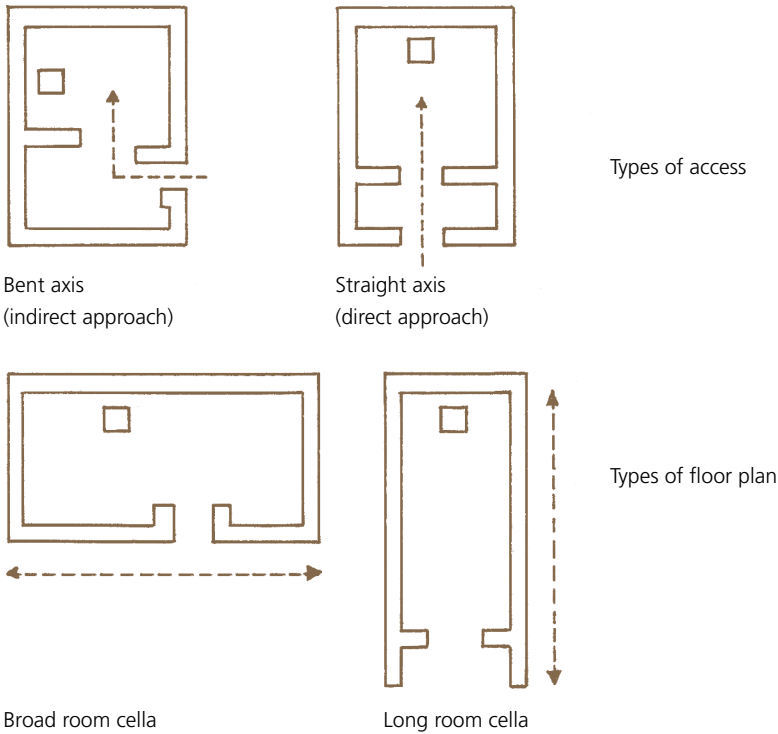


fig. 4.3. Schematic depiction of temple cellae. Types of access and types of floor plan. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

4.4. Egyptian temples

4.4.1. Divine and mortuary temples

A proper understanding of Egyptian religious architecture begins with an appreciation of the Egyptian environment and how it informed Egyptian consciousness. "Conceptually, the essential elements of the ancient Egyptian environment were stability, simplicity and rhythm".²¹² The massive Egyptian temples were built as a bulwark against the perpetual forces of chaos. Just as the Nile valley gave life, so it claimed back all life.

Throughout Egyptian history the pharaohs built elaborate tombs for themselves, these were provided with offering places. During the Old Kingdom (2700-2100 BCE) these offering places were monumentalised to form elaborate sanctuaries. Ancient Egyptian architecture developed a vast array of diverse structures including pyramids and temples.

Many scholars hold the traditional distinction which sharply differentiates between temples of the gods, and temples of dead monarchs. Relating to this distinction Hundley notices that "the function and symbolic characteristics of all Egyptian temples were both too varied and too intertwined to support this distinction".²¹³ To get a well balanced picture of temples in all ancient Near Eastern regions, the study in this paragraph has only focussed on the temples of the Egyptian deities.

²¹² Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 66.

²¹³ Hundley, *God in dwellings* 18.



map. 4.A Locations of appointed temple sites in ancient Egypt (Drawn by author).

Egypt had a long tradition of temple building, encompassing sanctuaries of modest dimensions to large temple complexes. The culmination point of Egyptian temple building cult and religious architecture emerged in the era of the New Kingdom (1550-1090 BCE).

Most Egyptian temples adhered to the same general design and were composed of three successive parts consisting of courts, halls and the sanctuary with adjacent auxiliary rooms.

Several temple sites were entirely surrounded by an outer wall around all temple structures.

New Kingdom temples were composed of an axial and symmetrical sequence of features that include a monumental gate set within a pylon, a walled court, colonnaded hall(s), an offering room and a cella for the cult statue. In New Kingdom temples, a chapel for the sacred barque was incorporated just in front of the statue chapel.²¹⁴ In such a barque the deity was carried on festival occasions.

One of the most striking examples of a tripartite, straight axis Egyptian temple is the Ptolemaic Edfu temple of Horus. It is one of the latest and best preserved sanctuaries of ancient Egypt. The temple consisted of a pillared hall, two transverse halls and a barque sanctuary surrounded by chapels.

²¹⁴ Such a barque is a portable shrine for the statue of the god when journeying outside the temple during the festival processions. See fig. 4.8.

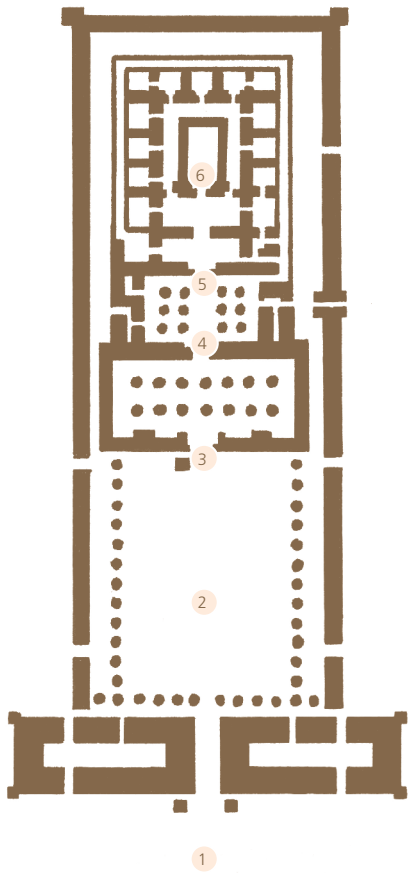


fig. 4.4a Layout temple of Edfu. (Redrawn by author after A. Rosengarten, *A Handbook of Architectural Styles*).

- 1 Gateway and pylons
- 2 Peristyle courtyard
- 3 Pronaos
- 4 Hypostyle hall
- 5 Hall of offerings
- 6 Inner sanctum

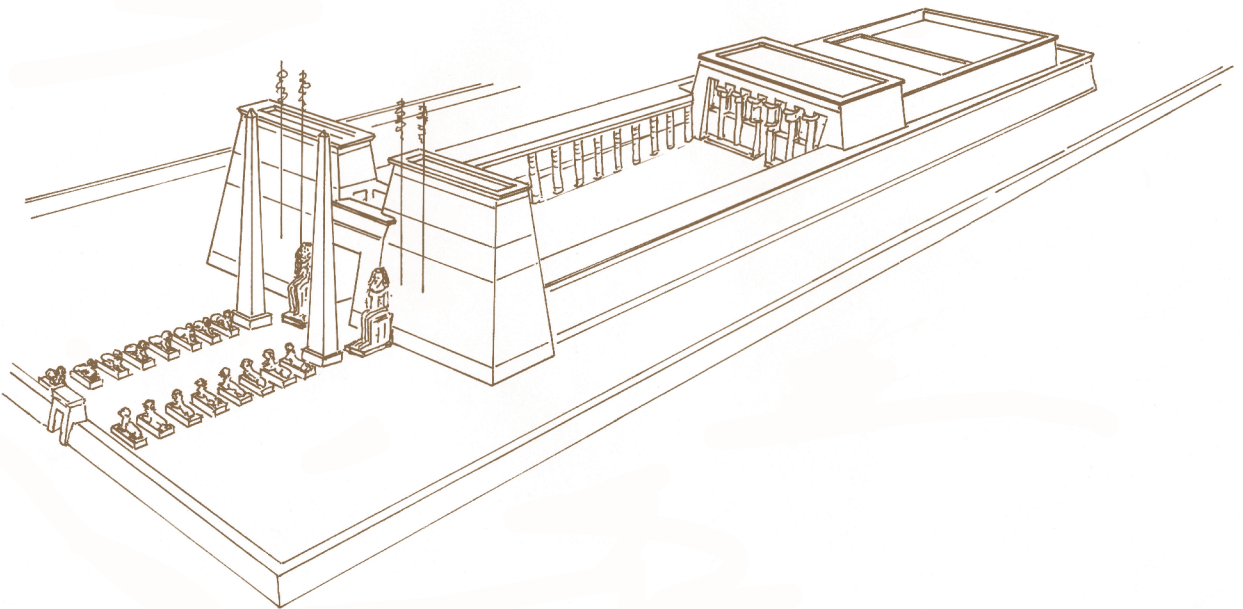


fig. 4.4.b Sketchy impression temple of Edfu. (Reconstructed by author after Dieter Kurth, *The Temple of Edfu: A Guide By An Ancient Egyptian Priest*).

Egyptian temple building traditions may be shared within a larger cultural sphere, such as the Syro-Palestinian area.²¹⁵ Excavations at the eastern Nile river delta site of Tell ed-Dab'a bear witness to a strong Egyptian-Canaanite historical/archaeological/religious connection.²¹⁶ Tell ed-Dab'a is the archaeological site where Avaris, the capital city of the Hyksos once stood.

The Tell ed-Dab'a temple, called temple III was 30m long and had 4m thick walls. This 13th century BCE temple was tripartite and straight axis. Other examples of tripartite, straight axis temples, are the temples of Sethi I at Abydos and the 3rd century BCE Edfu temple of the falcon god Horus. They are the ultimate prototypes of the classic Egyptian straight axis temple, which has the same floor plan as Solomon's temple, except that this temple is much more elaborately developed, with many more rooms, halls, courtyards and side rooms.

4.4.2. Architecture of Egyptian temples

The earliest sanctuaries of ancient Egypt were booths or tabernacles in which offerings were presented to a deity. These little structures, built of mud-brick and wood rather than stone, were placed in a walled court.²¹⁷ The next step in the development of sanctuaries was the construction of small chambers containing a cult object.

A striking example of this is the stone shrine in the innermost room of the Edfu temple. That consisted of a stone base representing the former primeval reed shrine. Analogous to Egypt, the innermost room in Solomon's temple originated as a primordial or primitive shrine, the tent shrine of the desert wanderings.²¹⁸

The customary Egyptian temples had an open courtyard, a hypostyle hall and a tripartite arranged temple with an inner sanctuary. An architectural feature of Egyptian temples was the placement of twin pillars at the entrance. Striking similarities with the Tabernacle as well as the temple of Solomon become perceptible.

A typical example of an Egyptian sanctuary has been found on an ivory plaque in the royal cemetery at Abydos in Middle Egypt. It shows from left to right two flagpoles facing each other, on either side of the entryway pylons. Subsequently, it shows the sanctuary with the symbol of the deity and finally the shrine at the back. Later on this shrine was placed in the innermost room or most holy place of the classic Egyptian temple, but now rendered in stone. Above the sanctuary two boats transporting a sacred reed shrine are depicted.



fig. 4.5 Fragment of the Ivory plaque with a shrine or tabernacle and its symbols at Abydos. (Redrawn by author after a copy of John M. Lundquist in *The temple of Jerusalem*).

Some other significant features of Egyptian temples that also are found in the descriptions of Solomon's palace and temple, are excavated in the site of the *Medamud* temple near Luxor, built during the reign of Thutmose III (1479-1425). The temple had a portal entry which led to a colonnaded courtyard, which in turn led to a hypostyle hall. Later on a large courtyard and outer perimeter wall were added.²¹⁹ These walls constructed of mud-brick, surrounded the entire complex and included numerous freestanding buildings.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 47.

²¹⁶ Lundquist, *ibid.* 63.

²¹⁷ Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 88-89.

²¹⁸ Lundquist, *ibid.*, 65.

²¹⁹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 161.

²²⁰ Baines, "Palaces and temples of Ancient Egypt", 304.

4.4.3. Temple of Amun-Re and Khonsu at Karnak

The most elaborate temple was the large complex of Amon-Re at Karnak. Within this temple site several other smaller temples were situated, among them the typical temple of Khonsu; a single, straight axis, symmetrical structure. The entire temple complex was surrounded by an enclosure wall which encompassed an area of at least 400x400m. Another wall, built during the 13th dynasty (1800-1650 BCE) was even larger.²²¹

Baines observed that temple complexes were often linked to one another. "The whole Theban area formed a vast sacred space whose principle axes were the north-south route linking the great temple of Amon-Re at Karnak with the Luxor temple, and the east to west axis linking Karnak to the temples on the west bank of the Nile".²²² Temples often had a special relationship with the royal palace. Temples had stone enclosure walls and were approached through entrances flanked by two massive pylons (tapering towers). Behind the pylons a courtyard was situated, followed by one or two hypostyle halls, intermediate halls and finally the sanctuary.²²³ The temple axis was east to west oriented from the direction of the rising sun. Solar alignment provided the full influx to the cult object. In Egypt, however, this orientation was also often replaced by the flow of the Nile.²²⁴

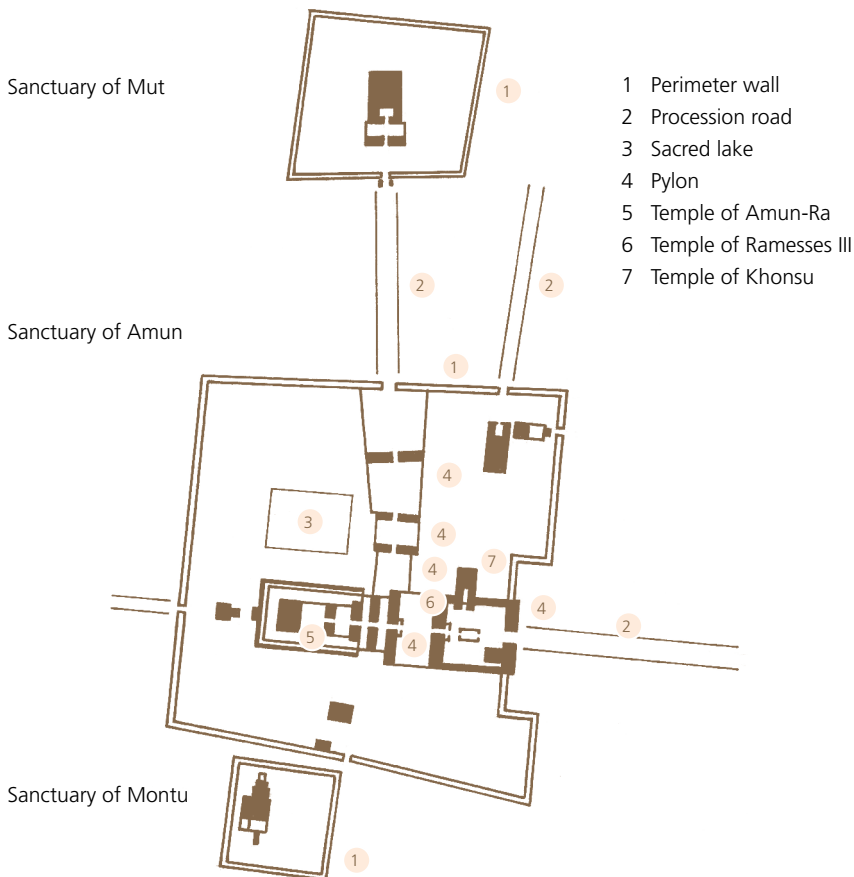


fig.4.6 Plan showing the major temple site at Karnak with its three main sanctuaries which are linked by processional avenues. (Redrawn by author after G.J Wightman, Sacred spaces).

²²¹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 169.

²²² Baines, "Palaces and temples of Ancient Egypt", 309.

²²³ Baines, *ibid.*, 309-310.

²²⁴ Palmer, *ibid.*, 304-306.

An avenue flanked by sphinxes led to the entryway of the actual Amun-Ra temple. Next came pylons or portals that gave entrance to the second part, an open court bordered with a portico of pillars. Progressing inward the next unit was a hypostyle hall accessible by means of a ramp. This hall had a roofing supported by pillars and led into the core of the temple, being a tripartite sanctuary with the barque chapel, a vestibule or offering room and at the rear end the cella with a statue of the deity to whom the temple was dedicated. The inner part of this kind of sanctuary was usually surrounded by auxiliary rooms for the benefit of temple service and storage rooms for ritual utensils. The Egyptian temples expanded in the course of time to large walled-in complexes, including smaller temples. The temple of Amun-Ra stood near the middle of a huge, square enclosure which after several enlargements reached a size of about 500x500m.

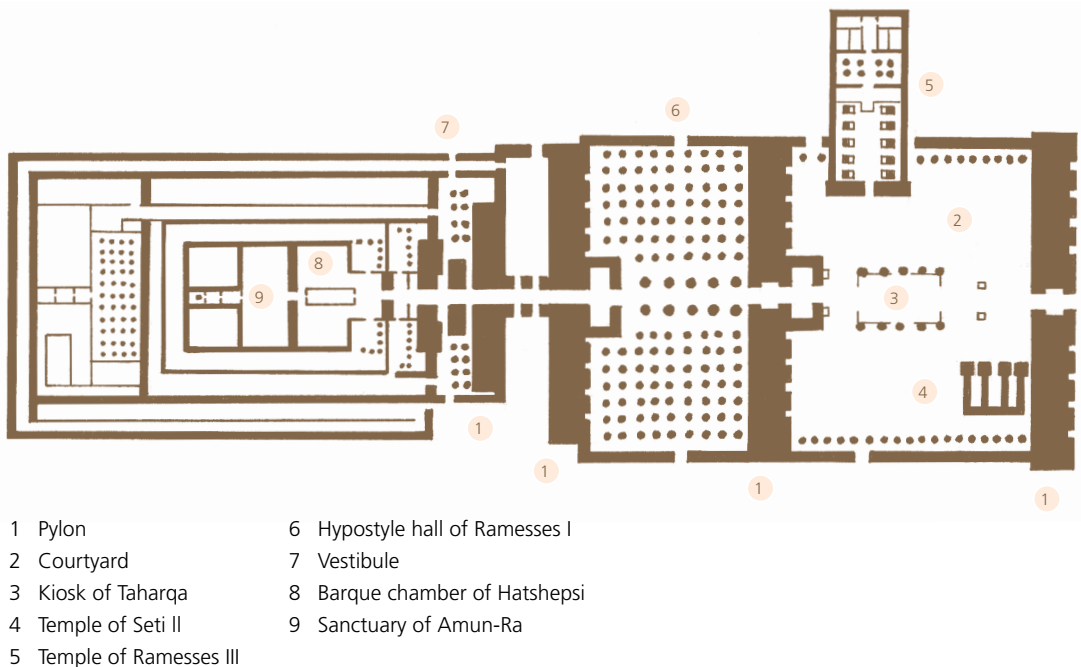


fig. 4.7 Temple of Amun-Ra, the greatest of ancient Egyptian temples. (Redrawn by author after G.J Wightman, Sacred spaces).

Some additional remarks on the subdivision and arrangement of the sanctuary can be made. If the cult included a processional element there was often a barque chapel with a pedestal to support the barque or ship shaped litter with its cabin which either occupied a separate room or, in smaller temples, the same room as the primary cult image.²²⁵

When festivals were taking place magnificent processions were held in which priests carried the cult statues of the gods within a type of portable shrine. The sacred barques with its litters were carried on long carrying poles. Two impressive figureheads at the prow and stern of each barque identified its owner. Amun's barque had ram's heads, Mut had woman's heads and Khonsu falcon heads. The litter with its cabin presumably served as a model for the Ark of the Covenant.

²²⁵ Hundley, *God in dwellings*, 28.



fig. 4.8 Procession of Amun-Ra's divine barque. Relief from the Red Chapel of Hatshepsut at Karnak. (Redrawn by author after *Odyssey Adventures in Archaeology, Egyptian temples*, 2010).

The nearby temple of Khonsu, located into the temple site of Amun-Ra, - one of the best preserved cult temples of the New Kingdom -, offers a more balanced insight into typical New Kingdom temple design than does the temple of Amun-Ra itself. Characteristic is the steady diminution in the size of spaces as one moves toward the cult statue chamber and the increasing darkness and sense of seclusion.²²⁶

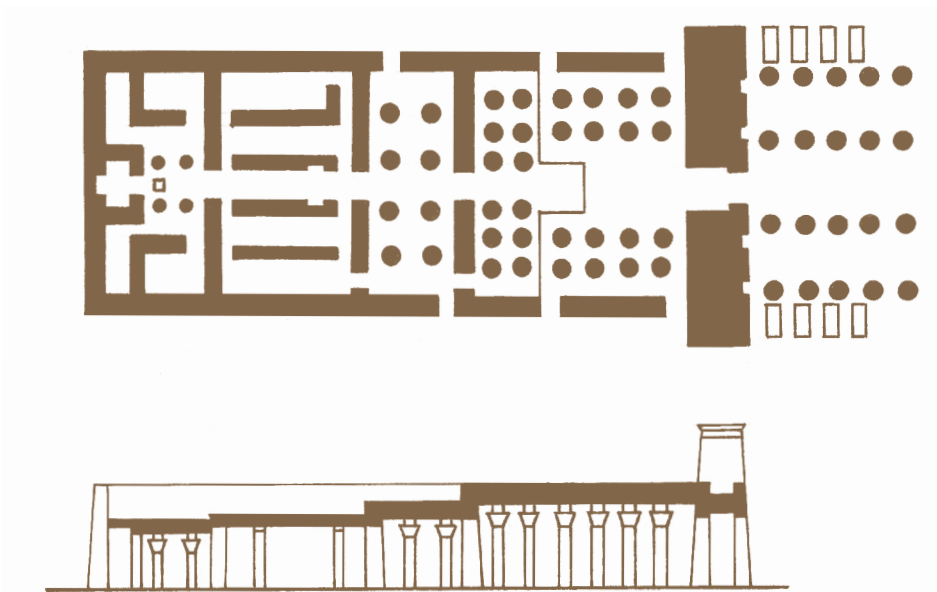


fig. 4.9 Temple of Khonsu, located within the temple complex of Amun-Ra. (Redrawn by author after G.J Wightman, *Sacred spaces*).

²²⁶ Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 104.

4.5. Mesopotamian temples

4.5.1. Temple building strongly influenced by its environment

Contrary to the common Egyptian architecture that evolved in a relatively isolated tradition of temple building, Mesopotamian temple building was a mishmash of architectural features. Over time it was much more influenced by the style of building of surrounding nations.

A fundamental architectural form of the Mesopotamian world was the house. Such a house was primarily a domestic residence, but was also used to refer to palaces and temples. At different periods various types of buildings were characteristic. In succession the house generated from a one room building to tripartite and courtyard structures. The courtyard house was adopted as the standard model for both palaces and temples.



fig. 4.10 Schematic reproduction of a Mesopotamian courtyard-house. (Redrawn by author after H.W.F. Saggs, *Everyday life in Babylonia and Assyria* (1965))

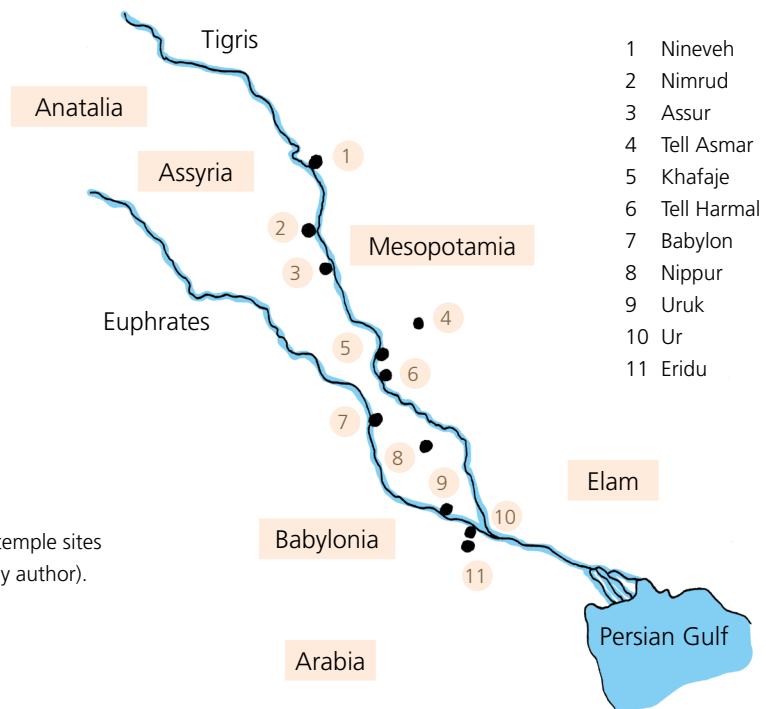
Although the temple was called *bitu*, house, it was not so much a place of divine residence since the focus of temple cult was fulfilling the needs of the gods through sacrifice, libation and ritual.²²⁷ The ancient Mesopotamians saw their temples as the physical points of connection between the human and divine realms. The gods were represented by a small cult image within the cellae of their temples. Mesopotamian temples grew, like their Egyptian counterparts, from small one room structures to elaborate multi-acre complexes.

The form of a Sumerian temple was the manifestation of Near Eastern cosmology, which described the world as a disc of land which was surrounded by an ocean, above them was the firmament. A world mountain formed an *axis mundi* that joined all three layers of land, waters and firmament. The role of the temple was to act as that *axis mundi*, a meeting place between gods and men.²²⁸ The *ziggurats* in the temple complexes were built to reach nearer to the heavens.

The plan of the temple was rectangular with some sort of indirect access (the so called bent-axis approach) to the statue of the god that stood within it. The corners of the temple pointed in cardinal directions to symbolise the four rivers which flow from the mountain to the four world regions. The temple was built on a low terrace of rammed earth meant to represent the sacred mound of primordial land which emerged from the water during creation.

²²⁷ Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 4.

²²⁸ Lundquist, "What is a temple? A preliminary Typology", 205-208.



Map 4.B. Locations of appointed temple sites in ancient Mesopotamia (Drawn by author).

4.5.2. Architecture of Mesopotamian temples

The earliest Mesopotamian temples had a single room, while the later temples had the more elaborate standard tripartite plan.²²⁹ Later on the courtyard temple with rooms on all sides of the court came into prominence. In Babylonia the bent-axis configuration was replaced by the direct-axis approach and temples got a more symmetrical layout.²³⁰

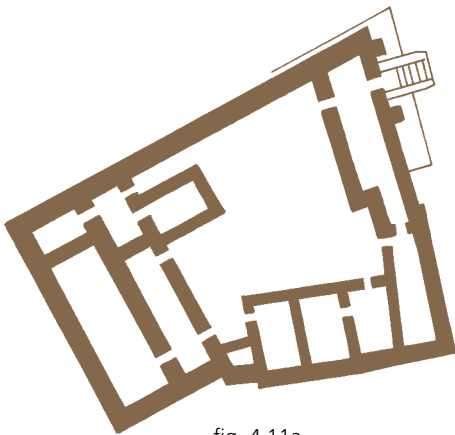


fig. 4.11a

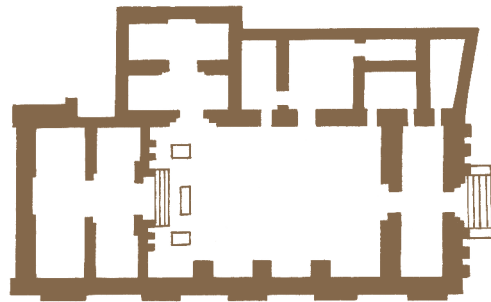


fig. 4.11b

fig. 4.11a Broad room temple of Sin at Khafaje with indirect approach (bent axis). The sanctuary was accessible from a central courtyard. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred spaces*).

fig. 4.11b Temple of Tell Harmal with direct approach (straight axis). The temple precinct consisted of a main portal towards a central courtyard behind which the sanctuary was situated. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred spaces*).

²²⁹ Margueron, "Temples: Mesopotamian temples", 165-167.

²³⁰ Robertson, "Temple and sanctuaries Mesopotamia", 373.

Just like the plan of Solomon's temple, the temple-palace symbiosis was common in Mesopotamia. One of the best examples of a temple and palace in close proximity was found in Tell Asmar, where the Shu-Sin temple stood adjacent to the palace.²³¹

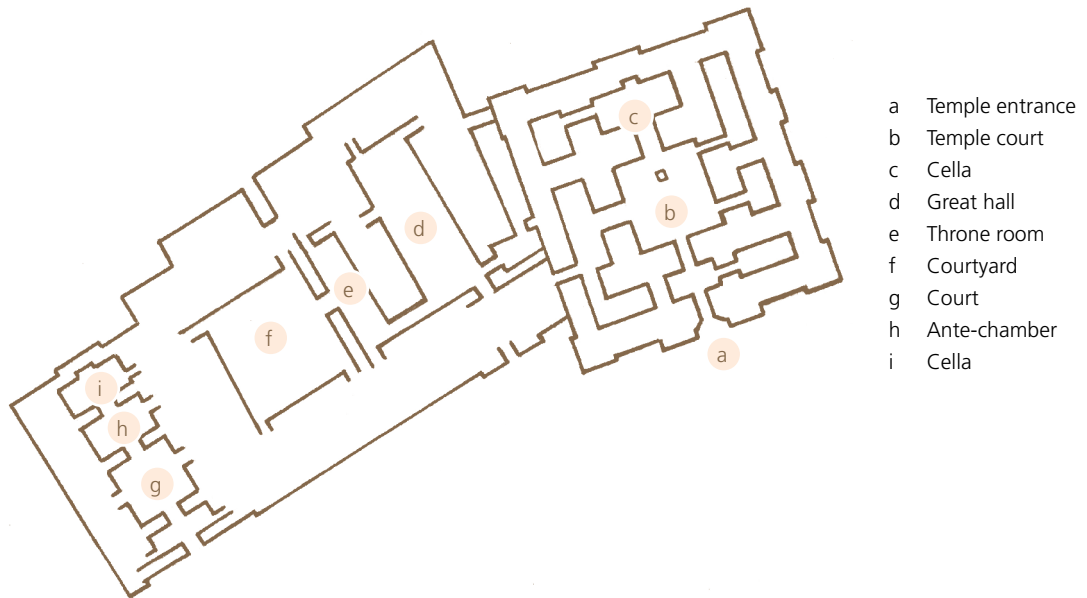


fig. 4.12 Temple-palace symbiosis Shu Sin temple at Tell Asmar. (Redrawn by author after Michael Roaf, *Palaces and temples in the ancient Near East*).

The earliest Mesopotamian temples were built with sun-dried mud brick, although beginning in the late third millennium BCE kiln-fired brick, frequently set in bitumen, was used. This choice of material was forced upon them by the lack of more durable materials, especially in the Tigris- Euphrates floodplain of south Mesopotamia.²³²

The use of brick led to the early development of the pilaster and column, and of frescoes and enamelled tiles. The walls of the temple were brilliantly coloured, and sometimes plated with zinc or gold, as well as with tiles.

From very early times (fifth millennium) temples were built upon a platform (an elevated area) and approached by steps. There was also some variety and development in the plans of Mesopotamian temples throughout the history of Mesopotamian religious architecture.²³³

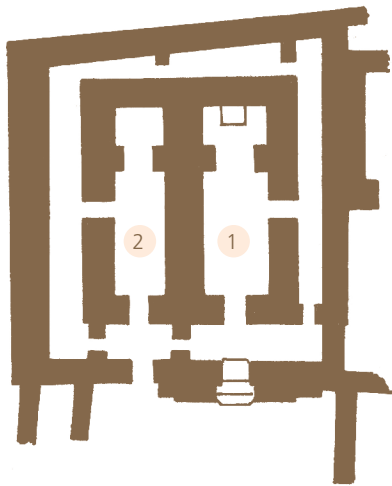
The following temple types can be distinguished:

- Tripartite temple
After the earlier type of the single room temple of the Ubaid period (4th millennium), the tripartite temple continued to be used in the 3rd millennium often as part of a larger temple complex.
- Courtyard temple
In the early dynastic period (2900-2350 BCE), courtyard temples built around an open internal courtyard became the norm and remained the most common type of temple.

²³¹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 149.

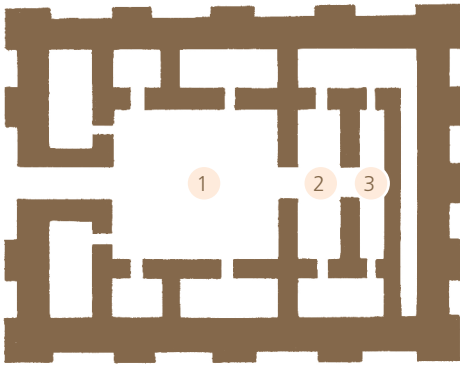
²³² Robertson, "Temples and sanctuaries: Mesopotamia", 373.

²³³ Roaf, "Palaces and temples in Ancient Mesopotamia", 427-428.



- 1 Temple of Nabu
- 2 Temple of Tashmetum

fig 4.13a Tripartite temple; twin sanctuaries of Nabu and Tashmetum at Nimrud, recently blown up by IS. (Redrawn by author after D. Oates, *The burnt Palace and the Nabu Temple*).



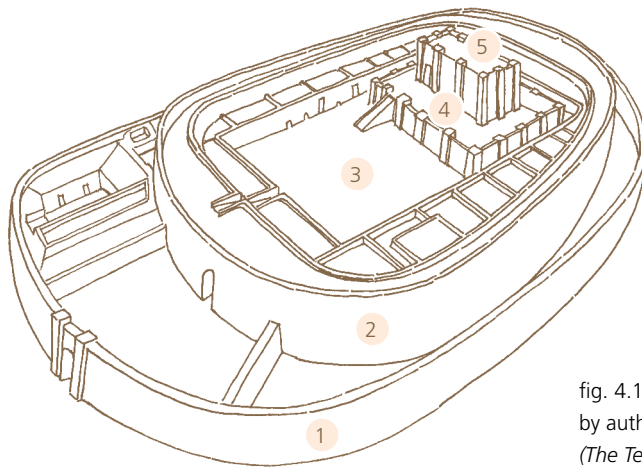
- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Antechamber
- 3 Innermost room with cult object

fig 4.13b Courtyard temple; temple of Ishtar at Babylon. (Redrawn after W.A. and E.T.A. Wigram, *The cradle of mankind*, 1922).

Three other special manifestations of Mesopotamian temples may be recognised on the basis of their architectural form.²³⁴

- The first which is restricted to the Early Dynastic period (2900-2350 BCE) is the Oval Temple. The distinguishing feature of this type of structure is a large curving perimeter wall surrounding the religious precinct. It had a shrine on a platform reached by stairs. Examples of that type of temples have been found at Tell Khafaje, Tell al-Ubaid and Ancient Lagash.
- The second type is the platform temple. These temples were built on artificial elevations like the White Temple of Ur.
- The third type, the *ziggurat*, is a particular form of platform temple with several stages. The earliest *ziggurats* were built at Ur, Eridu, Uruk and Nippur about 2000 BCE. These *ziggurats* had several stages and were equipped with three staircases meeting at right angles. Its rectangular lower stage measured about 60x45 meters. The most famous one however, is the *ziggurat* of Marduk at Babylon.

²³⁴ Roaf, "Palaces and temples in Ancient Mesopotamia", 427-430.



- 1 Outer perimeter wall
- 2 Inner perimeter wall
- 3 Courtyard
- 4 Temple platform
- 5 Temple

fig. 4.14a Oval temple. (Redrawn by author after P. Delougaz, *The Temple Oval at Khafajah*).

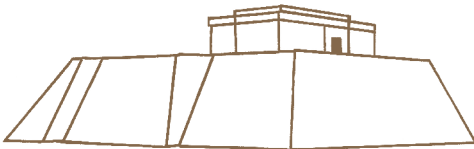


fig. 4.14b Platform temple. (Drawn by author).

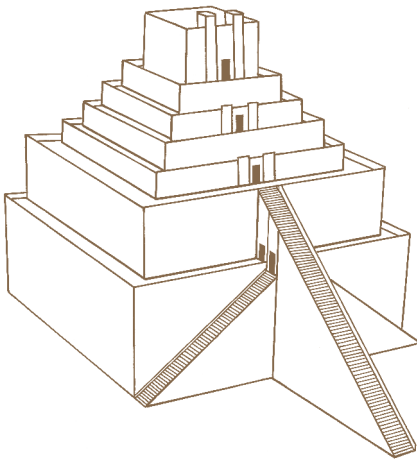


fig. 4.14c Ziggurat. (Drawn by author).

Several features of Mesopotamian temples like the temples of Khafaje, Tell Asmar and Babylon were also found in Solomon's temple. Many of them also had a tripartite floor plan and were built on an artificial mountain.

The temple of Khafaje from around 2500 BCE, enclosed by a solid, oval defensive wall, took the form of a long rectangular sanctuary and followed the tripartite plan. By way of a forecourt one entered the inner court accessed through a heavily guarded entrance. Before the temple platform in the inner court stood an altar.

The temple of Tell Asmar was located in a square courtyard, with rooms arranged around it. Palmer recapitulates: "Following the tripartite plan, entrance to the temple was effected between two pillars or towers leading to a vestibule, then to an antecella and finally to the innermost cella with the god's statue at the far end" as in the temple of Tell Harmal (see fig 4.11b). Just like other temples of that period, the entrance of the temple contained a bronze lintel and this lintel was supported by two columns. These

columns had a structural function, in contrast to freestanding pillars flanking the temple entrance.

4.5.3. Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE) provided Babylon with an advanced urban design and several magnificent buildings and constructions. He ordered the complete reconstruction of the imperial buildings including the great *Etemenanki ziggurat* and the construction of the Ishtar Gate.

According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the city had the form of a gigantic square. The city was protected by a formidable defensive system which included a double and triple defensive wall and a deep encircling moat. The square city was cut into two parts by the Euphrates River. The main temples and sanctuaries included the *Etemenanki ziggurat*, the great temple of Marduk (*Esagila*) and fifty-two others, including the temple of Ishtar.

- 1 Euphrates river
- 2 Temple of Marduk Esagila
- 3 Ziggurat Etemenanki
- 4 Temple of Ishtar
- 5 Ishtar gate
- 6 Palace of Nebuchadnezzar
- 7 Citadel
- 8 Marduk gate
- 9 Triple wall
- 10 Double wall
- 11 Moat

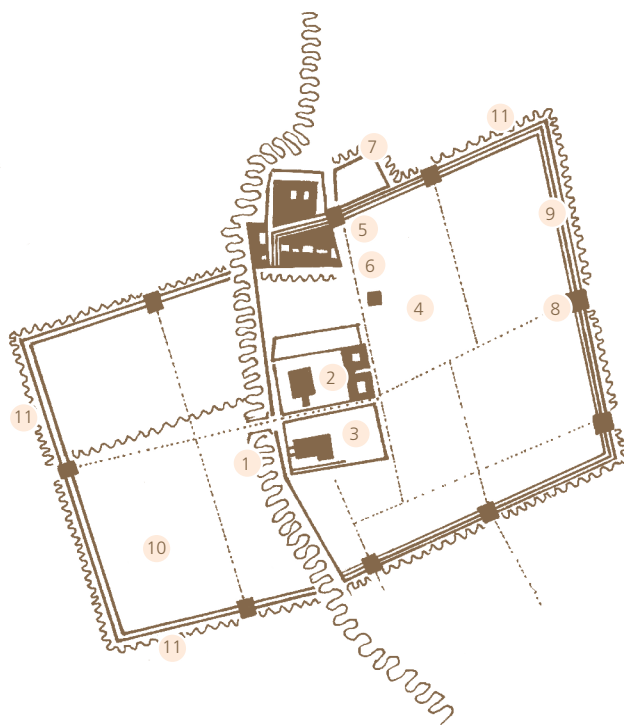


fig. 4.15 City-plan of Babylon in which the temple sites of Marduk were located. (Redrawn after J. Oates, *Babylon*).

4.5.4. Temple of Marduk

The most illustrious of the immense temple sites is the sanctuary of Babylon, dedicated to the supreme god Marduk. The sanctuary was divided into two courts: a large one containing the ziggurat and a smaller one (*Esagila*) for the ground level temple.

The *ziggurat* was a special kind of platform temple built in stages approached by sets of stairs leading from one stage to the next one. The temple shrine was apparently located atop the final stage.²³⁵ *Ziggurats* were built on an immense scale. According to the descriptions of Strabo the famous multi staged ziggurat was 300 feet, 86m. in height (others assume half this height). Around the base were more temples and accommodations for priests.²³⁶ The *ziggurat* consisted of three to seven ascending levels of decreasing area, with a flat surface on top. Mesopotamian ziggurats typically had an upper temple on the top level and a lower temple on the base. The lower temple featured a central courtyard surrounded by groups of rooms, of which one contained the sacred image.²³⁷

²³⁵ Averbeck, "Temple Building among the Sumerians and Akkadians", 6.

²³⁶ Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, 73.

²³⁷ Hamblin, Seely, *Solomon's Temple*, 147.

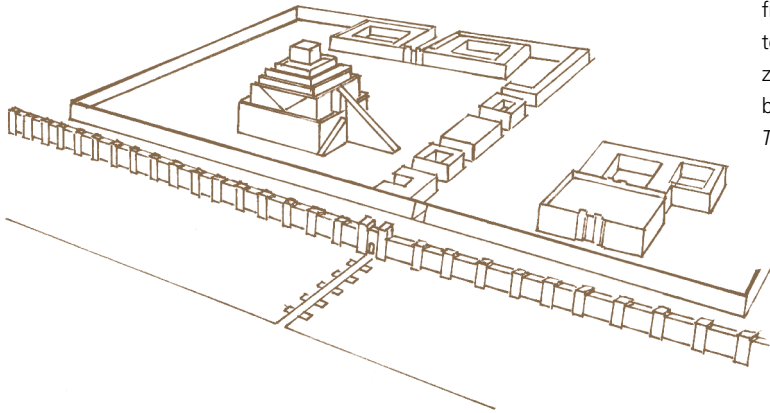


fig. 4.16 Impression of Marduk temple Esagila and Marduk ziggurat Etemenanki. (Redrawn by author after Robert Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*).

The Esagila temple consisted of outer and inner courts, arranged axially and symmetrically and surrounded by two ranges of chambers including chapels. The core part consisted of the typically Babylonian broad vestibule and broad cella, both of the same dimensions, arranged axially with direct approach from the court to the cult statue. Both vestibule and cella were flanked by small square *adyta*. Entering the *Esagila* one entered first a large court (40x70m), then a second court (40x25m), subsequently one saw the sanctuary itself which consisted of two sacred rooms: an anteroom and the *adytum* with the cult statue of Marduk.

The temple sites of Babylon with its large courts, porches and magnificent ornamentations foreshadow in a way some of the grandeur of Herod's temple.

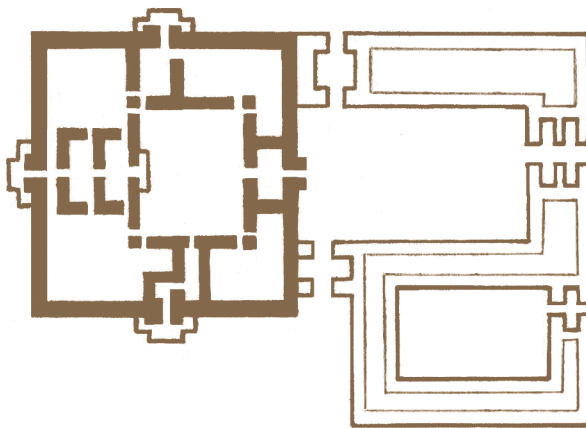


fig. 4.17 Marduk temple Esagila. (Redrawn by author after J. Oates, *Babylon*).

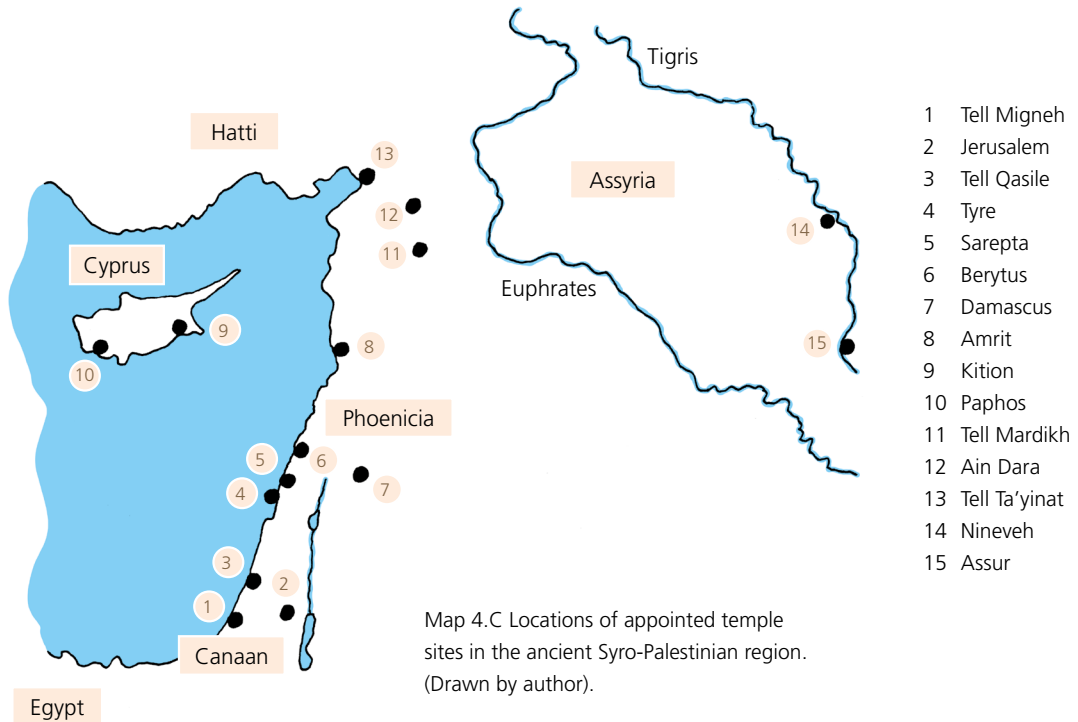
4.6. Syro-Palestinian temples

The designation "Syro-Palestine" functions as "a sort of catch-all category" of nations that were settled between the empires of Egypt, Hittite Anatolia and Mesopotamia.²³⁸ The region of ancient Syria-Palestine was a patchwork of diverse interconnected small nations and city states with various groups of population.

Temples in this region were relatively small in comparison to their Egyptian and Mesopotamian counterparts. Their architecture, however, was widely influenced by neighbouring countries, incorporating

²³⁸ Hundley, *God in dwellings*, 105.

Egyptian as well as Mesopotamian architectural features. Relating to Israelite temple building, three regions have been reviewed, viz. the Phoenician, Syrian and Palestinian region.



4.6.1. Temples in the Phoenician region

Phoenician temples were found in the coastal strip alongside the eastern border of the Mediterranean and on the isle of Cyprus. The Philistines were strongly influenced by the Mycenaean religion before they assimilated their religious beliefs and practices to those of the conquered Canaanites. Excavations have uncovered a number of Philistine sanctuaries like Sarepta (near Sidon), Tel Miqneh (Ekron) and Tel Qasile (near modern Tel Aviv). In all cases these are relatively modest, village based temples rather than major sanctuaries.²³⁹

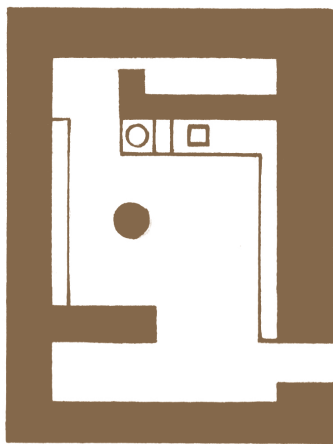


fig. 4.18a Temple of Sarepta. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

²³⁹ Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 179.

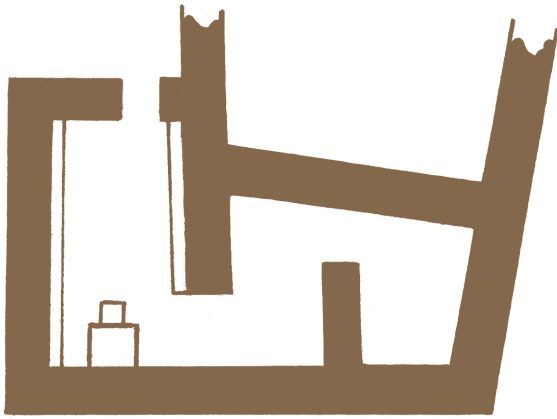


fig. 4.18b Temple of Tell Qasile (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

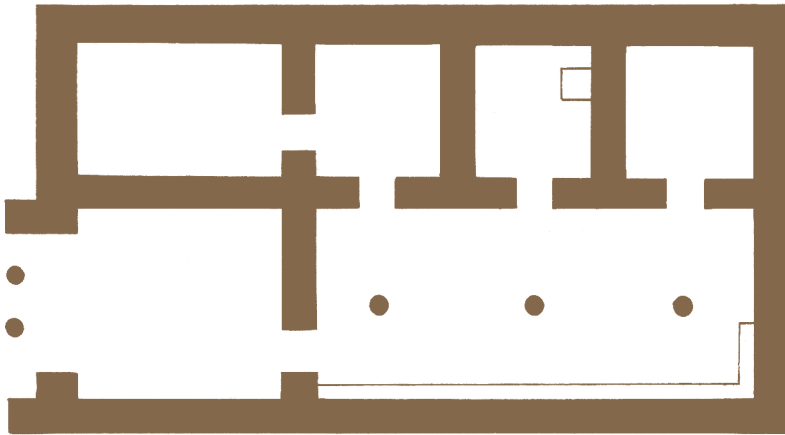


fig. 4.18c Temple of Tell Miqneh. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

Two types of Phoenician sanctuaries can be identified:

- open-air precincts or “high places”
- usual temple buildings

Open air sanctuaries were common in Phoenicia and several have been excavated.

The open air precinct of the so called Ma’abed at Amrith consisted of a paved elevated large court within a small, single-chambered shrine set upon a monolithic stone platform of roughly 5 square metres. The shrine was set in the middle of the court surrounded by porticoes and fronted by a broad altar. The court cut into a hillside was actually a deep basin filled with water from a nearby spring to create a sacred lake around the shrine.

Various features suggest Egyptian influence. In the mainland of Phoenicia no major temples of the Iron Age have been excavated. Wightman refers to a small temple (4x7m.) of Astarte at Sarepta in Lebanon that consisted of a long cella.²⁴⁰ Offering benches lined the walls and a stone display bench stood in the middle of the back wall. In front of the display bench stood a massebah.

²⁴⁰ Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 191.

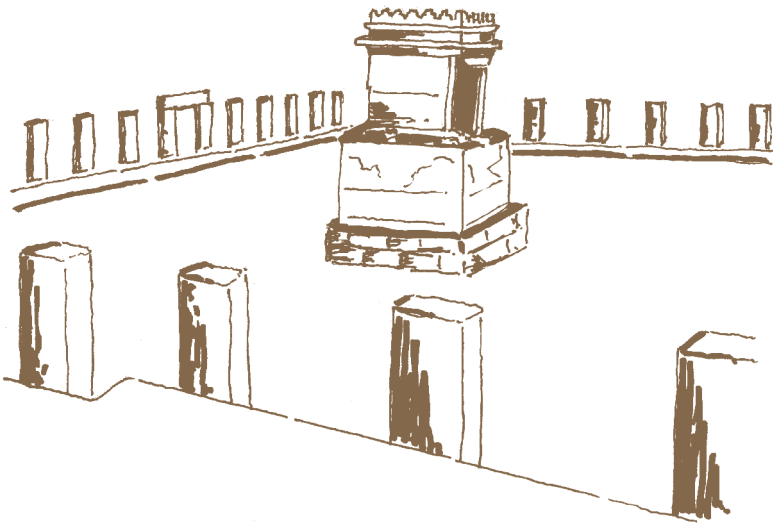


fig. 4.19a Impression of the open air precinct of the Ma'abed temple at Amrith. (Drawn by author)



fig. 4.19b Shrine of the Ma'abed temple at Amrith (Drawn by author)

4.6.1.1. Temple of Melqart at Tyre and remote Mediterranean regions

We do not know whether the temple of Melqart at Tyre was a real (actual) building or only a walled-in precinct with cult objects. Two ancient literary sources specifically refer to the shrine of Melqart in Tyre. The first is a writing of Herodotus. He visited the city around 450 BCE and described a temple with two striking stelae or pillars, one of refined gold and one of emerald. The second literary source is a saga by Achillius Tattius, written in the fourth century CE. In that writing he referred to a sacred precinct in honour of Heracles.

According to Josephus, Hiram's reconstruction programme at Tyre included the rebuilding and refurbishing of the city's existing sanctuaries for Melqart and Astarte. Expansion efforts may have concentrated on rebuilding upward rather than outward for purposes of external visibility.²⁴¹

A depiction of a late eighth century BCE relief shows a tall edifice that towers above Tyre's urban landscape (see fig. 4.20b). This edifice is identified as the temple of Melqart.

²⁴¹ Markoe, *Phoenicians, people of the past*, 128-129.

Archaeological evidence for the Melqart cult has been found at its earliest in Tyre and later spread throughout its colonies around the Mediterranean.

fig. 4.20a The old city of Tyre and the location of the temple of Melqart. (Drawn by author)

- 1 Present coastline
- 2 Causeway built by Alexander
- 3 Isle of Tyre
- 4 Isle of Hercules (now submerged)
- 5 City wall
- 6 Temple of melqart

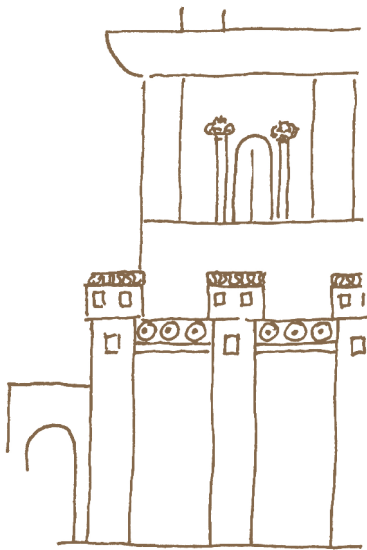
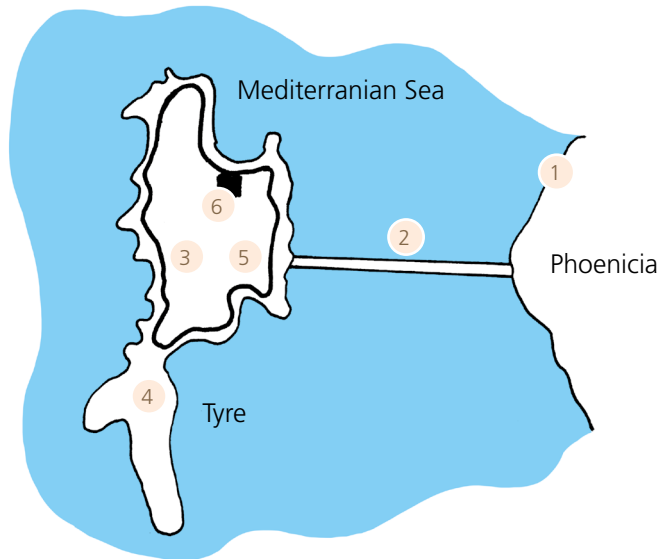


fig. 4.20b Part of an Assyrian relief. The tall edifice that appears above the city walls may represent the famous temple of Melqart. (Redrawn by author after Glenn E. Markoe, *Phoenicians: people of the past*).

4.6.1.2. Temples at Kition and Paphos

The mainland of Phoenicia presented not one single excavated temple that can serve as an example for Solomon's temple. Recent excavations in Beirut (ancient Berytus), however, brought a part of a residential district to light. It was a tripartite sanctuary, comprising a vestibule, central cella with a massebah, and an adyton at the back.

Representative examples of a Phoenician temple that have been excavated are the temple at Kition and Paphos on Cyprus, established during the Late Bronze Age. Temple 2 of the Kition site consisted of a vestibule, a long cella and an adyton, all integrated in a rectangular edifice of 9x20 m. The access was indirect (bent axis). Enlargement of the temple in the 13th century BC involved the construction of a courtyard.

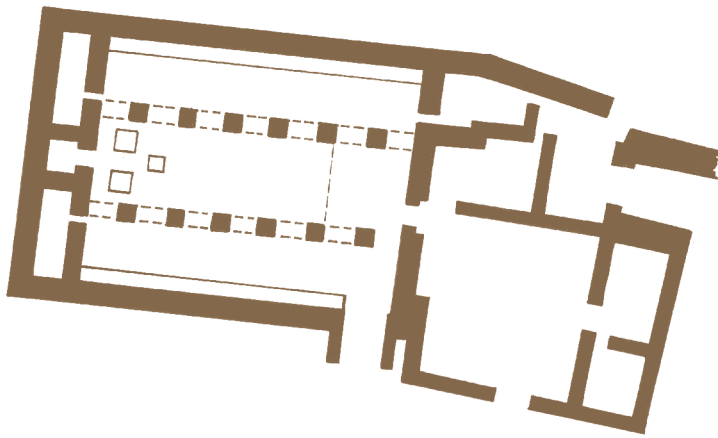


fig. 4.21 Temple of Astarte at Kition, Area II, Floor 2. (Redrawn by author after B. Charlton, *The syncretism of Aphrodite and Astarte on the Island of Cyprus*).

The temple of Paphos was placed in a court measuring about 50x60m, surrounded by a enclosure wall. This court was probably surrounded by a colonnade and accessed by a huge doorway. The temple edifice consisted of a nave, two aisles (like the temple of Solomon) and a cell in which the sacred pillar, an emblem of the deity was placed. The edifice measured about 9x18m. In front of the temple twin columns were placed like Boaz and Jachin before the temple of Solomon. The two bronze or copper pillars, flanking the entrance of the temple, could be compared with massebot or stelae before the temple of Melqart in Tyre and the temple of Paphos on Cyprus.



fig. 4.22 Bronze coin of the emperor Caracalla showing the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos.

4.6.1.3. The temple of Melqart a precursor of Solomon's temple?

Phoenician temples and the temple of Melqart in particular, are said to be precursor of Solomon's temple. The biblical text of 1 Kgs 5 and 6 reports that Solomon received aid from Hiram, the king of Tyre, in the construction of his buildings. This aid involved not only materials, but also architectural direction and skilled craftsmen. Consequently questions regarding to Phoenician temple building have to be answered. However, this is not an easy task, remains of Phoenician temples unfortunately are exceedingly scanty. There are some significant similarities, but also demonstrable differences between the Phoenician and Solomon's temple.

The question as to whether the temple of Solomon correlates with the temple of Melqart in Tyre or not is not easily answered. There are no excavated temple remains in the Phoenician territory, within the date range of the temple of Solomon. Earlier ones were destroyed by the Amorites. Whether the temples of Melqart and Solomon's temple are comparable or not, descriptions in the biblical book of Kings suggest that it embodied several features (such as building technics, building materials and ornamentation) recognisable from Phoenician temples. Tyrian sanctuaries must have attracted Solomon's attention. His appeal to Hiram for Phoenician help to build his own monumental temple must have been motivated by the sight of them.

Judging by Herodotus' description, Solomon's attraction to Hiram and the expertise of Hiram's craftsmen in building a temple, the assumption seems to be justified that the temple of Melqart, like the

temple of Paphos, was a real building that served as an example for Solomon's temple. Nevertheless, the input of the Phoenicians was according to Markoe on a technical rather than a conceptual level.²⁴² The design for the massive structure of Solomon's temple seems to be more in line with the temples from Syria and Mesopotamia.

4.6.2. Temples in the Syrian region

The Syrian region roughly covers an area from roughly Mount Hermon in the south of Turkey in the north. Many remains of modest sized temples were found in this region. The Syrian temple was literally the house of the deity. The main temple was nearly always demarcated from private houses by a clear space all around, which often was further delineated by means of an enclosure wall.²⁴³

In general Syrian and Canaanite temples were east to west oriented. Most of what can be said about temples of the Syrian region is confined to their ground plans. Many temples from the Late Bronze Age (the 2nd and 1st millennia) are excavated in this region.

4.6.2.1. Types of temples

These temples which can be grouped into a number of types, demonstrate a development in architecture. In the majority of cases these temples were directly approached (straight axis).

- The simplest temple was a long room cella (Hebr. *hechal*) with an open façade (1), sometimes supported by one or two columns *in antis*.
- A second type had a walled façade (2), this type was used with both broad and long room cellae.
- A third type had a shallow porch in front of the enclosed cella. In large temples of this type the front of the porch was supported by two columns *in antis* (3).
- In the type four temple a wall replaced the columns in the façade, converting the porch into a broad vestibule (4).
- A fifth type had two towers on either side of the façade and between them a porch with one or two columns *in antis* (5). The walls of many temples of this type of were extremely thick (up to 5 metres). This type of temples is commonly referred to as *migdal* temples.
- A sixth type also included a vestibule and porch. This resulted in a tripartite sequence of a broad porch, a broad vestibule and a long cella (6).

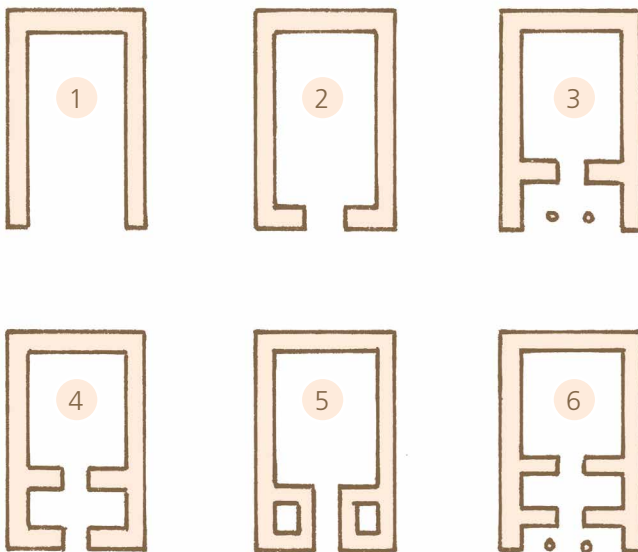


fig. 4.23 A selection of direct approach temple types that dominated Syro-Palestinian architecture during the 2nd and 1st millennia. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

²⁴² Markoe, *Phoenicians, people of the past*, 129.

²⁴³ G. J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*, 149.

4.6.2.2. Temples of Tel Mardikh, Ain Dara, and Ta'yinat

The temple on the citadel of Ebla (Tel Mardikh) from the mid second millennium BCE, dedicated to Ishtar, could be regarded as one of the oldest Syrian temples. It was a tripartite ante type temple with a cult niche built into the back wall.²⁴⁴ It measured 30x60m and it was situated next to the royal palace.



fig. 4.24 Temple of Tel Mardikh-Ebla.
(Redrawn by author after G.J. Wghtman, *Sacred Spaces*).

Another example of a tripartite temple is the temple of Ain Dara, excavated north-west of Aleppo. In particular the annexes are fascinating: an ambulatory surrounds three sides, excluding the front side. These annexes are comparable with the three storeys high annexes around the temple of Solomon.

Novák speaks of a building surrounded by a gallery with more than one story; the upper one accessible by a staircase.²⁴⁵ The annexes were structurally not connected with the temple itself, making an interesting comparison with the annexes attached to the temple of Solomon by offsets in the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.²⁴⁶

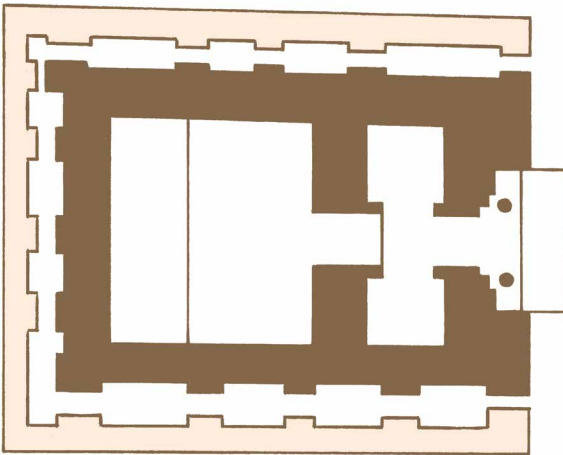


fig. 4.25 Temple of Ain Dara.
(Redrawn by author after M. Novak, *The Temple of Ain Dara*).²⁴⁷

The temple of Ta'yinat in the Syrian territory in the plain of ancient Antioch, is a classic example of Syrian Iron Age temples (1000-900 BCE).

Harrison identifies this temple as a megaron or longroom temple including a columned entrance, a pronaos and a central naos or cella. The temple was rectangular (11.75x25.35m), tripartite and straight axis. The entryway had the two side walls in antis with two pillars standing in the entryway. The porch was followed first by the main hall and subsequently the innermost room that was separated from the

²⁴⁴ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 56.

²⁴⁵ Novák, "The Temple of 'Ain Dara", 52.

²⁴⁶ Abou Assaf, *Der Tempel von Ain Dara*, 18.

²⁴⁷ Novak, *ibid.*, 47.

main hall by two side walls within a door. Another feature of Ta'yinat was a massive palace complex next to the temple.²⁴⁸



fig. 4.26a Temple of Ta'yinat. (Redrawn by author after T.P. Harrison, *West Syrian Megaron or Neo-Assyrian Langraum?*)²⁴⁹

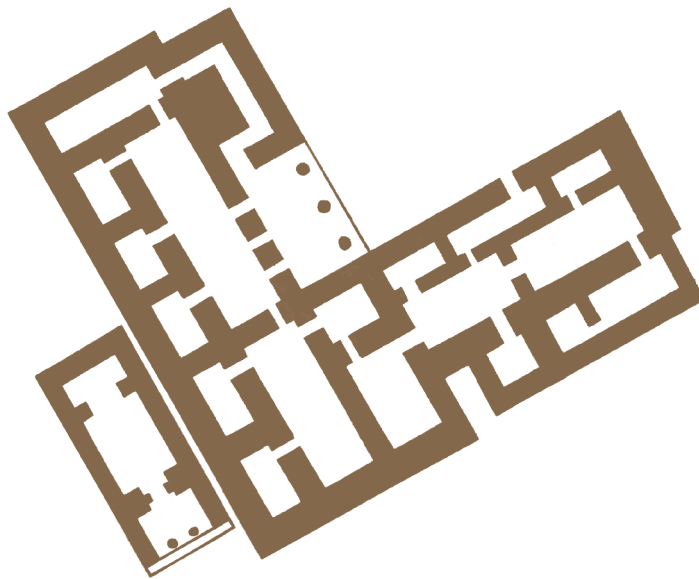


fig. 4.26b Temple of Ta'yinat adjacent to the palace (temple-palace symbiosis). (Redrawn by author after T.P. Harrison, *West Syrian Megaron or Neo-Assyrian Langraum?*).

The temples of Tell Ta'yinat and Ain Dara found in northern Syria are some of the closest surviving parallels to Solomon's temple. These temples have the same tripartite arrangement, with an innermost room at the back and two columns in the front. The cella of the temple edifices was, like the *hechal* in Solomon's temple, the largest room where most of the sacrificial and liturgical rituals were performed. The porch / vestibule served primarily to grant access. The cellae of many Syro-Palestinian temples included a separate space where the cult image was kept. In the description of Solomon's temple this space is called *debir*, i.e. inner-room or Holy of Holies. These temples, like Solomon's temple, were situated next to the royal palace. The palace-temple symbiosis was one of the striking features of temple building in the Syro-Palestinian region. The archaeological excavations of these temples reveal many details that are useful in understanding features of Solomon's temple that are not clarified by the Hebrew text.

Many scholars think the architectural similarities of Solomon's temple to dozens of known temples in Syria can be explained by the fact that Solomon hired artisans from Phoenicia helping to build his temple (1 Kg 5:20, 32). Although no remains of Solomon's temple have been discovered, archaeological examples of the furnishing of Syrian and Canaanite temples show important parallels to biblical descriptions.

The temple of Ta'yinat is arguable most similar to the temple of Solomon. Like Solomon's temple, this temple had a rectangular and tripartite floor plan. Its architecture corresponded in many ways to

²⁴⁸ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 56.

²⁴⁹ Harrison, "West Syrian megaron or Neo-Assyrian Langraum?", 6-7.

Solomon's temple. The layout with the porch, main hall and innermost room are a striking example of these similarities. Another feature of Ta'yinat that bears comparison with the temple of Solomon was a massive palace complex next to the temple.²⁵⁰

4.6.3. Temples in the Palestinian region

The Palestinian region roughly covers the present day state of Israel and the Transjordan area, in antiquity also labelled as Canaan. The major channel through which the wider Near Eastern culture reached Israel was via the Canaanites.²⁵¹

The Canaanite city states were already established when Israel appeared in Palestine. In Canaanite temple building, Egyptian influences from the Late Bronze Period (1570-1200) were perceptible. This influence was perhaps greatest in Beth-Shean. The level VII temple for instance, resembled several of the Egyptian Amarna sanctuaries with benches around the walls and an elevated area for the shrine.²⁵²

The earliest examples of Canaanite temples had a simple one room rectangular form in a broad room style. By the middle of the second millennium the broad room pattern gave way to a long room plan with a succession of rooms in a straight axis linear pattern. In the Iron Age (ca. 1200-600 BCE) temple complexes developed in the larger urban areas.²⁵³ Such complexes included the temple itself, ancillary structures and one or more courtyards. All parts were surrounded by an outer enclosure or *temenos* wall.



map 4.D Locations of appointed cities and temple sites in the ancient Palestinian region. (Drawn by author)

- 1 Arad
- 2 En-gedi
- 3 Jerusalem
- 4 Jericho
- 5 Gezer
- 6 Shechem
- 7 Bethshan
- 8 Megiddo
- 9 Hazor
- 10 Tyre

4.6.3.1. Temple of En-Gedi and Megiddo

The earliest remains of a (Chalcolithic, ca. 4500-3400 BCE) Canaanite temple have been excavated in En-Gedi. It was a hillock structure above the spring at En-Gedi. It was built as a single broad room temple with the focal point in the wall immediately opposite the entrance. It was surrounded by a *temenos* wall with a gatehouse.²⁵⁴

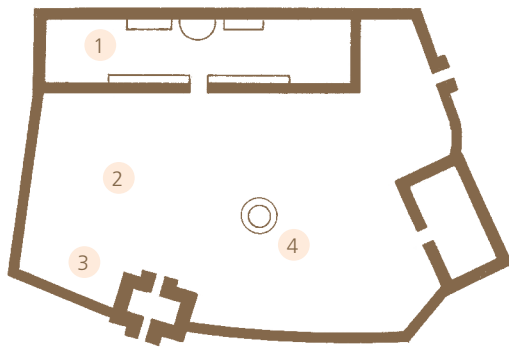
²⁵⁰ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 56.

²⁵¹ Clements, *God and temple*, 4.

²⁵² Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 227-228.

²⁵³ Palmer, *ibid.*, 214.

²⁵⁴ Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem", 376; Usishkin, "The Chalcolithic Temple", 15-26.



- 1 Broad room temple
- 2 Courtyard
- 3 Gate house
- 4 Well

fig. 4.27 Temple of Engedi having a broad cella with the cult object directly opposite the doorway. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

A similar example from the Early Bronze Age (3400-2000 BCE) has been excavated in Megiddo. In the Middle and Late Bronze Ages the buildings were elongated by the addition of a forecourt and imposing towers guarding the entrance.²⁵⁵

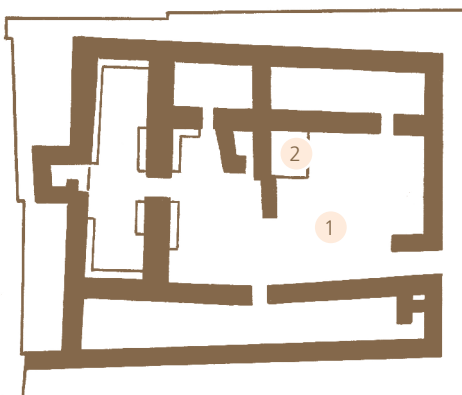
This broad room temple consisted of a rectangular main room with two pillars supporting the roof and an ante room or porch. The roof of the ante room was supported by two additional pillars which were incorporated into the façade of the building. "They framed the entrance and lent the temple front a distinctive appearance".²⁵⁶

The broad room temple was gradually replaced by the so called long room temple with anteroom, often called temple in antis. Architecture of Canaanite temples developed in a similar way as in the Syrian region.

4.6.3.2. Temple of Arad

From the Early Bronze Period political and religious spheres became closely interrelated. At Arad and Megiddo, temple and palace were situated in close proximity, shared communal courtyards and were segregated from the profane space of adjoining neighbourhoods by a temenos wall.²⁵⁷

The citadel and sanctuary of Arad were constructed at the time of the kings David and Solomon. Located in the north western corner of the citadel, the temple comprised of three rooms along an east west axis: ulam (entrance hall), heichal (main hall) and debir (the innermost room or Holy of Holies), like the temple in Jerusalem. At the centre of the large courtyard in front of the temple stood an altar, probably similar to the altar in the temple of Jerusalem.²⁵⁸



- Broad room temple
(niche with two maseboth)
- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Burnt offerings altar

fig. 4.28 Temple at Arad stratum X. (Redrawn by author after G.J. Wightman, *Sacred Spaces*).

²⁵⁵ Bloch-Smith, "Massebot in the Israelite Cult", 29.

²⁵⁶ Kamlah, "Temples of the Levant – Comparative Aspects", 514.

²⁵⁷ Palmer. *Expressions of sacred space*, 217.

²⁵⁸ jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/arad.html (15-01-2020)

Besides Arad and Megiddo there were some more Canaanite temples that could have served as an example for the temple of Solomon. These temples were excavated in Shechem, Hazor and Gezer. These towns are recorded in 1 Kgs 9:15, 17 as a part of Solomon's building activities.

In Shechem (dating from the Middle Bronze Age ca. 2000-1500 BCE) like in Megiddo, a so called *migdal*, a fortress type temple with massive projecting towers in the front, has been excavated. These temples had a long room floor plan, rather than a broad room, with an entryway in one of the short sides.²⁵⁹ The temple of Shechem was possibly the earliest tripartite temple in Palestine.²⁶⁰ This temple had massive 5m thick foundation walls. The plan consisted of an anteroom, a narrow entryway and a rectangular hall with a colonnade. In the later period, bases for *massebot* were installed on either side of the entryway.

The temple of Megiddo had 3m thick walls and two projecting towers in the front. Most frequently Canaanite temples were architecturally transformed into a "hierarchized" (Kamlah) sequence of rooms, which culminated in a central sacred space. The architectural arrangement of the central sacred space could have been a niche (cut into the back wall, opposite the entryway), room, shrine or podium. Another way of constructing the central sacred space was to partition the rear space of the main room. In some cases, the floor level of the back room was higher and stairs from the main room gave access to this most holy part of the temple building.²⁶¹ The cult statue in human or animal form represented a deity.

There are four Canaanite cities of the Late Bronze Age where temples had been excavated which in whole or in part can be compared with Solomon's temple, viz. Arad, Shechem, Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer. The last three cities played a prominent role in Solomon's building efforts. In their spatial design they can be regarded as forerunners of Solomon's temple.

- In the northern part of the Palestinian region, the Hazor Lower City Area H temple, a tripartite long room temple, is most closely related to the temple of Solomon in its design.²⁶²

- In the southern part of the Palestinian region, the Iron Age settlement of Arad with its citadel and temple was constructed at the time associated with King David and Solomon.

The sanctuary of Arad could be seen as a miniature version of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The temple consisting of two rooms, included several elements described in the Bible as being part of the temple like a sacrificial altar, an incense altar and a holy of holies. Peculiar in the temple of Arad was the discovery of two "standing stones" (*stelae*) on its rear side.

4.6.3.3. Temple at Tel Motza

Recently the remains of an exceptional Iron IIA temple complex (10th-9th centuries BCE) have been excavated at Tel Motza in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. This temple was first discovered in the 1990s but renewed excavations deliver more and more information about the plan of the temple. The importance and uniqueness of the Tel Motza temple are accentuated by the fact that it is the first Iron Age temple to be excavated in the heartland of Judah.

The temple was an east to west oriented complex, following a long room type plan. It was a massive construction with a vestibule consisting of two column bases and flanked by antes. The temple edifice was 18m long and 13m wide, about two thirds the size of Solomon's temple. Within the temple an elevation has been unearthed. The difference in elevation and type of floor could also indicate a distinction between the two parts of the chamber and suggest a partition between units within the temple that represent the main chamber and the innermost chamber, alluding to the biblical temple. To the east was a large courtyard with a prominent stone altar.²⁶³ The Motza temple was a bit smaller than Solomon's

²⁵⁹ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 220.

²⁶⁰ Toombs, "Shechem (Pace)", 1181.

²⁶¹ Kamlah, "Temples of the Levant – Comparative Aspects", 523.

²⁶² Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 53.

²⁶³ Kisilevitz, "The Iron IIA Judahite Temple at Tel Moza", 150-151.

temple. The temple type corresponds to the temple type which is found in northern Syria. It can be classified as a temple in antis comparable to the temples at Tel Tayinat and Ain Dara. Kisilevitz suggests that the Motza temple could have served as a local cult centre alongside the nearby temple at Jerusalem.²⁶⁴ An interesting question is how the Motza temple could have survived the religious reforms that the kings Hezekiah and Josiah led in the seventh and eighth centuries BCE. Under these reforms worship sites that competed with Jerusalem were prohibited and many local temples were destroyed.

In Kisilevitz's article the temple at Tel Motza is presented as a Judahite temple. It matches in many respects biblical descriptions of Solomon's temple, but the presumption of a Judahite temple seems premature at this stage. This temple has just as much in common with a variety of other temples in the region.

4.7. Conclusions

Without a keen understanding of the religious significance and architecture of temple building in the ancient Near East we cannot get a good picture of the plan and architecture of Israelite temples.

The common temple building culture in the ancient Near East had great impact on temple building in Israel. A comparison of temple building cultures in the ancient Near East and Israel brings to light considerable consistency in temple ideology and concepts. Temples in the ancient Near East have been typified as divine presence, heavenly abode, centre of the world, embodiment of the cosmic mountain, first fixed point in the primeval waters of creation, as garden sanctuary reflecting paradise and as sacred place.

In many respects there is a likeness between the temple ideology, concepts, layout and architecture of ancient Near Eastern and Israelite temples. From early Egyptian temples the Israelites inherited the building with two or three rooms. Phoenician and Syro-Palestinian temples also had a tripartite arrangement and were surrounded by courts. Storehouses for the temple treasures are paralleled in Babylonian and Egyptian temples by similar rooms, which surrounded the "*naos*" or hypostyle hall. The "molten sea" finds its parallel in Babylonian temples in a great basin called *apsu*. As the *ziggurat* typified a mountain, so the *apsu* typified the sea.

For the benefit of the study of ancient Near Eastern temples a lot of physical evidence is available from sites scattered all over the Near Eastern region. It may be noticed that in many respects striking similarities in architecture, ornamentation and furnishing of ancient Near Eastern temples are found.

Conceptions of demarcated sacred space were embedded in a larger religious context.

Temples were often built on top of a hillock and as a rule they were oriented towards the sun. Almost all temples from Egypt to Mesopotamia had a tripartite floor plan and the temple buildings were surrounded by one or more courtyards. Walls, gates and courts are the physical barriers for the preservation of sacred space and restricted access.

Temple building in the ancient Near East was ordered by the gods. Models or blueprints of the intended temples were shown to the king or ruler in question.

²⁶⁴ Kisilevitz, *ibid.*, 162.

5. Israelite sanctuaries

Plan and arrangement of Israelite sanctuaries from the Tabernacle to Herod's temple

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. Tent shrine and subsequent temples

The first mentioned Israelite sanctuary in biblical texts concerns a portable tent shrine, called Tabernacle, made as a dwelling for YHWH (Exod. 25:8). The plan, furnishing and ornamentation of the Tabernacle may be regarded as the prototype of the subsequent temples in Jerusalem.

After the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, a permanent residence for the name of YHWH was made. So the first temple, named after King Solomon, was built on Mount Moriah. The floorplan of this temple, was identical to the Tabernacle, but its dimensions were twice the size of the Tabernacle. Architecturally also there were many similarities with Canaanite and Phoenician temples.

The second temple, built by Zerubbabel, was a modest and austere replica of the first temple. Centuries later it was enlarged and exquisitely rebuilt in Greek-Roman style by order of King Herod. Herod's temple was considered one of the architectural wonders of the world in which the characteristics of Solomon's as well as Ezekiel's temple are distinguishable. The temple mount was transformed into an artificial mountain with enormous retaining walls roundabout. Over the years this artificial mountain was constantly expanded.

The visionary future temple described by the prophet Ezekiel in many respects resembles Solomon's temple as well as the idealistic temple of the Temple Scroll. The temple building proper has the same layout and almost the same dimensions. Curiously the vision report makes no reference to the holy objects which surely were found in the Tabernacle and temple of Solomon. The plan of the temple compound is perfectly square and entirely separated from its surrounding area. The walls, gates and courts of the temple show much likeness with customary examples of temple and town building in Solomon's period.

5.1.2. Terms denoting Tabernacle and Temple

In the ancient Near Eastern nations including Israel, the temple was identified by a term denoting a palace or a temple as well as the main room in them. The general Hebrew term for *temple* is *hechal* (היכל) which refers to the Sumerian *e-gal*, meaning "big house". "The etymology of this word may actually have been known somehow to the Chronicler. In 2 Chron 3:5 היכל is also defined as הבית הגדול, "the great house".²⁶⁵

According to Exod 25:8 God wanted a sanctuary in order to dwell among his people. The first Israelite dwelling place of the Lord is called *Tabernacle*. The different names given to the Tabernacle elucidate its various functions. It has been described in four terms:

- *Sanctuary* (Exod 25:8), in Hebrew *miqdash* (מִקְדָּשׁ). This term is derived from the word קָדוֹשׁ, denoting that which is holy, separate or sacred.
- *Tabernacle* (Exod 25:9) is originally a Latin term (*tabernaculum*), a translation of the Hebrew noun מִשְׁכָּן derived from the verb שָׁכַן which means "to settle down" or "dwell" and speaks of the structure as the dwelling place among God's people.
- *Tent* (Exod 26:36). In the Hebrew text the Tabernacle is also referred to by אֹהֶל the common word for "tent", indicating that it is a portable dwelling.

²⁶⁵ NIDOTTE, 1, 1026-27; TWAT II, 408-15. Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House", 73.

- Tent of Meeting or אהל-מועד (Exod 29:42). The expression tent of Meeting reflects the fact that people gathered at the entrance of the Tabernacle on special festival occasions.²⁶⁶

All these keywords are denoting the holiness of the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of YHWH on earth and the meeting point between YHWH and his people. The same keywords apply to the temple in Jerusalem. In the Hebrew Bible the Jerusalem temple is denoted as:

- בית-יהוה "the house of YHWH", or בית-האלהים "the house of God";
- בית-המקדש "holy place", "sanctuary";
- היכל "temple", "palace".

The first two expressions denote the basic idea of the temple as a dwelling place of God, a connotation expressed by the lexeme מִשְׁכָּן. The third one refers to the physical manifestation of the building. בית-המקדש, meaning "house of holiness", is usually translated as "sanctuary".

In the Hebrew Bible the term מקדש appears primarily with reference to the only legitimate Israelite sanctuary. In this respect it may denote either the entire Tabernacle site separated by curtains (Lev 19:30) and the entire temple compound separated by a perimeter wall (Ezek 44:1, 5, 7-8), or exclusively the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:33).

LXX uses primarily two Greek words to translate the Hebrew מקדש: "sanctuary", ἅγιον "holy place" and ἁγίασμα "sanctuary". Both occurrences have been derived from the basic root meaning "holy", "sacred".

The Greek term ἄβωτος means "abode", "temple". It can be used even more narrowly for the innermost shrine or cella that houses the god. In the NT ἄβωτος refers in particular to the Jerusalem temple.²⁶⁷ In combination with היכל the basic Hebrew word בית corresponds with the Greek term ἱερόν that refers to the physical structure of the sanctuary.

5.1.3. Tabernacle and temple, heavenly blueprints?

The Hebrew Bible shows that the "blueprint" of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon do not originate on earth. The earthly sanctuary of the Israelites can be qualified as "a prototype given by God".²⁶⁸ Both the Old and New Testament maintain that the "heavenly temple" served as the basis for the revelation of the earthly sanctuaries' shape. The earliest references to a heavenly sanctuary as an archetype or prototype for the Tabernacle appear in the chapters 25-26 of the book of Exodus.

In Exod 25:8 the purpose of the Tabernacle is explained: "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them". "I will dwell among or amidst my people" is like the echo of the Sinai that sounds through the entire Hebrew Bible, and particularly in the prophetic speeches that one finds in the book Ezekiel. Immediately after that in Exod 25:9 the origin of the Tabernacle is given: "Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the model I will show you". Exod 26:30 adds: "to the model / pattern (תבנית) that you were shown on the mountain".

Words of comparable purport sound in 1 Chron 28:12, where David had given to Solomon "the model / pattern of all that the Spirit had put in his mind" and in vs. 19: "All this I have in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the model / pattern". The terms "model" and "pattern" are translations of the Hebrew word תבנית. The dictionaries translate this word in different ways: "pattern", "form", "image" and "model".²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ NIDOTTE, 2, 1130-1434.

²⁶⁷ TDNT, 625.

²⁶⁸ Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 50.

²⁶⁹ NIDOTTE, 4, 275.

In the New Testament the earthly temple is said to be a “copy and shadow of what is in heaven” (Heb 8:5). In the book Revelation the author describes the heavenly temple as the source for the earthly sanctuary in all its forms by combining them all into one as typifying the ideal heavenly model: “After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened” (Rev 15:5).²⁷⁰

According to the biblical texts we may conclude that Moses and David were shown a model, a copy of the original, an architect’s blueprint or plan of the original heavenly temple itself, whatever that might be.

Several rabbinic sources argue that Moses was shown a miniature model of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, which was necessary because of the complexity of the instructions. Others argue that it was an exact copy of the sanctuary, contending that the basic meaning of *הבנייה* in Exod 25:9, 40 and in 1 Chron 28:11, 12, 19 denotes a model.

However, in most of the references to the “pattern” there seems to be an indication of an actual object, a replica, not an architect’s plan.

This view is found in Jewish and Christian non canonical sources from the Hellenistic period onwards and supports the view that Moses was shown the heavenly temple of which the Tabernacle and later the first temple were the earthly counterparts.²⁷¹

In describing the origin of the earthly sanctuary, in the New Testament, the similar Greek words *παράδειγμα*, (KJV translation “example”; RSV translation “copy”) and *τυπος* (KJV as well as RSV have “pattern”) are used. This indicates that the meaning of the Greek words corresponds with the Hebrew word *הבנייה*.

5.2. Tabernacle

5.2.1. The Tabernacle according to the Exodus account

The first sanctuary of the Israelites to be built after their exodus from Egypt, was a portable tent shrine called “Tabernacle”, *משכן* (Exod 25:9). Within the Tabernacle the ark of the covenant (*ברית ארון*) was placed.

The Tabernacle story in the book Exodus is divided into two large sections: Exod 25-31, recording the assignment to erect the Tabernacle, and Exod 35-40 describing the performance of the assignment. The Tabernacle account in Exodus has close affinity to stories of temple building known from the Near Eastern contexts.²⁷² The historic reliability of the book Exodus, however, has been the subject of speculation and controversy. Also the Tabernacle as the archetype for the later temples was a subject of discussion.

Wellhausen and others considered the Tabernacle to be a “retro projection” of the Jerusalem temple back into Mosaic times. In the older critical view, the Exodus account is unhistorical, maybe an artificial reconstruction based on Solomon’s temple. However, recently there have been attempts to date the material, or at least its origins, to the pre-exilic, even up to the pre-monarchical period, especially by a number of Israeli scholars.²⁷³

A number of ancient civilizations, even before the wilderness period, did know of similar structures. Parallels that suggest a Late Bronze Age (1570-1200 BCE) context for the Tabernacle could be observed. Structures or descriptions of structures comparable to the Tabernacle, with beams and curtains, have been found in Egypt from both the third and second millennium BCE including the time of the new kingdom during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 51.

²⁷¹ Price, *ibid.*, 52.

²⁷² Hurowitz, “The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle”, 21.

²⁷³ Pitkänen, “Temple Building and Exodus 25-40”, 255.

²⁷⁴ Pitkänen, *ibid.* 277.

Assuming a historical exodus, the Israelites left Egypt in order to worship their God in the desert (Exod 7:16). After the endowment of the Ten Commandments and making the Covenant at Mount Sinai, YHWH ordered a sanctuary to be made. Because of the desert wanderings the Israelite needed a portable sanctuary. The construction apparently was borrowed from Egyptian predecessors.

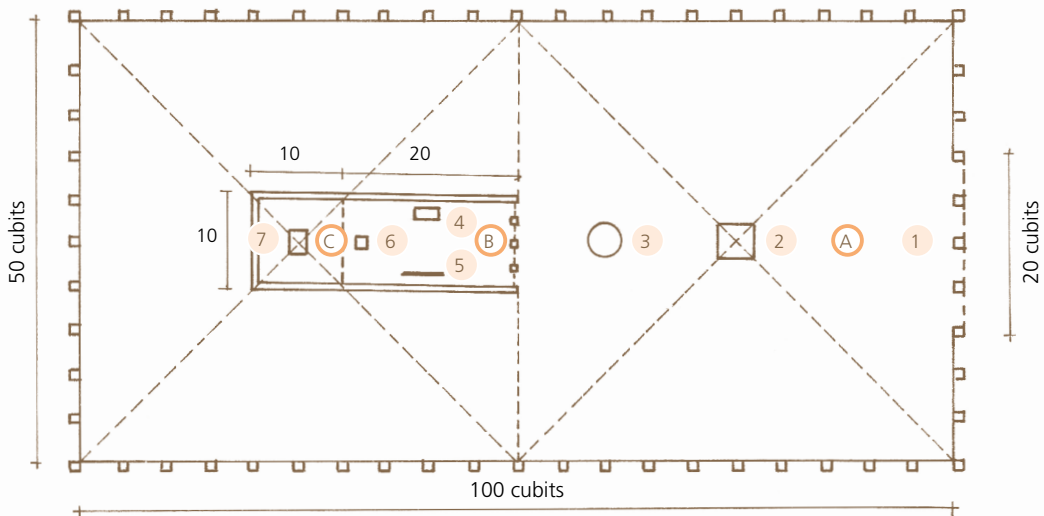
Before the establishment of the Tabernacle no communal habitation had been set up to worship YHWH by the Israelites. Only an altar of earth had been mentioned in the biblical account (see Exod 20:24). To worship their God the Israelite needed a habitation in an enshrined form. Now YHWH was about to declare to Moses what the character of the habitation should be, its size, form and materials. A master builder, Bezalel, endowed with the spirit of the Lord, was appointed in the Exodus account.

The purpose of the Tabernacle is quite clear. YHWH identified the primary purpose of the Tabernacle as follows: "let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25:8). In Exod 29:43, 45 YHWH says: "I will meet with the Israelites there (in the Tabernacle), and it shall be sanctified by my Glory". After the dedication of the Tabernacle, YHWH's glory descended from heaven upon the Tabernacle. The glory of YHWH, which beforehand had been shown on Mount Sinai, established his permanent presence in the Tabernacle.

5.2.2. Ground plan and architecture of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was a portable tent shrine intended for use by migrating people. The Tabernacle served as a meeting place between the Lord and his people and was thus called Tent of Meeting. The dimensions of the Tabernacle and all its parts reflect a carefully contrived design and a harmonious whole. The numbers 3, 4 and 10 predominate with proportionate cubes and rectangles. The various parts are all in numerical relation.²⁷⁵

The dyadic division of the tent shrine into two parts, "Holy" and "Holy of Holies" and of the Tabernacle as a whole into tent and court, presents a structure which is divided into three parts, similar to the temple in Jerusalem.²⁷⁶



- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| A Court | 1 Entrance | 5 Menorah |
| B Holy place | 2 Altar of burnt offering | 6 Altar of incense |
| C Holy of holies | 3 Laver | 7 Ark of the covenant |
| | 4 Table of the showbread | |

fig. 5.1 Layout of the Tabernacle.
(Drawn by author).

²⁷⁵ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 537-538.

²⁷⁶ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 24.

The Tabernacle was arranged as a separated sacred space. There were three entrances each with a screen in it and each leading to a more sacred spot, in succession: to the courtyard (הצר), then to the Holy Place (הקדש) and finally to the Most Holy Place (קדש הקדשים).

The courtyard in which was placed the Tabernacle proper, was an uncovered enclosure, separated from the camp by a partition made of white linen curtains (קלעים) hung from poles. The courtyard was rectangular, measuring 100x50 cubits.²⁷⁷ The height of the partition or curtain surrounding the courtyard was 5 cubits. The Tabernacle itself measured 30x10 cubits. It was made of three 10 cubits high walls of gold plated acacia wooden boards / panels. The Tabernacle was covered with strips of linen cloth, embroidered with cherubim and covered with outer layers of goats' skins, rams' skins and ערת החשים probably bullocks' hides / fine leather.

The composition of the Tabernacle and the surrounding court was remarkable. The court was divided into two halves, creating two equal squares. At the centre of the eastern part was the great altar (מזבח); at the centre of the western part was the Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant (ארון ברית־יהוה). The sacred space thus created, was divided into three zones of graded sanctity: the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place and the courtyard.

A ratio of 2:1 between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was used. The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube of 10 cubits; the Holy Place measured 20x10 cubits. A veil of finely woven blue, purple and scarlet linen, embroidered with cherubim, divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.

Gradations in sanctity were reflected in restrictions on accessing and the value of the materials used for construction. Only the priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place and only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on Yom Kippur. The use of metals copper-silver-gold in the right order are carefully graded in terms of their proximity to the Holy of Holies.

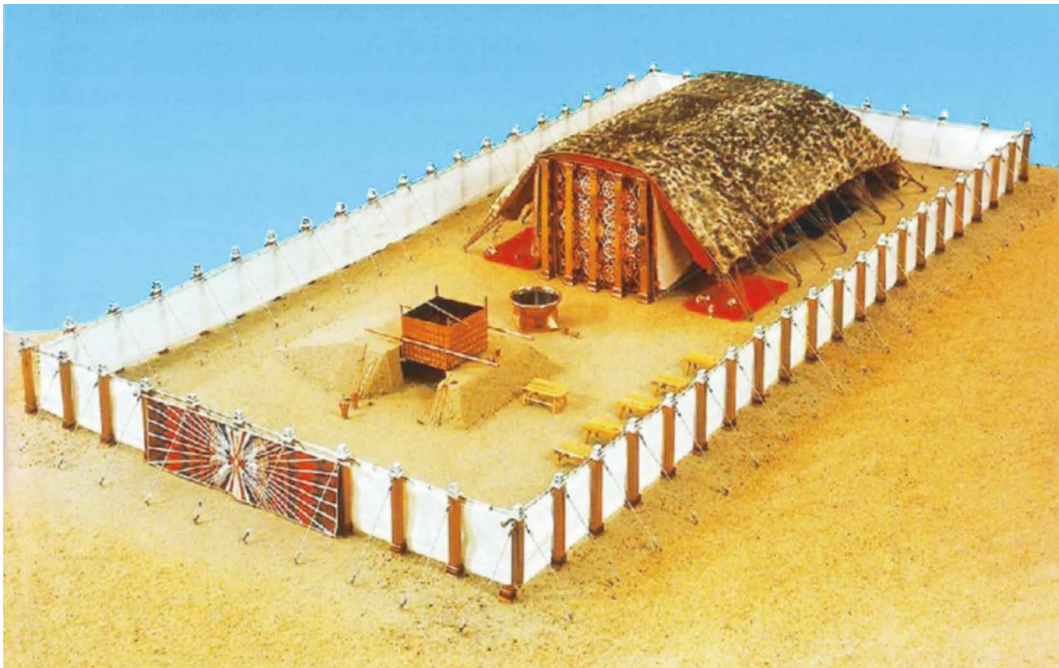


fig. 5.2a Model of the Tabernacle and its court.

(Taken with permission from Huis van goud, www.uhwdw.nl / P.F. Kiene / Beröa Verlag)

²⁷⁷ The cubit is conceived of as the current cubit of 45 cm. In 2 Chron. 3:3 we read that the cubit of the old standard was used. The cubit in Ezekiel's messianic temple is the royal cubit of 1 cubit and a handbreadth; 52.5 cm. See Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings*, 233.

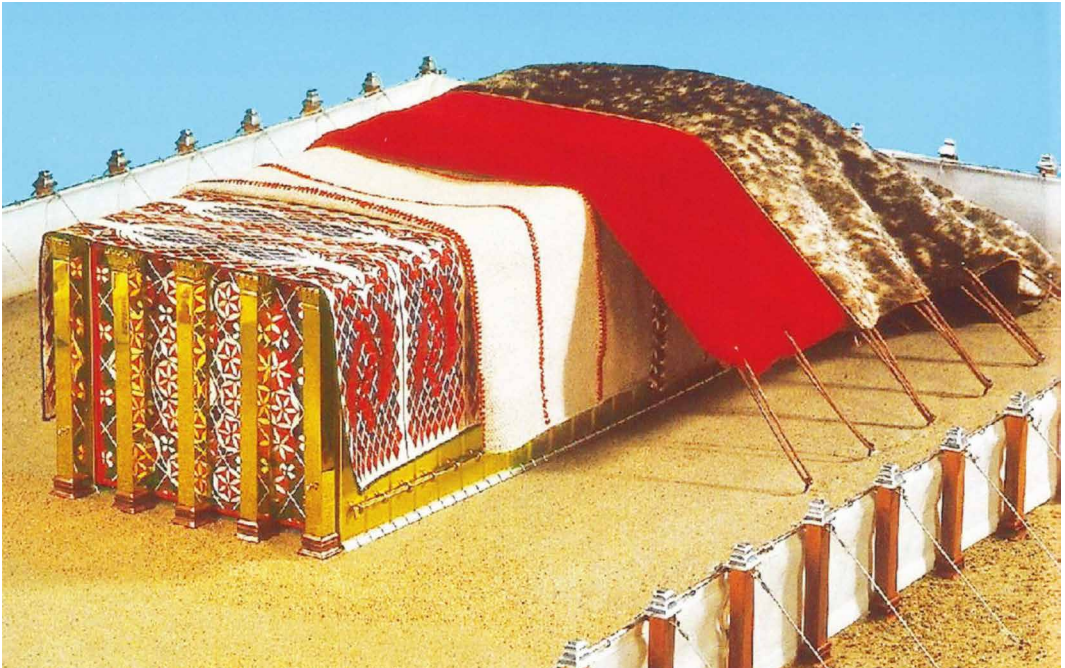


fig. 5.2b Model of the Tabernacle, the four coverings and the curtains on the front side
(Taken with permission from Huis van goud, www.uhwdw.nl / P.F. Kiene / Berōa Verlag)

5.2.3. Tabernacle furnishings

The courtyard of the Tabernacle contained two furnishings: the altar of burnt offering (מזבחה) in front of the tent and the basin or laver for the washings (כיור נחשת). The dimensions of this copper plated altar were 5x5 cubits wide and 3 cubits high.

The Holy Place was the outer room of the Tabernacle, containing three furnishings: the Incense Altar (מזבחה מקטר קטרת), the Table of the Showbread (שולחן אשר עליו לחם) and the *Candelabrum* or *Menorah* (מנורה זהב טהור).

- The *Menorah* was made of pure gold. Like the Ark of the Covenant, the Incense Altar and the Table of the Showbreads were made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold.
- The dimensions of the Incense Altar were a cubit long and wide and two cubits high (see Exod. 25:23-24).
- The dimensions of the Table of the Showbreads were two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high (see Exod 30:1-3).

The size of all furnishings of the Tabernacle were limited for it must be portable. Therefore the furnishings were provided with carrying poles.

Inside the Holy of Holies was Israel's most sacred relic, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord (ארון ברית-יהודה), being a chest of acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold. Its dimensions were two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit and a half high (see Exod. 25:10-11). The golden lid of the Ark was called the "Mercy Seat" or "atonement cover" (כפרת) and represented the throne of God. It was topped by two cherubs of gold.

The Ark contained sacred relics of the exodus: the tablets of the law, a jar with manna and Aaron's rod. Although Israel was forbidden to make an image of God, the ark represented the throne of YHWH and hence the presence of YHWH. The continuing presence of YHWH was manifested by the pillar of fire and the cloud hovering over the Tabernacle.

5.3. Israelite precursors of the temple in Jerusalem

5.3.1. Tent or temple

After the desert wanderings and the conquest of the land Canaan the sanctuary of the Israelites was placed in Shiloh (see Josh 18:1 and 1 Sam1:3). In Josh 18:1 this sanctuary is named “tent of meeting” (אהל מועד) and in 1 Sam 1:9 “temple” (היכל). One may wonder whether after the settlement of the Israelites the Ark of the Covenant was placed in a tent or a temple building

There are two convincing indications that argue for the assumption of a real building:

- In biblical usage a temple implies a built structure with roof and walls, designated rooms, a more formal structure. Unfortunately, little is known about the origins, significance and furnishings of the sanctuary in Shiloh. There must have been quite a substantial sanctuary at Shiloh, actually functioning as what we would understand to be a temple.²⁷⁸

- The use of the words “door” and “doorpost”. “Eli was sitting beside the doorpost (מזוזה) of the temple”. The texts of 1 Sam 1:9 and 1 Sam 3:15 suggest that the sanctuary had doors, דלתות (1 Sam 3:15) and מזוזות (1 Sam 1:9). The use of the words “door” and “doorpost” are an indication that the sanctuary at Shiloh must have been a real building. דלתות and מזוזות are terms which are never used for the entrance of a tent. The entrance to a tent is usually called פתחאהל.

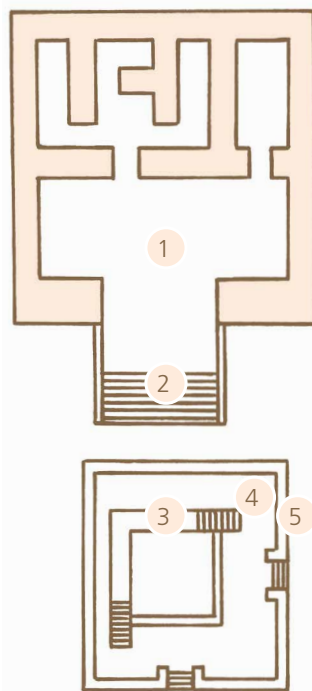
5.3.2. Shrines

The Hebrew Bible describes at least eleven buildings that can be identified as shrines dedicated to the worship of YHWH, including Shiloh, Dan, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh, Hebron, Bethlehem, Nob, Ephraim, Ophrah, and Gibeah. The most prominent of them was Shiloh where the Ark was housed (1 Sam 1:9).

Shrines at Dan and Bethel also existed from very early times. Even a statue was placed there. In Judg 18:17 there is talk about the carved image, the *ephod*, *teraphim* and the cast idol. Later these sites were appropriated by king Jeroboam who set up golden calves there.

- 1 Bamah / high place (with golden calf?)
- 2 Eight meter wide staircase
- 3 Large stone horned altar on an altar platform
- 4 Two stairs
- 5 Altar enclosure

fig. 5.3 Sacred precinct at Dan, eight century BCE.
(Redrawn by author after C.H.J. de Geus, *Towns in Israel and the Southern Levant*).



The Israelites were prohibited to worship other gods, nevertheless they served many foreign gods along with YHWH. Even a connection between YHWH and Asherah was supposed.

During excavations in the ruins of Kuntillet Ajrud in the eastern part of the Sinai peninsula, potsherds with the following text have been found: “I have blessed you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah”.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 3.

²⁷⁹ Spronk, “Beelden van God in het oude Israël”, 10-15.



fig. 5.4 Drawing from Kuntilet Arjud. (Taken from "Beelden van God in het oude Israël' in: *Over God*). The standing figures depict YHWH and his Asherah. They show the same characteristics as the god Bes and its female counterpart Beset, known from Egyptian iconography. In the background a woman playing the harp.

Archaeologists have also excavated at least four Israelite temples of this period in Megiddo, Arad, Lachish and Beersheba. These are not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The most significant archaeological remains are at Arad; they date from the 10th century. This temple was oriented toward the east and had been divided up in three zones. The first was a large courtyard with a sacrificial altar built of unhewn stones with the same measurements (5x5x3 cubits or 2.3x2.3x1.4m) as the Tabernacle altar (Exod 27:1).

In general the three rooms in the Arad temple are similar to those of the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple, although the shapes and configuration of the rooms are different.²⁸⁰ This temple is significant because it seems to evince the existence of a Yahwistic Israelite sanctuary, the first uncovered in archaeological excavations.²⁸¹ (See fig. 4.28).

5.4. Solomon's temple

5.4.1. Reliability of the sources.

Prior to the investigation of Solomon's temple some questions relating to the historical reliability of the sources need to be discussed. The historical reliability of the biblical texts in the books 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles regarding the temple building activities of Solomon is a much debated issue. Even the existence of Solomon as a historical person is questioned by some scholars. Some observers characterise him as the emperor with no clothes. Conclusive archaeological evidence to correlate the biblical narrative has been lacking until now. Excavations in Jerusalem supposedly yielded next to nothing that can be associated with Solomon's major buildings. At other sites, however, archaeologists have uncovered remains of structures which they assign to Solomon's reign. The gateways and walls at Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo are well known.

Recently archaeologists have found a limited amount of artefacts of the First Temple Period, but none of those finds were uncovered on the Temple Mount itself. Rather they were recovered from the Ophel excavations to the south of the mountain and from the Temple Mount Sifting Project. These are the first artefacts from the First Temple period found *in situ*. Also, a section of an ancient city wall, including a gatehouse from the tenth-century BCE Jerusalem, possibly built by King Solomon has been revealed. This is the first time that a structure has been found that may correlate with written descriptions of Solomon's building activities in Jerusalem.

Balancing the testimony of the Bible, ancient texts, and archaeology is a delicate task, but from the field of archaeology more and more will be brought to light. It should be clear that in this study MT is considered as being the starting point for investigating all Israelite sanctuaries. Discussing the historical reliability of the biblical sources is not a part of this research.

²⁸⁰ Hamblin, Seely, *Solomon's Temple*, 33-34.

²⁸¹ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 54 (cf. also *The Temple of Jerusalem Aharoni*, "Arad", 86-89).

5.4.2. Solomon's temple, a permanent earthly dwelling place for YHWH

The construction of Solomon's temple started in the fourth year of his reign, around 1000 BCE and completed in the eleventh year. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Except for some small artefacts, no archaeological remains of the first temple building have been found. Its structure, however, can be visualised from the descriptions of Old Testament sources.

Like the Tabernacle, Solomon's temple was meant to be a dwelling place for YHWH. The books of Kings and Chronicles report that the plan of the proposed temple was "revealed" to Solomon's father David. He passed on to Solomon a detailed specification of all that had to be done. The Chronicler records: "All this David said: I have in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me, and He gave me understanding in all the details of the plan" (1 Chron 28:19). In the same way Moses had to make the Tabernacle in accordance with the plan he had been shown on the mountain (Exod 25:40). These two pieces of information are very important for understanding the plan of the temple.²⁸²

The Tabernacle and Solomon's temple were consciously related in every detail. Both had been revealed by YHWH and both were built according to a heavenly model. It was not only the structure that corresponded; one of the keys to any understanding of the temple cult is the realisation that the rituals and the personnel were also thought to be the visual manifestation of the heavenly reality.

5.4.3. Solomon's temple part of the common ancient Near Eastern temple building culture

It is not easy to get a clear image of Solomon's temple, for there are no physical remains of the structure left. We greatly depend on written biblical records. Assistance may be drawn from descriptions and excavations of ancient temples discovered in the land of Israel and surrounding areas.

There are many texts from the ancient Near East describing temples and palaces that enhance the visual evidence and add a crucial interpretive dimension, offering important information about how the physical structures were outlined. Also archaeological evidence is useful for illustrating and concretising reconstructions based on the biblical records, and it can be suggestive for understanding obscure passages, filling gaps in the reconstruction, and creating links between the written sources and ancient reality.²⁸³ From Egypt to Mesopotamia there were certain hieratic building methodologies, patterns, types and traditions within a certain religious framework.²⁸⁴

Evidently the ground plan of the temple building followed the common architectural pattern of the time in the region. The temple of Solomon was a tripartite structure, consisting of three distinct architectural units; the **אולם**, "vestibule" the **היכל** "main room" and the **רביע** "innermost room".²⁸⁵ The temple was straight axis, which means that the worshipper entering the front door would be able to proceed in a straight line to the Holy of Holies in the back of the sanctuary. Common examples of this style of temple building are the Egyptian long room temples with direct access to the innermost room, which housed a statue of the deity. The ancient Near Eastern models that showed most similarity to the style of Solomon's temple are those from Phoenicia, Syria and Canaan.

According to the custom of his age, Solomon constructed the temple using the Phoenician expertise of his father David's materials supplier, Hiram, king of Tyre. The biblical text records that besides materials, Hiram sent his Phoenician architects and craftsman to advise their Israelite counterparts on building the temple to contemporary specifications.

Among the striking parallels uncovered by the archaeologist's spade are two small temples of the Canaanite city of Hazor in north eastern Israel from the thirteenth century BCE; and the small Syro-Hittite temples or royal chapels at Tel Tayinat and Ein Dara in northern Syria, dating from the eighth or ninth

²⁸² Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 16-17.

²⁸³ Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House", 66.

²⁸⁴ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 47.

²⁸⁵ Lundquist, *ibid.*, 17.

century BCE. In each of these cases there was a vestibule, a main room and an innermost room. There are affinities in design also with the Late Bronze period Canaanite temples excavated at Lachish and Beit Shean in Israel, both several centuries older than Solomon's temple (see paragraphs 4.6.2.2. and 4.6.3. above).

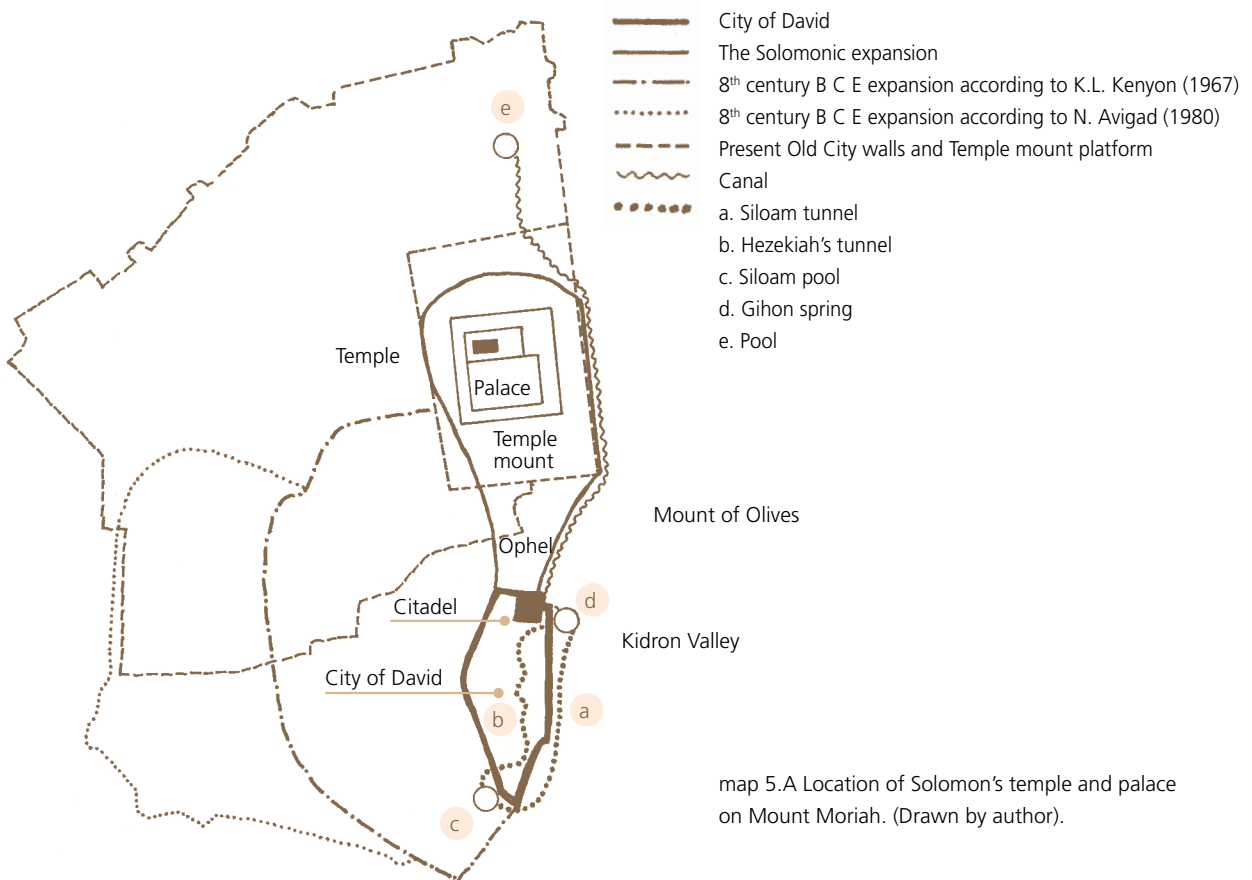
Solomon's temple was not a copy of any of these, but it embodied features derived from all ancient Near Eastern temples. Solomon's temple was located on the summit of a hill, thus expressing the Babylonian idea of the divine abode; it was surrounded by courts like the Phoenician temples, while its tripartite arrangement and east to west orientation brings to mind Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian temples.

The two pillars Boaz and Jachin had their parallel in the Phoenician temple of Tyre, but also in Egyptian obelisks. The side rooms which surrounded Solomon's temple were paralleled in Babylonian and Egyptian temples by similar rooms. The "molten sea" finds its parallel in Babylonian temples in a great basin called the apsu "deep". As the ziggurat typified a mountain, so the apsu typified the sea.

Solomon's temple had no hypostyle halls like Egyptian temples; but this feature was introduced into Solomon's palace. Like many temples in the ancient Near East of that time, the temple was part of the royal domain. The temple-palace symbiosis paralleled Syro-Palestinian examples as Ain Dara, Tel Ta'yinat and Arad. Although it had features in common with ancient Near Eastern temple culture, it combined those features in a new and independent way.

5.4.4. Solomon's temple and palace

In order to build the temple, the palace and additional national institutions king Solomon extended the City of David northward (the Ophel) incorporating both Mount Zion and Mount Moriah.



map 5.A Location of Solomon's temple and palace on Mount Moriah. (Drawn by author).

The temple was on top of Mount Moriah (see 2 Chron 3:1), above the royal palace as indicated by several verses which speak of ascending from the king's house to the temple (1 Kgs 12:11; 22:4) or going down from the temple to the king's house (1 Kgs 11:19).

The temple proper was situated on an east to west axis with the entrance on the eastside. Its shape was rectangular: 60 cubits long; 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high (i.e. a good 30m long; 10m wide and 15m high). Like the Tabernacle, the temple had a tripartite arrangement.

Although the tripartite floorplan and the close relationship between temple and palace of Solomon's temple and Syrian-Hittite antae temples have a lot of features in common, it is questionable whether there were also similarities between the Syrian-Hittite types of palace and Solomon's palace.

A well known Syrian and Hittite type of palace is the so called *bit hilani*. The *bit hilani* is a palace with two long narrow rooms, both with their main axis parallel to the façade. The first room is a portico with one to three columns (see fig. 5.5a and 5.5.b).

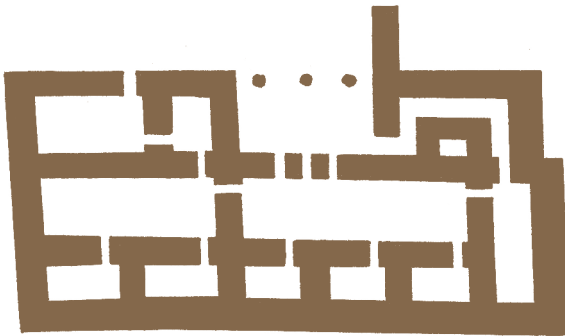


fig. 5.5a Bit Hilani palace at Ta'yinat. (Redrawn by author after Osborn, *Communicating Power in the Bit Hilani Palace*).



fig. 5.5b Bit Hilani palace at Cincirli. (Redrawn by author after Ussishkin, *Solomon's Temple*, 1).

Two often depicted diagrams of the temple and palace on Mount Moriah paint an image of a cluster of separated buildings which do not have the particular characteristics of the *bit hilani* palace. The temple, palace and governmental buildings do not constitute a single coherent whole in one building complex like *bit hilani* palaces. Also the typical combination of two successive long rooms are lacking in the reconstructions of fig. 5.6a and 5.6.b.

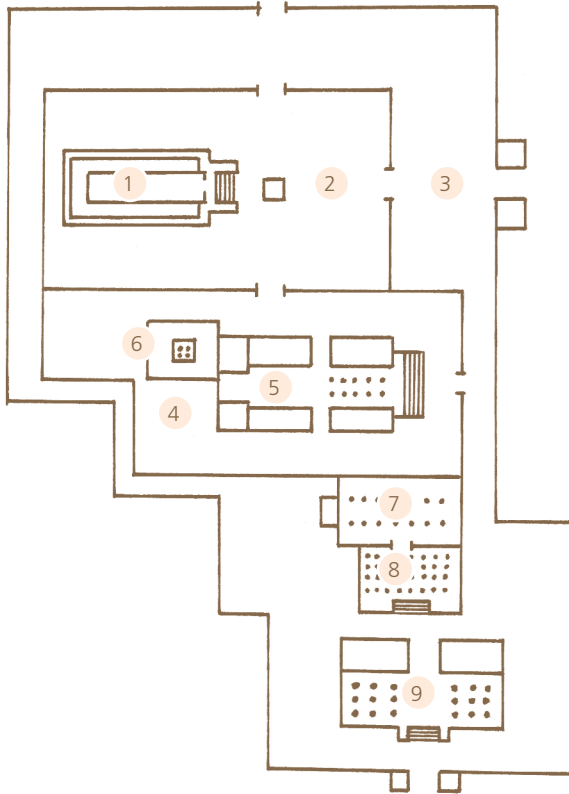


fig. 5.6a Temple and royal palace domain. (Redrawn by author after Stade in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*).

- 1 Temple
- 2 Temple court
- 3 Great court
- 4 Middle court
- 5 Solomon's palace
- 6 House of pharao's daughter
- 7 Throne hall
- 8 Porch of pillars
- 9 House of the forest of Lebanon

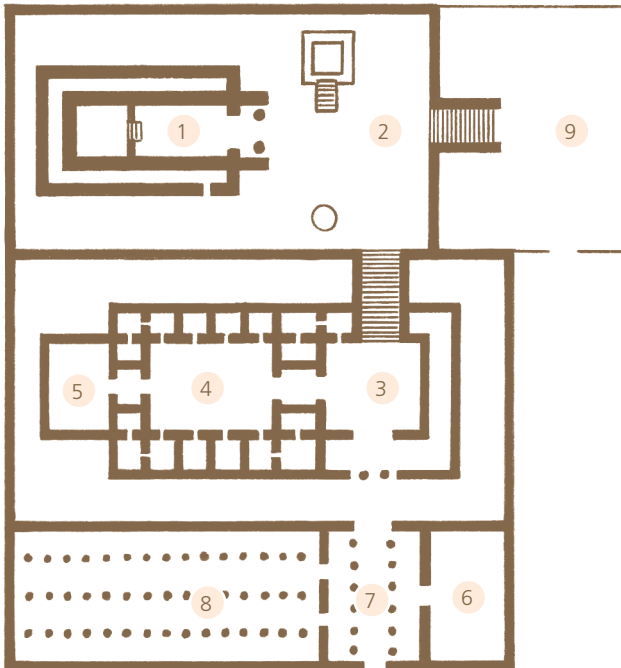


fig. 5.6b Temple and royal palace domain. (Redrawn by author after Ritmeyer, *Archaeological Design*).

- 1 Temple
- 2 Temple court
- 3 Court of Solomon's place
- 4 Solomon's palace
- 5 House of pharao's daughter
- 6 Hall of the throne
- 7 Hall of pillars
- 8 House of the forest of Lebanon
- 9 Enlarged temple court by Jehoshaphat

The royal buildings are mentioned in 1 Kgs 7:1-12. These buildings were: the House of the Forest of the Lebanon, the Hall of Pillars, the Hall of the Throne, Solomon's own house and a house for Pharaoh's daughter. The temple, the palace and governmental complex were spread across three courts, separated by walls.

The entire temple-palace complex was surrounded by a greater court with a perimeter wall. 1 Kgs 6:36 reports that Solomon "built the inner courtyard", while 1 Kgs 7:8, 9 and 12 mention the "other courtyard" and the "great courtyard". These descriptions imply that the temple was originally surrounded by a single courtyard. A second larger courtyard encompassed all Solomon's buildings, taking in the temple and its court as well as the royal buildings.²⁸⁶ The great courtyard, like the inner courtyard of the temple, was surrounded by a wall of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams.

5.4.5. Description of Solomon's temple in two biblical accounts

In the Hebrew Bible two detailed descriptions of Solomon's temple can be found, one in 1 Kgs 6-7 and the other in 2 Chron 3-4. A comparison of both accounts shows a number of differences between the texts. During the First Temple period, the temple had undergone many changes and repairs. This could also be the reason for the two different descriptions. In the following schedule the differences between the two temple buildings and its appurtenances in the descriptions of 1 Kgs 6-7 and 2 Chron 3-4 are tabulated. The measurements rendered in the schedule are given in cubits.²⁸⁷

Differences in Temple descriptions	1 Kgs 6-7 2	Chron. 3-4
internal dimensions temple building	6:2. L x W x H = 60x20x30	3:3. L x W = 60x20
porch (<i>ulam</i>)	6:3. L x W = 10x20	3:4. 20 wide, 120 high
chambers	6:5,6. 3 side storeys high	3:9. upper chambers
table of the bread of the Presence	7:48. 1 table	4:8. 10 tables
partition between <i>heichal</i> and <i>debir</i>	6:31. doors of olive wood	3:14. veil
<i>debir</i>	6:20. 20x20x20	3:8. 20x20
2 pillars of bronze	7:15. 18 cubits high circumference 12 cubits	3:15. 35 cubits high
capitals	7:16. "lower" capitals 5 cubits high 7:17. nets 7:19. "upper" capitals 4 cubits high	3:15. capitals 5 cubits high with chains
laver	7:23. 10 diameter 5 cubits high 30 circumference 7:26. 2,000 baths decoration of lilies	4:2. 10 diameter 5 cubits high 30 circumference 4:5. 3,000 baths decoration of oxen

²⁸⁶ Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House", 92.

²⁸⁷ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 306.

Reconstructing the original shape of the temple, it should be primarily based on the description found in the books of Kings. The picture portrayed by Chronicles describes a complete building, but it differs in certain details from the one depicted in 1 Kings. The Chronicler's account of the building of the temple in 1 Kings, should be traced not only to the knowledge of the parallel account, but also to the elimination of many details, which were likely to be irrelevant to the community of the second temple period.

Many of the architectural details of Solomon's temple would have been insignificant for the much more modest structure of the Chronicler's day. For the Chronicler, continuity with the past seemed less a matter of architecture than of location. The additions he made to his narrative show this concern with the legitimate site of the sanctuary (see 2 Chron 3:1).²⁸⁸ The statements regarding the place where the temple was built (Mount Moriah) are found only here. The Chronicler considered the establishment of Solomon's temple as an action in line of the covenant with Abraham. That line goes from Abraham (Gen. 22) to David (1 Chron 21) to the temple.²⁸⁹ After the revelation of God at the threshing floor, David began at once preparations to build the temple on that location (1 Chron 22:1-5).

Hurowitz argues that Chronicles' description of the temple has most value as a textual witness, because the account in 1 Kings would be corrupt in some places and occasionally the text can be restored with the help of Chronicles.²⁹⁰ The most important addition in Chronicles in contrast to Kings is the description of the bronze altar (2 Chron 4:1). In my opinion, one may wonder why the text of 1 Kings should be corrupted, for it is a quite different description with a quite different purpose than the Chronicler had in mind. I think the Chronicler had the intention to write a kind of rite de passage, giving a historical retrospective view with other accents, whereas the description of 1 Kings offers the model for the actual realisation of a building plan.

Mulder leaves room for a literal interpretation of the text. In his view, however, it does not exclude the possibility of revisions in 1 Kings. He argues that the core of the temple account in 1 Kgs 6 notes something other than a verbal blueprint of the building of the temple. According to him, it remains a question whether 1 Kgs 6 may be regarded as the original building plan and the execution of that plan at the time of Solomon himself, or whether we are dealing with a reflection from the later history of the construction of the temple. To Mulder it is clear that the entire chapter in its current form was composed *during*, if not after the exile.²⁹¹

In the context of the present study it is not a relevant question whether the temple described in 1 Kings is only a textual witness or a reflection from later history. Not the form of the text transmitted, but its content, viz. the image of the temple described is primary. Like the Tabernacle account in the book Exodus, a detailed three-dimensional plan has been given.

5.4.6. The temple proper

Notwithstanding the biblical descriptions in the books of Kings and Chronicles, it is not easy to visualise the temple of Solomon. Over the years researches have produced many drawings and models, each based on the personal architectural preferences and fancies that have been incorporated in their reconstructions.²⁹²

Depending on the biblical texts and the results of scholarly research, I also form a picture of Solomon's temple. In general it is in line with the view of Stade and Wright in their interpretation of the biblical data imaging Solomon's temple.

²⁸⁸ Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 31. 350-369.

²⁸⁹ Roubos, *II Kronieken*, 32.

²⁹⁰ Hurowitz, 2007, "YHWH's Exalted House", 66-67.

²⁹¹ Mulder, *1 Kings*, 228.

²⁹² For an overview of these reconstructions see Th. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 46-60.

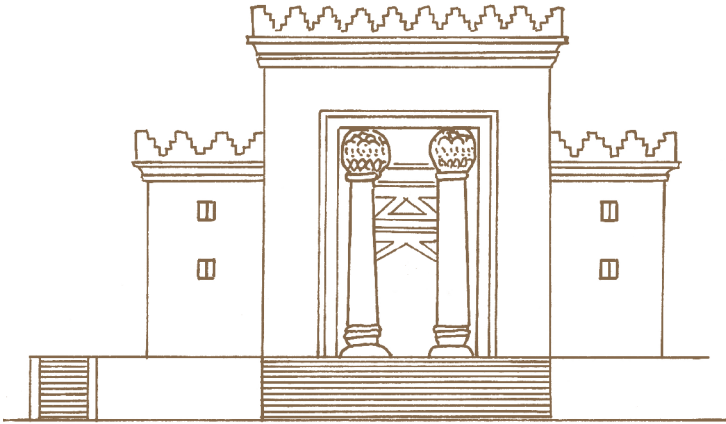


fig. 5.7a Solomon's temple, reconstructed by B. Stade (1887). (Redrawn by Author).

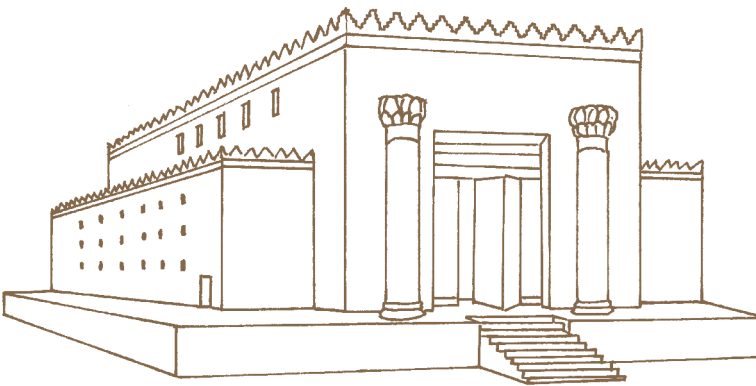


fig. 5.7b Solomon's temple, reconstructed by G.E Wright / W.F. Albright (1955). (Redrawn by author).

The description of the temple in 1 Kgs 6 first gives the overall measurements of the main structure and the elements of which it was composed. The temple of Solomon was a larger version of the Tabernacle and made in stone. Nevertheless, this temple was a modest building of limited dimensions like similar temple buildings in the region.

In the biblical accounts of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles no indications are found that the temple proper was built on a raised platform. Solomon's temple, however, was built on the model of Phoenician / Syrian temples like the temples of Ta'yinat and Ain Dara, which were raised above the ground level and accessed by a flight of steps. Probably the floor level of Solomon's temple was also raised above the level of its surrounding court. In the description of Ezekiel's temple it will be built on a one rod high platform.

We may assume that Ezekiel remembered Solomon's temple in giving a corresponding image. In accordance with Ezekiel's temple, the temple platform of Solomon's temple must also be accessible by a flight of ten steps leading up between the marked twin bronze pillars named Boaz and Jachin. They were eighteen cubits high and had bronze capitals a further five cubits high; together over ten metres high. According to the text of 2 Chron 3:15 the pillars were thirty-five cubits high with a capital of five cubits on top, together over eighteen metres high. They were decorated with pomegranates and lily work, nets of chequer work and wreaths of chain work (1 Kgs 7:15-22). Their purpose is obscure and remains a much discussed item.

The complete structure of the temple was made of dressed stones ("blocks dressed at the quarry" 1 Kgs 6:7) panelled inside with beams and planks of cedar, and overlaid with gold. The entry to the temple was on its eastern side, and the building's axis ran east to west. The structure was a rectangular edifice. Including

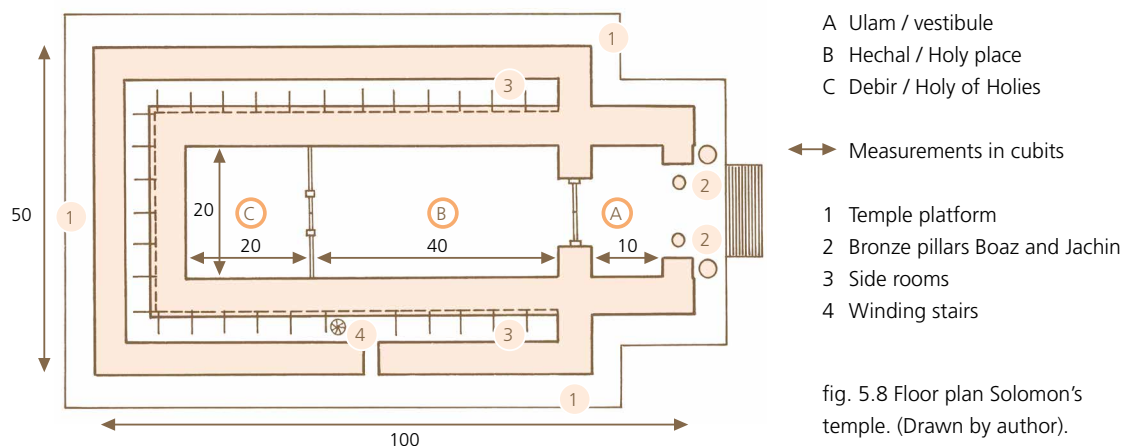
the front hall, the three storey high small storage rooms round the two sides and at the back, together with the interior and exterior walls, the outside dimensions of the building can be estimated at 100 cubits long and 50 cubits wide; the same dimensions as the courtyard of the Tabernacle.

In 1 Kgs 6:2 the interior dimensions of the main temple without the front hall are mentioned: 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. In LXX the temple was 25 cubits high.²⁹³ The external dimensions of the temple including its front hall and annexes are not given in 1 Kgs 6, but have been derived from the dimensions of Ezekiel's temple.

Since detailed measurements of the thickness of the walls are missing we may consider that an accurate architectural presentation of the structure was not the intention of the text. The text seems to indicate a concern solely for the internal space of the temple. Walls are only to be considered as boundaries that delineate internal space.

In 1 Kgs 6 ideological proportions seem to be indicated and not the actual measurements.²⁹⁴ Successively the temple consisted of: the אולם (porch or vestibule), which was 10 cubits deep; subsequently the היכל (main room or Holy Place) which was forty cubits long and finally the רביע (room at the back or Holy of Holies) which was 20 cubits long.

The interior width of all three parts of the edifice was 20 cubits. In front of the actual temple space there was a front hall which was attached to the main building and which, compared to the older temples found in Palestine like the one in Arad, formed a new element.²⁹⁵



5.4.7. The entrance and vestibule

The entrance of the temple has sometimes been compared with *bit hilani* palaces.²⁹⁶ The traditional *bit hilani*, however, had the throne room doorway offset from the main axis, and had an open front, whereas the vestibule of Solomon's temple had its doorway arranged on a straight axis and the porch was probably partially enclosed. Without doubt the design and function of the porch was basically different.²⁹⁷

The two bronze pillars Boaz and Jachin at the entrance of Solomon's temple are sometimes considered to be similar to the *bit hilani* entrance columns. However, the *bit hilani* columns were essentially structural

²⁹³ The exact measurements are uncertain for the length of the cubit deviated from time to time. Generally one puts the length of the cubit at 0.45 m. using the cubit of the old standard according to 2 Chron. 3:3. See also Mulder, *1 Kings*, 233.

²⁹⁴ McCormick, *Palace and Temple*, 113.

²⁹⁵ Mulder, *1 Kings*, 234.

²⁹⁶ A type of palace known in North Syria with an entrance loggia or portico with columns, approached by a broad flight of steps (see also par. 5.4.4. fig. 55.a and 5.5.b).

²⁹⁷ Davey, "Temples of the Levant and the Buildings of Solomon", 111.

in purpose while Boaz and Jachin appear to have been of religious significance.²⁹⁸ Each of these was 18 cubits in height and was surmounted by a capital of carved lilies, 5 cubits high.

The vestibule, in front of the temple was a broad room structure with internal dimensions of 10 cubits deep and 20 cubits wide, like the width of the temple proper. The height of the אֵיילִם is not specified in 1 Kgs 6:2. Only the height of the entire temple building (30 cubits) has been given. The difference between the text of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles relating to the height of the vestibule puzzles the critical reader. Scholars have tried to solve this problem, but present quite different views.

Hurowitz states that the version of 2 Chron 3:4, according to which it was 120 cubits high, is possibly a textual error. According to him, this height seems to be unrealistic.²⁹⁹

Jarick, however, accepts the reading of 120 cubits for the height of the structure, rather than that it must be brought down to a lower figure of 30 cubits in accordance with 1 Kgs 6:2. The Chronicler would just imagine a temple that reaches unambiguously heavenwards.

Jarick argues that the case in point is how they imagined the temple to be, and it would seem that the lower dimensions conceived by the traditions represented in the book of Kings were simply not high enough for their grander vision of the temple.³⁰⁰ That means that the temple in Chronicles has to be regarded as a conceptualisation of a heavenward reaching temple, an imaginary temple. In this respect one can say that the Chronicler manipulated the historical data in favour of their theological opinion.

Since the text of Chronicles was construed with that intention, there is no reason to harmonise the text or to regard it as an error. The height of the vestibule of the temple according to the Chronicler's resurfaces in Josephus description. However, a porch or vestibule with a height of 120 cubits seems to be unrealistic. The dimensions of Solomon's temple according to 1 Kgs 6 corresponded with pagan temples from that time. A 120 cubits high porch would have resembled the lighthouse of Alexandria. The famous pylon (entrance gate) of the Egyptian temple of Edfu has a height of no more than 36 metres (about 72 cubits). From an architectural point of view a height of 120 cubits does not correspond with its other dimensions. A porch of such a height is an architectural monstrosity. It would be more fitting if the porch were a little higher than the main building. If we decide in favour of a real first temple in Jerusalem, then we would doubtlessly prefer the picture in the book of Kings and not engage ourselves in other options of a different design.

With regard to the height of the temple porch, there is not only a difference in the texts of the books Kings and Chronicles but also in the texts of MT and LXX. On the basis of MT some hold the view that the walls of the vestibule were 30 cubits high, matching the vertical dimension of the rest of the building, while others set them at 25 cubits, following LXX.

Busink depicts the roof of the vestibule lower than that of the main building.³⁰¹ Wright, rather, assumes the same height for both the vestibule and the main building.³⁰²

In fig. 5.9 the height of the portico and the pillars Boaz and Jachin at the front of Solomon's temple according to 2 Chron. 3 are shown. The height of the temple building is not mentioned by the Chronicler. It may be assumed that the height is equal to 1 Kgs 6, i.e. 30 cubits. The height of the portico would be 120 cubits. A portico four times higher, however, seems unlikely.

²⁹⁸ Davey, "Temples of the Levant and the Buildings of Solomon", 111.

²⁹⁹ Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House", 69-70.

³⁰⁰ Jarick, "The Temple of David in the book of Chronicles", 367.

³⁰¹ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, Bd.1, fig. 52.

³⁰² Wright, "Reconstruction of the Solomonic Temple", 41-44.

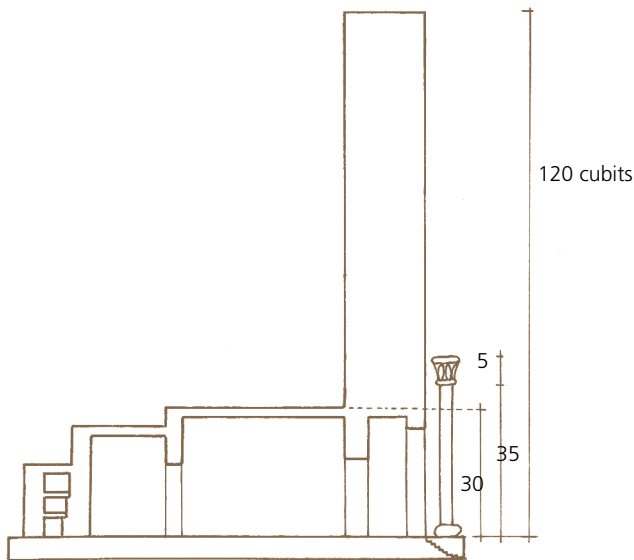


fig. 5.9 Temple of Solomon according to Chron 3:4 with a 120 cubits high portico. (Drawn by author).

5.4.8. Design of the House

The hechal (היכל) and debir (דביר) formed “the house” (הבית) which was 30 cubits high (1 Kgs 6:20), LXX reads that the house was only 25 cubits high. The debir however was a perfect cube, thus likewise 20 cubits high. What is happening here? The height of the debir was 10 cubits less than the hechal and so it has been suggested that as in Egyptian temples, the roof height of the temple progressively decreased toward the rear of the building.³⁰³

Some suppose that an attic was constructed at the far end of the house and others claim that the debir was raised up above the floor level of the hechal, like the temple of Hazor. Although there is no talk of steps before an elevated floor in biblical texts, the floor of the debir probably could have been elevated because of a bedrock platform that protruded within the debir, called the “Foundation Stone” (אבן השתייה) in Jewish tradition. Busink assumes that the debir was located on the same level, leaving the space above it unoccupied.³⁰⁴

The two rooms of the temple were divided by doors rather than by a veil as in the Tabernacle. Vincent suggests a temple in which the debir was a separate architectural unit isolated from the hechal by a thick masonry wall and “having its own roof”.³⁰⁵ A wooden partition is implied by 1 Kgs 6:16. Most scholars seem to decide in favour of a wooden partition. Busink suggest a so called Bretterwand.³⁰⁶

1 Kgs 6:4 reports that the temple was provided with הלוני שקפים אטמים (openings or stone facings with latticed window frames). The meaning of these words is obscure. Most scholars follow Rashi’s opinion, that these words describe windows that were wide on the outside and narrowed down inside. Mulder holds the view that these latticed windows were presumably made of wood and could not be opened.³⁰⁷

Comparing the Tabernacle to Solomon’s temple, the similarities between the plan and arrangement of both are striking. The dimensions, however, differ. The measurements of the Tabernacle were (20+10) x10 cubits (13,5x4,5m) and the measurements of the temple edifice were (40+20)x20 cubits (27x9m), thus the length and breadth of the temple ground plan was twice as large as that of the Tabernacle. We do not know for sure whether these measurements reproduce the exact dimensions or whether it is a schematic representation of Solomon’s temple.

³⁰³ Davey, “Temples of the Levant and the Buildings of Solomon”, 109.

²⁹⁴ Busink, *ibid.*, 197-209.

²⁹⁵ Vincent, *Jerusalem de l’Ancient Testament II-III*, 373-431.

²⁹⁶ Busink, *ibid.*, 208.

²⁹⁷ Mulder, *1 Kings*, 235.

In the following figures three selected views on the design of the temple edifice are given.

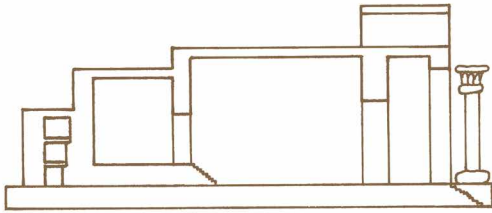


fig. 5.10a Temple of Solomon after C. Watzinger (1933) (Redrawn by author after Th. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, vol. 1).
An Egyptian like temple building with an elevated portico at the front side and a lowered roof at the rear end.

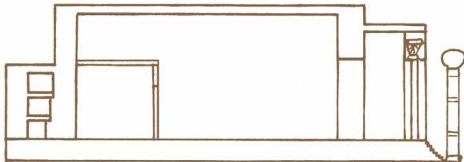
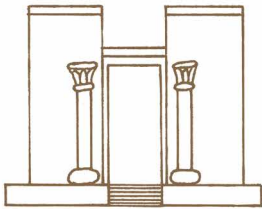
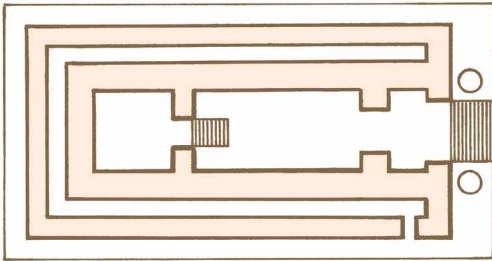
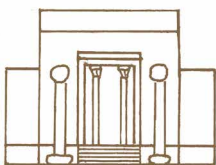
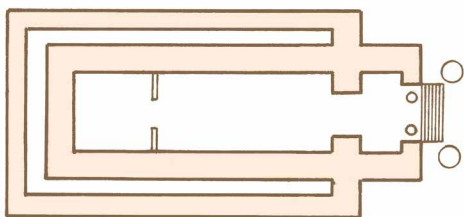


fig. 5.10b Temple of Solomon (Redrawn by author after Th. A. Busink (1967), *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, vol. 1).
Busink's reconstruction of the temple has a lowered portico. In his reconstruction the platform around it is lacking but instead the temple has been placed on a raised substructure.



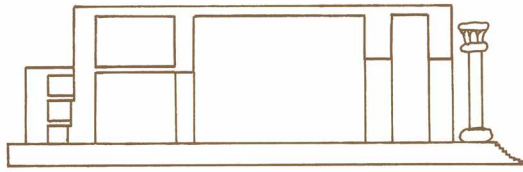
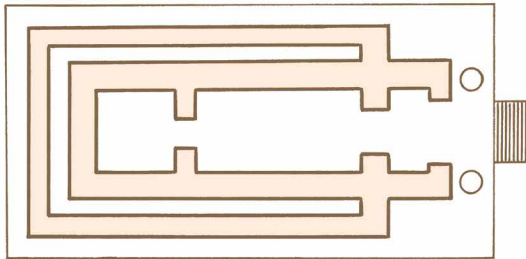


fig. 5.10c Temple of Solomon after G.E. Wright and W.F. Albright (1955). (Redrawn by author after Th. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, vol1). The roof of the whole temple (portico, Holy room and Holy of Holies) has the same height of 30 cubits. The temple has been situated on a platform.



5.4.9. Annexes or side rooms

The *hechal* and *debir* were surrounded by three storey high *עליות* “annexes” or “side rooms”. The structure encompassed the temple on three sides, but does not cross the vestibule. Watzinger extends them to the front of the temple.³⁰⁸ Presumably these side rooms functioned as auxiliary rooms, in 1 Chron 28:12 called storehouses for the temple treasures.

According to the text of 1 Kgs 6:6 the lowest storey was five cubits wide, the middle one six cubits and the third was seven cubits wide. Around the outside of the temple offsets or ledges on the wall were made in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the temple itself. Each level was five cubits high (1 Kgs 6:10). That means that their combined height was approximately 15 cubits.

According to Josephus, the surrounding extensions i.e. storage rooms of Solomon’s temple consisted of thirty small rooms which had connecting passages or doorways. (Ant. VIII, 65-66). While this specific arrangement is not discussed in the biblical account, it clearly represents some interpretation of 1 Kgs 6:6, 10.

Like the author of the Temple Scroll, Josephus’ information about the dimensions of the temple seems to be based on descriptions of the Tabernacle in Exodus, the temple in 1 Kings and the book of Ezekiel. Furthermore, he seems to have mixed in elements from the temple of his own day, some of which are supported by Tannaitic sources as well.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 53, 56.

³⁰⁹ Schiffman, *Descriptions of the Jerusalem Temple in Josephus and the Temple Scroll*, orion.msc.huji.ac.il/symposiums/4th/papers/Schiffman99.html, (12-2-2020).

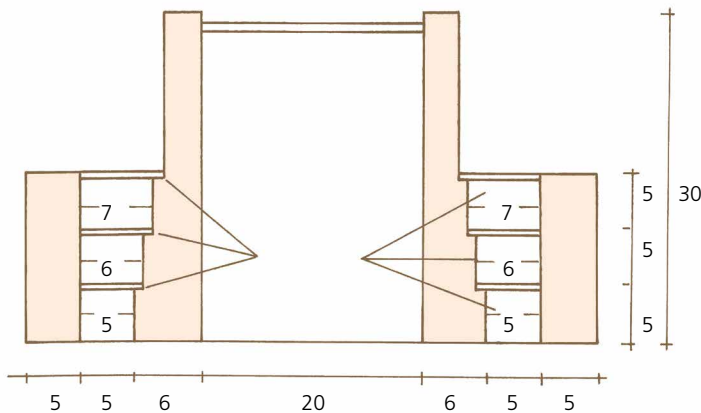


fig. 5.11 Cross section Solomon's temple and its annexes / side rooms according to 1 Kings 6:2-6. (Drawn by author).

5.4.10. Courtyards

Although the texts of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles provide no information relating to a temple platform, it may be assumed, as mentioned above, that Solomon's temple was constructed on a platform and approached by a flight of steps like other temples in the Phoenician and Syrian region. Ezekiel's temple will also be built on a platform.

The temple and adjacent storages rooms were surrounded by a courtyard of uncertain dimensions. The inner court (1 Kgs 6:36) was walled by three courses of dressed stones and one course of trimmed cedar beams and likewise the great courtyard, which enclosed both the temple and the palace, was walled (1 Kgs 7:12). These courtyards were altered and extended over the years.

In 2 Chron 20:4-5 there is talk of a new court. There we read: "Then Jehoshaphat (873-849 BCE) stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in front of the new courtyard". The question arises whether this was a new and enlarged court replacing Solomon's outer court that surrounded both the temple and the royal palace, or whether only the refurbishment and fortification of Solomon's existing court was meant.

Unfortunately, the biblical text gives no indication as to the layout or dimensions of this court. Apparently the court which Solomon has built had become too small to accommodate the multitudes and Jehoshaphat may have extended the existing courtyard or added a new one. This would be in harmony with Josephus' observations in *War* 5.185 where he wrote: "But in future ages the people added new banks". The hilltop of the Temple Mount was widened more and more by this process of levelling up.

At the time of Manasseh (687-642 BCE) there were two courts in the House of the Lord (2 Kgs 21:5). Jeremiah's scribe read the words of the prophet in the chamber of Gemariah which was "in the upper court" at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house (Jer 36:10). These courtyards represented areas of increasing sanctity as one approached the Holy Place. Since the temple was built upon a hill, the more sacred areas were raised above the less sacred, and the temple itself was right at the top. The form and dimensions of the temple courts are not mentioned in the biblical accounts.

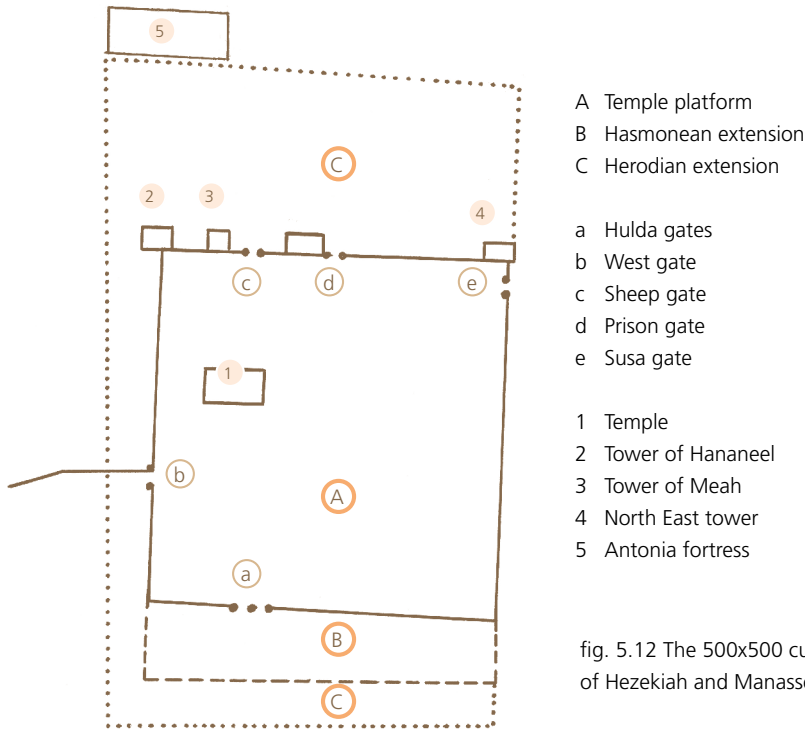
The descriptions of Flavius Josephus and tractate *Middoth* offer more points of reference, despite many discrepancies. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 8.95-96), Solomon built a three cubit high partition around the sacred temple precinct. Beyond this court he built another whose figure was that of a square having sides of a stadium (185m) in length (*Ant.* 15. 400).

From these two statements one could assume that in the time of Solomon, the temple Mount was already a square, but another record gives a different picture. *War* 5.185 says that only "a wall on the east side of the temple was built, the other parts of the house stood naked".

From these apparently contradictory statements may be inferred that Solomon built the actual temple (in a precinct surrounded by a partition), while the four-stadia-square Temple Mount was constructed by the later kings of Judah.

Additionally Josephus, describing Solomon's temple, used Herod's temple as a model. Then Josephus must have referred to the inner enclosure within the partition.³¹⁰

The dimensions of the "Mountain of the House", as the Temple Mount is referred to in the tractate *Middoth*, were 500 cubits in length and width. It may be supposed that this temple mount is the same as the square temple precinct of Solomon mentioned by Josephus. Despite the expansions of the Temple Mount during the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, this square platform probably retained its separate entity.³¹¹



- A Temple platform
- B Hasmonean extension
- C Herodian extension
- a Hulda gates
- b West gate
- c Sheep gate
- d Prison gate
- e Susa gate
- 1 Temple
- 2 Tower of Hananeel
- 3 Tower of Meah
- 4 North East tower
- 5 Antonia fortress

fig. 5.12 The 500x500 cubit square temple platform in the days of Hezekiah and Manasseh. (Drawn by author).

After the division of the monarchy upon the death of Solomon, Jeroboam made two sanctuaries, one in Bethel and one in Dan. Interestingly, the site of Dan also had a square temple platform with an altar in front of it. Chambers, in which ritual functions were performed, surrounded the courtyard of this high place.³¹²

The layout of this complex may have been based on that of Solomon's temple, which was also located inside a courtyard with an altar in front of it. Although this sanctuary was much smaller than Solomon's temple (it was built on a 36 royal cubit or 19m square platform, see fig. 5.3), it would have been logical for Jeroboam to have built a new temple reminiscent of Solomon's design. This is an important piece of information because the literary sources of Josephus in a certain respect are affirmed by excavations. Moreover, we get some clarity about the 500 cubit square shape of the platform of Solomon's temple mount.

The symbolism of the square, with its four sides of equal dimensions, would appear to indicate a standard of perfection: The Holy of Holies and the burnt offering altar were a perfect square, just like the temple courts in the biblical account of Ezekiel and the description of the Holy City in the book of Revelation.

³¹⁰ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 140-141.

³¹¹ Ritmeyer, *ibid.*, 140.

³¹² De Geus, *Towns in Ancient Israel and the Southern Levant*, 98-103.

5.4.11. Furnishings and interior of Solomon's temple

Entering the inner courtyard, in front of the temple there was the huge bronze burnt offering altar (מזבחה נחשת). Reading 2 Chron 4:1, this altar was twenty cubits square and ten cubits high. Probably the altar was constructed of unhewn stones (Exod 20:25) plated with bronze. According to Exod. 25:26 one came up to the altar by a ramp. Ascending the altar by a flight of steps was prohibited (Exod. 20:26).

Between the altar and the temple a great bronze bowl called the "Sea" (ים) was erected. It was 10 cubits (4,5m) in diameter, 5 cubits (2,5 m.) tall. It rested on the backs of twelve oxen, facing the cardinal directions (1 Kgs 7:23-26; 2 Chron 4:3-5). It had a capacity of 2,000 bath (44,000 litres). In addition, there were ten smaller bronze water basins or lavers, which stood five on each side of the courtyard to the north and south. They were mounted on wheels (1 Kgs 7:27-37). These lavers had a capacity of 40 bath (880 litres) each. Water for washing the burnt offerings came from the ten lavers, while the water from the "Sea" was used for priestly ablutions (2 Chron 4:6).

The primary building material of the temple was made up of finely dressed ashlars. The inside of the temple was covered with wood panelling, the walls and ceilings with cedar, the floors with cypress. According to 1 Kgs 6:22 Solomon overlaid the whole "house" with gold. The Chronicler's account differs in some details (see 2 Chron 3:5-7).

The doors of both the *hechal* and *debir* were made of olivewood and carved with *cherubim*, palm trees and flowers and overlaid with gold. According to the account in 2 Chron 3:14, a veil of blue, purple and crimson linen, with *cherubim* embroidered on it, was hung immediately before the Ark of the Covenant, separating the *debir* from the *hechal*.

The tree and flower motifs on the walls refer to the Garden of Eden. The *cherubim* corresponded to the ones on the curtains of the Tabernacle.

The *hechal* was furnished with a gold Altar of Incense, a gold Table for the Bread of Presence (or Table for the Showbread). The table was placed on the north side of the *hechal*. Moreover in the *hechal* there were ten candelabra or candlesticks on both sides of the *hechal* (1 Kgs 7:48-9) or according to the Chronicler there were a Golden Altar, ten Tables for the Showbread and ten candelabra.

In the Tabernacle there was only one lamp, the great seven branched *Menorah* (מנורה) of pure gold. There was a striking distinction between gold and bronze furnishings. The furnishings of the temple itself were made of gold, while the furnishings in the courtyard were made of bronze. In the Tabernacle silver was also used (for the sockets of the pillars part of the enclosure). In Solomon's temple there is only talk of silver utensils.

Within the *debir* was the Ark of the Covenant as described in Exod 25:10-22. This Ark was a portable chest of acacia wood. It measured 2,5x1,5x1,5 cubits and was overlaid with pure gold. On top of it was placed an atonement cover of pure gold. At the ends of the cover were two cherubim, made of one piece with the cover. The Ark contained "The Testimony" (העדות).

In 1 Kgs 6:23-28 there is a description of two enormous cherubim carved from olivewood and overlaid with gold. These cherubim were 10 cubits high (half the height of the *debir*) and had a wingspan of 10 cubits. They stood with their wingtips touching the walls and thus they spanned the width of the *debir* (20 cubits). Under these cherubim the Ark of the Covenant must have been placed.

5.4.12. Reconstruction, dismantling, refurbishment and enlargement of the temple complex

There were continuous building activities. Previously mentioned are the restoration activities and the apparent enlargement and fortification of the Temple Mount. During the reign of king Jotham (756-741 BCE) the Upper Gate of the temple precinct was built (2 Kgs 15:35; 2 Chron 27:3). Josephus records (*Ant.* 9.237) that Jotham "erected porticoes and gateways in the temple area, and set up those parts of the walls that had fallen down, and built very large and impregnable towers". Jotham's son Ahaz,

however, dismantled the temple by buying the service of Tiglath-Pileser III with the temple treasuries and furnishings.

During the reign of Hezekiah (725-696 BCE), a major cleansing and refurbishment of the Temple Mount and other building projects in Jerusalem took place. It is most likely that the artificial temple platform was enlarged under his reign until it reached the square shape of 500 cubits referred to by tractate *Middoth*.

5.5 The Elephantine temple

Special attention has to be paid to a Jewish temple in the Egyptian territory on the isle of Elephantine near modern Aswan (mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel as Syene, Ezek 29:10).

Aramaic papyri discovered on the isle of Elephantine, have revealed the existence of a military colony of Jews there that acted as mercenaries for the Egyptians and after them for the Persians by guarding their southern border. They established a township and built their own temple before the Persian ruler Cambyses conquered Egypt in 525 BCE.

The so called Elephantine Papyri dating from the 5th century BCE known as Elephantine Papyrus No. 30, or Elephantine Temple Papyrus, discovered between 1893-1910, include correspondence speaking of ongoing friction with Egyptians dealing with the Jewish temple. This temple was situated adjacent to an Egyptian temple which was dedicated to the ram headed deity Khnum. Egyptians abhorred the practice of sacrificing bulls and particularly rams who the Egyptians considered gods. In 410 BCE feelings were running high and the priests of Khnum orchestrated a riot destroying the Jewish temple.

In the so called *petition* to Boagas, a letter written in 407 BCE to Boagas, the Persian governor of Judea was appealed to for assistance in rebuilding the Jewish temple of Elephantine. This temple had been badly damaged by an anti Jewish rampage. A request for help was also sent to Johanan the High Priest in Jerusalem. In the course of the appeal to Boagas the Jewish inhabitants of Elephantine spoke of the antiquity of the damaged temple:

“Now our forefathers built this temple in the fortress of Elephantine back in the days of the kingdom of Egypt, and when Cambyses came to Egypt he found it built. They (the Persians) knocked down all the temples of the gods of Egypt, but no one did any damage to this temple”.³¹³

All these papyri give us an insight into conditions of Palestine in relation to the Jewish colony in Egypt in the generation or so immediately following the period of Nehemiah. The Elephantine Papyri also give significant, independent verification of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah confirming the existence of several key players. This proves that Elephantine was not a remote phenomenon of an isolated community. The inhabitants of Elephantine and their temple were in full contact with their original homeland.

The Elephantine temple was a simple architectural design analogous to the Tabernacle. The building had a room of two chambers surrounded by a courtyard paved with fine plaster. Its dimensions were much smaller than the Jerusalem temple of Solomon.

According to the excavators, the temple shrine was about 12 cubits wide by 24 cubits long and the courtyard 48 cubits wide by at least 80 cubits long. These dimensions are almost similar to the description of the Tabernacle. The documents report that the shrine had a roof of cedar wood and five stone-lined doorways with bronze hinges. Moreover, the Elephantine temple featured an altar on which sacrifices and burnt offerings were made to “Yahu”.³¹⁴ Excavation work done in 1967 revealed the remains of an Israelite colony around a small temple.

There is much debate as to the origin of this Jewish colony. The Jewish community was probably founded as a military installation in about 650 BCE during Manasseh’s reign. The second century BCE

³¹³ Powis Smith, “The Jewish Temple at Elephantine”, 459.

³¹⁴ Rosenberg, *The Mishkan a Jewish Parallel from Ancient Egypt*, biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/Teruma/roz.html (23-6-2020).

Letter of Aristeas records that large numbers of Jews had come into Egypt and in an earlier period still others had sent to Egypt to help Psammetichus in his campaign against the king of the Nubians. Herodotus described this settlement in his *Histories* as a watchpost at Elephantine facing Ethiopia.

Jer. 42-43 records the flight of the the Judeans into Egypt under the leadership of Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Jochanan son of Kareah to escape from exile. There is no factual record of this Jewish colony in the biblical books, nothing in the works of Josephus and nothing in the Talmud or any official Jewish records, nothing at all except in the papyri that had been found in 1893.³¹⁵ Only some casual mentions in extra-biblical sources and the book of Jeremiah imply the settlement of Jews in Egypt in that period of time.

5.6. Zerubbabel's temple

5.6.1. The relevance of Zerubbabel's temple for the study of Ezekiel's temple

A prima vista, the relevance of Zerubbabel's temple for the study of Ezekiel's temple vision is not very obvious, especially since the physical structure was considered a faint shadow of Solomon's temple. However, with the exception of the front hall the floor plans of Solomon's, Zerubbabel's and Ezekiel's temple edifice proper are generally similar. It should be noted that the hall (*ulam*) of Ezekiel's and Solomon's temple was an enclosed, roofed space, while Zerubbabel's temple had an open front and was provided with a canopy on columns across the full width of the temple building (cf. fig. 5.8 and 5.13).

Ezekiel's image of a restored temple has important bearings on the history of the temple. At a glance, however, it will become clear that Ezekiel's temple is neither a copy of Solomon's nor a reference to Zerubbabel's temple. In particular the overall design of the temple precincts with their surrounding additional facilities differ greatly. Vice versa Zerubbabel's temple cannot be equated with the temple of Ezekiel. Zerubbabel's temple was no more than a paltry copy of Solomon's temple and can certainly not be an example of the glorious future temple of Ezekiel that appealed to the mind of the returned exiles. This observation is important because Ezekiel's temple vision often has been interpreted as a preserved description of the Solomonic temple or as a plan for a post-exilic restored temple.³¹⁶

Evidently, in his description of the visionary temple Ezekiel had the images of the first temple in mind, i.e. the temple as it was after the repairs and alterations that had been carried out in it since Solomon's time. Nevertheless, Ezekiel described a completely new temple that was shown to him. The square temple precinct with its walls, worshipper's rooms, the *binyan* behind the temple, the priestly rooms on either side of the temple and the central positioning of the burnt-offering altar are quite different from Zerubbabel's temple.

Ezekiel's visionary temple would certainly have motivated the returned exiles to build a new temple according to the descriptions of Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel was one of their own, belonging to the family of Zadok and he had still ministered in the temple of his youth. He was familiar with the lost temple.

The contradictory data of the books Ezra and 1 Kings about the exact dimensions of the temple could also have induced the preference of Zerubbabel and the returned exiles to follow the detailed description of Ezekiel.³¹⁷

The archaeologist Yitchak Magen confirms this assumption. The envisioned temple of Ezekiel in a certain sense would have formed the basis for the temple built by the returned Babylonian exiles.³¹⁸ However, it cannot be denied that the measurements of the subsequent temples do not cohere in every detail. Comparing the differences and similarities in the floor-plan of Solomon's, Zerubbabel's and Herod's

³¹⁵ Rosenberg, Was there a Jewish temple in ancient Egypt? *Jerusalem Post*, Juli 1 2013.

³¹⁶ De Jong, "Ezekiel as a Literary Figure and the Quest for the Historical Prophet", x.

³¹⁷ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 146.

³¹⁸ Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim", 157-162.

temple edifice and the plan of Ezekiel's visionary temple, it nevertheless becomes clear that in general a line of continuity in the spatial concepts can be found.

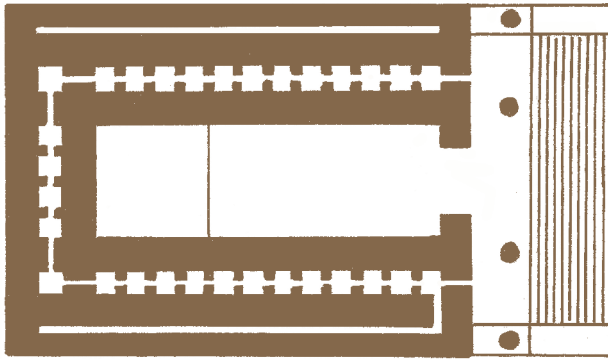


fig. 5.13 Floor plan of Zerubbabel's temple. (Redrawn by author after Michael Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the temple Era*).

5.6.2. The decree of Cyrus and the temple of Zerubbabel

Among the exiles the desire to return and to rebuild the temple was eventually rewarded by the opportunity to do so, and after many setbacks a new building was erected in Jerusalem. It was under the leadership of Shesbazzar (Zerubbabel) whom Cyrus had appointed as governor of the Persian province of Judah that the first group of exiled Judeans set out for Jerusalem. Persian imperial policy under Cyrus involved granting more autonomy to submitted nations than Babylonians and Assyrians before him allowed.

Cyrus encouraged the Judean exiles to return to their homeland. An official decree, recorded on a clay cylinder, permitted not only the return of the exiles but also the rebuilding of the temple. Cyrus also allowed the surviving temple treasures taken away by Nebuchadnezzar to be returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:5-11).

The temple was built on the ruins of Solomon's temple. A very incomplete description of the plan of the structure is found in a copy of the original decree by Cyrus (Ezra 6:3-4; 1 Esdr 6:24-25; see *Ant* 11.4.6; 99). In Ezra 6:3-4 only a brief description of the dimensions is given but the measurements described in Ezra do not match with the measurements given in 1 Kings. The height and the width of the structure should be sixty cubits, in conformity with the measurements specified in the permit issued by Cyrus. Its length is not mentioned here. This certainly must be an omission. The length of Zerubbabel's temple may be 90 cubits, as in the Temple Scroll, less than the 100 cubits of Ezekiel's temple. The height and width measurements according to the decree of Cyrus surpass those of Solomon's temple. Doubling the height of Solomon's temple (30 cubits) seems to contradict the reaction of the people to the poor appearance of Zerubbabel's temple. So the height of Zerubbabel's temple would have corresponded to that of Solomon's temple.

Arriving in Jerusalem, the returnees first rebuilt the altar for the burnt offerings and after that they laid the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3:1-10). With the support of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the restoration work began. Despite the opposition of the Samaritans the temple was soon completed and was rededicated.

Zerubbabel's temple was the centre of worship in Judean religion from 515 BCE until it was rebuilt and enlarged by King Herod in 19 BCE. We do not have a detailed description of Zerubbabel's temple, but we know that it was patterned after Solomon's temple with an open entrance hall, Holy Place and Most Holy Place. The building must have corresponded in size to the floor plan of Solomon's as well as Ezekiel's temple and must have been simpler and more austere, with none of the sumptuous adornment with which Solomon had arrayed the original temple.

It is recorded that the old people who had seen Solomon's temple and who were still alive at the foundation of Zerubbabel's temple, wept at the contrast between the two (Ezra 3:12). The prophet Haggai asked: "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem

to you like nothing?" (Hag 2:3). Not only had much of the splendour of Solomon's temple gone, the Second Temple of Zerubbabel, also missed some important items. The Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat and the cherubim had gone, thus the Most Holy Place remained empty. There is another primary feature in Zerubbabel's temple that is lacking, namely the two bronze pillars Boaz and Jachin. We do not know why these pillars were not rebuilt.

The temple of Zerubbabel can be qualified as a priest's temple contrary to a king's temple built by King Solomon. "It was built according to priestly concepts which had begun to take shape already in the period of King Josiah's reform, had been developed in Ezekiel's vision, and reached its final crystallization and execution during the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah".³¹⁹

5.6.3. Extra-biblical sources describing Zerubbabel's temple and the Samaritan temple

From extra-biblical sources and recent archaeological excavations one can derive some extra information about Zerubbabel's temple. There are three important written sources that contain interesting and valuable comments relating to the temple of Zerubbabel:³²⁰

In *Contra Apionem* Josephus refers to the writings of a Greek philosopher Hecataeus of Abdera. If Hecataeus was truly the author of these writings, we have one of the oldest surviving descriptions outside the Bible of the Jewish temple, most unusually written by a non Jew. Hecataeus claimed that the temple was nearly in the middle of the city and he described a temenos enclosed within a stone wall, with double gates as an entrance. Subsequently he described "a square altar, composed of unhewn, undressed stones". Finally he described the temple itself and its appurtenances, the altar of incense and the seven branched candlestick (*Contra Apionem* 1.22; 198-199).

The *Letter of Aristeeas* describes Jerusalem as well as the temple. The city itself stood out of the surrounding countryside on a high mountain and the temple stood out prominently even above the height of the city in general "towering above all". The letter describes "three enclosing walls over seventy cubits", the altar of burnt offering, the orientation of the temple, the water cistern and reservoir supply, the manner of the service of the priests, the role and dressing of the high priest and the sacrificial process.

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach chapter 50 is devoted to a poetic eulogy of the Zadokite high priest Simon II. It is one of the most important and unique documents relating to the temple of Zerubbabel, in which the inner sanctuary is indicated as "House of the Veil".³²¹ Simon was said to have overseen the temple repairs and renovations (*Sir* 50:1-3). An ossuary, found in a tomb in the old city of Jerusalem bore the inscription in Aramaic: "Simon, builder of the temple".³²²

In the fifth century BCE the Samaritan leader Sanballat built a temple on Mount Gerizim which could be a replica of Zerubbabel's temple of Jerusalem. Josephus told of a temple built by Samaritans (*Ant.* 11.8.7.). Finding the remains of such a temple is particularly relevant to those who seek information about Zerubbabel's second temple.

Yitchak Magen excavated the remains of a large acropolis with a paved cultic *temenos*, fortifications and town houses.³²³ This Samaritan temple existed during the Persian and Hellenistic periods and was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 111/110 BCE. These buildings resemble the plan of the first temple as well as the envisioned temple of Ezekiel. However, the dimensions of the Samaritan temple were much smaller.

³¹⁹ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 143.

³²⁰ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 82-89.

³²¹ According to Josephus (*War* 5.5.5.) and Talmudic sources, there was no built partition between the Holy and Holy of Holies in the second temple, only a curtain.

³²² Limestone ossuary (1st century BCE-1st century CE), source: Israel Antiquities Authority, Israel Museum Jerusalem.

³²³ Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim", 157-162.

According to Magen the ground plan of the Persian period features three “chamber gates”, one to the north, one to the east and one the south. In retrospect these gates and other instances like excavated foundations of gate buildings in Gezer, Hazor Ashdod, Lachish and Megiddo, could be reminiscences of the temple gates depicted in the temple vision of Ezekiel.

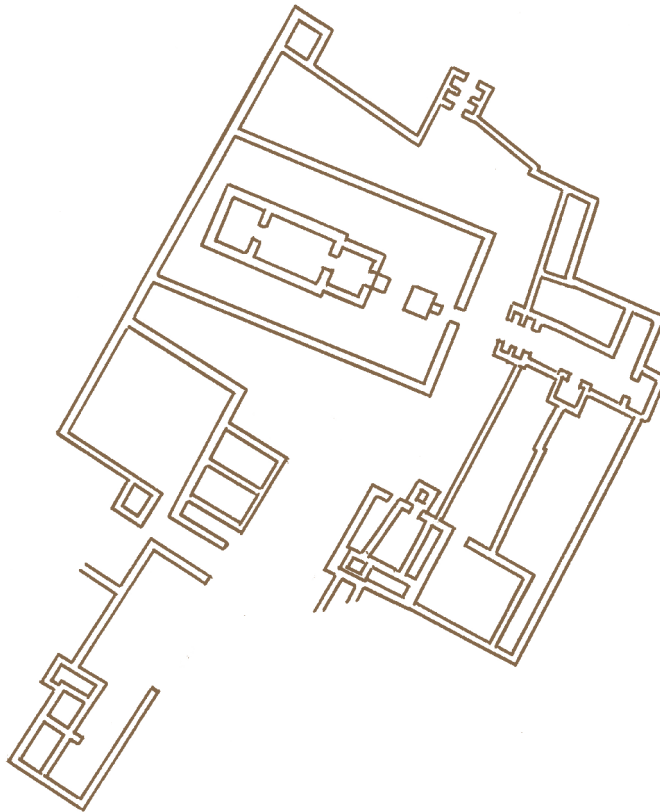


fig. 5.14a Samaritan temple complex on Mount Gerizim reconstructed by Israel Antiquities Authority. (Redrawn by author).



fig.5.14b Roman coin Samaritan temple Mount Gerizim

5.7. Post-exilic building activities on the Temple Mount

Under Nehemiah’s leadership the returned exiles started rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem including the walls around the square temple platform. The building and restoration of the city walls and gates of Jerusalem have been described in chapter 3 of the book Nehemiah.

Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple proper, but Nehemiah, who came to Jerusalem much later (445 BCE), rebuilt the walls and fortified them.

One of the fortifications was the famous Hananeel tower. Most of the pre existing walls were simply repaired. The wall just above the steep Kidron valley, however, was relocated higher up the slope and, according to Mazar, built on top of a ruined wall of King David’s palace.³²⁴

³²⁴ Mazar, “The wall that Nehemiah Built”, *BAR* 35-2 (2009), 24-33, 66.

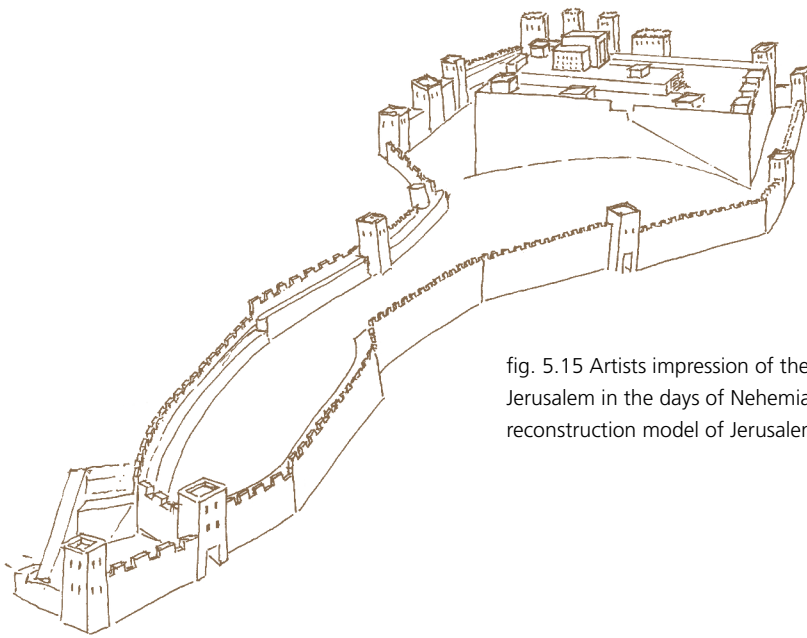


fig. 5.15 Artists impression of the temple mount and walls of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah. (Drawn by author after a reconstruction model of Jerusalem. L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*)

During the intervening years of Zerubbabel's initial modest temple and the erection of Herod's magnificent temple there was a lot of other building activity. In 168 BCE Antiochus IV Epiphanes built the Acra, a fortress for his Macedonian garrison on the south side of the temple mount from which the Jewish population could be controlled.

According to Josephus (Ant. 12.252) Antiochus "built a citadel (known as the Acra) in the lower part of the city for the place was high, and overlooked the temple; on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers, and put in it a garrison of Macedonians". The description of Josephus agrees with the record in the first book of Maccabees: "they fortified the city of David with a great and strong wall, with strong towers, and it became unto them an Acra" (1 Macc 1:35). Ultimately it was captured by Simon Maccabaeus in 141 BCE and destroyed at the end of the 2nd century BCE.

There are many theories as to the location of the Acra. According to Ritmeyer, the term "Lower City" is always understood to refer to the south eastern hill of Jerusalem, so one would expect the Acra to be situated to the immediate south of the square Temple Mount". During Benjamin Mazar's 1968 and 1978 excavations adjacent to the south wall of the Temple Mount, features were uncovered which may have been connected with the Acra, including barrack-like rooms and a huge cistern.

The subsequent period of the Hasmoneans was a time of flourishing and prosperity in comparison to the earlier period of the return from Babylon. The Hasmonean kings, who were priests, put much emphasis on the temple. It would be inconceivable that they did not enlarge the temple and its courts and added to its grandeur.³²⁵

Simon the son of Onias would according to Sir 50:1-2 have built the upper storey of the temple in the mid third century BCE. Building activities as recorded by Ezra, Nehemiah and some extra-biblical writers after them give an impression of the rebuilding of the temple edifice and the restoration of the temple mount. In this regard Kenyon notes:

"There were certainly a number of vicissitudes in the history of the immediately pre-Herodian Temple, but basically it was the temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel after the return from the Babylonian exile. It is inconceivable that Zerubbabel, with his very exiguous resources, would have increased the size of the Solomonic platform. It is reasonably certain that he built upon the basis of surviving foundations, and restored the platform as best he could".³²⁶

³²⁵ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 147.

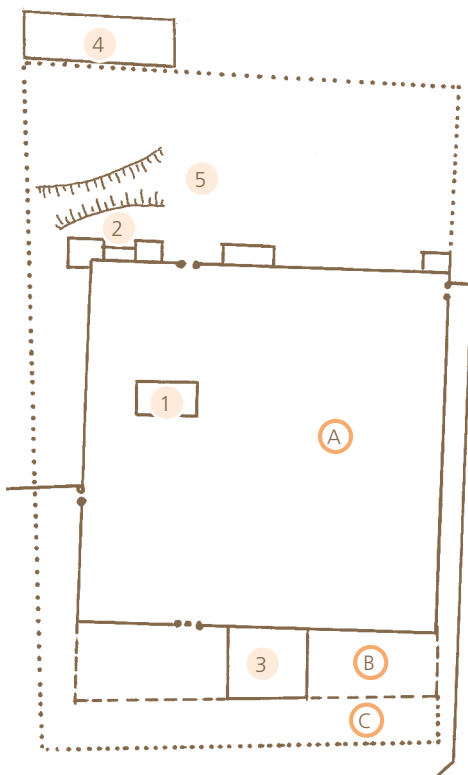
³²⁶ Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem*, 111.

The Hasmoneans changed the appearance of the Temple Mount substantially. The square temple platform was fortified again and extended on the south side. The extension had been accomplished in 152 BCE by the Hasmoneans under the leadership of John Hyrcanus. To allow entry to the Temple Mount from the south, a pair of tunnels were built which were later called the Double and Triple Gate.

Josephus (*Ant.* 14.61) recorded the existence of great towers (a stronghold or citadel) to the north-west corner of the Mishnaic Temple Mount. They could be identified as the Hasmonean *Baris*, a rebuilt or repurposed citadel at the northwest corner of the Temple Mount, built earlier by Ptolemy during his rule of Jerusalem in the 3rd century BCE. According to the records of Josephus, the *Baris* had several towers, one of which was called Straton's Tower (*Ant.* 13.307-313), which had an underground passage (*hypogeion*).

Several scholars locate the *Baris* at the northwest corner of the enlarged present day Temple Mount at the place where the Herodian Antonia Fortress stood. Ritmeyer contends that this does not tally with the geographical situation of the fosse (a kind of moat or hollowing, north of the first temple) because a tunnel to the north of the fosse could not have linked the citadel with the square Temple Mount.³²⁷ The two strongholds must have stood in different places (see fig. 5.16).

I think he is right because, according to Josephus in *Ant.* 14.61, some fortifications of the *Baris* must have stood close to the southern side of the *fosse* at the north-west corner of the Mishnaic Temple Mount. If this is the case, the older strongholds could have been integrated in the *Baris*, built by Hyrcanus.



- A 500 x 500 cubits square temple platform
- B Hasmonean extension
- C Herodian extension

- 1 Temple
- 2 Baris
- 3 Acra
- 4 Antonia fortress
- 5 Fosse

fig. 5.16 Square temple platform and Hasmonean extension on the south side and location of the Acra and Baris. (Redrawn by author after Ritmeyer, *The Quest*).

³²⁷ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 217-218.

The available data on Zerubbabel's temple and that of the Hasmoneans temple is rather limited. On Zerubbabel's temple we are given only some measurements which appear in the book Ezra. On the renovated and expanded Hasmonean temple we only have some scarce information from Josephus, the Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem Scroll.

5.8. Herod's temple complex

5.8.1. The first and last temple as a source of inspiration

Various features of the first temple of Solomon as well as the last temple of Ezekiel can be found in Herod's temple complex. That is why the relevance of Herod's temple for this study is obvious. Disregarding the standing structure of Zerubbabel's temple, he wanted a temple with the beauty of Solomon's and the greatness of Ezekiel's temple with its various concentric courts.

Herod was one of the great builders of antiquity but most famous in building a new temple. He is said to have had no religious intentions but only political. He tried to buy the loyalty of the Jews. In so doing he created one of the largest and best documented sacred complexes in the ancient world. He began his building activities in 19 BCE but not until 63 CE was it completed (Ant. 15.11.1-2; and War 1.21.1). In order to build "his" temple, Herod completely dismantled the centuries old temple of Zerubbabel, replacing it with an entirely new structure. Herod maintained the basic floor plan and dimensions of the temple, but enlarged the courtyards by extending the size of the platform on the temple mount.

A host of data about Herod's temple is available from written sources as well as archaeological excavations. The written sources are: the Mishnaic tractate Middoth (measurements), the writings of Josephus, the Temple Scroll, and the New Testament in some detail and context. These sources are augmented by the results of excavations to the south and west of the Temple Mount. Although Herod's temple itself was totally erased by the Romans, much of the artificial mountain with its enormous retaining walls is left.

In the Tractate *Middoth* all Scriptural sources about the first temple, the writings of Josephus and the Temple Scroll are combined. Chyutin notes that "the Tractate Middoth exploits all the available sources and attempts to weave them into a coherent picture". However, he also notes that "the tractate probably is more a literary construction of Herod's temple than a reliable historical description".³²⁸ But I think for the critical reader investigating the data, this tractate will remain an important source of information.

Josephus' descriptions of Herod's temple are found in Ant. 5.11.1-7, War 5.5 and Apion 2.8. Several scholars assume that Josephus' description of Solomon's temple in Ant. 8.3.2- 8.5.2 is influenced by Herod's temple.³²⁹ Because Josephus was educated in the tradition of the Greek and Roman historians, it is plausible that he was reasonably objective and not tendentious in his descriptions. He does not deviate from the dimensions that appear in the Scriptural descriptions of the first and second temple.

In the temple Scroll we find an idealised picture combining the data of the first and second temple with those of the description of Ezekiel's future temple. In the New Testament we find mainly indirect references to the appearance of Herod's temple. Uncovering the lower and underground parts of the retaining walls, the subterranean chambers, accesses and stairways of the artificial temple mountain, one gets an impression of a long history of building activities.

5.8.2. The appearance of Herod's temple in some classical reconstructions

From the detailed accounts of the temple preserved in the works of Josephus (*War* 5.5. 1-8; and *Ant.* 15. 11.5-7), the rabbinic text of the tractate *Middoth* as well as present day excavations around the temple mount, it is possible to largely reconstruct Herod's temple complex. Even though it is uncertain

³²⁸ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 145.

³²⁹ Orion.msc.huji.ac.il/symposiums/4th/papers/Schiffman99.html (25-2-2020).

what Herod's temple looked like in all its detail, one can form a general idea of its layout. Unfortunately, a detailed biblical description is not available. Maimonides' considerations offer some more guidance; he wrote: "When the Second Temple was originally constructed in the time of Ezra, it was built as a combination of the First temple built by Solomon, but including certain aspects of the things mentioned by Ezekiel".

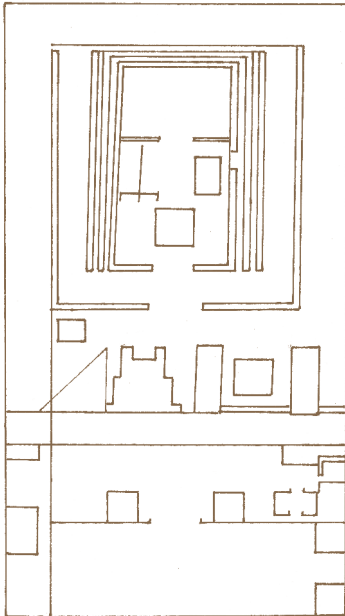


fig. 5.17 Maimonides' floor plan of Herod's temple in his commentary on the Mishnah. (Redrawn after a late 12th century manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford).

Over the centuries many reconstructions of Herod's temple were made. One of the earliest depictions is to be found in Maimonides' comment on Middoth and a beautiful figure of Herod's temple from a Passover Haggadah printed at Amsterdam at 1695 has been included in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

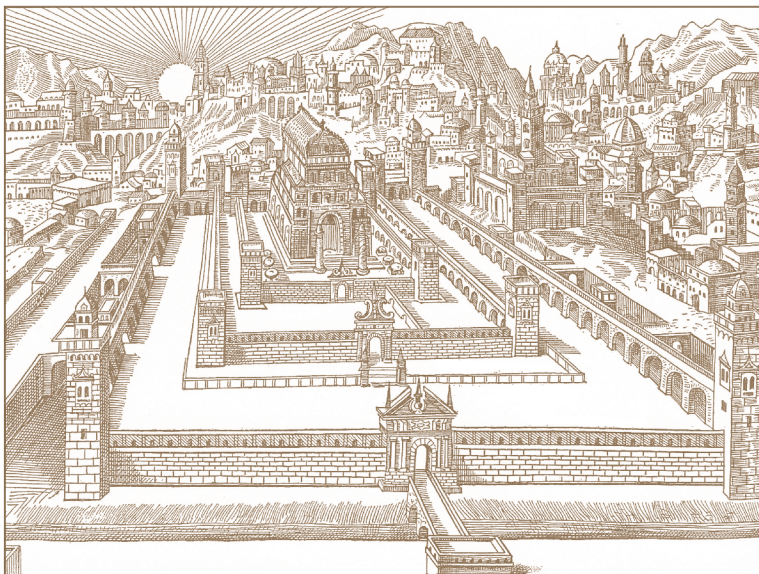


fig. 5.18 Temple of Jerusalem from a Passover Haggadah from 1695. (With permission photographed in Bijbels Museum, Cromhouthuis Amsterdam).

5.8.3. The temple mount and its retaining walls

The temple mount on which the magnificent temple complex was situated, was a large trapezoid shaped walled-in raised platform (*temenos*). Archaeological investigation reveals that the outer wall of Herod's temple was an irregular quadrangle: the south wall was 283m long, the west wall 487m, the north wall 318m and the east wall 475m. The surface of this platform was approximately 14.5ha.

The platform had an enormous circumference, one of the largest temple sites in the ancient world.³³⁰ The temple site had more than twice the length of Solomon's temple site. By comparison Josephus gives the measurements of Solomon's temple mount, namely one stade (180m) for each side (Ant.15. 400). The tractate *Middoth* gives 500x500 cubits (approximately 225x225m) as the circumference of Solomon's temple mount (*Mid. 2.1*).

The entire area of the Herodian temple mount was twice as large as the monumental Forum Romanum built by Trajan, and three and a half times more extensive than the combined temples of Jupiter and Astarte-Venus at Baalbek.³³¹

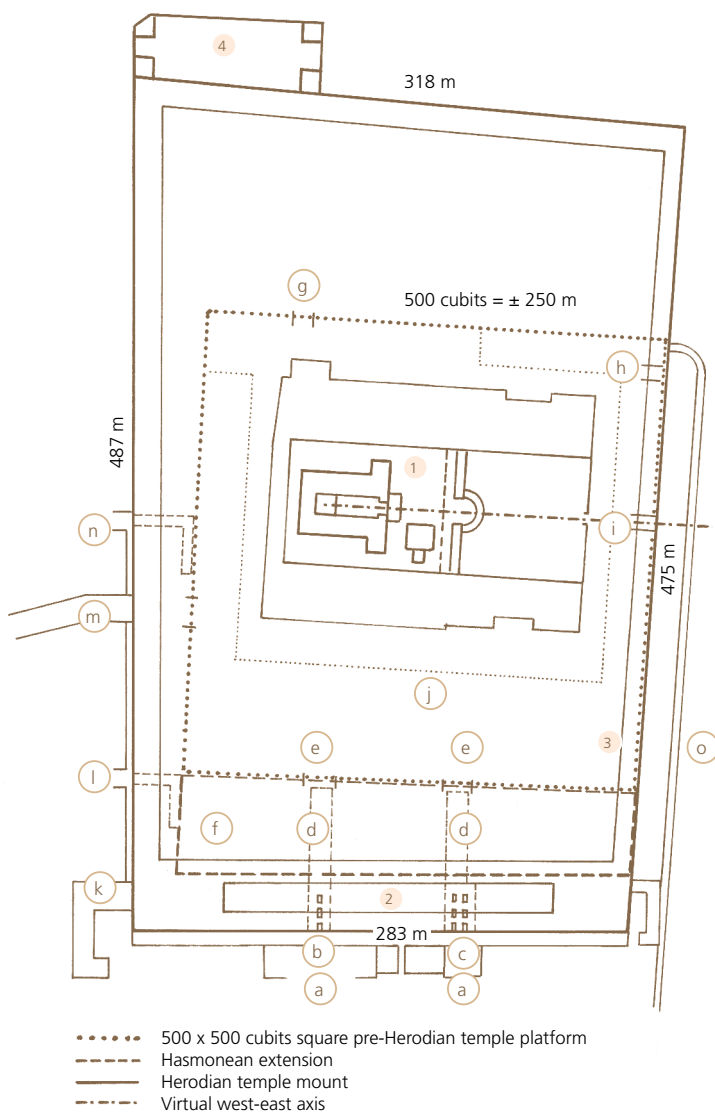


fig. 5.19a Herodian temple mount. (Redrawn by author after L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*).

³³⁰ Dov, *In the shadow of the temple*, 77.

³³¹ Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem", ABD 6, 365.

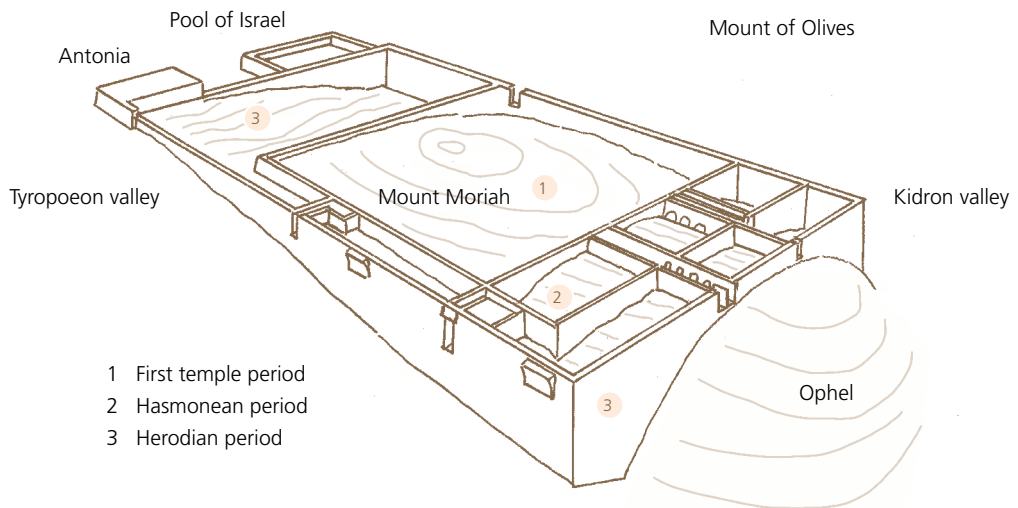


fig. 5.19b Stages in the historical development of the temple platform. (Redrawn by author after L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*).

Classic examples of reconstructions of Herod's temple mount with its magnificent temple, portico's, colonnades and fortified walls are to be found in an illustration of M. de Vogüé (1864) and a model of C. Schick (1896). In the illustration of De Vogüé the Antonia fortress is partly integrated in the outer court of the temple complex and in Schick's model the Antonia fortress is situated outside the north-west corner of the temple complex. The large stairways outside the temple platform on the south are lacking in De Vogüé's illustration.

In the model of Schick and the bird's eye view of Ritmeyer they are clearly indicated. The results of more recent excavations become visible in the illustration of Ritmeyer.

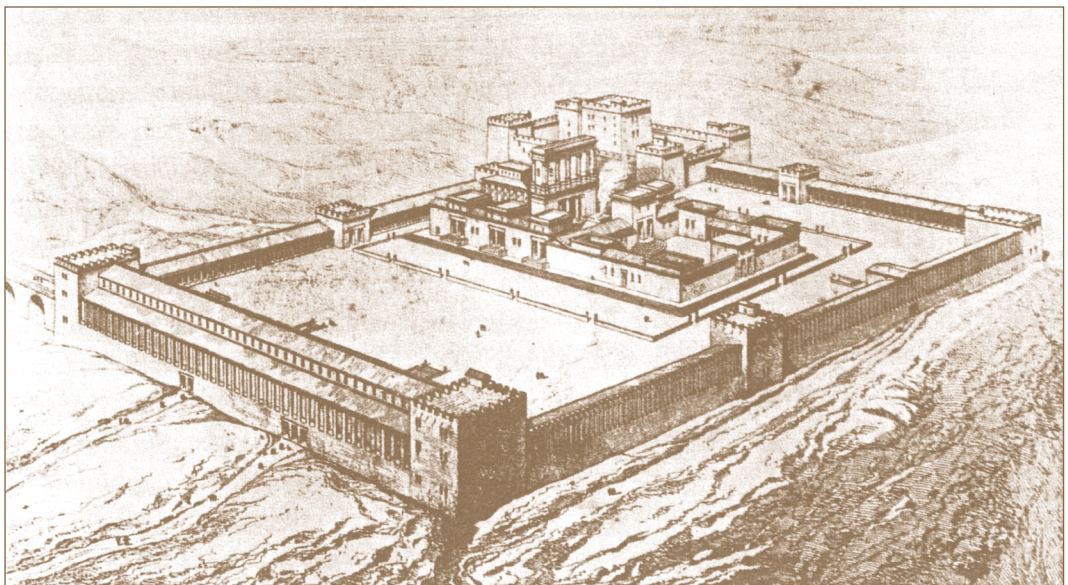


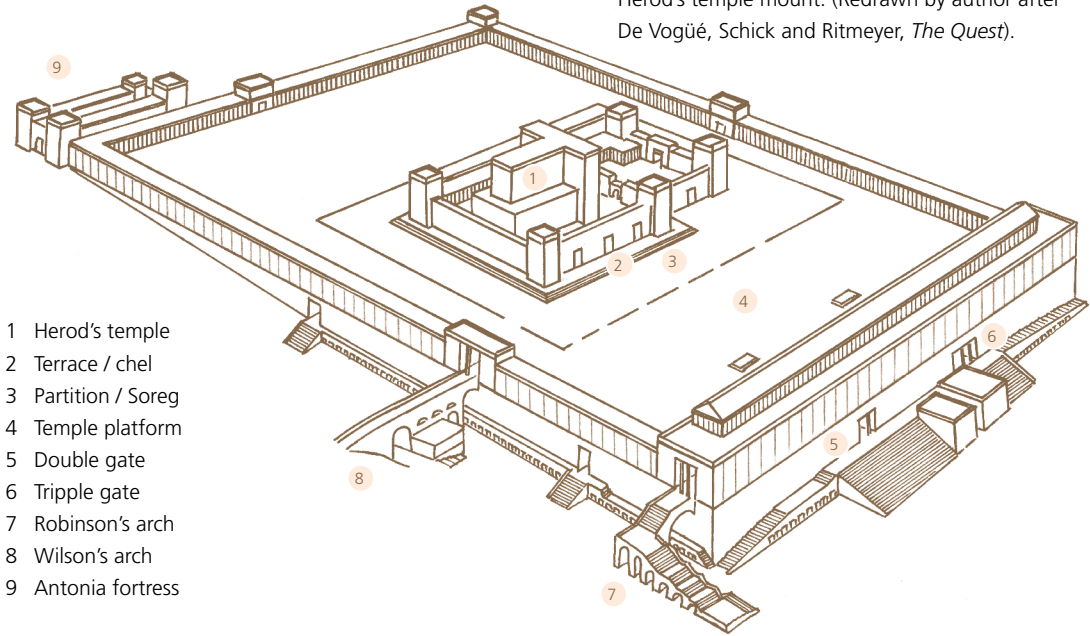
fig. 5.20 Herodian temple reconstructed by M. de Vogüé, (Taken from *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, 1864).

Contemporary reconstructions of Herod's temple mount have been made by scholars like E. L. Martin and L. Ritmeyer. They disagree with regard to the location of the temple. According to Ritmeyer and many

others, the temple was on Mount Moriah and, according to Martin, the temple was situated further south on the Ophel nearby the Gihon Spring (see fig. 5.29).

A reconstruction has been made based on the representations of De Vogüé, Schick and Ritmeyer. In recent excavations and the pictures of Ritmeyer the height of the enormous retaining walls and stairways on the south and west side of the temple mount become clear.

fig. 5.21 Bird's eye view of a reconstruction of Herod's temple mount. (Redrawn by author after De Vogüé, Schick and Ritmeyer, *The Quest*).



- 1 Herod's temple
- 2 Terrace / chel
- 3 Partition / Soreg
- 4 Temple platform
- 5 Double gate
- 6 Tripple gate
- 7 Robinson's arch
- 8 Wilson's arch
- 9 Antonia fortress

In order to enlarge the surface of the temple area Herod's engineers had to construct enormous retaining walls. The height of the walls varied: they were about 30-50m high from the bedrock to the top, sloping upward from the south to the north. A part of these walls still stands today and is known as the Western (or Wailing) Wall. The Herodian retaining walls enclosed the whole Temple Mount except for a part of the eastern wall. The northerly portion of the eastern wall was originally Solomonic and the southern part Hasmonean.



fig. 5.22a Photograph Holy Land model of the Temple Mount. (Photograph taken by author).



fig. 5.22b Photograph Holy Land model of the Western Wall with Wilson's Arch and bridge and Robinson's Arch and stairways. (Photograph taken by author).



fig. 5.23a Temple Square with Wailing Wall. (Photograph taken by author).

The 5m thick walls were made up of massive 1.20m high and 6m long stone blocks (ashlars). Josephus described the construction of the outer walls (*Ant.* 15. 397-400). They were built around the base of the temple mount.

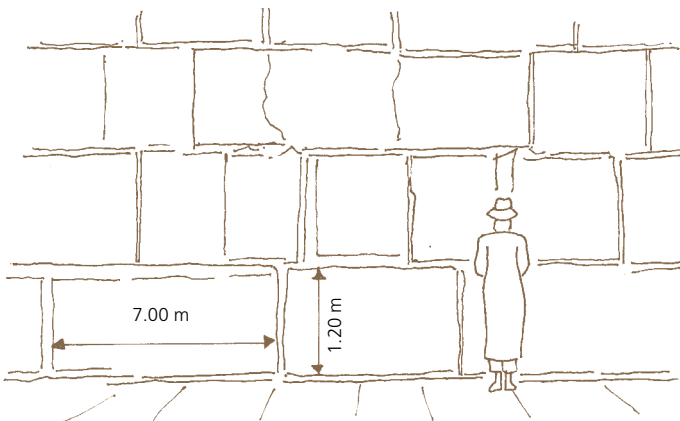
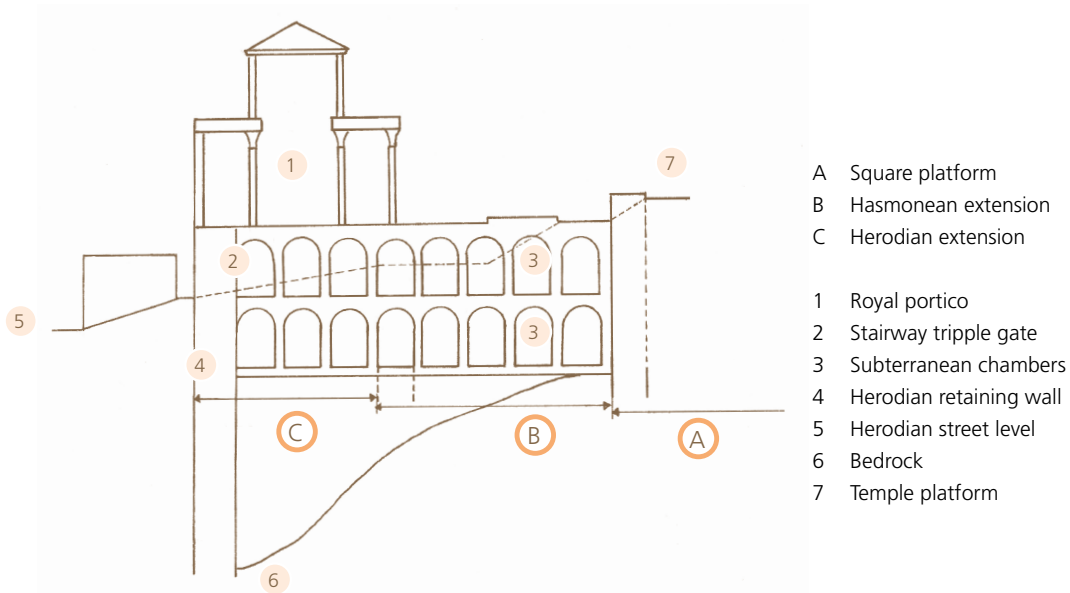


fig. 5.23b Drawing of massive ashlars (7.00 x 1.20m) of the current Wailing Wall part of the western retaining wall. (Drawn by author).

When the wall reached the designated height, the summit of the temple mount was levelled off and the empty space between the walls was filled up. This provided a levelled surface for the temple complex. Not all the empty space was filled up. Under the south eastern corner of the platform are storeys of vaulted subterranean chambers. These vaulted chambers were used as storerooms. During the Crusader period they were used as stables and renamed Solomon's Stables.



- A Square platform
- B Hasmonean extension
- C Herodian extension
- 1 Royal portico
- 2 Stairway tripple gate
- 3 Subterranean chambers
- 4 Herodian retaining wall
- 5 Herodian street level
- 6 Bedrock
- 7 Temple platform

fig. 5.24a Cross section of the royal Portico and vaulted subterranean chambers in the south-east corner of the temple platform. (Redrawn by author after Max Schwartz, *The Biblical Engineer*, and L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*).

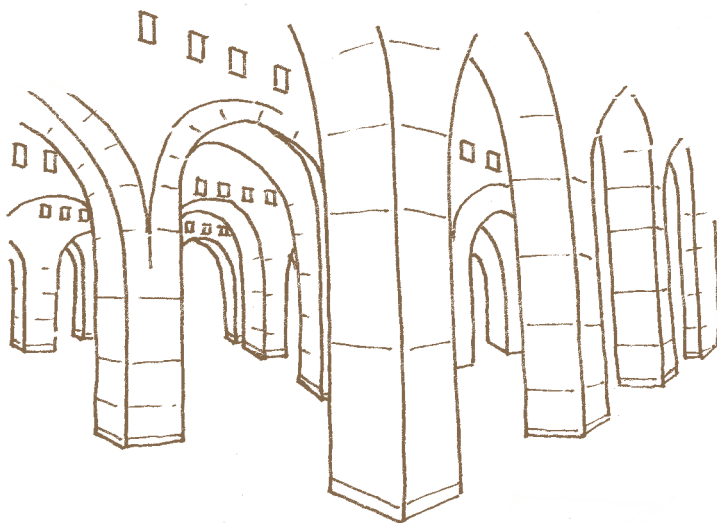


fig. 5.24b Subterranean chambers or vaults, now called Solomon's Stables. (Drawn by author).

5.8.4. Ground plan and architecture of Herod's temple mount

The area of the temple square surrounded by porticoes was known as the Court of Gentiles. Josephus called it "The first court" (*ho protos peribolos*). That court, paved with stones, was 230x230m and could easily hold 100,000 people at a time.

Round three sides on the west, north and eastside of the temple platform ran a covered portico with two rows of Corinthian columns (*War* 5.5.2; 191-93; *Ant.* 15.11.5; 410-416). The colonnade along the eastern side was known as Solomon's Portico. The one on the southern side of the square was larger and more elaborate and was called the Royal Portico. This portico extended along the entire length of the southern wall. It consisted of three aisles made up of four rows of polished white columns in the Corinthian order. The middle aisle was one and a half times as wide and twice as high as the other two aisles. The ceilings of these porticoes were ornamented with cedar wood carvings.³³²

³³² Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 104-105 (see also Dov, *Historical Atlas of Jerusalem*, 108).

According to *Middoth* 1.3 there were five gates giving access onto the original pre-Herodian temple platform (see fig. 5.19a); the Hulda Gates (e) on the south, the Kiphonos Gate (f) on the west, the Tadi Gate (g) on the north and the Shushan Gate (i) on the east.

The monumental Double Gate for the people (b)) and Triple Gate for the priests (c)) on the base of the southern wall were approached by a 65m wide monumental flight of steps. From the Double Gate a vestibule and entrance tunnel led gradually upwards to the level of the temple platform and into the Royal Portico. These were the primary entrance and exit of the temple mount.

From the west side, from the ancient upper city, the temple mount was approached by means of two overpasses or viaducts across the Tyropion valley. They provided access to two gates. The first overpass at the south western corner, nowadays known as Robinson's Arch (k)), was the main entrance from the upper city on the western side of the temple platform and led up into the Royal Portico. This huge bridge was 15m wide and 108m long. The second overpass, leading up into the western portico, is nowadays known as Wilson's Arch (m).

The Kiphonos Gate (f), named in *Middoth* 1.3, following on Barclay's Arch (l), was reserved for non-Jews. It was located just north of Robinson's Arch (k) and led into an underground vestibule and via a staircase onto the esplanade.³³³ In addition to these three entries on the west side of the temple mount a fourth one is mentioned by Josephus (*Ant.* 15. 410) by some identified with Warren's Gate (n).³³⁴

The locations of the gates in the northern and eastern wall mentioned in Mid.1.3 are not known with certainty. Of the Tadi Gate in the northern wall, *Middoth* 1.3 reports "that it was not used at all".

The eastern gate was called the Shushan Gate (i) because it bore a relief of the Shushan palace in Babylon. This gate was not a public entry but was used by priests for the Red Heifer ceremony (Lev. 19) that took place on the Mount of Olives. The Miphkad Gate (h) was used on Yom Kippur for leading the scapegoat into the wilderness. There is much confusion about the right name and location of the gates in the eastern wall of the temple mount.

The eastern gate mentioned in *Middoth* 3.1 as the Shushan Gate is often misidentified with the Beautiful Gate of the New Testament (see Acts 3:2,10) and the references to the closed outer gate of the sanctuary which faces east in Ezek 44:1-2. Ezekiel's reference is to the eastern gate of the temple, not the eastern gate on the retaining wall enclosure.³³⁵

The relationship between the exact location of this eastern gate and the temple proper is also questionable. From *Middoth* 2:4 and *Yoma* 16 we learn that the gate was exactly in a straight line with the site of sacrifice of the Red Heifer on the Mount of Olives on the east and the gates of the temple and the entrance into the Holy of Holies on the west (see the virtual axis in fig.5.19a). This location, however, is a presumption on the basis of literary sources. The archaeological evidence confirming this presumption has not been found.

The importance of the eastern gate has been underlined by Jewish tradition and the book Ezekiel. The Divine Presence (שכינה) used to appear through the eastern gate and will appear again "for YHWH, the God of Israel has entered through it" (Ezek 44:2).

Josephus mentions an "eastern gate" which was considered within the far north-eastern extremity of the inner sacred court (*Ant.* 15.424).

The following considerations show that this gate cannot be the Shushan Gate in front with the temple. On account of the assumption of a more northerly location of the Shushan Gate or Golden Gate, expounded by Kaufman, the idea was born that the temple also was situated more northerly. This assumption, however, is contrary to the east to west orientation of the Holy of Holies, equating the location to the Dome of the Rock. Moreover, many scholars hold the view that our understanding of ancient Near Eastern temples built in the style of the temple of Jerusalem virtually requires that there

³³³ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 107-108; Dov, *Historical Atlas of Jerusalem*, 107.

³³⁴ Lundquist, *ibid.*, 108, (see Mazar, Cornfeld, Friedman, *The Mountain of the Lord*, 134).

³³⁵ Price, *Rose Guide to the Temple*, 43-44.

would have been a gateway on the east in direct line with, and on the same axis as, the Holy of Holies.

The present day supposed Golden Gate is not on the same line as the Holy of Holies, if we accept the present day Dome of the Rock as standing on the same place as the temple.³³⁶ The supposed present day Golden Gate was built by the Ottoman Turks on top of the ruins of an earlier gatehouse or fortification dating back to the time of Nehemiah. On the north-east angle of the former temple platform something like a corner tower was situated which could be identified with the Miphkad Gate (see fig. 5.19 and 5.21). This gatehouse or corner tower must have been mistakenly associated with the original eastern gate.

In the north-west corner of the temple mount stood the fortress Antonia (see fig. 5.19a 4), a citadel with four towers, surrounding a courtyard. The highest of the four towers, the one at the southeast corner called Straton's Tower, provided a clear view of the temple area and the city of Jerusalem. The citadel was used as a Roman garrison where the procurator resided when in Jerusalem. It was connected to the outer court of the temple by an underground passage (*Ant.* 15.11.7; 424).

The Gihon Spring, Jerusalem's main water source, was not sufficient to supply the needs of the city's residents and the vast number of pilgrims. Herod improved and expanded some of the reservoirs of the First Temple period and added many more. 37 cisterns have been found on the Herodian temple mount.³³⁷ The cisterns collected rainwater from the vast esplanade or were replenished by an aqueduct leading from Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem to the Temple Mount. The very slight difference in height (approximately 30m) between the springs and the Temple Mount, mandated a meandering route of 21 km, twice the actual distance between the pools and the temple platform.

5.8.5. The temple precinct

The inner part of the temple square, around the temple itself, was the consecrated area. It was enclosed by a partition. Josephus says that this partition, that separated the inner court from the outer court, was three cubits (approximately 1.5m) high. This partition is called *soreg* (*Middoth* 2.3). It seems to refer to some type of lattice work and creates the impression to be made of wood. Josephus however calls it an enclosure (*druphaktos*) and says that it was made of stone. Beyond this no gentile was allowed to enter. By each gate there were inscriptions in Greek and Latin, saying: "Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows" (*Ant.* 15. 418; *War* 5.193-194).

Between the partition or *Soreg* and the walls of the temple (*Middoth* 2.3; *War* 5.193) was a terrace with steps up to the temple platform of 10 cubits (5m) wide, called *Chel* which surrounded the entire sacred precincts (see fig 5.21).

The restricted area consisted of a series of courts on ascending levels, connected by series of steps, with the temple on top. The first flight of 12 steps (*Middoth* 2.3; *War* 5.194) led up to the massive fortification wall which ran around the restricted area. Another flight of steps led up to the gates (like towers; *War* 5. 202) accessing the precinct on the temple platform. Each gate formed a kind of gatehouse 40 cubits (18m) high and 14 cubits (6.5 m) wide (*War* 5. 203). Each gate had two doors of 30 cubits (13.5m) high (*War* 5. 202).

Probably the Court of the Women was on the same level as the surrounding terrace (*chel*). It measured about 135 cubits square (60x60m). One could enter this court via the Eastern Gate and two others on the north and south side. The four unroofed corners of this court were used respectively by Nazirites, by lepers and for the storage of wood and oil. Alongside the perimeter walls around the courts side rooms for storage or eating the sacrificial meals could have been situated. A colonnade surrounded the temple courts, creating a kind of ambulatory.

According to *Middoth* 2. 5 the Court of the Women also had a balcony surrounding it "so that the women should behold from above and the men from below and that they should not mingle together".

³³⁶ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 109.

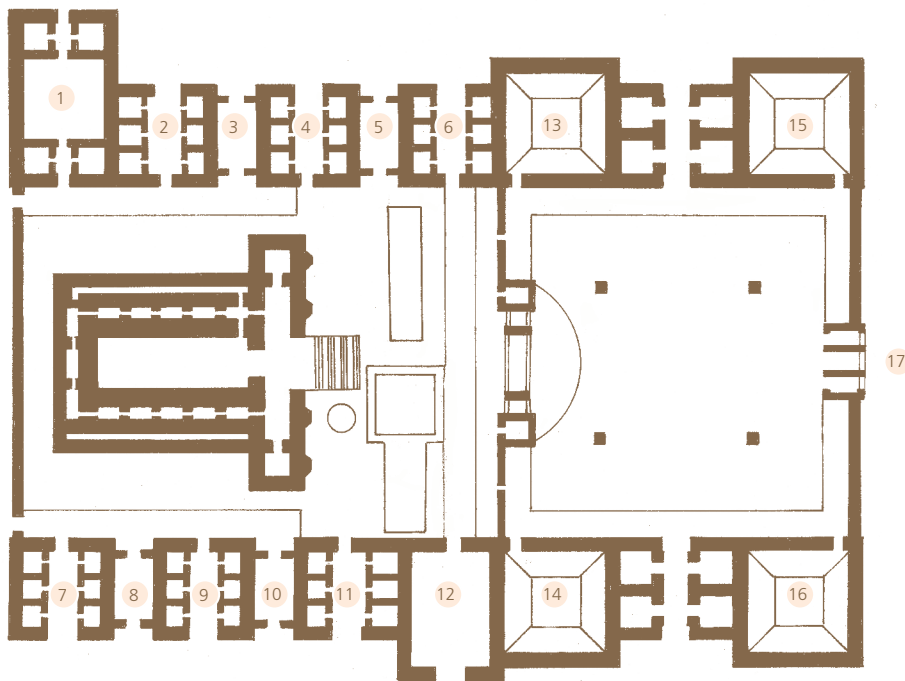
³³⁷ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 220.

Josephus further states that in the Court of women “a special place was walled off for the women and that they only were allowed to enter through the East Gate” (*War* 5.199).

A semi-circular flight of fifteen easy steps led up from the Court of the Women through the Nicanor Gate, called the Beautiful Gate. This gate gave entrance to the narrow Court of the Israelites (*Middoth* 1.4; 2.6). The heights of all gates were equal except this one. The height of this gate was 50 cubits (22.5m) and its doors were 40 cubits (18m) high. The Court of the Israelites was a narrow 5m wide strip, separated from the Court of the Priests by a low balustrade. According to Josephus the Court of the Priests was not only entered by the Nicanor Gate but also by two gates on the north and three gates on the south side. Jewish sources report on ten entrances into both inner courts together, including the East Gate and the Nicanor Gate (*War* 5.198). This is confirmed by the Mishnah (*Sheqal.* 6.3 and *Middoth* 1.4.).

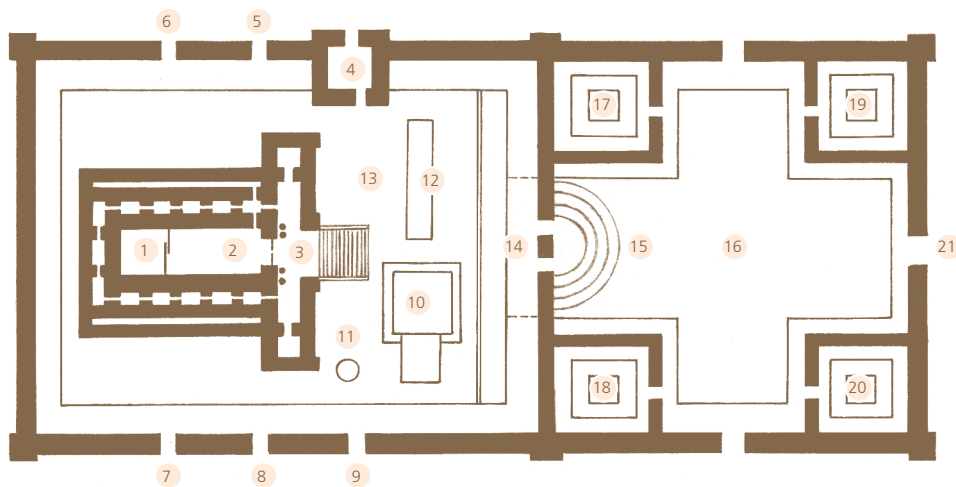
The Court of the Israelites and the Court of Priests together (called Azarah in *Middoth*) formed a large court of about 190x135 cubits (85x60m) within the temple edifice. The Court of the Israelites was a small strip of 135 cubits (60m) across the width of the court by 11 cubits (5m). It was separated from the court of Priests by a low stone parapet (*War* 5. 226; *Middoth* 2.6.). In the Court of the Priest on both sides of the temple there were several additional rooms like the chamber of the Hewn Stone and the chamber of the Hearth, according to *Middoth*.

In the following figures the floor plans of the precinct of Herod's temple are depicted in accordance with the descriptions of Josephus and the tractate *Middoth*. In broad lines both floor plans are the same, but they differ in details; the peripheral buildings flanking the courts are more elaborated.



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Chamber of the hearth | 5 Salt-parva chamber | 9 Gate of the firstlings | 13 Chamber of the lepers |
| 2 Gate of Jeconiah | 6 Gate of the flame | 10 Golah chamber | 14 Chamber of oils and wines |
| 3 Rinsing chamber | 7 Kindling gate | 11 Watergate | 15 Chamber of wood |
| 4 Gate of offerings | 8 Wood chamber | 12 Chamber of hewn stone | 16 Chamber of Nazirites |
| | | | 17 Eastern gate |

fig. 5.25a Herod's temple precinct with its gates and courts according to Tractate Middoth. (Redrawn by author from L. Ritmeyer *The Quest*).



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Debir | 7 Gate of the kindling | 13 Court of the priests | 19 Chamber of wood |
| 2 Hechal | 8 Gate of the firstlings | 14 Court of the Israelites | 20 Chamber of Nazirites |
| 3 Ulam | 9 Watergate | 15 Nicanor gate | 21 The Beautiful gate |
| 4 Rinsing chamber | 10 Altar | 16 Court of the women | |
| 5 Gate of the flame | 11 Laver | 17 Chamber of the lepers | |
| 6 Gate of the offerings | 12 Slaughtering place | 18 Chamber of oils and wines | |

fig. 5.25b Herod's temple precinct with its gates and courts according to Josephus (Redrawn by author after *The Jewish Encyclopedia*).

5.8.6. The temple edifice

According to Josephus, the ancient foundations of the temple were replaced by new ones (*Ant.* 15. 391-392). The temple edifice itself was built on huge foundations of solid blocks of white marble. These measured 20m by 5m. The entire sanctuary was wider in front and narrower behind (*War* 5. 207; *Middoth* 4.7) like a lion, styled shoulders on each side" (*War* 5. 207), According to Josephus and *Middoth*, the ground plan of the temple building was T-shaped because of the widened front (see fig. 25a and 25b). It was ascended to by a flight of 12 steps. The Holy Land model of M. Avi-Yonah is a nice three dimensional representation of Herod's temple.

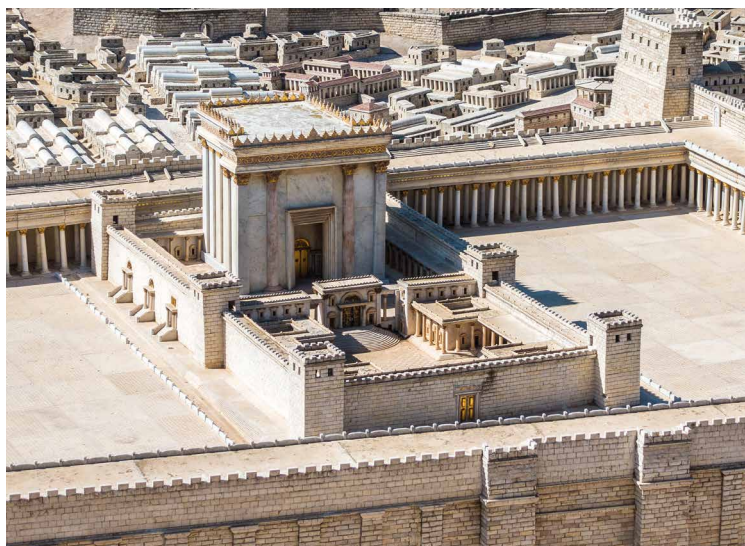


fig. 5.26 Holy Land model of the Herod's temple reconstructed by M. Avi-Yonah. (Photograph taken by author).

According to Josephus the height and width of the porch at the front side of the temple was equal, each 120 cubits. In *Ant.* 8. 64-65 he remarks: "As for the porch... its height was raised as high as a hundred and twenty cubits". The Mishnah, compiled a century later than Josephus, offers a description of a less high and broad porch of a hundred cubits (*Middoth* 3.6.). The gold covered facade of the porch was imposing. The entrance of the porch was 70 cubits high and 24 cubits wide. This entrance had no doors.

The inside measurements of the sanctuary proper corresponded with the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel: 20 cubits (9m) wide: the *ulam* 10 cubits (4.5m) deep: the *hechal* 40 cubits (18m) long and the *debir* was a perfect cube of 20x20x20 cubits (9x9x9m).

Like Solomon's temple, the temple had a tripartite arrangement, being the porch, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy Place had huge folding gold plated doors. It was covered by a large multi coloured veil between the porch and the Holy Place. The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were also separated by a veil. Above the doorway to the Holy Place a spreading vine made of gold was suspended. The Holy of Holies, a 20 cubits square room was, in contrast with the temple of Solomon, entirely empty. According to Josephus, the Holy of Holies was elevated and approached by a ramp or flights of steps.

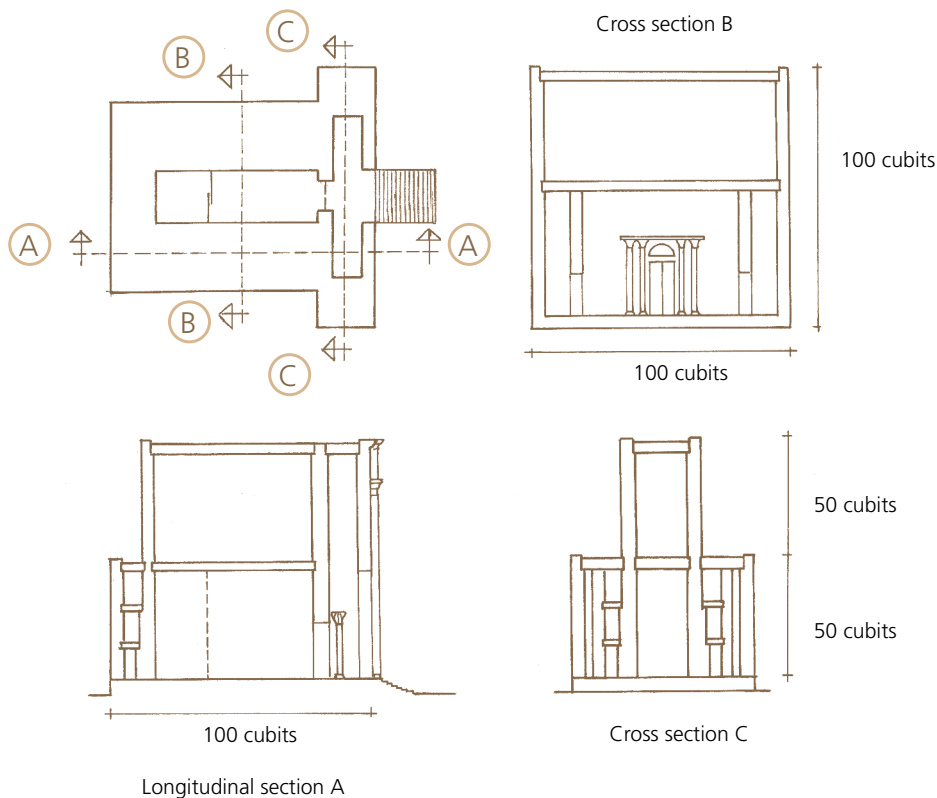


fig. 5.27 Floor plan, longitudinal and cross sections Herod's temple. (Drawn by author). The dimensions are according to the Mishnah.

In planning the temple building itself, Herod's architects had to face a problem in relation to the height of the edifice. Herod was probably keen on building a more imposing structure than the one he was replacing. But the second temple, erected after the return of the exiles, had followed the dimensions of Solomon's temple as set out in the first book of Kings.

Herod was bound by the recorded internal length and width of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies too. Possibly he referred to a passage in the book of Chronicles (2 Chron 3:4) which gave the porch of the temple the height of 120 cubits instead of the 30 cubits given in Kings.

Referring to the descriptions of the book Ezra and Sirach 50:2 the temple itself was doubled in height to 60 cubits. Around the sides of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies there were three storeys of interconnected rooms, 38 in all, 15 on the sides and 8 on the back. Access to these rooms was from the two sides of the porch (*War* 5. 220-21). The rooms were probably used for storage.



fig. 5.28a Bar Kochba coin with façade of Herod's temple.



fig. 5.28b Image of the temple in a fresco at he Dura-Europos synagogue.

5.8.7. Interior and furnishings of Herod's temple

In the court of the priests the burnt offering altar had been erected. Furthermore slaughtering facilities, the laver and other things needed for sacrifice were placed in the court of the priests. (*War* 5. 225; *Middoth* 3.1.6; 5.2; *Tamid* 1.4. There is also a reference to the "Chamber of Utensils" in *Tamid* 3.4.).

In front of the temple, the great altar of burnt offering was situated. It was made of un-hewn stone, forming a square of 14,5m and 4,5m high, with four protrusions or horns from the corners at the top. The priests mounted the altar by means of a ramp from the south.

North of the altar were the slaughtering facilities for the animals used in the sacrifices. These arrangements were equipped with all items to be needed to tie up the animals, hooks for hanging up the pieces of meat and a system for cleaning the tables and equipment.

A large laver basin for ritual washings, standing on 12 massive lions, was situated between the altar and the temple porch towards the south. There was machinery to fill the laver with water.

Inside the Holy Place were the Table of Showbread, the small incense altar and a golden seven-branched candelabrum (the Menorah) (*War* 5. 217). The room of the Holy Place was covered with gold. The Holy of Holies (*debir*) was also covered with gold and separated from the Holy Place by a curtain (*War*. 5. 212-213). Only priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place. The Holy of Holies could only be entered once a year on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest.

Contrasting with Solomon's temple, the Holy of Holies in Herod's temple was empty (*War* 5. 219 m. *Mid*. 4.7). In the original Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim above the Mercy seat. Rabbinic tradition identifies a large bedrock stone on the floor of the Holy of Holies, rising to a height of three-finger breadths, as the "Foundationstone" (*אבן השתייה*) (*Yoma* 5.2). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on this stone, which is presumed to be the rock in the Dome of the Rock. If the Foundationstone and the rock in the Dome of the Rock are identical, the location of Solomon's and Herod's temple are up for debate no longer.

5.8.8. Location of the temple

The question where exactly the temple was located has been fully debated. Most researchers assume that the Holy of Holies was located where the Dome of the Rock stands today.³³⁸ Nevertheless, the location of the original temple is unclear according to the description in the Mishnah (*Middoth*. 2.1).

There is no convincing archaeological evidence about the exact location of the temple. Furthermore, the measurements of the site on Mount Moriah (Haram al-Sharif) do not correlate with the Jewish literary sources. According to both the Mishnah and Josephus, the temple mount court was square; according to *Middoth* 2.1 500x500 cubits, approximately 6ha. According to the description of Josephus in *Ant*.15, 400 the measurements are smaller (approximately 4ha). Today's Haram al Sharif is much larger (15ha, 2,5 times the size of the temple mount according to *Middoth*).

The majority of researchers had the preconceived idea that the rock es-Sakhra was the site of the altar or the Holy of Holies. Some researchers like Conder (1884), Watson (1896) and Hollis (1934) placed the Holy of Holies over the Rock, while others like Schick (1896), Mommert (1903), Dalman (1909) and Vincent (1954) believed that the Rock is the place where the altar of burnt offerings was located. De Vogüé (1864) placed the temple in the northern part of the temple mount, while Fergusson (1878) located it in the southern part.³³⁹ In more recent studies comparable positions have been adopted. There are three major theories on the location of the temple, each of them backed up by plausible evidence:

1. The temple located at the Dome of the Rock. Busink in his major work about Jerusalem's temple accepts the traditional location of the temple, being the same as the Dome of the Rock.³⁴⁰ This view has also been well documented in recent years by the archaeologist Ritmeyer and by the head of Israel's Department of Antiquities Bahat.³⁴¹
2. The temple located north to the Dome of the Rock (Kaufman). If Kaufmann is correct in his view, the temple was originally located at the site of a small dome north of the Dome of the Rock, called the Dome of the Tablets.³⁴²
3. The temple located south to the Dome of the Rock (Bellarmino Bagatti, Sagiv) between the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa mosque at the Al Kas ablution fountain.

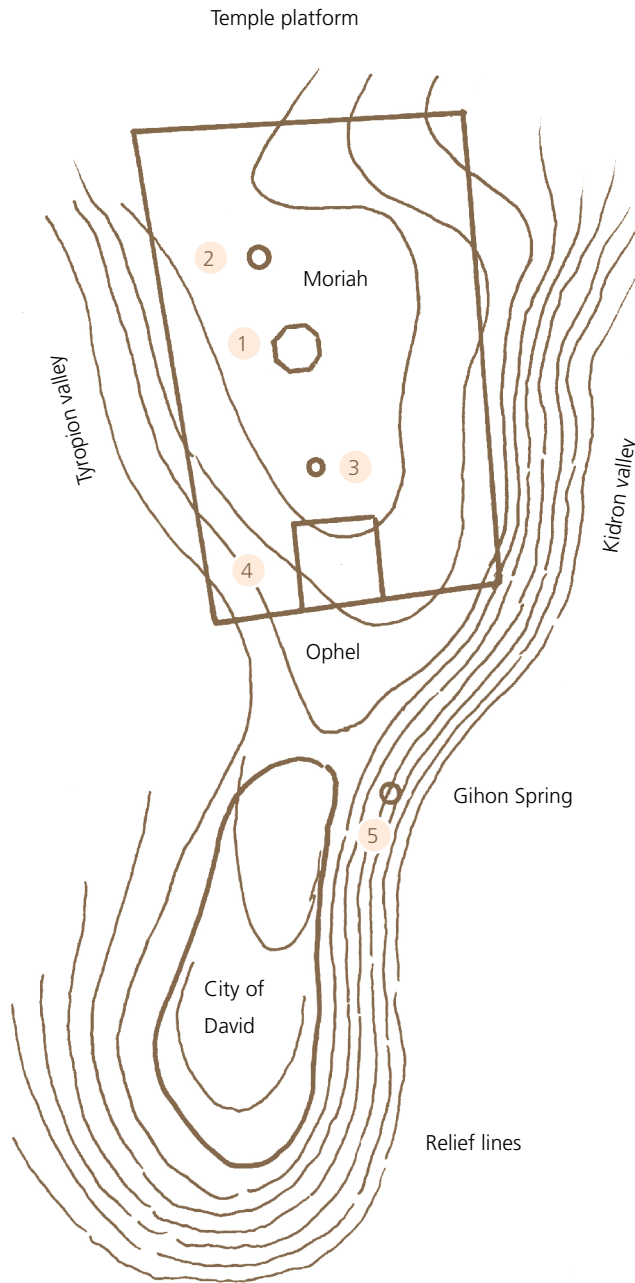
³³⁸ Sagiv, "The temple is on the southern part of the Temple Mount", *Tchumin* 14, 438, 6.

³³⁹ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 146-147.

³⁴⁰ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, Bd.1, Abb. 256.

³⁴¹ Ritmeyer, "Locating the Original Temple Mount", *BARev*, (1992), 26-28; and "The Ark of the Covenant: Where it stood in Solomon's Temple", *BARev*, (1996), 46-72.

³⁴² Kaufmann, "Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem stood", *BARev*, (1983), 40-59.



Proposed temple locations

- 1 Dome of the Rock
- 2 Dome of the Spirit
- 3 Al Kas fountain
- 4 South west corner temple mountain, adjacent to the Aksa mosque
- 5 Gihon Spring

fig. 5.29 Recent proposals for the location of Herod's temple. (Drawn by author).

Two striking variations on these theories are:

4. The far south-western location adjacent to the Al Aqsa mosque at the southern wall (Kaplan, Robertson).
5. The farther southern location of the temple just above the Gihon Spring on the south-eastern ridge of Jerusalem (Martin, Cornuke).

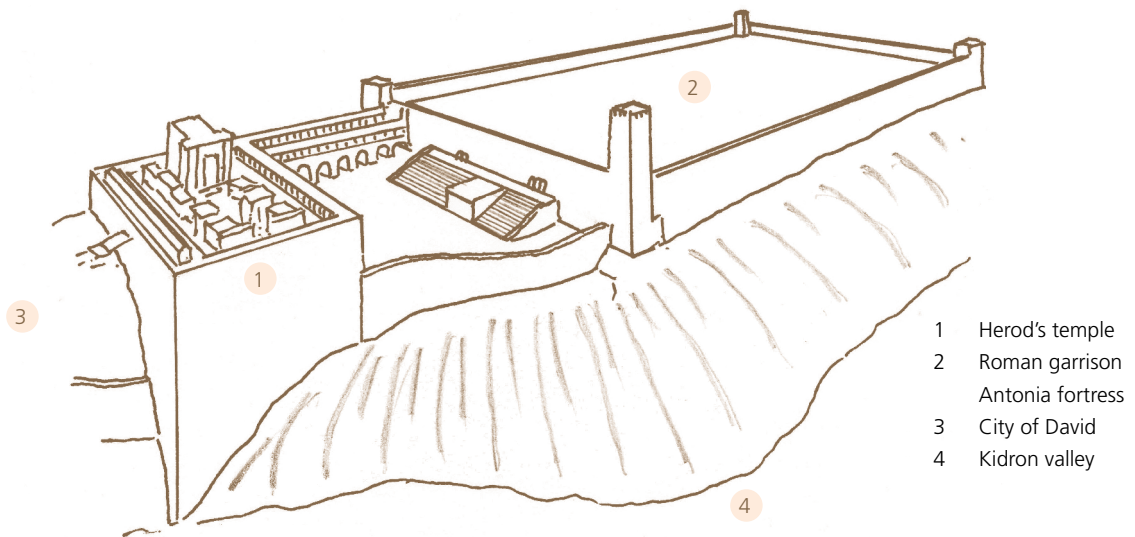


fig. 5.30 The Roman garrison, called Antonia fortress, on Mount Moriah and Herod's temple north of the City of David. (Redrawn by author after E. Martin).

There is unanimity among scholars on the location of the successive temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod on Mount Moriah. However, the problem remains how the Temple Mount actually developed into its present-day form. This is partly due to apparently conflicting information in the historical sources (of Josephus and the Mishnah) and the differing interpretations of the archaeological evidence.

5.9. The temple in the Dead Sea Scrolls

5.9.1 Creating a new concept

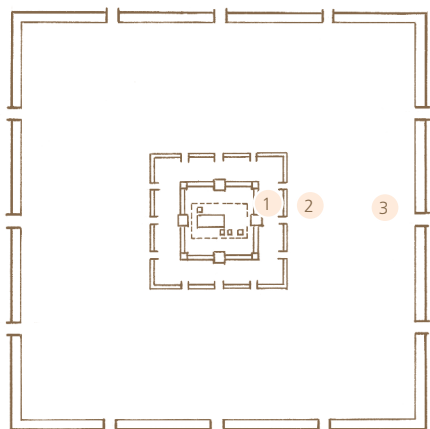
The Temple Scroll (11QTemple, preserved in several copies) describes the plan for an ideal future temple. The concept of a new temple according to the Temple Scroll is of particular importance for understanding Ezekiel's temple vision. In the temple of the Temple Scroll we find lines of resemblance in the arrangement of the sanctuary and its courts, with the Tabernacle, the first and second temple, but most of all with Ezekiel's visionary temple. Its central concern is the detailed description of the temple and the temple precincts, the holiness and purity of its cult and of the temple city.

The three most relevant copies are: 11QTemple^a (11Q19), 11QTemple^b (11Q20), and 4Q524. 11Q19 and 20 are to be dated in the period of the last part of the 1st century BCE and first part of the 1st century CE. 4Q524 is important since it is the oldest surviving copy to be dated at 150-25 BCE - at least one hundred years earlier than 11Qtemple^a.

We may assume that the description of the temple has been based on the temple that existed in the time of its composition, i.e. Zerubbabel's temple.³⁴³ The sections devoted to the design and construction of the temple, ordinances to safeguard the purity of the structure, the compound and even the entire city in which it stood, are highly relevant to this research.

The temple scroll describes a temple compound arranged in three concentric square courts, possibly in resemblance with the tribal camp in the desert and the ideal concept of sacred space of Ezekiel's temple. That means that the scroll presents an idealised square temple plan which exceeds the circumference of the present day temple mount.

³⁴³ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 24-26; Garcia Martinez, Van der Woude, *De Rollen van de Dode Zee*, 129-136.



- 1 Inner court (300 x 300 cubits) 4 gates
- 2 Middle court (500 x 500 cubits) 12 gates
- 3 Outer court (1600 x 1600 cubits) 12 gates

fig. 5.31a Schematic representation of the temple compound with three courts envisioned in the Temple Scroll. (Redrawn by author after Yigal Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*).

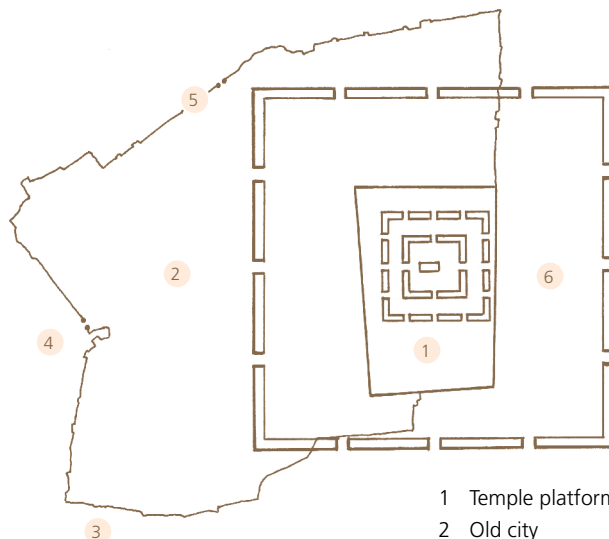


fig. 5.31b Temple compound situated in the old city of Jerusalem.
(Drawn by author).

- 1 Temple platform
- 2 Old city
- 3 City wall
- 4 Jaffa gate
- 5 Damascus gate
- 6 Kidron valley

Does the Temple Scroll offer a real image of the actual temple of Zerubbabel? That could be of great value for the understanding of the architectural structure and the ritual processes of that temple.

There are many scholarly positions. Some hold the view that this temple was primarily meant to be an idealistic temple or an eschatological one, representing a vision of the Messianic temple of the Messianic Age. Most likely the temple of the *Temple Scroll* comes forward as a composite temple. According to Schiffman, the author or redactor used elements of real and imaginary temples in order to create a unique temple.³⁴⁴

The goal of the plan for the temple and its courts is to create a compound of concentric zones of holiness, in which the holiness emanating from the Divine Presence in the centre, the temple itself, radiates outward across the entire land of Israel. As the holiness radiates outward, so the levels of ritual purity progress inward, with each court demanding a higher degree of purity.

5.9.2. Description of the temple plan

The guiding architectural principle for this plan is the square court in conformity with Ezekiel's vision, but in other respects it is not Ezekiel's temple at all. The temple building itself looks like Solomon's temple, except for the three square courts and some other edifices and furnishings.

In the temple according to the Temple Scroll new structures occur, unknown in the biblical descriptions of either of the two temples. A short overview will follow here:³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ García Martínez, Schiffman, "The Construction of the Temple According to the Temple Scroll", RdQ 17, (1996), 555-571.

³⁴⁵ Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 91-93; Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related texts*, 36-42.

1. The "House of the Staircase", a massive tower to be built on the north-western corner of the temple, with a walkway allowing access to the sanctuary from its top;
2. The "House of the Laver", to be situated at the south-eastern corner. It has been described as being 21 cubits square, and located 50 cubits from the altar of burnt offerings;
3. The "House of the Utensils". It has the same size as the House of the Laver and has been located seven cubits from the House of the Laver. This house is meant for storage of temple utensils used for sacrifice on the altar;
4. A slaughterhouse, a 12-columned building in the north-western corner of the inner courtyard, with chains and rings hanging from the ceiling, to which animals are to be attached;
5. A stoa or colonnade on the west side of the temple.

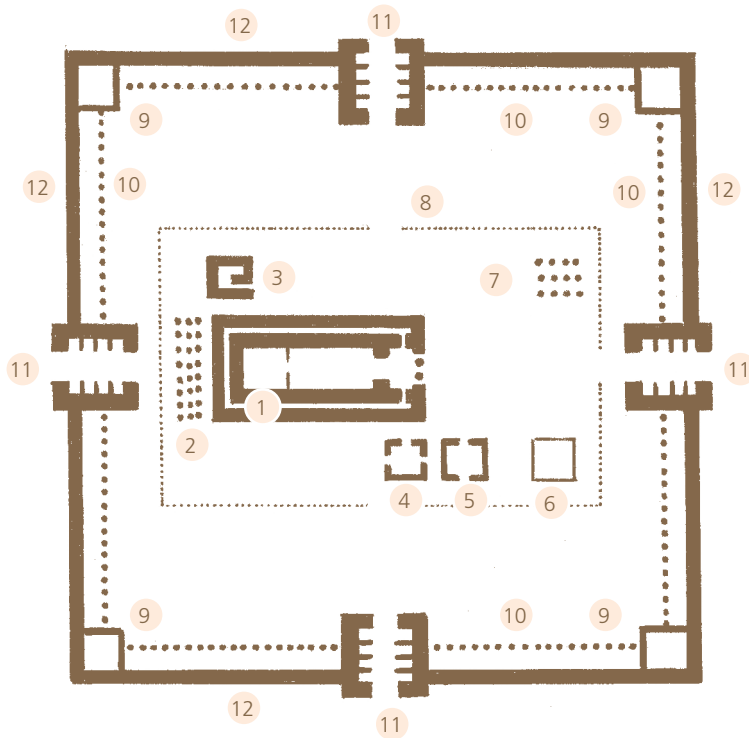


fig. 5.32 The inner court of the temple according to the Temple Scroll (Redrawn by author after Yigael Yadin *The Temple Scroll*).

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Temple | 7 Slaughter place |
| 2 Stoa behind the temple | 8 Partition |
| 3 Stairhouse | 9 Kitchens |
| 4 House of the Laver | 10 Stoa around the inner court |
| 5 House of Altar utensils | 11 Gate house |
| 6 Altar | 12 Perimeter wall |

In the Temple Scroll three courts are discerned, namely: the Inner Court, the Middle Court and the Outer Court.

1. The Inner Court is represented as a square of 280 cubits. The wall around it has four gates, one on each side. Furthermore, worked into the wall was a stoa (roofed colonnade) with rooms for the priests and kitchens for preparing the sacrifices. Only ritually pure priests and Levites are allowed to enter the Inner Court.

2. The Middle Court is to be 480 cubits in length on each side and 100 cubits wide. In the wall on the outside, rooms are constructed. The outside measurements are 500 cubits per side, the same as the court of Solomon's temple, the outer court of Ezekiel's temple and the dimensions of the Temple Mount (*Middoth*. 2.1). The Middle Court is restricted to ritually pure male Israelites over 20 years of age. To accommodate them, the Middle Court has 12 gates.

3. According to Crawford, the Outer Court is a major innovation of the Temple Scroll; none of the other Israelite temples in antiquity, real or projected, had more than two courts.

"The purpose of this innovative third court is in keeping with the zones of holiness which the Scroll is establishing around the Temple; the Outer Court is for ritually pure Israelite women, children and proselytes, and allows them to participate in the public festivals of the Temple".³⁴⁶

As a consequence, the dimensions of the Outer Court are very large. The walls encompassing this court are 'about' 1600 cubits, distancing the temple precinct from its profane environment; they would extend over half the old city of Jerusalem and the adjacent Kidron valley. Like the Middle Court, the Outer Court also has 12 gates.

The Outer Court is provided with installations to enable families and clans to celebrate the public festivals together. The outer wall has three storeys; each storey has sets of rooms: an inner 'chamber', an outer 'room' and a porch as part of the stoa or colonnade (cf. 4Q365a cols. 41.17-42.9). On the roof of the outer wall there are structures that are to be used to construct booths for the festival of Sukkot.

Around the Outer Court a terrace (רִיבּוּר) is provided, 14 cubits wide, with 12 steps leading up to it. Outside the terrace a fosse (הַיִּל) is provided, to separate the holy Temple from the city.³⁴⁷

In the eyes of the Qumran community, Herod's temple was totally corrupt and unsatisfactory. With great concern the author of the Scroll portrayed the temple in the light of preserving its sanctity by three walled courtyards with restricted admission and prescribed purity restrictions.³⁴⁸

5.10. Description of the New Jerusalem

In the caves of Qumran fragments of seven Aramaic manuscripts were discovered that belong to a scroll (4Q554) that is concerned with the description of the New Jerusalem. Some columns in 4Q554 overlap with 2Q24 and 5Q15.

According to García Martínez "The description of the city and the temple in the New Jerusalem is located midway between Ezekiel's description of the future Jerusalem and the Heavenly Jerusalem of the New Testament Book of Revelation 21-22".³⁴⁹ However, García Martínez also indicated the different conceptual framework of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21-22, the Jerusalem in which there is no temple.³⁵⁰ The New Jerusalem manuscripts describe an idealised city of which the name never appears in these texts.

In the worldview of the ancient cultures, the planning of an ideal city was connected with the cosmic order and the mathematical expression of this order. The ideal city in Jewish tradition appears as a city which has been designated to be a sacred city shaped by means of geometrical figures.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 39.

³⁴⁷ Crawford, *ibid.* 41.

³⁴⁸ Palmer, *Expressions of sacred space*, 264.

³⁴⁹ García Martínez, "New Jerusalem", 2:609.

³⁵⁰ García Martínez, "The 'New Jerusalem' and the Future Temple of the Manuscripts from Qumran", 213.

³⁵¹ Chyutin, *The New Jerusalem Scroll from Qumran*, 131.

So the physical expression of the sacredness of the New Jerusalem is the special geometrical structure of the city and its division in zones. In its layout the square and the oblong were preferred as the geometrical basis for the spatial description of the city plan.³⁵² The geometrical layout of the New Jerusalem is in many respects comparable to the geometrical layout of Ezekiel's temple. The plan of the New Jerusalem includes valuable information for the purpose of a careful examination of Ezekiel's temple.

Like the vision report of Ezekiel, the description of the New Jerusalem has been presented in the form of a guided tour under the direction of a heavenly figure. The entire area (the external oblong enclosure) of the New Jerusalem described in 4Q554 is a temple city within a large urban area, almost twice as large as the sacred reserve described in Ezek 48:30-35.

All measurements are minutely recorded. In contrast to the description of Ezekiel's temple in minute detail, the city in the account of Ezekiel has been described in a very succinct way; only the circumference and the names of the twelve gates are specified. The New Jerusalem texts, however, give an exact and detailed plan of the city, its houses, streets and gates.

It is interesting to compare the general plan in the descriptions of Ezekiel and the New Jerusalem texts.³⁵³ According to the prophet Ezekiel, the future city will be a square of 4,500x4,500? (see chapter 6.2.4.). The perimeter wall will be a total of 1,8000)? The numbers can be interpreted as cubits as well as rods.³⁵⁴

In the New Jerusalem Text this square shape has changed into a rectangular one, and moreover he has altered its size. The dimensions of the external, oblong enclosure of the entire area of the New Jerusalem are 140 *ris* for the long sides and 100 *ris* for the short sides (that 24x17 km).³⁵⁵ This rectangle comprises a magnificent city, flanked, as in Ezekiel, by twelve large gates as well as by 480 posterns and protected by 1432 towers.

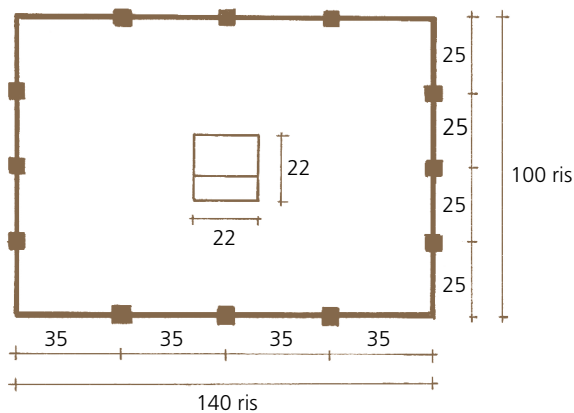


fig. 5.33 The external oblong enclosure of the New Jerusalem with its wall, gates and inside the temple proper. (Redrawn by author after M. Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the temple Area*).

According to Jewish tradition the plan of the ideal city is square: the temple city proper is a square of 22x22 *ris* (about 3,5x3,5 km) divided into two oblong parts: the residential area on the north side and the temple area on the south side (see fig. 5.34a). The residential area is 22x14 *ris* (about 3,5x2,4 km) wide and designed as an orthogonal grid of streets of different width. The streets enclose square blocks (*parzita*) of residential houses.

³⁵² Chyutin, *ibid.*, 107.

³⁵³ García Martínez, *Qumranica Minora II*, 8-12.

³⁵⁴ Only the number of measurement is mentioned, not the unit of measurement.

³⁵⁵ One *ris* is about 170m.

Each block is encompassed by streets on all its sides.³⁵⁶The temple area is 22x8 ris (about 3,5x1,5 km) wide and includes a square enclosure of 1600x1600 cubits (about 800x800m) wide with the temple inside it. The enclosure is surrounded by an unoccupied strip (migras) of 100 cubits wide. Figure 5.34b shows that the area of the whole city of the New Jerusalem (temple area + residential area) is eight times greater than that of Jerusalem before the destruction of the second temple.

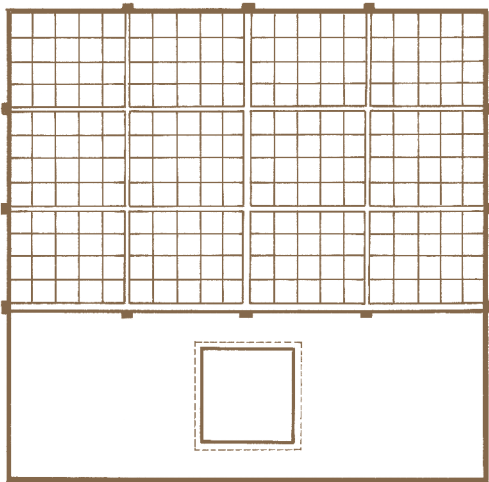
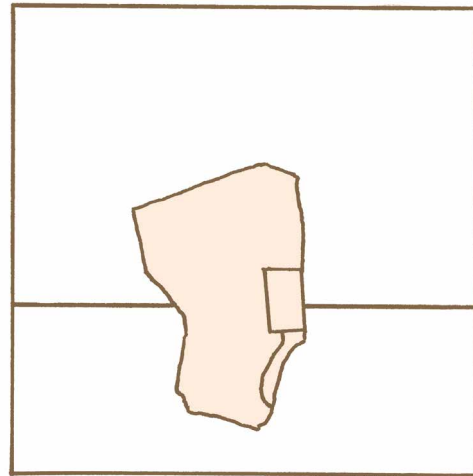


fig. 5.34a Schematic representation of the New Jerusalem according to Scroll 4Q554. (Redrawn by author after M. Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the temple Area*).



5.34b The New Jerusalem city projected over the old City of the second temple period. (Drawn by author).

5.11. Conclusions

The plan, furnishing and decoration of the Tabernacle, Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple and Herod's temple resembled each other in many respects. The architecture, materials and dimensions, however, differ since the Tabernacle was only a portable tent shrine, whereas the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod were made as a permanent dwelling place for the Name God, built of stone and cedar wood.

The splendour of Herod's enlarged temple complex exceeded the fairly modest proportions of Solomon's and Zerubbabel's temple.

Like many other temples in the Ancient Near East, the first as well as the second temple in Jerusalem were located on an elevated platform, separated from its profane environment, situated on Mount Moriah adjacent to Solomon's palace. In the biblical accounts no information has been given about the design of the temple site.

All Israelite sanctuaries from Solomon's to Herod's temple had the same tripartite arrangement (vestibule, main hall and innermost room) and were surrounded by one or more courts as usual in Ancient Near Eastern temple building cult.

In Solomon's temple there was nothing that corresponded to the hypostyle hall of an Egyptian temple, but that feature was introduced into Solomon's palace, in the "House of the forest of Lebanon" and the "Porch of pillars".

³⁵⁶ Chyutin, *The New Jerusalem Scroll from Qumran*, 85, 127.

Not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern temple building cult, the preparation and construction of the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple were ordered by YHWH. He said to Moses: "Make this exactly like the pattern (תבנית) I will show you" (Exod 25:9). The Tabernacle and temple are considered to be the earthly counterparts of a heavenly model like in other temple building accounts of the Ancient Near East.

After the dedication of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon the Glory of YHWH (כבוד-יהוה) filled the sanctuaries (Exod 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chron 7:2-3). About the 2nd temple nothing is said of the Glory of the Lord entering after having left the temple of Solomon (cf. Ezek. 8:23).

The Elephantine temple built in the 6th century BCE was a simple architectural design analogous to the Tabernacle. The building had a room of two chambers surrounded by a courtyard. Its dimensions were much smaller than Solomon's temple.

Zerubbabel's temple built after the decree of Cyrus must have corresponded in size to the floor plan of Solomon's temple and was simpler in design and more austere.

The Hasmoneans have changed the appearance of the Temple Mount substantially. The square temple platform had been fortified and extended on the south side. They also built a stronghold or citadel to the north-western corner of the Temple Mount, which could be identified as the Hasmonean *Baris*.

King Herod built a magnificent new temple as a replacement for Zerubbabel's temple. He maintained the basic floor plan and dimensions of the temple, but enlarged the courtyards by extending the size of the platform on the temple mount. In order to enlarge the surface of the temple area Herod's engineers had to construct enormous retaining walls. These retaining walls enclosed the whole Temple Mount, except for a part of the eastern wall.

The concept of a new temple according to the Temple Scroll is of particular importance for understanding Ezekiel's temple vision. The guiding architectural principle for this plan is the square court in conformity with Ezekiel's vision.

The physical expression of the New Jerusalem is the special geometrical structure of the city and its division into zones. In its layout the square and the oblong were preferred as the geometrical basis for the spatial description of the city plan. The New Jerusalem described in 4Q554 is a city of extraordinary proportions, more than twice the size of the sacred reserve described in Ezekiel 48:30-35.

It may be concluded that Ezek 40-48 draws a very detailed plan of the future temple but that the description of the New Jerusalem is rather succinct. The author of 4Q554 changed the square ground plan in a rectangle and altered its size. He reinterpretes Ezekiel's temple and city and presents it as an idealised future city. This transmission shows the interpretation of Ezek 40-48 by the Qumran community.

6. Ezekiel's visionary temple

Its plan and arrangement

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. Ezekiel's temple a riddle of spatial design?

Many commentators argue that the temple vision in Ezek. 40-48 must be regarded as a later addition to the book Ezekiel. However, "the temple vision provides an appropriate and necessary culmination to the book that would otherwise make little sense without its climactic vision".³⁵⁷

Taking the line of Greenberg of a holistic approach in reading the book Ezekiel, I agree with the assumption that the entire book Ezekiel was written according to a well structured design, of which the final temple vision presents the culmination of the entire book.³⁵⁸

What is expressed by the description of the temple vision of the prophet Ezekiel?

In his commentary on Ezek. 40-48, Milgrom remarks: "It is well accepted that Ezekiel's visionary sanctuary is a riddle in spatial design".³⁵⁹ By visualising the vision however, efforts should be undertaken to get a clearer picture of Ezekiel's temple in order to shed more light on the riddles of a complicated biblical text.

6.1.2. Ezekiel's temple vision a blueprint, concept or symbol

According to the Hebrew Bible the models of the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple were seen as "blueprints" originated in heaven, not on earth. In chapter 5.1.3 has been concluded that the "heavenly temple" served as the basis for the revelation of the earthly sanctuaries' shape (see Exod 25:9, 40 and 1Chron 28:12). Also in the New Testament it is said that the earthly temple was "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven" (Heb 8:5).

A similar pattern becomes visible in Ezekiel's vision account. In Ezek 40:2 the plan or concept of Ezekiel's visionary temple, shown by a supernatural figure, was transmitted in visions of God (מראות אלהים). However, the question arises whether the temple vision is also meant to be a blueprint or something else. As a vision it is distinguished from the models or blueprints of the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple.

A blueprint is a technical drawing and not a written document like Ezekiel's vision report. Does the temple vision really present a practical building plan, a blueprint in the modern sense? Ezekiel's temple does not fulfil all the conditions of a blueprint. It lacks a command to build, it lacks vertical dimensions, it lacks some important structures (no walls and porticoes around the inner court are mentioned) and it lacks most furniture of Solomon's temple.

In determining the character and purpose of the temple vision, a full picture is indispensable. We need a full picture of its historical, theological and factual content as well as its literary form.

Disagreements about the question whether Ezekiel's temple vision is the blueprint for a concrete building project, viewing an actual temple or an imaginary symbolic temple have puzzled scholars over the years. Conservative scholars have suggested that the temple vision must be explained as a blueprint. Most contemporary scholars presume that Ezekiel's temple must be understood symbolically.

Within this range of views Harmut Gese in 1955 wrote his redaction historical oriented dissertation. Gese takes a special position with his proposal to read Ezekiel's temple vision as a *Verfassungsentwurf*, understood as a written document representing a draft or concept referring to the composition of Ezek 40-48.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 5.

³⁵⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20, AB 22*, 18-27.

³⁵⁹ Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 41.

³⁶⁰ Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiel Kap. 40-48*.

He speaks about Ezekiel's vision account in terms of a concept (*Entwurf*) indicating the religious political organisation of a future restored Israel.³⁶¹

According to me, Gese's *Verfassungsentwurf* is not intended to clarify the spatial concept of Ezekiel's temple in terms of architecture. Therefore it is all the more remarkable that Gese has characterised Ezek. 40-42 substantively as a *visionäre Baubeschreibung* (a visionary builder's specification or a blueprint).³⁶² In my view the terms *Verfassungsentwurf* and *Baubeschreibung* do not match. A draft, concept or program outlines the contours of a plan, an idea, but a blueprint or builder's specification denotes in detail all parts of an actual operational building plan. Ezekiel's vision cannot reflect such a detailed plan because Ezekiel's text only presents a two-dimensional description of a sanctuary intended as a message of hope for the future restoration of Israel. Ezekiel's vision in its literary form looks like a *visionäre Baubeschreibung* (a visionary builder's specification or a blueprint), but cannot be interpreted in that way.

My proposition is reading the temple vision as a concept has more in common with Gese's term *Verfassungsentwurf* when applied to the spatial design of Ezekiel's temple precinct. The description of the temple as a concept will be further elaborated in chapter 7.

Whether we read the temple vision as a blueprint, concept or symbolically, the main research questions evoked by the vision report still apply to the depiction and interpretation of the temple vision. Evidently, in the vision report emphasis has been laid on the description of the groundplan and architecture of the temple compound.

In succession all structures, courts and other open space are catalogued, and the measurements are given in detail. Milgrom answers the question of what is intended with the spatial design of Ezekiel's temple. On account of Ezek. 42:20 he indicates that "spaces measure divisions in Ezekiel's sanctuary to separate the holy from the common".³⁶³ On that account the temple compound or *temenos* is separated from its environment by a massive perimeter wall. This *temenos* composed of two courts, is accessed by massive guarded gate houses. These courts, including the temple platform are vertically graded in three levels. Entering the *temenos* an increasing gradation of holiness is expressed in restricted access and upgrading levels of the platforms. Like its predecessors Ezekiel's temple is east-west oriented.

6.1.3. A two-dimensional description of three-dimensional structures

Ezekiel was walking through a three-dimensional structure, but he gives a two dimensional description of the temple. A two-dimensional schematic outline of the groundplan may suggest that it is was no more than a first draft and details were less important. However, the prophet also observed all kinds of details, like window openings and ornamentations.

Because blueprints for a building plan must be three-dimensional and not two dimensional like Ezekiel's description, the vision can be characterised as the conceptualisation of a future temple and not as a blueprint for a soon to be built temple.

Levenson and Greenberg³⁶⁴ call it a "Program of Restoration". Ezekiel's auditors in exile needed hope, the promise of restoration nourished their hopes. The temple described in many respects, brings to mind its predecessors. Its dimensions and layout, however, are indications of a new temple in times to come. In Ezekiel's description one observes a striking mingling of reminiscences of preceding sanctuaries as well as images of the new envisioned temple. On the one hand the dimensions and tripartite arrangement of the temple proper are comparable with the temple of Solomon, on the other hand the two dimensional measurements and characteristic features in the description of Ezekiel's temple differ from Solomon's temple. Apart from the two-dimensional description of this temple, the enlargement of the temple

³⁶¹ Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechieel Kap. 40-48*, 1.

³⁶² Gese, *ibid.*, 6.

³⁶³ Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 41.

³⁶⁴ Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, 1; Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration", 181.

compound with a third square forecourt of 500 rods (Ezek 42:15-20) and its surrounding sacred area are notable. On the one hand, Ezekiel presents a detailed description of temple structures and furnishings; on the other hand, important objects are missing or are left out of consideration. Why and what does that mean? These questions will be discussed in chapter 7.

6.1.4. The prophecy of a new temple

The vision of a new temple did not come as a complete surprise. In Ezek 37:26 it had already been prophesied. The Israelites would return to their homeland, Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt and the Davidic kingdom would be restored.

In 573 BCE in the twenty-fifth year after the deportation of Jehoiachin and fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the hand of the Lord was upon the prophet Ezekiel, who was carried off in exile. In a vision he was brought from Babylon to the land of Israel, placed on top of a very high mountain.

The picture of a new temple was shown to him. He saw a city-like structure. Then he saw a man whose appearance was like bronze with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand (Ezek 40:1-3). This supernatural figure guided the prophet through the walls, gates, courtyards and chambers of the envisioned temple and gave him their measurements. Finally, this supernatural guide said to the prophet: "Describe the house of Israel everything you see" (Ezek 40:4).

The appearance of a "heavenly" messenger is described not only in Ezek 40:3, but in a comparable fashion also in Ezek 8:2. There the prophet saw the figure of a man "from what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal". In the book of Revelation, which reflects many images of the book Ezekiel, we read in chapter 1:13-15 that the apostle John saw "someone like a son of man. His eyes were like blazing fire and his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace".

Some other biblical texts draw attention to the figure of a man holding a measuring rod in his hand. In Ezek 42:15 he measured the temple area all around. In Zech 2:1 the prophet Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. In Rev 11:1 the apostle John "was given a measuring rod like a staff and he was told, come and measure the temple of God..." In Rev 21:15 the one who talked to the apostle had "a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls".

6.2. "I will put my sanctuary among them for ever" (Ezek. 37:26b).

6.2.1. The assignments to make or to show a habitation for God

The exclamation of Israel's God in Ezek 43:6: "I will dwell among my people", is like an echo of the Sinai that sounds through the entire Old Testament, and particularly in the prophetic speeches in the book Ezekiel. The preamble to the temple vision is already found in Ezek 37:26b-27a: "I will put my sanctuary among them for ever. My dwelling place will be with them".

The purpose of all subsequent sanctuaries in Israel's history in the past and future is to make a habitation for God's Name amidst his people. In Exod 25:8 the assignment to build (עשה) the Tabernacle was given. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them". In 2 Sam 7 we read about king David's intention to build a house for God. However, God declared that a house for his Name should be built (יבנה בית לשמי) by David's son and successor. In this context the words עשה and בנה are identical. The establishment of an actual tent shrine and edifice are intended. On the other hand, in Ezek 40:4 the prophet received the assignment to only report all he had observed and not to make or build it. Consequently, we may assume that the vision of Ezekiel is not proposed to be conceived as a blueprint for the benefit of a soon to be built temple, but as a picture of Israel's glorious future.

6.2.2. The meaning of תכנית in Ezek 43:11

Although in the introductory clause of Ezek 40:4 the word תכנית, “shape” or “plan” not is mentioned explicitly, it will be clear that YHWH revealed the “plan” of the envisioned temple like He did for the Tabernacle and Solomon’s temple. The special meaning of תכנית in Ezek 43:11 will be compared to תבנית in Exod 25:9, 40 and 1 Chron 28:11. In Exod 25:9 the origin of the Tabernacle is given: “Make this Tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern (תבנית) I will show you”. Verse 40 adds: “To the pattern shown to you on the mountain”. KJV, NIV, NRSV translate תבנית as “pattern”, NEB as “design” and the Dutch NV as “model”. In 1 Chron 28:12 comparable words are used. LXX reads: παράδειγμα. In the cases of both Exod 25:9 and 1 Chron 28:12, the noun תבנית is related to the verb “build” (בנה).

What is intended by Ezekiel’s temple? Should this temple be interpreted as reality or fiction? Are we to choose between one of these options or do we have to look in a quite another direction? For instance, should we consider the temple as the perceptual embodiment of YHWH’s holiness and glory, dwelling amidst his people? What is intended by the text: literally carrying out instructions or could a metaphorical, idealistic reading be meant? Will the house of Israel be summoned to build this temple one day? Could Ezek 43:10-11 be an indication for executing the rebuilding of a real physical temple?

In vs.10 of MT we read: ומדרו את-תכנית “and let them measure the shape / proportion / plan” or in a more abstract sense the “perfect standard”. Joyce argues that in spite of its distinct vocabulary, Ezek 43:10-11 seems to convey very much the same meaning as the more typical language of Exod 25:9, 40, which uses the fairly common word תבנית for that which was shown to Moses on the mountain.³⁶⁵ Some wish to emend Ezek 43:10-11 to assimilate it to the language of Exod 25.

The noun תכנית from the stem תכן more precisely means “shape”, “proportion”, “standard”.³⁶⁶ The sense of the verbal root in the Niphal has to do with what is regulated or standard. Zimmerli argues that the essential idea of תכנית is “correctness”.³⁶⁷ On first sight its meaning, just like the orthographical form displays much likeness with תבנית in Exodus and 1 Chronicles. In the context of the book Ezekiel, however, תכנית is used as a more abstract expression, for this temple is not meant to be an actual building plan for returning exiles.

Yet the second part of Ezekiel 37, gives guidance to the building of a temple in a distant future of a restored Israel. The prophet Ezekiel was only instructed to “see”, “describe”, “make known”, and “write”. Stevenson observed that what is omitted in Ezek 43:10-11 is particularly significant. In contrast to Solomon’s temple, Ezekiel was not given the instruction to build the temple.³⁶⁸

I suggest perceiving תכנית as the perfect standard of measurement for the concept of a future temple.³⁶⁹ So תכנית should be viewed as an intermediate reading between the extremes of blueprint and idea. The noun תכנית occurs twice in the book Ezekiel. In Ezek 28:12 the king of Tyre is described as the one who seals the proportion: i.e. he set the standard of perfection: “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect beauty”.

According to Ezek 43:7b-11 the house of Israel was not a model of virtue and perfection. YHWH accuses the Israelite because of defiling his holy Name with their harlotry and abominable practices. They did not meet the YHWH’s intended standard of holiness.

³⁶⁵ Joyce, “Ezekiel 40-42: The Earliest Heavenly Ascent Narrative?” 29.

³⁶⁶ NIDOTTE, 4, 292-293.

³⁶⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 81.

³⁶⁸ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 17.

³⁶⁹ The term concept is comparable with Gese’s term Verfassungsentwurf when it applied to the spatial design of Ezekiel’s temple and not to the composition of the vision account (cf. 6.1.2.).

Ezek 43:10 indicates that the house of Israel, when it becomes ashamed of its sins, it is to measure out the temple according to its “perfect” shape or standard, i.e. YHWH’s standard.

This is why vs. 11 opens with a conditional clause *ואם ינכלו מכל אשר-עשו* “and if they will be ashamed of all they have done” (see chapter 2.4.4 Ezek 43:11). After that the house of Israel will measure out *צורת הבית* “the ground plan of the temple” which Ezekiel has displayed to them. Thereupon vs.11 ends with the clause: *וישמרו את-כל-צורתו ואת-כל-הקתיו ועשו אותם* “and they may observe the whole plan and all its ordinances and do them”. For the time being this concept or ground plan has to be kept in mind as the perfect embodiment of sacred space for the return of the divine glory among the Israelites.

In my view *תבנית* and *תבנית* do not express difference but rather nuance. In Exod 25 and 1 Chron 28 the plan or model of a three dimensional physical sanctuary is revealed, but in Ezek 43 the image of a new temple is limited to a concept or first draft of a two-dimensional ground plan. The concept has yet to be elaborated into a concrete building plan. *תבנית* and *תבנית* are synonymous nouns and support the principle of uniformity in the layout of Israelite sanctuaries according to above mentioned rabbis (see 6.2.1.).

6.2.3. The plan of Ezekiel’s temple

According to MT, Ezekiel was instructed to measure the plan of the future temple and to proclaim to the house of Israel - in this particular case the house of Israel was represented by the exiles - all that was shown to him (Ezek 40:5).

In many respects Ezekiel’s temple resembles the Tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and Herod, but there are also differences in plan, measurements and furnishing. There are detailed descriptions of gates, for instance, which are not found in the descriptions of Solomon’s temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Furthermore, in comparison with previous sanctuaries, the text of Ezek. 40-48 seems to suggest a temple site, surrounded by a much larger sacred area. Accordingly the enlarged temple site should be situated in quite a different geographical landscape.

The plan of Ezekiel’s temple is largely in line with its predecessors. On the basis of the plan and the dimensions of the temple the rabbis Ariel and Richman, founder and director respectively of the Temple Institute, give consideration to an important principle of Israelite sanctuaries, namely uniformity. According to them the Tabernacle, the first, second and third temple are all bound in structure and form by a single unifying thread.³⁷⁰ The design of YHWH’s sanctuary must necessarily be homogeneous for any holy temple erected by the nation of Israel at any time in history. The essential scheme of the holy temple is, according to both rabbis, eternal and unchanging. The alterations which are discernible from temple to temple affect only the cosmetic, outer layers of this undying edifice.

In his introduction to the Mishnah, Maimonides points out that it is permitted to enlarge the temple so long as its basic structure is maintained. “All this is put in writing by the hand of YHWH who instructed me” (1 Chron 28:19).

The final vision report of Ezek. 40-48 has been described as the ideal image of “a perfectly ordered Israelite society living in a perfectly ordered homeland under the leadership of a perfectly ordered priesthood serving in a perfectly ordered temple complex”.³⁷¹ The layout of the visionary temple described in Ezek 40-42, however, does not give a complete picture of its ultimate design. The measurements catalogued are only two dimensional and in the description much is lacking or vague. Ezekiel portrayed the contours of a future temple with the old temple in mind.

Steinberg relied on the opinion of the *Tosafos Yom Tov* and the *Metzudos* which say: “Whatever Ezekiel did or specified will be like the second temple”.³⁷² As a matter of fact, Ezekiel could not be ordered to build the temple which was shown to him in a vision on the short term. A temple site of the described proportions would be geographically impossible even in the present day situation. However,

³⁷⁰ Ariel, Richman, *Carta’s Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem*, 37.

³⁷¹ Keck, *Isaiah-Ezekiel*, 1532.

³⁷² Steinberg, *The Third Beis HaMikdash*, Introduction.

that says nothing about a possible rebuilding in the distant future. Notable in the model of this temple is the concept of multiple concentric domains, the square shape and the numbers 5 and 10 as well as the multiples 20, 50 and 100 just like the measurements of the Tabernacle.

Ezekiel's visionary temple, like Solomon's temple before it, follows the general pattern of ancient Near Eastern temples. These temples were built to provide housing for the divine presence, with perhaps an adjacent room for priests approaching it. The people gathered outside, accommodated in a colonnade or in courtyards. Normally the divine presence in the inner chamber was mediated by an icon of the god, in contrast to Jerusalem's temple.

6.2.4. Ezekiel's temple expressing separation and limited access

In Ezek. 42:20 the layout of Ezekiel's temple is motivated: "to make a separation (הבדיל) between the holy (קדש) and the common (חל)". These are expressed in factors of location, elevation, orientation and diminishing access. The architecture of Ezekiel's temple is arranged around the notion of holy space. Holy space is clearly separated from common space in a number of different buffer zones, each shielding the supreme level of holiness, namely the Holy of Holies in which YHWH will return to dwell among his people forever. These levels or gradations in holiness are based on the plan and tripartite arrangement of the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple. Zones of holiness are also expressed in allowing access for ordinary worshippers, Levites and priests.

In fig. 6.1a, b and c, the gradations of holiness in Israelite sanctuaries are compared. Ezekiel's temple in the vision account was prefigured by the Tabernacle and in retrospect Herod's temple was prefigured by Ezekiel's temple.

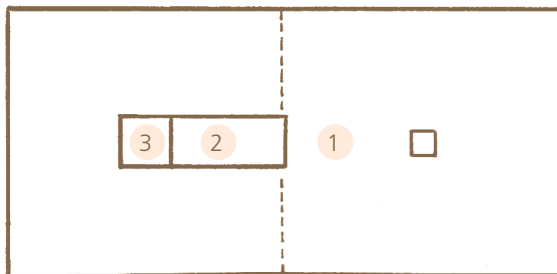


fig. 6.1a The Tabernacle: The forecourt was open to all Israelite men as well as women, in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle only priests were allowed to enter and in the Holy of Holies only the High Priest once a year. (Drawn by author).

- 1 Fore court
- 2 Holy place
- 3 Holy of Holies

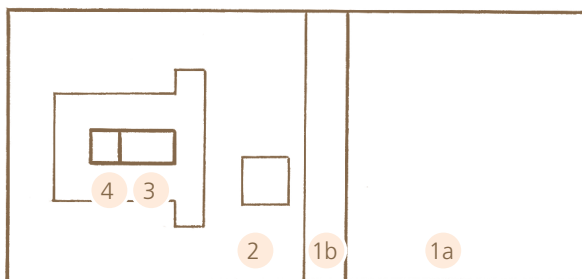


fig. 6.1b Herod's temple had two courts i.e. the court of the women + a small strip called the court of the Israelites (men and women were separated), and the temple court. Only priest were allowed to enter the temple court. (Drawn by author).

- 1a Court of the women
- 1b Court of the Israelites Fore court
- 2 Court of the priests
- 3 Holy place
- 4 Holy of Holies

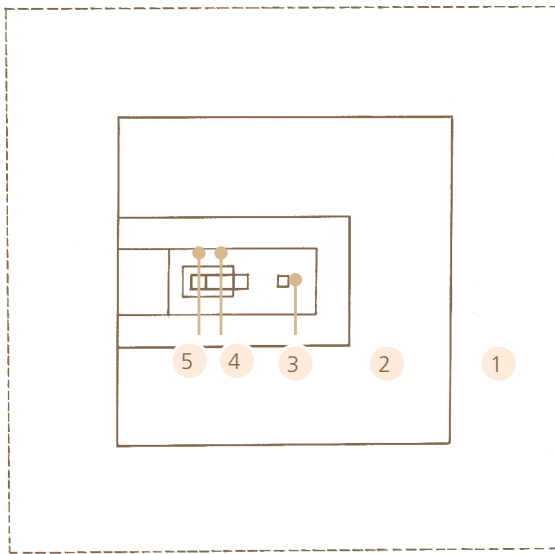


fig. 6.1c Ezekiel's temple also has two courts: The outer court, probably open to men as well as woman, and the inner court only for priests. According to Ezek 42:15-20 we may assume a surrounding third court, probably available for non-Israelite people. (Drawn by author)

- 1 Exterior court (500 x 500 rods); not drawn at scale
- 2 Outer court (500 x 500 cubits)
- 3 Inner court
- 4 Holy place
- 5 Holy of Holies

The domain of the sanctuary itself amidst the sacred allotment or portion (תרומה) shows a division into three parts, viz. three concentric courts (see fig. 6.1c). The measurements of the structures within the temple site are incomplete, yet the spaces are fully defined.

The notion of limited access is particularly expressed by guarded gatehouses to the outer court as well as the inner court. The outer court may be entered by all Israelites, but the inner court only by priests. As is shown in the above pictures, gradations of holiness and separation of space are manifest first and foremost in the layout of the temple precinct. On a larger scale gradations of holiness continue in the territorial division of the land on three levels: 1 the sanctuary; 2 the sacred allotment; and 3 the land Israel.

Between the territorial grants of the land to the tribes of Israel the sacred allotment or *teruma* (תרומה) will be located. The whole sacred allotment including the prince's land on either side (Ezek 45:7) runs from the Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west (see fig. 6.2a). In between the prince's lands the 25,000x25,000 cubits? (about 13x13 km) wide sanctuary allotment dedicated to YHWH of is situated (see fig. 6.2b). The dimensions of the part for the priests and the Levites are each 25,000x10,000 cubits?. The third part with the city in it measures 25,000x5,000 cubits. The city itself measures 4,500x4,500 cubits? and is surrounded by a zone of open land called *migras* (מגרש).

For a good understanding of the numbers, the interpretation of the unit of measurement in the biblical accounts is a complicating factor. Has only the cubit been used as unit of measurement or also the rod? The temple precinct proper has been measured in cubits, but in Ezek 42:15-20 the rod is unit of measurement (see also chapter 6.3.4.). In Ezek 45:1-6 and Ezek 48:30-35 only numbers are mentioned without the unit of measurement.

Block argues that the design of the sanctuary allotment reflects three levels of increasing sanctity: profane city, moderately Levitical part and most sacred priestly part with the temple compound within.³⁷³ He concludes that the text is frustratingly vague on the spatial relationship between these three, especially the relative positions of the priests' and the Levites' allotments.

³⁷³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 732.

According to the traditional interpretation, the sanctuary is located in the centre of the priestly teruma which is positioned between the Levitical allotment to the north and the city to the south.

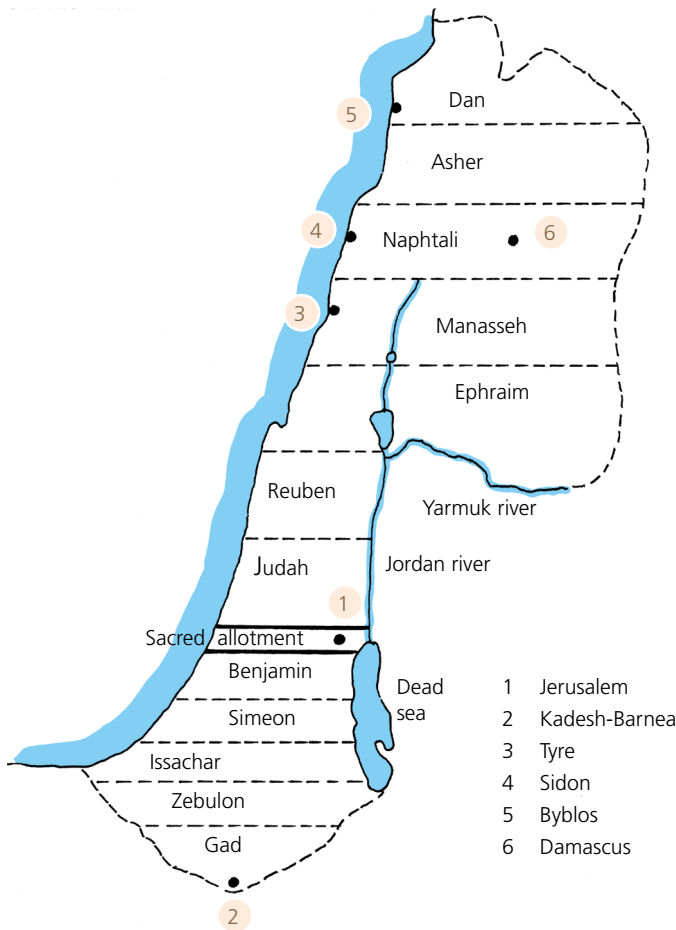


fig. 6.2a Division of the land: The tribal allotments and the sacred allotment in between. The distribution of the land follows the tribal structure according to the traditional pre-monarchical order. In this scheme the tribe of Levi is excluded from the allocations. (Drawn by author)

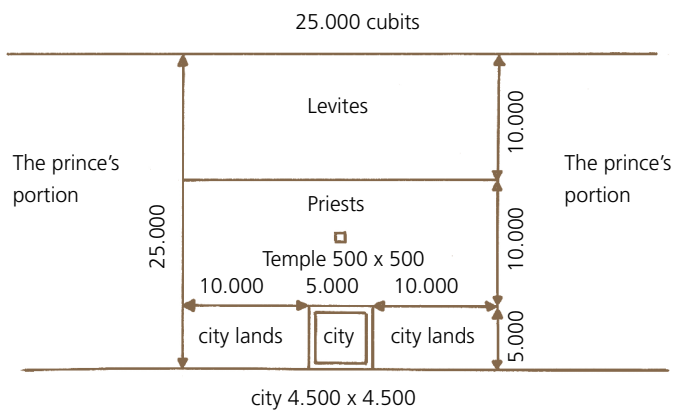


fig. 6.2b The sanctuary allotment is also divided into three parts: the city, a part of the priests with the temple and a part of the Levites. (Drawn by author).

6.3. The design and architecture of the temple compound with its structures

The careful analysis given above resulted in new insights into the character, the layout and appearance of Ezekiel's visionary temple. Examining the available data many seemingly inexplicable details and unusual architectural terms (often hapax legomena) could be clarified. My architectural background was very helpful in forming my own interpretation of the vision and to present it in a series of illuminating illustrations.

6.3.1. The location

The temple was shown to the prophet **בְּמַרְאוֹתַי**, “in divine visions” (see. also Ezek 1:1 and 8:3). LXX reads **ἐν ὁράσει** θεοῦ. By the hand of God, Ezekiel was brought to the land of Israel and set down on a very high mountain, on the southern slope of which he noticed a city-like structure. The **כ** *comparationis* of **כַּמְבֹנֵה-עִיר** indicates that the prophet observed a real city, but one that was completely unknown to him. He got a view of “something like the structure of a city”. Likewise, the **k** *comparationis* is used in Ezek1:26-27 where the prophet saw “what looked like a throne of sapphire” and on the throne “a figure like that of a man”. The prophet saw something or someone he had never seen before and tried to compare it to something that was known to him.

According to Block, the characterisation of the structure in Ezek 40:2 is intentional.³⁷⁴ Allen calls the “very high mountain” theological geography, pointing to God's supremacy.³⁷⁵ According to him Mount Zion is in view. The vision seems to picture the topographical separation of temple and city. A city-like structure is situated south of the temple compound. This may simply reflect the location of Solomon's temple, which was to the north of the city of David.

6.3.2. The layout of the temple precinct

Looking from afar to the temple site Ezekiel observed a temple surrounded by a massive perimeter wall to separate the holy from the common in order to safeguard the holiness of the sanctuary. Three gatehouses built into the walls, ascended to by seven steps, give entry into the first elevated platform being the outer court, the domain of the laity.

A second elevated, but unwallled platform also entered into through three gatehouses, ascended to by eight steps, gives access to the inner court, the domain of the priests. On the third unwallled platform, ascended to by ten steps, the sanctuary is situated and exclusively reserved as the habitation of YHWH. The design of Ezekiel's temple is perfectly symmetrical, composed of square courts. Opinions differ about issues of layout, composition and the exact location of various structures. In some pictures the most remarkable differences between scholars and other researchers come to light.

In the following figures a selection of representative reconstructions from the hand of. K. Galling, W. Eichrodt, Th. A. Busink, L.C. Allen, I. Benzinger, L.H. Vincent, G.A. Cooke and D.I. Block is shown.³⁷⁵ These reconstructions from authoritative authors and commentators are the most significant examples of the layout of the temple in Ezekiel literature. In all these reconstructions the positioning and shape of the additional buildings around the inner court are different. In the reconstruction of Galling and Eichrodt the elevated inner court is surrounded by a talus or slope instead of a wall.

The gatehouses to the inner court are situated on the elevated platform by Benzinger, Busink, Vincent, and Cooke, in the talus / slope in between the inner and outer court by Galling and Eichrodt. Three gatehouses are situated on the elevated platform and one (the eastern gatehouse) in the outer court by Block,

³⁷⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 514.

³⁷⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 229.

³⁷⁶ Galling, in Bertholet, *Hesekiel*, 141; Eichrodt, *Der Prophet Hesekiel*, 375; Benzinger, Vincent and Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 707-708, 710 ; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 231; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, fig. 2; Block, *ibid.*, 508.

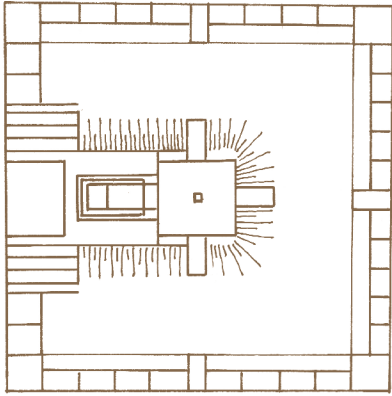


fig. 6.3a K. Galling / W. Eichrodt

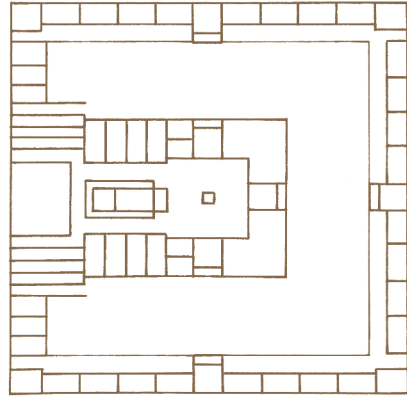


fig. 6.3b Th. A. Busink / L.C. Allen

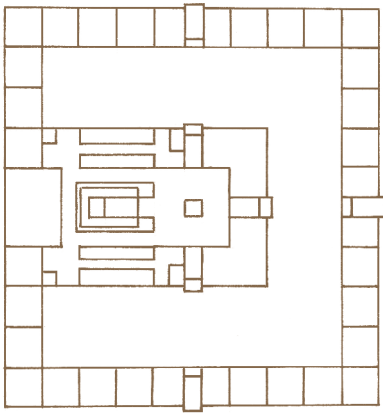


fig. 6.3c I. Benzinger / L.H. Vincent

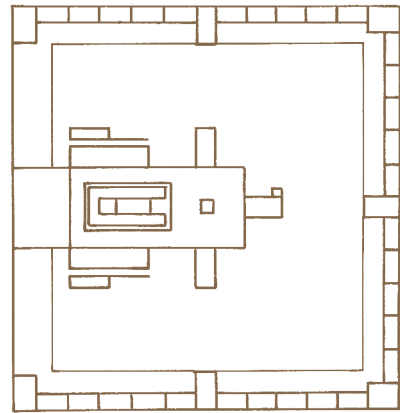


fig.6.3d G.A. Cooke

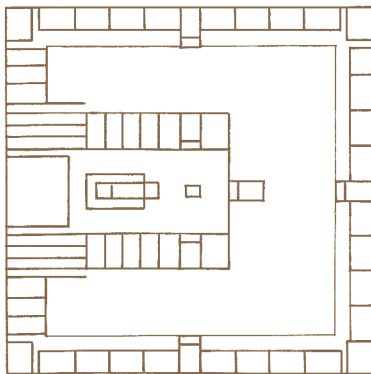
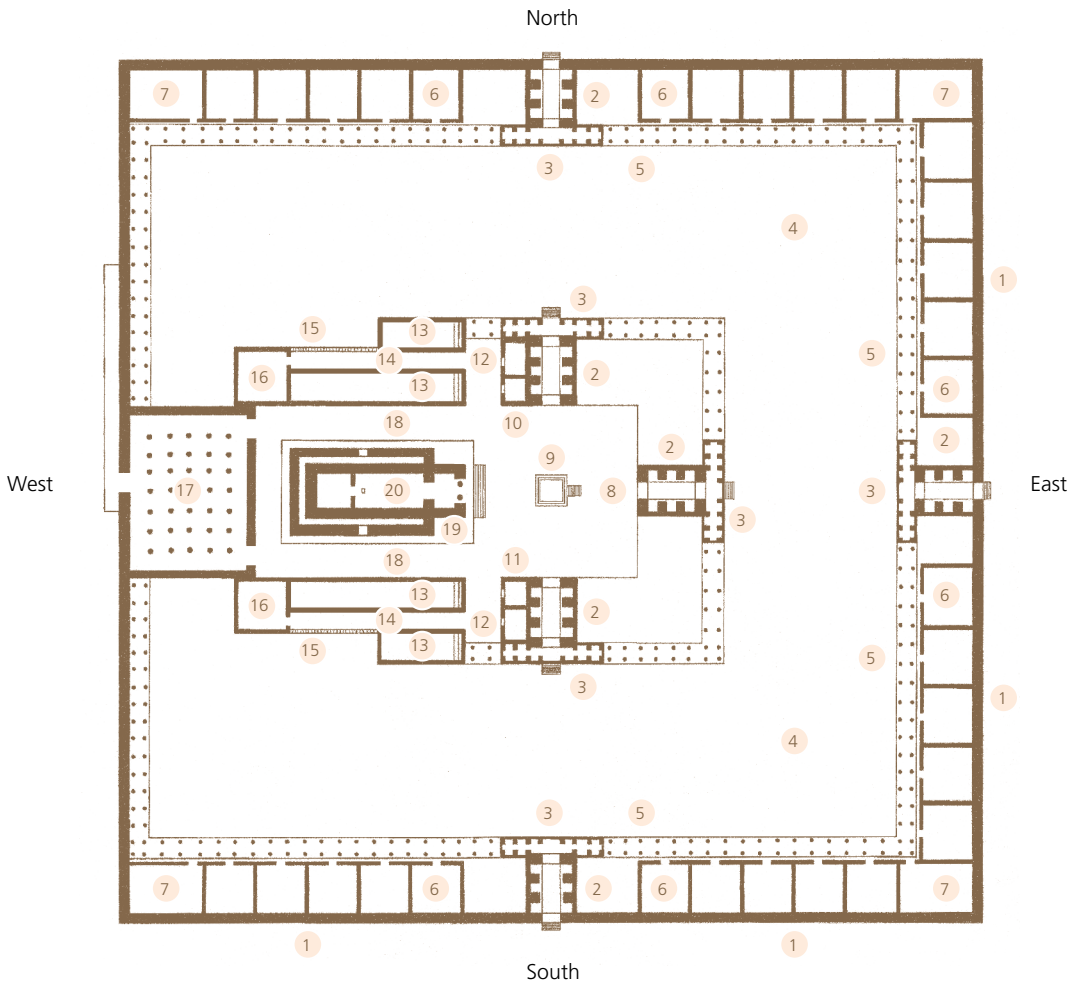


fig. 6.3e D.I. Block

(All illustrations redrawn by author).

Based on Ezekiel's texts I have developed my own interpretation about the script of the prophet, the layout of the temple precinct and its architectural design from an architectural point of view.



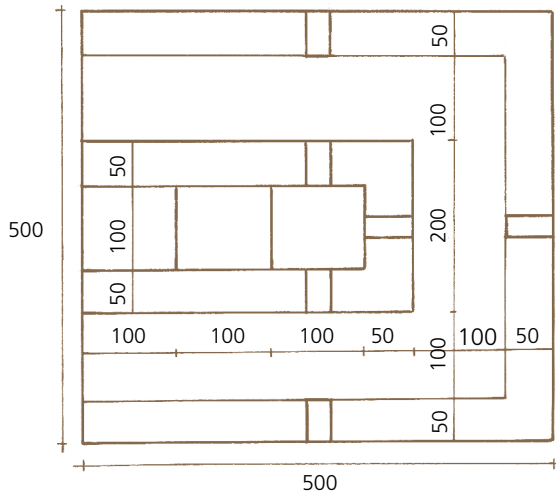
- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | Perimeter wall | 11 | Rooms for the priests in charge for the sanctuary |
| 2 | Gate houses | 12 | Rinsing rooms |
| 3 | Porches / vestibules | 13 | Priestly rooms |
| 4 | Outer court | 14 | Passage way |
| 5 | Porticoes around the courts | 15 | Walls between the priestly rooms and kitchens |
| 6 | 30 worshipper's rooms | 16 | Kitchens for the benefit of the priests |
| 7 | Kitchens | 17 | Western building |
| 8 | Inner court | 18 | Restricted area around the temple |
| 9 | Burnt offering altar | 19 | Temple platform |
| 10 | Rooms for the priests in charge for the altar | 20 | Temple edifice with its annexes |

fig. 6.4 Layout of Ezekiel's temple. (Drawn and reconstructed by author).

6.3.3. Measuring Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 40:19, 23, 41:13-14)

Significant in measurements is the use of the number 25 and its multiples: for instance the temple compound 500x500; the inner court 100x100; the temple 50x100; the gates 50x25 cubits. The measurements give expression to a symmetrical well balanced plan.

In accordance with the enumeration in Ezek 40 the distance from the perimeter wall to the center of the temple precinct, the very spot of the burnt offering altar, is 2x250 cubits (50+100+50+50). Another remarkable phenomenon is the number of steps from the one court to the other: 7 steps to the outer court; 8 steps to the inner court and 10 steps to the temple platform; altogether 25 steps (about 7,80m).



Temple precinct 500 x 500 cubits
Outer court 400 x 450 cubits
Inner court 100 x 100 cubits
Gate houses 50 x 25 cubits

fig. 6.5a Overall measurements of Ezekiel's temple precinct in cubits. (Drawn by author).

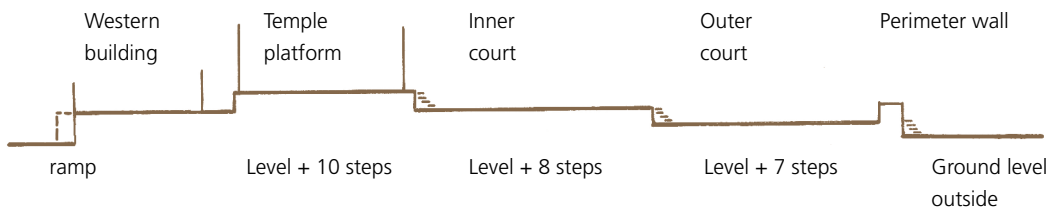


fig. 6.5b Increasing differences in height from the ground level outside the temple to the level of the outer court, the inner court and the temple platform. (Drawn by author).

6.3.4. Two units of measurement

After having measured the temple precinct (הבית הפנימי) see fig. 6.5a) the angelic guide continue measuring the outer dimensions of the entire holy domain (see fig 6.1c). Surprisingly he then measures walls of 500 rods long. The key question in scholarly debate is whether one must read 500 cubits (אמות) or rods (קנים), i.e. 260x260m or approximately 1600x1600m. A rod is 6 cubits long. The definition of the cubit as a cubit plus a span / handbreath clarifies the standard of measurement to be employed in the

description.³⁷⁷ קנה "rod" can be used as a unit of measurement and as an instrument of measurement. In the texts of the temple vision cubits (אמורות) as well as rods (קנים) are both measured with the same instrument i.e. the measuring rod. MT reads חמש־מאות קנים "five hundred rods" (distance); LXX however, reads πεντακδίδιους εν τῷ καλάμῳ "five hundred with the measuring rod" (instrument). Unfortunately, the text does not clearly inform us whether rod or cubit is meant.

The question about the meaning of קנים complicates our understanding of the dimensions of the temple site and the interpretation of the wall in Ezek. 40:5 and 42:20. There is also disagreement on the assumption of a perimeter wall around the temple precinct and another wall outside the temple precinct around an enlarged temple site. Are the walls mentioned in Ezek. 40:5 and 42:20 identical or could the wall of Ezek. 42:20 be another structure as the LXX appears to have envisaged by reading προτειχίσμα, "outwork wall".³⁷⁸

Many scholars regard the walls described in Ezek. 42:15-20 as the perimeter wall of the outer court and change "rods" into "cubits". Others do not give their opinion upon this question.

According to Block, "the guide's measurements confirm the shape of the temple complex as one large square of 500x500 cubits".³⁷⁹ Others suggest a court or domain outside the gates mentioned in Ezek. 42:15-20.

According to Keil "The LXX omits the word קנים (rods) in vs.16, 18 and 19, whilst they have changed it into πήχεις (cubits) in vs.17 and have also attached this word to the numbers in vs. 20".³⁸⁰

The presence of קנים in the texts mentioned, creates great interpretive problems among scholars. Since one rod was 6 cubits, 3000 (500x6) cubits is incompatible with the 500 cubits envisioned by Ezek 40:15-41:13. Allen argues that in Ezek 42:16-19 קנים has been added in MT, presumably as a result of misunderstanding בקנה המדה "by the measuring rod".³⁸¹ According to Block קנים is to be deleted here and throughout vs. 16-17 as an erroneous gloss on בקנה המדה.³⁸² Referring to Ezek. 42:20, 43:16-17, 45:1 and 46:22, he states that ellipses are common. Block identifies קנים as an instrument rather than a unit of measurement.

In my opinion MT may be defended as *lectio difficillior*, it seems unlikely that an error would have been made four times. Ezek 42:20, ארך חמש מאות ורחב חמש מאות "a length of five hundred and a breadth of five hundred" is preceded by Ezek 42:16-19 where we read בקנה המדה חמש־מאות קנים, "five hundred rods with the measuring rod". So one may conclude that an area with a surface of 3000x3000 cubits outside the temple precinct is meant.³⁸³

Keil argues that only the outer circumference of the entire temple area would be measured in Ezek 42:15-20. The 500x500 cubits wall would be the surrounding wall of the outer court mentioned in Ezek 40:5.³⁸⁴ Consequently the 3000x3000 area outside the temple proper could be identified as the third court mentioned in the Temple Scroll. This assumption is also found in Rev 11:1-2, where John said: "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, Come and measure the temple of God.... but do not measure the court outside (ἐξωθεν) the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations..."

³⁷⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 517. The normal cubit of six hand breaths has been estimated as 44,6cm. Since the ratio of the normal to the long cubit was 6:7, the cubit used here approximated 52cm which is remarkably close to the Egyptian long or royal cubit of 52,3cm.

³⁷⁸ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem 2*, 711-712.

³⁷⁹ Block, *ibid.*, 570.

³⁸⁰ Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 268-269.

³⁸¹ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 227.

³⁸² Block *ibid.*, 568.

³⁸³ Aalders, *Ezechiël*, hoofdstuk 25-48, 295.

³⁸⁴ Keil, *ibid.*, 269.

Considering all these points of view, the elliptic form of Ezek 42:20 could be explained. In accordance with the description of the Qumranic Temple Scroll, Ezekiel might have observed three successive courts: the inner court, the outer court and an external court like area around the temple precinct (see fig. 5.31a).

According to Ezek 45:2 there will be an open strip (מנרש) of fifty cubits wide around the outside of the wall (הוניה). In this open space planting or farming is forbidden. Ezek 43:7-9 states that the area of the temple site will be enlarged so that the people will not live in such close proximity of the temple. In this way they will be prevented from contaminating it.

In my opinion the text shows an incomparable, never yet seen eschatological temple in quite a different geographical context. Consequently, I advocate a literal reading of the text. I think the space outside the temple precinct is to be understood as a great square around the temple, encompassed by a second perimeter wall further away.

6.3.5. The perimeter wall around the temple (Ezek 40:5)

Ezekiel's guided tour started outside the temple complex where he observed a wall (הוניה) all around (סביב סביב) the temple complex. The angelic guide measured the wall with a קנה (rod / stick). The wall surrounds the whole temple complex, which included the courts, the all the rooms and the temple proper. Egyptian, Babylonian and Canaanite temples were also surrounded by massive walls with imposing gates (see fig.4.6, 4.14a, 4.16, 4.27).

The wall of Ezekiel's temple precinct is one rod (about 3,15m) thick and high. So it is not made to protect against attacks, but to enclose the restricted area and to protect the holy precinct against the ones who are not allowed to enter. A defensive wall requires a higher wall. Busink talks of 12m ("Eine gut verteidigungsfähige Festungsmauer ist aussen etwa 12m. hoch").³⁸⁵ Since the gatehouses and outer court are built 7 steps (about 4 cubits or 2,10m) higher than the surface of the surrounding area, the perimeter wall outside could be established at 5,25m.

6.3.6. The outer court and its structures (Ezek 40:17-19)

The outer court (הצר החיצונה) is located on three sides of the temple. All sides of the court measure 100 cubits from the edge of the pavement (רצפה) called the lower pavement (הרצפה התחתונה) to the inner court (הצר הפנימי). As distinct from the inner court, where only priests are admitted, the outer court is intended for laity. In the outer court Ezekiel observed the following structures:

- three gatehouses (שערים) and its porches / vestibules (אלמות) (40:6, 20, 24) ;
- the pavement (רצפה) and porticoes (עמודים, περίστυλά στωαι) (40:17-18);
- the worshipper's rooms (לשכות) (Ezek 40:17);
- the four kitchens (בית המבשלים) in the corners of the outer court (46:21-24).

6.3.7. Outer gates (Ezek 40:6, 20, 24)

In the outer wall of Ezekiel's temple there are three gates (שערים), one on the east, one on the north and one on the west side. Similar to the east gate all three gates are described equally and have the same dimensions. After measuring the outer wall the guided tour proceeded to the east gate. The entire temple complex is east west oriented like the previous temples. Archaeological excavations of city gate structures in that region show many similarities with the structures described by Ezekiel.

The outer east gatehouse is treated as a representative of the others, all other gates are modelled on the prototype of the eastern gate. There are six gates; three outer gates, granting access to the outer court and three inner gates that "mirror" the first ones and grant access to the inner court.

³⁸⁵ Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem 2*, 274.

The angelic man approached the outer east gate and ascended to the gatehouse (שַׁעַר) from the outside by a flight of steps (מַעְלֹת). According to Ezek. 40:22 and 26 there are seven steps. LXX therefore reads in vs. 6 ἑπτὰ ἀναβαθμοῖς. The outer court and its gatehouses are built approximately 4 cubits (2.10m) higher than the surrounding area.

Zimmerli observed that in the search for archaeologically comparable temple gate structures no analogous Palestinian temple buildings are found. However, surprisingly great similarities have been encountered with walls and city gate structures of the Solomonic period. The walls and city gates of Megiddo, Hazor and Geser are almost identical to the gatehouses of Ezekiel's temple.³⁸⁶ The gatehouses of Ezekiel's temple, however, also distinguish themselves from city gates which were built not only for providing access to the city but also for defense purposes.

On that account towns were often reinforced with bastions and defense towers. A bastion can be defined as a protruding part of the wall. Bastions and towers are often strategically placed at points where the wall is most vulnerable: for instance, near a gate. For their defense ancient cities were often surrounded by double walls in the shape of massive walls or casemate walls.³⁸⁷

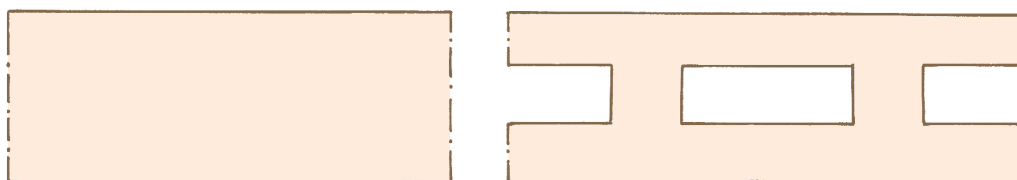


fig. 6.6. Schematic representation of the top view of a massive wall and a casemate wall. (Drawn by author).

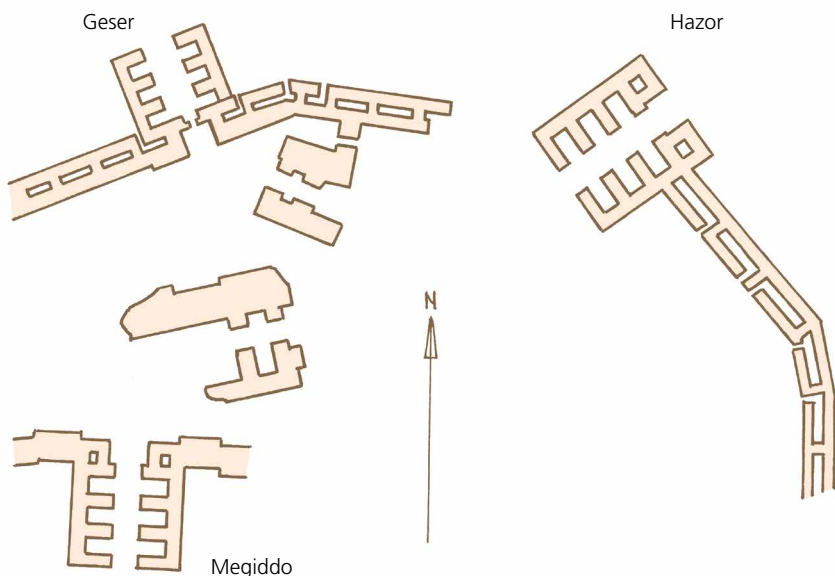


fig. 6.7, Examples of Solomonic city gates of Geser, Hazor and Megiddo. Redrawn after W. Zimmerli based on *IEJ* 8, (1958), 84, 85.

³⁸⁶ Zimmerli *Ezekiel* 2, 352-53; Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem* 2, 714-15; 720.

³⁸⁷ De Geus, *Towns in Ancient Israel and the Southern Levant*, 16.

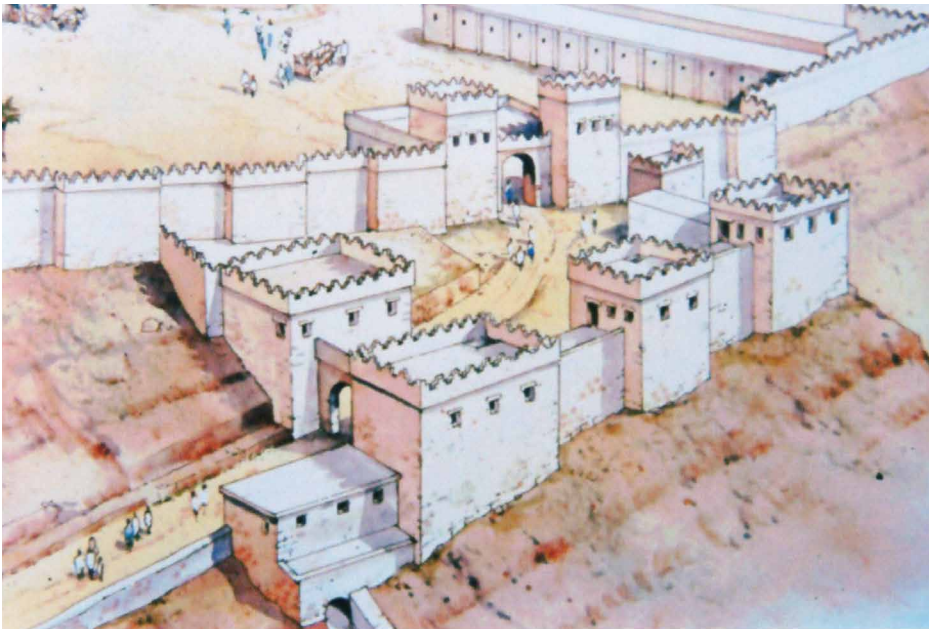
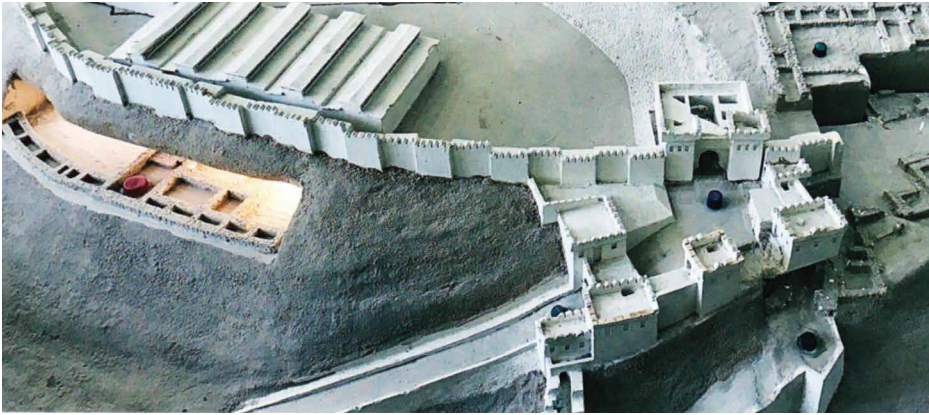


fig. 6.8a and 6.8b Photographs of a model and a picture of ancient Megiddo with its city walls and defence towers and a close-up picture of the northern city gate. Photograph's taken by author in the Tel Megiddo Visitors Centre.

The only function of the perimeter wall around Ezekiel's temple with its three gates is to safeguard the temple for impurity and to restrict granting access to the holy domain. So Ezekiel's temple has no fortifications for defence.

Standing on the high mountain, the contours of walls and gate buildings that recalled the images of ancient city gates loomed up in front of him. Three gatehouses give access to the temple precinct.

6.3.8. Floorplan and architecture of the gatehouses (Ezek 40:6-17, 20-27)

Entering the gatehouses one passes through a threshold, a passageway with alcoves on both sides, another threshold and a vestibule respectively (see fig. 6.9). The height of the gatehouses in Ezekiel's temple is unknown. They are provided with a flat roof (גג).³⁸⁸

³⁸⁸ HALOT, 176.

In the gatehouses there are six alcoves / recesses (תאורה), functioning as guardrooms and situated alongside a passageway, three on either side. These alcoves / guardrooms are one rod wide and one rod deep and separated from each other by 5 cubits thick side walls, provided with walled-in pilasters and decorated with carved palm fronds.

Cooke suggests that these five cubits thick side walls were provided with "splayed openings".³⁸⁹ I find this an unlikely assumption. No excavated gatehouse affirms Cook's theory. The question that has to be answered refers to the manifestation of the side walls. In a note added to the text of Ezek. 40:7 that the Targum makes mention of supports which were provided with a כותרה, capital or crown on top. A capital or crown on top of a six cubits wide side wall is implausible. I think supports with a capital on top protruding from the side walls on either side of the passageway are meant (see fig. 6.10). Just like the supports of the porch / vestibule, the supports between the alcoves alongside the passageway must be two cubits thick.

The alcoves are provided with הלנות אטמות. The meaning of these words is not quite clear. The Targum speaks of narrowed or closed windows; open on the inside, narrow on the outside or latticed. LXX reads θυρῶδες κρυπταί, "secret doors". This can be related to the Temple Scroll that speaks of "blocked windows in their inner faces", identifying niches. "Since these niches all had doors, they functioned as cupboards for storing utensils of the guards".³⁹⁰ I suppose that cupboards could possibly be in niches between the protruding pilasters in the side walls of the alcoves. In my opinion the function of the openings or apertures in the outer walls of the gate houses could have been misunderstood. Narrowed openings or loopholes in general were made for defense purposes. They were common in defensive towers through which archers shoot their arrows.³⁹¹ The gates in Ezekiel's temple, however, are only intended for securing the holiness of the temple and granting access. So I think these הלנות אטמות in the top side of the outer walls of the gatehouses are needed for letting in light and will probably be latticed.

There is a kind of partition (גבול) serving as a barrier or boundary marker between the guardrooms and the passage. According to Zimmerli it must shield the recesses on the corridor side.³⁹² Von Soden sees in it "a railing projecting from each pillar one cubit into the recess or a wooden partition" which gives a certain protection in the recesses to the guards on the gate.³⁹³ It could also have had the shape of a low ledge.

After the gateway with its alcoves follows a second threshold, giving way to a vestibule / porch (אלם) (see the notes to Ezek 40:14 in chapter 2.4.1.). There are two ways of interpreting a portico: as a porch leading to the entrance of a building or extended as a colonnade, with a roof structure over a walkway supported by columns. The dimensions of the second threshold correspond with that of the first.

The porch / vestibule must be a rectangular room 8 cubits deep and 60 cubits wide. The אילים are not 60 cubits high, but the אלם must be 60 cubits wide (see paragraph. 6.3.9.). The gatehouse internally measures 50x25 cubits. The outside measurements and width of the walls on either side are undetermined. I estimate them to be 2 cubits like the vestibule. The length of 50 cubits however, is based on an exterior measurement.

The entrance or threshold is 10 cubits wide. Through the middle of the gatehouse runs a 13 cubits wide corridor or passageway flanked by guardrooms, three on either side, behind a 1 cubit wide low ledge. These guardrooms are built in the shape of alcoves / recesses and are alternated by internal walls provided with walled-in pilasters.

Entering the gatehouse, the guide measured in painstaking detail all elements of the gatehouse, starting with the threshold (סף) which is measured 1 rod or 6 cubits wide. Width is meant to be the

³⁸⁹ Cooke, *The book of Ezekiel*, 432.

³⁹⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 522-523.

³⁹¹ Block, *ibid.*, 522.

³⁹² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 351.

³⁹³ Zimmerli, *ibid.*, 351.

shortest dimension.³⁹⁴ At the other side of the passageway is one more threshold with a porch / vestibule at the inner end of the gatehouse.

In the text there is a difficulty. In Ezek. 40:8 the depth of the vestibule is one rod is 6 cubits, but in Ezek 40:9 it is 8 cubits. How could this difficulty be solved? In regarding the beginning of vs. 8 and 9 as a dittography, like Hebrew manuscripts as Syr and Vulg do, we read eight cubits instead of one rod. The front of the porch was supported by cuboid columns, each 2 cubits thick. In fig. 6.9 the measurements of the gatehouses are rendered.

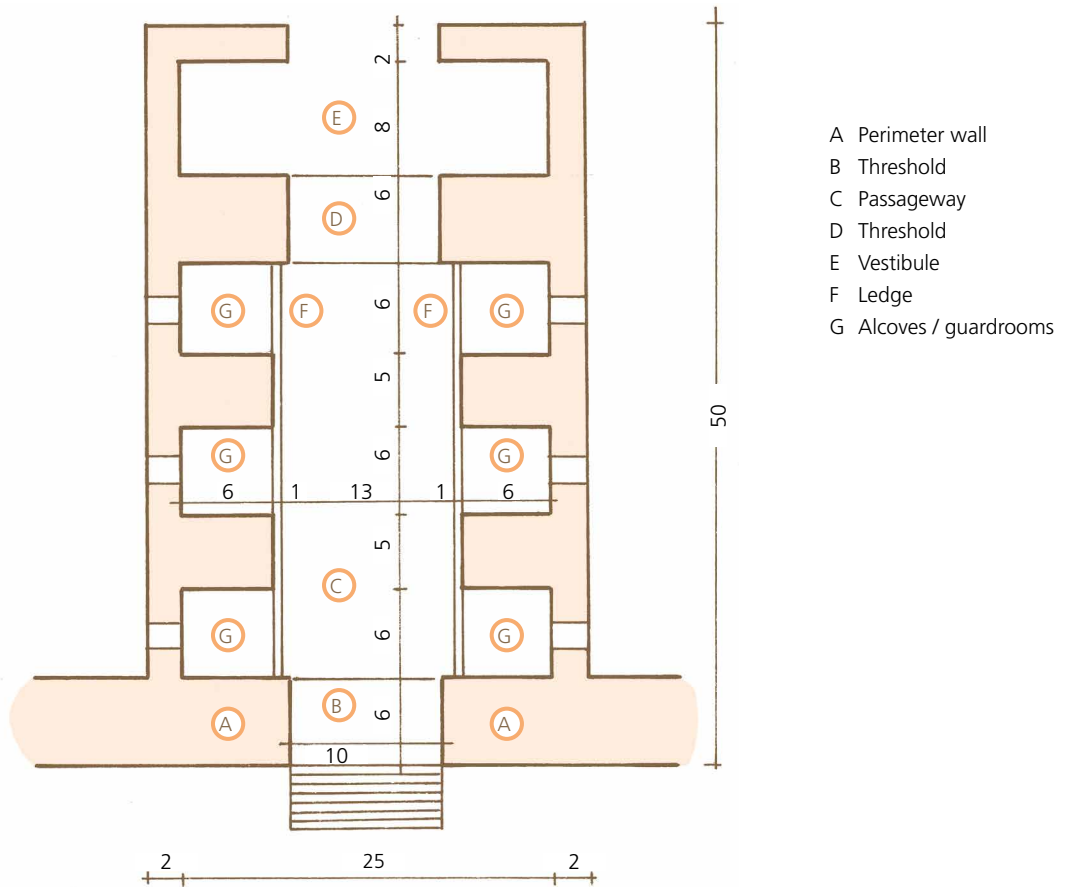


fig. 6.9 Gatehouse of Ezekiel's temple as is commonly depicted by most scholars. (Redrawn after Th. A. Busink. *Der Temple von Jerusalem* (1980); B. Maarsingh, *Ezechiël III, POT*, (1991); D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel chapter 25-48*, (1998).

Special attention must be paid to the gate facing east of Ezekiel's temple precinct. In accordance with Ezek. 44:2-3 the gate facing east is to remain shut because YHWH, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of YHWH. Jewish tradition states that the Messiah will pass through the eastern gate when he returns. However, we cannot connect Ezekiel's "gate facing east" with the eastern gate i.e. the Golden Gate of the old city of Jerusalem. The current Ottoman Golden Gate is not in line with the entrance of the former temples of Solomon and Herod.

³⁹⁴ In order to understand the measurements it should be mentioned that the length (אריך) and the breadth (רוחב) of a measurement are not seen from the perspective of someone who is passing through, but describe quite objectively the longer and shorter dimensions of an object to be measured (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 349-350).

6.3.9. The meaning of אֵילִם

In the vision account two different words are used אֵילִם and אֵילִם which give rise to much disagreement (The philological implications have been discussed in the notes of Ezek 40:14 in paragraph 2.4.1.). In my opinion אֵילִם is an architectural term rendered by “columns”. As in gatehouses and courts of Egyptian temples see fig. 6.11), we find also colonnades of massive cuboid columns in Ezekiel’s temple court.

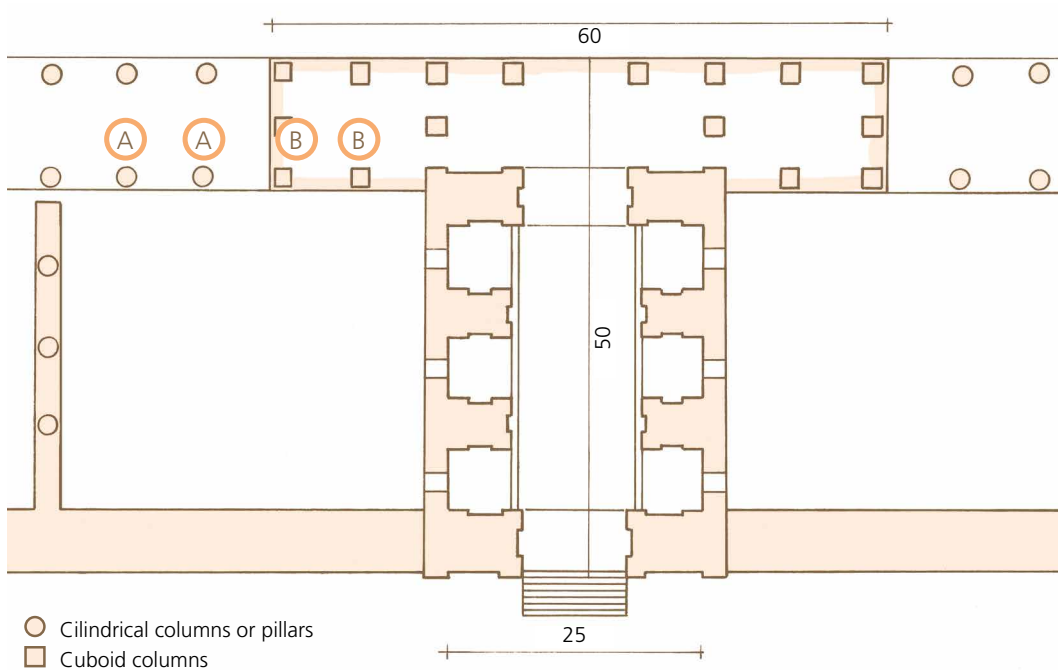


fig. 6.10 Gatehouse of Ezekiel’s temple. (Drawn and reconstructed by author).

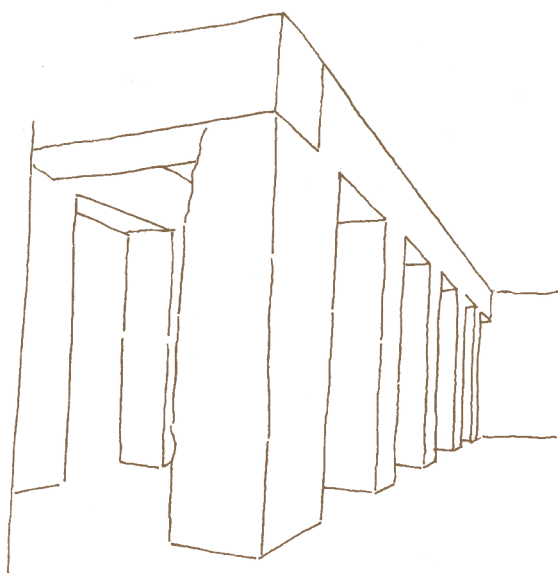


fig. 6.11 Massive cuboid columns in the temple of Khafra in Egypt, like columns in the gatehouses of Ezekiel’s temple. (Redrawn by author after a photograph in G.J. Wightman, *Sacred space*).

This translation could be satisfactory, but what about a length or height of 60 cubits? Schmitt and Laney interpret these 60 cubits not as columns or pillars but as towers of sixty cubits high.³⁹⁵

Steinberg and Clorfene fix the height of the gates as well as the “pillars” at sixty cubits.³⁹⁶ However, such gates or towers seem unlikely, these are totally out of proportion with the other part of the gatehouses.

According to me this supposition is untenable from an architectural point of view. Are these sixty cubits meant to be a vertical or horizontal measurement? Also sixty cubits high pillars do not seem to be acceptable. By comparison, some columns in the great hypostyle hall of Karnak were 24m (approximately 48 cubits) high. However, the dimensions of the gatehouses of Ezekiel’s temple are disproportionate to the hypostyle hall of Karnak and to 60 cubits height columns. In Ezek 40:14b the way of measuring is explained: “sixty cubits towards the column(s) of the court around the gate(s)”. NIV translates: “The measurement was up to the portico facing the courtyard”.

In my opinion this reading provides scope for a longitudinal measurement (see fig. 6.10). The way of measuring in vs.14 is comparable to vs.13, where the width of the gatehouse is measured. Hence, the supposition of a longitudinal measurement is a more appropriate one.

Block translates verse Ezek. 40:14 as follows: “Then he measured the vestibule; it was sixty cubits”.³⁹⁷ This translation reflects confusion between אֵיל and אֵלִים / אֵלִים. According to Block “sixty is difficult, but not impossible”. The question is, what has been measured, the porch / vestibule or pillars? O’Hare remarks that confusion between the similar words אֵלִים and אֵלִים in the plural of אֵיל, is caused by the translator’s difficulty in distinguishing י from ו.³⁹⁸

In my opinion אֵלִים must not be seen as an error that has to be emended or deleted. The porch / vestibule bordering the outer court could be a part of the portico around the court. The width of the gatehouse has been determined at 25 cubits. Equally, the width of the enlarged porch with its massive cuboid columns must be determined at 60 cubits. So it may be concluded that the gatehouses including the porches, shown to the prophet, must be

T-shaped structures, forming a part of the porticoes facing the outer court. Just to be clear, the text offers only a two-dimensional plan without measurements of the height of the structures described. In that case the width of the אֵלִים porch / vestibule has been measured. אֵלִים is to be regarded as a functional term and אֵלִים as an architectural one.

It is suggested that the gates could be closed by a double leaf door. In the text of Ezek.40, nothing is said about doors, only about thresholds (entrances).³⁹⁹ In Ezek 44:2, however, the outer east gate has been shut for YHWH has entered by it. But shut by what? The data of chap. 40 and 44 seem to be contradictory. The only reference to doors is Ezek 41:21 and 23 -25. In Ezek 41:21 is there talk of door posts (מַזוּזוֹת) within the temple and in vs. 23-25 of double doors. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the gates could be closed by doors.

6.3.10. Pavements and porticoes (Ezek 40:17-18, 42:3)

Within the perimeter wall around the temple is a רֶצֶפָה, a pavement. This should be the tiled floor of the porticoes and the outer court (Ezek 40:17-18; 42:3). In all known modern translations of the Bible רֶצֶפָה has been rendered by “pavement”. Evidence for that is found in 2 Chron 7:3. There רֶצֶפָה is the pavement whereupon the people bow down in the temple of Solomon. In Esth 1:6 a mosaic floor in the palace of the king of Persia is denoted.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ Schmitt, Laney, *Messiah’s Coming Temple*. 85.

³⁹⁶ Steinberg, *The Third Beis HaMikdash*, 34; Clorfene, *The Messianic Temple*, 62.

³⁹⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 518.

³⁹⁸ O’Hare, “Have you seen Son of Man, 64.

³⁹⁹ Meziere, *The Gates of the Ezekielian Temple*, 40.

⁴⁰⁰ Block, *ibid.*, 525.

Other options are also recorded. In the Syriac version רִצְפָה is “to pave”, but “arrange in a line” is also possible. Then we get “range” or “series”, like LXX in Ezek 42:3 reads περίδτυλα, “colonnade or portico.”⁴⁰¹ Ezek 40:18 has not περίστυλα βυτ στοαί. As a rule στοαί were roofed colonnades consisting of a series of cylindrical columns or pillars.

From Ezek 42:6 one may assume that the rooms in the outer court of Ezekiel’s temple are colonnades or porticoes provided with roofs or balconies.⁴⁰² This view can also be found with ancient Jewish writers.⁴⁰³ About רִצְפָה הַסָּאָר says: “I say that this is the surrounding balcony”.

We learn from *Middoth* 2:5 that the walls originally did not have balconies, but later on they were surrounded by a gallery, on which chambers were built. Since the verse continues: “The balcony flanked the gates, so that the underneath of the balcony was flush with the top of the gates”, we infer that this gallery was a balcony.

Tosafos Yom Tov reports: “The balcony went around the entire outer courtyard. The balconies were interrupted by the roofless enclosures in the corners of the courtyard. These rooms probably were used to cook the sacrificial meals of the worshippers”.⁴⁰⁴

Middoth explains that they made a balcony around the walls of the Women’s Courtyard so that women would also be able to see the rejoicing of the ‘Water Drawing ceremony’ without having to mingle with the men who were in the courtyard below. This balcony stood on pillars. This is also explained in *Binyan HaBayis* regarding the third *Beis HaMikdash*: “Around the courtyard there will be a balcony, supported by pillars”. Radak adds that this will possibly be like the Women’s Gallery in the Second Temple.⁴⁰⁵

Weighing all the arguments one against another I think רִצְפָה could still be rendered as “pavement” (maybe in the shape of a mosaic tiled pavement composed of precious materials) as the floor in the palace of the king of Persia. Ezek 40:18 ends with the addition הַרִצְפָה הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה, “the lower pavement”. When there is talk about a lower pavement, consequently there should also be an upper pavement. Commentators suggest that the elevated platform of the inner court, eight steps higher than the outer court is meant. Could these arguments bring us to a convincing translation of הַרִצְפָה הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה? Plausibly, there will be a pavement in the entire outer court.

6.3.11. Worshipper’s rooms and kitchens (Ezek 40:17, 46:21-24)

There are לְשִׁכּוֹת, rooms / chambers / halls, on the east, north, and south side of the outer court. What do they look like and what could be their function? Standing in the outer court the prophet counted 30 chambers on the pavement alongside the outer court, attached to the outer wall. One may assume that these chambers are constructed as halls behind the porticoes. The text does not tell us their purpose. It is likely that these rooms will be used by worshippers as eating and meeting places during religious events.⁴⁰⁶ The use of these chambers should be in connection with temple sacrifice.

There is a variety of ideas relating to the function of the chambers around the outer court. According to Rashi the chambers are built on the balconies and used for storage.⁴⁰⁷ The Temple Scroll gives another explanation: “On the roof of the outer wall are structures that are to be used to construct booths for the festival of Sukkoth” (col. 42.10-17).⁴⁰⁸

I agree with the majority of commentators assuming that “worshipper’s rooms” are meant for eating the sacrificial meals. That is also affirmed by the Temple Scroll. The outer court was provided with installations to enable families and clans to celebrate the public festivals together. Thereupon the Temple Scroll reports on a three-storey outer wall (col. 42.10). Each storey would have a set of rooms: an inner

⁴⁰¹ Maarsingh, *Ezechiël III*, 147; *NIDOTTE* 3, 1191. (Aram. *risp’ta*, pavement; *r’sap*, arrange in a line).

⁴⁰² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 524.

⁴⁰³ Steinberg, *The Third Beis HaMikdash*, 54-55.

⁴⁰⁴ Steinberg, *ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰⁵ Steinberg, *ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰⁶ Block, *ibid.*, 524.

⁴⁰⁷ Steinberg, *ibid.*, 54-55.

⁴⁰⁸ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 40.

“chamber” and an outer “room” and a porch as part of a stoa. This information seems to be contradicted by the height of the wall (one rod / six cubits) according to Ezek. 40:5. In the Temple Scroll however, three courts are mentioned, the inner, middle and outer court.⁴⁰⁹ The chambers mentioned, were positioned in the outermost court, lacking in the vision account of Ezekiel. What did these rooms look like?

On account of Ezek. 42:6 the depth of the worshipper’s rooms has not been reduced since they do not have galleries before them. The worshipper’s rooms are shaped as open halls with a portico before them. Their roofs possibly could be provided with balconies. In all four corners of the outer court are unroofed enclosures of 30x40 cubits, used as kitchens for the preparation of the sacrificial meals of the people (see fig. 6.4). These kitchens are equipped with cooking facilities and are unroofed so that smoke is able to escape.

6.4. The design and architecture of the temple platform with its structures.

6.4.1. Temple platform (Ezek 40:28-41:15, 42:13)

The text of Ezek. 41:15-26 regarding the temple building proper, the inside and outside proportions, its architectural features and some other structures and installations is very complicated and confusing. This text is a mishmash of a general overview and detailed observations.

The temple court proper is situated on an eight steps (2.50m) high platform of 345x200 cubits (180x105m). Adding up all measurements from east to west we get the length of the sacred area: 345 cubits (180m) i.e. the length of the inner East Gate (50 cubits or 26m) + the Inner Court (הצר הפנימי) before the temple (100 cubits / 52,5m) + the temple (100 cubits / 52,5m) + the *בונה* (5 cubits / 2,5m), the *גזרה* (20 cubits / 10,5m).⁴¹⁰ + the *בנין* behind the temple (70 cubits / 37m).

Adding up the measurements from north to south we get the width of the sacred area, i.e. 200 cubits / 105m i.e. the width of the blocks of priestly rooms doubled (2x50=100 cubits / 52.5m), + the *גזרה* doubled (2x20=40 cubits / 21m), + the *בונה* doubled (2x5=10 cubits / 5m), + the temple and its annexes (50 cubits / 26m).

The inner court before the temple is 100 cubits square (52x52m). The burnt offering altar is located in the centre of the inner court as well as in the centre of the entire temple area.

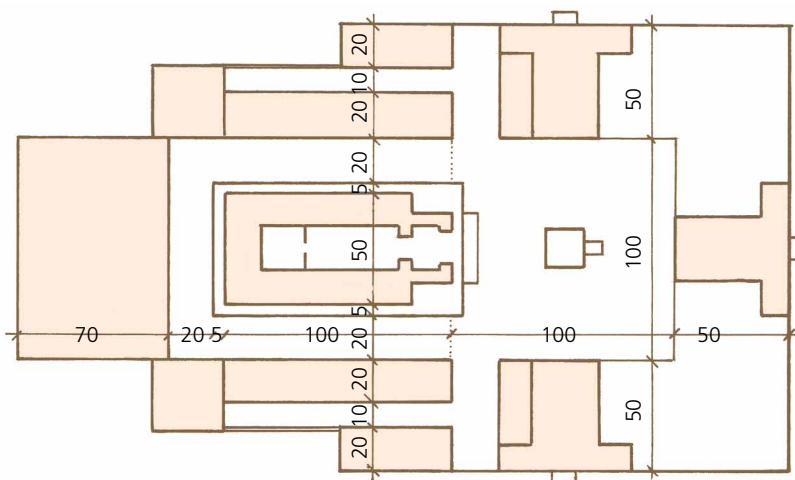


fig. 6.12 Measurements restricted area and inner court. (Drawn by author).

⁴⁰⁹ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 40.

In the temple of Herod an enclosing inner wall separated the inner court from the outer court of the Gentiles, but in Ezekiel's description there is no reference to such a wall: but only to a retaining wall around the elevated platform upon which the temple and various other structures are situated. Gatehouses provide access to this elevated platform.

6.4.2. Inner Court (Ezek 40:28-47)

The inner court of 100x100 cubits in front of Ezekiel's temple is part of the 375x200 cubits elevated platform: a demarcated area of one hundred cubits square. The altar of burnt offering is centrally located in the middle of the inner court in front of the temple building. The laver as well as other facilities are omitted in the description of Ezekiel. Solomon's and Herod's temples had two sections within the inner court that were the Court of Israel and the Court of the Women. These two courts were separated by a wall. For women it was prohibited to enter the court of Israel.

The description of Ezekiel's temple does not mention the Court of the Women. Why not? Possibly there will be no distinction between men and woman in this temple. In the new temple perhaps all Israelite worshippers will share in spiritual equality with the same access into the presence of God.

6.4.3. Structures on the elevated temple platform (Ezek 40:28-41:15, 42:1-14)

In the temple precinct various structures are erected including the temple itself, i.e:

- the three inner gates (שערים פנימים) (40:28-37);
- the "pillard" porticoes (עמודים) and galleries / cloisters (אתיקים); (41:15-16, 42:6);
- two rooms adjacent to the north and south gate in the inner court (לשכות שרים בהצר הפנימי) (40:38, 44-46);
- the holy rooms (לשכות הקדש), where the priests eat the holy offerings (42:1-14);
- the priestly kitchens (מקומות) (46:19-20);
- the walls (גדר) and entrances (מבואות) (42:7, 9, 46:19);
- the building (בנין) behind the temple on the west side (41:12);
- the altar of burnt offering (המזבח העולה) in the inner court (43:13-17) ;
- the temple (הביית) and its annexes or side chambers (צלעות) (40:48-41:26).

6.4.4. Inner gates (Ezek 40: 28-37)

Just as the three gates give entry into the outer court, the inner court is accessible by way of three gates. These are identical to the first ones. The only difference is that the gates are facing in the opposite direction with the אולם or vestibule oriented to the outer court. In this way the gates enhance the symmetry and beauty of the temple complex. One approaches the gates by a flight of eight steps (Ezek. 40:37).

Block presents a different ground plan. According to him, in Ezekiel's temple the eastern inner gate is situated in the outer court and the porches of the gates border alongside the inner court.⁴¹¹ However, Ezek 40:31 indicates very clearly: its vestibules face the outer court.

The entrance of the northern gate to the inner court receives some special treatment, for it contains some items that do not appear in the other gates. In the porch the prophet observed two pairs of "tables" (שלהנות) for slaughtering the העולה "the burnt offering", the הטאת "sin offering", and האשם "guilt offering" on each side of the porch. LXX omits the clauses מפר...מפר "on each side", and the addition העולה, "burnt offering".

Outside the gatehouse, on each side of the porch are also two pairs of tables; four tables on each side of the gate, together eight tables. The tables described, are made of hewn stones. The tables are square, one and a half cubits in length, and breadth, and one cubit in height. Referring to 1 Kgs 7:9 these hewn stones could be ashlar that are rectangular hand cut stones, as opposed to natural rock.

⁴¹¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 508 figure 1.

LXX has a varying dimension of the tables, namely two and a half cubits in length.⁴¹²

6.4.5. Porticoes (Ezek 42:6)

Alongside the perimeter wall are structures shaped as “pillared” porticoes. LXX reads: περίστυλα κύκλω τῆς αὐλῆς, referring to a roofed colonnade around the outer court.

In the text of Ezek 42:6 a striking difference has been made between porticoes with pillars (עמודים) in the courts (הצרות) and galleries / cloisters (אתיקים) of the priestly rooms. It is important to note the plural “courts”.

The text does not give any explicit information with regard to porticoes around or on the temple platform. However, I think the porticoes of the outer court as well as the inner court are meant in Ezek 42:6. Some scholars regard הצרות as a transcriptional error; one should read החיצונות “the outer courts”. Reference is made to Ezek. 40:17 that reads החצר החיצונה “the outer court” like LXX does (τῆν αὐλὴν τῆν ἔσωτέραν). However, that has been rendered in singular. So in Ezek 40:17 only the outer court could be meant. In my opinion the gates and porticoes of the inner court are to be seen as the mirror images of the outer court. Porticoes around the outer court as well as the inner court could be plausible.

6.4.6. Rooms adjacent to the gates (Ezek 40:38, 44-46)

Adjacent to the northern gatehouse, the prophet observed a room (לשכה) for priests who are in charge of the altar. It can be entered from the porch. The purpose of this room is to provide a place for washing sacrificial animals prior to slaughter. On the walls inside the room appurtenances are installed to store the utensils. The nature of the appurtenances on the walls used to store the utensils is disputed.⁴¹³

The lemma שפתים is a *hapax*. What is meant by שפתים? Sym. renders with χειλος “lip” and Vulg with *labia* “lips”. LXX reads γείσος λελαξεῦμένον “hewn cornice or rim”, which could refer to small niches in the walls for storing utensils. Targ renders in quite a different way, *wnglym* “hooks”. שפתים have traditionally understood as hooks on which to hang the utensils (see NRSV and NASB).⁴¹⁴ Based on the dualis form, NIV reads “double-pronged hooks, each a handbreadth length”, REB “rims”, NEB “ledges” and Zimmerli reads “storage trays”.⁴¹⁵

On account of the dualis I prefer “double hooks” to hang utensils. Another room adjacent to the southern gatehouse is meant to be for priests who are in charge for the temple. Possibly also the chamber for the singers.

6.4.7. Priestly rooms or sacristies (Ezek 42:1-14)

The “temple court” or restricted area (גזרה) is flanked by two sets of rooms (לשכות) on the north and south side of the platform. Standing in the outer court the prophet could obtain a clear picture of these structures. The overall length of these sets of rooms is a hundred cubits and the breadth fifty cubits.

According to Ezek 42:1 the priestly rooms are situated opposite (dgn) the restricted area (גזרה) and in front of the structure (בנין), opposite the pavement (רצפה) of the outer court, that is to say, between the restricted area next to the temple and the outer court. However, there is much confusion about the exact location.

Many commentators make a guess at the exact location and the proportions of the priestly rooms. According to them, they are situated against the western wall on either side of the בנין. In my opinion that is impossible, for in Ezek 46:20 it is said that Ezekiel saw a place (מקום) at the western end, behind the priestly rooms, reserved for outdoor kitchens for the benefit of the priests. So I have depicted the

⁴¹² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 533.

⁴¹³ Block, *ibid.*, 534.

⁴¹⁴ Block, *ibid.*, 534.

⁴¹⁵ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 367.

priestly rooms on both sides of the temple building on its north and south side (see fig. 6.4.).

The prophet observed edifices built up in three floors and arranged in blocks of 100 and 50 cubits on either side of the temple. Between these blocks is a passage way of 10 cubits wide.⁴¹⁶ One block of rooms faces the restricted area (hrzg) and equals the temple in length; the other faces the structure (בנין) in the north.⁴¹⁷ But what is indicated by structure (בנין) in the text of Ezek 42:1? Standing in the outer court the prophet saw the structure of the perimeter wall together with the worshipper's rooms and the portico across the structures of the temple platform in front (אל-פני) of the priestly rooms (לשכות).

What is the purpose of these לשכות? The prophet was shown complexes of priestly rooms or sacristies. They are intended to be holy rooms (לשכות הקדש), "where the priests who approach YHWH eat the most holy offerings" (יאכלו-שם הכהנים) (Ezek 42:13). LXX added ὁσίου Σαδδουκ, (sons of Zadok). These rooms are also intended for storage and changing of the priestly vestments used during performing duties in the inner court and the temple in which they have ministered (Ezek 42:14). Different clothing is to be worn in the outer court accessible to common people. Probably these 100 cubit long blocks are used as refectories and the 50 cubit long blocks for storing the holy vestments.

The texts dealing with the architecture of the priestly rooms are described in a very complicated fashion. "Virtually every detail concerning the design and appearance of the chambers is open to debate, and any reconstruction is tentative".⁴¹⁸ The way in which the design of the rooms has usually been depicted, is questionable and various explanations are given about it. I will try to shed some new light upon the architectural features, observed by the prophet.

The text records about buildings בשלשים "in thirds" (tripled), assuming three floors. Most scholars assume structures drawn up as one-sided terraced buildings. The text is obscure, it is not easy to imagine such a building. Why terraced buildings? The "upper rooms" (הלשכות העליונה) should be קצרות (shortend), for "galleries / corridors" (אתיקים) that take away space from the rooms, literally: "eat / consume them" (כייובלו) more than from the lower and the middle floor of the buildings. "These are designed like terraces, the upper balconies being set progressively farther back than those beneath them".⁴¹⁹

Most interpreters suggest priestly rooms in three stages, terraced in the length of the structures. Then the middle and upper floors are smaller in floor space. Mainly because of the limited width of the upper floor that would be very unlikely. Contrary to this assumption we must think of terraces at the head (the smallest side) of the buildings instead of terraces alongside the length of the sets of rooms. On the first and second floor the terraces are accessible via stairs.

Ezek 42:6 shows the difference between the architecture of the "pillared" structures around the outer court and the priestly rooms, "The rooms have no pillars like the courts have". According to this reading the courts have colonnades. The priestly rooms have "arcaded" galleries in three stages, "gallery above gallery" (אתיק אל-פני-אתיק).

Considering the obscure, complicated and, in some cases, detailed observations, I assume Ezekiel was shown two blocks of 100 and 50 cubits long and 20 cubits wide with terraces or balconies facing the short side of the blocks onto the inner court. The text says nothing about the width of the galleries. Taking up his position in the outer court the prophet saw the entrance on the north side of the long block.

It is usually assumed that the floors of the buildings are tripled in the 100 and 50 cubit longitudinal direction which provides a very inappropriate terraced construction. From an architectural point of view

⁴¹⁶ Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 455; Reconstructions of I. Benzinger and L.H. Vincent in Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 2. 707.

⁴¹⁷ Cooke, *ibid.*, 456.

⁴¹⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 564.

⁴¹⁹ Block, *ibid.*, 564.

it is far more likely, however, that the galleries with their staircases are situated on the short side of the buildings. In Ezek. 42:4 the length and width of the passageways between the priestly rooms are given.

What is meant by the MT by the obscure reading “a way of one cubit”? (דרך אמה אחת) Many a scholar emends דרך אמה אחת following the LXX reading πηχυνς ἑκατὸν τὸ μῆκος, “a length of hundred cubits”. I agree with them because the passageway runs alongside the hundred cubit long set of rooms; so a one hundred cubit long passageway is also plausible.

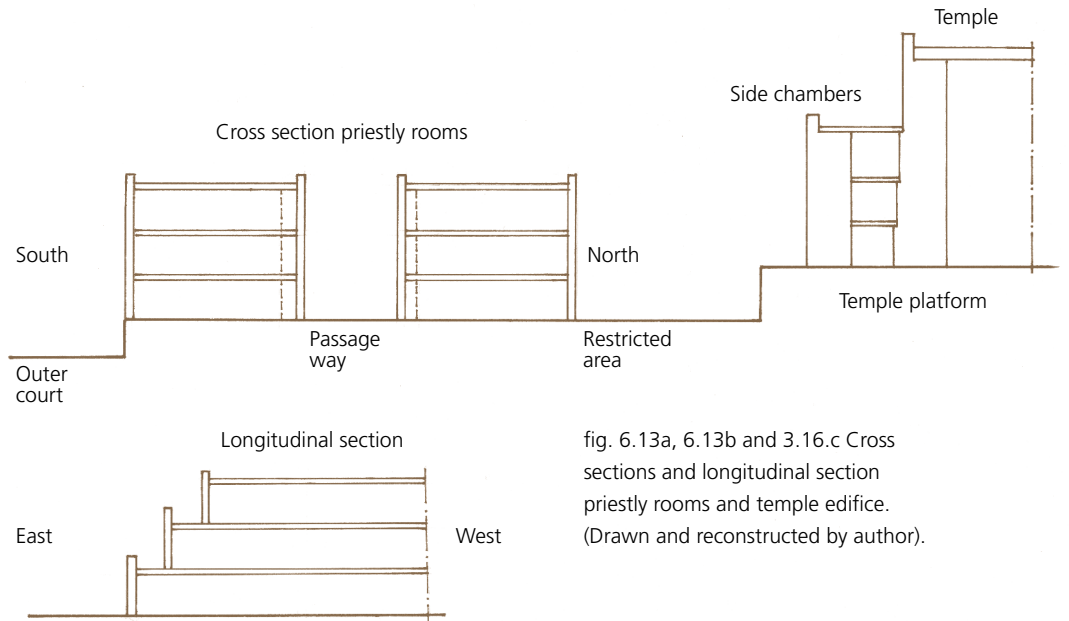


fig. 6.13a, 6.13b and 3.16.c Cross sections and longitudinal section priestly rooms and temple edifice. (Drawn and reconstructed by author).

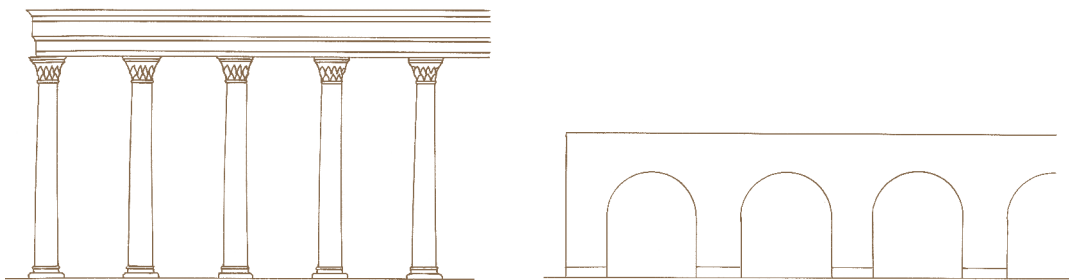


fig. 6.13c Pillars and cloisters or arcades. (Drawn by author).

6.4.8. Outdoor kitchens, walls and entrances (Ezek 46:19-24, 42:7, 12)

Behind the priestly rooms a place (מִקְדָּשׁ) is shaped where the priests prepare their sacred meals, “in order not to bring them out into the outer court and communicating holiness to the people” (Ezek. 46:20). Like the kitchens in the corners of the outer court for the laity, they must be unroofed. Nothing is said about cooking or baking installations. Probably behind the priestly rooms there are walled-in places with the essential facilities, comparable with those in the outer court.

⁴¹² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 533.

⁴¹³ Block, *ibid.*, 534.

⁴¹⁴ Block, *ibid.*, 534.

⁴¹⁵ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 367.

A part of the passageway (מהלך) before the sets of priestly rooms is flanked by a wall or stone fence (גדר) in line with the 50 cubit long block, extending westward. The גדר runs parallel to the part of the longer block which faces the Outer Court.

There was an entrance "at the side of the gate" (Ezek. 46:19). By a flight of steps officiating priests are able to enter the temple platform from the outer court up to the priestly rooms.

6.4.9. *Binyan* (Ezek 41:12)

Another large structure called *binyan* (בנין), located behind the temple to the far west side against the perimeter wall, is mentioned by the prophet. The internal dimensions of the building are 90x70 cubits. The walls are 5 cubits thick. The structure has been measured together with its gallery (ארוקיה).

According to Block, no firm conclusions about these structures are possible, but some sort of gallery may be imagined.⁴²⁰ ארוקים must be galleries or corridors in the shape of cloisters or arcades.

The function of the בנין remains unclear, because Ezekiel says nothing about it. However, it is odd that nothing is said about the function of a structure larger than the temple building. The description of the temple in 1 Chron. 26 may be of help here. Vers 18 refers to a possibly related structure called "parbar" (פרבר) (KJV untranslated), "court" (NIV), "colonnade" (NRSV), "forecourt", "colonnaded porch", "rampart" (HALOT).

With respect to the interior of the בנין the Temple Scroll (35.10-15) refers to an enclosure with standing columns at the west of the temple for the guilt-offering and the sin-offering. The term "standing columns" indicates that these were free-standing without a roof over them. Josephus refers to "the west stoa of the temple" (War 5.4.2).

I imagine this structure as an unroofed walled-in colonnaded court. This structure is accessible from outside the temple precinct via an "upgoing road" or "ramp" (מוטילה) (see 1 Chron 26:16). I conclude from this that the *binyan* behind the temple to the west can be identified as the פרבר of 1 Chron 26:18 and as the western enclosure of the Temple Scroll.⁴²¹

I suppose this building is meant to store the sacrificial animals. It would explain how live animals will be brought from outside the temple to the inner court. It is not likely that they will be forced to enter through gates which are only accessible by means of steps. These live animals will be brought into the enclosure behind the temple via a ramp alongside the outer wall of the temple precinct. Within that enclosed court behind the temple the live animals will be tied before sacrifice.⁴²²

6.4.10. The altar of burnt offering; its shape and measurements (Ezek 43:13-17)

Special attention must be paid to the great altar of burnt offering (מזבה העלה) located in the inner court on the central point of the temple complex. The house of YHWH is not only the source of holiness, it is also the focal point for purgation. This is why there are two most holy locations in the spatial layout of Ezekiel's temple.

As is rightly remarked by Stevenson "the relationship between the Holy of Holies and the Altar is at the heart of the ideology of Ezekiel, and is expressed in the architectural layout of the House. The Holy of Holies is the symbolic dwelling place and the altar is the place of purgation. In this geometry of holiness, the architectural center of the complex is not the Holy of Holies but the altar".⁴²³

According to Albright its shape reflects the Mesopotamian ziggurat with all its cosmic connotations.⁴²⁴ To some extent in its composition, the three stages of the altar from bottom to top are

⁴²⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 554.

⁴²¹ Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era*, 98-99.

⁴²² Chyutin, *ibid.*, 99.

⁴²³ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 40.

⁴²⁴ Albright, "The Babylonian Temple-Tower and the Altar of Burnt Offering" JBL 39, 137-142.

described in terms of its lateral tapering. Even though it shows some affinity with the shape of the zigurat (terraced temple towers), a total comparison would be exaggerated

In Ezek 43 a detailed description of the shape and measurements of the altar of burnt offering and the rites for its consecration is given. According to the scope of the present study we limit the investigations to the physical structures and furnishings of the temple complex.

The dimensions and the various parts of the altar of burnt offering, located in the inner court in front of the temple, are enumerated. For the first time the height of a construction in the temple complex is reported. Remarkably the specification of the unit of measurement is repeated. The measurements of the altar are given in long cubits being "a cubit and a handbreadth". The unit of the long cubit, being one cubit and a hand-breath, has already been mentioned in Ezek 40:5.

The gutter or base of the altar is one cubit deep and one cubit wide. The meaning of *הַיֵּק*, further defined as *הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ*, is obscure. The *הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ* is best understood as a gutter sunk into the ground, one cubit deep and one cubit wide at the bottom of the altar. The reference to the earth distinguishes this trench from another one at the top of the altar.⁴²⁵

The gutter is provided by a *נְבוֹל* "curb or rim", one span in height. Maybe *הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ* "bosom of the earth" is to be understood as the opposite of *הַרְאֵל*, "the mountain of God" in Ezek 43:15. *הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ* could be the Hebrew equivalent of the Akkadian *irat kigalli*, ("bosom of *kigallu*"), the formal designation of the foundation platform of the divine palace and the temple tower of Marduk. If the *הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ* was a sunken foundation, the height of the altar is the same as the height given in 2 Chron 4:1 for the altar in Solomon's temple. The altar description, then, could be derived from an ancient document or tradition describing the pre-exilic altar.⁴²⁶ The context however, calls for an interpretation along the lines of 1 Kgs 22:35, where *הַיֵּק* refers to a depression or cavity of a chariot into which the blood of the slain king Ahab ran.⁴²⁷

This proposal is rejected by Zimmerli, who sees these expressions rather as mundane architectural terms: the *הַיֵּק* as a drain alongside the altar to accommodate the flow of blood and water. The name of the topmost part of the altar which represents the actual "altar hearth" is written in two different ways *הַרְאֵל* or *אֲרִיאֵל* (Ezek 43:15).⁴²⁸

The altar would be built in three stages, 2+4+4 cubits high. In total the height would be 10 cubits from ground level to top level of the altar hearth. The measurements of 20x20 cubits square of the base inclusive the surrounding one cubit wide gutter and curb are comparable to the 20x20 cubits square of the first temple altar (2 Chron 4:1). The three stages of the altar are each two cubits shorter than the one below it. The first stage (the lower block is upon the base) is 16x16 cubits wide. It is surrounded by a ridge of one cubit wide (these data may have dropped out of the text); the upper block 14x14 cubits wide, also surrounded by a gutter of half a cubit deep.

The altar hearth is 12x12 cubits wide and surmounted by four horns. This means that the altar proper is as wide as the entryway to the temple and the overall width is the same as its entry hall.⁴²⁹

The steps needed to approach the altar hearth, are on the east side in front of the temple, so that the officiating priests face the temple. According to Exod 20:26 steps to ascend altars were prohibited. Preceding altars always were provided with a ramp, constructed at the south side.

⁴²⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 599.

⁴²⁶ Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48*, 50.

⁴²⁷ Block, *ibid.*, 598-599.

⁴²⁸ Tuell, *ibid.*, 46; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 425. According to Zimmerli the use of these obscure expressions cannot be separated from Isa. 29:1-2, describing the city of David. In Isa 29:2b Jerusalem is compared with the sacrificial hearth.

⁴²⁹ Block, *ibid.*, 601.

Nothing is said about the composition or design except that its horns are protruding upward at each of the corners of the altar hearth. The height of the horns is not mentioned in MT. LXX has the following addition καὶ ὑπεράνω τῶν κεράτων πῆχυς “the four horns will be a cubit high”.

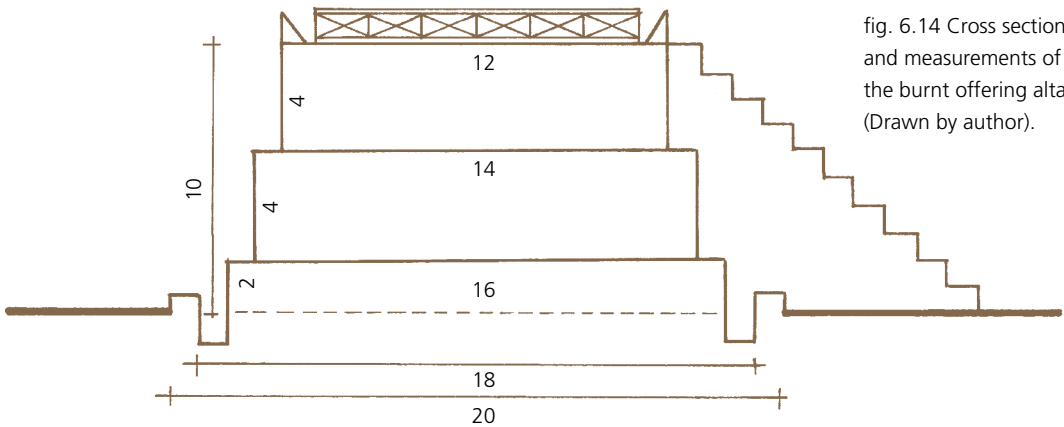


fig. 6.14 Cross section and measurements of the burnt offering altar. (Drawn by author).

The measurements of Ezekiel’s altar differ from the altar in the Tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and Herod. The altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle was a portable object of wood covered with bronze, 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide and three cubits high.⁴³⁰

The account of the building of Solomon’s temple in 1 Kgs 6-7 gives no description of the altar of burnt offering. Probably the bronze altar of the Tabernacle was placed in front of the temple. In 1 Chron 16:14 it is said that the bronze altar had been removed from the front of the house and put on the north side of the great altar. We do not know for sure whether this altar was established by Solomon or Ahaz.

The Bible does not give a detailed description of the altar of burnt offering in Herod’s temple, so we depend on extra-biblical sources. The Mishnah *tractate Middoth* 3.1 knows of a stepped altar with a base and three pedestal blocks that measured 28x28, 26x26 and 24x24 cubits respectively from bottom to top.⁴³¹ It is bigger than the altar in Solomon’s temple (see 2 Chron 4:1) and the altar in Ezekiel’s visionary temple (cf. Ezek. 43:13-17).

6.5. The design and architecture of the temple proper

6.5.1. Exterior of the temple (Ezek 41:5-11, 13-14)

On the west side of the inner court the temple itself (הביית) is situated. This is the central edifice for which the entire complex exists. This temple building seems to be similar to previous temples that Israel has had. The temple is set on a raised platform or podium (גבה).

This platform is said to be one rod, i.e. six cubits or about 3.15m high (cf. Ezek. 41:8) corresponding to the ten steps before the entrance of the temple. That raised platform is made up of מוסדות, “foundation walls”.⁴³²

Two entrances to the annexes, one on the north side and another on the south side, open out onto the surrounding five cubit wide terrace. This terrace around the temple is called מנה in Ezek. 41:11, the width of the terrace is 5 cubits. The clause ורחב מקום המנה “and the breadth of the place of the remaining space” on the raised platform seems to be incomprehensible. What is meant by מקום (Ezek 41:11) in this particular case? LXX reads εἶρος τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ ἀπολλοῦπου. The LXX translation φῶς ‘light’ instead of the Hebrew מקום is even more complicated. In my opinion there are two options in solving this problem:

⁴³⁰ The length of the cubit differs from Ezekiel’s cubit which is a hand-breath longer.

⁴³¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 604.

⁴³² HALOT, 556-557.

- a. מִקְוִים is a specific indication of the five cubits broad terraced space before the entrance of the annexes;
- b. there is a place from ground floor to the floors overhead behind the entrances that is made from the מִנְהַ, entering the annexes.

These two places could be 5x5 cubit free spaces inside the annexes on either side of the temple building. LXX reads θύραι τῶν ἐξἑδρῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπόλοιπον, “doorway entrance of the halls on the open space”. In those places the winding staircases could be situated. This last option seems the most preferable to me.

One is able to approach the temple platform on the front or east side by a flight of steps, which LXX numbers ten. The reading of MT **וּבַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר** “and by the steps which” is, according to many scholars, to be corrected to **עֶשֶׂר וּבַמַּעֲלוֹת** “and by ten steps” in line with LXX δέκα ἀναβαθμῶν.⁴³³ The conclusion of the Greek text could be right, assuming that entering the temple compound further and further there is an upgrading level of holiness. The difference between the profane and sacred territory is seven steps, between the sacred and holy eight steps and between the holy and most holy ten steps.

There are pillars (עַמֻּדִים) on either side of the entry in the entryway of the temple. The entrance of Solomon's temple, was flanked by **שְׁנֵי הָעַמֻּדִים** **אֲבִיב** and **יָחִין**, “two large bronze pillars”, named Boaz and Jachin. In Ezekiel's temple there is only talk of עַמֻּדִים, pillars (Ezek 40:49b). Are these pillars comparable to the ones in Solomon's temple? The question which needs to be answered is whether these pillars are free standing (before the entrance) or supporting pillars as part of the construction of the front of the temple.

Block gives a plausible explanation: “Given the wide variation in forms of the “free standing pillars” hypothesis, and the unconvincing nature of the analogical Near Eastern iconographic evidence, these pillars are best understood as integral to the structure of the building, perhaps supports for some sort of “awning “canopy”. I agree with Block that they are part of the façade; not only decorating but also sustaining the front of the temple building. The span of the entrance amounts to 14 cubits; so more support will be needed.⁴³⁴

Outside the entrance hall of the temple an architectural element was made on the front of the temple above the entrance. There is much debate about the meaning of עֵבַ עֵיץ. Many explanations have been offered in order to render the meaning of this architectural term. It could be a cornice / canopy. Since the temple already has a porch it does not need a canopy or shed over its entrance, so I think it must be a cornice.

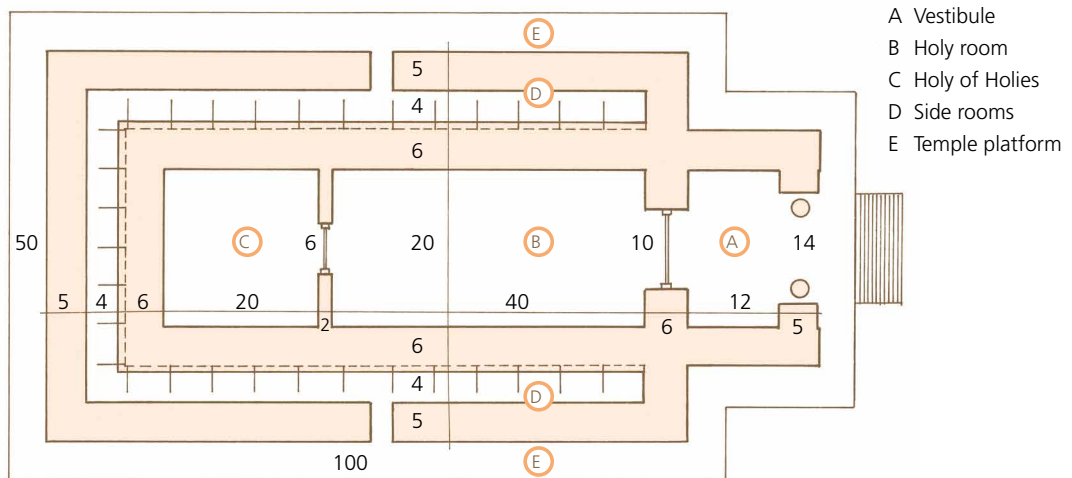


fig. 6.15 Tripartite floor plan temple edifice including its annexes and its measurements. (Drawn by author).

⁴³³ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 223. Allen argues that LXX has preserved a superior reading. “A main clause is required and a number is expected”. Climbing the height of one rod needs a flight of ten steps.

⁴³⁴ Allen, *ibid.*, 232.

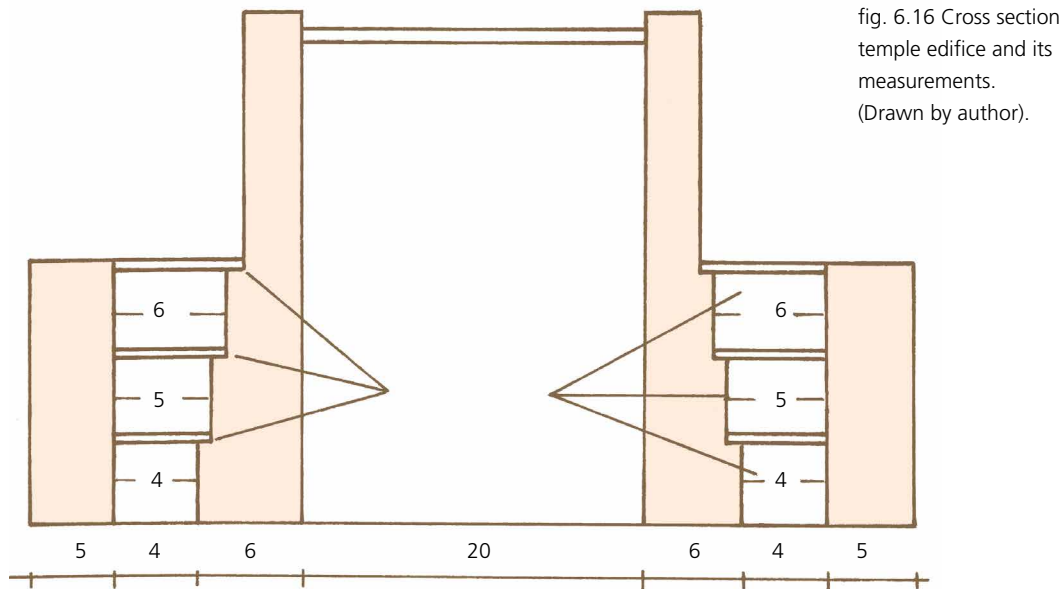
The exterior dimensions of the temple building including the annexes are 50x100 cubits. A perfectly proportioned rectangle is created, continuing the use of multiples of twenty-five. The measurements of 50x100 cubits are in line with the enclosure of the Tabernacle. The dimensions of the temple edifice with its annexes or side rooms are almost the same as Solomon's temple. Accordingly, it may be assumed that the thirty cubits height of Solomon's temple likewise may be attributed to Ezekiel's temple.

On the outside of the temple building, side rooms (צִלְעוֹת) (Ezek 41:5-7) are located along the three exterior walls on the north, south, and west side. What do these annexes / side rooms look like? These auxiliary structures will be three stories high. There will be thirty chambers on each floor, ninety chambers in total. Ezekiel does not reveal the purpose of these side chambers, but they may be intended for storage.

The reading of MT צִלְע אֶל-צִלְע שְׁלוֹשׁ וּשְׁלִשִׁים פַּעַמִּים "side room over side room, thirty-three times" is difficult. Block suggests a reversal of the numbers, "thirty (side rooms) three times".⁴³⁵ This is in line with the three floors of the side rooms of Solomon's temple mentioned in 1 Kgs 6:6. LXX, however, reads πλευρὸν ἐπὶ πλευρὸν τριάκοντα καὶ τρεῖς δις literally: "side over side, thirty and three twice", which suggests two stories, each with thirty-three diminutive cells. The side rooms widen from the bottom to the top floors.

The width of the floors of the side rooms of Solomon's temple increased from 5 and 6 to 7 cubits upwards. The width of the groundfloor of the side rooms mentioned in Ezek is 4 cubits (see Ezek 41:5). In line with the design of Solomon's temple the side rooms in Ezekiel's temple would be 4, 5 and 6 cubits wide. Ezekiel's temple has recessed walls with "ledges" (אֲחוּזִים) like Solomon's temple (see fig. 5.11 and 6.16).

In conformity with 1 Kgs 6:8 access is gained to the upper stories through לוּלִים, probably to be understood as interior winding staircases.⁴³⁶ The thickness of the outer walls of the annexes are given, namely 5 cubits.



Like the entrance hall of the temple, the side rooms in the annexes have narrowed windows (הַלְנִים אֲטֻמוֹת) and cornices (הַעֲבִים). I assume this cornices are made as decorations above the window-openings.

⁴³⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 544-545.

⁴³⁶ NIDOTTE, 2, 780.

It may be assumed that the measurements of Ezekiel's temple correspond with the temple of Solomon. Although Ezekiel offers no understanding about vertical measurements it may be expected that the dimensions as well as architectural features and ornamentations of both temples are practically identical.

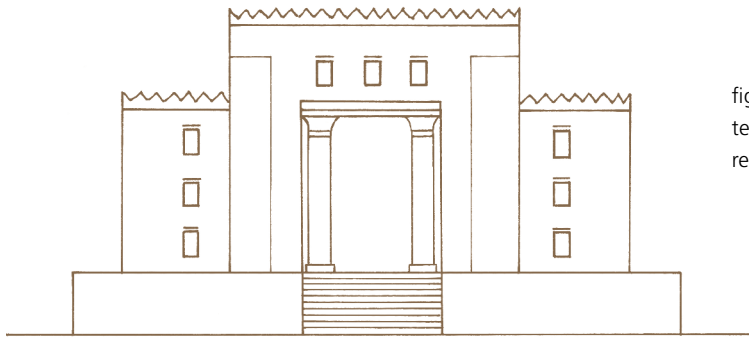


fig. 6.17 Front- and side view temple and annexes. (Drawn and reconstructed by author).

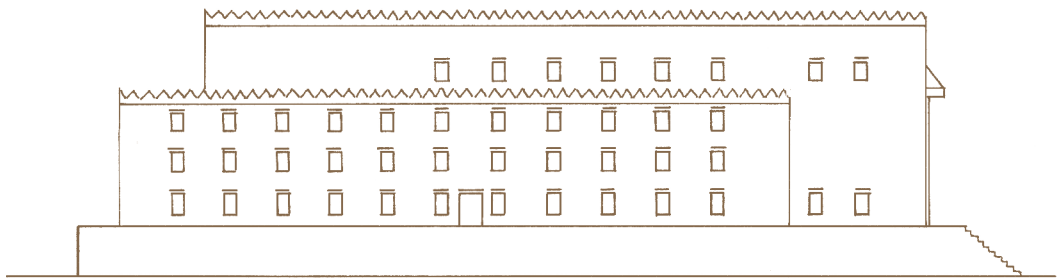
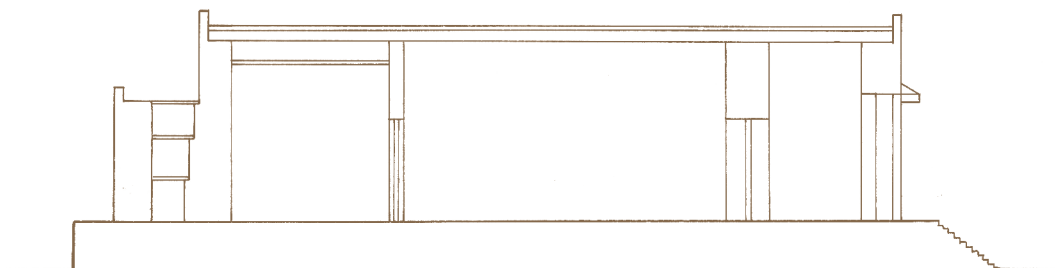
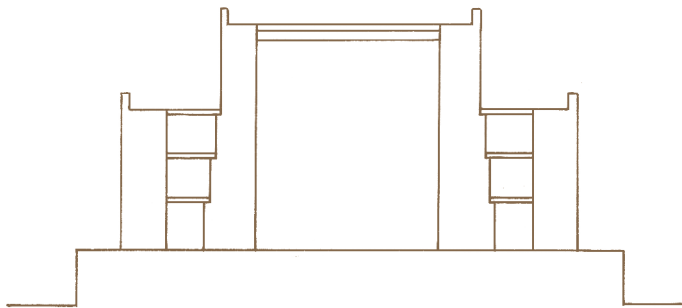


fig. 6.18 Cross- and longitudinal section temple and annexes. (Drawn and reconstructed by author).



6.5.2. Other structures and characteristics (40:16, 28-47, 42:6)

Before describing the interior of the temple a sketchy enumeration of structures and architectural features, observed from the inner court is given, namely: **אלמוי ההצר**, the “porches” or “porticoes” of the gates and the temple situated on the inner court, **ספים**, “thresholds” (plural!) of the temple and the gates, **הלונים האטמות**, “narrowed or latticed windows” of the gate buildings (the same as in Ezek 40:16) and **אחיקים** “galleries”.

From the text we may conclude that there are galleries with pillars on three sides of the hrzg, the inner court in front of the temple.

The antecedent of the cardinal **ושלשתם** in Ezek 41:16 is unclear in the opinion of most scholars. It has been explained and translated in different ways. According to Block, the antecedent of **ושלשתם** refers to the **הלונים האטמות** which he interprets as a “three tiered sill”.⁴³⁷ Zimmerli assumes a connection with **אחיקים**.⁴³⁸ The fact is that the antecedent could be found in **אחיקים**, obviously **לשלשתם סביב** **והאחיקים** is a coherent clause. KJV translates **ושלשתם סביב אחיקים** as follows: “the galleries round about in three stories”; HALOT relates it to the Akkadian *metiqu* “passage, street”.⁴³⁹ A gallery functions as a passageway, for that reason the translation “all three galleries around” (the inner court) is appropriate.

6.5.3. Interior and furnishing of Ezekiel’s temple (Ezek 40:48-41:4, 15b-26)

Ultimately, the angelic guide and the prophet reached the temple proper. First the dimensions of the **אילים**, the “columns or side walls” on either side of the **אלם**, entrance hall are measured; the thickness is 5 and width 3 cubits each.

The dimensions of the entry hall are mentioned; twenty cubits long and eleven cubits wide. The reading of MT **עשתי עשרה** “eleven” is questionable for “eleven cubits” is not in conformity with the overall length of hundred cubits, LXX **δωδεκα** “twelve”, however, surely is. Referring to LXX the width of the entry hall must be $14+2 \times 3=20$ cubits. MT seems to have dropped some words which are still represented in LXX by *homoioteleuton*, namely **πηγῶν δέκα τεσσάρων καὶ ἐπωμίδες τῆς θύρας τοῦ αὐλοῦ** “14 cubits and the side walls of the entrance of the porch”. In other words, the phrase regarding the fourteen cubits width of the entrance is to be added.⁴⁴⁰ That seems to be a meaningful addition.

The angelic guide measured the pilasters on each side of the entrance: six cubits wide. Width is to be understood as depth or thickness. In the side walls of the entry hall window openings are made like in the gates of the outer and inner court. These side walls also are decorated with palm trees.

After having measured and described the entry hall of the temple Ezekiel’s attention is focussed on the entrance of the nave, the great hall or Holy Place. Ezekiel’s text is complicated; a correct translation is difficult. As in Solomon’s temple, the doorposts or frames on either side of the nave are “squared”. What is meant by **מזוזה רבעה** “squared doorposts” in Ezek 41:21? The doorposts, as in Solomon’s temple, had quadruple rabbets.⁴⁴¹ Noth talks about “Vier-Staffelung”.⁴⁴²

Zimmerli understands **מזוזה רבעה** as a fourfold gradation, becoming narrower towards the rear of the door casing.⁴⁴³ The temple of Ta’jimat can be cited as archaeological evidence for such a gradation (there the doorposts were tripled). Zimmerli points out the parallel in 1 Kgs 6:31 that informs us about the corresponding “fivefold” doorposts at the entrance to the innermost room.

⁴³⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 554.

⁴³⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 382

⁴³⁹ HALOT, 101.

⁴⁴⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 223; Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiel*, 23.

⁴⁴¹ Allen, *ibid.* 233.

⁴⁴² Noth, *1 könige*, 127.

⁴⁴³ Zimmerli, *ibid.*, 388.

After describing the doorposts, the focus is on the doors themselves. Ezekiel observed double doors leading into the great hall or long room and closing off the inner room or Holy Place. Double doors consisting of two swinging leaves, each of which was set in its own pivot hole next to the doorpost.⁴⁴⁴

Rashi and Radak suggest two successive sets of doors, Radak two sets of singular doors, Rashi two sets of double doors. From the text of Ezek. 41:23-24 the question arises if two sets of doors are intended or only one set of double doors.

I think the text suggests one set of double swinging doors for each the great hall and the inner room, and not two successive sets of doors. Moreover, two successive sets of doors seem unnecessary. Just as the interior of the temple, the doors are decorated with carvings of cherubim and palm trees.

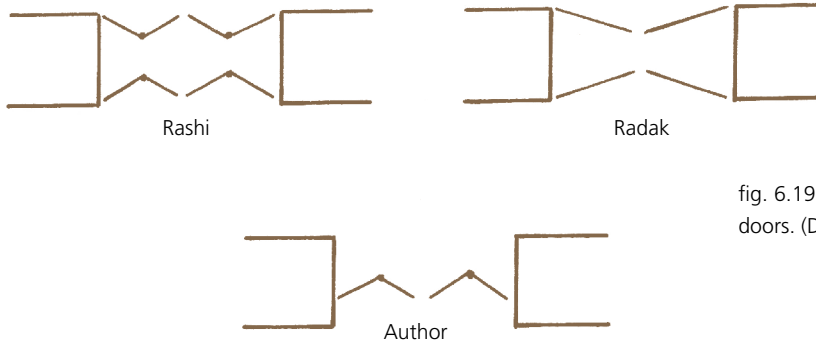


fig. 6.19 Doorframes with double doors. (Drawn by author).

The layout of the temple precinct as well as the temple edifice proper shows an increasing degree of holiness. Outside the temple edifice that becomes visible in the increasing elevation of the courts and the temple platform, inside the temple in the gradation of holiness of the three rooms and the contraction of their entrances from 14, to 10 to 6 cubits.

After the entry hall the angelic guide measured the **היכל**, the long main room, nave or Holy Place of the temple. The dimensions of the long room or nave are 20x40 cubits.

Subsequently a description of the interior and decoration of the temple has been offered. All walls of the temple interior are “panelled with woodwork” (שחיה עץ).

The inside of the temple was decorated with carvings of cherubim and palm trees, motifs obviously borrowed from Solomon’s temple. These cherubim had two heads: one humanlike and another like a young lion. “The all seeing *cherubim* or sphinxes are vigilant guardians of God’s sovereign holiness, while the palms, as often in ancient Near Eastern art, represent the tree of life”.⁴⁴⁵

In the Holy Place, before the entrance of the innermost room of the temple, Ezekiel observed a peculiar piece of furniture, an altar (**מזבה**) being “the table (**שולחן**) in the face of YHWH”, called the wooden altar (**המזבה עץ**). This three cubits high and two cubits square piece of furniture has the dimensions of an altar. A table of above mentioned dimensions is strange. Ezek 41:22 begins with “altar” and ends with “table”.

In a sense altar and table are equated in Jewish writings. The *Mishnah* tractate *Pirkei Avot* 3:3 includes a quotation from R. Shimon who says: “If three ate at one table and did not speak of Torah at it, it is as if they ate of the offerings of the dead” (see Ps 106:28).

Block explains as follows: “Either the table represents an altar with the bread of the Presence functioning as a type of non-burnt offering presented to YHWH or its structure resembled an altar”.⁴⁴⁶ In my opinion Block avoids the problem by assuming one of the two. I suppose altar and table appear to be interchangeable (see Ezek 41:22 to Ezek 44:16). Altar and table are two ways to approach God.

⁴⁴⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 560.

⁴⁴⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 233.

⁴⁴⁶ Block, *ibid.*, 559.

A table of wood is appropriate but an altar of wood raises questions. The fire will consume the wooden altar. Although Ezekiel says nothing about it, the altar must be overlaid with a fireproof covering like the golden incense altar in the Tabernacle and Solomon temple.

Behind the Holy Place is the “Holy of Holies” (קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים) or innermost room (פְּנִימָה); a room of 20x20 cubits. In 1 Kgs 8:6 it is called דְּבִיר. Some assume an elevated ground floor in the Holy of Holiest. This supposition fits in the concept of increasing holiness, expressed in increasing elevation of the sacred space. But we are not sure about this supposition; the text of Ezekiel says nothing about it.

In comparison to Israel's previous temples, there is no mention of a veil between the main room and the innermost room. This does not necessarily mean that the veil is missing, but it is unlikely that Ezekiel would omit some reference to it if the veil would be there together with doors.⁴⁴⁷ In Solomon's and Herod's temple the walls and all the furniture inside the temple were plated with pure gold. In Ezekiel's temple there is no mention of gold. Even the altar of incense (the golden altar in the Tabernacle and temple of Solomon) is called here a wooden altar.

According to Block, the absence of any reference to its decoration, furnishings, or function only reflects the primary rhetorical concern to define sacred space, not to provide a blueprint for a construction project.⁴⁴⁸ Defining sacred space is apparently a major purpose of Ezekiel's temple, but that the omission of references to decorations and furnishings indicates that the future temple only defines sacred space, seems incorrect.

In Ezek 41:15b-26 various architectural details (wooden wall coverings, windows, door frames and the design of the doors) are mentioned as well as decorations (carved *cherubim* and palm trees). Some important pieces of furniture are missing, like the Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Menorah. Probably that has more to do with changes in the temple service than the design and definition of sacred space.

6.6. Ezekiel's temple compared to its predecessors

6.6.1. An inventory tour through a virtual temple

A scrutinizing reading of the vision report yields a considerable number of new insights and ideas with regard to the plan, architecture and arrangement of Ezekiel's temple. From textual data and in retrospect from archaeological evidence we get an indication of the appearance of the envisioned temple. There is much referring to its predecessors both in the ancient Near East and Israel, but there are also differences in the plan and arrangement. The interpretation of these differences depends in full measure on our way of reading, conceiving the text literally or figuratively.

Ezekiel was ordered to look closely and to listen attentively (Ezek 40:4). All that was shown to him had to be declared to the house of Israel. In Ezek 47:6 the angelic guide asked him: “Have you seen, son of man?” The question arises what the prophet really saw and what he did not. Would he have written down all that was shown and said to him?

On the one hand the vision report echoes the Tabernacle, Solomon's temple and the style of building of that time. Written sources and archaeological excavations bear witness to corresponding architecture. On the other hand, there are major differences. This temple has a perfectly square shape according to the vision report, and in contradiction to its predecessors,

Ezekiel's temple seems to be almost empty. Many objects in Solomon's temple are missing and others have changed. Possibly that is illustrative for a changing purpose, changing temple service and a changing priesthood without high priest. The interpretation of these differences, however, depends on our way of reading.

⁴⁴⁷ Schmitt, Carl Laney, *Messiah's Coming Temple*, 93.

⁴⁴⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 543.

The Tabernacle and Solomon's temple have set their mark upon Ezekiel's temple. In turn Ezekiel's envisioned temple must have influenced the ideas of the Qumran community, reflected in the Temple Scroll.

After having investigated the background of temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel and their layout, design and furnishing, a comparison must be possible.

The following matters have been compared:

- location
- plan / layout
- walls and courts
- temple
- additional buildings and other structures
- installations and furnishings
- architecture and decoration
- priesthood

6.6.2. The location

The temple of Solomon was built on Mount Zion and dominated the city of Jerusalem hundreds of years. The importance of this very spot traces back to a major event in the kingship of David. The temple was built where YHWH appeared to David after punishing him and his people with a plague. Like in other religious cultures in the Ancient Near East, the appearance of the deity was a prerequisite for holy places. When the plague was averted, David was told to build an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan. David said: "Here shall be the house of YHWH and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chron 22:1).

The temple envisioned by Ezekiel would also be built on a very high mountain (Ezek 40:2). Hals remarks: "this very high mountain picks up language with a mythological heritage, as in Ps 48:2, but it is not a description of the actual geography of Jerusalem".⁴⁴⁹ Early temples often symbolised the "cosmic mountain" or primordial hillock. Although Mount Zion is not more than a hillock it still possesses in its theological meaning all the prerogatives of ancient conceptions.

The 500x500 cubits (260x260m) wide temple compound could amply be built on the present day temple platform on Mount Zion, however, according to a literal reading of the vision report the temple site and its surrounding area together should be enlarged with a third court. The entire temple site should be 500x500 rods (almost 1600x1600m). For that purpose, the entire landscape should be transformed: a river flows out of the temple to the Dead Sea and the city of Jerusalem should be located south of the temple. Furthermore, there is talk of a new distribution of land.

6.6.3. The "plan"

The term "plan" is open to various interpretations such as blueprint, design, groundplan. This term is used in various translations of Ezek 43:10-11 (see NIV, NRSV NEB and DB and by various scholars as Milgrom / Block, Allen, Joyce, Fisch).⁴⁵⁰ By "plan" a blueprint is often supposed. A blueprint, however, is out of the question, it does not fit in a two-dimensional portrayal. Joyce expounds his use of the word "plan". According to him the phrase "so that they may observe and follow the entire plan" (vs 10) seems to imply a definite expectation that the envisaged restoration of the temple will actually happen and moreover that it will be based on the pattern (תכנית) given to Ezekiel in his vision.⁴⁵¹

In my view the shape of Ezekiel's virtual temple should be interpreted as a new image-paradigm which takes shape in an idealistic spatial concept described in chapter 7. Ezekiel's future temple still

⁴⁴⁹ Hals, *Ezekiel*, 300.

⁴⁵⁰ Milgrom, Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 42 (fig.1); Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 231 (fig.2); Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 229; Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 295.

⁴⁵¹ Joyce, *ibid.*, 229.

shows many characteristics of Solomon's and Herod's actual temples but it also differs in many respects. Ezekiel's temple is strictly separated from its profane environment.

On the contrary, the temple of Solomon was integrated in the complex of the royal palace. The temple was surrounded by a courtyard i.e. the inner court and beyond that was a greater court which enclosed both the temple and the palace. The elevation of the courts points to increasing sanctity. Although the temple of Herod was separated from the city and its environment by a massive raised platform with enormous rampart walls, the Roman Antonia fortress on the contrary was built against the temple complex.

The plan of Ezekiel's temple is composed of three perfect square courts of 100x100 cubits, 500x500 cubits and 500x500 rods wide. A third court of large dimensions also mentioned in the Temple Scroll is a new phenomenon. The plan of Ezekiel's temple and that of the Temple Scroll are entirely symmetrical in contradiction to Solomon's temple. Striking are the measurements of 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 and 100 cubits. A multiple of five cubits is used in the dimensions of the gatebuildings, the courts and temple itself. The steps ascending to a higher level, moving from the outside to the temple, are also significant in this matter. Seven steps at the outer gate, eight steps to the inner gate and ten steps to the vestibule of the temple on the temple platform; in total twenty-five steps.

6.6.4. Walls and Courts

Solomon's temple had three courts separated by walls. The first one within the governmental buildings, i.e. the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the Hall of Pillars and the hall of the Throne; the second one within Solomon's Palace and the third one within the Temple. These walls were built with dressed stones and timber (1 Kgs 7:12).

The outer court of Ezekiel's temple is surrounded by a perimeter wall around the entire temple compound of one rod high and thick. The inner court is situated on a raised platform. The 500x500 rod exterior court around the temple complex must also be walled in, but the text does not give any information about its height and style of building.

An important feature of Herod's temple was the *soreq*, the wall of partition. It was a low wall that surrounded the inner court and separated the inner and outer courts of the temple. At each gate, giving access to the inner court, there was a sign written both in Latin and Greek, prohibiting Gentiles from entering the area beyond the wall.

The inner court of Ezekiel's temple is a part of the elevated temple platform. Only priests and Levites are allowed to enter this "restricted area". Ezekiel makes no mention of a court of Israelites as in Herod's temple. Possibly (Israelite) men and women together are allowed to enter the outer court.

6.6.5. Temple edifice

Solomon's temple had the same tripartite arrangement as its predecessor i.e. the Tabernacle or desert shrine. Likewise, many temples in the ancient Near East had a floorplan composed of a porch or vestibule, a main room and an inner room. The design also resembles its predecessor in many respects. The temple edifice itself was a rectangular building of 60x20 cubits (including its entry hall and annexes 100x50 cubits). According to MT 2 Kgs 6:2, the temple was 30 cubits high, but in the reading of LXX its height was 25 cubits. The three floors high annexes had a height of 15 cubits.

Considering the dimensions of the floorplan of Ezekiel's temple it must have broadly the same proportions as Solomon's temple. I therefore suppose the temple was 30 cubits high, just like Solomon's temple. Probably Ezekiel must have had Solomon's temple in mind, reflecting its proportions. For that reason, we may also assume that the construction and composition of both temples are similar.

6.6.6. Burnt offering altar

The great burnt offering altar is located in the midst of the inner court at the exact centre of the 500 cubit square temple complex. The stepped shape of the altar in three stages, is often compared to a *ziggurat*, assuming Babylonian influences. Maybe there is some likeness but the resemblance with the altar in the

temple of Solomon is much more evident. Shape and measurements of the altars in Ezekiel's and Solomon's temple are comparable in many ways. Despite the similarities with the altar in Solomon's temple, the altar in Ezekiel's temple has yet undergone some significant changes. The altar of burnt offering in the temple of Solomon was ascended by a ramp from the south, but the altar of burnt offering in Ezekiel's temple will be approached by a series of steps on the east side (Ezek 43:17). This feature flies in the face of the Mosaic proscription on steps for an altar (Exod 20:26). By locating them on the east side of the altar the officiating priest may keep his face toward the Holy of Holies in westerly direction as he approaches to YHWH with the sacrificial victim.⁴⁵²

At the end of the monarchy, before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple occurred blasphemous practices in worshipping YHWH. In Ezek 8:13 a heavenly messenger speaks to Ezekiel about detestable things that happened in the temple. "At the entrance of the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs towards the temple of the Lord and their faces towards the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east" (Ezek 8:16). Priests worshipped YHWH in the direction of the sun rather than in the direction of the temple.⁴⁵³

In pagan temples officiating priests as worshippers of the sun approached the altar in easterly direction with their backs to the temple. Standing between the porch of the temple and the burnt offering altar with your back to the temple and to YHWH was seen as a blasphemous act.

6.6.7. Additional buildings and other structures

In addition to the temple proper, Ezekiel was shown many other buildings and structures within the temple compound such as the binyan, the priestly rooms, worshipper's rooms and porticoes. With respect to Solomon's temple, none of those buildings are described in the books of Kings and Chronicles. However, that does not mean that there were no other buildings around it. From the context and the purpose of providing in all needs of temple service we may assume that Solomon's temple also was surrounded by auxiliary rooms and other facilities.

6.6.8. Installations and furnishings

The text in 1 Kings 6 and 7 gives a detailed description of the furnishing of Solomon's temple, but with regard to Ezekiel's temple much is unclear. Making an inventory tour through Ezekiel's temple we get the impression that not only the layout is different. Many objects in Solomon's temple are missing and others have changed in Ezekiel's temple. Possibly that is illustrative for a changing purpose, changing temple service and a changing priesthood without high priest. There are not only missing objects, but also new items like a river coming down from the temple and alongside this river, trees with leaves for healing. The guided tour through the temple site and its buildings shows an empty temple with one exception reported in Ezek.41:22: a wooden altar or table in the Holy Room. Most objects which were found in previous temples are not mentioned in Ezekiel's temple.

The following items in Ezekiel's temple are missing or have not been mentioned:

- The two pillars named Boaz and Jachin in front the vestibule of the temple;
- The ten water basins on bronze carts filled with water for washing the sacrifices;
- The Laver, the large bronze basin filled with water used by the priests for ritual cleansing (for washing their hands and feet);
- The Golden Menorah or lamp stand;
- The Table of the Showbread;
- The Veil that served as a partition between the Holy and the Most Holy Place. Ezekiel refers only to a door into the Holy of Holies (Ezek 41:3-4; 21-25);
- The Ark of the Covenant, representing the presence of YHWH.

⁴⁵² Block, *The book of Ezekiel 25-48*, 601.

⁴⁵³ Taylor, *YHWH and the Sun*, 158.

The omission of any reference to the Ark of the Covenant, veil and other objects is not because of Ezekiel's negligence in giving a complete description. He is, rather, very careful in giving all the necessary details. Apparently there is a theological explanation that the Ark of the Covenant and other objects no longer are required. It should be noted that the Ark of the Covenant was also missed in Zerubbabel's and Herod's temple.

6.6.9. Architecture, decoration and the special meaning of the East Gate

The prophet Ezekiel provides us with many details regarding the temple, including the doors, the number of panels on each door and the carvings on each of the panels. Obviously, he was not vague and overlooking items.

Some changes have been made in the temple service, the plan and dimensions of the whole temple complex: The perimeter wall, gates, temple and other buildings are all together very massive structures, like Canaanite temples. Yet they are not intended for defence purposes but only for separating and guarding sacred space.

The structures of Ezekiel's temple are carefully detailed and beautifully decorated. The walls and columns in the gates are richly decorated with palm trees and the walls and doors inside the temple edifice with carvings of palm trees and *cherubim*.

Special attention is given to the outer gate which faces east. This gate will be closed, for YHWH will enter by it. Only the prince may sit in it to eat food before YHWH. For that reason, this gate must have doors (on the outside) that will never be opened.

6.6.10. Dimensions of the temple site

The entire precinct of Ezekiel's temple forms a square space of 500x500 cubits (260x260m). In Ezek 42:16, however, another measurement of 500x500 rods (almost 1600x1600m), being a much debated and troublesome item, is mentioned.

Like most scholars Block translates: "Five hundred cubits - in rods, using the measuring rod" in compliance with NIV and NRSV, but by way of deviation from KJV and the Dutch SV and NV. Block correctly translates the first clauses in Ezek 42:15 as: "When he had finished measuring the interior temple area".⁴⁵⁴

I suppose that in line with the Temple Scroll an exterior temple area of 500x500 rods may also be assumed. In the time of the kings Hezekiah and Manasseh the temple was also built on a square platform of 500x500 cubits, but the temple edifice was eccentrically located on the platform while Ezekiel's temple is situated centrally in front of the east gate.

The absence of most height measurements should be noted. The descriptions of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon display a three-dimensional picture of respective sanctuaries. The texts concerning Ezekiel's temple, however, draw a two-dimensional picture. Only a few vertical measurements are given like the height of the perimeter wall (1 rod), the temple platform (1 rod or 10 steps) and the burnt offering altar (2+4+4 cubits). The levels of the outer and inner court are given in series of steps (7 and 8 steps respectively).

The measurements of the temple edifices with its side rooms of Ezekiel's and Solomon's temple are almost equal. The height of the side rooms flanking the temple and the priestly rooms adjacent to the temple is given in the number of floors.

A much discussed item is the length of אֵילִם of the vestibules in the gatehouses. In my view the אֵילִם in this case should be understood as a series of massive cuboid columns in a 60 cubits long vestibule alongside the outer court. Since there is only talk of longitudinal measurements in Ezekiel's temple, אֵילִם will be regarded as a long vestibule and not as 60 cubits tall pillars or towers.

Solomon's temple had courts which were enlarged over the years. These courts were also accessible by means of gatehouses. These gatehouses were comparable to the gatehouses of Megiddo and other towns, but had no vestibules like the gatehouses of Ezekiel's temple.

⁴⁵⁴ Block, *The book of Ezekiel 25-48*, 568-569.

6.7. Conclusions

Like the model of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon, Ezekiel's temple must, according to Ezek 43:10-11, be made according to a heavenly model shown to the prophet by an angelic guide. However, the layout, arrangement and furnishing are quite different.

A first comparison between Ezekiel's temple and its predecessors points to similarities but also to differences. From the Tabernacle up to the envisioned temple of Ezekiel all sanctuaries have the same tripartite arrangement and gradations of holiness despite the differences of their dimensions and functional shifts.

Ezekiel's temple seems to be meant for a renewed temple cult of a restored Israel in a new era, and this sanctuary will be erected for evermore (Ezek 37:15-28).

The temple of Ezekiel is almost empty. Ezekiel records only the burnt offering altar in the inner court and the altar of incense (the wooden altar) in the main room. We do not know for sure whether this temple really will be empty or that missing items are simply unmentioned. It could be that particular emphasis has been laid on the concept of sacred space and the holiness of the temple and less on temple service and objects required for this.

In comparison to the temple of Herod, Ezekiel's temple complex is surrounded by a walled-in court of enormous dimensions (500x500 rods). For that reason two motives could be advanced: the separation between the holy and profane is emphasized in order to prevent the temple for defilement (see Ezek 43:7-9); or, an enlarged third court could provide sufficient space for great masses of worshipping people from all over the world.

In Ezekiel's temple the partition between men and women will possibly be repealed. There will be distinction between Zadokite priests and Levites on the one hand and worshipping laity on the other hand.

In conformity with biblical quotations in Ezek 37:26-28, 43:11 and Zech 6:12 and 15, I consider Ezekiel's vision to depict a literal, physical temple as the centre of worship in an era to come.

After the dedication of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon the Glory of YHWH filled the sanctuaries (Exod 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chron 7:2-3). After the Glory of YHWH leaving the temple of Solomon (Ezek 8:23) nothing is said of it entering Herod's temple. In Ezekiel's envisioned future temple, however, the Glory of YHWH will return and fill the temple again (Ezek 43:5).

On the basis of Ezek 48 about the division of the land, we may conclude that the temple and its surrounding area (the *terumah* or portion) is completely separated from the city. The Temple Scroll contains no allusions to the exact location of the temple, but because of the enlarged third court we may assume that this temple also is separated from the city.

A geometrical structure for the ideal city was fairly commonplace in the ancient world. Ezekiel's temple as well as the city of the New Jerusalem in Ezek 48 are designed square.

7. Ezekiel's temple as the ultimate imagination

7.1. Ezekiel's temple vision account a rhetorical masterpiece

7.1.1. Up to an interpretive framework

After having investigated the text of the vision account, temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel as well as Ezekiel's envisioned temple, the various parts of the research approached from different angles can now be merged and some conclusions may be drawn. Scholarly research on the book Ezekiel has been especially focused on redaction and text-critical issues. By contrast in the present study emphasis has been laid upon imagination. Ezekiel's frequent use of imagery invites the reader to further explore and consider of the vision account.

The text analysis of the vision account and the investigations into ancient Near Eastern and Israelite temple building architecture led me to conclude that the prophet linked the future temple with familiar images from the past for the purpose of imaging Ezekiel's temple. The ground plan of the Tabernacle and the encampment of the tribes around it are clearly recognisable in Ezekiel's temple vision. The vision account refers to Mount Sinai as a model for the relationship between God and the Israelite people. The spatial paradigm of Ezekiel's temple, its location, layout and the distribution of the land between the tribes leads us back to the exodus episode when God dwelled among his people.

With his temple vision Ezekiel hands over a concept in which the theology in its rhetorical persuasiveness speaks with a clear voice. The intricate chiasmic pattern of the vision account with its legislation in the centre of the text emphasises its purpose: "This is the law of the temple...it will be most holy" (Ezek 43:12). After the return of the Glory of YHWH this temple will never be desecrated.

The architectural design of Ezekiel's temple raises many questions. The text of the vision account as it stands is very complicated. The meaning of architectural and technical terms and measurements is often obscure. From an architectural point of view, however, the spatial paradigm can be visualised. This leads to a better understanding of the ground plan of the temple precinct and various architectural details. In this final chapter, the results of the preceding substudies will be evaluated, compared and explained. From a conceptual approach, imaging Ezekiel's temple, a more appropriate interpretation seems possible.

7.1.2. Blueprint for rebuilding or sign of a coming restoration?

Should Ezekiel's vision account be taken literally or figuratively? Does a choice between these two options provide a sufficient basis for an appropriate explanation of the text? Both options are justified on good grounds, but do not take us any further forward in explaining the many missing links in the spatial design. Are there alternative routes to a better understanding of the meaning of the text?

The question now arises: How can the plan of a new temple, as described in Ezekiel's vision account, be approached? Will a real physical temple be built, a replacement of its predecessors? Ezekiel was not commissioned to build a new temple like Moses was instructed to build the Tabernacle and Solomon to build the first temple.

A key question remains whether the plan of Ezekiel's temple is to be seen as a blueprint for the future temple or as a symbol for a restored Israel. In my view neither of these two extremes are convincing. As has already been indicated in the previous chapter, for a blueprint a three-dimensional, well developed plan is required. On the other hand, a temple as only a symbol does not provide the prospect of a real restoration in the context of Ezek 37:24-28. Another important question is whether a clear picture of Ezekiel's temple would help to get more grip on the meaning of Ezekiel's vision. Looking for satisfactory answers to these questions I followed Ezekiel on his tour through the envisioned temple and made some remarkable discoveries.

7.1.3. Imagery in the book Ezekiel, presenting the unseen

Ezekiel presented a never before perceived temple in a narrative full of visual imagery. The unseen can only be reflected as imagery which on the one side is very clear and on the other sometimes vague and obscure. Imagery plays an important role not only in the temple vision. The whole book of Ezekiel is characterised by the use of imagery. The book opens with phrases about seeing. "I saw visions of God" (Ezek 1:1). An often used phrase is "I looked and saw..." (e.g. Ezek 1:4 and 44:4). Frequently Ezekiel was called to see (e.g. Ezek 40:3). In Ezek 47:6 he was expressly asked, "Have you seen it, son of man?" In relation to the verb "to see" the noun "eyes" is also often used, for example in Ezek 43:11 "for their eyes" and in Ezek 44:5 "see with your eyes and with your ears hear".

The temple vision account is a report with continuously returning imagery and a call to look or to see, but without real pictures the vision goes beyond our imagination. Ezekiel's temple vision can be qualified as a supernatural, never before observed image of a future reality, the final promised piece of Israel's history. A tall order to describe and to interpret such a phenomenon.

The temple vision account begins by saying that Ezekiel was brought from Babylon to the land of Israel in **מראות אלהים** twarm. This Hebrew phrase occurs only in the book Ezekiel, namely in Ezek 1:1; 8:3 and 40:2. Most English translations render **מראות אלהים** as "visions of God" (*genitivus subjectivus*). Another reading, which I prefer, could be that Ezekiel saw God's visions (*genitivus objectivus*), that he saw what God saw beforehand. God enabled Ezekiel to see what He himself has in sight. **מראות אלהים** are not based on Ezekiel's perception, but on God's view of a future reality.

The image of wheels filled with eyes in the throne vision account of Ezek. 1 shows that it is not only Ezekiel who sees. The rims of all four wheels of the throne chariot were full eyes all around. This imagery suggests that what Ezekiel saw, also had eyes itself.⁴⁵⁵ The image of wheels filled with eyes is found also in the book of Enoch which lists the **אופנים** (*ophanim*, wheels) together with the *seraphim* and *cherubim* as a group of celestial beings associated with the throne of God.

The description of wheels with moving eyes bearing the throne of God in Ezek 1:1-24 helps to explain the use of the phrase **מראות אלהים**. Later in the book of Ezekiel the prophet sees what God sees, where he looks, so to speak, through the eyes of God (Ezek 8-11 and 40-48).⁴⁵⁶ Ezekiel "saw something like..." (Ezek 8:2-3 and 40:2). He saw something that he had not seen before, something unknown that he compared to known images from the past.

7.2. Temple ideology and conceptualisation

7.2.1. Theological framing of sacred space

For the conceptualisation of sacred space a theological framework is needed. After the description of temple building in the ancient Near East in chapter 4 and Israelite sanctuaries in chapter 5, questions about temple ideology relating to Ezekiel's temple need to be answered.

The concepts of the various sanctuaries in the ancient Near East and Israel also need to be compared with Ezekiel's temple. But to what extent is Ezekiel's temple comparable to its predecessors? Does Ezekiel's temple ideology correspond with previous common temple ideology in the ancient Near East and Israel or have other aspects in the vision report been accentuated?

The temple ideology and arrangement of the temple site are comparable to the Tabernacle and temple of Solomon in many respects. Solomon's temple, however, was desecrated by the idolatry of Israel's kings. In Ezek 43:8 God complains about their spiritual adultery and the violation of his sanctuary.

⁴⁵⁵ Conrad, "God's Visions and God's Eyes in Ezekiel's Surrealistic Imagery", 55-56.

⁴⁵⁶ Conrad, *ibid.* 56.

“When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices”. The design of Ezekiel’s temple with its walls, gates and courts as well as the sacred allotment around the temple present an appropriate response to the violation of the holiness of the preceding temple.

There is talk of a shift in focus that leads to changes in temple design and temple service. The legitimation of the Zadokite priesthood is a striking example of that. The whole temple ideology and spatial concept of Ezekiel’s temple is dominated by the separation between the holy and the profane, the pure and the impure. Priests who serve in the temple must have the right discernment for this. Lev 10:10 says on that topic: “You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean”. Ezekiel’s temple is most holy since according to Ezek 37: 26-28 it will be YHWH’s future dwelling place on earth.

The cosmic identification of the temple as the *axis mundi* or cosmic meeting point between heaven and earth, so important in ancient Near Eastern temple culture, seems out of the picture in the description of Ezekiel’s temple tour. Apart from Ezekiel’s visionary encounter with an angelic guide who was showing him around through an imaginary temple, no other supernatural manifestations are mentioned. It is striking that Ezekiel’s temple has been presented neither as the intermediary between heaven and earth, nor as a copy of a heavenly temple. All possible cosmic and heavenly connotations about the temple are left unsaid during Ezekiel’s tour through the temple which was shown to him.

The uniqueness and theological significance of Ezekiel’s temple, however, is determined by the return of YHWH’s Glory to his temple as a permanent dwelling place for His Name on earth, because this temple will not be the place where YHWH regularly appears to his people, but the place where he permanently will be among them. Therefore Ezekiel’s temple ideology, temple service and spatial design are closely interrelated, heralding a New Age.

Only after the description of the whole temple complex through which Ezekiel was shown around, YHWH himself appears on the scene. He appears acting and speaking. As the vision report tells us in Ezek 43:3, “The glory of YHWH entered the temple through the gate facing east”. After that Ezekiel “heard someone speaking to him from inside the temple” (Ezek 43:6). The voice he heard said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever”. His indwelling Presence exceeds all expectations of his appearance. According to the text of Ezek 37:26 YHWH “will put his sanctuary among the Israelites forever”. “Then the house of Israel will never again defile YHWH’s holy name” (Ezek 43:6).

As the dwelling place for the name of YHWH, this temple must be the spatial embodiment of holiness. In the future temple YHWH manifests himself in the presence of His Name (יהוה שמה). YHWH and the new temple together confirm Israel’s final restoration.

Because the focus of this study is on the spatial aspects of quite a new temple in quite a new geographical setting, I want to present Ezekiel’s temple as a new “image-paradigm” in which the layout of the temple is interpreted as a spatial concept.

7.2.2. Reflection and recognition of sacred space

As explained in the preceding paragraph, Ezekiel’s envisioned temple reveals an atmosphere of holiness and purity. The discrepancy between the opposites of holiness and impurity is one of the main themes in the book of Ezekiel and very determining for the location and ground plan of Ezekiel’s temple as sacred space. Not only in Ezek 43:8 but throughout the whole book of Ezekiel, YHWH complains that his people had defiled his holy Name and his temple. The character of sacred space shows what a new temple means: it will reflect the holiness of YHWH himself throughout its concept.

What was meant by sacred space in the ancient world and how was sacred space constructed? When people had an encounter with the divine, when heaven and earth met, that place became sacred and set apart from its environment. So it became “sacred space”. Some of the clearest examples of sacred space in the Hebrew Bible are Gen 28:16-17 and Exod 3:5. In Gen 28 at Bethel, Jacob in a dream saw a

stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven and angels of God ascending and descending on it. When Jacob awoke he said: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate to heaven".

It may be assumed that the bipolar distinction between heaven and earth, the sacred and profane can be considered as a characteristic of religious belief in the ancient world. In the narrative of Moses and the Burning Bush where the Angel of YHWH appeared to Moses in flames of fire YHWH said: "Do not come any closer, take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground". So profane space became sacred space. After their sojourn at Mount Sinai the Israelite built their sanctuaries, so sacred space became a secluded territory with a sanctuary.

There were two major types of sacred space in the Hebrew Bible: The dynamic model of the Tabernacle and the static model of the temple in Jerusalem. Whereas the dynamic model of the Tabernacle reflected the movability of God's presence en route to the Promised Land, the static model of Solomon's temple signified the permanent dwelling place of God.

Ezekiel's temple will be the future sacred place on behalf of the restored Israelite people in which all special features of Bethel, the Burning Bush, the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple in the past converge. Ezekiel's temple is simultaneously "holy ground" like the place of the Burning Bush, the meeting point of the human and divine like Bethel, it represents the idealistic layout of the Tabernacle encampment and incorporates all the characteristics of a permanent secluded sanctuary.

7.2.3. Preservation of sacred space

The construction of temples and temple sites usually was carried out in a way to preserve the sanctity of the sacred space in differentiating sacred from profane (inside-outside). Walls demarcated sacred and profane space, they served as one of the means to protect the sacred nature of the temple. The architectural boundaries of the sacred precinct were well defined, visible and obstructive. Sacred space is also guarded space. Gates, doors, and veils served a similar purpose: they allowed individuals who were worthy to pass from the profane into the sacred.

Within the temple precinct itself several gradations of holiness could be distinguished. In the first and second temple at Jerusalem, laity were allowed to enter the outer court. Only Levites and priests are allowed to enter the inner court and only priests the holy domain of the temple edifice. In all ancient Near Eastern temples as well as in the temple of Jerusalem comparable restrictions in preserving and safeguarding the temple can be distinguished.

As evidenced in chapter 6, all of the architecture of Ezekiel's temple was designed to represent and preserve the sanctity of the site, generally through the establishment of sacred zones, barriers between those zones, and limited sight lines. The result of this architecture is that accessibility is limited so that nothing profane can approach.

It may be concluded that Israel shared in ancient Near Eastern ideology of sacred space on nearly every point. In Ezekiel's temple the usual pattern of temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel is easily recognisable in many respects. The degree to which Ezekiel's temple is set apart from its environment is first of all emphasised by a surrounding third court. Moreover the temple site is situated in the centre of a so called "sacred portion" or *hmwrt* (Ezek 48:9; 18), the allotment of the priests and Levites.

The design of the sacred portion reflects three levels of increasing sanctity, the common portion of the city, the moderately sacred portion of the Levites and the most sacred portion of the priests. Ezekiel's territory extends the concentric rectangles of graded sanctity beyond the temple walls.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 742.

7.3. A new image paradigm

7.3.1. Ezekiel's temple perceived as a concept

Attempting to find clues for the interpretation, it might be possible to approach the concept of Ezekiel's temple in quite a new way from the angle of imaging. The temple vision account reads as the concept for a plan based on a new society and a new temple ideology. Various translations and many a scholar use the term "plan" (see chapter 6.6.3). What is meant by the terms "concept" and "plan" relating to Ezekiel's future temple?

The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines "concept" as an idea or mental image and plan or design as a detailed drawing or program for carrying out an actual building project.

A vision is also a kind of mental image. However, the image or vision which Ezekiel received must be recorded in a written concept. This concept must be shown with a reason: "That they may be ashamed" (Ezek 43:10). Ezekiel's temple is a moral appeal. If the Israelites will be ashamed, more details of the future temple will be revealed (Ezek 43:11). The image of this temple should initiate a process of awareness and after that "they may observe and follow the entire plan..." (Ezek 43:11).

Concepts and elaborated plans or designs indicate two clearly distinct stages which are part of a process. Every plan starts with an idea, or impression which is shown in a concept or preliminary draft. Ezekiel's temple has all characteristics of such a concept: it is two-dimensional, some structures are described vaguely and in some cases important data is missing.

Ezekiel was *shown* a city-like structure which he perceived as a concept and saw so to speak the vague contours through his eyelashes. Entering the temple precinct he must have seen structures that were familiar to him and others that he had never seen before.

Ezekiel was *instructed* to transmit this concept of a new temple to his fellow exiles "Describe the house of Israel everything you see" (Ezek 40:4b); "Let them consider the plan...make known to them the design" (Ezek 43:10b-11). They got the concept of a future temple and had to consider and remember it, because that they will be ashamed. Evidently memories are framed by spatial references which enable to anchor memories.

As has already been demonstrated in Ezek 40:4b, the prophet Ezekiel was not instructed to build the temple, he must only tell the people what it would look like. Moses and Solomon were instructed to build according to the model (תבנית) that was shown to them. Ezek. 43:10 offers a special reading (תכנית).

Not the blueprint for a concrete building plan of an earthly physical temple was shown to the prophet, but the concept of an imaginary temple shown by a heavenly messenger. That is in line with the use of the term צורה (Ezek 43:11) "shape", "pattern" or "concept" of the temple. Something in between a blueprint and a symbol. It is not a blueprint, but more than a symbol. The vision was intended to evoke shame but also to comfort the exiles and to vitalise new hope. The temple vision formed the basis for a new future.

The temple was shown to Ezekiel not only in words or ideas, but also in images. Images that help eminently to focus on Israel's future restoration. In visions the prophet Ezekiel received impressions or mental images of a future temple. He reflected and merged his visionary perceptions with images in retrospect, derived from reminiscences of Solomon's temple in its last appearance before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

From Ezekiel's representative faculty to capture memories of the lost temple and his creative faculty to unfold an image-paradigm of the future temple, a new concept of sacred space in quite another geographical setting originates. Distinctive features are the location (town and temple are strictly separated) and the territorial distribution of the land among Israel's tribes.

Many can be traced back to the arrangement of the Tabernacle and the encampment of the tribes around it according to Num. 2-3. Many theological and spatial motifs recorded in the books Exodus and Numbers are found in Ezekiel's temple vision.

In my view it is important to approach the concept of Ezekiel's temple from the angle of imaging. For a better understanding of Ezekiel's concept of the temple the help of other academic fields can contribute to picture the text.

7.3.2 The field of spatial design.

Knowledge from the disciplines in the field of spatial design is indispensable for a keen understanding of the architectural language of the vision report and the way in which Ezekiel's temple should be approached. Temple building and town planning both have idealistic aims which take shape in spatial concepts. Both seek to create an appropriate environment, the one to live in, the other to protect holiness and to create conditions to worship God or the gods.

The drafting of a spatial plan commonly proceeds according to a fixed pattern and time schedule. Likewise the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple is planned in order, although the timetable remains an open ended question. It is my firm opinion that Ezekiel's temple vision presents neither a blueprint nor merely an idealistic or symbolic temple, as has been said before. A blueprint provides a three-dimensional detailed design. Ezekiel however, displayed only a two-dimensional ground plan.

The architectural critic and historian Mumford wrote: "No town plan can be adequately described in terms of a two-dimensional pattern, for it is only in the third dimension that the functional and aesthetic relationships come to life"⁴⁵⁸.

In contrast to a blueprint of a physical temple, an idealistic or symbolic conceived temple can be characterised as a model in a more fictional sense as a literary embodiment of new hope for the Israelite exiles or a recontextualised temple with a spiritual message for the actual reader. In the case of a purely symbolic temple one may raise questions about the historical relevance of the vision. With a symbolic reading of the vision report usually a spiritual interpretation of Ezekiel's temple vision is chosen.

The study of Ezekiel's temple calls for a new approach which offers a way of escaping the traditional contradiction between considering Ezekiel's temple as a blueprint or a symbol. I take Ezekiel's image of a new temple as a spatial concept.

In order to make clear what I mean by a spatial concept and how such a concept is formed, I compare the iconic ground plan of Ezekiel's temple and city with some more recent examples of iconic city plans.

7.4. Some iconic concepts from the field of spatial design

Presenting some significant iconic concepts of ideal city plans I want to show that the layout of Ezekiel's temple may be approached in the same way as an ideal spatial concept. The first ideal concept I would like to mention is the fortified city of Elburg, built after the St. Marcellus flood of 1362. Elburg was given the rectangular grid layout of a Roman castrum. Evidently this layout has much in common with the square ground plan of Ezekiel's temple.

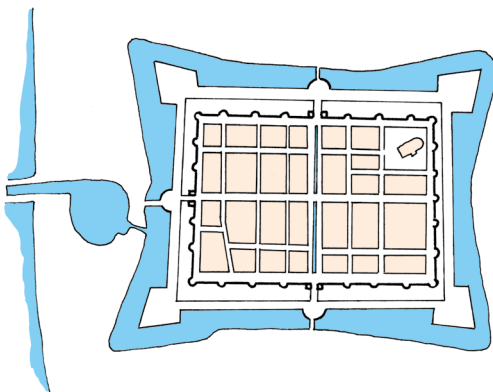


fig. 7.1 Iconic square ground plan of the small town Elburg based on the layout of a Roman castrum. (Drawn by author).

⁴⁵⁸ Mumford, *The City in History*, 351.

A contemporary example of an ideal concept is Howard's utopian urban plan of a self-contained community surrounded by "greenbelts". In his *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* the qualities of town and landscape are integrated. The iconic diagrammatic scheme of the three magnets summarises the context underlying Howard's vision.

The principles of the triad "space, light and air", advocated by the Town Garden Movement after Howard, have become the doctrine of town planning of the last century. The upper two magnets list the advantages and disadvantages of mere city life or country life. The third magnet in the scheme communicates the advantages of a complementing town-country townscape.

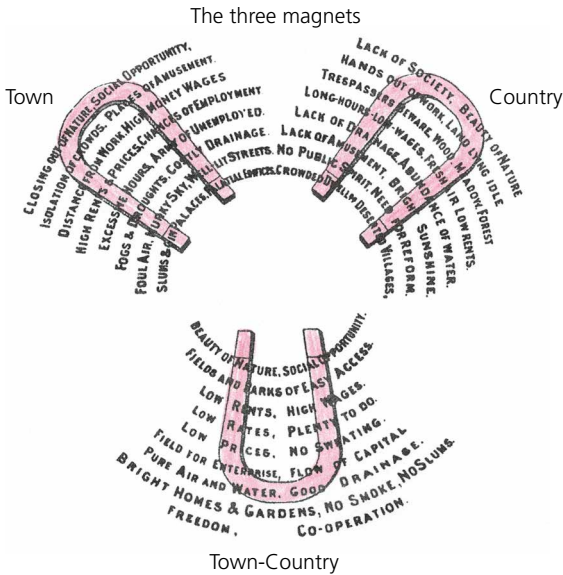


fig. 7.2 Ebenezer Howard's iconic scheme of the three magnets of town, country and town-country. (Adapted from Gerald Burke *Towns in the making* (1971)).

Another concept of an ideal city is La Ville Radieuse, Le Corbusier's functionalist plan for a utopian "Radiant City", designed in 1930. His diagrammatic plan is a coupling of architecture and ideology meant as a guideline for social reform. It represents a utopian dream to reunite man within a well ordered environment. It is a city of skyscrapers in a park like environment, the prototype of the modernist city.

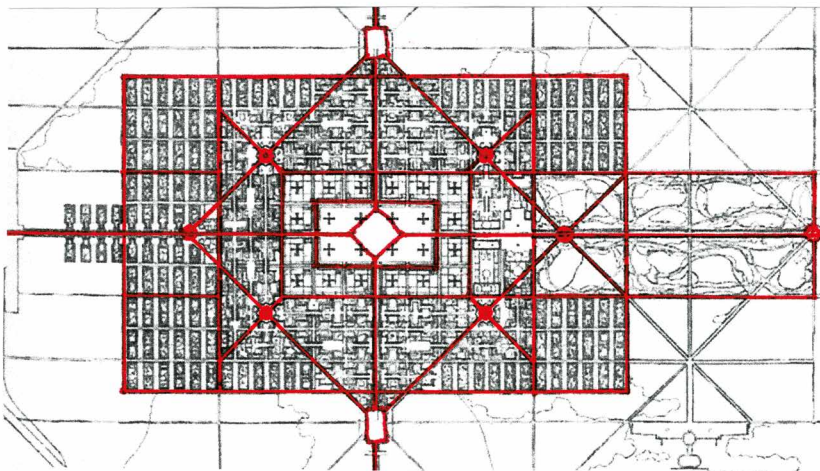


fig. 7.3. Le Corbusier's ideal pan of La Ville Radieuse, consisting of a high density grid of skyscrapers spread across a vast green area (1930), (Adapted from Honnoré Rottier, *Stedelijke Structuren* (1978))

Brasilia was planned from scratch as an ideal city. It is perhaps one of the most iconographic new capitals of the 20th century, designed by Lucio Costa. A city of clean lines, rational planning and space. From above the planned outline of the city resembles a dragonfly, a bird or airplane.

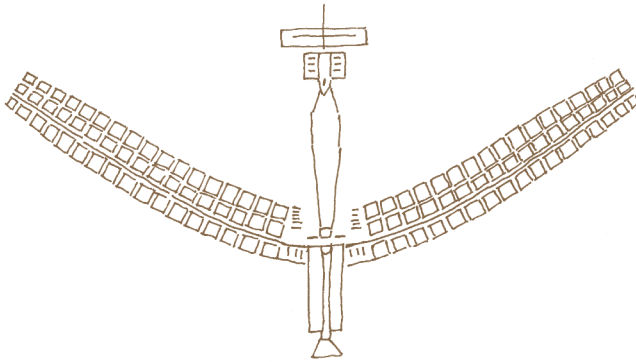


fig. 7.4. Lucio Costa's pilot plan for Brazil's new capital Brasilia, (1957). (Taken from Danilo Macedo Matoso and Sivia Fischer, "Preservation of a Modernist City" in: *Conservation Perspectives* (2013)).

The last plan I want to show is the structure plan of Almelo I have worked on.⁴⁵⁹ The city map of Almelo consists of alternating residential, industrial and green belt areas (the so called green lungs of the city). From the sky the city looks like a butterfly on a lawn. In this model land and townscape are intertwined. In this plan many principles of the designs of Howard's garden city and Le Corbusier's modernist city have been applied to a medium-sized provincial town.

As icons of ideal spatial plans these concepts are in a way, comparable to the temple vision of the prophet Ezekiel, who painted an iconic picture of a holy temple in perfectly square proportions. Like in the butterfly model of Almelo's structure plan the principles of the garden city have been redefined in the design of a modern city, so in Ezekiel's temple vision account has been redefined how the sacred has to be spatially separated from the profane.

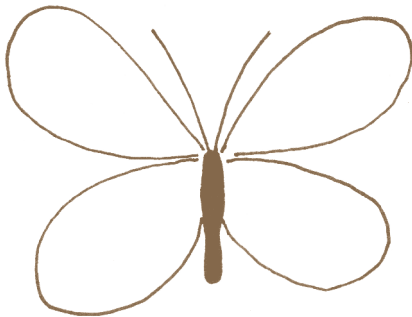


fig. 7.5a The Iconic butterfly model of Almelo, *Structuurplan voor de binnenstad* (1987). (Drawn by author).

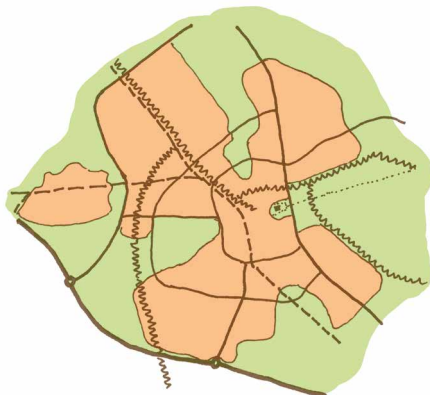


fig. 7.5b The contours of Almelo's structure plan, *Structuurplan Amelo. Symbiose tussen stad en land*, (1997). (Drawn by author).

⁴⁵⁹ Gemeente Almelo, *Structuurplan Amelo*, 1997. (*Structure-plan of Almelo. Symbiosis between town and country*).

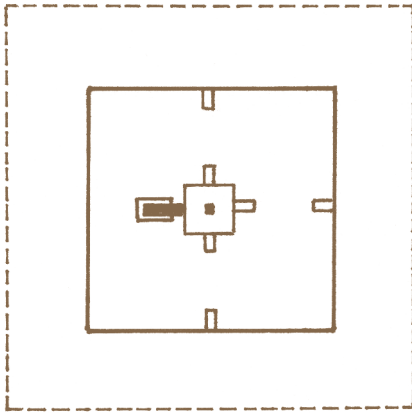


fig. 7.6. Ezekiel's iconic scheme of the future temple.
(Drawn by author).

7.5. The formation of a spatial plan

The formation of a spatial plan usually proceeds in three stages:

- developing a vision (iconic representation);
- developing a spatial concept (master plan);
- creating a detailed design.

These three stages of the development of an ordinary town are also applicable to the creation of Ezekiel's temple site.

7.5.1 First stage in a planning process

The first stage in a planning process is the development of a vision expressed in an iconic image of which the intended purpose is clearly defined.

The purpose of Howard's garden city was to improve the living conditions of the English working class who lived in overcrowded, densely packed residential districts. Illustrative for his vision is the first stage in the planning process that resulted in the iconic diagram of the garden city, combining the best features of town and countryside in a new form of settlement.

Likewise in the butterfly model of Almelo's city plan, the qualities of the city and the surrounding landscape are integrated into a structure of alternating urbanised and agricultural areas.

In a comparable way Ezekiel's vision operates, in creating the image of a new temple in which the holy and profane in contrast to above mentioned views are not integrated but strictly separated. Furthermore, within the sanctuary allotment and temple precinct various successive zones of increasing holiness can be distinguished. The vision of Ezekiel's temple provides the creation of an iconic sacred place. The Holiness of this sacred place will be preserved by walls, gates, square courts and elevations.

7.5.2. Second stage in a planning process

The second stage in a planning process is the development of a spatial concept. In such a concept the ideas are rendered in the shape of a master plan outlining its location and environmental characteristics, its dimensions, structure and the function of the various parts of the concept. Important details are included, while other elements can be left out.

In the layout of Howard's garden city and the master plan of Almelo, the features of an ideal concept are clearly recognisable. These concepts are the hallmarks of a new way of thinking, distancing themselves from the negative aspects of an undesirable development.

The ambition of both examples was building towns with a healthy quality of life.

With Ezekiel's temple concept of the purity and holiness of the temple the prophet had the restoration of the defiled temple of Jerusalem in mind which was rejected and abandoned by YHWH. This temple had to be replaced by another one in which its holiness would be secured and in which

desecrating activities will be banned. The prophet Ezekiel gave a description of an ideal square temple precinct with two focal points: the Holy of Holies in the temple edifice and the burnt offering altar in the inner court. The burnt offering altar, however, is situated in the centre as the nucleus of the whole temple precinct. In Ezekiel's concept of holiness and purity the Holy of Holies is the focal point of Holiness, the place of YHWH's indwelling Name and the burnt offering altar is the focal point of purification.

7.5.3. Third stage in a planning process

The third stage in a planning process is making a *detailed design*. In the case of Ezekiel's temple a detailed three dimensional design has to be made for the temple complex as a whole and architectural plans for the various buildings and other structures. Such a design is still on the horizon, in the fullness of time. Questions about exact dimensions, architecture and materials then need to be answered. Our image of Ezekiel's temple is tied to the biblical text, no more and no less. For the time being we are left with just a spatial concept, framing a kind of master plan with several obscurities and open ends.

Ezekiel's temple as a theological concept of the restored relationship between YHWH and his people provides a clear picture of Israel's future. Whether this picture can be seen as an actual building or a concept can be derived from the use of the word *Tynbt* in Exod 25:8 and *תבנית* in Ezek 43:10. *תבנית* means model, architects plan, *תבנית*, however, is used as a more abstract expression, indicating a shape, groundplan or concept (see also chapter 6.2.2.).

7.6. The future temple

7.6.1. Which temple are we talking about?

After the Tabernacle there were several temples at the very same spot in Jerusalem: firstly Solomon's temple, secondly Ezra's and Herod's temple. Will Herod's temple have a successor?

In Jewish as well in Christian circles there are diverging opinions, from the assumption of the rebuilding of a real physical temple to a metaphorical or idealistic temple. In the daily prayer of the 17th blessing of the *Shémonéh Esrei* we hear the desire for the restoration of the temple on Mount Zion. The contemporary temple Institute in Jerusalem strives to establish a physical temple in our days.

Christian dispensationalists also decide in favour of the rebuilding of a physical temple. On the basis of 2 Thes. 2:3-4 they infer to the existence of physical temple in which the lawless one is revealed, he who takes his seat in the temple of God:

“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God” (NRSV).

This lawless one often is identified as the future antichrist mentioned in the letters of John (see 1 John 2:22 and 2 John 7).

But what about Ezekiel's temple? Could the envisioned temple announced by Ezekiel be equated with a kind of desecrated end time temple or a millennial temple in which God dwells for ever? That seems unlikely since according to Ezek 43:6 YHWH's name will never again be defiled in this temple.

Mainstream Judaism and Christianity do not expect the rebuilding of a real physical temple on that very spot in Jerusalem but embrace the concept of an idealistic or symbolic temple. Referring to 1 Cor 3:16-17 the Christian church is said to be the spiritual temple because God's Spirit dwells in us. “Do you not know that you are God's temple?...for Gods temple is holy, and you are that temple”.

In line with the text of the book Ezekiel, Levenson and Greenberg present the envisioned temple as a “program for restoration”, one to be grounded on earth.⁴⁶⁰ Nevertheless, one must be aware that a physical temple to be built by the returned exiles is probably not intended, but rather the plan of an eschatological temple that will be established in the distant future. The images of the temple described, however, are very realistic and detailed and in many ways correspond to the temple of Solomon, and maybe also to the walled-in and fortified sanctuaries in Babylonia that Ezekiel had seen. On the other hand, there are striking differences.

The question that still remains unanswered is what could be meant by the detailed description of this visionary temple. Apparently, it is not intended to be a blueprint or builders’ specification like the text about the Tabernacle or the Solomon’s temple. Moses and Solomon were instructed to make them exactly like the pattern shown by God.

According to the text of Ezek. 40:4 Ezekiel had only to pay attention to everything his angelic guide was going to show him. He was not assigned to make it. However, according to Ezek. 43:11, the Israelites will one day in the future execute the plan that was shown to Ezekiel. The phrase, “so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances” (vs.11) seems to imply a definite expectation that the envisaged restoration of the temple actually will happen, moreover that it will be based on the pattern given to Ezekiel in his vision”.⁴⁶¹ This is crucial for the interpretation of the vision report.

In my opinion Ezekiel’s vision reflects a terrestrial picture of a celestial reality. The image of a heavenly temple will become a purely earthly physical temple. God’s promises apply to the restoration of temple, land and people, and his return and presence in the new temple among his people. That is why the importance of the vision exceeds the scope of the prophet Ezekiel, for the time being limited to comforting and encouraging the exiles. In this respect I observe the closest parallels between Ezekiel’s temple vision and John’s vision of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21.

Despite the collapse of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, the true Zion will stand and will be approachable to God’s people wherever they find themselves. John’s vision on the other hand, is a vision of the new heaven and the new earth, beyond the destruction of this world. Tuell notes in this context that it is scarcely surprising that John’s vision of the future should take the form of a heavenly reality. The eternal beauty, peace and perfection of God’s realm reflects God’s dream for our world.⁴⁶² But does the shape of the holy consequently mean the shape of a heavenly temple as Tuell suggests?

From the concluding words of Ezek. 37 can be deduced that an earthly temple will also be a holy one. There it says: “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nation will know that I YHWH make Israel holy when my sanctuary is among them forever”. Over the ages Israel was not an example of a holy people. Time and again they defiled YHWH’s holy name.

The scenery is an earthly one, in favour of Israel and the nations. The nations will know that only their God is able to make Israel a holy nation. The ultimate argument for YHWH’s acting is repeatedly mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, “Then they will know that I am YHWH”. So, Ezekiel writes about an earthly people, land and temple. Ezekiel’s temple has been described in earthly terms. Its appearance, dimensions and building materials (stone and wood) resemble previous sanctuaries in Israel and the ancient Near East.

On the other hand, the heavenly city of Jerusalem in Rev 21-22 is described in heavenly terms. Its appearance, enormous dimensions and precious materials (golden streets and pearly gates) indicate a heavenly setting. Moreover, the heavenly Jerusalem is described as a cube (three-dimensional), while Ezekiel’s temple is described as a square ground plan (two-dimensional).

⁴⁶⁰ Strong, “Grounding Ezekiel’s Heavenly Ascent”, 192-211.

⁴⁶¹ Joyce, “Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40-48”, 229.

⁴⁶² Tuell, *Ezekiel*, 329.

7.6.2. Depicting Ezekiel's future temple

The challenge of this study was to depict and compare temple building in the ancient Near East and Israel in relation to Ezekiel's temple. In the light of preceding temple building cults we gained a better understanding of Ezekiel's vision report.

Two basic notions of imagination have been used referring to Ezekiel's memory of the lost temple and the revelation of something quite new shown in visions of God:

- Ezekiel's representational faculty, reproducing images of a pre-existing reality (Solomon's temple) and
- Ezekiel's mental creative faculty, producing images of a virtual divine reality (God's future temple).

The elusive otherness of a future idealistic temple is also displayed in the temple vision. In Ezekiel's texts we are confronted with this two sided image of the temple vision, although there is no question of a contradiction between these two sides of the vision account. The realistic representational and idealistic creative elements in the vision rather complement each other.

Ezekiel's temple was shown to the prophet "in visions of God". Ezekiel reflected these visions in visual language. He described in detail the appearance of the temple, its interior structures and its rejuvenating effects on its surrounding territory.⁴⁶³ Finally the vision account ends with a brief description of the city Jerusalem, receiving the comforting new name of יהוה שמה, "YHWH is there".

The basic plan of Ezekiel's temple is clearly modelled on Solomon's temple. The layout of the temple compound, however, differs from that of its predecessor. It is entirely symmetrical: the courtyards for instance, are perfectly square. Contrary to many ancient Near Eastern temples, including Solomon's temple, the temple of Ezekiel will be completely separated from its environment. Its walls are meant "to make a separation between the holy and the common" (Ezek. 42:20).

An urgent question is why Ezekiel's temple would need a third court of such a large scale. It could help to make more separation, but there could be another aim. It is said by the prophet Isaiah: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:7). In this eschatological temple the people of all nations will make pilgrimages. Therefore, it should be necessary to enlarge the temple precinct with a third court on behalf of assembling people celebrating the festival of booths (see Zech 14:16).

7.6.3. Ezekiel's temple compared to the one in the Temple Scroll of the Qumran community

Although Ezekiel's temple building proper was modelled after the destroyed temple of Solomon, the entire temple site shows more likeness with the temple in the Temple Scroll. It is noteworthy that both temples feature three square courtyards. It may be assumed that the author of the Temple Scroll was familiar with the temple of Ezekiel and borrowed from its description.

There are many similarities but also differences between both temples. In Ezekiel's temple the burnt offering altar is located in the midst of the inner court being the focal point in the centre of the temple complex. In the Temple Scroll the central point is the porch of the temple building.

The third court of Ezekiel's temple is described in Ezek 42:15-20 as a gigantic walled-in square area of 500x500 rods (over 3000 cubits). The purpose of this court is given in verse 20: "to separate the holy from the common" in a less restricted area. The temple in the Temple Scroll also has a third court but the dimensions are about half the measurements of Ezekiel's temple, about 1600 cubits. This court was probably meant to enable the people to celebrate the public festivals together. The outer wall has three storeys with sets of rooms. Ezekiel does not give any information about the height and arrangement of this wall.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Rennaker, "Approaching Holiness: Sacred Space in Ezekiel's Paper", 202-217.

⁴⁶⁴ Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts*, 39-40.

Both Ezekiel's temple vision account and the Temple Scroll pursue the same objective for the temple and its courts, namely:

“To create a compound of concentric zones of holiness, in which the holiness emanating from the Divine Presence in the centre, the temple itself, radiates outward across the entire land of Israel. As the holiness radiates outward, so the levels of ritual purity progress inward, with each court demanding a higher degree of purity”^{.465}

The significant guiding architectural principle for the plan of the temple compound is a series of squares of decreasing dimensions and increasing levels of height.

7.7. Some theological considerations on the shape of Ezekiel's temple

7.7.1. The shape of the temple as embodied holiness

A keyword used in the vision-report is holiness, particularly as the opposite of idolatry, harlotry, impurity and abomination. Holiness (Xdq), is expressed in the biblical context by YHWH's holiness and all that belongs to the realm of the divine. So the temple of Ezekiel will be a holy place on account of YHWH's holy name. The holy must be withheld from ordinary use, treated with special care and, in the context of the book Ezekiel, belonging to the sanctuary. Holiness is the pivotal term relating to Ezekiel's temple.

In the temple vision the temple will be totally separated from the common or ordinary environment. In Ezek 43:7-8 YHWH complains of the unholy behaviour of the people defiling his holy name by their abominations. They placed the threshold and doorposts of the king's palace beside that of the temple with only a wall between them. YHWH summons them: “Let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me” (Ezek 43:9). Israelite sanctuaries embodied holiness.

The Tabernacle was called the Holy Place and the innermost sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant rested was the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place. 1 Kgs 9:3 likewise points to the holiness of the temple of Solomon. YHWH said to Solomon, “I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever”.

This holiness is also reflected by Ezekiel's temple. In Ezek 42:20 the layout of Ezekiel's temple is motivated: “to make a separation (הבדיל) between the holy (קדש) and the common (הל)”. These are expressed in factors of location, elevation, orientation and diminishing right of access.

The book of Ezekiel ends with a glorious vision in the same way as it began. The final vision in Ezek 40-48 highlights the glory of YHWH. After leaving the city (Ezek 11:23) the glory of YHWH will return to his temple. The vision in the chapters 40-48 may be seen as the counterpart of the chapters 8-11. The nation of Israel will be restored. “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Ezek 37:27), YHWH said to the prophet Ezekiel. That is the intention and the message of the temple vision. That is why the vision ends with the statement, יהוה שמה “YHWH is there”. It is YHWH's final and irrevocable presence among His people that the vision anticipates. The temple will be the physical embodiment for the Presence of YHWH.

In the ground plan for his temple Ezekiel adheres to the priestly notion of separation between the holy and profane. The architecture of Ezekiel's temple is arranged around the notion of holy space. “Holy space is clearly separated from profane or common space in a number of different buffer zones, each shielding the supreme level of holiness, that of the Holy of Holies in which Yahweh returns to dwell among his people forever”^{.466} These levels or gradations in holiness have taken shape in the plan and tripartite arrangement of the Tabernacle and temple.

⁴⁶⁵ Crawford, *ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁶⁶ Meziere, *The Gates of the Ezekielian Temple*, 24.

Zones of holiness are also expressed in allowing access for ordinary worshippers, Levites and priests. In Ezekiel's temple it is not the buildings that are emphasised, but the creation of space. Accordingly, a conceptual shift in focus is created, a shift from structures to space. The concern here is not the arrangement and construction of structures themselves, but the spaces which are defined by the structures. So, the issue in Ezek 40-48 is the creation of spaces, and even more importantly, keeping these spaces separate.

The separation of space is manifest in three areas: the house of YHWH or Holy Place; the Portion; and the land Israel. The relationship between these three areas should be expressed by visualising three concentric maps.

The measurements of the structures are incomplete; however, the spaces are fully defined. The distinction between defining territory and providing a builder's specification (with specified dimensions) explains why most vertical measurements are omitted in this territorial scheme.⁴⁶⁷ This definition of space is the purpose of the measurements; in other words, architectural structures are built for the purpose of delimiting space. Walls and gates are not for defence purposes but are meant to be boundary markers, for controlling access and safeguarding holiness.

The significant guiding architectural principle for the plan of the temple compound is a series of squares of decreasing dimensions and increasing levels of height from the outside of the perimeter wall to the temple platform.

The notion of holy space is also expressed by the ground plan and the measurements of the temple design. The plan of the temple is characterised by a square ground plan, expressing perfect symmetry. Significant in its measurements is the use of the multiples of the numbers 5, 10 and 25 (for instance the temple compound 500x500; the inner court 100x100; the temple 50x100; the gates 50x25 cubits). This numerical pattern is also wholly or partly found in the Tabernacle and the first temple. These measurements give expression to a symmetrically well balanced plan.

Another remarkable feature is the number of steps from the one court to the other (7 steps to the outer court; 8 steps to the inner court and 10 steps to the temple platform; altogether 25 steps). In Scripture numbers may sometimes have a more symbolic significance than their quantitative indications would suggest. Relating to sacred space and the temple of Ezekiel in particular a symbolic meaning of numbers may be part of the concept of embodied holiness.

7.7.2. Conceptualisation of embodied holiness

Although it has previously been confirmed that Ezekiel's temple was described as a two-dimensional structure, that is, only the ground plan was measured; nevertheless he perceived a three-dimensional structure. He saw walls, porticoes and complete buildings with their window openings and ornamentations, but of all structures in the temple precinct only the height of the perimeter wall, the temple platform, and the burnt offering altar are mentioned in the vision report. Additionally, the height of some smaller objects like the altar / table in the main room of the temple and the slaughtering tables are mentioned.

After YHWH had set Ezekiel on a very high mountain where he saw a city-like structure, he saw a man whose appearance was like bronze with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hands. He carefully measured the temple. However, what dominates in the description of the vision account is not the first sight of a city-like structure or the frame of a city before Ezekiel's eyes, but a ground plan.

7.7.2.1. Vertical conceptualization of sacred space

While no specific measurements are given, the vertical ascent is implicit in the description of successive flights of stairs. In the description of these flights of stairs one moves progressively up from the outer gatehouses to the temple edifice. The difference in elevation increases with each unit in this sacred complex, as one moves from the outside to the centre.

⁴⁶⁷ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 39.

Ezekiel's texts seem to suggest that the emphasis of the author was on the general concept of height, not on a precise physical measurement. Yet it should be noted that the successive flights of stairs display the access of the temple compound and the passing of zones of increasing holiness up to the temple in great detail. Also, the mention of the height measurements of the slaughtering tables and altars are indications of the importance of significant details.

In the use of vertical sacred space, the great burnt offering altar in the centre of the inner court is the central point of the entire temple compound, as well as being one of the most noticeable objects in Ezekiel's temple. Of particular interest is the terminology used for the altars base **הַיֵּק הָאָרֶץ**, "the bottom upon the ground" and the designation of the summit of the altar as, "mountain of God". The use of these terms emphasises its depth and height. From this axial point, being "a mountain of God", the highest heaven will be linked as an *axis mundi* to the lowest earth. Following Isa 29:1-2 the terms **הַרְאֵל** and **אֲרִיאֵל** in Ezek 43:15 are translated as "altar hearth" describing the city of David on Mount Zion. In a way Iah and Mount Zion as the mountain of YHWH are synonymous in Isa 29:1-2 (see chapter (6.4.10 and footnote 427).

Remarkably, the vision account contains no instructions on how to build the altar and from which materials it will be composed as opposed to the altar in Exod. 20:24-26. All that matters are its size and shape. With regard to the shape of the three-tiered altar, there is a certain analogy with the layout of the three-tiered temple compound.

7.7.2.2. Horizontal conceptualization of sacred space

Although there is convincing evidence for a vertical alignment of sacred space within the temple compound, it is above all described in terms of a horizontal alignment.

On his conducted tour through the temple, Ezekiel was guided along the different locations on ground floor level of the temple compound. The prophet's way led through six gates to the temple edifice. Each of the six gatehouses Ezekiel passed had three chambers on each side, creating a tripartite passageway. It is only after recording all six of these unique tripartite gates that Ezekiel approached the sanctuary, which also exhibits a tripartite structure viz. the porch or vestibule, the main hall or Holy Room and the innermost room or Holy of Holies. In light of the horizontal conceptualisation of sacred space, the Holy of Holies appears to be the climax of Ezekiel's initial view of the temple compound as a city-like structure.

The great burnt offering altar at the centre of the temple precinct is the centre of worship, but the Holy of Holies in the temple is the dwelling place of YHWH. However, the ultimate goal of Ezekiel's temple tour is not the altar, but the temple building to the west of the altar in the Holy of Holies.⁴⁶⁸ Everything is focussed on that holy place where the Glory of YHWH returns to the Israelite people. Even the altar is directed towards the Holy of Holies. The altar is not said to be in the centre of the court, but in front of the temple (Ezek 40:47).⁴⁶⁹

Not only do the geometrically square ground plan of the temple site, its location of the burnt offering altar, in the centre of the temple compound and the Holy of Holies on the west side determine in the conceptualisation of the temple. The imagery of the Garden of Eden is also a vital part of the temple interior which suggests a horizontal emphasis.⁴⁷⁰ While the six gates of the temple courtyards are all decorated with palm trees, the walls of the sanctuary and its doors are decorated with palm trees and cherubim. The author of Genesis used the same when God expels Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Cherubim were placed at the east of the Garden of Eden to prevent a westward return to the sacred garden and the

⁴⁶⁸ Israelite sanctuaries were east-west oriented and also approached from the east to the west. Israelite priests worshipped YHWH with their face to the Holy of Holies. Other ancient Near Eastern temples were also east-west oriented. However, the officiating priests worshipped with their face in the direction of the rising sun, with their back to the sanctuary with the cult object. This was seen as a blasphemous act in worshipping YHWH (see paragraph 4.4.3, 5.4.3, 6.6.6.).

⁴⁶⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 355.

⁴⁷⁰ Rennaker, "Approaching Holiness: Sacred Space in Ezekiel's Paper", 202-217.

presence of God. Similarly, the *cherubim* on the doors that Ezekiel describes are stationed at the east entrances to the sacred inner chambers of the sanctuary. This positioning of protective figures indicates the supreme sacredness of a western direction to the most holy inner room of the temple.⁴⁷¹

7.8. Reflections on the nature of Ezekiel's temple

7.8.1. Debate on the reading of Ezekiel's temple vision

In my view the temple vision should be interpreted as prophecy describing an eschatological temple. The text of the vision account, however, can be read as the concept of a real building plan and has been drafted in the literal sense of the word, describing a physical earthly temple. In the classic debate on a literal or figurative approach of the text there seems to be too little attention to the symbolic meaning of the temple vision in offering new hope on the one hand, and the literal description of a real temple on the other hand. In my opinion both these sides of the vision account have to be respected. Both the historical and spiritual reality of the vision account must be recognised and accepted.

The spiritual reality opens the eyes for the hidden meaning of Israel's restoration and the renewed relationship between YHWH and his people. The historical reality shows an eschatological temple as the climactic finale of a nation that has lost all hopes. So I read Ezekiel's temple vision against the background of the historical developments of Jerusalem's fall and future restoration.

Ezekiel's temple vision correlates to all events and prophecies of the book that bears his name, from YHWH Glory leaving the old temple to YHWH's Glory returning to the new temple. Ezekiel's prophecy is linear, it is going somewhere. The ultimate aim of Israel's fall and rise is set out in Ezek 43:7, "...this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name".

7.8.2. Features unique to Ezekiel's temple

7.8.2.1. Building the new temple

In my view the temple in Ezekiel's vision account is no more and no less than a spatial concept. It shows the contours of a future temple. The vision account is not a building program like the texts about the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple were.

In Ezekiel's perception this temple is an eschatological temple that will be built in a distant future. Who will build this temple? In Zech 6:12:13 a clue is offered: "Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of YHWH. It is He who will build the temple of YHWH, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne". The name Branch is also found in Zech 3:8 and Jer 23:5, 33:15. The Branch is king and priest like Melchizedek, the prerogatives of a messianic ruler. These titles are only attributed to the Messiah.

7.8.2.2 Temple site

The entire temple site with its third court of 500x500 rods according to Ezek 42:15-20 and the Temple Scroll is much too large to fit on the present Temple Mount. The temple is set in the middle of a large consecrated area, the *הרומה* (Ezek 45:1). The temple and the temple district will not be a part of the rebuilt city of Jerusalem as is currently the case. Distinctive in the concept of the temple site as well as the city are their ideal square shapes.

⁴⁷¹ Renaker, "Approaching Holiness: Sacred Space in Ezekiel's Paper".

7.8.2.3. Changed and omitted features in Ezekiel's temple

In Ezekiel's temple no mention is made of a wall of partition and a Court of Women. That seems to suggest that women are no longer excluded from the inner court. The burnt offering altar will be approached by stairs from the east. In contrast, previous altars were approached by a ramp from the south.

Omitted or not mentioned items are the Laver, the ten wash basins, the two bronze pillars Boaz and Jachin, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah, the veil and the Ark of the Covenant. According to me two arguments can be put forward for the omission of these objects:

- The missing items are no longer needed for a new temple service in a new era of a restored Israel;
- In the spatial concept of a sacred temple precinct these objects are of secondary importance and not decisive for the preservation of sacred space.

Special attention has to be paid to the absence of the Ark of the Covenant. A first clarification has been given by the prophet Jeremiah: "In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land, declares the Lord, men will no longer say: The Ark of the Covenant of YHWH. It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. At that time they will call Jerusalem the Throne of YHWH, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honour the name of YHWH" (Jer 3:16-17).

Maybe the Ark of the Covenant is replaced by the Throne of YHWH. Ezekiel himself confirms the fact that the Throne of the YHWH is represented by his temple. YHWH said to him: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever" (Ezek 43:6-7).

7.8.2.4. Temple service

Temple service will be put on a new footing. The priests presiding over the temple services will be of the line of Zadok (Ezek 44:15). They proved to be faithful after the failure of the Levitical priests in the line of Eli. It is remarkable that no high priest is mentioned in the vision account. Instead Ezekiel speaks of an enigmatic figure, the prince, who will be privileged to sit inside the eastern gate to eat in the presence of YHWH.

A number of changes are made in the annual cycle of feasts. Only two feasts are mentioned by Ezekiel, namely Passover (Ezek 45:21) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezek 43:25)

7.8.2.5. The New Jerusalem

Contrary to the view that a literal fulfilment of the territorial vision of the described distribution of the land and the location of the new temple and city is not anticipated, it is my profound conviction that Ezekiel envisioned a real temple and city as the great finale of Israel's actual history. In contrast to Isa 54:12, describing the future glory of Zion, which captivates the image of a city with images of all kinds of precious stones, Ezek 48 talks of an earthly temple and city in terms of common building materials. Centuries later the apostle John combined these two models into a glorious vision of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. The images of splendour are borrowed from Isa 54, but the basic design derives from Ezekiel.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 740.

7.9 Conclusions

Ezekiel's temple is the spatial embodiment of holiness which radiates from the Holy of Holies into the world. This holiness takes shape in a perfectly geometrical structure.

The city-like structure of Ezekiel's temple is presented as a new image paradigm. In the square concept of the temple a perfect spatial balance expressing sacredness has been achieved. Everything in that temple is focussed on the preservation of its sacredness.

In order to preserve the sacredness of the temple, its walls and subsequent gates and courts are all designed to safeguard the sanctuary by means of increasing restricted access and a purified temple service.

Ezekiel's temple is not presented as the plan or design for a soon to be built sanctuary, but as a concept displayed in a two-dimensional ground plan.

In the spatial concept a shift in focus is created, a shift from structures to space. The concern is not in the first place the arrangement and construction of structures themselves, but of the spaces which are defined by the structures.

Temple service is concentrated around the burnt offering altar in the centre of the temple precinct as the locus of purification and the Holy of Holies as the locus of YHWH's presence.

In the horizontal alignment of the temple precinct the Holy of Holies appears to be the climax of Ezekiel's initial view of the temple. In the vertical alignment the three tiered great burnt offering altar in the centre of the inner court is the central point of the entire temple compound

Many changes in the temple layout and temple service are determining for the character of Ezekiel's temple. Questions about the omission of so many important objects in Ezekiel's temple are still difficult to answer.

Ezekiel was not instructed to build the temple, he must only tell the people what it would look like.

Contemporary town planning concepts of ideal cities can help us to perceive Ezekiel's temple as a two-dimensional iconic concept in the modern sense of the word. The rough contours of its layout and a number of prominent visual details emerge clearly from Ezekiel's vision report.

The theological significance of Ezekiel's temple is determined by the return of YHWH to his earthly dwelling place where He is present by his Name (hmX hwhy). God and temple together will confirm Israel's final restoration.

The ultimate aim of Ezekiel's earthly temple is described in Ezek 37:27-28: "My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I YHWH make Israel holy when my sanctuary is among them for ever".

Words of comparable purport sound in Rev 21:10-21 where the heavenly Jerusalem is described. Rev 21:3 parallels Ezek 37:27 with the words: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

List of architectural and technical terms.

- 40:2
כמבנה-עיר
A **city-like structure / complex**. This Hebrew construction is a hapax legomenon. כ comparisonis indicates that the prophet not had seen a real city but something in the shape of a city. LXX ὡσεὶ οἰκοδομὴ πόλεως, something like the edification of a city.
- 40:3
שער
Gate in the shape of a gatehouse with a gateway flanked by “recessed” rooms for the guards, and a porch or vestibule. In many respects they resemble porches built in Solomon’s time.
- 40:5
הומה
The **wall** running around the temple compound. This wall is one rod high (six cubits = appr. 3,15 m.) and one rod thick.
- בית
In most of Ezekiel’s texts the word בית **house**, LXX οἶκος, is used for the temple building itself, but in 40:5 the entire temple complex is meant (περίβολος, “encircling wall”).
- 40:6
מעלות
The outer and inner gates as well as the temple platform are accessible by a **flight of steps**. In front of the outer gates is a flight of 7 steps (see 40:22, 26), in front of the inner gates a flight of 8 steps (see 40:34, 37) and in front of the temple platform a flight of 10 steps (LXX 40:49). This flight of steps is one rod / six cubits high, equal to the height of the temple platform (see 41:8), that is to say each step is approximately 30 cm high (ἔπτα ἀναβαθμοῖς, a flight of seven steps).
- סף
Entering the gatehouse, one passes a **threshold of** one rod deep, corresponding the width of the wall.
(LXX αἰλαμ τῆς πύλης, “porch of the gate”).
- 40:7
תא
The gateway on either side is flanked by three square **alcoves / recesses** of one by one rod used for guarding purposes. (θέα, probably derived from θάλαμος, Vulg. *thalamus*, “room”)
- אולם
The **porch / vestibule** of the gates (LXX αἰλαμ). The porches of the outer as well as the inner gates are situated at the side of the outer court.
- 40:9, 14
אילים
אילו and pl. אלים from איל are interpreted in many commentaries and translations interpreted as doorposts or jambs. In my opinion it has to be translated as columns. In the gates the אילים are walled in protruding columns or pilasters. In verse 14 the porch / vestibule is a hall consisting of side walls and free standing columns which links up with the portico around the outer court. LXX transliterates both אולם and אילים with ailam.
- 40:12
גבול
Probably a one cubit high and one cubit wide elevated **partition / barrier** in front of the alcoves in the gatehouses in the shape of a low ledge.

40:13 גג	The gates are provided with a flat roof (גג). In this case the inside of the gatehouse was measured. LXX reads τοῖχος, "wall", in our perception a more appropriate rendering. The outer walls of the gatehouse are measured on the inside from the one side to the other.
40:15 איתון	The hapax איתון is an unknown architectural term. The context (also LXX ἕξωθεν) suggest a reference to the outer side of the gatehouse. Possibly it could be a molding used as a point of reference for the measurement.
40:16 הלנות אטמות	Narrow apertures / openings / loopholes in the gates and the temple building. It is unclear whether its function or shape is described. These are probably needed for letting in light and openings through which the temple guards could observe the activities outside. LXX reads θυρίδες κρυπταὶ "hidden windows".
40:17 לשכות	There are thirty rooms / chambers on the east, north and south side around the outer court intended for worshipping people to eat their sacrificial meals. LXX reads παστοφόρια "rooms".
40:18 רצפה	הרצפה, called the lower pavement , is probably a strip of mosaic tiled pavements; the floor of the worshippers' rooms and the porticoes around the outer court. LXX does not refer to a pavement but about περίστυλα κύκλω τῆς αὐλῆς, a colonnade surrounding the courtyard.
40:39 שלהנות	Tables for slaughtering the sacrificial animals. These tables are situated inside and outside the porch of the north gate and probably also of the south gate. According to vs. 42 these tables are of hewn stone. The reading of LXX ἕκρυσις, probably denotes the tables or benches whereupon the act of slaughtering is performed (resulting in the efflux of blood, etc).
40:43 השפתים טפה אחר	Double hooks on which utensils are hung. LXX reads γείσος λελαξέυμενον, rims or ledges upon which the utensils are laid.
40:49 עמדים	Pillars in the entryway of the porch of the temple. Also the porticoes around the inner and outer court have pillars. In my opinion LXX erroneously reads αιλ.
41:1 היכל	In general, it means palace or temple but in Ezekiel's vision report the main hall or nave of the temple is intended. In LXX rendered as nao,j, "temple".
41:2 כתפות	Lit. shoulders being side-walls on either side of the entrance. LXX reads ἑπωμίδες, also meaning "shoulder" or "side wall".

41:3 פנימה	A preposition meaning inside. In this case the inner room is meant. In 41:4 פנימה is declared to be the קדש הקדשים the Holy of Holies. LXX renders into ἀὐλήν τὴν ἑσωτέραν "inner room".
41:5 קיר-הבית	Several Hebrew words express the notion of "wall" in order of frequency: הוֹמָה, קִיר and גֵּר. הוֹמָה is the usual term for the wall of a city. In 40:5 הוֹמָה is mentioned as the projecting wall around the temple compound, probably built with ashlars or roughhewn stones. LXX τοῖχος has the same meaning as קִיר. The קיר-הבית, the side walls of the temple, however, should be well crafted hewn stone walls , in general used for residential structures and the temple.
41:6 צלעות פעמים	The annexes of the temple with three storeys of side rooms , (LXX πλευρὰ, "sides"), probably used for storage. Brackets / offsets serving as supports for the floors of the side-rooms . LXX reads διάστημα ἐν τῷ τοίχῳ τοῦ οἴκου, "step in the walls of the house".
41:7 מוסב-הבית	The side-rooms of the temple building are accessed by galleries / corridors inside the annexes. In <i>Middoth</i> IV 5 מוסב has been described as "gallery". The small side rooms could be interconnected in the shape of or by way of a gallery or corridor.
41:8 גבה	גבה literally means height , being the elevated platform upon which the temple is built. LXX reads also ὕψος κύκλω διάστημα a raised pedestal or platform all around.
מוסדות אצילות	Foundation walls / ramparts of the elevated temple platform. LXX reads πλευρὰ "sides". Lit. Armpits or joints . In LXX and most modern translations אצילה is omitting. The Dutch SV translates very literally: "een vol riet, zes ellen, de el tot de oksel toe" (a full reed, six cubits, the cubit up to the armpit). In the SV and KJV אצילה is interpreted as a full reed, the length of the royal cubit of a cubit and a handbreadth.
41:9 מנח	The 5 cubits wide free or open space around the temple building, that is the free space upon the elevated platform between the annexes and its foundation walls. LXX reads τὰ ἀπόλοιπα ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν πλευρῶν τοῦ οἴκου, "open space around the sides of the building".
41:11 מקום המנח	The open place could be interpreted as an opening in the outer wall of the annexes, as the entry of the side rooms. That "place" measures 5x5 cubits in accordance with the width of the "opening" and the thickness of the outer wall of the annexes. LXX reads θύραι τῶν ἐξεδρῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπόλοιπον, "entrances of the halls on the open space".

41:12 בנין	The בנין is a large building of 70x90 cubits located behind the Temple. Nothing is said about the function of the building. The בנין might be an enclosure of standing columns, an unroofed walled-in colonnaded court meant to store sacrificial animals. בנין is also an indication for built structures alongside the perimeter wall.
נזרה	The 20 cubit wide courtyard or restricted area around the temple building on the elevated platform. LXX renders נזרה erroneously as ἀπόλοιπος, "open space".
41:15, 16 אתיקים אתוקיהא	In the context of the vision report אתיקים are corridors, passageways in the shape of cloisters or arcades inside the edifices (the <i>binyan</i> and priestly rooms) or roofed porticoes / colonnades sustained by pillars around the outer and inner court, officiating as a passageway. LXX here renders again as ἀπόλοιπον)
שחף עין	The walls of the temple are covered with carved panels of wood. " The <i>hapax</i> שחף can be related to Akk. <i>siphu</i> "overlay". LXX reads ἐξυλωμένα κύκλω, made of wood all around.
41:21 מזוזה	Doorposts or jambs part of a door frame. In many translations and commentaries אילים have been interpreted is as doorposts or jambs.
41:25 עב עין	An architectural element, probably a wooden cornice or canopy .
42:4 מהלך	The passageway giving access to the priestly rooms. LXX renders מהלך as ἐξεδρῶν περίπατος, a walkway with arcades.
42:6 עמודים	Free-standing pillars / columns . LXX reads στύλους, "pillars" (like in a peristyle).
42:7,12 גדר	The גדר in 42:12 identified as ημψγη τρδγη, separationwall screening the entries of the priestly rooms. LXX erroneously reads φῶς, "light".
43:13 מזבה	In Ezekiel's temple two altars are mentioned: מזבה העלה, the great altar of burnt offering (LXX θυσιαστήριον) in the midst of inner court and עין המזבה, the wooden altar in the main room of the temple.
חיק	A gutter around the altar of burnt offering for draining away the blood of the sacrificial animals. LXX reads βάθος, "depth".
גבול אל-שפהה	The border / boundery / edge of the altar base. LXX renders in the same way as γείσος ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖλος.
גב	A kerb or ledge at the foot of the altar.
43:14 עזרה	A plinth or enclosure encircling the compartments of the burnt offering altar. LXX renders as κοίλωμα, "hollow".

43:15

ההראל

קרנות

The **altar hearth** the third stage of the burnt offering altar.

Horns on the four angular points of the altar. LXX reads κεράτων.

42:9, 46:19

מבוא

Entry, access LXX reads εἴσοδος.

46:22

הצרות קטרות

"**Fenced in courts**", in the corners of the outer court serving as kitchens (see 46:23).

LXX reads ἀὐλὴ μικρά, "small courtyards".

טור

A "courses of stones", a facility on behalf of the laity for the preparation of sacrificial meals. The facilities are made in the shape of a **stone ledge** inside of the enclosure.

43:23

מבשלות

Hearths, cooking places in the kitchens.

LXX reads μαγειρεία.

List of Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , D.N. Freedman et al., eds., 6 vols. New York 19
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ANEP	<i>Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> . J.B. Pritchard, ed., 2 nd ed. Princeton 1969
ANES	Sup Ancient Near Eastern Studies
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BARev	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCT	<i>The Bible and Critical Theory</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , K. Elliger and K. Rudolph, eds., Stuttgart 1977
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BRL	<i>Biblisches Reallexikon</i> , 2 nd ed., HAT erste Reihe, Tübingen 1977
BSTS	Bible Study Textbook Series
BW	<i>The Biblical World</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZHT	Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CANE	<i>Civilisations of the Ancient Near East</i> , J. Sasson ed. 4 vols. New York. 1995
CB	The Century Bible
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CQS	Companion to the Qumran Scrolls
COT	Commentaar op het Oude Testament
DB	Die Bibel
DF	Damaszener Forschungen
EAEHL	<i>Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , M. Avi-Yonah, eds. 4 vols. London 1975
EBC	Everyman's Bible Commentary
EDSS	Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls
EHCOT	<i>The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament</i> , Wigram George V., Peabody 2003
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Arameic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , Koehler L. Baumgartner W. and J.J. Stamm, trans. And ed. M.E.J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden 2001
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
Herm	Hermeneia
HCOT	Historical commentary on the Old Testament
IAHI	International Archives of the History of Ideas
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IOSCS	The International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>

<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JIAAT</i>	<i>Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	Sup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	Sup Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Sup
<i>KDCOT</i>	Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary Old Testament
<i>KJV</i>	King James Version
<i>LAI</i>	Library of Ancient Israel
<i>LeidV</i>	Leidse Vertaling
<i>LHBOTS</i>	Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies
<i>LSTS</i>	Library of Second Temple Studies
<i>LuthV</i>	Lutherse Vertaling
<i>LXX</i>	Septuaginta
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archeology</i>
<i>NEB</i>	The New English Bible
<i>NBV</i>	Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling (2004)
<i>NIB</i>	New Interpreter's Bible
<i>NIBC</i>	New International Biblical Commentary
<i>NICOT</i>	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by W.A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids. 1997
<i>NIV</i>	New International Version
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NSBT</i>	New Studies in Biblical theology
<i>NV</i>	Nieuwe Vertaling (1951)
<i>OEANE</i>	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archeology in the Near East</i> , J. M. Meyers ed. New York. 1997
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTRM</i>	Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs
<i>P</i>	Papyrus
<i>PA</i>	Palaestina Antiqua
<i>POT</i>	De Prediking van het Oude Testament
<i>QD</i>	Questiones Disputatae
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriology et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Religion Compass</i>
<i>RdQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>REB</i>	Revised English Bible
<i>ROT</i>	Reading the Old Testament commentary series
<i>RSH</i>	Radboud Studies in Humanities
<i>SBB</i>	The Soncino Books of the Bible
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SeptCS</i>	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
<i>SHBC</i>	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>STDJ</i>	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>SV</i>	Staten Vertaling

Sym	Symachus
Syr	Syriac
Targ	Targum
TB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , G. Kittel and G. Friedrich eds. Trans. G. W. Bromiley, Abridged in one vol. 1985
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren eds. Trans. J.T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley and D. E. Green, 8 vols. Grand Rapids 1974-
TSDSS	Thematic Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls
TWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
Vulg	Vulgate
WBC	World Biblical Commentary

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Nederlandse samenvatting

Het boek Ezechiël is een literair meesterwerk dat spreekt van Israëls val, herrijzenis en uiteindelijk herstel. Door velen wordt het evenwel ook gezien als een moeilijk boek. Hieronymus noemde het een labyrint van Gods mysteries. Deze studie is echter met name gericht op de verklaring van het tempelvisioen van Ezechiël 40-48, de finale van het boek. Dit visioen roept niet minder vragen op dan het gehele boek Ezechiël. De theoloog Jacob Milgrom noemde het visioen een ruimtelijk raadsel.

Dit proefschrift beoogt het verschaffen van wat meer inzicht in de bijzondere aard van een prachtige, maar niettemin gecompliceerde profetische tekst en het verhelderen van enkele problemen bij de beeldvorming van Ezechiëls visioen. De vraag die in deze studie centraal staat is hoe het visioen van Ezechiëls tempel kan worden verklaard en uitgebeeld. Mijn stelling is dat het uitbeelden van de tekst van Ezechiël 40-48 een beter inzicht verschaft in het tempelvisioen.

De titel van dit proefschrift, *Visualising the vision*, maakt duidelijk dat in deze studie de nadruk vooral wordt gelegd op het beeldend weergeven van een tempel die aan ons is overgeleverd in een narratieve tekst. Ezechiël zelf geeft met de vertrouwde beelden van Salomo's tempel voor ogen de nieuwe werkelijkheid weer van een toekomstige tempel.

De visionaire beelden bevatten ook elementen die Ezechiël onbekend voorkwamen. Hij zag "iets als een stad". De beelden die hij zag vroegen het uiterste van zijn voorstellingsvermogen. Wij als mensen van de 21e eeuw hebben nog veel meer verbeeldingskracht nodig om ons een voorstelling te maken bij een tekst van 2600 jaar oud.

Naast het belang van een goede beeldvorming bij de tekst zijn de vragen over het karakter en de bedoeling van de tekst cruciaal. Die vragen zijn op verschillende manieren uitgelegd. Tegenover de klassieke uitleg van een letterlijke tempel staat de moderne opvatting van een idealistische tempel. Zal deze tempel ooit gebouwd worden of wordt het beeld van de tempel enkel gebruikt als metafoor voor een nieuwe toekomst? Misschien liggen zelfs beide opties in het visioen opgesloten.

In dit verband is het opvallend is dat in Ezechiëls beschrijving het beeld van een aardse tempel opdoemt die in zekere zin vergelijkbaar is met de tempel van Salomo. De afmetingen en te gebruiken materialen zijn dan ook puur aards. Daarentegen doemt in het visioen dat Johannes van Patmos ontving een heel ander beeld op, namelijk een hemelse beeld van het nieuwe Jeruzalem dat neerdaalt op aarde. Dit hemelse Jeruzalem heeft in zijn afmetingen hemelse dimensies. Ook de gebruikte materialen zijn buitengewoon want er wordt gesproken van gouden straten en paarden poorten; hemelse metaforen voor een ongekende schoonheid.

In de beschrijving van Ezechiëls tempel gaat het om structuren, bouwkundige elementen, ornamenten en gebruiksvoorwerpen die ons bekend voorkomen, maar toch levert de Hebreeuwse tekst met de vele bouwkundige termen de nodige hoofdbrekens op bij de vertaling. De soms cryptische omschrijvingen van wat Ezechiël waarnam tijdens zijn rondgang door een virtuele tempel zijn soms moeilijk te duiden. In het betoog van de profeet Ezechiël worden de gebouwde elementen vaak vrij oppervlakkig beschreven. Daarentegen zijn ogenschijnlijk minder belangrijke details zeer uitvoerig weergegeven. Bovendien werd Ezechiël een driedimensionale tempel getoond die hij tweedimensionaal beschreef.

Bijna alle hoogtematen ontbreken. Dit betekent dat het tempelvisioen niet als een blauwdruk voor een nieuw te bouwen tempel kan worden gezien. Hoewel Ezechiëls tempel zich op het eerste gezicht aandient als een concreet bouwplan, ontbreekt er aan de beschrijving te veel om het weer te geven in een bouwtekening met alle daarvoor benodigde gegevens. Ezechiëls beschrijving laat zich lezen als een ruimtelijk concept waarin de hoofdlijnen en enkele belangrijke details van het plan zijn vastgelegd. Op dezelfde wijze worden in onze tijd de eerste schetsen voor stedenbouwkundige plannen ontwikkeld. De tempel werd Ezechiël getoond om die te beschrijven, maar hij kreeg niet de opdracht om te bouwen zoals dat eerder het geval was bij de Tabernakel en de tempel van Salomo. De betekenis van het

tempelvisioen reikt veel verder. Het houdt een belofte in van een nieuwe toekomst, het is een boodschap van hoop. Het visioen van een nieuwe tempel moest bij de ballingen schaamte opwekken over hun vroegere ongerechtigheden. Dan zou God weer in hun midden kunnen wonen en zou de eenheid tussen God, volk, land en tempel weer hersteld kunnen worden.

Met het oog van een bouwkundige ben ik Ezechiël gevolgd op zijn rondgang door de tempel die hem getoond werd. Dat leidde tot verrassende ontdekkingen en nieuwe inzichten. Op grond van mijn waarnemingen is de vertaling van de Hebreeuwse tekst op aan aantal plaatsen genuanceerd.

Deze studie is als volgt onderverdeeld:

Hoofdstuk 1 stelt een aantal inleidende vragen, bespreekt de methode van onderzoek en de context van het gehele boek Ezechiël.

Hoofdstuk 2 biedt een tekstkritische en filologische verkenning. Daarin wordt een vertaling gegeven van de Hebreeuwse tekst. Moeilijkheden in de tekst zijn vergeleken met de Griekse en in enkele gevallen ook met de Aramese tekst. De vertaling is voorzien van korte aantekeningen bij grammaticale en filologische kwesties.

Hoofdstuk 3 bespreekt de relatie tussen visioenen, woorden en beelden. De concepten van verbeelding in de Westerse geschiedenis evenals de betekenis van de symboliek en concepten van heilige plaatsen in het antieke Nabije Oosten worden voor het voetlicht gebracht. Tot slot is onderzocht hoe de tempel en het Nieuwe Jeruzalem in de loop van de tijd is afgebeeld en welke invloed dat heeft gehad op de Westerse stedenbouw en architectuur.

Hoofdstuk 4 biedt een overzicht van culturele, architectonische en religieuze achtergronden van tempelbouw in Egypte, Mesopotamië en de Kanaänitische regio.

Zowel de theologische concepten als de daarmee corresponderende ruimtelijke concepten voor de tempelbouw zijn onderzocht.

De gegevens uit literaire bronnen aangevuld met bewijsmateriaal uit archeologische opgravingen bevatten voldoende aanwijzingen voor een betrouwbare reconstructie van de layout en architectuur van tempels in het antieke Nabije Oosten.

Hoofdstuk 5 geeft een beschrijving van alle Israëlitische heiligdommen vanaf de Tabernakel tot de tempel van Herodes. Een nauwkeurig onderzoek van alle beschikbare bijbelse en buitenbijbelse bronnen en archeologisch bewijs stelt ons in staat om een redelijk goed beeld te krijgen van de bouwfasen en de verschijningsvorm van zowel de eerste als de tweede tempel. De resultaten uit het onderzoek wijzen ook op gemeenschappelijke kenmerken van tempelbouw in deze regio.

Hoofdstuk 6 geeft een gedetailleerde beschrijving van het plan van Ezechiëls tempel, van zijn architectuur, inrichting en ornamentering van de voorhoven, gebouwen en andere structuren. Aan deze beschrijving is een aantal tekeningen toegevoegd van de reconstructie van het tempelgebouw en de daaromheen liggende voorhoven en gebouwen en andere bouwwerken. Deze tekeningen dragen bij aan een beter begrip van Ezechiëls beschrijving.

Ook wordt duidelijk dat het beeld van de tempel in veel opzichten teruggevoerd kan worden op herinneringen aan eerdere tempels in het antieke Nabije Oosten. In hoofdlijnen is het plan met zijn muren, poorten voorhoven en de tripartite indeling van het heiligdom ook vergelijkbaar met zijn Israëlitische voorlopers. In sommige opzichten wijkt de tempel echter ook af van de gangbare tempelconcepten van die tijd. Sommige kenmerken van Ezechiëls visionaire tempel zijn totaal nieuw.

Hoofdstuk 7 biedt uiteindelijk een ruimtelijk kader voor de interpretatie van het visioen. Uitgangspunt is dat het tempelvisioen niet gezien moet worden als een blauwdruk, maar als een nieuw paradigma in de vorm van een ruimtelijk concept in een totaal nieuwe geografische setting.

Curriculum Vitae

Konstantin Stijkel geboren op 5 februari 1945 te Berlijn studeerde stedenbouwkundige techniek aan de HTS in Zwolle. Deze studie werd afgerond in 1973. Daaraan voorafgaande werden diverse bouwkundige en stedenbouwkundige vakopleidingen gevolgd.

Gedurende de periode van 1963 tot 1973 was hij in dienst van de gemeente Hoogeveen, de Provinciale Planologische Dienst van Noord-Holland te Haarlem en de gemeente Leeuwarden.

Vanaf 1973 tot aan zijn pensionering in 2006 was hij in dienst van de gemeente Almelo als ontwerper van diverse plannen voor stadsvernieuwing en stadsuitbreiding. De twee meest in het oog springende projecten waaraan hij als stedenbouwkundige in multi-disciplinaire teams heeft gewerkt, waren het structuurplan voor de gehele gemeente en het structuurplan voor de binnenstad.

Naast een professionele loopbaan als stedenbouwkundige was hij gedurende meer dan 40 jaar actief op het kerkelijk erf. Pastoraat werd zijn grote passie. Vanaf 1984 tot 2001 is hij als voorganger op basis van een preekconsent actief geweest in Gereformeerde en Hervormde kerken in Overijssel en Drente. Van 2001-2017 werd deze bediening voortgezet in meerdere Baptistengemeenten.

Activiteiten in kerkelijk verband vormden de opmaat voor diverse theologische studies. Zo werd in 2000 de studie HBO bachelor godsdienst pastoraal werker aan de Reformatorische Hogeschool te Zwolle afgerond en in 2001 de studie HBO master leraar voortgezet onderwijs in het vak godsdienst. Daarop volgde een studie theologie aan de Protestantse Theologische Universiteit te Kampen en werd in 2007 de universitaire master behaald. Hij studeerde af op Ezechiël 37. In 2009 werd gestart met een promotieonderzoek over het tempelvisioen van Ezechiël waarin met name de visuele aspecten in Ezechiëls visioensverslag zijn belicht. In deze studie heeft hij zijn stedenbouwkundige en theologische kennis kunnen combineren.

Parallel aan het promotietraject werd het NOSTER-traject doorlopen waarvan in 2016 het certificaat werd verkregen.

Hij schreef tijdens zijn studietraject enkele artikelen die gepubliceerd zijn in:

- ACEBT 26 over het herstellingsvisioen van Ezechiël (Ezek 36:23-48:35). Mede naar aanleiding daarvan nam hij deel aan een Colloquium Biblicum in Praag met de lezing "Ezekiel's visions of resurrection and restoraton, alternative readings in the Masoretic Text and Papyrus 967.
- Schrift 286 over de tempel van Ezechiël in woord en beeld.



