



Hasmoneans deposited the stones of the altar which the kings of Greece had defiled. Through the one on the northwest they used to go down to the bathing place.

1:7 The fire chamber had two gates, one opening on to the Hel and one on to the courtyard. Rabbi Judah says: the one that opened on to the courtyard had a small opening through which they went in to search the courtyard.

1:8 The fire chamber was vaulted and it was a large room surrounded with stone projections, and the elders of the clan [serving in the Temple] used to sleep there, with the keys of the Temple courtyard in their hands. The priestly initiates used to place their bedding on the ground.

1:9 There was a place there [in the fire chamber] one cubit square on which was a slab of marble. In this was fixed a ring and a chain on which the keys were hung. When closing time came, the priest would raise the slab by the ring and take the keys from the chain. Then the priest would lock up within while the Levite was sleeping outside. When he had finished locking up, he would replace the keys on the chain and the slab in its place and put his garment on it and sleep there. If one of them had a seminal emission, he would go out by the winding stair which went under the Birah, and which was lighted with lamps on both sides, until he reached the bathing place. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob says: he descended by the winding stair which went under the Hel and he went out by the Taddi gate.

2:1 The Temple Mount was five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits. The greater part of it was on the south; next to that on the east; next to that on the north; and the smallest part on the west. The part which was most extensive was the part most used.

2:2 All who entered the Temple Mount entered by the right and went round [to the right] and went out by the left, save for one to whom something had happened, who entered and went round to the left. [He was asked]: "Why do you go round to the left?" [If he answered] "Because I am a mourner," [they said to him], "May He who dwells in this house comfort you." [If he answered] "Because I am excommunicated" [they said]: "May He who dwells in this house inspire them to draw you near again," the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yose to him: you make it seem as if they treated him unjustly. Rather [they should say]: "May He who dwells in this house inspire you to listen to the words of your colleagues so that they may draw you near again."

2:3 Within it was the Soreg, ten handbreadths high. There were thirteen breaches in it, which had been originally made by the kings of Greece, and when they repaired them they enacted that thirteen prostrations should be made facing them. Within this was the Hel, which was ten cubits [broad]. There were twelve steps there. The height of each step was half a cubit and its tread was half a cubit. All the steps in the Temple were half a cubit high with a tread of half a cubit, except those of the Porch. All the doorways in the Temple were twenty cubits high and ten cubits broad except those of the Porch. All the doorways there had doors in them except those of the Porch. All the gates there had lintels except that of Taddi which had two stones inclined to one another. All the original gates were changed for gates of gold except the gates of Nicanor, because a miracle happened with them. Some say: because their copper

gleamed like gold.

2:4 All the walls that were there [in the Temple] were high except the eastern wall, for the priest who burned the red heifer would stand on the top of the Mount of Olives and direct his gaze carefully to see the opening of the Sanctuary at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.

2:5 The courtyard of the women was a hundred and thirty-five cubits long by a hundred and thirty-five wide. It had four chambers in its four corners, each of which was forty cubits. They were not roofed, and so they will be in the time to come, as it says, "Then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court, and behold in every corner of the court there was a court. In the four corners of the court there were keturot courts" (Ezekiel 46:21-22) and keturot means that they were not roofed. For what were they used? The southeastern one was the chamber of the Nazirites where the Nazirites used to boil their shelamim and shave their hair and throw it under the pot. The northeastern one was the wood chamber where priests with physical defects used to pick out the wood which had worms, every piece with a worm in it being unfit for use on the altar. The northwestern one was the chamber of those with skin disease. The southwestern one: Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said: I forget what it was used for. Abba Shaul says: they used to store there wine and oil, and it was called the chamber of oil. It [the courtyard of the women] had originally been smooth [without protrusions in the walls] but subsequently they surrounded it with a balcony so that the women could look on from above while the men were below, and they should not mix together. Fifteen steps led up from it to the courtyard of Israel, corresponding to the fifteen [songs of] ascents mentioned in the Book of Psalms, and upon which the Levites used to sing. They were not rectangular but circular like the half of a threshing floor.

2:6 There were chambers underneath the Court of Israel which opened into the Court of Women, where the Levites used to keep lyres and lutes and cymbals and all kinds of musical instruments. The Court of Israel was a hundred and thirty-five cubits in length by eleven in breadth. Similarly the Court of the Priests was a hundred and thirty-five cubits in length by eleven in breadth. And a row of mosaic stones separated the Court of Israel from the Court of the Priests. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob says: there was a step a cubit high on which a platform was placed, and it had three steps each of half a cubit in height. In this way the Court of the Priests was made two and a half cubits higher than that of Israel. The whole of the Court was a hundred and eighty-seven cubits in length by a hundred and thirty-five in breadth. And thirteen prostrations were made there. Abba Yose ben Hanan says: they were made facing the thirteen gates. On the south beginning from the west there were the upper gate, the gate of burning, the gate of the firstborn, and the water gate. And why was it called the water gate? Because they brought in through it the pitcher of water for libation on the festival. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob says: in it the water welled up, and in the time to come from there it will come out from under the threshold of the Temple. Corresponding to them in the north beginning in the west were the gate of Yehoniah, the gate of the offering, the women's gate, the gate of song. Why was it called the gate of Yehoniah? Because Yehoniah went

forth into captivity through it. On the east was the gate of Nicanor; it had two doors, one on its right and one on its left. There were further two gates in the west which had no special name.

3:1 The altar was thirty-two cubits by thirty-two. It rose a cubit and went in a cubit, and this formed the foundation, leaving thirty cubits by thirty. It then rose five cubits and went in one cubit, and this formed the surround, leaving twenty-eight cubits by twenty-eight. The horns extended a cubit in each direction, thus leaving twenty-six by twenty-six. A cubit on every side was allowed for the priests to go round, thus leaving twenty-four by twenty-four as the place for the wood pile [for the altar fire]. Rabbi Yose said: Originally, the complete area [occupied by the altar] was only twenty-eight cubits by twenty-eight, and it rose with the dimensions mentioned until the space left for the altar pile was only twenty by twenty. When, however, the children of the exile returned, they added four cubits on the north, and four on the west like a gamma, since it is said: "Now the hearth shall be twelve cubits long by twelve broad, square" (Ezekiel 43:16). Is it possible that it was only twelve cubits by twelve? When it says, "With four equal sides" (ibid), this shows that he was measuring from the middle, twelve cubits in every direction. A line of red paint ran round it in the middle to divide between the upper and the lower blood. The foundation ran the whole length of the north and of the west sides, and it took up one cubit on the south and one on the east.

3:2 At the southwestern corner [of the foundation] there were two openings like two small nostrils through which the blood which was poured on the western side of the foundation and on the southern side flowed down till the two streams became mingled in the channel, through which they made their way out to the Kidron wadi.

3:3 On the floor beneath at that corner there was a place a cubit square on which was a marble slab with a ring fixed in it, and through this they used to go down to the pit to clean it out. There was an ascent on the south side of the altar, thirty-two cubits [long] by sixteen broad. It had a square window in its western side where disqualified sin-offerings of birds were placed.

3:4 The stones both of the ascent and of the altar were taken from the valley of Bet Kerem. They dug into virgin soil and brought from there whole stones on which no iron had been lifted, since iron disqualifies by mere touch, though a flaw made by anything could disqualify. If one of them received a flaw, it was disqualified, but the rest were not. They were whitewashed twice a year, once at Pesah and once at Hag, and the Sanctuary was whitewashed once a year, at Pesah. Rabbi says: they were whitewashed every Friday with a cloth on account of the blood stains. The plaster was not laid on with an iron trowel, for fear that it might touch and disqualify. Since iron was created to shorten man's days and the altar was created to prolong man's days, and it is not right therefore that that which shortens should be lifted against that which prolongs.

3:5 There were rings to the north of the altar, six rows of four each. And some say, four rows of six each. Upon them they used to slaughter the sacrificial animals. The slaughter house was to the north of the altar, and on it were eight small pillars on top of which were blocks of cedar wood, in which were

fixed hooks of iron, three rows in each, upon which they would hang [the sacrifice] and they would strip its hide on tables of marble that stood between the pillars.

3:6 The laver was between the porch and the altar, a little to the south.

Between the porch and the altar there were twenty-two cubits. There were twelve steps there, each step being half a cubit high and a cubit broad. There was a cubit, a cubit and a level space of three cubits, then a cubit, a cubit and a level space of three cubits, then at the top a cubit, a cubit and a level space of four cubits. Rabbi Judah says that at the top there was a cubit, a cubit and a level space of five cubits.

3:7 The doorway of the porch was forty cubits high and its breadth was twenty cubits. Over it were five main beams of ash [wood]. The lowest projected a cubit on each side beyond the doorway. The one above projected beyond this one a cubit on each side. Thus the topmost one was thirty cubits long. There was a layer of stones between each one and the next.

3:8 There were poles of cedar wood stretching from the wall of the Sanctuary to the wall of the Porch to prevent it from bulging. There were chains of gold fixed in the roof beams of the Porch by which the priestly initiates used to ascend and see the crowns, as it says, “And the crowns shall be to Helem and to Toviyah and to Yedaya and to Hen the son of Zephaniah as a memorial in the Temple of the Lord” (Zechariah 6:14). A golden vine stood at the door of the Sanctuary trained on poles, and anyone who offered a leaf or a grape or a bunch used to bring it and hang it there. Rabbi Eliezer bar Zadok said: on one occasion three hundred priests were commissioned [to clear it].

4:1 The doorway of the Hekhal was twenty cubits high and ten broad. It had four doors, two on the inner side, and two on the outer, as it says, “And the Hekhal and the Sanctuary had two doors” (Ezekiel 41:23). The outer ones opened into the interior of the doorway so as to cover the thickness of the wall, while the inner ones opened into the Temple so as to cover the space behind the doors, because the whole of the Temple was overlaid with gold except the space behind the doors. Rabbi Judah says: they stood within the doorway, and they resembled folding doors. These were two cubits and a half [of the wall] and these were two cubits and a half, leaving half a cubit as a doorpost at the one end and half a cubit as a doorpost at the other end, as it says, “And the doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves, two leaves for the one door and two leaves for the other” (Ezekiel 41:24).

4:2 The great gate had two small doors, one to the north and one to the south.

By the one to the south no one ever went in, and concerning it was stated explicitly by Ezekiel, as it says, “And the Lord said to me: this gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut” (Ezekiel 44:2). He [the priest] took the key and opened the [northern] door and went in to the cell, and from the cell he went into the Hekhal. Rabbi Judah says: he used to walk along in the thickness of the wall until he came to the space between the two gates. He would open the outer doors from within and the inner doors from without.

4:3 There were thirty-eight cells there, fifteen on the north, fifteen on the

south, and eight on the west. On the north and on the south there were five over five and five again over these; On the west there were three over three and two over these. Each had three openings, one to the cell on the right and one to the cell on the left and one to the cell above. In the [one at the] northeastern corner there were five openings, one to the cell on the right, one to the cell above, one to the mesibbah, one to the door, and one to the Hekhal. 4:4 The [chamber] of the lowest [story] was five cubits wide and at the ceiling six cubits. The [chamber] of the middle [story] was six cubits wide and at the ceiling of seven. The [chamber] of the top [story] was seven cubits wide, as it says, "The lowest story was five cubits wide, the middle one 6 cubits wide and the third 7 cubits wide" (I Kings 6:6).

4:5 The mesibbah (a winding walkway) went up from the north-east corner to the north-west corner by which they used to go up to the roofs of the cells. One would ascend the messibah facing the west, traversing the whole of the northern side till he reached the west. When he reached the west he turned to face south and then traversed whole of the west side till he reached the south. When he reached the south he turned to face eastwards and then traversed the south side till he reached the door of the upper chamber, since the door of the upper chamber opened to the south. In the doorway of the upper chamber were two columns of cedar by which they used to climb up to the roof of the upper chamber, and at the top of them was a row of stones showing the division in the upper chamber between the holy part and the Holy of Holies. There were trap doors in the upper chamber opening into the Holy of Holies by which the workmen were let down in baskets so that they should not feast their eyes on the Holy of Holies.

4:6 The Hekhal was a hundred cubits by a hundred with a height of a hundred. The foundation was six cubits, then it rose forty, then a cubit for the ornamentation, two cubits for the guttering, a cubit for the ceiling and a cubit for the plastering. The height of the upper chamber was forty cubits, there was a cubit for its ornamentation, two cubits for the guttering, a cubit for the ceiling, a cubit for the plastering, three cubits for the parapet and a cubit for the spikes. Rabbi Judah says the spikes were not included in the measurement, but the parapet was four cubits.

4:7 From east to west was a hundred cubits: The wall of the porch five cubits, the porch itself eleven, the wall of the Hekhal six cubits and its interior forty, a cubit for the space between, and twenty cubits for the Holy of Holies, the wall of the Hekhal six cubits, the cell six cubits and the wall of the cell five. From north to south was seventy cubits: The wall of the mesibbah five cubits, the mesibbah itself three, the wall of the cell five and the cell itself six, the wall of the Hekhal six cubits and its interior twenty, then the wall of the Hekhal again six and the cell six and its wall five, then the place of the water descent three cubits and its wall five cubits. The Porch extended beyond this fifteen cubits on the north and fifteen cubits on the south, and this space was called the House of the slaughter-knives where they used to store the knives. The Hekhal was narrow behind and broad in front, resembling a lion, as it says, "Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped" (Isaiah 29:1): Just as a lion is narrow behind and broad in front, so the Hekhal was

narrow behind and broad in front.

5:1 The whole of the courtyard was a hundred and eighty-seven cubits long by a hundred and thirty-five broad. From east to west it was a hundred and eighty-seven. The space in which the Israelites could go was eleven cubits. The space in which the priests could go was eleven cubits. The altar took up thirty-two. Between the Porch and the altar was twenty-two cubits. The Hekhal took up a hundred cubits, and there were eleven cubits behind the kapporet.

5:2 From north to south was a hundred and thirty-five cubits. The ascent and the altar took up sixty-two; From the altar to the rings was eight cubits. The rings took up twenty-four cubits. From the rings to the tables was four cubits, From the tables to the dwarf pillars four, And from the dwarf pillars to the wall of the courtyard eight cubits, And the remainder was between the ascent and the wall and the space occupied by the dwarf pillars.

5:3 There were six chambers in the courtyard, three on the north and three on the south. On the north were the salt chamber, the parvah chamber and the washer's chamber. In the salt chamber they used to keep the salt for the offerings. In the parvah chamber they used to salt the skins of the animal-offerings. On its roof was the bath used by the high priest on Yom Kippur. In the washers' chamber they used to wash the entrails of the sacrificial animals, and from it a winding way went up to the roof of the parvah chamber.

5:4 On the south were the wood chamber, the chamber of the exile and the chamber of hewn stones. The wood chamber: Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob says: I forget what it was used for. Abba Shaul says: It was the chamber of the high priest, and it was behind the two of them, and one roof covered all three. In the chamber of the exile there was a fixed cistern, with a wheel over it, and from there water was provided for all of the courtyard. In the chamber of hewn stone the great Sanhedrin of Israel used to sit and judge the priesthood. A priest in whom was found a disqualification used to put on black garments and wrap himself in black and go away. One in whom no disqualification was found used to put on white garments and wrap himself in white and go in and serve along with his brother priests. They used to make a feast because no blemish had been found in the seed of Aaron the priest, and they used to say: Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He, for no blemish has been found in the seed of Aaron. Blessed is He who chose Aaron and his sons to stand to minister before the Lord in the Holy of Holies.