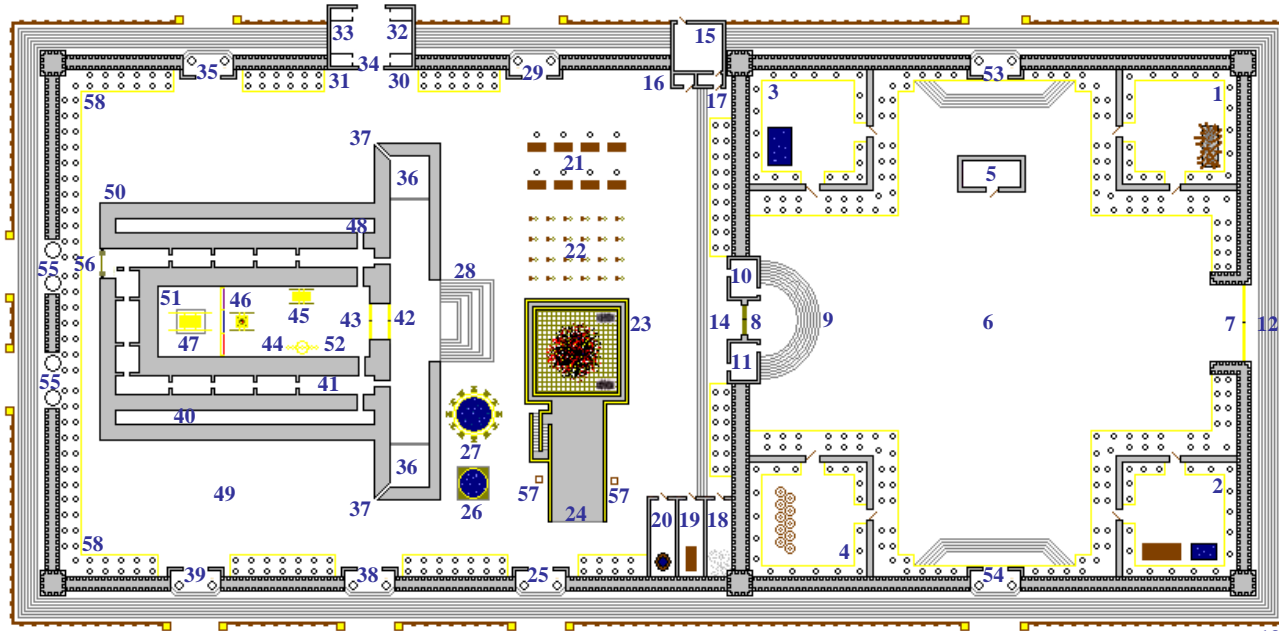




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Thought no one really knows for certain what Herod's temple looked like; most scholars of the matter agree that if we truly understood its majesty we would consider it the eighth wonder of the world. Even without exact dimensions, we can still create general idea of its layout from archaeology, accounts from ancient authors, and the Mishnah. The problem in forming an absolute description of the Temple is that the sources are all incomplete and at times contradictory. The Mishnah is suspect on some counts because it was written long after the temple existed. The major literary sources are Josephus and the Mishnaic tractate Middot; which are sometimes exaggerated. What is presented herein is the author's viewpoint based on these works. Given the problems with the sources, the information is provided in generalities rather than in specific detail.



1. **The Chamber or Court of Wood** - According to the Mishnah, there were four unroofed chambers in the four corners of the Court of Women. The North-East corner was the place where unclean priests inspected the firewood to be used in the Temple. They served by removing wood that was worm-eaten or rotten.
2. **The Chamber or Court of the Nazarene** - In the South-East corner of the Court of Women was a room where those taking the Nazirite vow would cut their hair and cook their peace-offerings.
3. **The Chamber or Court of the Lepers** - In the North-West corner of the Court of Women was the place where lepers would cleanse themselves before presenting themselves to the priest.
4. **The Chamber or Court of Oils** - This room stored oil for the Menorah, wine for drink offerings and grain for offerings.
5. **The Treasury** - Somewhere among the chambers in the Court of Women was located the Temple treasury (gazophylakia). It was a place where money donated to the Temple or deposited privately was kept. According to the Mishnah, there were thirteen horned-shaped depositories in the Temple, called shopharoth, designated for different types of offerings. People would deposit money in these depositories for different purposes. It is probable that these thirteen depositories were located near the Temple treasury; the contents of these depositories were periodically emptied and stored in the Temple treasury. (The same name is used for these depositories as for the Temple treasury itself.) The Temple treasury is also called the "Storehouse of God". The "widow's mite" probably took place in the court of women in one of these depositories.
6. **The Court of Women** - This was the minor of the two major courtyards in the actual temple complex. The inner court faced east, though there were minor entrances on the north and south sides and the main entrance to the main court to the west. Women were required to enter through the north or south gates. The north and south walls of the Court of Women were lined by porticos, thereby creating a corridor from east to west; along the walls of the inner court were storage chambers where temple property or perhaps private property was stored.
7. **The Beautiful Gate** - This Gate led into the Court of Women, where all Jews could enter, except the ritually impure, and ironically 'women'. It was the principal entrance to the Temple. Unlike the other gates, overlaid with silver and gold, the doors of this Gate were made of Corinthian brass, so heavy it took 20 men to open them.
8. **Nicanor's Gate** - The Court of Women led into the main court of the Temple, known as 'Azarah', via a semicircular stairway of 15 steps, which led up to the Nicanor or Upper gate. According to Josephus, this gate was larger than the other 9 gates, being 50 cubits high with doors 40 cubits wide. Nicanor was the benefactor who paid craftsmen in Alexandria, Egypt, to fashion the two large brass doors for the gate. Nicanor was a faithful and well to do Jew who eagerly pursued the opportunity to assist in the Temple remodeling. Each door he provided was 5 cubits wide and 20 cubits tall (about 7 1/2 feet by 30 feet). The brass was carved with intricate designs, and its finish was exceedingly bright. History records, as these doors were being sent by ship from Egypt to Judea, a storm broke out. The crew was forced to cast one of the doors into the sea. When the danger continued, the crew decided to toss the second out as well. Hearing their plans, Nicanor prayed and declared that if they throw out the door, they should throw him out as well. His self-sacrifice called for a miracle and the storm subsided. When the ship docked, the door cast overboard was miraculously found floating in the harbor. All the Temple doors were plated with gold except the Nicanor gate. The rabbis wanted the people to see the "miracle doors" in their pristine form. Additionally, the brass finish had the appearance of fine gold. The heavy doors required 20 men to open them. The Nicanor Gate was opened only on the Sabbath, at Festivals, and if the king was present. On all other days, smaller gateways (to the left and right of Nicanor gate) were used.
9. **The Steps to the Inner Court** - Fifteen steps on which the musicians of the Leviyim stood while playing hymns.
10. **The Keeper of the Vestments or the Room of Pinchas ha'Malbish** - This room held the priest's clothes. It was named for the man who was originally in charge of its 96 closets.

- 11. The Havitin Chamber** – Also known as ‘Lishkas Osei Chavitin’, this room is where the 12 loaves of meal offering were baked every morning. (They were offered daily in two parts, half in the morning and half in the afternoon.)
- 12. Steps** - On the inside of the ‘soreg’ would be found stairs leading up to a terrace, ten cubits wide, which was bounded by the walls of the inner court. According to Josephus, there were 14 steps leading to the terrace, while the Mishnah states that there were only 12. The number in the Mishnah is suspect because of the symbolic importance of the number 12. Josephus explains that beyond the terrace were 5 steps leading up to gates opening into the inner courts, but the Mishnah describes no additional steps.
- 13. The ‘Soreg’** - Surrounding the inner court was a balustrade called the ‘soreg’. The soreg was a free-standing structure, separating the outer court from the inner court, and had warning signs regularly spaced along it advising gentiles that entrance into the inner court was forbidden on pain of death.
- 14. Court of Israelites or Court of Males** - The first 11 cubits of the eastern side of the Azarah was the Courtyard of the Israelites. **Chambers underneath the Israelite Courtyard** - The Mishnah refers to chambers under the Israelite Courtyard, which opened into the Women's Courtyard. The doorways leading into the chambers were near the Nicanor gate. There the Levites placed their harps, psalteries, cymbals, and other instruments.
- 15. Chamber of Hewn Stone** - The chamber of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the land, was located partially outside the Azarah in order to allow the judges to sit when court was in session. There they judged the priesthood. A priest that was found disqualification was clothed and veiled in black, and went out, and had to leave. And if there was not found in him disqualification, he was dressed and veiled in white; he went in and served with his brethren the priests. And they made a feast-day, because there was not found disqualification in the seed of Aaron the priest. **Lishkas Sanhedrei Ketanah (second)** – In this room, of questionable location, sat 23 judges of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sanhedrin who handled the more difficult questions.
- 16. Golah** – The Lishkas ha'Golah is a fresh water well room. It is thought to be named after the people of Golah, who had dug the well. Another theory is that it is named after the large bowl (Gulah) that was set near the well and filled with water daily. It is also known as the Wheel or Exile Chamber. Within the chamber was a wheel with a crank. A rope was attached to the wheel and buckets to the rope. By turning the crank one could raise water.
- 17. Parhedrin** - The “Lishkas Parhedrin” was used by the Kohen Gadol (the High Priest) daily, and he lived there during the 7 days before Yom Kippur. Here government assessors, who were appointed for 1 year, took money for the office of Kohen Gadol. It is also called the wood room. Though the other buildings of the Temple were of stone, this chamber was wood. Wood is not a durable material. These priestly chambers were made of wood to show that service was temporary and he should be humble in his position. Others say it was named after the large wooden chests in the room for storing the High Priest's garments.
- 18. Chamber of Salt** - Sacrificial meat had to be salted before it was offered. In addition, the skins of the Sacrifices were salted to preserve them and distributed to the priests.
- 19. Parvah Chamber** – Also called Lishkas Beis ha'Parvah, this room was named after the builder of the chamber. A mikva was located on the roof. It was supplied by water from the fountain of Eitam to the south of the Temple Mount. Its waters were conducted through pipes to the mikva. Parvah secretly constructed a tunnel under this chamber leading to the Holy of

- Holies so he could observe the High Priests. He was caught and sentenced to death.
- 20. Chamber of the Well** – The Lishkas Ha'Medichin, was where the sacrifices (Korbanos) were rinsed.
- 21. Posts and Slaughter Tables** – There were rings north of the altar: 6 rows, each of 4. They were used to slaughter the sacrifices. There were also 8 short pillars with capitulars, and hooks of iron were fastened in them. There were 3 rows of hooks upon each column, upon which the animals were hung and skinned upon the marble tables.
- 22. Posts and rings** - There were 24 rings, one for each priestly group. The rings were circular hoops set into the flooring. They were used to hold the sacrifices steady while being slaughtered.
- 23. Altar of Burnt Offerings** – Called the “Mizbe'ach”, this Altar for burnt offerings measured 32 cubits square at its base and 10 cubits high including the Keranos (horns). **"Shis"**- A sewer, that was part of a natural cave located under the Altar. Blood and water flowed into the sewer and out into the Kidron Valley. On occasion the sewer clogged and had to be cleaned out.
- 24. Ramp** – Also called the ‘Kevesh’, this ramp led to the Mizbe'ach or the altar. It was 32 cubits long and 16 cubits wide.
- 25. The Water Gate** – It was opposite the Altar and was only opened on Sukkos to bring water from the Pool of Siloam. A stream passed through the Azarah at this gate. When necessary, it was blocked, causing it to overflow and cleanse the floor. **Chamber of Avtinah**- The chamber where incense was prepared. It named after a renowned family of incense makers, and located in the vicinity of the Water Gate, maybe on a balcony above the gate.
- 26. Laver** - The laver was between the porch and the altar. It was used in the cleansing of sacrificial animals.
- 27. Brazen Sea** – The water for ceremonial washing and baptism.
- 28. Steps of the Temple** – The entrance to the Temple consisted of 12 steps, each half a cubit high, and the depth alternating--a cubit, a cubit, and then 3 cubits (the final step was an extension of 4 cubits).
- 29. Gate of Offering or Sacrifice**- The “Kadashai kadashim” (sacrifices of greater sanctity) were brought in through here. **The Offering Chamber** – Somewhere near the gate of offering, this room was where animals were examined for blemishes.
- 30. Chamber of Showbread** – Also called the Lishkas Lechem ha'Panim. Here the Lechem ha'Panim or showbread was baked.
- 31. Chamber of Offering** – The Hebrew “Lishkas Tela'ei Korban”, where at least 6 blemish-free sheep were kept.
- 32. Chamber of Hearth** - Also called the Beis Ha'Moked ha'Katan, it was a room with a fireplace and an entrance to a basement Mikvah, washrooms and quarters for the priests.
- 33. Chamber of Stones** – Also called the Lishkah of the Avnei Mizbe'ach., the stones of the Altar, defiled by the Greeks, were stored. Tokens exchangeable for flour and wine were also sold there.
- 34. Hearth Gate** – Within this gate was the Hearth or Fireplace Room. It was large, domed room where Kohanim could warm themselves during the service. (They became chilled easily while working barefoot in the open, on cold, marble floors.) There were 4 smaller rooms in the corners of this large room.
- 35. Flame Gate or Spark Gate** - Above of this gate was a balcony supported by marble columns. The Spark Chamber was located on the balcony. The gate has also been called the gate of Yechoniah, since King Yechoniah went into exile to Babylonia from this gateway. **Spark Chamber** – This room was on the balcony of the Spark Gate. Here was a constant fire, should the Temple ever need a fire-source.
- 36. Place of the Knives** - At the ends of the Temple entrance were 2 rooms. They were 15 cubits square and held the sacrificial knives.
- 37. Passageway** – These 2 passageways not only gave access to the Place of the Knives, but allowed the Priests to slaughter the sacrifices at the

- entrance of the Sanctuary without being in front of it. It was through the northern passage that the Romans threw the torch, which set the temple ablaze in 70 AD.
- 38. Gate of the First Born Offering** - All “kodoshim kalim” (sacrifices of lesser sanctity), such as the first-born offerings, were brought into the Azarah through this southern gateway.
- 39. Gate of Kindling** - The firewood for the Altar was carried into the Azarah through this gateway.
- 40. & 48. Side Rooms** – The use of these rooms is unknown, though many suppose them to be for storage.
- 41. Side Chambers** - 38 chambers were allegedly used for storage; 15 on the north side (3 levels of 5), 15 on the south side (3 levels of 5) and 8 on the west side (2 levels of 3, and another 2 on top). Each compartment had 3 entrances; two to the compartments on either side, and one in the ceiling to the compartment in the level above.
- 42. Entrance** - The Entrance to the Temple, was 10 cubits wide by 20 cubits high. Above it hung a golden vine of new leaves and grapes of gold. When necessary, grapes and leaves were removed and given to the poor Priests. Near the roof, was a golden Menorah.
- 43. The Doors of the Sanctuary and the Temple**- The words “Sanctuary and Temple” seem to be redundant since both words refer to the same doorway. The Mishnah explains that the first set the Sanctuary doors and the second are the Temple doors.
- 44. Menorah** – A golden lamp stand with seven arms. Each arm was filled with olive oil and burned using wicks. There is no record of its height; however, since there were rather long snuffers. It is estimated that it was 6 to 8 feet tall.
- 45. Table of Shewbread** – held the sacred bread eaten by the priests.
- 46. Altar of Incense** – Used to burn sweet savor to the Lord.
- 47. Ark of Covenant** – Though gone, it served as a reminder.
- 49. Court of the Priests or the Azarah** - The Azarah was 135 cubits by 187 cubits. This great court held the Temple. **Chamber of the Curtain** – An unknown location where the veil separating the Holy and the Holy of Holies was woven.
- 50. Temple of Herod** – The bedrock of Mount Moriah protruded above the surface of the mountain where the Sanctuary was to be located. Uneven and rocky, they leveled the flooring upon which to construct the Sanctuary by encasing it in a 6 cubit high foundation. Only in the Holy of Holies did the bedrock still protrude above the level of the flooring by 3 finger breaths.
- 51. Holy of Holies** - The Holy of Holies was also called the Place of the Covering, referring to the covering of the Ark. It was the main part of the Temple being two stories high, each story being about 45 cubits tall. Though the compartments surrounding the main Sanctuary were three stories high, the roof of the third story of compartments was only 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the height of the main Sanctuary.
- 52. Holy Place or Sanctuary or the “Heichal”** - It was 40 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 40 cubits high. On the outside it reached a height of 100 cubits, though King Herod raised it to 120 cubits.
- 53. & 54. Entrance of Women or the Women's Gate** – Women were not permitted in the Israelite's Court. Women who brought sacrifices entered here and watched from the Women's Court.
- 55. West Entrances** - Since these gates were used so infrequently, they had no name by which they were referred.
- 56. A back entrance & Winding Staircase** - The lowest story of the northeast compartment had a back door. That door led into an open area, which contained a winding staircase, leading to the roof for repairs. Some say that it was a ramp, not a winding staircase.
- 57. Two Tables** - One marble table held fats to be burned, and one silver for holding the 93 Klei shares (vessels used by the Kohanim).
- 58. Two small Gates** - Two small gates in the northwest and southwest part of the wall for which no special use is mentioned.