

# ROSE GUIDE TO THE TEMPLE



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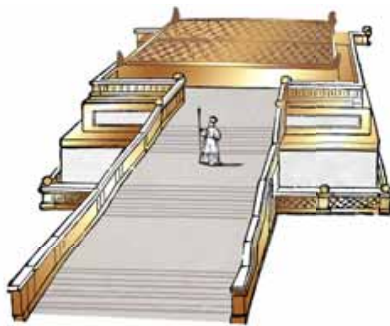
## THREE PARTS OF THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

### The Courtyard

The temple complex consisted of three parts: the Courtyard, which was the outer area surrounding the temple, the Holy Place and Holy of Holies within the temple. The sacred items within the Courtyard enabled the priests to maintain proper ritual purity in order to gain access to the inner area (the temple itself).

### THE OUTER DESIGN OF THE TEMPLE

The basic dimensions of the temple (based on the standard cubit of 18 inches) were 90 feet long (27.4 m) by 30 feet wide (9 m) by 45 feet high (14 m), totaling about 3,500 square feet (1,067 square meters) (1 Kings 6:2–3; 2 Chronicles 3:3–4). The temple would have fit inside a professional basketball court. A standard soccer field would be six times the size of Solomon's temple. The porch, at the front extending across the width of the temple, was 30 feet wide and 30 feet high (9 m x 9 m) (2 Chronicles 3:4). The temple had windows with decorated frames (1 Kings 6:4). The outer design included side chambers that consisted of three-storied rooms with a winding staircase that reached these rooms (1 Kings 6:5–8). The temple structure stood on a platform about 10 feet high (3 m). Ten steps, bordered on each side by cast bronze pillars, led upward to the entrance porch. The pillars were topped with molten bronze capitals each 7.5 feet (2.3 m) in height. Each capital was ornate, decorated with a lily network motif and twisted threads of chainwork into which were fastened 100 engraved pomegranates (1 Kings 7:17–20).



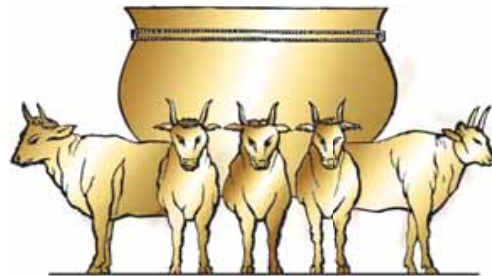
### THE BRAZEN ALTAR

The brazen altar lay on the east side of the temple directly in front of the temple (2 Chronicles 4:1). The altar was made of fieldstones (Ex. 20:25) and measured 30 feet long by 30 feet wide (9 m x 9 m) and 15 feet high (4.6 m). The altar for the tabernacle was only 4.5 feet high (1.37 m) and didn't have steps, but since the altar at the temple was 15 feet high (4.6 m), it most likely had steps for the priests to climb in order to burn offerings and sacrifices. It is unclear exactly how much of this altar was polished bronze. But since the priests ministered barefoot in the temple complex, it is unlikely that the entire structure was covered in bronze,

particularly the steps which the priests would have had to climb barefoot in the hot sun. There were also polished bronze pots, shovels, meat forks, and other articles necessary for making sacrifices and offerings upon the altar.

### THE MOLTEN SEA (BRAZEN SEA/LAVER)

Near the altar, on the southeast corner of the temple, stood an immense cast metal water-basin or laver called the "brazen sea" or the "molten sea." This reservoir, 45 feet in circumference (14 m), 7.5 feet high (2.3 m), 3 inches thick (7.6 cm), and 15 feet (4.6 m) from brim to brim, held 11,000 gallons (41,640 liters) of water. It rested on the backs of 12 bronze oxen three facing north, three facing west, three facing south and three facing east (2 Chronicles 4:2–3). Two rows of 300 gourds encircled the sea below the rim. The purpose of the laver was to provide a source of water for the ritual cleansing of the priests who would officiate and the cleansing of vessels used in the sacrificial system.



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## TEN BRONZE BASINS

Near the molten sea were 10 bronze basins sitting in 10 bronze stands. Each stand was 6 feet long (1.8 m), 6 feet wide (1.8 m), and 4.5 feet high (1.4 m). Each basin was 18 feet (5.5 m) in circumference and held 240 gallons (908 liters) of water. The basins and stands were ornamented with figures of lions, oxen, and cherubim and decorated with wreaths of hanging work. The basins were stationed five on the north and five on the south sides of the Courtyard. The basins were used to transport water to various places around the temple, and much smaller sprinkling bowls were used to administer the water for ritual purification and cleansing of the priests.



## The Holy Place

The largest room in the temple was called the Holy Place. Its walls were covered with cedar panels with elaborately carved cherubim overlaid with fine gold and decorated with palm trees and chains (2 Chronicles 3:5, 7). The floors were covered with boards of pine so that no stonework remained visible. This room was adorned with beautiful precious stones and its beams, thresholds, and doors were overlaid with gold (2 Chronicles 3:7–8).



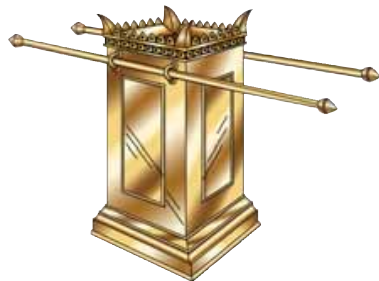
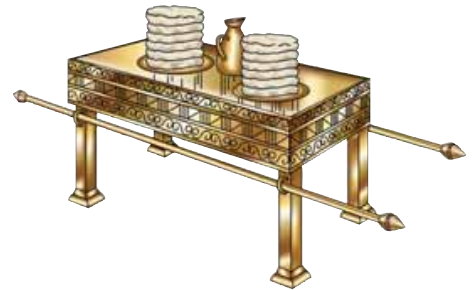
Objects inside this room included the lampstands, table(s) of the bread of the presence, the altar of incense as well as numerous tools and instruments used in priestly service.

### THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND (MENORAH)

Transferred from the tabernacle was the golden lampstand which had been beaten from a single piece of gold (Exodus 25:31–40). It is unclear exactly where the tabernacle menorah was placed in Solomon's temple, but it may have been hidden and stored in one of the temple chambers. Solomon had 10 new golden lampstands made and positioned them five on the north side and five on the south side of the Holy Place (2 Chronicles 4:7). There were also golden wick trimmers, tongs, and basins used in the priestly service.

### THE TABLE(S) OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

The table of the bread of the presence held the 12 loaves of bread (showbread) made from fine flour (1 Kings 7:48). It was called the "bread of presence" because it was to be always before the Lord in his presence (Exodus 25:30). While there was one table in the tabernacle, Scripture indicates that there was as many as 10 tables for the bread of the presence at different times in the first temple period (1 Chronicles 28:16; 2 Chronicles 4:8). There were also 100 golden sprinkling bowls and pure gold dishes to be used in the priestly service (2 Chronicles 4).



### THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

The altar of incense was used to offer a special kind of incense to the Lord (Exodus 30:1–34; 1 Chronicles 28:18). The altar was cedar overlaid with pure gold. As with the altar in the tabernacle, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) the high priest took incense from this altar and brought it into the Holy of Holies. To accompany the altar were pure gold censers used in the priestly service.

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## The Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place)

The innermost room was separated from the Holy Place by a double veil of fabric and by a wall whose only door was kept closed, except on rare occasions. Access to this room, called the Holy of Holies, was forbidden to all except the high priest, and to him only once a year on the Day of Atonement. This room was constructed as a perfect cube about 30 feet (9 m) square and was gilded throughout with more than a ton of gold (2 Chron. 3:8). In the middle of this windowless room stood a raised platform, the covered top of Mt. Moriah that protruded within the Holy of Holies. Jewish tradition called it the “Foundation Stone” and believed it to be the center of the world and the point from which God created Adam. On this platform sat the most important of the holy furnishings—the ark of the covenant.



### THE VEIL

The veil of the temple is mentioned only in 2 Chronicles 3:14: “He made the curtain of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim worked into it.” This design followed that of the tabernacle before it (Exodus 26:31–33; Hebrews 9:3) and was also followed in the second temple that came after it (Matthew 27:51). First Kings 8:8 says that the poles of the ark of the covenant were so long that they could be seen from the Holy Place. This means the poles protruded into the Holy Place and only a veil would have allowed this.

### THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

Made out of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, the ark was the central focus of the temple. When Solomon brought the ark into the temple, there was “nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites” (1 Kings 8:9). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sacrifice and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat—the top of the ark of the covenant where the winged cherubim faced each other—to atone for the sins of the people.

The ark possibly rested within an incised base to prevent it from being unsteadied when the high priest used its long carrying poles to guide himself to the mercy seat. Solomon also made two 15-foot-high (4.6 m) olive wood cherubim overlaid with gold to overshadow the ark (1 Kings 6:23–28; 8:6–7).

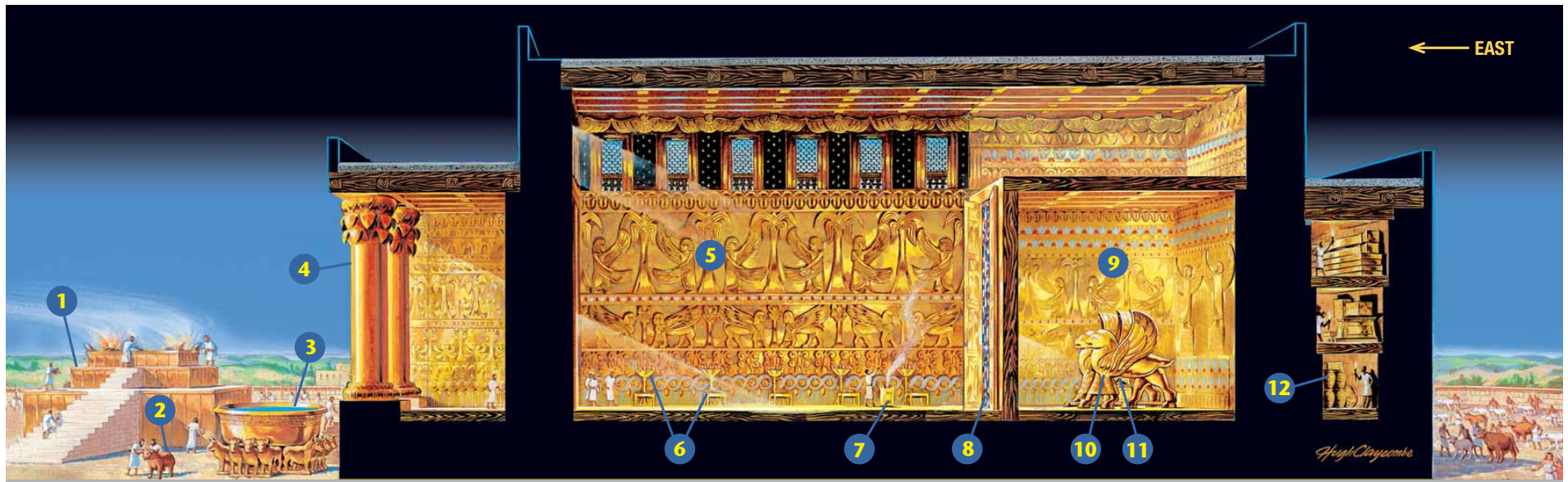


### THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST ARK

The ark of the covenant has always been shrouded in mystery. From the beginning, it was hidden from public view and approachable by only a select few. Once it was placed within the Holy of Holies, a specially constructed curtain was hung to prevent direct access to the ark. The Bible says that the ark was made of “acacia wood” (Exodus 25:10; כִּיֹּץ “shittim”). Acacia wood was considered so durable that the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) translated the Hebrew “acacia wood” as “incorruptible wood.” Magnifying this imperishable quality was the pure gold which overlaid the wood (Exodus 25:11). The ark disappeared with the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC. Therefore, in the second temple during the Day of Atonement the high priest could only pour the blood on the barren stone within the Holy of Holies where the ark would have been. Jewish tradition held that the ark was deposited before the first temple’s destruction in a secret chamber beneath the Holy of Holies. Today in the news from time to time people will claim to know the whereabouts of the ark, but no conclusive proof has ever been offered.

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## Solomon's Temple Side View



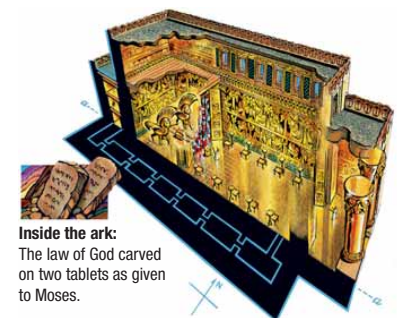
- 1 BRAZEN ALTAR.** Sacrifices took place upon this altar.
- 2 ANIMALS FOR SACRIFICE.** Their blood would bear away the sin of a repenting and praying people. The animal was killed and its blood (life) drained away into vessels; the blood was placed on the horns and base of the altar. Other portions of the animal were eaten or burned.
- 3 MOLTEN SEA (LAVER).** Held water used for ceremonial washing (1 Kings 7:23).
- 4 BRONZE PILLARS.** "Yachin" and "Boaz" supported the roof of the Porch.
- 5 HOLY PLACE**
- 6 LAMPSTANDS AND TABLES.** The tables held the bread of the presence.

**BEDROCK.** The bedrock upon which the temple rested was once a threshing floor honorably purchased by Solomon's father, David (2 Samuel 24:24).

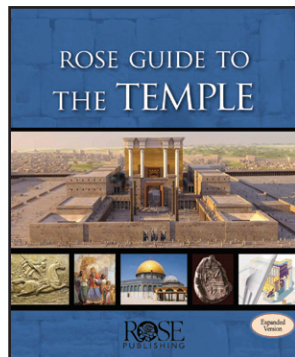
**ART FORMS.** Solomon carved cherubim and palm trees on the walls and "overlaid the whole interior with gold" (1 Kings 6). These were not objects of worship but only for God. Cherubim were winged spiritual beings guarding sacred objects. Scripture says the temple was decorated with various colors, turquoise, and marble, inlaid and painted possibly similar to other ancient temples.

- 7 ALTAR OF INCENSE.** Used for times of prayer.
- 8 VEIL OR CURTAIN.** Made of blue, purple, crimson linen.
- 9 HOLY OF HOLIES**
- 10 CHERUBIM.** Massive sculptures touched each other wingtip to wingtip and wall to wall.
- 11 ARK OF THE COVENANT.** Beneath the wings of guarding cherubim was this gold-covered chest carried from the wilderness of Sinai. Its lid was the place the high priest placed life (blood), and from this "mercy seat" God poured forth his mercy.
- 12 STORE ROOMS (TREASURIES).** Three stories high, these rooms surrounded the temple on sides and rear, and contained the king's wealth.

Written descriptions of Solomon's temple appear in Scripture but must be interpreted by each artist. No two illustrations look exactly alike. ©Hugh Claycombe





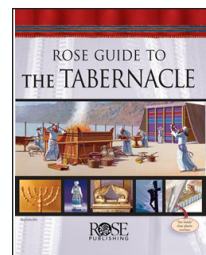


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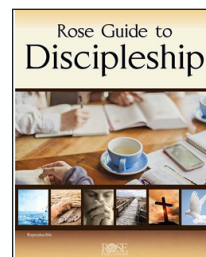
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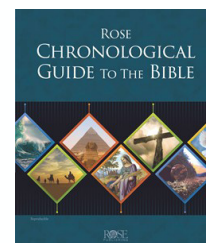
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