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| **Menu** | **Subtitle** | **Description** |
| LIFE IN THE SECOND TEMPLE | SOUTH | - |
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|  | WEST | - |
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|  | TOP | - |
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|  | NORTH | - |
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|  | EAST | - |
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|  | Other views | - |
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| NORTH VIEW | SOREG | Around the Sanctuary and its two courtyards, there was a stone barrier, about 1.5 meters high, called the Soreg. It bore inscriptions in Greek and Latin saying, “no foreigner should go within that sanctuary” under penalty of death.This is probably the spot where the Jews of the province of Asia arrested Paul and accused him of bringing Greeks into the Sanctuary (Acts 21:28). |
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|  | COURT OF THE WOMEN | - |
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|  | COURT OF THE ISRAELITES | - |
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|  | ALTAR | - |
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|  | COURT OF THE PRIESTS | - |
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|  | COURT OF THE GENTILES | - |
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|  | ANTONIA FORTRESS | The Hasmonean kings built a fortress northwest of the Temple Mount, where the priestly vestments were kept. An underground passageway connected the fortress with the Temple area. When Herod expanded the esplanade of the Temple, he rebuilt the fortress and named it "Antonia" in honor of his Roman patron, Marc Antony. At the time of Jesus, a cohort of Roman soldiers was kept at the Antonia fortress to keep a close eye on the activity inside the Temple area, especially during Jewish festivals. It is probably there that Jesus was flogged and crowned with thorns by the soldiers. |
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| SOUTH VIEW | TRUMPETER’S PLACE | A trumpet was blown many times and in several places during the daily service on the Temple Mount. According to Josephus, there was a special spot reserved for blowing the trumpet before and after the Sabbath. In 1968, a Hebrew inscription reading “the place of the trumpeting” (le-beit ha-teqiy‘a) was discovered engraved on a stone that was dislodged from the southwestern corner of the parapet of Herod’s Temple Mount. |
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|  | THE ROYAL PORTICO | The Stoa or Royal Portico, at the southern end of the Temple Mount was a large colonnaded hall. Activities not directly related to the cult of the Temple, such as selling offerings for the sacrifices, took place there. It is probably from the Royal Portico that Jesus drove out the merchants and the money changers. Jewish tradition says that at the eastern end was the site where the Sanhedrin met during the last thirty years prior to the Destruction of the Temple. Directly inspired by the model of Roman civic basilicas, it was so lavishly decorated that Josephus deemed it one of the finest porticos “under the sun” (AJ 15.11.5). |
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|  | COURT OF THE GENTILES | - |
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|  | HULDA GATES | The Temple Mount was generally accessed from the south through a double gate and a triple gate. According to the Mishnah (Middot 1.3), they were called the Huldah Gates in memory of the biblical prophetess Huldah. Most pilgrims entered through the right gate and exited through the left one. However, those who were in their first year of mourning for a close relative would choose the opposite course as a sign of their bereavement on this joyous occasion. |
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| TOP VIEW | COURT OF THE ISRAELITES | Only male Jews who had undergone the rites of purification could go through the bronze doors of the Gate of Nicanor and enter the second inner court of the Temple: the Court of the Israelites. There, they were able to see the Altar and the Sanctuary but were not allowed to go near them. |
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|  | UNDERGROUND PASSAGEWAYS | Starting from the Huldah Gates and going under the Royal Portico, two lavishly decorated passageways led up into the Court of the Gentiles. |
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|  | HOLY TEMPLE | - |
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|  | COURT OF THE PRIESTS | A small wall, about half a meter high, separated the Court of the Israelites from the Temple building: the space between them was called the “Court of the Priests”, the descendants of Aaron, the first High Priest. |
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|  | COURT OF THE WOMEN | - |
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|  | COURT OF THE GENTILES | In Jesus’ time, non-Jews were allowed in the Temple esplanade under certain conditions. They had access to the porticos and to part of the courtyard but weren’t allowed past a fence, called the Soreg. Apart from the Roman soldiers there who kept the peace, many sympathizers and proselytes of Judaism would make pilgrimages to the Temple on main feasts: Passover, Pentecost, New Year, Yom Kippur, and the feast of Tabernacles. |
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| TEMPLE - TOP VIEW | COURT OF THE WOMEN | Past the Soreg, to the East, a large gate led to the first inner court of the Temple: the Court of the Women. According to the Mishnah “a balcony was built around it, so that the women could watch from above with the men from below so they would not intermingle” (Middot 2:5). Four rooms were built on each corner. To the west: a semi-circular flight of steps led the worshippers to the monumental Gate of Nicanor. This was the closest women could get to the Sanctuary. |
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|  | ALTAR | Inside the Court of the Priests stood the Altar of the Burnt Offerings: it was a large and square altar, with “horns” on each corner, and was reached by a monumental ramp. It was made of unhewn stones, because no iron tools should touch it, “since iron was created to shorten man's days, and the altar was created to extend man's days” (Mishnah, Middot 3.5). |
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|  | HOLY TEMPLE | The Temple building, appeared to the pilgrims coming from the Mount of Olives “like a mountain covered with snow” (Josephus). Since it faced the east, its façade, covered by exquisite white marble and gold, gleamed with the first rays of the rising sun. A gate with no door opened to the Ulam or vestibule. The main hall (Hekhal) was accessed through a doorway featuring “a golden vine (…), supported by poles” (Mishnah, Middot 3.8). It contained the Menorah (seven-lamp lampstand), the table of Showbread, and the Altar of Incense. The Holy of Holies (Qodesh ha-Qodashim) was hidden by a curtain. When Jesus died on the cross, the Gospel recounts that “the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mt 27:51). Behind the veil “there was nothing at all” (Josephus): it was the place of God’s presence (Shekhinah). The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year, during the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). |
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|  | GATE OF NICANOR | This door separated the cout of women from the court of men and priests. There were probably thirteen boxes on the sides of the Gate of Nicanor, with an inscription indicating the special purpose of each: oil, wood, priestly garments, pigeons, etc. Probaly here Christ saw the rich and the poor widow lay their offerings (Luke 21:1). |
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| WEST VIEW | THE GATES OF THE WESTERN WALL | Four gates gave access to Herod’s Temple Mount from the west. Two of them (Warren’s and Barclay’s gates) were simple gateways. They led to the esplanade through underground staircases. Wilson’s Arch was the last gigantic vault of an elevated highway that gave direct access to the Temple precinct through a monumental gate. Robinson’s Arch was a wide L-shaped stairway that brought the worshippers from the street below to a monumental gate built in front of the Royal Portico. |
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|  | THE WESTERN WALL | The Western Wall or Wailing Wall is no more than a short section of the western retaining wall of the Second Temple, most of which is now hidden by residential buildings. A few courses of huge well-cut blocks of stones are still visible in the Western Wall piazza. Since these are the last remains of the Temple—and thus the most sacred place in Judaism—Jews have gathered here for centuries to commemorate the destruction of the Temple. |
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