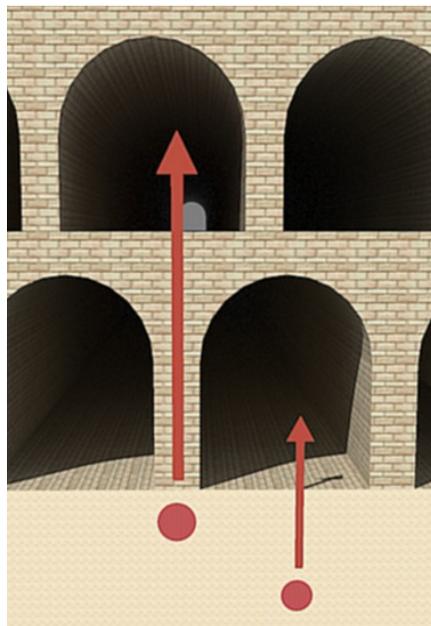


Chapter 1: The Har Habayis

As mentioned earlier, the Beis Hamikdash was built on Har Hamoriah. The mountain is naturally, like all mountains, sloped, and not fitting for large courtyards. When Shlomo Hamelech built the Beis Hamikdash, he first built huge retaining walls, around part of the mountain²², reaching in height nearly to the top of the mountain, and built a flat platform on top²³. This whole big artificial platform is called the Har Habayis, the mountain of the house, (meaning the part of the mountain that the house was built on²⁴).

Underneath the whole Har Habayis was built two layers of arches, one on top of the other, with the feet of one arch being opposite the space of the one on bottom, so that if there was any *tumah* from graves underneath the mountain, it could not rise to the top and make the people above *tamei*.²⁵ (Corpse *tumah* makes anyone above it *tamei*, unless there is a roof over at least a square tefach of space on top of it, which blocks it from rising. The two levels of arches were needed so that even if there was a grave right under the foot of an arch, in which case the arch would not protect from it, the second layer would stop it.)²⁶ The floor of the Har Habayis on top of this was not flat, but slightly sloped²⁷, and was paved with marble tiles.²⁸



The arches blocking the tumah

The Har Habayis was 500 amos²⁹ by 500 amos square.³⁰ It was surrounded by a wall five amos thick³¹, and over forty amos tall³². It had five gates, two in the south,

22 Not all of the mountain was sanctified and called the Har Habayis, only five hundred amos by five hundred amos were (Piskey Tosafos Middos #5).

23 Josephus, *Antiquities* 8:3:9, 15:11:3, *Wars* 5:5:1

24 Chanukas Habayis Ashkenazi, siman 2

25 Rambam Hilchos Beis Habechirah 5:1

26 Parah 3:6 with commentaries

27 Rashi Pesachim 7a

28 Tavnis Heichal 4:26; Har Hamoriah on Rambam, Hilchos Beis Habechirah 1:10, see also Mefareash on Divrey Hayamim I 29:2.

29 In modern measures, an amah is 48 centimeters, or 18.9 inches, so the Har Habayis was 240 meters by 240 meters.

30 Middos 2:1

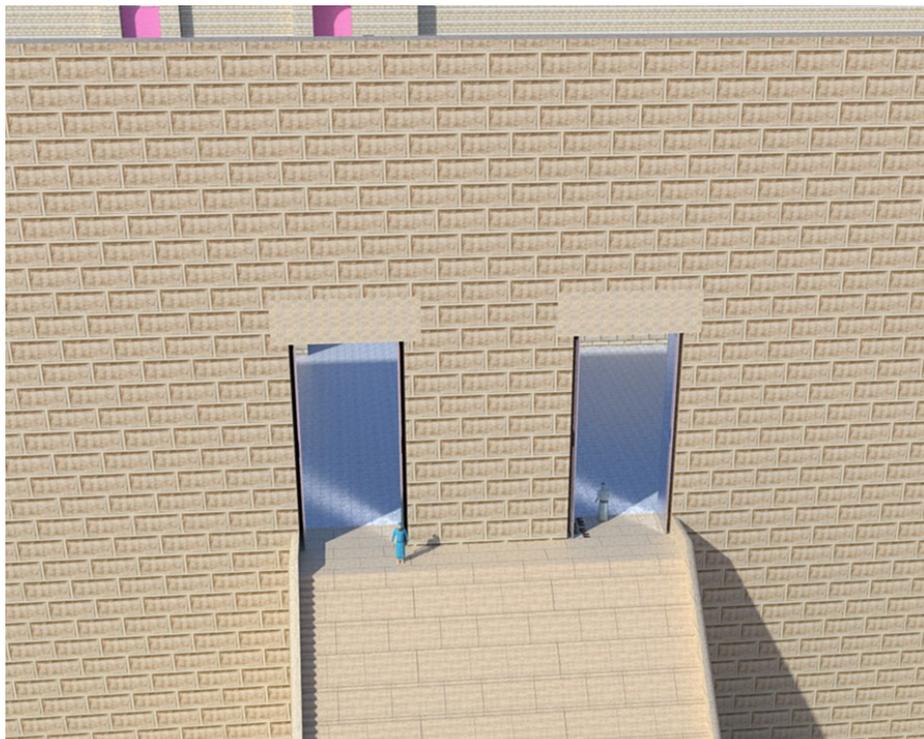
31 Ezras Kohanim Middos 2:1 ד"ה הר הבית ה' this is not included in the 500 amos.

32 Tosafos Yesheirim Yoma 16a, in some manuscript versions the Gemara (Yoma ibid) says this clearly, "all the walls that were there were taller than forty amos" (see Dikdukey Sofrim). Similarly Josephus (*wars* 5:5:2) writes about the walls of

Chapter 1: The Har Habayis

one in the west, one in the north, and one in the east³³. All these gates were ten amos wide and twenty amos tall³⁴, and had double doors, made of silver,³⁵ at their inner side³⁶, which opened outward. Because of this, the gateways of the Har Habayis did not have the same level of sanctity as the Har Habayis itself, since when the doors were closed the gateways were left outside.³⁷

The two southern gates were located slightly apart from each other³⁸, and were the main gates used for regular entrance and exit, as most of Yerushalayim is to the south of the Har Habayis. During the end of the period of the first Beis Hamikdash, the prophetess Chuldah sat between them, and from then on they were called the Chuldah gates³⁹.



The Chuldah gates

The western gate was located in the middle of the western wall⁴⁰, and was used for regular entrance and exit⁴¹. The Mishnah calls it the Kiponos gate, and the Mefarshim give various reasons for this name. Many of them are based on a Greek etymology of the word, in

the Azaros that they were forty amos.

33 Middos 1:3

34 Middos 2:3

35 Josephus Antiquities 8:3:9

36 Tavnis Heichal 2:19

37 Ezras Kohanim Middos 1:3 ד"ה להר הבית

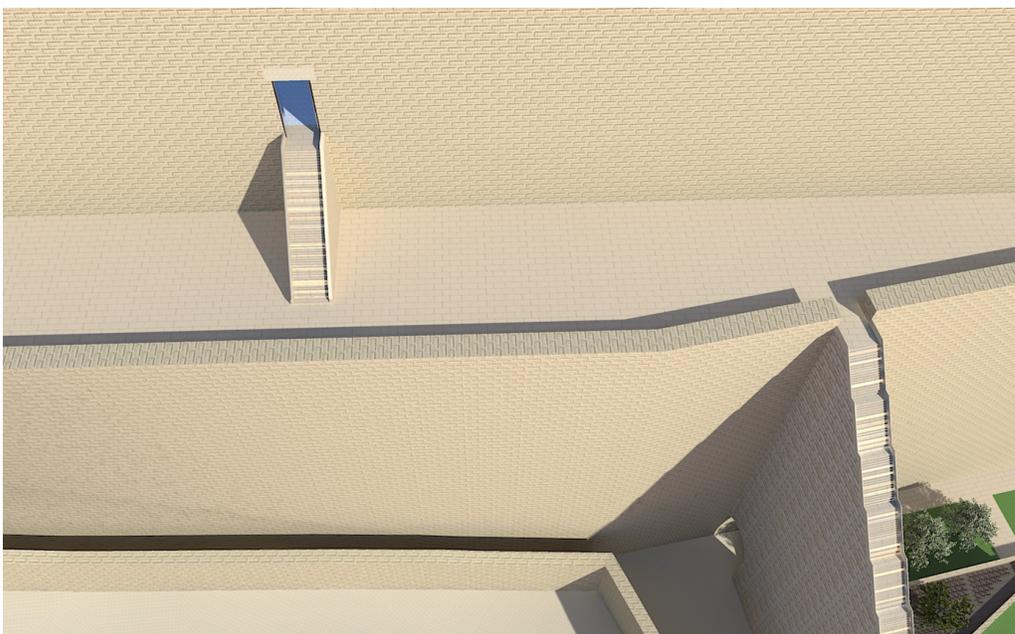
38 Ravyah siman 1145

39 Middos 1:3 with Rosh. The Rosh gives another reason, that since they were the main gates of the Har Habayis, they were called the Chuldah gates, like a weasel (Chuldah) that lives in the base of a house.

40 Ezras Kohanim middos 1:3 ד"ה קיפונוס ב', see also Ravya (siman 1145), who writes that it was not directly opposite the Beis Hamikdash, but more to the south (which this fits the center of the wall also, since the Beis Hamikdash was closer to the northern wall of the Har Habayis), so that people exiting through it don't turn their backs to the Kodosh Hakodoshim.

41 Middos 1:3

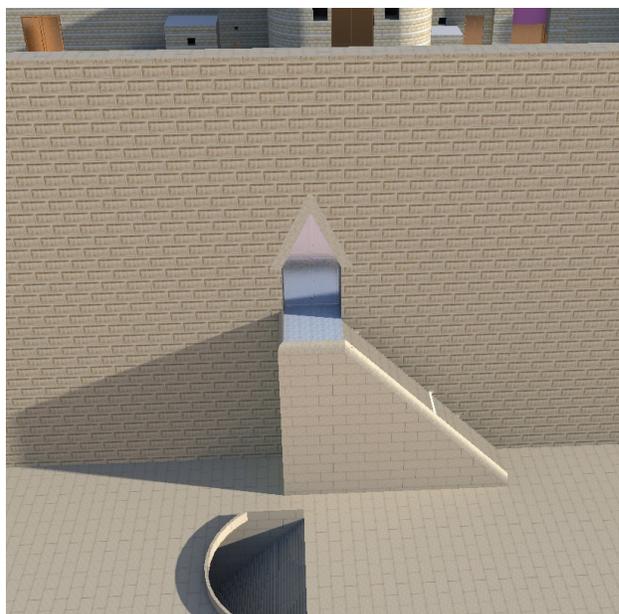
which case during the time of the Bayis Rishon, it was not called by this name. The Passuk⁴² mentions the Shaleches gate, which was situated in the west, at the end of a road leading to the Har Habayis; this is very probably this gate. Next to this



The western gate (Shaleches/Kiponos)

gate there was a rose garden, which was used in the Ketores; although in general, no gardens were allowed in Yerushalayim⁴³. This garden also had fig trees in it⁴⁴, and it would seem that this was part of the bigger palace garden (see chapter 7).

The northern gate of the Har Habayis did not have any significant use, rather it was used for Kohanim who became Tamei during the night, to quietly go away from the Har Habayis⁴⁵. It was located right near the Beis Hamoked, where the Kohanim slept, so they could quickly leave⁴⁶. This gate had a unique lintel, different than all the other gates. Instead of the lintel being one stone, resting on both doorposts, it was made of two stones leaning against each other diagonally, forming a triangular shape.⁴⁷ The



The Northern gate

42 Divrey Hayamim 1 26:16

43 Bava Kamma 82b with Rashi

44 Maasros 2:5

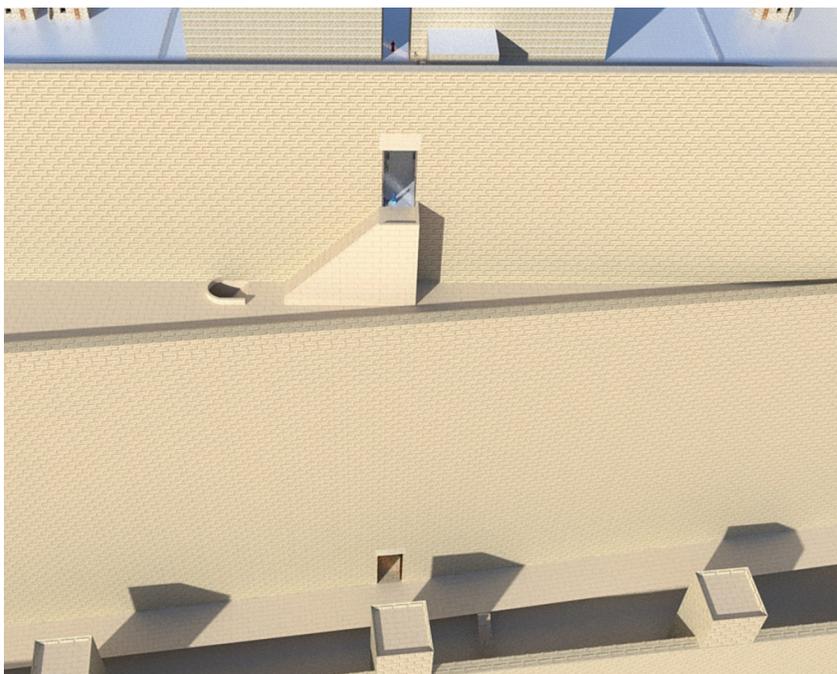
45 Middos 1:3 (and 1:9) with Ezras Kohanim ד"ה לא היה משמש כלום

46 Ravyah siman 1145

47 Middos 2:3

Mishnah⁴⁸ calls this gate the tadi (or tari) gate. Various reasons are given for this name, some from Greek and some from Hebrew. Since it is not even certain if this gate was called this in the first Beis Hamikdash (as many gates were called different names in the first and second Beis Hamikdash), I will not get into the various reasons here.

The eastern gate was located directly opposite the eastern gates of the Beis Hamikdash⁴⁹ (The gate of the Ezras Nashim, the gate of the Azarah, and the gates of the Heichal.) It was used for regular entrance and exit to the Har Habayis⁵⁰. On top of this gate there was a room, where two measuring rods (made of gold or silver⁵¹) were kept. The measuring rod that was in the northeast corner of the room was half an etzba more than a regular amah, and the one in the southeast corner was a full etzba longer than the regular amah⁵². When someone made something for the Beis Hamikdash, they would make up a price per Amah. However, when it came time to measure the finished product, they would measure it with one of these larger



The eastern gate



The room with the measuring rods

48 Middos 1:3

49 Rashi Berachos 54a

50 Shiltey Hagibborim perek 3, the Mishnah (Middos 1:3) says it was also used for leading out the Parah Adumah to Har Hazeisim, however in the first Beis Hamikdash, they did not make any Parah Adumah, so it was obviously not used for this.

51 Rabbeinu Chananel, Pesachim 86a, from the Aruch (ערך שתי א')

52 In modern measurements, the northern one was 49 centimeters, and the southern one was 50 centimeters.

measuring rods, to make sure the person is not getting more than he is supposed to, in which case he would be doing Me'ilah (unlawful use of Hekdesh). The smaller measuring rod was used for metal objects, where even a small increase is worth a lot, and the larger one for structures.⁵³

[In the third Beis Hamikdash, there will be a fifty amah wide empty space (*migrash*) around the Har Habayis⁵⁴. The first and second Beis Hamikdash might have also had such a *migrash*, see appendix 2 at the end of this book. The height of the Har Habayis is also not clear, see appendix 3 for discussion about it.]

The whole Har Habayis has a special holiness, more so than rest of Yerushalayim. Just like in the Yidden's camp in the desert, where there were three areas, the camp of the Yisraelim, the camp of the Levi'im, and the camp of the Shechinah (the Mishkan), and each one had higher levels of holiness than the previous ones, so too in Yerushalayim you have the same scheme. The city of Yerushalayim corresponds to the camp of the Yisraelim, and therefor people who had Tzaraas may not enter. The Har Habayis corresponds to the camp of the Levi'im, and people who became *tamei* from their body (as opposed to touching something *tamei*), like a Zav, Niddah, and Baal Keri⁵⁵, are not able to enter it. The Azarah corresponds to the camp of the Shechinah, and only completely pure people are able to enter it. Over time, the Chachamim added more levels of holiness to various parts of the Har Habayis, such as the *cheil* and the Ezras Nashim, making them more holy than the rest of the Har Habayis, but not as holy as the Azarah⁵⁶.

Running along the east wall of the Har Habayis, on the inside, was a double portico, (meaning there were two aisles)⁵⁷. This portico was thirty amos wide, and twenty five amos tall⁵⁸. It had three rows of columns; the most inner one being built into the Har Habayis wall⁵⁹. The shaft of each column was around 16.5 amos tall⁶⁰,

53 Keilim 17:9

54 Yechezkel 45:2

55 Pesachim 67b

56 Rambam Hilchos Beis Habechirah 7:11, Hilchos Bias Hamikdash 3:2-7

57 Josephus, Antiquities 8:3:9, 15:11:3, Wars 5:5:1

58 Josephus, Wars 5:5:2, he actually says that the columns were this high, however in the Herodian stoas, the columns were only 27 feet (16.5 amos) tall, and Herod would not have made his columns shorter than the Solomonic ones, so the 25 amos is probably referring to the whole portico.

59 Josephus, antiquities 15:11:5, this is talking about the southern, royal, stoa, built by King Herod in the Second Beis Hamikdash, which was a triple stoa, with four rows of columns, however it would seem that in many details he would have built it similar to the existing stoa, such as this.

60 Josephus, antiquities 15:11:5, writes that each column in the southern Herodian stoa was 27 feet tall. The foot used by Herod was the roman foot, which is 296 mm, so each column was 799.2 cm tall, which equals 16.5 amos (one amah is 48 cm). It would seem that Herod made his columns the same height as the ones in the original Solomonic portico, which was still standing.

Chapter 1: The Har Habayis

and was thick enough that it took three people with their arms outstretched to encircle it⁶¹, giving them a circumference of around eleven to twelve amos, and a diameter of 3.5 amos. The roof of the



portico was *The Har Habayis Portico*

made of polished cedar wood, with the different planks being expertly joined together in a beautiful way, without any designs engraved or painted on it⁶². This portico survived the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, and was reused in the second; even when king Herod rebuilt the second Beis Hamikdash, he kept this portico, not rebuilding it⁶³. Under this portico there was two rows of benches, with the roof on top protecting them from the rain.⁶⁴

The Beis Hamikdash was not located in the center of the Har Habayis, rather it was towards the northwest, with the biggest space between the Azarah and the Har Habayis walls in the south, the next biggest in the east, the next in the north, and the least in the west. For example, in the south there was 250 amos, in the east there was 213 amos (including the Ezras Nashim), in the north there was 115 amos, and in the west there was 100 amos⁶⁵.

The Har Habayis was not just a wide empty space. It had many buildings and chambers, as well as large plazas. From various places, we can put together a list of

61 Josephus, antiquities 15:11:5

62 Josephus, Wars 5:5:2

63 Josephus, Antiquities 20:9:7

64 Pesachim 13b with Rashi, also mentioned in Berachos 33b, Sukkah 45a. The Gemara says that this went all around all four walls of the Har Habayis, however that was added during a later period, Shlomo Hamelech just made one in the east (*Josephus, Antiquities 15:11:3, Wars 5:5:1*) Although all the details of the Beis Hamikdash were given by Hashem, and cannot be changed, it would seem that the directive here was just to make a portico along the walls of Har Habayis, without specifying if it should be on all walls or just one.

65 Middos 2:1 with Tosfos Yom Tov

what these chambers were used for, although we don't know where on the Har Habayis most of them were located, although generally speaking, the biggest number of buildings were in the south, less in the east, less in the north, and the least in the south, commensurate with the amount of space there was there⁶⁶.

Here is a list of some of these various chambers and buildings⁶⁷ (Some of these buildings may have had different uses over time, or had different names, so two items in the list can actually be the same building).

- At the end of the first Beis Hamikdash period, Yirmiyahu mentions⁶⁸ the chamber of the sons of Chanan the son of Yigdalyahu the Navi, which was on top of the chamber of Maseyahu the son of Shalum, one of the treasurers of the Mikdash. These chambers were located next to the Officers' chamber, which is referring to the Beis Hamoked⁶⁹, putting them in the north of the Har Habayis.
- By the upper gate of Binyamin, (which is probably the gate called in the Mishnah Sha'ar Hanitzotz⁷⁰) there was a jail, with a vaulted roof. One of the officers of the Kohanim, who was upset at Yirmiyahu Hanavi for saying his Nevuos of punishment, put him in this jail for a day.⁷¹
- There was a Beis Medrash, where the Sanhedrin would gather on Shabbos and Yom Tov⁷².
- There was a Shul located near the Azarah, in the Har Habayis⁷³.
- Lishkas Hakeilim- chamber of the vessels: in this Lishkah, people could put any vessel that they want to donate to the Beis Hamikdash, and once a month, the treasurers would come in and take them. Anything that they had a use for, they would use, and what they couldn't use, they would sell and use the money⁷⁴. (There was another Lishkas Hakeilim in the Azarah, where they

66 Middos 2:1 with Tosfos Yom Tov

67 For more, see Shiltey Hagibborim, chapter 25, Ezras Kohanim, middos 2:1 ד"ה מקום שהיה רוב תשמישו, Tavnis Heichal, chapter 17-18.

68 Yirmiyahu 35:4

69 Tavnis Heichal 2:145

70 The Mefarshim explain that this gate was located in the portion of Binyamin, which is towards the north, so this is one of the northern gates of the Azarah. It was called the upper gate since it was located in the west, and the Beis Hamikdash rose higher towards the west (similarly, the westernmost gate in the south was also called the upper gate, see Middos 2:6). The westernmost gate in the north of the Azarah was the Sha'ar Hanitzotz, so this is most probably the gate referred to in this passuk.

71 Yirmiyahu 20:2

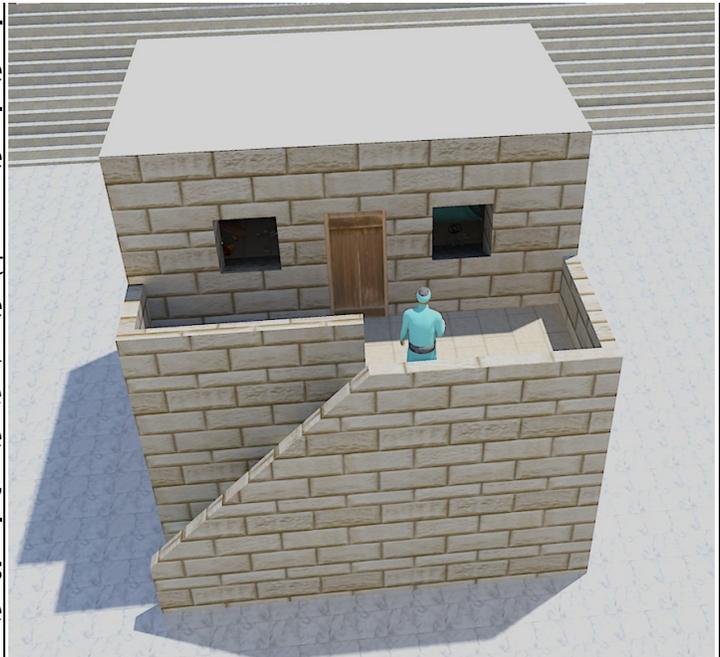
72 Rambam Sanhedrin 3:1 from Tosefta Chagigah 2:4

73 Yoma 68b with Rashi

74 Shekalim 5:6

would keep the vessels used for the avodah, however these were two different rooms, one for donations, and one to store the regular vessels⁷⁵.)

- Lishkas Chasha'im- the quiet peoples' chamber: here righteous people can put in money quietly, and poor people from good families would take money from here quietly, without them seeing the giver and getting embarrassed.⁷⁶ This was located next to the above mentioned Lishkas Hakeilim⁷⁷.



Lishkas Hakeilim

- Lishkas Hashekalim: here they would keep the half Shekels given by every Yid every year, and they would withdraw money from it three times a year.⁷⁸
- There was a room where they would sit and collect the half shekels every year, and if someone didn't pay, they would take a collateral from him to make him pay.⁷⁹
- There were storehouses to keep the money donated for the upkeep of the Beis Hamikdash⁸⁰.
- There were special storehouses to keep the money donated by David and the generals from the spoils of war with various enemies, called the treasury of the house of Hashem⁸¹.
- Chizkiyahu Hamelech set aside some Lishkos to put the Terumah and Maaser in them, after telling the Yidden to bring them to the Beis Hamikdash in order to give them to the Kohanim.⁸²

75 Shiltey Hagibborim (*ibid*)

76 Shekalim 5:6

77 Peirush Talmid Rabbeinu Shmuel Ben Shneur on shekalim

78 Shekalim 3:1

79 Shiltey Hagibborim (*ibid*) from Shekalim 1:3

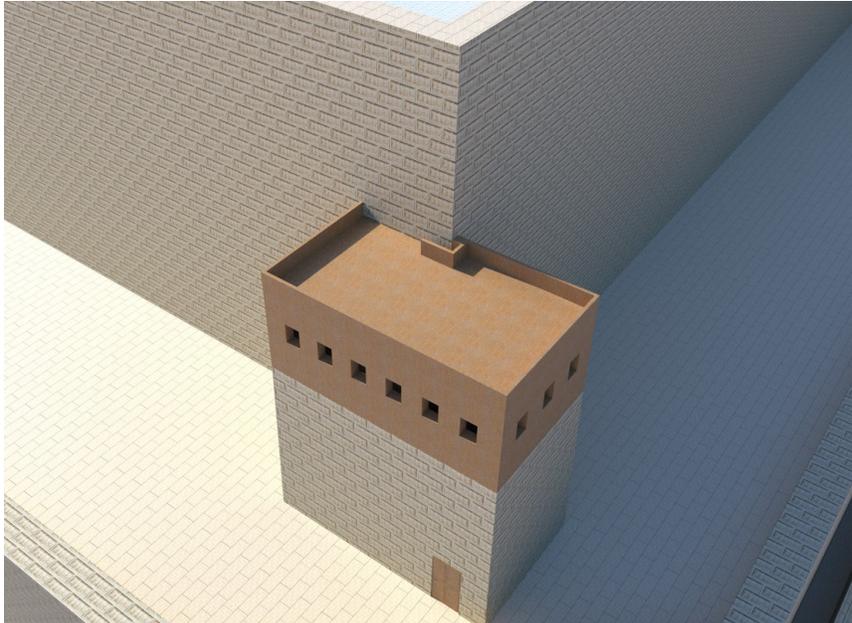
80 Shekalim 5:6 with Bartenura

81 Shiltey Hagibborim (*ibid*), from Melachim I 7:51 and Divrey Hayamim I 29

82 Divrey Hayamim II 31:11

Chapter 1: The Har Habayis

- There was a room to store the wood needed for the Mizbeach.⁸³
- There was a room where they kept weapons and shields, which were made by David⁸⁴.
- There were various offices for the various different officers in the Beis Hamikdash.
- In the northwest corner of the Har Habayis, right outside it, Shlomo built a wooden tower. In later years, this was added to, until the Chashmona'im made it into a full fledged fortress.⁸⁵ This tower was called the Birah⁸⁶.



Birah

Shlomo Hamelech built two more gates in the Har Habayis. The Midrash⁸⁷ describes them as follows:

Shlomo saw that the observance of loving-kindness was great before the Holy One, blessed be He. When he built the Temple he erected two gates, one for the bridegrooms, and the other for the mourners and the excommunicated. On Shabbos the Yidden went and sat between those two gates; and they knew that anyone who entered through the gate of the bridegrooms was a bridegroom, and they said to him, May He who dwells in this house cause you to rejoice with sons and daughters. If one entered through the gate of the mourners with his upper lip covered, then they knew that he was a mourner, and they would say to him. May He who

83 Tavnis Heichal 2:160

84 Melachim II 11:10, Divrey Hayamim II 23:9

85 Yosifun chapter 91

86 Rebbi Yochanan in Yerushalmi, Pesachim 7:8

87 Pirkey Di'rabbi Eliezer, end of chapter 17

Chapter 1: The Har Habayis

dwells in this house comfort you. If one entered through the gate of the mourners without having his upper lip covered, then they knew that he was excommunicated, and they would say to him, May He who dwells in this house put into your heart (the desire) to listen to the words of your associates, and may He put into the hearts of your associates that they may draw you near (to themselves), so that all Israel may discharge their duty by rendering the service of loving-kindness.



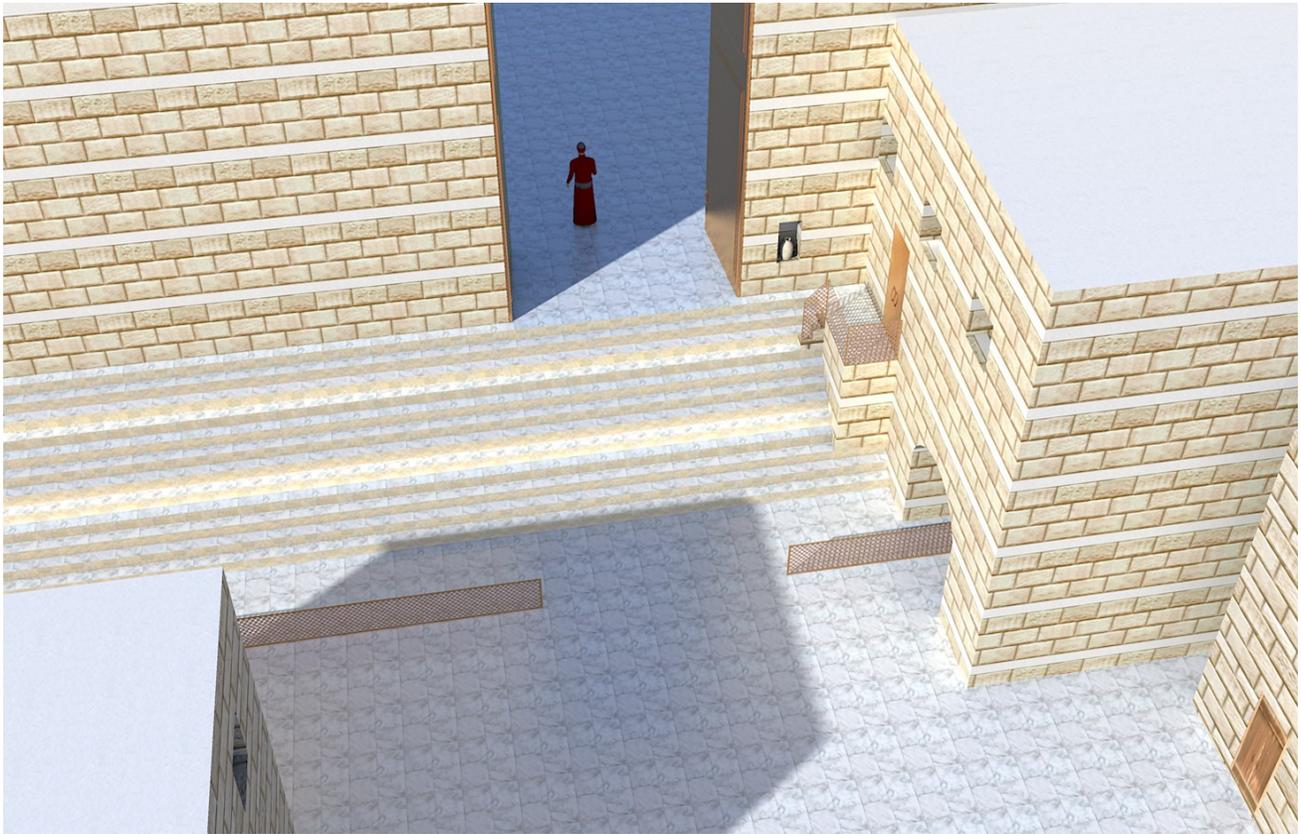
Shaar Harachamim, in the days of the first Beis Hamikdash

The Kaftor Vaferach⁸⁸ says that these gates are the gates now called the Sha'ar Harachamim, in the eastern wall of the present day Har Habayis. It is not counted in the Mishnah because it was not there in the Second Beis Hamikdash⁸⁹. [Alternatively, if you say there was a 50 amah migrash around the Har Habayis, this could have been a gate in the wall of the *migrash*, see appendix 2.]

88 Chapter 6

89 Maharam Kazis on Middos 1:3

Chapter 1: The Har Habayis



Part of the eastern cheil

At a little distance away from the walls of the Azarah, there was a short, wooden, lattice⁹⁰ fence, ten tefachim⁹¹ high, called the *soreg*. Between the *soreg* and the wall of the Azarah was a 10 amah space⁹², this was in the east, in the north this area was bigger to accommodate the Beis Hamoked⁹³. This area is called the *cheil*. It had a higher level of holiness than the Har Habayis, and non-Jews, as well as people who are tamei from a corpse, were not able to enter it.⁹⁴

Four amos⁹⁵ inside from the eastern *soreg* there were twelve steps, each one half an amah tall and half an amah deep.⁹⁶ These steps' length ran all across the Har Habayis, from north to south⁹⁷.

There were three courts by the Beis Hamikdash, which were the top three courts of all the Yidden. The lower two had twenty-three judges, and the highest one had

90 Rashi Yoma 16a

91 80 cm

92 Middos 2:3

93 Maharam Kazis middos 2:3

94 Keilim 1:8

95 Tiferes Yisrael Middos 2:3 Yachin #23

96 Middos 2:3

97 Rashi Yoma 16a

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seventy-one judges. The greatest scholars from amongst all of *Klal Yisrael* would get appointed to the lowest one, from there they would get promoted to the second Beis Din, and from there to the highest one. If one of the many courts throughout Eretz Yisrael had an argument, they would bring it up to the lowest court, if they knew what the *Halachah* was, they would tell them, and if not, they would go to the second court, if they also did not know, they would go to the highest court. If they knew the *Halachah*, they would tell them, and if not, they would deliberate among themselves and rule what the *Halachah* is⁹⁸.

The first of these was located in the *cheil*, right outside the eastern gate of the Ezras Nashim⁹⁹. In here there was a court of twenty-three judges, sitting in a semicircle. In front of them there three rows of students sitting on the floor, with twenty-three students in each row; these rows were also semicircular. There were also two scribes standing in front of them, to record what happened¹⁰⁰.



The Beis Din

98 Sanhedrin 88b

99 Sanhedrin 86b with Rashi

100 Sanhedrin 36b-37a with Rashi