

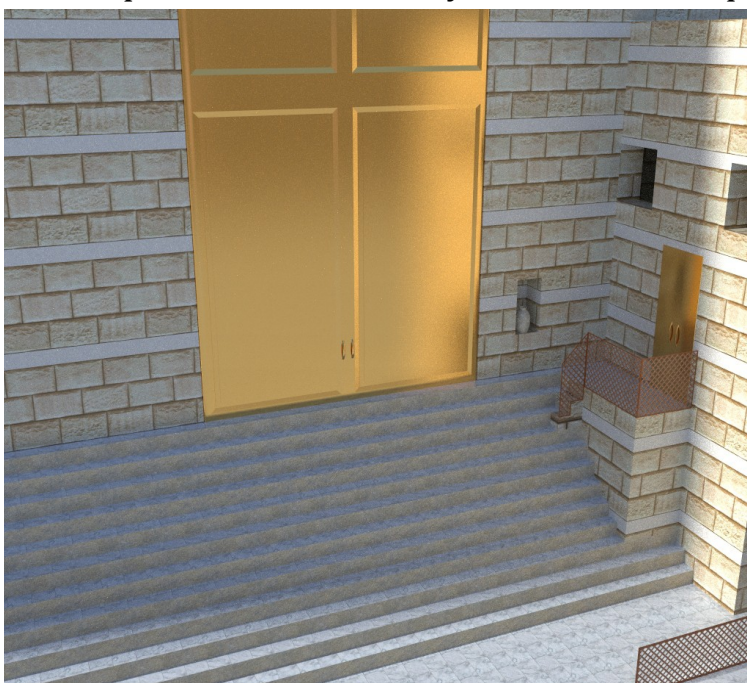
Chapter 2: The Ezras Nashim

In front of the Azarah (the main courtyard) there was another square courtyard, called the Ezras Nashim, the women's courtyard. It was called this because it was the furthest place where women could go in the Beis Hamikdash¹. This courtyard had a higher level of sanctity than the *cheil*, and a *tevul yom* (a *tamei* person who already immersed themselves, but has to wait until nightfall to be completely *tahor*) cannot enter it².

Although this courtyard is not mentioned clearly in the first Beis Hamikdash, it was there. There is a passuk³ that calls the Azarah “the inner courtyard”, and Rashi (on the passuk) explains that this is in regards to the Ezras Nashim, which is the outer courtyard. In another place⁴ Rashi explains that the gate to the Azarah is called “the third entrance” because it is inside the *cheil* and the Ezras Nashim.⁵

The Ezras Nashim was 135 amos long and 135 amos wide⁶. Its walls reached a height of over forty amos from the eastern part of the Har Habayis, before the steps, although from the floor of the Ezras Nashim it was six amos less. In this way, all the walls of the Har Habayis and the Azaros reached to the same height⁷. These walls, like all the other walls of the Beis Hamikdash, were five amos thick⁸.

There were three gates to the Ezras Nashim, one in the east, and another two in the north and south. Like all the gates in the Beis Hamikdash, each gate was twenty amos tall and ten amos wide⁹, and had double doors to close it, made of copper¹⁰. Next to the eastern gate, on the outside,



The eastern gate of the Ezras Nashim

1 ד"ה עזרת נשים ב Ezras Kohanim Middos 2:5

2 Keilim 1:8

3 Melachim I 6:36

4 Yirmiyah 38:14

5 See Ezras Kohanim, Middos 2:5 ד"ה עזרת נשים א, for more discussion about the Ezras Nashim in the first Beis Hamikdash.

6 Middos 2:5, this is not including the walls

7 Josephus (*wars* 5:5:2)

8 Ezras Kohanim Middos 2:5 ד"ה מאה ושלשים וחמש על רוחב קל"ה

9 Middos 2:3

10 Tavnis Heichal 2:34

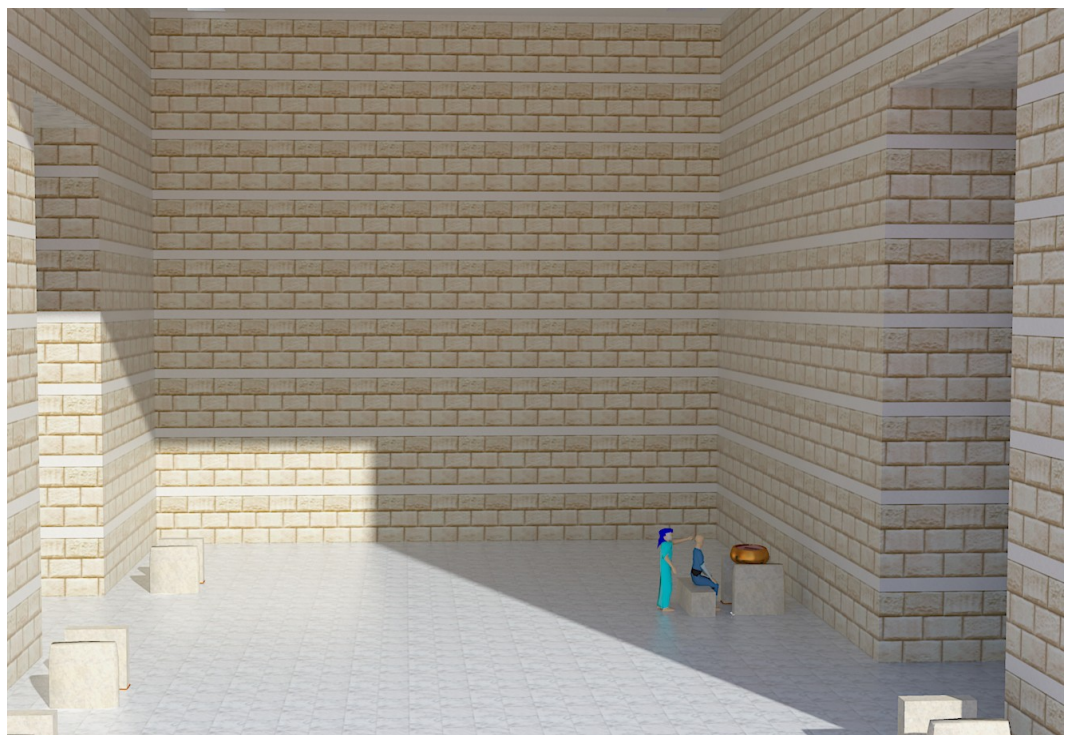
there was a niche in the wall, where a jug of ashes from the Parah Adumah was kept¹¹.

There were four chambers in the four corners of this courtyard. Each one was forty amos long¹² (from east to west), and thirty amos wide (north to south)¹³. Each room had two doors, one from the Ezras Nashim and one from the cheil, these doors were located on the northern and southern walls of the chambers. The two doors were not parallel to each other, besides for in the southwest chamber, the Lishkas Hashemanim, where the two doors were directly opposite each other.¹⁴ In the First Beis Hamikdash, these chambers had roofs, although in the second they didn't, based on Yechezkel's Nevuah of the third Beis Hamikdash¹⁵.

The southeast room was called Lishkas Hanezirim, the chamber of the *Nezirim*. If someone

makes a promise to be a Nazir, at the end of their time, they have to come to the Beis Hamikdash and bring certain *Korbanos*.

They would then shave all their hair, and throw them into a fire under a pot where they are



Lishkas Hanezirim

cooking their *Korban Shelamim*. This haircut and cooking took place in this chamber¹⁶. The ovens here were not like regular ovens, but were made in a special way, so that they cannot become tamei. They were made by attaching a stone to the ground with clay, opposite a protruding piece of bedrock. The pot was put on both stones, and the fire was lit in the space underneath¹⁷.

¹¹ Parah 3:3

¹² Middos 2:5

¹³ Radak Yechezkel 46:22

¹⁴ Tosefta Yoma 1:3, Chanukas Habayis (Ashkenazi) 22, 26, diagram.

¹⁵ Middos 2:5 with Rosh, as explained in Ezras Kohanim ד"ה וכך הם עתידים להיות

¹⁶ Middos 2:5

¹⁷ Keilim 6:2

The northeast room was the Lishkas Ha'etzim, the chamber of the wood. In this room, Kohanim who had a *mum*, and could not do the regular services in the Beis Hamikdash, would check the wood for the Mizbeach. Any wood that had a worm was not able to be used¹⁸, if it was wet; if the wood was dry, they would scrape away the wormy part.¹⁹



Lishkas Ha'etzim

The northwest room was Lishkas Hametzora'im, the chamber of the Metzora'im. In this room, there was a mikveh, and when the Metzora would come to bring his *Korbanos* in the Beis Hamikdash, on the eighth day of his purification, he would first use this mikveh. In fact, anyone who would



Lishkas Hametzora'im

enter the Azarah needed to immerse themselves, and this was the main mikveh used for this, as it is right near the main gate of the Azarah.²⁰

¹⁸ Middos 2:5

¹⁹ Menachos 85b

²⁰ Middos 2:5, Tosefta Nega'im 8:9, Ezras Kohanim Middos 2:5 ד"ה לשכת מצורעים

The southwest room was Lishkas Beis Shemanya, the oil chamber. In this chamber they kept stores of oil, wine and flour. The oil was used for the Menorah, as well as for the *Korban minchah*, together with flour; the wine was used for the *Nesachim*²¹.



Lishkas Beis Shemanya

As mentioned earlier, there were three courts by the Beis Hamikdash. The second Beis Din was located at the end of the Ezras Nashim, near the eastern gate of the Azarah.²²



Leading up to from the Ezras Nashim to the Azarah were 15 steps. These steps were not straight, like the other steps in the Beis Hamikdash, but round²³. Each step

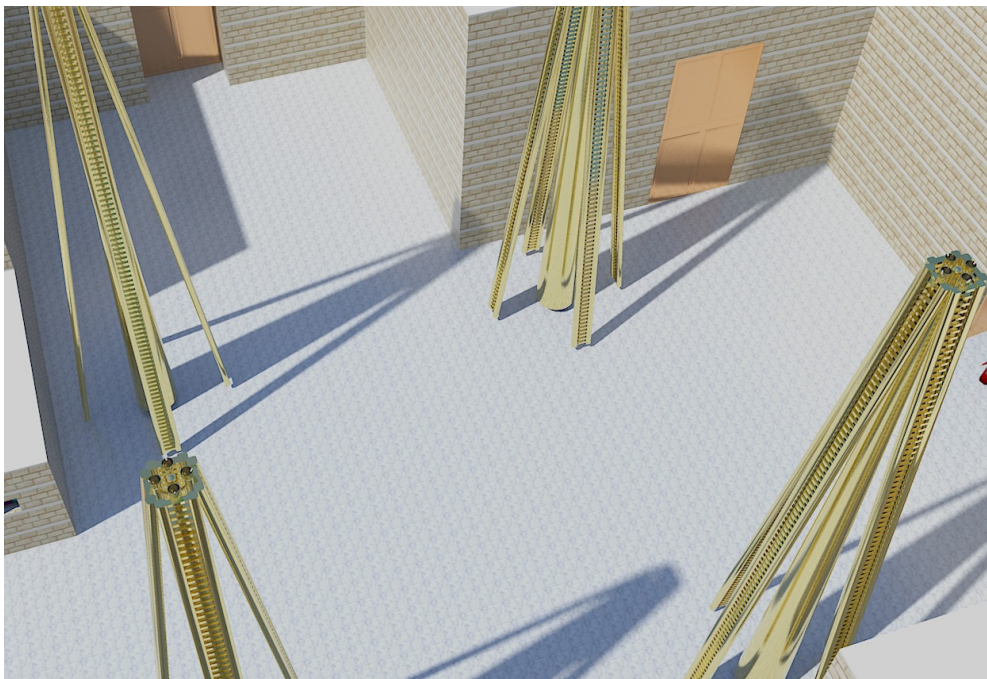
²¹ Middos 2:5, Shiltey Hagibborim chapter 25

²² Sanhedrin 86b with Rashi

²³ Middos 2:5

was half an amah tall and half an amah deep, like all steps in the Beis Hamikdash²⁴, making the Ezras Yisrael seven-and-a-half amos higher than the Ezras Nashim. These 15 steps correspond to the fifteen chapters of Tehillim that start with the words *Shir Hama'alos*-A Song of the Ascends²⁵. During the *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva* on Sukkos, the Levi'im would stand on these steps and sing these chapters.²⁶

During Sukkos, for the *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva*, they would put up four²⁷ large Menoras (candelabras) in the Ezras Nashim, 50 amos tall²⁸. Each one had four oil bowls, each bowl containing 30 lug²⁹ of oil. There were ladders leading up, and young Kohanim would climb up the ladders to pour in the oil. The light



The candelabras

from these candelabras would light up the whole city of Yerushalayim³⁰. These candelabras were only here for Sukkos, and after Yom Tov they would take them away.³¹

²⁴ Middos 2:3

²⁵ Tehillim 120-134

²⁶ Middos 2:5, Ezras Kohanim ד"ה כנגד ט"ו מעלות שבתהילים

²⁷ Maharil Hilchos Sukkah

²⁸ Sukkah 52b

²⁹ Around 10.35 Liters or 2.73 gallons

³⁰ Sukkah 5:2-3

³¹ Chanukas Habayis (Ashkenazi) 19

On both sides of the staircase leading up to the Azarah there were doors leading into chambers built under the Azarah. In these chambers the Levi'im would store their musical instruments³². They would wrap these instruments in leather wraps³³, and hang them on wooden stands, called a *malbein*. These stands were made of two posts, with a panel on top of them, and the instruments would hang on these panels.³⁴



Lishkas Klei Shir

32 Middos 2:6

33 Keilim 24:14

34 Peirush Hamishnayos L'haRambam, Keilim 18:3