

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, The Courtyard- Study Art 1.1

Bro. Andrew Johnson, 2026

DISCLAIMER:

Please feel free to use my work as a “jumping-off point,” but please be careful to NEVER use it to replace your own Biblical study or thought! Bible study is a wonderful, personal, and essential part of learning and growing in faith, and should never be sidelined or replaced by ANY artist's rendering.

Intent:

To provide visuals fit for presentations or classes. This material was created as part of a personal study on the structures and furnishings of Solomon's Temple. I created a full breakdown of temple measurements and descriptions here: <https://www.biblicaltoolbelt.com/l/solomons-temple-study-chart/>

Important Notes:

This art represents my personal suggestions of some of the appearance and working mechanics of Solomon's Temple.

While many measurements and descriptions exist, it's worth noting that many descriptions are incomplete and even scattered into other books of the Bible.

Some concepts I list here are purely conjecture- I don't know what architectural wisdom Solomon used to build the Temple, and don't know what/ how materials were used. In these cases, I'll provide an educated guess and provide some context to the solutions I've come up with.

Other ideas may be based on descriptions of the Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy (Ezekiel 40-48), Temple practices described in Nehemiah 13, Herod's Temple, and even modern Kosher practices.

Description:

The Temple is described in I Kings 6 & 7 as well as 2 Chronicles 3 & 4. These measurements and descriptions have been collated in a chart I made here: <https://www.biblicaltoolbelt.com/l/solomons-temple-study-chart/>

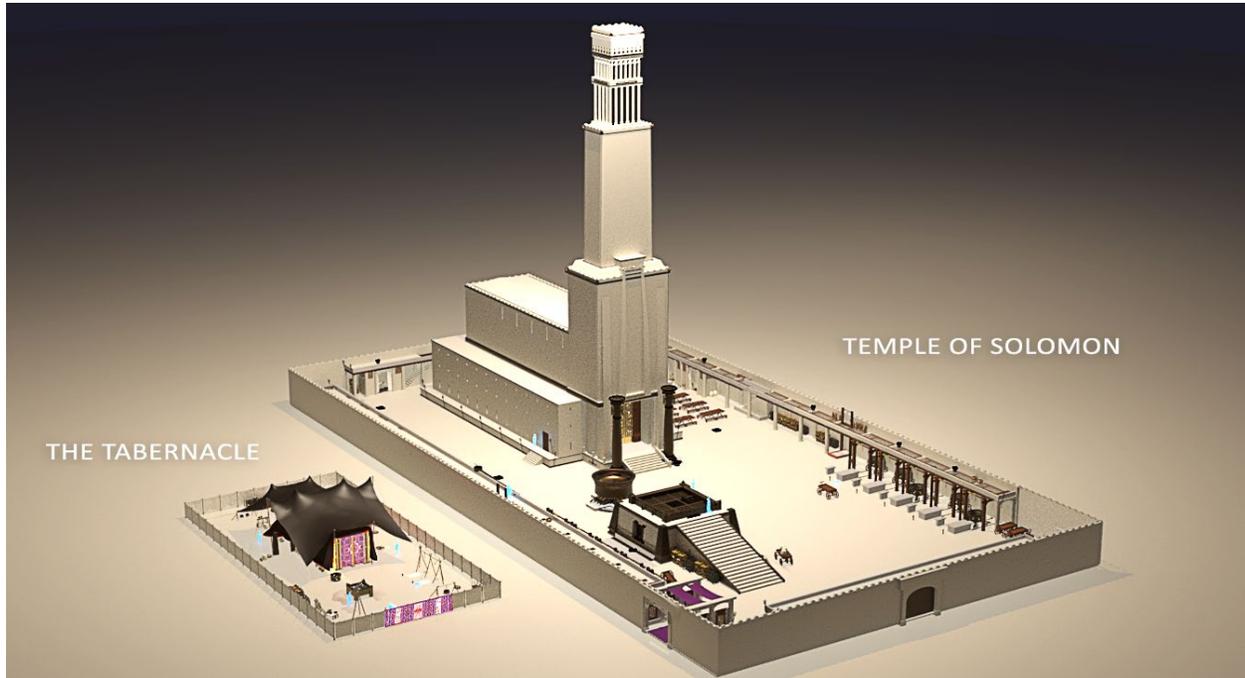
However, additional Temple information can also be found in 2 Kings 16, within the context of changes that King Ahaz made in the court.

Size of the Court

It's generally accepted by many scholars that since the Temple itself is twice the size of the Tabernacle, that the Court of the Temple was also twice the size of the Court of the Tabernacle. There are no Bible passages that give us this information, and it's just a guess, but it provides a valuable starting point, and

I would suggest that this sizing feels about right when working with a model. The court size we are assuming for the Temple is 200 cubits long and 100 cubits wide. I've also doubled the height of the curtains to suggest a wall height as well (I'm assuming 10 cubits).

To illustrate the relative sizes of the Tabernacle and the Temple, I put this quick visual together.



Thoughts on the Walls of the Court

I believe the walls held more function than dividing a sanctified area from one which was not. Like many other court furnishings, such as the Bronze Sea, and the Mobile bronze carts, I'd suggest that the walls were not directly connected to the materials, numbers, and symbolism of the curtain surrounding the Tabernacle. I think there is perhaps license to take this approach since:

- 1) The Temple court had two entries on two different walls, whereas the Tabernacle only had one.
- 2) The precise construction of the Temple wall simply isn't given, and therefore likely does not carry the weight of spiritual significance that the court posts and linen curtain for the Tabernacle did.

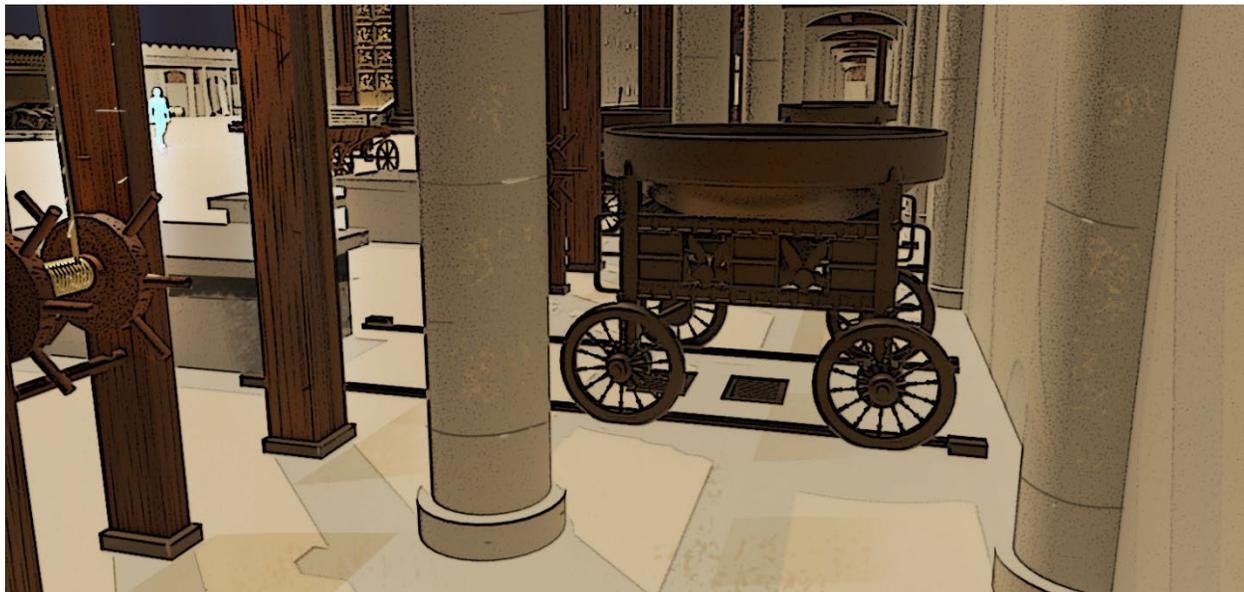
Since descriptions aren't available, many of my thoughts on the walls are reasoned conjecture, and should be taken as such.

Here, my reasoning begins with the Mobile Bronze Basins.

As stated in my documentation here (<https://www.biblicaltoolbelt.com/l/bronze-basins-solomons-temple/>), I believe the basins weighed about as much as a car and would probably not have rolled very far. We know their purpose, they were meant for the washing (and perhaps soaking) of burnt offerings (2 Chronicles 4:6). Why 5 to the north and 5 to the south? Likely because the locations reflected

different areas where offerings were killed and processed. Cattle were killed at the entry of the Temple and probably processed to the south of the Altar of Burnt Offering, while Sheep and Goats had to be offered on the north side of the Altar (Leviticus 1) and were almost certainly processed immediately at that location as well.

In my model, I've added stone tables and stations for offerors in front of the Mobile Basins. Each station has a wooden frame with a hoist to lift and then lower the offering to the Mobile Basins. These run along short grooves or tracks to a front or back position. The "back" position indicates that the Basin is near the wall where it can be filled or drained, while the "front" position means the Basin is in use under the hoist.

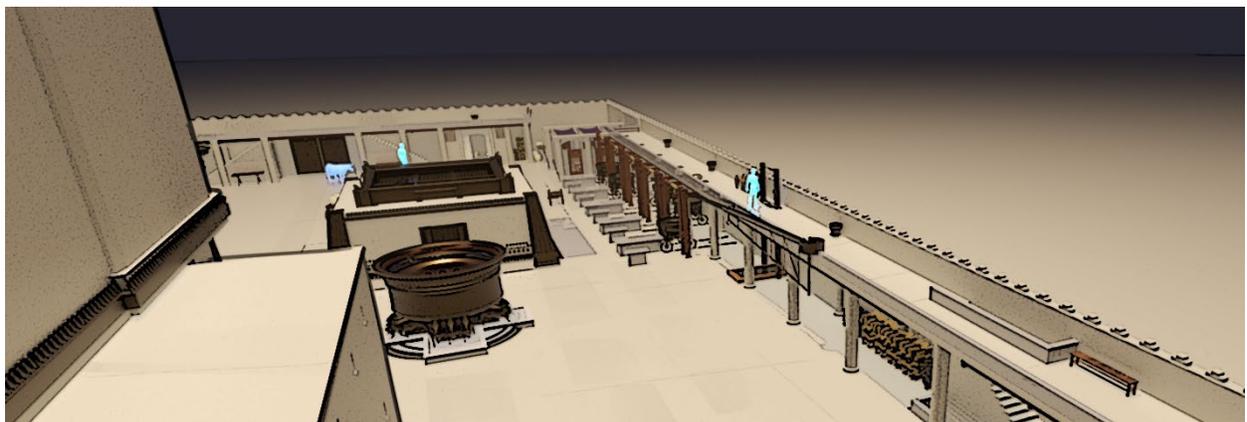
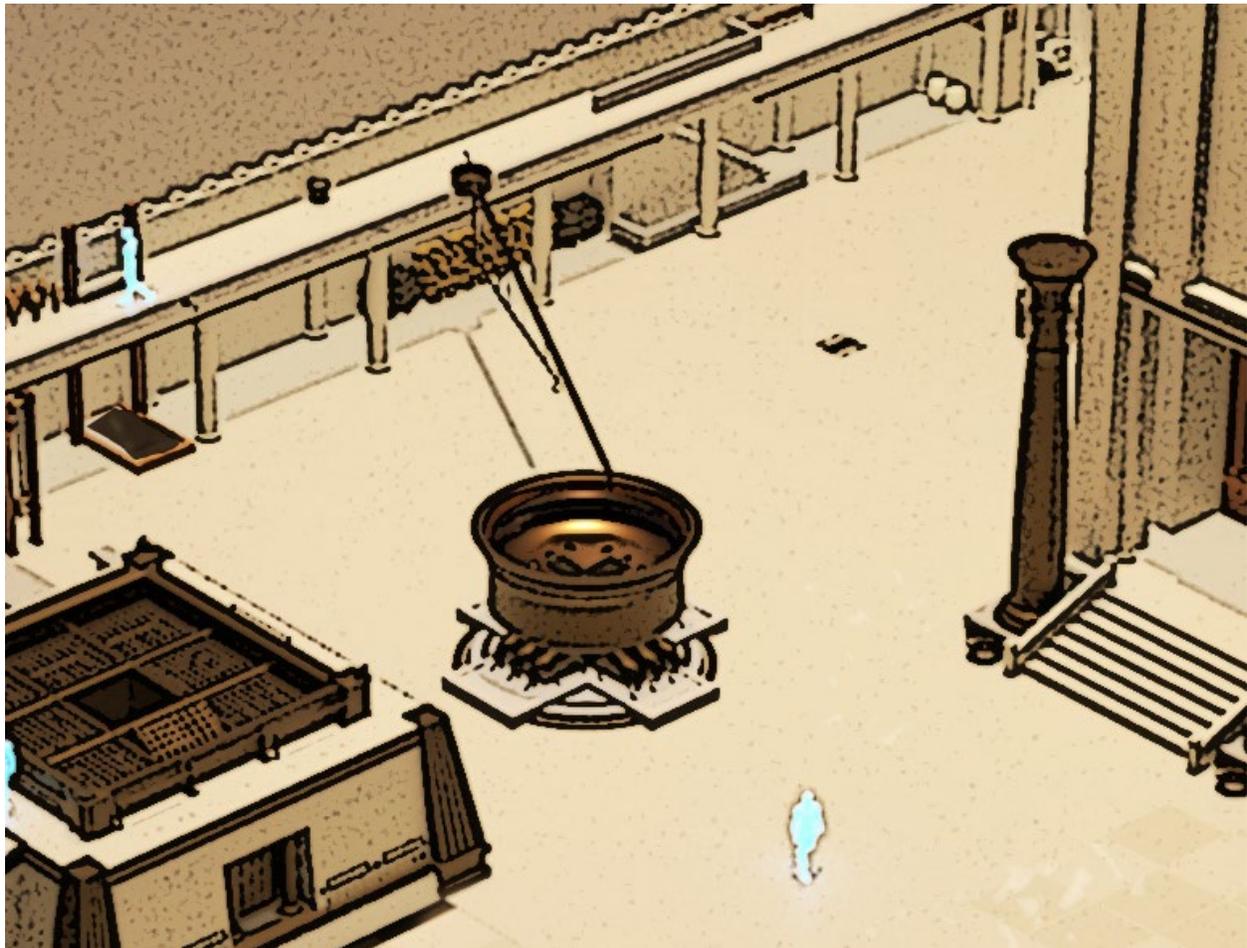


When the basin is near the wall, it can be filled if water is poured into it from overhead. This got me thinking that the wall probably also included a utility walkway along the top. I believe this is consistent with the general description given in 1 Kings 6:36: "And he built the inner courtyard of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams." As I read this, my view is that this refers not to the pavement of the court, but to the walls defining the court. If this is correct, the outer wall, the walkway above, and pillar supports would be the "three courses of dressed stone," while cedar beams formed ceiling supports under the walkway. There are other ways to read this, so I won't be dogmatic on this view, but at a minimum, I don't believe that my model conflicts with the language used.

However, if water was filled from above, how did water reach the walkway? There are many ways this could have happened- from simply carrying vessels of water up a flight of stairs to drawing water (via bucket or a water wheel/ conveyer from a small well or reservoir located along the wall.

One thing I noticed was I put the model together is that the location of the Bronze Sea, which is at the southeast Corner of the Temple (2 Chronicles 4:10) is not terribly far from the wall. I had been wondering how it might have been refilled for some time, and the possibility that the wall was used for

refilling the basins made me wonder if there wasn't a simple system rigged up on the wall with a gutter on a swing arm that could fold away when not in use, but reach the Bronze sea for refilling when needed. My thought was that the arm would be on a hinge. At the top of the hinge axel would be a large basin that fed a gutter. Water could be poured in at the wall, and reach the Sea, and because the wall was high up, those refilling it could easily see the water level.



The wall might also serve as a storage location to keep wood dry, stock grain, wine, tools such as carts and wheelbarrows (to more easily restock items and deliver offerings over the greater distances of the Temple) and even hold private rooms for the priests. Nehemiah 13:4-5.



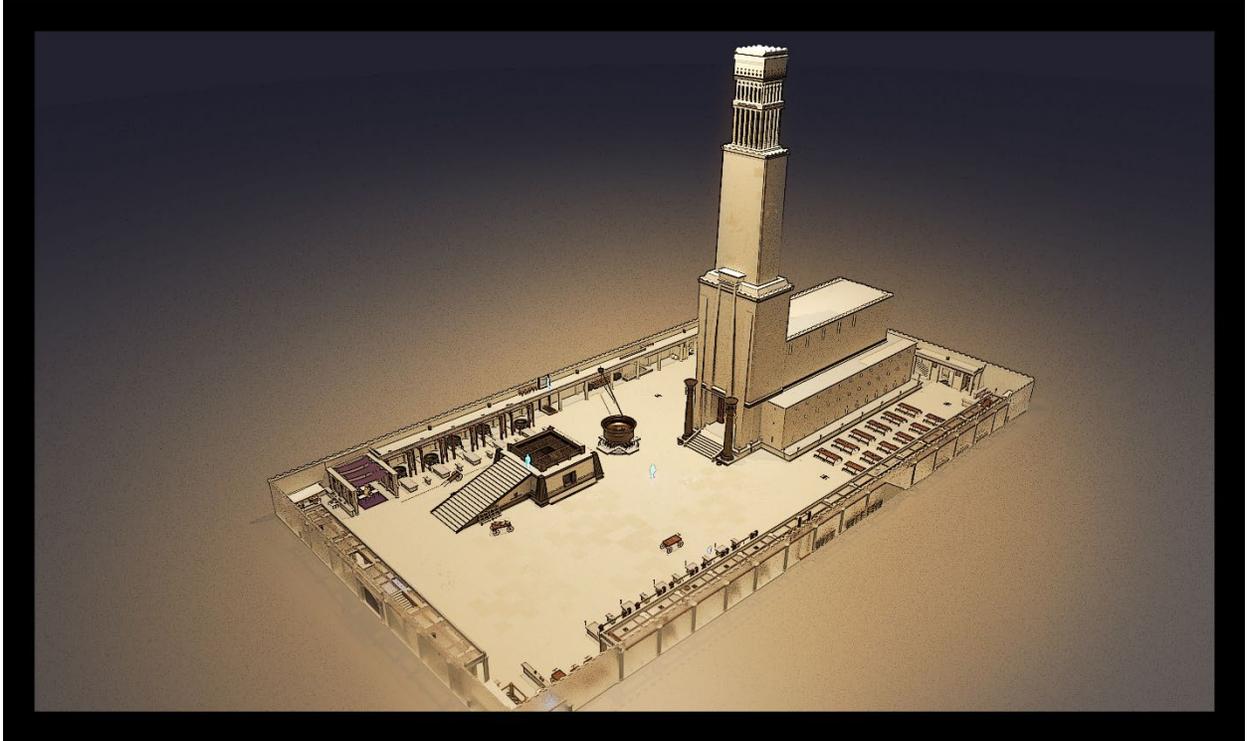
Such rooms would have been necessary for the priests for changing attire (see Leviticus 16- the Day of Atonement), writing, meditation, and meeting. Such rooms are alluded to in Ezekiel 46:19.

Corner Features

I would suggest that the Temple also housed kitchen in each of the four corners of the wall. These would have been used to boil offerings that would have been eaten communally by the priests (the sin offering) or shared between the priests and the offerors (peace offerings) in the court (Leviticus 3-6). Kitchens would have had a hearth, probably ovens and griddles for making bread, plus areas for storing wood, flour/ grain, and more.

I've placed these in the four corners, partly because this is a convenient use of the space, but also partly because it reflects the location of the kitchens in the Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy, Ezekiel 46:20-24.

While these would be in the outer court in Ezekiel's Temple, my view is that Solomon's temple would have had these in the space used for offering, just as it was for the Tabernacle. Since offerors had to perform and process the offering within this court, there is no reason (that I can think of) why they should have to leave it to consume their meal. I've added a proposed communal area on the North side of the Temple, toward the back. It's anyone's guess if this is correct, but again, I do not believe this conflicts with Scripture.



One other feature along the wall is the Sabbath Canopy. This isn't described in 1 Kings or in 2 Chronicles, but it is talked about in 2 Kings 16, because King Ahaz destroyed it and walled up the King's Gate to the Temple in addition to other ill-advised renovations to the Temple in his time. "He took away the Sabbath canopy that had been built at the temple and removed the royal entryway outside the temple of the Lord, in deference to the king of Assyria."

The Sabbath canopy appears to be a Royal canopy for the King, who would have had special access to the Temple. Just outside the temple to the south, the Kings house would have had steps leading to a grand entryway where the king could sit and observe Temple activities from the best seat in the house. From this position, the king would have been able to see almost all activity of not in the court without being in the way. This space was probably much, much nicer than the modest space I've created as a bit of a placeholder in the model.



Location of the Altar of Burnt Offering.

Depending on what the Altar of Burnt offering looked like and which way the steps up to the hearth faced, the Altar could fit in several locations. I have placed it east of the Bronze Sea with the steps facing east.

The east-facing steps is unclear, but in this case it's an educated guess based on Ezekiel 43:17 "The upper ledge also is square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. All around the altar is a gutter of one cubit with a rim of half a cubit. The steps of the altar face east."

In terms of the location, if my model is correct, I'm inclined to stick with a southern location. First, it's closest to the king. Second, it's closest to where the heaviest offerings (cattle) were probably processed, Third, it aligns "sacrifice" and "washing" on the right hand of the Temple, facing east (connection with Christ?). Fourth, Ahaz had it moved in such a way that we can be reasonably sure it was not on the north (2 Kings 16:14):

"As for the bronze altar that stood before the Lord, he brought it from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the temple of the Lord—and put it on the north side of the new altar."

Lastly, I imagine a centralized Altar as an obstacle to traffic in an out of the temple. Perhaps this is why Herod's Temple also had its Altar of Burnt Offering to the South as well.



Thoughts on the Porch Construction

Famously, there is a disparity between differing translations of Scripture regarding the porch of the Temple. The length and width are no issue (1 Kings 6:3):

“The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is twenty cubits, and projected ten cubits from the front of the temple.”



The height is another issue:

2 Chronicles 3:4 in the NIV reads:

“The portico at the front of the temple was twenty cubits long across the width of the building and **twenty cubits high.**”

But in the KJV it reads:

“And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length of it was according to the breadth of the

house, twenty cubits, and the height was an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.”

Strongs and the original Hebrew agree with the KJV:

the first measure [was] threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits. ⁴And the porch that [was] in the front [of the house], the length [of it was] according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height [was] an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold. ⁵And the greater house he cieled with fir tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set

So various translations disagree on this passage. As I understand it, many scholars are much more comfortable with the 20 cubit height because:

- 1) A tower of that height serves no practical purpose on the Temple. It does not appear to be accessible, and poses architectural concerns, especially regarding weight and concerns with forces such as wind.
- 2) 20 cubits is closer to the height of Jachin and Boaz, and both could fit as supports under the porch.

Fair enough, and maybe this is the right view. However:

A) The Hebrew says what it says. Scribes were well known for meticulous accuracy. This isn't a perceived error due to an absent word, but rather a perceived error because of an added word (hundred). It is odd to me that such a glaring error could be made without challenge.

B) For reasons I pointed out previously, I believe Jachin and Boaz were free-standing decorative pillars:
<https://www.biblicaltoolbelt.com/l/jachin-and-boaz/>

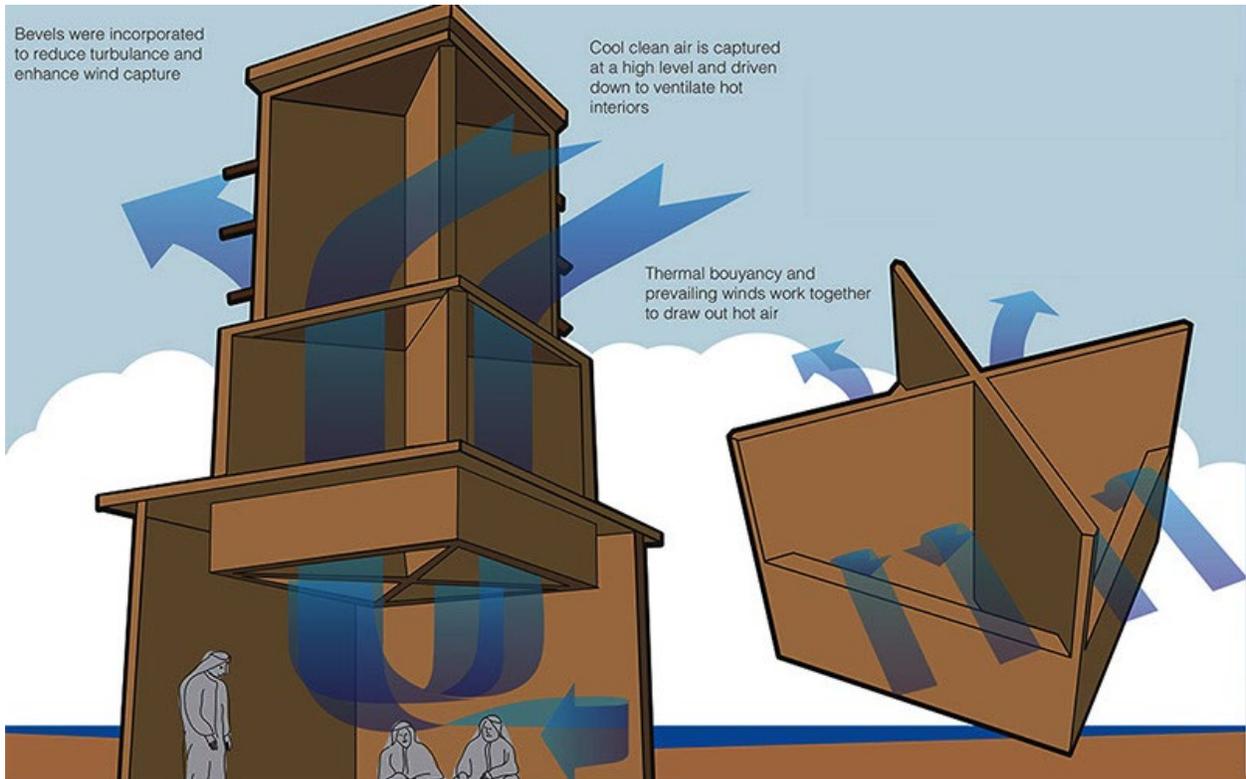
C) I don't know what architectural wisdom Solomon used to build the Temple, and don't know what/how materials were used. Surely a tower structure of this sort could be made today.

D) There may have been a function for such a tower.

But what use?

I'm not sure, but one possibility might be: a windcatcher.

Windcatcher towers have been used all throughout the Middle East from Egypt to Persia since around 1300 BC. Solomon reigned in the 900s BC, and would surely have been familiar with windcatchers.



Windcatcher towers are tall projections that capture wind to help circulate cool air in a building- a bit like a simple air conditioning unit. This feature lowers interior building temperatures by several degrees.

Solomon's Temple may very well have needed something like this. The Holy and Most Holy Place of the Temple would have been covered in gold. Beautiful, yes; but light and heat may have made the Temple sweltering on a summer day in Israel*. Something like a windcatcher could keep the Temple interior manageable and even cool for the priests. In this case, the wind hitting the tower would be a benefit, not necessarily something to worry about.

This is a guess, of course, and we don't know how such a tower would have integrated with the rest of the structure (unlike the side storage rooms, for example), but I don't believe we should be quick to discount the words as written in Scripture just because we aren't certain about how they should be applied, or because we can't quickly come up with a visual solution.

* ASIDE: I think the "narrow windows" weren't arabesques as some have suggested, but literally narrow windows, mostly used for ventilation and a minimal amount of light. Windows that brought in too much light may have made the Temple inhospitably warm.

Final Thoughts

There's a lot of guesswork built on guesswork here, and my model is almost certainly lacking in some ways. Please treat my work with skepticism. Even so, I hope this model helps viewers envision this space as a real, working location, "exceedingly magnificent," as Solomon says- not just a stone house with some items in the courtyard.

Production Notes:

All of these illustrations were created over a few days using digital media. Most elements were fabricated in 3D to create a uniform model. Scale man models were sourced from Daz Studio to save on production time. Objects were rendered in 3D, then painted over in Photoshop.

