EZEKIEL

Chapter 41

**Then the man brought me to the outer sanctuary and measured the jambs; the width of the lambs was six cubits on each side.  2 The entrance was ten cubits wide, and the projecting walls on each side of it were five cubits wide. He also measured the outer sanctuary; it was forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. 3 Then he went into the inner sanctuary and measured the jambs of the entrance; each was two cubits wide. The entrance was six cubits wide, and the projecting walls on each side of it were seven cubits wide.  4 And he measured the length of the inner sanctuary; it was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits across the end of the outer sanctuary. He said to me, “This is the Most Holy Place.” 5 Then he measured the wall of the temple; it was six cubits thick, and each side room around the temple was four cubits wide.  6 The side rooms were on three levels, one above another, thirty on each level. There were ledges all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side rooms, so that the supports were not inserted into the wall of the temple.  7 The side rooms all around the temple were wider at each successive level. The structure surrounding the temple was built in ascending stages, so that the rooms widened as one went upward. A stairway went up from the lowest floor to the top floor through the middle floor. 8 I saw that the temple had a raised base all around it, forming the foundation of the side rooms. It was the length of the rod, six long cubits.  9 The outer wall of the side rooms was five cubits thick. The open area between the side rooms of the temple  10 and the priests’ rooms was twenty cubits wide all around the temple.  11 There were entrances to the side rooms from the open area, one on the north and another on the south; and the base adjoining the open area was five cubits wide all around. 12 The building facing the temple courtyard on the west side was seventy cubits wide. The wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length was ninety cubits. 13 Then he measured the temple; it was a hundred cubits long, and the temple courtyard and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long.  14 The width of the temple courtyard on the east, including the front of the temple, was a hundred cubits. 15 Then he measured the length of the building facing the courtyard at the rear of the temple, including its galleries on each side; it was a hundred cubits. The outer sanctuary, the inner sanctuary and the portico facing the court,  16 as well as the thresholds and the narrow windows and galleries around the three of them—everything beyond and including the threshold was covered with wood. The floor, the wall up to the windows, and the windows were covered.  17 In the space above the outside of the entrance to the inner sanctuary and on the walls at regular intervals all around the inner and outer sanctuary  18 were carved cherubim and palm trees. Palm trees alternated with cherubim. Each cherub had two faces:  19 the face of a man toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward the palm tree on the other. They were carved all around the whole temple.  20 From the floor to the area above the entrance, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall of the outer sanctuary. 21 The outer sanctuary had a rectangular doorframe, and the one at the front of the Most Holy Place was similar.  22 There was a wooden altar three cubits high and two cubits square; its corners, its base and its sides were of wood. The man said to me, “This is the table that is before the LORD.”  23 Both the outer sanctuary and the Most Holy Place had double doors.  24 Each door had two leaves—two hinged leaves for each door.  25 And on the doors of the outer sanctuary were carved cherubim and palm trees like those car ved on the walls, and there was a wooden overhang on the front of the portico.  26 On the sidewalls of the portico were narrow windows with palm trees carved on each side. The side rooms of the temple also had overhangs.**

Although Ezekiel does not expatiate on it, this part of the vision shown to him obviously follows the theology that informed the tabernacle and Solomonic temple. That theology must be gleaned from a variety of biblical texts. Most relevant, but mostly with only implicit theology, are the tabernacle texts (Ex 26:1–31:11; 36:8–39:43) and those describing the Solomonic temple (1 Ki 6:1–38; 7:13–51). Ezekiel’s variations, and especially his omissions, seem, on the whole, not to repudiate the divine intent of those predecessors, but to intensify it. Another purpose here is to correct abuses that had crept in under apostate and syncretistic kings and priests. (CC)

The decorative features (cherubim, palms, etc.) of the temple (e.g., 1 Ki 6:29–35; Ezek 41:18, 20, 25) suggest a “paradise restored” ambience. Because it was God’s earthly “house” and “dwelling place,” it was the focal point of his redemptive activity until that goal would be realized, first in Christ, and then in the eschaton (Revelation 21–22). It is the heart of the Gospel that in Christ that goal was reached when “the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (Jn 1:14), and by his life, death, and resurrection, he opened the gates of paradise, whither baptized believers will follow at “the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). (CC)

Because God in the OT era dwelt in the Holy of Holies, that is the focal point of the temple in Ezekiel, just as in its two predecessors. It was the Most Holy Place because of the presence of him who alone is holiness itself. All sacrifices were ultimately offered to him who sat on the throne (above the lid of the ark of the covenant), and his promise was to forgive the sins of the worshipers through those OT “sacraments” (types and partakers of the final, all-availing sacrifice on Calvary). (CC)

That holiness “radiated” outward from the Holy of Holies through the nave or Holy Place into the courtyard and thence to Jerusalem and, potentially, to the ends of the earth has a missionary implication, but one that was not fully implemented until Pentecost. (CC)

The NT gives no prescriptions for church architecture, but the altar, whence the Eucharist is distributed, remains central, whether in the basilica-type “long house” model dominant in the west or in the slightly different structures of the eastern churches. All other aspects of biblical worship are to express that sense of sacred space and sacred time as the basis from which the new creation in Christ will ultimately be formed. Especially the final two chapters, Ezekiel 47–48, envision the coming new creation. (CC)

In keeping with the style I have adopted for chapters 40–48, the following notes on the specifics of the Hebrew text also include theological reflection. (CC)

**41:1** *outer sanctuary.* Or nave, the largest of the three rooms comprising the temple (see 1Ki 6:3–5, where it is called the main hall). This outer sanctuary was identical in size to Solomon’s (see 1Ki 6:17). (CSB)

For the so-called “guidance formula,” “he brought me” (here וַיְבִיאֵ֖נִי) (CC)

Finally, we arrive at the main part of the temple itself. Following the pattern of its historical predecessors, the Mosaic tabernacle and the Solomonic temple (Ex 26:31–33; 1 Ki 6:16), this sanctuary is divided into two sections: the larger section measured in Ezek 41:1–2 and the inner sanctum measured in 41:3–4. (CC)

The first and largest room is labeled הַהֵיכָ֑ל, “the nave.” Like the Holy Place in the tabernacle and the temple, this nave follows the “long room” architectural design, and thus the whole temple is also of that design (see figure 5). (CC)

Ezekiel used the word הֵיכָל twice before, in 8:16, but there it referred more broadly to the entire temple building in Jerusalem (for which he usually uses בַּיִת, God’s “house,” e.g., 8:14, 16). That broader sense is closer to its earlier etymological history, for the term and its cognates go all the way back to the Sumerian *e-gal*, literally meaning “big house,” which in Akkadian appeared as *êkallu*, which can signify the “palace” of a lord or potentate. הֵיכָל is used of a royal “palace” occasionally in the OT (e.g., 2 Ki 20:18 || Is 39:7; Nahum 2:6). Since Yahweh is Lord and King, הֵיכָל can be used of his “palace” in heaven (Pss 11:4; 18:6; 29:9; cf. Is 6:1) as well as his tabernacle at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:9; 3:3) and temple in Jerusalem (e.g., Jer 7:4), specifically its “nave” or Holy Place (e.g., 1 Ki 6:17) just outside the Holy of Holies. Here the word is used in that specialized sense. One may quibble about its best English equivalent, but “nave,” used by many translations, is probably the best, suggesting as it properly does a counterpart—and even a sort of type—of the corresponding space in traditional Christian church architecture. In some of the ancient churches of the Near East that still use Aramaic, an Aramaic cognate of הֵיכָל is regularly used for the nave of churches. (CC)

The doorposts of the entrance into the nave are “six cubits wide,” one cubit wider than those leading into the vestibule (40:48). (CC)

Literally, רֹ֥חַב הָאֹֽהֶל is “the width of the tent.” This apparently refers to the tabernacle of Moses, which is called מוֹעֵדאֹהֶל, the “tent of meeting” (e.g., Lev 1:1, 3), or just הָאֹהֶל, “the tent” (e.g., Num 11:24, 26; Deut 31:15). The dimensions of the erected tabernacle are not given in the Bible. Scholars have attempted to deduce its size from the dimensions given for the frames and the curtains. One view holds that the tabernacle was six cubits wide. In that case, this verse could be saying that the width of these doorposts was the same as the width of the tabernacle. A more common view is that the width of the tabernacle was ten cubits. If that is correct, it is possible that these last two words of Ezek 41:1 anticipate the entranceway at the start of 41:2, which says that “the width of the entrance was ten cubits.” In that case, the words might better be translated as a separate sentence: “the width [was the same as that] of the tabernacle.” However, then we might expect these words to be in 41:2 rather than at the end of 41:1. (CC)

**41:2** The ten-cubit width of the entrance (doorway) is larger than the entrance to the Holy of Holies, since that entrance is six or seven cubits wide (see on 41:3), evidently accenting the greater sanctity of the Holy of Holies. (CC)

**41:3** *he went into the inner sanctuary.* Only the angel, not Ezekiel, entered the Most Holy Place. Lev 16 forbids any but the high priest to enter it, and then only once a year (see Heb 9:7). (CSB)

“Then he entered the inner room” translates וּבָ֣א לִפְנִ֔ימָה. Instead of a Qal imperfect of בּוֹא with *waw* consecutive (וַיָּבוֹא, as in 40:6), the verb is a perfect with conjunctive *waw*. Some critics suspect a corruption. However, we have met the analogous Qal perfect וּמָדַד, “he measured” (e.g., in 40:20, 24, 35), where we would have expected the imperfect with *waw* consecutive (וַיָּמָד, as, e.g., in 41:1–5), so such variation seems to be acceptable in Ezekiel. (CC)

If any significance can be attached to the verb form here, it may be that the guide enters the Holy of Holies by himself and does not invite Ezekiel to accompany him. As a priest (1:3), Ezekiel has easy access to the nave, but only a high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). (CC)

 *six cubits wide.* Note the progressive narrowness of the door openings as one approaches the inner sanctuary (40:48, 14 cubits; 41:2, 10 cubits). (CSB)

**41:4** The innermost room is perfectly square. See figure 5. We are not told its height. In the Solomonic temple, the Holy of Holies was a cube: twenty cubits in each of the three dimensions (1 Ki 6:20). In Ezekiel’s vision, its width and length are the same as in Solomon’s temple, so it is likely that its height too would have been twenty cubits, forming a perfect cube, no doubt indicative of holiness and perfection. (CC)

For only the third time, the guide speaks. The first time was his instruction in 40:4 for Ezekiel to pay attention to the details so he could relate them to the Israelites, and in 40:45–46, the guide explains the function of the two rooms described in 40:44–46. Here in 41:4 he simply gives the name of the room: קֹ֥דֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִֽׁים, “the Holy of Holies.” A construct chain with a noun (קֹ֥דֶשׁ) in construct with its plural (here with the article: הַקֳּדָשִֽׁים) functions as a superlative, so it could be rendered “the Most Holy Place.” Ezekiel himself, a priest (1:3), would not have needed such an explanation, but it may be given for the benefit of the Israelites to whom Ezekiel is to preach the details of his vision. (CC)

“The Holy of Holies” is used for the corresponding space in the tabernacle of Moses (Ex 26:33–34) and the temple (e.g., 1 Ki 6:16; 7:50; 8:6; 2 Chr 3:8, 10). In the temple of Solomon, it is also labeled a רְּבִיר, “adytum” (e.g., 1 Ki 6:19–23; 8:6, 8; 2 Chr 3:16; 4:20), but that word never occurs in Ezekiel. The phrase used here explains why no further description is given. The overriding concern at this point is to demarcate the boundaries and zones of holiness and to defend them. (CC)

**41:5-12** Having reached a sort of a climax in the “tour” at the Holy of Holies, it is not mentioned again, and for the final time, until 45:3. No guidance formula (“he brought me,” as in, e.g., 41:1) introduces the new topic that continues in 41:5–11: the side rooms of the temple. See figure 5. The boundaries of this section are delineated by forms of מָדַד, “to measure,” at the beginning of 41:5 and of 41:13, a verse that begins a new section. Ezek 41:12 describes a separate structure, not a side room, but is considered to be in the same section as 41:5–11.

The entire section of 41:5–12 is difficult, not only because of a host of technical architectural expressions, often of uncertain meaning, but also because of its consistent nominal sentence style, which in the MT is interrupted only by subordinate verbal clauses in 41:6b and 41:7 and a parenthetical verbal clause in 41:8. Thus we have little more than a catalogue of architectural features. There are echoes of the description of corresponding features in Solomon’s temple in 1 Ki 6:5–8 (see also 1 Ki 6:10). Although 1 Ki 6:5–8 is less than a model of lucidity itself, it is sometimes helpful here. (CC)

**41:5** Ezek 41:5 gives us the thickness of the side walls of the temple building, which had not been included in the description of the entrances. The figure of six cubits means they were just as thick as the walls around the entire compound (40:5). Six cubits is also the width of the doorposts of the nave (41:1). That the doorposts of the vestibule, however, measured only five cubits (40:48) is another indication that the vestibule was not really considered part of the temple structure. (CC)

The text’s real interest in this section is in the צְלָעוֹת. The noun צֵלַע can mean “rib” (Gen 2:21–22), but here it means “side room.” The same term was used for the side rooms in Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 6:5, 8; apparently יָצוֹעַ, the Kethib in 1 Ki 6:5, 6, 10, is a synonym). They appear to have surrounded Ezekiel’s temple on all sides except the front. The singular צֵלָע is used in this verse, as also in 41:6, 9, 11, but otherwise this section uses the plural. Depending on context, the singular may either have collective force or speak of only a single room. When measured, each צֵלַע was found to be four cubits wide. On one side is the temple wall itself, and in 41:9 (after a digression on ways of access to these rooms), there is an outer wall, one that is five cubits thick. That is, each of the walls is thicker than the rooms themselves! (CC)

**41:6** *thirty on each level.* These 90 side rooms were probably storerooms for the priests, possibly for the tithes (see Mal 3:10). (CSB)

The MT literally, says, “and [as for] the side rooms, [there was] room upon room, three, and [that] thirty times.” Less tersely, that seems to say that there were three side rooms situated one above the other. (In צֵלָ֨ע אֶל־צֵלָ֜ע, the preposition אֶל means “above, on,” a meaning more common for עַל.) This stack of three occurred thirty times. In other words, there were three stories of side rooms, and each story had thirty rooms. The rooms in the second and third stories were directly above those in the first story. Nothing is said about the distribution of the rooms, but presumably it was uniform, with more (twelve?) along each of the long (north and south) walls and less (six?) along the short (western) wall. (CC)

The rest of 41:6 describes the relationship between the side rooms and the temple building. Considerable paraphrase is necessary to achieve an intelligible translation. Literally, the MT reads, “there were things coming [ledges] on the wall which the temple had for the side rooms all around, so that there would be supports, but the supports would not be in the wall of the temple.” בָּאוֹת is the feminine plural Qal participle of בּוֹא, “go, come.” Here it must be a technical building term, something “coming” on the wall and wide enough for the supports of the side rooms to rest on, hence “ledges, terraces.” It corresponds to what in 1 Ki 6:6 are called מִגְרָעוֹת, a hapax noun derived from the verb גָּרַע, “reduce, diminish,” describing the terraced form of the side rooms around Solomon’s temple. (CC)

Another plural participle (Qal passive, masculine) used as a technical architectural term is אֲחוּזִים, used twice in this verse. Since אָחַז can mean “grasp, hold,” this participle apparently means “supported,” though I have translated its second occurrence as the noun “(the) supports.” This derivation is confirmed by the language of 1 Ki 6:6 regarding supports for the corresponding side rooms in Solomon’s temple: לְבִלְתִּ֖י אֲחֹ֥ז בְּקִֽירוֹת־הַבָּֽיִת, “in order that they would not be fastened in the walls of the temple.” (CC)

The side rooms were built against the temple wall in such a way that one end of the horizontal supports that formed, in effect, the ceilings and/or floors of the side rooms did not need to be fastened into the wall itself. This could be accomplished only by building the temple wall so that it had ledges on its outer side on which the supports of each story could rest. That is to say, the outer side of the wall narrowed with each story, and thus (as the next verse tells us) the rooms themselves became successively wider, going from bottom to top. The obvious purpose of this type of construction was to avoid doing violence to the sanctity of the temple building by directly attaching these rooms to its walls, potentially damaging the walls. The side rooms, constructed as an external building, also would not disturb the visual integrity of the sanctuary. (CC)

**41:7** This verse follows from the preceding one. The method of construction described in the preceding verse occasioned the widening of the side rooms from story to story as one ascended. This much is clear in the verse, but little more, and understandings and translations vary widely. 1 Ki 6:6 gives specific figures: the rooms in the lowest story were five cubits wide, and they widened by a cubit each story until the top (third) story was seven cubits wide. If this was also true for Ezekiel’s temple, the temple wall, which was six cubits thick at the bottom (Ezek 41:5), must have narrowed to only three cubits thick at the top. (CC)

As I understand the first clause of the verse, the initial feminine singular verbs וְֽרָחֲבָ֡ה וְֽנָסְבָה֩ are impersonal: “it spread out and it was surrounded.” I have assumed that they refer to the rooms, and have translated freely: “the side rooms became wider all around.” These verbs are further explained by their cognate nouns מוּסָב (translated “surrounded”) and רֹחַב (“width”) later in the verse. וְֽרָחֲבָ֡ה is the Qal perfect of רָחַב, “be wide,” but many versions treat it as a noun, “a widening.” וְֽנָסְבָה֩ is the Niphal perfect of סָבַב, “turn, encircle, surround.” The absence of a *daghesh forte* in the ב can be explained as due to Aramaicizing influence. The LXX ignores the word, but the Targum reads a noun equivalent to the Hebrew מְסִבָּה, which here could mean “a ramp, circular passage, winding staircase.” Many critics consider that an attractive emendation and assume that the initial *mem* was misread as a *nun* and that the final ה of וְֽרָחֲבָ֡ה originally was a definite article on מְסִבָּה. With that change, the resultant translation would be something like “a widening ramp spiraled up to the side rooms,” partially anticipating the last part of the verse. (CC)

The double לְמַ֨עְלָה לְמַ֜עְלָה seems to imply continuing ascent and so is translated, “as one went up from story to story.” That is, the higher one went, the wider the rooms became. Since those words are connected to לַצְּלָע֗וֹת (“to/regarding the side rooms”), the widening did not take place gradually, but at each story. (CC)

The following כִּ֣י clause is nominal. The noun מוּסָ is a hapax, but clearly derived from סָבַב, “surround,” and so the construct phrase מֽוּסַב־הַ֠בַּיִת must mean that the side rooms, though not mentioned here, were “what surrounds the temple.” I have added in brackets “the side rooms” as the adverbial accusative that the sense seems to imply. Some suggest repointing מֽוּסַב to the Hophal participle מוֹסַב, “was surrounded.” (CC)

The import of the verse’s final sentence is the most difficult. רֹֽחַב־לַבַּ֖יִת here can hardly mean “the width of the *temple*” because that would imply that the temple walls became wider the higher one climbed. But this is architecturally improbable and appears to contradict 41:6, which spoke of ledges that would narrow the walls with each story. The sentence is intelligible, however, if בַּיִת is taken here to refer to the totality of side rooms, viewed as one “house” or building, hence, “the width of the building increased …” (CC)

The Qal imperfect יַעֲלֶ֥ה, “as one went up,” would seem to imply some means of ascending, but its location and nature are unclear. Some picture a large exterior ramp or stairway around most of the building, but this would seem to make lighting the rooms very difficult. For Solomon’s temple, 1 Ki 6:8 describes access to the upper stories by saying וּבְלוּלִּ֗ים יַֽעֲלוּ֨, “they would go up by staircases” (לוּלִים could also be “trapdoors”). Such a means here is more likely and accords with extrabiblical analogues. (CC)

**41:8** This verse has no parallel in Kings. It describes a platform six cubits (about ten feet) high on which the temple and side rooms stood, elevating an already high structure considerably more. The point can only be to emphasize its centrality and sacredness. גֹּבַהּ is the ordinary word for “height,” used in, for example, 40:42. However, some cite גַּב, “back,” used in, for example, 1:18 and 43:13, and conjecture that here we should read גַּבָּה, an otherwise unattested feminine form (cf. Γαββαθα in Jn 19:13), but such tinkering with the text will clarify nothing. (CC)

The Qere, מוּסְד֚וֹת, is the sole reading in some manuscripts. It is the plural of the feminine noun מוּסָדָה, which occurs elsewhere only in Is 30:32 meaning “appointment,” but here it must mean “foundation,” as does the masculine noun מוֹסָד. The Kethib, מיסדות, could be intended to be vocalized as מְיֻסָּדוֹת, the Pual feminine plural participle of יָסַד, meaning “furnished with foundations.” (CC)

Finally, אַצִּילָה apparently is a technical architectural term, the meaning of which is not at all clear. Its plural occurs in Jer 38:12 and Ezek 13:18, where it is used anatomically of “joints” on the human body. It is conceivable that here “joint” is used architecturally of the place where one part of a building joins another, but its specific application here escapes us. The guesses are many, and I have followed Zimmerli in rendering “top terrace.” (CC)

**41:9-10** The verse division is infelicitous. Ezek 41:9a is a separate thought from 41:9b, and 41:9a is a sort of continuation of 41:5. Ezek 41:9b begins a sentence that continues into 41:10. In Ezek 41:9b–11, a new topic, the “open area,” enters the description.

With this information that “the thickness of the outer wall of the side rooms was five cubits,” we can calculate the width of the exterior of the temple (including the side rooms) as fifteen cubits: six cubits for the thickness of the wall of the temple (41:5); four cubits for the width of the side rooms (41:5); and five cubits for the width (thickness) of this outer wall of the side rooms. When we add fifteen cubits for the width on both sides to the width of the nave and the Holy of Holies of the temple, twenty cubits (41:2, 4), we arrive at a total for the width of the building as fifty cubits. Ezek 41:13 tells us that the length of the temple was one hundred cubits. This gives the symmetry of a perfect rectangle, fifty by one hundred cubits. These numbers, like many others in the temple description, are multiples of twenty-five. (CC)

Attention is now turned to וַאֲשֶׁ֣ר מֻנָּ֔ח, literally, “and that which is left alone.” מֻנָּ֔ח is the Hophal participle of נוּחַ, “left behind, abandoned.” The same participle will be used as a noun (לַמֻּנָּ֔ח, with article and לְ) in 41:11. It is usually translated something like “the open area.” (CC)

The final phrase of 41:9, בֵּ֥ית צְלָע֖וֹת אֲשֶׁ֥ר לַבָּֽיִת, means “between the side rooms that belonged to the temple,” and it begins a sentence that continues in 41:10. בֵּית can be used as a preposition, meaning “between,” as also in Prov 8:2 and Job 8:17. So used, בֵּית is a synonym of בֵּין, which begins 41:10. (CC)

It is unclear what the לְשָׁכוֹת (“rooms”) in 41:10 were. Since it is the same term used in 40:44–46 to describe the priests’ quarters, that may be its meaning here (so NIV) but possibly it refers to some other rooms. Keil thinks these are the same as the ones described in 42:1–14. Whatever they were, the open area is measured as twenty cubits wide. There is also a five-cubit open area mentioned in 41:11, but it seems to be distinct from this twenty-cubit open area.

**41:11** he singular phrase וּפֶ֤תַח הַצֵּלָע֙, “the opening of the side room,” is puzzling. Perhaps all three initial words, וּפֶ֤תַח הַצֵּלָע֙ לַמֻּנָּ֔ח, are best understood syntactically as thetical: “as for the opening of the side room to the open area.” On that topic, the verse goes on to say that there was one such opening toward the north and another toward the south. In the phrase וְרֹ֨חַב֙ מְק֣וֹם הַמֻּנָּ֔ח, “the width of the place of the open area,” the noun מָקוֹם (“place”) seems redundant. (CC)

**41:12** Before the entire temple compound is measured in 41:13–15a, this verse is devoted to still another previously unmentioned building, a large structure behind the temple (on its western side). It covers almost the entire space from east to west on that side. Instead of using מֻּנָּח, “open area” (41:9, 11), for the space in which this building is located, 41:12–15 uses גִּזְרָה, “restricted area.” Probably גִּזְרָה has different connotations, although we are not certain what they were. In the OT גִּזְרָה occurs only in Ezek 41:12–15; 42:1, 10, 13; and Lam 4:7, where its meaning is too uncertain to be helpful. It appears to be derived from the verb גָּזַר, “cut off,” which in the Niphal can mean “be separated, excluded.” Probably it is cognate with the Arabic *jezira*, “island, cut off place,” which appears in the modern names of various localities with biblical relevance. In this context, then, it would imply not merely vacant space, but restricted space, off-limits to most people, possibly even to the priests. Its application to the area in front of the temple in 41:14 would support this understanding of the word. (CC)

Nothing is said of this building’s function. Ezek 43:7–8 may indicate that various civic monarchical buildings behind Solomon’s temple had tended to encroach upon sacred space. Perhaps the building behind the temple in Ezekiel’s vision functioned as a barrier to that happening again. Another possibility is that this building was meant to prevent idolatrous and syncretistic outrages such as those reported in Ezekiel’s vision in chapter 8 and that may have occurred in the comparable location to the west of Solomon’s temple. 1 Chr 26:18 mentions a structure “to the west” of the Solomonic temple called a פַּרְבָּר. Some commentators think that the plural of that word occurs in 2 Ki 23:11. In 2 Ki 23:11פַּרְוָרִ֑ים are associated with the idolatrous worship of the sun. Compare Ezek 8:16, where idolaters or syncretists had faced east (toward the rising of the sun) in worship, with “their backsides to the temple of Yahweh.” (CC)

With internal measurements of ninety cubits by seventy cubits and external dimensions (including the five-cubit wall all around) of one hundred cubits by eighty cubits (41:12), this was a larger building than the temple itself. Hence, in Ezekiel’s mind, it must have been a structure of considerable importance, although we cannot be sure of what that significance was. In 41:13 the length of this building with its wall is expressly given as one hundred cubits (a measurement given also in 41:15a). Presumably the width of the area in which the building sat was also one hundred cubits, the same as the width of the inner court (40:47) and the width of the temple and the open area around it (41:14). (See the following discussion of 41:13–15a.) Since the width of the building was eighty cubits, perhaps it stood in the center, with ten cubits of open space on either side of it. (CC)

**41:13-15a** The temple compound is measured in these verses. They pull together a number of measurements and details, most of which have either been mentioned previously or which one could easily obtain by a little elementary mathematics. The picture that emerges in these verses is a picture of three squares, each measuring one hundred cubits by one hundred cubits: the inner court (40:47), the temple and the open area around it (see below), and the restricted area behind the temple (see the previous discussion of 41:12). (CC)

Keil spells out how the one hundred cubits length and width of the temple area can be obtained. His view excludes the vestibule, which he pictures as in the inner court, and includes the open areas around the temple (see figure 2). The length (east to west) of one hundred cubits includes the following: forty cubits for the nave (41:2); twenty cubits for the Holy of Holies (41:4); six cubits for the western wall behind the temple (41:5); four cubits for the side rooms on the west (41:5); five cubits for the outside wall of these side rooms (41:9); five cubits for the small open area onto which the side rooms opened (41:11); twenty cubits for the large open area behind that (41:10). The width was also one hundred cubits: twenty cubits for the temple (nave and Holy of Holies; 41:2, 4); six cubits each for the wall of the temple on the north and the south sides (twelve cubits total; 41:5); four cubits each for the side rooms on the north and the south (eight cubits total; 41:5); five cubits each for the outside wall of those rooms (ten cubits total; 41:9); five cubits each for the small open areas on the north and the south (ten cubits total; 41:11); and twenty cubits each for the large open areas on the north and the south (forty cubits total; 41:10). (CC)

Twice, at the beginning of 41:13 and also of 41:15, we meet the *waw* conjunctive with the perfect (וּמָדַ֣ד, “and he measured”) instead of the usual classical use of the imperfect with *waw* consecutive (וַיָּ֫מָד in 41:1–5) with the same meaning. While 41:12, 15 used the masculine noun בִּנְיָן to refer to the “building” in the restricted area behind the temple, for it 41:13 uses the feminine synonym בִּנְיָה, which occurs only here in the OT. (CC)

In 41:15, for אֲשֶׁ֨ר עַל־אַחֲרֶ֧יהָ, literally, “which is at its rear,” I have translated “at the rear of the temple,” following the NIV. (CC)

Problematic in 41:15 is the meaning of the plural noun with suffix whose Qere is וְאַתִּיקֶ֛יהָא, while its Kethib probably is to be vocalized וְאַתּוּקֶיהָא. The Qere clearly is the plural of the noun אַתִּיק, whose singular occurs in 42:3 and whose plural recurs in 41:16 and 42:5. The Kethib, undoubtedly a synonym, is the plural of אַתּוּק (or אָתוּק), which occurs only here. The *plene* writing of its third feminine singular suffix (ֶיהָא) is unique in Hebrew, but א was commonly used as a vowel letter in Aramaic.(CC)

As for the meaning of אַתִּיק or אַתּוּק, I have chosen “balcony.” For them BDB gives “gallery, porch.” KJV rendered the plural “galleries,” as do most English translations. Two main alternatives have been suggested on the basis of cognate languages or Hebrew etymology, but none have found widespread acceptance: (1) “passageway, corridor” from an Akkadian word; (2) “ledge,” that is, describing the way a window frame may recede in steps, based on an alleged derivation from נָתַק, “tear, cut off,” with prosthetic א. Similarly, HALOT includes “overhang.” Whatever the word referred to, this verse mentions some that were visible outside the west building, while 41:16 indicates that there were some inside the nave, and 42:3 and 42:5 indicate that some could be seen from the inner and outer courts, in the latter two instances also with reference to three levels. Apparently the ancients were in as much of a quandary as we are. In 41:15, the LXX translates it with the plural of ἀπόλοιπος, its usual translation for גִּזְרָה, “restricted area,” including earlier in the verse, while in 41:16, the LXX suggests some sort of windows. In 41:15–16, the Vulgate simply transliterates the word, as does the Targum in 41:16, probably because they did not understand it. Their translations of the other occurrences vary. (CC)

**41:13** *hundred.* The 100-cubit symmetry stood for perfection. (CSB)

**41:15b-26** In 41:15 the MT has a large space between the two words אַמָּ֑ה וְהַֽהֵיכָל֙ (“one hundred cubits” and “the temple”), which probably antedates the verse numberings. This space indicates that 41:15b really goes with the beginning of 41:16. Keil launches a lengthy, but unconvincing, defense of the later versification. The verse divisions between 41:16–17, 17–18, and 18–19 likewise come in the middle of sentences, but the MT does not indicate that with spaces there. (CC)

Ezek 41:15b–26 reveals additional aspects of especially the interior decorations of the temple. Interpreters agree that these verses are rife with obscurities and difficulties, perhaps more so than any other part of the book. Any comparison of translations and commentaries will remove any doubt on that score. Part of the difficulty in comprehending the material lies in the changing vocabulary. We would have expected the descriptions found here to have been revealed when the guide and the prophet were still inside the temple (41:1–4). Nor does the material in 41:15b–26 connect readily with the sequel in chapter 42. Naturally, critics have a field day in hypothesizing multifarious later glosses and redactions, but their speculations really solve nothing. (CC)

**41:16** THRESHOLDS –KJV translates the plural first occurrence of סַף as “door posts” and later in 43:8 as “post(s)” (NKJV is similar), but I know of no reason to depart from the word’s normal meaning of “threshold.” Perhaps the reference is to a prominent sill that ran all around the room beneath the “openings slanting inward” (וְהַחַלּוֹנִ֣ים הָ֠אֲטֻמוֹת, repeated without articles in 41:26; see the first textual note on 40:16, which has the same phrase as here, but with the feminine form of the noun:וְחַלֹּנ֣וֹת ). (CC)

 GALLERIES AROUND THE THREE OF THEM –KJV takes לִשְׁלָשְׁתָּ֔ם (the noun שְׁלשָׁה with לְ and third masculine plural suffix) as “on their three stories” (NASB is similar), like שָׁל֧וֹשׁ in 41:6. This agrees with 42:3, which describes other balconies “in three stories” (בַּשְּׂלִשִֽׁים). However, most English versions render it “the/all three of them.” I have translated, “on their three sides.” As for the antecedent of its pronoun, according to the rule of chiastic concord of the numerals three through ten, the most likely grammatical referent of the feminine form of the numeral (שְׁלשָׁה) would be the masculine noun אַתִּיקִים, “balconies” (or “galleries”?), but the context suggests that it refers also to the preceding “thresholds” and “openings,” and possibly also to the “nave” and “vestibules” in 41:15b. (CC)

 *everything … was covered with wood.* As in Solomon’s temple (1Ki 6:15). (CSB)

The construct phrase שְׂחִ֥יף עֵ֖ץ refers to something, literally, “of wood.” שְׂחִיף is a hapax. An Akkadian cognate makes most think of some kind of wood paneling or veneer (CC).

The phrase וְהָאָ֙רֶץ֙ עַד־הַֽחַלֹּנ֔וֹת (“and the ground until the openings”) must mean “from the floor to the openings,” as the LXX translates (ἐκ τοῦ ἐδάφους ἕως τῶν θυρίδων). (CC)

Other verses in chapters 40–41 refer to “openings” (חַלֹּנוֹת or חַלֹּנִים), but only at the end of 41:16 are they described as “covered.” In וְהַֽחַלֹּנ֖וֹת מְכֻסּֽוֹת, the Pual participle (מְכֻסּֽוֹת, from כָּסָה) is anarthrous, so it is not a nominative modifier (“the covered openings”) but a predicate: “and the openings were covered.” Is that participial adjective a synonym of אֲטֻמוֹת, “slanting inward” (?), which is used as a nominative modifier for the “openings” earlier in 41:16 and also for “openings” in 40:16 and 41:26? Does מְכֻסּֽוֹת mean they were completely “closed” or perhaps merely “latticed”? All the versions attest to the phrase here, but interpret it variously. The Hebrew does not enable us to form a very clear picture of what is being described. (CC)

**41:17** If my understanding of 41:17a is correct, עַל־מֵעַ֣ל הַפֶּ֡תַח here has the same meaning as עַד־מֵעַ֣ל הַפֶּ֔תַח in 41:20a. The meanings of the prepositions עַל and עַד can overlap. (CC)

With 41:17b and through 41:20 attention is turned to the decorative features of the building. At the end of 41:17, מִרּֽוֹת, “measures,” is unclear. The LXX omits it, but other versions witness to its originality. Many emendations are proposed, but Zimmerli suggests that it refers to measured-off areas. I have taken it as referring to the carefully designed nature of the reliefs mentioned in 41:18. (CC)

**41:18** *cherubim.* Who served as guards (cf. Ge 3:24). These, as opposed to those mentioned in ch. 10, have only two faces—a man’s and a lion’s (see 1Ki 6:29, 32, 35). (CSB)

The term for “cherub,” כְּרוּב (41:18, 20, 25), is the same as that used in chapters 9–11, but here the reference is to artwork, not the living creatures. They are first called “cherub(im)” in 9:3, but in 10:20 Ezekiel identifies them as the same creatures he saw in chapter 1. (CC)

Both nouns, כְּרוּבִ֖ים וְתִֽמֹרִ֑ים, “cherubim and palm decorations,” are plural, so it is odd if they are the subject of the singular passive participle (of עָשָׂה),וְעָשׂ֥וּי , “made.” We also encountered the difficult singular עָשׂוּי in 40:17, and it will be repeated in 41:19. However, 41:20 has the expected plural, עֲשׂוּיִם. Apparently the singular was a fixed technical term. “Made” is probably too general; with others, I have rendered, “carved.” (CC)

The clause וְתִֽמֹרָה֙ בֵּין־כְּר֣וּב לִכְר֔וּב, literally, “a palm decoration was between a cherub and to [another] cherub,” employs the late idiom of לְ … בֵּין instead of the classical Hebrew וּבֵין … בֵּין. (CC)

**41:19** The cherubim Ezekiel saw in his earlier visions (chapters 1 and 9–11) had four faces (e.g., 1:6). These have only two, probably because a mostly flat, two-dimensional carving of them (in wood upon a wall) could only show only two faces. Both cherubim and palm-like decorations, described by the same Hebrew terms as here, had adorned Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 6:29–35), but other features described there, including gold overlay and open flowers, do not appear here. The general pattern of animals or hybrid creatures on either side of a tree is well attested in various art forms throughout the ancient Near East. The OT does not delve into the theological meaning of these symbols, probably to minimize their significance in relation to Yahweh, lest they receive idolatrous attention. Yet we can easily assume that they conveyed the ideas of life and security, provided by Yahweh. (CC)

**41:20** The final phrase, וְקִ֖יר הַ֗הֵ֗י֗כָֽ֗ל֗׃, clearly means “the wall of the nave,” and the *waw* probably has the nuance “*even* on.” The dots above every letter of הַ֗הֵ֗י֗כָֽ֗ל֗ are called *puncta extraordinaria*. They appear on fifteen words in the OT, though scholars are unsure of their origin and meaning. Since they are present in both Babylonian and Tiberian texts, they predate the Tiberian system of vowels and accents in the MT. Probably they indicate that ancient scribes had misgivings whether the consonants should be in the text. (CC)

It is possible that הַהֵיכָֽל could be a dittograph of the identical first word of 41:21, or vice versa, but I see no cogent reason why its repetition should cause any major problem. One might have expected וּבְקִיר־הַהֵיכָל, but apparently the construction is to be attributed to the enumeratory style of this entire section of the book. (CC)

For the three Hebrew words וְקִ֖יר הַ֗הֵ֗י֗כָֽ֗ל֗׃ הַֽהֵיכָ֖ל spanning the end of 41:20 and the beginning of 41:21 the LXX (καὶ τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ὁ ναός) translates as if there were two, וְהַהֵיכָלוְהַקֹּדֶשׁ, “the Holy Place and the nave,” apparently reading or interpreting וְקִ֖יר as וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ in anticipation of that word’s use later in 41:21. The Vulgate too reflects only one הַהֵיכָל, but translates *in pariete templi*, “on the wall of the temple.” (CC)

**41:22** *wooden altar.* As the great altar stood outside the temple proper (43:13–17), so a smaller altar ’5 square by 5’ high) stood outside the Most Holy Place. It served as a table, no doubt to hold the bread of the Presence (Ex 25:30; Lev 24:5–9; see 1Ki 6:20). Ezekiel makes no mention of an altar of incense or of lampstands, such as were found in Solomon’s temple and in the tabernacle before it. Also not included are the “Sea” (1Ki 7:23) and the ark of the covenant. (CSB)

The abrupt change of subject to “the altar” (הַמִּזְבֵּ֡חַ) is thoroughly in keeping with Ezekiel’s periodic style in this section. In 41:23 he will return to the (doors of) the nave and Holy of Holies, and then shortly again to decorative features of the building. (CC)

In some respects this verse seems to have been as puzzling to Ezekiel as it is to us. Hence the guide interjects an explanation that in form resembles his announcement of the Holy of Holies in 41:4. First of all, the composition of the altar is of wood. The material is expressed as the predicate of a nominal clause: הַמִּזְבֵּ֡חַ עֵ֣ץ, literally, “the altar (was) wood.” Normally wood would be incongruous for an altar, because the sacrificial fires would consume the altar itself. Perhaps that incongruity explains why the guide identifies it as “the table” (הַשֻּׂלְחָ֔ן). That word indicates that the object was not really an altar (as usually understood), but the table perpetually set with the “bread of the Presence” (KJV “shewbread”) in the tabernacle and temple (Ex 25:23, 30; 1 Ki 7:48). (CC)

How could it then be referred to as an “altar” at the start of 41:22? Evidently the answer lies in the sacrificial and “sacramental” role of the table in Israel’s liturgy. The altar of incense was an inner (in the nave) counterpart to the great altar of burnt offering in the outer courtyard, where usually the meat of animals was offered. So too, the table of “shewbread” in the nave corresponded to the unbloody grain offerings, which were also sacrificed on the great altar in the outer court, and thus the table was a sort of non-burnt offering to Yahweh. Even so, this juxtaposition of “altar” and “table” is otherwise unattested in the OT. Undoubtedly the reason why the rest of the OT never connects the “altar” and “table” is to defend Israel against the belief that sacrifice was for alimentation of the Deity—a motif that was central to the sacrificial ritual of Israel’s pagan neighbors, but something which the Bible not only rejects, but ridicules (Ps 50:7–13). (CC)

From our NT vantage point, we cannot help but think of the Sacrament of the Altar, wherein our Lord prepares his Table for us (cf. Ps 23:5), and we partake of his body and blood, given and shed for us on the cross for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:26–28; 1 Cor 11:23–34). (CC)

This “table” seen by Ezekiel must have been constructed in a way that in some respects resembled an altar. The mention ofמִקְצֹֽעוֹתָיו֨ (“its corners”) signals something of that sort. That word is used twice in connection with the tabernacle (Ex 26:24; 36:29) but not ever specifically for an altar. Nevertheless, it is plausible that it implies a design somewhat similar to the “horns” that were virtually always found on altars (e.g., Ex 29:12; 37:25; Lev 4:7, 18; 1 Ki 2:28). (CC)

The measurement that “its length [וְאָרְכּ֣וֹ] was two cubits” is expressed using the construct phrase שְׁתַּֽיִם־אַמּ֗וֹת, a later idiom, instead of using the dual form אַמָּתַיִם preferred in earlier Hebrew, including the tabernacle description (e.g., Ex 25:10, 17, 23). The additional measurement that “its width was two cubits,” placed in brackets in the translation, is supplied from the LXX It seems to have fallen out of the MT by homoioteleuton. (CC)

In the clause וְאָרְכּ֥וֹ וְקִֽירֹתָ֖יו עֵ֑ץ (“its length and its sides were wood”) וְאָרְכּ֥וֹ is almost universally taken to be a copyist’s error for וְאַדְנוֹ, “and its base,” as reflected in the LXX. KJV and NKJV retain “length,” but the verse has already stated, “its length [וְאָרְכּ֣וֹ] was two cubits,” and one can hardly speak of “length” as being “wood”! (CC)

Idioms aside, the dimensions of Ezekiel’s table differ radically from the one in the tabernacle (Ex 25:23–30). Ezekiel’s table is higher than both its width and length. The tabernacle version had been rectangular, and its length (two cubits) was greater than its width (one cubit) and its height (one and a half cubits), and all of it was overlaid with gold. Presumably, the one in the temple (1 Ki 7:48) was the same. No wonder Ezekiel may have been perplexed about what it was! (CC)

**41:23-24** As in Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 6:31–34), the nave and the Holy of Holies both had double doors with swinging leaves. רֶּלֶת can be used for the whole “door” or for just its swinging “leaf.” Each door must have been set in its own pivot hole next to the jamb. “Swinging” translates מוּסַבּ֣וֹת, a Hophal participle denoting capability, “that can be turned.” Thus being reversible, whether going in or out, the leaves would easily swing in the right way to allow access. (CC)

**41:23** *double doors.* Folding doors, so that the entry could be made still narrower. (CSB)

**41:25** Here the feminine (equivalent to a neuter?) singular passive participle וַעֲשׂוּיָ֨ה, “carved,” is used with masculine plural subjects, כְּרוּבִ֣ים וְתִֽמֹרִ֔ים. See the discussion of the masculine singular וְעָשׂ֥וּי in 41:18. Without knowing the precise meaning of the participle, it is hard to react to the inconsistency. (CC)

A more insoluble issue arises with וְעָ֥ב עֵ֛ץ. The plural of עָב is also the last word of 41:26 (וְהָעֻבִּֽים). The noun עָב is common meaning “cloud,” but the term here, and also in Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 7:6), must be a homograph that is an architectural term. We have no clue what it meant, and, apparently, neither did the ancients. I have chosen “canopy” with NKJV, RSV and NRSV. (CC)

**41:26** The syntax of the last three words (הַבַּ֖יִת וְהָעֻבִּֽיםוְצַלְע֥וֹת) is uncertain. וְהָעֻבִּֽים may be coordinate with הַבַּ֖יִתוְצַלְע֥וֹת and conclude the series: “palm decorations” were “on the side walls of the vestibule [and on] the side rooms of the temple [and on] the canopies.” Or these three words may make their own independent statement, as I have translated: “the side rooms of the temple also had canopies.” (CC)