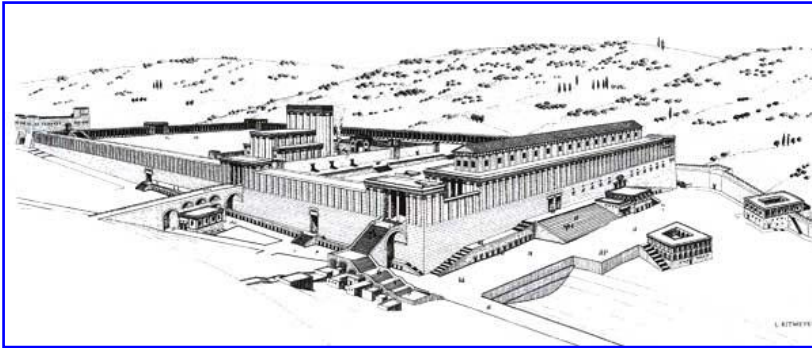
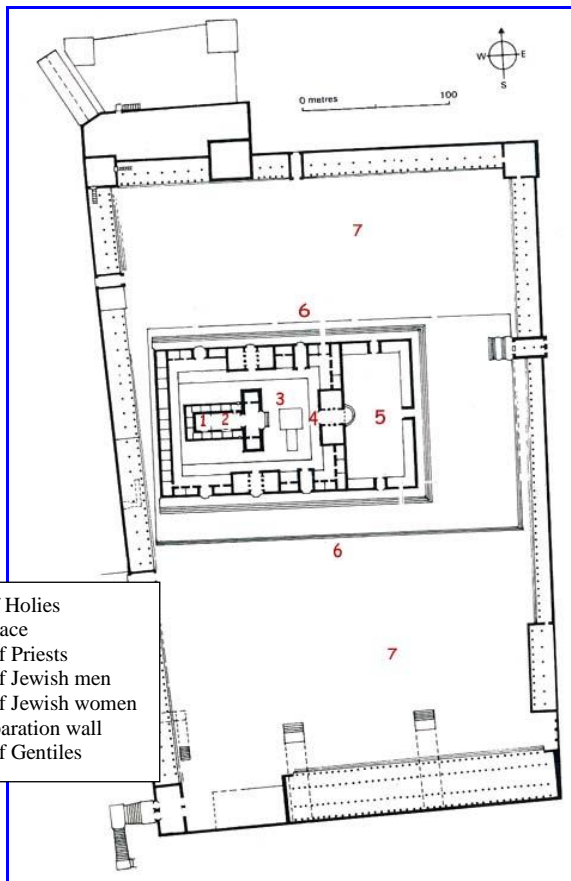


## THE TEMPLE AS THE CENTER OF JUDAISM



In the time of Jesus, purity—the condition of being free from physical, moral, or ritual contamination—was at the heart of Judaism. And the geographic center of purity was the Jerusalem Temple, since it was the very dwelling place of God on earth.

### THE TEMPLE AND PURITY



1. Holy of Holies
2. Holy Place
3. Court of Priests
4. Court of Jewish men
5. Court of Jewish women
6. The separation wall
7. Court of Gentiles

A close look at the very structure of the Temple confirms the importance of purity or holiness for Israel. This is evident in the series of barriers or concentric circles that protected the innermost sanctuary of the Temple from contamination.

#### *Mishnah Kelim 1.6-9*

**6.** There are ten degrees of holiness. **The land of Israel is holier than any other land ...**

**7.** **The walled cities [of the land of Israel] are still more holy**, in that they must send forth the lepers from their midst ... **8.** **Within the wall [of Jerusalem] is still more holy**, for there [only] they may eat the Lesser Holy Things and the Second Tithe. **The Temple Mount is still more holy**, for no man or woman that has a flux, no menstruant, and no woman after childbirth may enter therein. **The Rampart is still more holy**, for not Gentiles and none that have contracted uncleanness from a corpse may enter therein. **The court of the Women is still more holy**, for none that had immersed himself the selfsame day [because of uncleanness] may enter therein ...

**The Court of the Israelites is still more holy**, for none whose atonement is yet incomplete may enter therein... **The Court of the Priests is still more holy**, for Israelites may not enter therein save only when they must perform the laying on of hands, slaughtering and waving.

**9.** **Between the Porch and the Altar is still more holy**, for none that has a blemish or whose hair is unloosed may enter there. **The Sanctuary is still more holy**, for none may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. **The Holy of Holies is still more holy**, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest at the time of the [Temple] service (Danby's translation).