

# Ezekiel 43:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof.

## Analysis

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**And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof.** The Hebrew *rāḥû'a* (רָחוּץ, "square") emphasizes perfect symmetry—12 by 12 cubits for the top surface of the altar hearth. This is a perfect square, symbolizing stability, completeness, and divine order. The number twelve carries covenantal significance throughout Scripture: twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, twelve gates and twelve foundations in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12-14). The altar's dimensions thus point to redemption's scope—encompassing all of redeemed Israel (old and new covenant people of God).

The phrase "**square in the four squares thereof**" (literally "foursquare in its four sides," *rəḥû'at 'el 'arba' rəḥā'êhā*) reinforces the perfect symmetry. Unlike irregular or rounded shapes, the square communicates precision, order, and accessibility from all four directions. The east-facing orientation (v. 17) determined the primary approach, but the foursquare design meant the altar's benefits were available from all sides—no favoritism, no exclusion based on position.

This anticipates the universal scope of Christ's atonement. Just as the altar's perfect square opened access from all directions, Christ's sacrifice is available to all peoples ("to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," Romans 1:16). The New Jerusalem's perfect cube dimensions (Revelation 21:16) fulfill what the square altar typified—complete, symmetrical perfection in God's dwelling with redeemed humanity. No imperfection, no partiality, no limitation—perfect access through perfect sacrifice.

## Historical Context

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Square altars appear throughout Israel's worship history. The tabernacle's bronze altar was 5 cubits square (Exodus 27:1), Solomon's bronze altar was 20 cubits square (2 Chronicles 4:1), and Ezekiel's vision altar is 12 cubits square at the hearth level. The decreasing size from Solomon's to Ezekiel's suggests focus on quality of worship rather than mere magnitude. The perfect square design contrasts with pagan altars, which often featured irregular shapes or elaborate decorative elements—Israel's altar taught theological truth through simplicity and symmetry.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the altar's perfect square design teach that Christ's atonement is equally sufficient for all who approach Him, regardless of background or sin?
2. What does the progression from elaborate temple furnishings to this simpler, perfectly proportioned altar teach about God's priorities in worship?

## Interlinear Text

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וְהָאֲרָא יֵל	בְּשֵׁת יָם	עֶשְׂרֵה	אֵ כֶּךָ	בְּשֵׁת יָם	עֶשְׂרֵה
And the altar	shall be twelve	H6240	cubits long	shall be twelve	H6240
H741	H8147		H753	H8147	
רָחֵב	קָבֹעַ	אֶל	אַרְבַּעַת	רְבָעִי:	
broad	square	H413	in the four	squares	
H7341	H7251		H702	H7253	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 27:1** (Sacrifice): And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.

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