

Ezekiel 43:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east.

Analysis

And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof. The 'azārâ (עֲזָרָה, "settle" or "ledge"), the platform below the altar hearth, measures fourteen cubits square—two cubits larger than the hearth above it (12 cubits square). This creates a protruding ledge all around the altar hearth, providing priests space to perform sacrificial duties. The increasing dimensions as one descends (14-cubit ledge, then presumably larger base) create a pyramidal or ziggurat-like structure, rising in stages toward heaven.

"And the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about." The gəbûl (גָּבוֹל, "border" or "rim") of half a cubit (about 9 inches) surrounded the ledge, preventing priests from falling and channeling blood appropriately. The hēq (הֵק, "bottom" or "gutter") of one cubit provided drainage for sacrificial blood and water used in cleansing. These practical details reveal God's care for both holiness (proper blood handling) and safety (protecting ministering priests).

"And his stairs shall look toward the east." The eastern orientation is theologically significant throughout Ezekiel's temple vision. God's glory departed eastward (10:18-19, 11:23) and returns from the east (43:1-5). The rising sun in the east symbolizes light, life, and divine presence. East-facing stairs meant priests ascended toward the rising sun while God's glory-cloud filled the temple from the

east—visual proclamation that all access to God comes through His initiative, His provision, His presence. Christ, the "dayspring from on high" (Luke 1:78) and "Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), is the true eastern orientation—the Light by which we approach the Father.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern temples typically faced east to greet the rising sun, often with pagan solar worship connotations. Israel's east-facing orientation, however, celebrated not sun-worship but the God who created the sun. The tabernacle and Solomon's temple both faced east (Exodus 27:13, 1 Kings 8:22, 2 Chronicles 4:10). The eastern gate's significance intensifies in Ezekiel's vision—shut because the Lord entered through it (44:1-2), reserved exclusively for divine use. Christ fulfills this as the gate/door through whom alone we enter salvation (John 10:7-9).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do the altar's protective borders and drainage system illustrate God's concern for both holiness and the welfare of those who serve Him?
2. What does the eastern orientation teach about approaching God on His terms and through His provision rather than human initiative?

Interlinear Text

וְבָאֵר הַ	עַשְׂרֵה	אֶרְבָּעָה	אֶרְבָּעָה	אֶרְבָּעָה	עַשְׂרֵה
And the settle	and fourteen	H6240	cubits long	and fourteen	H6240
H5835	H702		H753	H702	
בָּרָאֵר	אֶרְבָּעָה	רְבָעַ יַפְתָּח	וְבָאֵר בָּרָאֵר	אֶרְבָּעָה	אֶרְבָּעָה
broad	and fourteen	squares	thereof and the border	about	H853
H7341	H702	H7253	H1366	H5439	
וְמַעְלַת הַ	סַבְיבָה	אֵמָה	אֵמָה	סַבְיבָה	וְמַעְלַת הַ
it shall be half	a cubit	and the bottom	^{וְ} a cubit	about	and his stairs
H2677	H520	H2436	H0	H5439	H4609
פָּנָה וְתַ	קְדִים				
shall look	toward the east				
H6437	H6921				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:26 (Parallel theme): Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Ezekiel 40:6 (Parallel theme): Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad; and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad.

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