## Part Six: The New Sanctuary, Year Twenty-Five (40:1–48:35)

Ezekiel finally reports a vision in which he is conducted around a sanctuary, Yahweh’s house or palace, and given instructions regarding how it is to work. In effect, Yahweh is filling out the declarations in 20:40–44 and 37:26–28 (Block, 2: 497–98), against the background of a knowledge of the Solomonic temple with which Ezekiel and the older people in his community had been familiar, and of the life, architecture, and culture of Babylonia and of Babylon in particular.

Different interpreters see the chapters’ structure in different ways, which may illuminate the text in different ways. Here is one understanding.

In a vision, Yahweh transports Ezekiel to a high mountain in Israel (40:1–2)

A guide conducts Ezekiel round a sanctuary there (40:3–42:20)

The wall, the gateways and the outer courtyard (40:3–46)

The house and the hall (40:47–41:26)

The courtyard (42:1–20)

Ezekiel witnesses the initiation of the sanctuary (43:1–27)

Yahweh’s magnificence comes to the house (43:1–5)

Yahweh issues an exhortation and gives Ezekiel some instructions (43:6–12)

Yahweh’s instructions regarding the altar and the offerings (43:13–27)

Yahweh issues instructions regarding the sanctuary (44:1–46:24)

Admission to the sanctuary and the roles of priests and Levites (44:1–31)

The sanctuary layout, integrity, and offerings (45:1–25)

The sanctuary offerings, integrity, and layout (46:1–24)

The guide shows Ezekiel the river and the land (47:1–48:35)

The sanctuary, the river, and the land (47:1–23)

The allocations, the sanctuary, and the city (48:1–35)

As this outline suggests, accompanying the linear sequencing of the chapters is a pattern of interweaving that interlinks Ezekiel’s tour round the sanctuary with supplementary information about it and directives about it. The latter may take a more prophetic form as a message relating what “the Lord Yahweh has said” or a more priestly form as instructions about the life of the sanctuary—though the distinction between these two is a little random, as the distinction between priest and prophet within the person, vocation, and instincts of Ezekiel is a little artificial (see further 43:10–27 and the verse-by-verse commentary).

Narrative Information Prophetic Message Priestly Instruction

40:1–37 40:38–46

40:47–41:15a 41:15b–26

42:1 42:2–12

42:13–20

43:1–12 43:13–17 43:18–27

44:1–4 44:5–16 44:17–31

45:9–25 45:1–8

46:1–18

46:19–47:12 47:13–23 48:1–35

Whereas Ezek 1–3 makes explicit the implications of Ezekiel’s first great vision for its readers (that it lies behind Ezekiel’s ministry as a prophet) and the context of Ezek 8–11 makes clear the implications of his second great vision (it forms part of his indictment of Judah regarding its relationship with Yahweh), Ezek 40–48 does not spell out the implications of this third great vision, and many a reader has felt the lack. “I venerate the mysteries of this place in silence” (Oecolampadius, 281; cf. Trapp, 509). Jerome (539) applies to it some words from Virgil’s Aeneid, describing it as “a house of toil, a maze inextricable” (Aeneid 6.27).

As once in high Crete, it is said, the Labyrinth

held a path woven with blind walls, and a bewildering work of craft

with a thousand ways, where the tokens of the trail were broken

by the indiscoverable and irretraceable maze. (Aeneid 5.588–91)

Readers have articulated the vision’s possible implications in various ways.

1. The Judahites are to build this temple when they go back to Jerusalem.
2. Modern Jews or Christians are to build it when they get the chance.
3. God intends literally to build it, and one day he will.
4. It symbolizes something God intends to build of which the Second Temple is a partial embodiment.
5. It symbolizes something God intends to build of which the church is a partial embodiment (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; Eph 2:19–22).
6. It symbolizes something God intends to build, and he eventually will, though paradoxically, it will not incorporate an actual temple! (Rev 21–22).
7. It is an account of Yahweh’s heavenly temple which Ezekiel has visited, and his report can be the means of Israelites sharing the experience of visiting there.

In terms of what Ezekiel and Second Temple readers of the Ezekiel Scroll might reasonably have thought, #7 seems a good starting point, but #4 puts us on the track of the chapters’ having practical implications for the life of the Second Temple community focused on the temple that they did build.

Related questions concern the chapters’ dating, authorship, and redaction, and they may seem as complicated as the question about its basic significance.[[1]](#footnote-2) Perhaps “on the issue of authorship and redaction within chs. 40–48, the most appropriate stance is one of responsible agnosticism” (Joyce, 219).[[2]](#footnote-3) The premodern assumption was that Ezekiel wrote the chapters. A common modern assumption is that they went through three stages of development, in Ezekiel’s own work, in the later Babylonian period, and in the Second Temple period. A postmodern assumption could be that we might follow the invitation of the text to read the chapters against the background of a Judahite community in Kebar in the 570s, but also read them against the subsequent background of the later Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods when they were being read, thought about, and amplified at least in small ways (see the Introduction to this commentary).

## The Environs of Yahweh’s Palace (40:1–46)

### Outline

The temple vision begins with Ezekiel’s account of when and how the vision came about, which leads into a description in 40:3–42:20 of how a guide conducted Ezekiel round the temple complex. For convenience, in light of its length, I divide this account into two parts. Ezek 40:3–46 covers the temple environs—its outer wall, its gateways, and its outer courtyard. It says little about the buildings’ significance. The complex is “like a city” (40:3) and it constitutes the environs of a “house” (40:5). Eventually we do learn about chambers for the slaughtering and washing of sacrifices and about chambers for priests engaged in the offering of sacrifices (40:38–46). But for the most part Ezekiel focuses on the facts about the building.

When Ezekiel had told people about his first vision, which led into his commission as a prophet, they might already have some idea of the nature of what he described, they would need to think about some of the details but likely never understand some of them, and they would get its main point only toward the end when Ezekiel told them about the commission it led into. They would have less difficulty understanding his second vision (Ezek 8–11) when the spirit took him back to Kebar and he related it to the Kebarites. As he related his last vision, they would know that he was outlining the ground plan of “something like the structure of a city” centering on a “house,” a temple, and their knowledge of Jerusalem and its temple would give them some clues about how to understand what they were hearing. But absent any further elaboration, such as does not appear in the Ezekiel scroll, they would likely have no understanding of why Ezekiel had received this vision or what it referred to, and perhaps neither would he. Some specifics would be clear to them in a way they are not to later readers. Some other specifics would likely be of ambiguous significance to them as they are to us, so that they and we just have to think about them.

The word “measure” (מׇדׇה) recurs through the vision. The vision follows the movement and measuring of Ezekiel’s guide, who resembles a project manager or surveyor whose focus lies on measuring. What Ezekiel thus gets to see is for the most part not a set of buildings but the ground plan of a set of buildings. We hear virtually nothing about their height or the materials of which they are or will be constructed. A project manager would be concerned with the first stage in making the building happen, and watching him undertake his measuring would imply watching a sign act that initiates Yahweh’s work of construction. If it is somethihg like a sign act, it constitutes a promise that the construction will happen. This fits with the introduction to the vision. The background is the fact that “the city” of Jerusalem still stands “struck down” (40:1), along with the “house” (cf. 40:5) on which Ezekiel’s previous great vision in Ezek 8–11 had focused. This vision portrays something like a city and a house again. Every simple detail about wall and gateways contributes to the underscoring of this fact. What Ezekiel sees both is and is not a rebuilding of the city and temple that were struck down in 587. Yet the nature of the earlier divine visions in Ezek 1 and 8–11 does not suggest that listeners or readers should assume that this vision relates something that is literally going to happen. In a sense it exists already in heaven and Ezekiel is paying a visit there.[[3]](#footnote-4)

In this chapter Ezekiel tells a broadly logical story focusing on the nature of the gateways of the complex, but he does not seek to tell it in a consistently logical way, as if he had thought the story through and edited it. He mentions the surveyor’s reed in 40:3 and then repeats himself to tell people its length in 40:5. He starts describing the gateway alcoves in 40:7 but then releases information about them in bits and drabs through 40:10–16. He speaks as a storyteller, relating things as they come to him and as they may keep people’s interest, or speaks as a visionary, relating things as he sees them, and he often writes elliptically.\*

In speaking as a storyteller, he speaks in verbal sentences, though the narrative’s verbal sentences commonly interweave with and lead into descriptive non-verbal sentences. This is easier in Hebrew than in English because English usually works with the assumption that a sentence must have a verb, whereas verbless sentences are common in Hebrew. After relating how the vision happened, or instance, Ezekiel continues:

So there: a city wall outside the house, all round. In the person’s hand the measuring reed, six cubits by a cubit and a handbreadth. He measured the width of the structure: one reed, and the height: one reed. He came to the gateway.… (40:5–6).

The first half of 40:1–42:20 concludes in 40:38–46 with two paragraphs that are almost entirely verbless sentences. They are thus sidetracks in the narrative and may be later insertions into it by Ezekiel or his curators, or they may have been part of the original vision. Modern interpreters of Ezekiel may be inclined to edit his story to make it more coherent, partly on the assumption that he must have written more logically and that his work must have been reworked by later editors. There is no way of coming to a view on whether or not Ezekiel was more logical at an earlier stage and his logic was loosened by him or by his curators, or whether he himself wrote in this uneven way from the beginning.

This section unfolds:

Yahweh’s hand falls on Ezekiel and a figure speaks to him (40:1–4)

The guide measures

The wall of the complex and the threshold of its eastern gateway (40:5–7a)

The threshold of the courtyard end of the gateway (40:7b–9)

The alcoves and the gateway in more detail (40:10–16)

The courtyard, its pavement, and its chambers (40:17–19a)

The northern and southern gateways (40:19b–27)

The three equivalent gateways to the inner courtyard (40:28–37)

The chambers at the gateway to the inner courtyard

For slaughtering and washing (40:38–43)

For the priests’ work of oversight (40:44–46)

Ezekiel has the task of bringing home the concrete reality of the building in the concrete world. My architect wife comments: “It’s more or less impossible to turn a concrete complex three-dimensional object into two-dimensional abstract words, which is why architects use drawings to convey to contractors what to build. A truly adequate accurate description would require volumes and volumes of words.” If Ezekiel had thought of people reading his memoir two and a half thousand years after his time, he would have perceived another unenviable aspect to his task. If explaining in words a plan, and even more a three-dimensional building, is a daunting task in relation to your contemporaries who may understand your architectural terms, it is an even more daunting task in relation to readers in such a different cultural context.

Jerome (487–88, 490) comments: “I am writing nothing worthy of the greatness of the subject matter, and I thank the Savior, if indeed there is anything I deserve to understand.… I admonish briefly with these words of the orator Victorinus, that you realize that lack of clarity in books comes from the greatness of the subject matter, from the teacher’s lack of experience, or from the insensibility of the audience.” But “my motto is that of Socrates: ‘I know what I do not know.’ For being aware of what you do not know is part of knowledge.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

### Translation

40:1In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on this actual day Yahweh’s hand came on me and he brought me there.[[5]](#footnote-6) 2In a divine vision[[6]](#footnote-7) he brought me to the country of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain, with something like the structure of a city on it (to the south). 3He brought me there, and there: someone, his look like the look of bronze, with a flax cord in his hand and a measuring reed. He was standing in the gateway. 4The person spoke to me. “My man, look with your eyes. With your ears, listen. Apply your mind to everything that I am enabling you to see. Because it was in order to enable you to see that you have been brought here—relate everything that you are going to see to Israel’s household.”

5So there: a wall outside the house,[[7]](#footnote-8) all round. In the person’s hand the measuring reed, six cubits by a cubit and a handbreadth.[[8]](#footnote-9) He measured the width of the structure:[[9]](#footnote-10) one reed, and the height: one reed. 6He came to the gateway whose orientation[[10]](#footnote-11) was eastward, went up its steps, and measured the gateway’s threshold: one reed in width (so a threshold: one reed, one in width).[[11]](#footnote-12) 7An alcove:[[12]](#footnote-13) one reed in length and one reed in width. Between the alcoves: five cubits.

The gateway’s threshold next to the gateway’s foyer on the house side:[[13]](#footnote-14) one reed. 8He measured the gateway’s foyer on the house side: one reed. 9He measured the gateway’s foyer: eight cubits, and its jambs:[[14]](#footnote-15) two cubits. So the gateway’s foyer on the house side.

10The eastward gateway’s alcoves, three on each side: one measure for the three of them and one measure for the jambs on each side. 11He measured the width of the gateway’s opening: ten cubits. The gateway’s length:[[15]](#footnote-16) thirteen cubits. 12A bar[[16]](#footnote-17) in front of the alcoves: one cubit the bar on each side. The alcove: six cubits [deep] on each side. 13He measured the gateway from alcove roof to alcove roof:[[17]](#footnote-18) the width, twenty-five cubits, opening opposite opening.[[18]](#footnote-19) 14He did the jambs: sixty cubits, and [starting] by a courtyard jamb, [did] the gateway, all round. 15[Starting] at the front of the outer gateway, to the front of the foyer of the inner gateway:[[19]](#footnote-20) fifty cubits. 16The alcoves and their jambs had beveled[[20]](#footnote-21) windows on the inside of the gateway all round. So also did the foyers,[[21]](#footnote-22) with windows all round on the inside, and palms on a jamb.

17He brought me to the outer courtyard,[[22]](#footnote-23) and there: chambers, and a pavement made for the courtyard, all round. Thirty chambers on the pavement. 18The pavement by the flank of the gateways corresponding to the length between the gateways (the lower pavement).[[23]](#footnote-24) 19He measured the width from in front of the gateway (the lower side)[[24]](#footnote-25) to in front of the inner courtyard on the outside: a hundred cubits.[[25]](#footnote-26)

The east. And the north: 20the gateway whose orientation was northward, belonging to the outer courtyard. He measured its length and its width, 21its three alcoves on each side, its jambs, and its foyers. It was like the measurement of the first gateway: fifty cubits its length, and in width twenty-five by the cubit. 22Its windows, its foyers, and its palms: like the measurement of the gateway whose orientation was eastward. By seven steps people would go up onto it, with its foyers in front of them.23The inner courtyard had a gateway opposite the north gateway and the east. He measured from gateway to gateway: a hundred cubits.

24He got me to go southward, and there: a gateway southward. He measured its jambs and its foyers in accordance with these measurements. 25It and its foyers had windows all round like these windows: fifty cubits in length, and in width twenty-five cubits. 26Seven steps going up to it, with its foyers in front of them, and it had palms, one on each side, on its jambs. 27The inner courtyard had a gateway southward. He measured from gateway to the gateway southward: a hundred cubits.

28He brought me to the inner courtyard through the south gateway and measured the south gateway in accordance with these measurements. 29Its alcoves, its jambs, and its foyers: in accordance with these measurements, with it and its foyers having windows all round. Fifty cubits in length, and in width twenty-five cubits. 30Foyers all round: in length twenty-five cubits and in width five cubits. 31Its foyers toward the outer courtyard with palms on its jambs. Eight steps its staircase.

32He brought me to the inner courtyard, eastward, and measured the gateway: in accordance with these measurements. 33Its alcoves, its jambs, and its foyers: in accordance with these measurements. It and its foyers had windows all round. In length fifty cubits and in width twenty-five cubits. 34Its foyers belonged to the outer courtyard, with palms on its jambs on each side, and eight steps its staircase.

35He brought me to the north gateway and measured it: in accordance with these measurements. 36Its alcoves—its jambs and its foyers. It had windows all round. In length fifty cubits and in width twenty-five cubits. 37Its jambs belonged to the outer courtyard, with palms on its jambs on each side, and seven steps its staircase.

* 38A chamber and its entrance with jambs [at] the gateways, as there they would wash the burnt offering.
* 39In the gateway’s foyers, two tables on each side, at[[26]](#footnote-27) which to slaughter the burnt offering, the decontamination offering, and the restitution offering. 40At the outer flank for someone going up to the entrance of the northern gateway, two tables, and at the flank toward the gateway’s foyer, two tables. 41[So] four tables on each side for the gateway’s flank, eight tables at which they would slaughter. 42And four tables for the burnt offering: hewn stone, length one and a half cubits, width one and a half cubits, and height one cubit, at which they would set down the things with which they would slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice.
* 43Hooks: one handbreadth, attached inside all round, with the flesh of the offering at the tables.
* 44Outside the inner gateway,[[27]](#footnote-28) singers’ chambers in the inner courtyard, [one] at the flank of the northern gateway with their orientation southward, one at the flank of the east gateway with their orientation northward. 45He spoke to me: “This, the chamber whose orientation is southward: for the priests having charge of the house. 46The chamber whose orientation is northward: for the priests having charge of the altar. They are the Zadoqites, who of the Levites approach Yahweh to minister to him.”

### Textual Notes

The text of this chapter is elliptical and jerky, and LXX’s text differs from MT more than usual and transliterates some words for which it apparently does not know a Greek equivalent.[[28]](#footnote-29) We have noted in the “Outline” above how difficult it is to describe an architectural plan in words. While at some points LXX likely evidences an alternative Hebrew text (esp. 40:44), at others it is likely paraphrasing a text that it finds difficult. *CTAT* gives thirty-three of its 434 pages in Ezekiel to this chapter. The chapter also includes a remarkable number of instances of Q having the long spelling of the third person plural suffix on a word such as יׇדׇיו, “his hands,” where K uses the archaic shorter spelling, in this case ידו: see 40:6, 9, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37.

**40:2** For מׅנֶּגֶב, “to the south,” LXX “opposite” implies מׅנֶּגֶד.

**40:3** LXX “glistening bronze” spells out the implications (cf. 1:7).

For “flax cord,” LXX “builder’s cord” again spells out the implications.

**40:5** For “a wall,” yet again, LXX “an outer wall” spells out the implications.

**40:6–16** The many detailed difference between LXX and MT especially through these verses presumably reflect the difficulty of understanding the description.

**40:13** For גַּג, “roof,” each time, LXX “wall” might imply גַּו, “back” (Kraetzschmar, 266; cf. NRSV), though *HUB* sees LXX’s translation as an example of “architectural exegesis.”

**40:14** NRSVtakesfromLXX a more realistic “twenty” (עֶשְֹרׅים) for MT “sixty” (שׁׅשּׁׅים), and “foyer” (אוּלׇם) for MT “jambs” (אֵילׅים).

**40:19** LXX reads “the width of the courtyard,” again clarifying MT’s text.

**40:30** LXX lacks this verse.

**40:39** LXX lacks “the burnt offering.”

**40:43** For the virtual hapax\* שְׁפַתַּיׅם, “hooks,” LXX assumes a word meaning a cornice (perhaps a meaning attributed to שְֹפׇתַיׅם, “lips,” which Vg. assumes), then nicely reads “On the tables, covers above, so as to be protected from rain and from drought.”

**40:44** For שׇׁרׅים, “singers,” LXX “two” implies שְׁתַיׅם.

For הַקׇּדׅים, “east,” LXX “south” implies הַדׇּרוֹם.

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**40:1** “Before telling of the mysteries he first gives an historical account in order to fix by time what is to be believed in revelation” (Gregory, 259).[[29]](#footnote-30)The year is 573. It is fourteen years since Jerusalem was “struck down” by Nebuchadrezzar and by Yahweh (cf. 33:21), but twenty-five years since the Kebarites were marched out of Jerusalem in 597. As far as one can tell, nothing much has happened to the Kebarites or to other Judahites since either date. Certainly none of Yahweh’s promises in Ezek 34–37 have come true. There has been no taking back of the scattered people to Jerusalem, no restoring of a sanctuary there, no reuniting of Ephraim and Judah, and no new David. If it is now the twenty-fifth year of the Kebarites’ exile, might it be half way through a Jubilee period?[[30]](#footnote-31) Like Jeremiah’s seventy years (Jer 29:10), Ezekiel’s fifty could then be both bad news and good news. It could mean no speedy deliverance, and most of the people who left Jerusalem as forced migrants will be dead before the next or next-but-one generation goes “back” there. But the household of Israel in Kebar (40:4) will be able to go back. There will be deliverance.

The figure twenty-five recurs in the chapter (40:13, 21, 25, 29, 30, 33, 36), as do multiples of twenty-five, fifty (40:15, 21, 25, 29, 33, 36) and a hundred (40:19, 23, 27, 47 twice), and twenty-five recurs in Ezek 41; 45; 48). The possibility that “twenty-fifth year” is more than merely a date is increased by the more specific dates that follow. The expression “the beginning of the year,” more literally “the head of the year” (רֹאשׁ הַשׇּׁנׇנׇה), came to be the term for the new year, Rosh Hashanah, in September or October. But the expression comes only here in the First Testament, and it is not yet a technical term for the new year. Indeed, Lev 23:23–32 specifies that the tenth of the month would be the Day of Atonement (cf. Tuell, 283). Three times Leviticus there refers to it as “this actual day” when people must not work. Lev 25:9 also observes that this day is the beginning of the jubilee year (cf. Rashi, in MG).[[31]](#footnote-32) And Lev 26:34–35 notes that Israel’s turning away from Yahweh and not letting the land enjoy its sabbath years will lead to Yahweh’s throwing the people out of the land for those sabbath years. But Leviticus calls this month the seventh month, assuming that the year starts in the spring, with the tenth day then being the date of the beginning of Passover (Exod 12:2–3). To make things more complicated, in Babylon the spring new year is also the time of the Akitu Festival in honor of Marduk.[[32]](#footnote-33) Ezekiel thus begins his account of his vision in his typical fashion with allusions and hints whose significance he does not clarify at this point, giving his listeners or readers a lot to think about, a wide range of possibilities, in his opening sentence.

**40:2a** He continues to do so as he continues the preamble to his vision. His account of Yahweh’s hand falling on him, of a divine vision, and of being transported in imagination to Jerusalem recalls 1:1–3:27, and also more precisely 8:1–3 (see further 43:1–5). On both earlier occasions the experience led to Yahweh’s conveying a devastating message, and readers or listeners might wonder if the same thing is about to recur. The good news will be that the entire message will contrast with 8:1–11:25. If Yahweh is again taking Ezekiel to Jerusalem in a vision, Ezekiel is still in Kebar with the rest of his community. There seems no basis for thinking that at this point his messages have reached Jerusalem, or that he himself ever got back there. It will be his scroll that gets there when someone eventually takes it.

**40:2b** “A very high mountain” could make one think of Jerusalem itself (17:22–23; 20:40), but what follows suggests that this mountain is not Jerusalem (which as a city is anyway lower than the temple) but a location on the mountain chain east of the city. Indeed, the closing scene of Ezekiel’s previous vision took place on “the mountain, east of the city” (11:23), the Mount of Olives (Blenkinsopp, 200). It would make a vantage point for looking at the temple area and would fit Ezekiel’s account of it that starts from the east gateway (40:6). The allusion to the south, then, could be a reference to the main part of Jerusalem being south of the temple area (Qimhi, in MG). But it is inappropriate to try to think realistically in detail about the location, any more than it was in 8:1–11:25 where some of the scenes corresponded to reality but some did not. The scene will compare with the scene that people know—there will be walls, gateways, courtyards, and a central temple building. But it will not correspond to any actual scene that people could know. Ezekiel’s words portray a visionary Jerusalem, a city transformed in terms of physical geography, not the one with the characteristics it had when Ezekiel and other older Kebarites left.

The first thing Ezekiel tells us he sees is “something like the structure of a city,” the complex he will describe through Ezek 40–42. Its being like a city will fit with its having magnificent gateways and a palace, because a divine King will live there. But the term “city” picks up from the reference to “the city” that was “struck down.” Ezekiel is inviting his people to imagine the city magnificently rebuilt.

**40:3–4** The person with the flax cord (for longer measurements) and the measuring reed or cane or rod (for shorter measurements) is a supernatural, visionary version of a surveyor such as one might see on a building site, who would give instructions to the workers. Bronze was one of the marks of the beings in 1:7 and is an indication of the surveyor’s supernatural significance. The point about the measuring tools isn’t to discover the measurements but to establish them. It could be part of the building process to ensure that the building works out in accordance with plans. “A master builder being about to build should first plot out the ground by measure, whereupon which he would build” (Mayer, 460). Yet some features of these chapters will imply that the visionary building work has already been done. It has been completed in Yahweh’s mind or in the heavens. The surveyor’s role in the vision is thus to enable Ezekiel to pass on information to “Israel’s household” back in Kebar. “The command to describe, i.e., to write, replaces the command to build the temple,” which Yahweh gave Moses in showing him the pattern for the wilderness dwelling (Exod 25:9).[[33]](#footnote-34)

**40:5**. The command to pass on what he sees is almost the last thing the surveyor says in this chapter. Ezekiel now starts doing as he was bidden. The first thing he sees is a wall round the entire vision complex, the kind of wall a city has, a חוֹמׇה (cf. 26:4; 38:11). The word will recur in 42:20, but otherwise the usual word for a “wall” (קׅיר) denotes the wall of a building. Having a city wall is an aspect of being “something like the structure of a city.” The Jerusalem temple didn’t have a wall, but the city did. It was part of its impressiveness, and it was designed to keep attackers out, but Yahweh had eventually let it fail in that respect. Now Ezekiel sees a new city wall, that will surely promise that that this complex is secure. But things are more subtle or more complicated than that. This city wall surrounds “something like the structure of a city,” not explicitly an actual city but a complex “outside the house,” outside the temple that Ezekiel will momentarily come to (40:45–48). The city-like structure is actually a “sanctuary” (Ezek 44), and we will eventually learn about an actual city that is distinct from the sanctuary (Ezek 45; 48). For the sanctuary, 42:20 will indicate the purpose of the wall, and will both encourage and caution Yahweh’s people. The wall will keep out foreign attackers not only because they are a threat to his people but also because they imperil the sacredness of this house (unless, of course, they come to acknowledge Yahweh). It will also keep out Israelites who abandon the sacredness. It will safeguard the sacredness of the courtyards and the house for people who safeguard their own sacredness. The wall is ten feet high and ten feet wide, like a city wall substantial enough to function for defensive purposes, and for defenders to stand on top, and to provide storerooms between the outer and inner wall.

**40:6–7a** Itwastheeastgatewaywhere the surveyor was standing. One might expect this, if the vision starts from where 10:18–11:25 troublesomely finished. It indeed begins, then, from the Mount of Olives side of the city, the side from which Yahweh’s magnificence will eventually arrive (43:1–4; Cook, 127). Its steps indicate that the entire complex is elevated above the land outside. The function of the gateways relates to that of the wall—guards would be stationed in them to make sure that only the legitimate people came into the complex. The one-reed “width” of the gateway threshold denotes the measurement from front to back rather than from side to side, which Ezekiel will refer to as its “length” (40:11). The far end of the gateway extends back into the first courtyard, beyond the width of the wall, as the gateways of a city may. The three alcoves or recesses set into the structure of the gateway are each ten feet square. The gateways’ pattern corresponds to the pattern of actual city gateways in Megiddo, Gezer, and Hazor, though those gateways are longer and narrower. They might thus both prevent the entrance of people who might profane the temple, and facilitate and encourage the entrance of people who should enter (cf. Psa 100:4; 122:2).[[34]](#footnote-35) There are then ten-foot-thick walls between the alcoves.

**40:7b–9** At the end of the gateway, another threshold leads from the gateway with its alcoves to the foyer on the inside of the gateway, which itself then leads into the first courtyard. The foyer on the inside of the gateway apparently measured ten feet internally, and twelve feet externally when one includes its walls. This inside foyer also had two jambs, which usually signifies a part of the structure of a building related to its entrance, and thus might imply that this is not an open foyer area but some kind of structure, like the gateway itself. The three-feet-wide jambs make it an impressive one.

**40:10–13** Ezekiel goes on to give more information about the alcoves, adding that there are jambs between them. He then also goes back to the gateway entrance and gives the measurement of its width and its greater “length,” which maybe means the total width of a broader entrance space outside. He adds that there is some kind of rail or low wall marking the front of each of the alcoves, eighteen inches high. The alcoves themselves are ten feet square, so that the measurement across the width of the gateway from the back of one alcove at the top, to the back of the opposite alcove at the top, is forty feet.

**40:14–16** The jambs at the gateway are an impressive, extraordinary, and impractical hundred feet high. It is the most concrete reminder that Ezekiel is relating a vision, not presenting a set of architectural drawings that are designed for implementing. The elliptical 40:14b apparently indicates that the surveyor started from a jamb at the courtyard end of the gateway and from there “did” (that is “measured”) all round the gateway structure. This half-implies that he measured both the jamb and the circumference of this structure, but it doesn’t say what it was. For different reasons, neither measuring project would be very practical, but again Ezekiel is not too worried about practicalities. While the account of the length of the gateway is also elliptical, it does give an actual measurement of eighty feet from the entrance to the gateway on the outside of the complex to the exit from the gateway into the first courtyard. The alcoves, their associated jambs, and the foyers had windows next to them, as would be needed, the jambs being decorated with engravings of palms—a feature suggesting continuity with Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 6:29–35). The gateway’s size, eighty feet by forty feet, is similar to that of Solomon’s temple itself, ninety feet by thirty feet (1 Kgs 6:2).

**40:17–19a** The guide conducts Ezekiel into the first courtyard to which the gateway leads, the “outer courtyard” as opposed to the “inner courtyard” round the actual temple building at the center of the complex. The complex as a whole which is a cross between a city and a temple has the kind of public courtyard that a temple regularly has, setting the temple building in a substantial open area where people might gather in the way described in Jeremiah and in the Gospels, and resembling the Dome of the Rock plaza in contemporary Jerusalem. It was where crowds might gather for worship and where prophets might preach and priests teach. The courtyard has a pavement round the inside of the city wall, “the lower pavement” in contrast to the pavement within the inner courtyard. It extends along the entire area either side of the gateways, and it has places that people might use for meetings or celebrations, or have as offices (cf. Jer 35:1–4; Ezra 10:6; Acts 5:12). It will become more explicit that there are three gateways, east, north, and south (40:20–27), with the temple and the inner courtyard occupying the west side of the complex. One might guess that there are ten chambers on each of the three sides, five on either side of each gateway. The distance across the first courtyard to the inner courtyard is then 175 feet.

**40:19b–27** The guide moves from the eastward gateway to the northern and then to the southern, which are the same, though Ezekiel adds interest by describing the steps that lead up to each of the gates. Presumably the eastward gateway also had them.

**40:28–37** The guide then conducts Ezekiel from the southern gateway into the first courtyard to the corresponding gateway from the first courtyard into to the inner courtyard, which stands opposite it, and then to the other two gateways between the first courtyard and the inner courtyard. These gateways on the south, east, and north of the inner courtyard are the same as the gateways on the outer courtyard, except that they stand eight rather than seven steps higher than their starting point. So the inner courtyard and the temple stand on a more elevated central platform. One would think that gateways implied a wall, which would ensure the exclusion of laypeople, but none is mentioned. In later practice the outer courtyard was the women’s courtyard and the inner courtyard was the men’s (*m. Middot* 2:5–6; Rashi, in MG). While gateways could suggest access but also issue a reminder about sacredness, if there was no wall, events such as the offering of sacrifices on the altar within the inner courtyard would be visible to people. The vision may imply distinctions between ordinary and sacred and between sacred and more sacred and most sacred, as Babylonian temples do,[[35]](#footnote-36) but the profile of Ezekiel’s distinction differs.

**40:38–43** Ezekiel slows down to focus on a feature of the inner courtyard, relating to the temple’s important role as the place of sacrifice. The process of sacrifice has three stages: slaughtering an animal, cleaning the parts that are to be offered (Lev 1:9, 13), and offering them by burning them on the altar. The slaughtering happens outside the gateways to the inner courtyard, the washing happens in a room within the gateways, and the offering happens on the altar, the other side of the gateways, in the inner courtyard. There are evidently tables for slaughtering on both sides of the approach to the inner gateway, but beyond that fact, a series of questions arise that it’s harder to be sure about. Eight might be the sum total of tables, four for slaughter outside and four for washing inside. Or the eight might be the slaughtering tables, with there being more inside for the washing. And “burnt offering,” the most important sacrifice, made daily as an act of worship on behalf of the people as a whole, may initially be shorthand for offerings in general. But references to it alone here or later may imply a different way of treating the other sacrifices, which do not involve offering the animal in its entirety. These other offerings are the decontamination offering, made when someone is defiled in a way that cannot be put right simply by the passage of time or by a sprinkling ceremony, and the restitution offering, made when someone has trespassed on Yahweh’s rights or territory. Ezekiel does not here mention the shared offering, made to accompany prayer, to fulfill a vow, or to express thanksgiving, but it does feature later (40:42). Further, while “gateways” would imply that the provision Ezekiel is about to explain featured at all three gateways, 40:39–40 refer only to the northern gateway (cf. Lev 1:11).

**40:44–46** The scene moves beyond the gateway to some locations within the courtyard, to the flanks of the northern and east gateways. MT refers to singers, whom one might expect to be Levites who were non-priestly, but one would think that only priests could be described as “having charge of” the house or the altar (cf. 44:16). So both these chambers surely relate to the work of priests, with two different areas of responsibility. If MT is right in referring to singers, the priests would evidently sing as well (one should not overestimate the skill required in this connection: it’s more like chanting or rap than a cathedral choir). Both groups of priests here are described as Zadoqites (בְּנֵי צׇדוֹק), which would naturally suggest those descendants of Aaron’s son Eleazar who are descended via Zadoq (see further 44:15). Now Ezek 40–48 contain the First Testament’s only references to the Zadoqites (2 Chr 31:10 refers to “the household of Zadoq), and “the paucity of biblical evidence makes it nearly impossible to draw credible conclusions about Zadokites or a Zadokite Priesthood.”[[36]](#footnote-37) Given that the priesthood also included the descendants of Aaron’s sons Ithamar, as well as the rest of the descendants of Eleazar, and that Ezekiel only ever implies that there are two groups of ministers, the Zadoqites and the Levites, “Zadoqites” looks like a broad term for priests in general. It covers all the descendants of Aaron, derived from Zadoq’s having been the first head priest in the First Temple (so Rashi in his comments on 43:9; 44:15, in MG; contrast, e.g., Cook, 17–18). The particular point in this context is that the two groups using the two chambers both “approach Yahweh to minister to him,” but one has responsibility for the altar in particular and the other for the temple building (see further 44:6–31). Specifically, they will have responsibility for seeing that neither get profaned or defiled in the way the temple and the altar have been—hence they have chambers in the inner court from which they can exercise this oversight (Block, 2:537).

### Biblical Theology Comments

Ezekiel’s temple vision complements the accounts of Moses’ wilderness sanctuary, Solomon’s temple, Zerubbabel’s temple, the Dead Sea Scrolls’ temple, Herod’s temple, Jesus as a temple, the church as a temple, and the lack of a temple in the new Jerusalem. He stands between the affirmation that the covenant chest is Yahweh’s footstool (Psa 132:7–8) and the implicit denial that even the temple is Yahweh’s footstool, because the earth itself is (Isa 66:1) (Zimmerli, 2:415–16). These visions complement one another in the way they affirm truths that contribute to a multiform understanding of the reality of God, of God’s presence with his people, and of the nature of worship. Over against some of those understandings, Yahweh here affirms that he is prepared to abide in a particular location where people can be sure of finding him. He is prepared to settle down. He wants it to be a place that signifies both his accessibility and his sacredness. He is prepared for his people to have a place where they can meet with him. He wishes to tell them what it should be like, rather than have them use their imagination. He wishes it to be a place open to everyone and not too closely associated with the administration. He wants its worship to involve bodily action and not just inner attitude.

### Application and Devotional Implications

Ezek 40–48 interweaves vision and instructions. Its being a vision suggests that it is something that exists with God and/or something whose fulfillment God intends to bring about. God will make sure that this temple comes into being. There is a contrast with the account of the wilderness sanctuary, where Yahweh gives Moses a construction plan that he is to implement, and the account of Solomon’s temple, where David and Solomon decide what to build and see it gets built. Here, the surveyor enables Ezekiel to see what is to be built but issues no commission to build (Cook, 113). There are indeed modern Jews or Christians who are looking forward to building Ezekiel’s temple when they get the chance.[[37]](#footnote-38) But “the rhetorical purpose of the guided tour is to measure the proportion of the house of Yhwh, not to provide a building plan for a temple.”[[38]](#footnote-39) Jerome (452) sees this temple as not one “to be built literally” when the Messiah comes or comes back, but one “being built daily in the saints.” Along the same lines, Martin Luther comments

As to how all the parts of the prophecy are to be interpreted and arranged, we will leave that until that life in which we shall see the whole building finished and complete. We cannot see it all now, since it is still under construction, and much of the stone and wood that belong to it is not yet born, let alone prepared for use in building. It is enough that we know it to be the house of God, his own building in which we all are. Whoever has the leisure and the inclination can look into it and investigate it extensively, if he will take up the word of God and the sacraments, with their powers and the effects which the Holy Spirit works in the church through them, and bring these things into agreement.[[39]](#footnote-40)

The building is God’s business. But God does give Ezekiel and his people instructions about how the sanctuary is to operate properly (which Solomon and his successors did not ensure) and about the ethical practice that goes along with that (which Solomon and his successors also did not implement).

### Selected Bibliography

Bergsma, John S. “The Restored Temple as ‘Built Jubilee’ in Ezekiel 40–48.” *Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society and the Midwest Region Society of Biblical Literature* 24 (2004): 75–85.

Ganzel, Tova. “Between the Prophet and his Prophecy.” In Tova Ganzel, Yehuda Brandes, and Chayita Deutsch, ed., *The Believer and the Modern Study of the Bible*, 463–80. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019.

Ganzel, Tova. *Ezekiel’s Visionary Temple in Babylonian Context*. BZAW 539. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021.

Ganzel, Tova, and Shalom E. Holtz. “Ezekiel’s Temple in Babylonian Context.” *VT* 64 (2014): 211–26.

Hunt, Alice. *Missing Priests: The Zadokites in Tradition and History*. LHBOTS 452. London: T&T Clark, 2006.

Jeffrey, Grant R. *The New Temple and the Second Coming: The Prophecy that Points to Christ’s Return in Your Generation*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2007.

Joyce, Paul M. “Ezekiel 40–42: The Earliest 'Heavenly Ascent' Narrative?” In Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp, ed., The Book of Ezekiel and its Influence, 17-41. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.

Liss, Hanna. "‘Describe the Temple to the House of Israel’: Preliminary Remarks on the Temple Vision in the Book of Ezekiel and the Question of Fictionality in Priestly Literatures.” In Ehud Ben Zvi, ed., *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*, 122–43. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.

Rhyder, Julia. “Gates and Entrances in Ezekiel 40–48: The Social Utopia of the Temple Vision.” Forthcoming in *VT*.

O’Hare, Daniel M. Have *You Seen, Son of Man? A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48.* SBLSCS 57. Atlanta: SBL, 2010.

Stevenson, Kalinda Rose. *Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48*. SBLDS 154. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.

Tuell, Steven S. “Ezekiel 40–42 as Verbal Icon.” *CBQ* 58 (1996): 649–64.

Young, Rodger C. “Ezekiel 40:1 as a Corrective for Seven Wrong Ideas in Biblical Interpretation.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44 (2006): 265–83.

## The Palace (40:47–42:20)

### Outline

After the sidebar concerning the chambers that are associated with the gateway into the inner courtyard, Ezekiel resumes his account of the surveyor’s taking him round the temple complex and measuring it. Ezekiel’s initial report continues to focus on simple architectural facts and measurements. The effect is to suggest in a matter-of-fact way that the temple exists in the purpose of God but also that it is definitely going to come into existence on the ground. The account is thus a further piece of performative language. Like 40:1–46, it includes sidebars describing aspects of the temple. It also incorporates occasional interpretive comments, which stand out against the general focus on facts:

* “This is the most sacred” (41:4)
* “This is the table, before Yahweh’” (41:22)
* “Sacred chambers” where the priests eat and de-vest (42:13–14)
* “To separate between the sacred and the ordinary” (42:20)

Although it is mostly concerned with down-to earth matters (or perhaps because it is thus concerned), much of the account is hard to understand. It includes a number of hapaxes,\* a number of sentences difficult to construe, and a number difficult to relate to one another as part of a map of the temple complex. As was the case with 40:5–46, some of the specifics would be clear to Ezekiel’s listeners as they are not to later readers, but some would likely be ambiguous even to those original listeners, so that both original listeners and later readers just have to think about them but not hope to interrelate them. They are like features of Ezekiel’s earlier visions, and features of other visions in the Scriptures. Or they are like aspects of the opening scriptural narrative that raises questions such as “Where did Cain get his wife from?” Such unclarities and ambiguities do not give the impression that listeners should spend too much time imagining the map becoming a reality, or that they should try to turn it into reality, or that they should infer from it actual realities from Zerubbabel’s temple. On the other hand, neither need they inhibit listeners from responding to the vision. It invites them to walk round the scene and imagine its promise fulfilled, in a fashion parallel to Psa 48:12–14 [13–15]:

Go round Zion [or this city], circle it,

count its towers,

Set your mind on its rampart,

go through its citadels,

In order that you may tell a future generation [or rather, this one]

that this is God,

God for all time and evermore—

he will direct us against death.

The passage unfolds:

The guide completes a measuring and demonstrating of

The temple courtyard, foyer, and main hall (40:47–41:2)

The most sacred place (41:3–4)

The temple walls and galleries (41:5–7)

Ezekiel sees and describes the nature of the galleries (41:8–12)

The guide measures the house as a whole (41:13–15a)

Ezekiel describes the internal features of the hall (41:15b–26)

The guide completes the tour:

The chambers behind the temple building (42:1)

Ezekiel describes them (42:2–12)

Their significance (42:13–14)

The inner house and courtyard (42:15–20)

There are thus stretches within the passage where the narrative gives way to factual description of aspects of the temple, most evidently in 41:15b–26 and 42:2–12. Such sections compare with 40:38–46 following on 40:1–37. Even more than in 40:1–46, Ezekiel write or speaks substantially in verbless clauses that are rather like shorthand notes. Ezekiel or a curator may well have added the description material to the narrative to fill out its picture, or this material may have featured as part of Ezekiel’s perception in the vision or his original communication of it.

### Translation

40:47He measured the courtyard: length, a hundred cubits, and width, a hundred cubits, foursquare, with the altar in front of the house.

48He had me come into the foyer of the house, and he measured a foyer jamb: five cubits [deep] on each side. The width of the gateway: fourteen cubits, and the flanks of the gateway: three cubits on each side. 49The length of the foyer: twenty cubits, and the width: eleven cubits.[[40]](#footnote-41) By ten steps people would go up to it. Pillars by the jambs, one on each side.

41:1He had me come into the hall, and he measured the jambs: six cubits in width on each side, the width of the tent. 2The width of the entrance: ten cubits, and the flanks of the entrance: five cubits on each side. He measured its length: forty cubits, and width: twenty cubits.

3He came inside, and measured the entrance jamb: two cubits [in length], the entrance: six cubits, and the width of the entrance [flanks]: seven cubits. 4He measured its length: twenty cubits, and width: twenty cubits, corresponding to the front of the hall.[[41]](#footnote-42) He said to me, “This is the most sacred.”

5He measured the wall of the house: six cubits, and the width of the gallery: four cubits all round the house, around.

* 6The galleries, gallery by gallery: three, and thirty units.
* Insets[[42]](#footnote-43) in the wall of the house,[[43]](#footnote-44) to be supports for the gallery all round, so that there are not supports in the house’s wall. 7It became wider and it circled round, upward and upward in relation to the galleries, because the house was surrounded upward and upward all round the house. Therefore the width of the house [went] upward, and thus from the bottom one would go up to the top by the middle.
* 8I saw the house had a raised area all round, the foundations of the galleries: the full length[[44]](#footnote-45) of a rod, six cubits in span.[[45]](#footnote-46)
* 9The width of the wall, that of the gallery, outside: five cubits.
* What was left free between the galleries of the house 10and the chambers: width, twenty cubits round the house, all round.
* 11An opening to the gallery via what was left free: one opening northward and one opening south. The width of the space in what was left free: five cubits all round.
* 12The structure that faced the yard on the westward side: width, seventy cubits.
* The structure’s wall: five cubits in width all round.
* Its length: ninety cubits.

13He measured the house. Length, a hundred cubits. The yard, the structure, and its walls: length, a hundred cubits. 14The width of the front of the house and the yard to the east: a hundred cubits. 15He measured the length of the structure facing the yard, at the back of [the house], with its balconies[[46]](#footnote-47) on each side: a hundred cubits.

* The hall inside, and the courtyard foyers: 16the thresholds, the beveled windows, and the balconies, round the three of them, opposite the threshold, paneled[[47]](#footnote-48) with wood, all round, [from] the ground to the windows, with the windows covered.
* 17Above the entrance and as far as the inner house, both outside and on the entire wall, all round in the inside and in the outside, patterns.[[48]](#footnote-49) 18Griffins and palms made, with a palm between each griffin. Two faces for a griffin, 19a human face toward the palm on one side and a lion face toward the palm on the other side, made on the entire house all round. 20The griffins and the palms made from the ground to above the opening.
* The wall of the hall: 21the hall with squared doorframe, and in front of the sacred place, something similar in appearance.[[49]](#footnote-50)
* 22The altar: wood, three cubits in height. Its length: two cubits. Its corners belonging to it, its length, and its walls: wood. He spoke to me, “This is the table, before Yahweh.”
* 23Two doors to the hall, and to the sacred place. 24Two doors to the two doors, doors that could be made to turn, two doors for one door and two doors for the other. 25Made on them (on the doors of the hall), griffins and palms, as made for the walls.
* A wood canopy[[50]](#footnote-51) at the front of the foyer, outside.
* 26Beveled windows and palms on each side, at the flanks of the foyer, the house’s galleries, and the canopies.

42:1He had me go out into the outer courtyard by way of the northward path, and come into the chambers,[[51]](#footnote-52) over against the yard and over against the structure, to the north.

* 2The front of the length [of the structure]: a hundred cubits, the opening north.[[52]](#footnote-53) The width: fifty cubits. 3Over against the twenty [cubits] of the inner courtyard, and over against the pavement of the outer courtyard: balcony by balcony, in threes.[[53]](#footnote-54) 4In front of the chambers, a walkway ten cubits in width in the inner [courtyard] direction, one cubit [away]. Its entrances on the north.
* 5The upper chambers: shortened, because the balconies took away from them more than the underneath ones and the middle ones in the structure. 6Because they were made in threes and they had no jambs like the jambs in the courtyards—therefore it narrowed compared with the underneath ones and with the middle ones, from the ground.
* 7The partition, on the outside, parallel to the chambers, in the direction of the outer courtyard, in front of the chambers, its length: fifty cubits. 8Because the length of the chambers, in the outer courtyard: fifty cubits, while there, at the front of the hall: a hundred cubits. 9Beneath these chambers, the entrance from the east, when one comes there from the outer courtyard 10(with the width of the courtyard partition).
* Eastward in front of the yard, in front of the structure, chambers, 11and a path in front of them, of similar appearance to the chambers northward. In accordance with their length, so their width and all their exits, and in accordance with their specifications and with their entrances. 12So in accordance with the entrances to the chambers southward: an entrance at the head of the path in the direction in front of the corresponding[[54]](#footnote-55) partition, eastward, when one comes into them.[[55]](#footnote-56)

13He said to me, “The north chambers, the south chambers, in front of this yard: sacred chambers where the priests who approach Yahweh will eat the most sacred things—they will set down the most sacred things, both the grain offering, the expiation offering, and the restitution offering, because the place is sacred. 14When they come in, the priests, they will not go out from the sacred area to the outer courtyard but set down there the clothes that they minister in, because they are sacred, and they will put on other clothes and approach the people’s area.”

15He finished the measurements of the inner house[[56]](#footnote-57) and had me go out by way of the gateway whose orientation was eastward, and he measured all round.16He measured the east side with the measuring rod: 500 round in rods by the measuring rod. 17He measured the north side: 500 round in rods by the measuring rod. 18The south side he measured: 500 in rods by the measuring rod. 19He turned to the west side—he measured 500 in rods with the measuring rod. 20On four sides he measured it. It had a wall all round, length 500 and width 500, to separate between the sacred and the ordinary.

### Textual Notes

The introductory textual note to 40:1–46 also applies here.

**40:48** “Fourteen cubits. The flanks of the gateway:” is not in MT, but something seems to be missing from MT there and LXX suggests אַרְבַּע עֶשְֹרֵי אַמׇּה וְכׅתְפוֹת הַשַּׁר, lost through homoioteleuton\* (Cooke, 445).

**40:49** For MT “eleven,” LXX has “twelve,” which makes the math work better (see Taylor, 255).

For אֲשֶׁר וּבְמַעֲכוֹת “by steps that,” I follow LXX “by ten steps,” which implies עֶשֶֶֹר וּבְמַעֲכוֹת.

**41:1** For הׇאֹפֶל, “the tent,” LXX το αιλαμ implies הׇאֻלׇם, “the foyer,” or הׇאֵילׅים, “the jambs.”

**41:3** For וְרֹהַב, “and the width of,” LXX “and the flanks of” implies וְכׅתְפוֹת.

At the end of the verse, LXX “on each side” implies מׅפֹּה וְשֶׁבַע אַמּוֹת מׅפֹּּה.

**41:7 “**Andfrom” translates MTC ומן (cf. LXX) rather than MTALR וְכֵן “and thus” (Allen, 2:224).

**41:8** For the near-hapaxמוּסְדוֹת (instead of מוֹסְדוֹת),“foundations,” K מסדות may imply pual ptpl מְיֻסׇּדוֹת, “founded” (Cooke, 453).

**41:15** For Q וְאַתּׅיקֶיהׇא, K has ואתוקיהא**.** The unusualsuffixparallels forms at Qumran (Zimmerli, 2:374).

**41:16** For הַסּׅפּׅים, “thresholds,” LXX “paneled” suggests סְפֻנּׅים.

**41:21–22** Over the first הַהֵיכׇל, MT has four dots, suggesting it has questions.[[57]](#footnote-58) LXX, Vg. lack one of the word’s two occurrences here.

**41:22** For וְאׇרְכּוֹ, “and its length,” LXX “and its base” implies וְאַדְנוֹ.

**41:22** After “two cubits,” LXX also has “and its width two cubits,” implying וְרׇחְבּוֹ שְׁתַּיׅם אמּוֹת (*BHS*).

**42:2** For ּפֶּתַח, “opening,” on the basis of LXX, NRSV reads פְּאַת, “side” (cf. 41:12), though LXX’s “toward” hardly implies this.

**42:4** For דֶּרֶךְ אַמׇּה אֶחׇד, “direction one cubit,” LXX “a hundred cubits length” suggests אֹרֶךְ מֵאׇה אַמׇּה (Cooke, 461; NRSV).

**42:9** For Q וּמׅתַּחַת הַלְּשׇׁכוֹת, “under the chambers,” K has a different word-division, ומתחתה לשכות.

And for K המבוא, “the entrance,” Q has הַמֵּבׅיא, “one who enters.”

**42:10** For מֵהַקׇּדׅים, “from the east,” LXX has a reference to the south, implying הַדׇּרוֹם.

**42:16** For Q מֵאוֹת, “hundred,” K has אמות, “cubits.”

**42:20** For לְחֹל, “and the ordinary,” LXX “and the outer wall” implies לְחֵל. LXX then goes on, “in the design of the house.”

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**40:47** Proceeding with his measuring and his conducted tour, the guide continues into the inner courtyard, and specifically into the half of the inner courtyard in front of the actual temple. The distance across is a substantial 175 feet, the same as the distance across the first courtyard from the gateway to the inner courtyard. Ezekiel here both refers to the area being one hundred by one hundred cubits and also uses the actual word “foursquare” (מְרֻבׇּעַת, pual participle from רׇבַַע, related to the word for “four,” אַרְבַּע). He thus draws attention to a feature of the complex as a whole that makes for a contrast with David’s city and Solomon’s temple. It makes for a comparison with the courtyard of the wilderness sanctuary, which Ezekiel and his listeners might have understood to be similarly proportioned (see Exod 27:9–19). They might also know that it compared with the measurements a king such as Esarhaddon gives for his constructions in Babylon, which emphasize squareness (Odell, 490).[[58]](#footnote-59) The squareness further suggests that Ezekiel’s vision outlines “an ordered, systematic picture of God’s restoration” that contrasts with the violent, lurid, wild, bloody nature of the picture of things that has dominated the rest of the scroll. Against that background, measurement and precision are healing and creative.[[59]](#footnote-60) We will hear more of the altar in 43:13–17. The twofold point that Ezekiel implies here is on one hand that the altar stands in the courtyard and could thus be visible to people, and on the other hand that it is oriented to the house and the reality of the presence of Yahweh (Zimmerli, 2:355).

**40:48–49** At last we reach the “house” itself, though initially only its foyer. Once more, entering involves ascending steps. The structure is another level higher than the inner courtyard, as the inner courtyard is higher than the outer courtyard (41:8). The foyer gateway is twenty cubits across, with its actual opening fourteen cubits. The rest of the width is occupied by the load-bearing jambs. The gateway’s design thus makes events inside the hall in principle public rather than invisible, for people in the right position in the inner or outer courtyard. The pillars (עַמֻּדׅים) by the jamb recall Yakin and Bo′az (1 Kgs 7:15–22), which had been broken up and taken off to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:13). Like Yakin and Bo′az, these pillars may have been freestanding rather than part of the load-bearing structure of the edifice. They are an aspect of what makes the temple look impressive, and they may have symbolic significance. There is in any case further promise in the assumption that pillars similar to Yakin and Bo′az are present in this visionary temple.

**41:1–2** Ezekiel’s guide leads him from the foyer into the main part of the “house,” its great hall. The word for “hall” (הֵיכׇל) can denote the entirety of a building, a palace or a temple. Or it can denote the central or dominant feature in a building, the great hall within a palace or the nave within a temple—which is the reference here. Like the word “house,” it does not in itself denote a religious building, like words such as *temple* or *nave*. For this purpose, the First Testament has especially the word “sanctuary” (מׅקְדׇּשׁ; e.g., 44:1). Ezek 40–42, however, focuses more on the temple as Yahweh’s “house,” which is palace-like in the way appropriate to a King, and also presupposes that there is no regular royal palace in this “city.” The “hall” is the King’s administrative and semi-public meeting space, to which his staff (the priests) have access, though all his citizens have access to him in the palace’s outer courtyard.

The entrance to the hall is flanked by impressive ten-foot-wide jambs, wider than the foyer’s jambs. Here Ezekiel makes explicit a comparison with and a reminder of the wilderness tent sanctuary with similar dimensions and a similar division between the sacred place and the most sacred place (e.g., Exod 26:33; *CTAT*, 347). This is the only reference to the “tent” (אֹהֶל) in Ezekiel. In other respects Ezekiel describes a building that compares with Solomon’s temple. In cubit numbers it is the same size (1 Kgs 6:2, 16–17),[[60]](#footnote-61) so this comment on the tent complements that description (Hävernick, 666–68; cf. Fairbairn, 461). The jambs being wider than the ones in the foyer, the actual entrance to the hall is narrower. The hall measures a little more than sixty feet by thirty feet. Ezekiel’s listeners will perhaps assume that the incense altar, lampstand, and presence bread table are there (cf. 41:22), but this vision focuses on the complex’s ground plan.

**41:3–4** The building as a whole has the common three-part structure of a middle-eastern temple, which also recurs in churches. Naturally, the guide alone goes “inside” into the palace’s inner room. It is the equivalent of the King’s private quarters, where even a priest goes only once a year to clean it up from defilement brought by the proximity of the people. The entrance narrows again, from fourteen cubits to ten cubits to six cubits. And the size of this inner room is half that of the hall, a little more than thirty feet square, in cubit terms the same as the equivalent room in Solomon’s temple. Ezekiel’s listeners might again assume that the two statues of griffins (“cherubim”) and the covenant chest are there, or at least may wonder about that. But the guide confirms the vision’s focus on the ground plan. His speaking indicates the importance of this moment, with his comment, “This is the most sacred” (קֹדֶשׁ הַקׇּדׇשׁׅים, traditionally “holy of holies”), being the vision’s first explicit reference to sacredness. Actually, “sacred space” is a concept like “holy war” and “salvation history that recurs in Western writings but introduces a foreign conceptuality into Ezekiel and the rest of the First Testament.[[61]](#footnote-62) The inner room is the most sacred place precisely because it is the personal place of Yahweh, the sacred one. “The sacred place is one that has a direct and immediate connection with God.” It is “a place where God dwells” and “where God reveals himself to humanity.”[[62]](#footnote-63) The sanctuary is one outstanding embodiment of that fact. Here, the description “the most sacred” makes another link with the wilderness sanctuary, where the expression occurs twenty-four times. While it also occurs three times in the account of Solomon’s temple, 1 Kings prefers the term “inner room” (דְּבׅיר), which Ezekiel does not use.

**41:5–7** After this brief summary account of the building’s three-part structure, the guide moves out to measure the “house” as a whole from the outside. Its walls are ten feet thick, and attached to them is a three-level, seven-feet-wide gallery. More literally, this is a “side” structure or a structure of “side” rooms (צֵלַע, the word for a “rib” in Gen 2:21–22). Like the English word *gallery*, the Hebrew word can be used in the singular as a collective noun\* (41:5) or in the plural (41:6). Here, it denotes a structure going round the north, east, and south sides of the house. Despite the detail that Ezekiel gives, the description of the galleries is too elliptical to make sense on its own. It becomes easier to understand when read in light of features of Solomon’s temple as described in 1 Kgs 6:1–10, which it apparently presupposes. That account makes two key facts explicit. The three galleries in that temple increased in width as one goes upwards, for reasons related to their “insets” (בׇּאוֹת). The wall gets narrower as it gets higher, and thus provides ledges on which the galleries can rest without the need to drive supports into the wall. This safeguards the wholeness of the house in a way parallel to the use of whole stones, which in 1 Kgs 6:7 directly follows the description of them. In Solomon’s temple one gained access to the upper galleries by means of some stairs (לוּלׅים), which LXX describes as winding stairs, ἑλικτὴ, helix-like (Vg. uses the word *coclea*,which suggests something resembling the shell of a snail). But that Hebrew word in 1 Kgs 6:8 need only mean stairs like ones in a house (cf. *DTT*, 698). Ezekiel’s repeated references to things going round might include reference to a winding staircase but may simple allude to the galleries going round the building. Either way, Ezekiel is presupposing that the three-level gallery follows the Solomonic pattern as it becomes wider as one goes up, and that the galleries go all round the three sides of the wall. Ezekiel’s numbers are also ambiguous, and may indicate thirty units altogether or thirty on each of the three levels. He says nothing about the purpose of the galleries, but it would be obvious to him and to his listeners that an actual temple like Solomon’s would need storage facilities for the equipment needed for worship, for the temple’s silver and gold, for the tithes of grain, olive oil, wine, and so on: and for scrolls (2 Kgs 22:8)!

**41:8–12** A raised area round the outside of the house forms the bottom level of the galleries’ support structure. Then, outside the house and the galleries and their wall, there is a substantial open space “left free” (מֻנׇּח, hophal from נוּחַ), over thirty feet wide, all round. Within this open space, an eight-foot strip comprises a walkway leading from access points north and south that will both provide and control access to the gallery, via the staircase. Perhaps the walkway is distinguished by being paved, whereas the rest of the open space is left as dirt. Beyond the open space there is a wall, and beyond that wall a set of “chambers” (לׅשְׁכׇּה; this word can also be used either as a collective noun or as numerical singular and plural). They mark the edge of the inner courtyard as a whole. Chambers with varying purposes have already featured in 40:17, 38, 44–46, and elsewhere the First Testament refers to chambers as meeting rooms or storage rooms. But the fact that the gallery’s walls were wider than the gallery itself (41:5, 9) may imply that the gallery’s protecting the temple is at least as important as its storage role (Cook, 156), and the same will apply to these chambers.

Ezekiel notes one further large “structure” (בּׅנְיׇן; the word occurs only in Ezek 40–42), located the other side of a “yard” which is a continuation to the west of the space “left free” between the house and the chambers. It thus occupies most of the space between the house and the western wall of the complex as a whole.

**41:13–15a** Ezekiel summarizes some implications of the guide’s measuring activity. In some contrast with the detailed measurements through 40:47–41:12, he does not indicate precisely how each of the four groupings totals a hundred cubits. Wisely, commentators generally avoid suggesting how the arithmetic might work, especially for the main house. The significance of this summary comment lies in the sum totals, as they point to the symmetrical nature of the temple and other features of the inner courtyard, and specifically to the way things work by hundreds. The figure of a hundred parallels figures such as the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1, the seventy years of passages such as Jer 25:11–12, the 490 years of Dan 9:25, the sequences of fourteen generations in Matt 1:2–17—and the 390 and forty of Ezek Ezek 4. They are not designed to reflect or to be the basis of literal calculations. They refer to historical realties, but in themselves they are symbolic figures.

**41:15b–26** Ezekiel has been interweaving a narrative account of the guide’s leading and measuring, on one hand, and shorthand notes regarding the results of the measuring and regarding what Ezekiel saw, on the other. Here he abandons the narrative framework and confines himself to shorthand notes except in 41:22b, which includes the only finite verb in this paragraph.

* Wood paneling covers the inside of the main hall, the courtyard foyers, on three sides the thresholds and the beveled windows (like the ones in the gateway alcoves, 40:6–7, 16), and the balconies (like the ones in the structure to the west, 41:15a), from the ground to the window frames. The identification of these parts of the temple is uncertain. But “the description implies that every inch of wall space was paneled with wood” (Block, 2: 558).
* Inside and outside the main house, the wooden paneling is engraved with griffins and palms, in partial overlap with the engraving of Solomon’s temple, and with the creatures in Ezekiel’s first vision. Again, even where the reference to locations is unclear, the cumulative effect of the verse is to emphasize the scale of the carving all over the temple. We can presumably assume that the griffins have their usual significance, as creatures that protect. The First Testament is less explicit on the symbolism of the palm, but it may suggest impressiveness and flourishing (Psa 92:12; Cant 7:7).
* The squared doorframes at the entrance to the hall and to the sacred place contrast with ones in Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 6:31) but match the note on squareness running through the vision (see especially 40:47).
* The wooden altar is a cross between a table for the presence bread and an incense altar (on which with care one could burn incense). This table, too, is square, in contrast to the one in the wilderness sanctuary (Exod 25:23). The corners will resemble the horns on a sacrificial altar, but omitting such a description would hinder their being treated like the horns of an altar. As the altar in the forecourt is ready for sacrifices to be offered, the table is ready for bread to be shared or incense to be burned.
* At the entrance to the main hall and at the entrance to the sacred place there are two pairs of swinging doors, “creating a sort of ‘airlock’ between the rooms of the temple building” (Cook, 164). There are more griffins and palms here and more palms at the end of this sidebar.

**42:1** Ezekiel briefly resumes his narrative. The guide has introduced him to the temple and measured its wall and galleries, and Ezekiel has described the galleries, the chambers, the structure west of the temple, and aspects of the inside of the hall (41:6–26), but in the vision the guide and the prophet are still inside the temple. The guide now first takes Ezekiel out into the inner courtyard, then from the inner courtyard through the northern gateway into the outer courtyard, then westward along the outside of the courtyard until they come to yet another set of chambers beyond the temple’s northwest corner. These chambers sitting over against the northwestern outer wall of the temple complex are thus next to the “structure” (בּׅנְיׇן) due west of the temple. And it is adjacent to the “yard” (גּׅזְרׇה) which is a continuation of the open area either side of the temple, the space “left free” (41:9–11), between the temple and the structure. Ezekiel will eventually indicate that there is a twin chamber building the other side of the structure (42:11–13).

**42:2–4** Ezekiel reverts to description of the ground plan of the complex as a whole. The “structure” measures a hundred cubits by fifty. The phrase “the opening [to the] north” implies that its longer measurement is its east-west one facing the chamber building to the north, the direction from which Ezekiel approaches it. The chamber building sits between the twenty-cubit open space round the temple which has the temple itself lying to its southeast and the pavement in front of the wall of the outer courtyard to its west. “Balcony by balcony, in threes” apparently means that there were three parts to the chamber building, which can thus be seen as three chambers. The following verses will explain this further. The “walkway” is a passageway inside the chamber building, “one cubit” perhaps being the distance from the outside.

**42:5–6** Three sections of the chamber building apparently have three different heights, and respectively have three stories, two stories, and one story. Ezekiel may here imply that someone on the top story would be aware that their story could have been much bigger but it is reduced in size because the shorter two-story and one-story sections reduce its potential, which was also reduced by the chambers’ lack of “jambs” or load-bearing columns. But of the upper chambers, Rashi comments, “I do not understand them at all,” and Qimhi comments, “I say, Elijah is destined to explain this passage” (both in MG). One might extend his point to apply to much of 42:1–12.

**42:7–12** To the north of the chambers is a partition (גֶדֶר). The term implies something less substantial than a wall, but significant as a marker. The hundred cubits to which Ezekiel then refers is the distance across the inner courtyard in front of the temple. The partition’s role will be hinted at by the explanation of the chambers’ role (42:13–14). Meanwhile, a note concerning the means of entry through the partition hints at the protection provided by it. A balancing set of chambers on the south side of the structure (42:10b–12) has a balancing arrangement of exits and entrances.

**42:13–14** The points about partitions, exits, and entrances leads into an account of the chambers’ function, which explains why they have the partition and the specified arrangements. An aspect of the privilege and responsibility of priests is to eat certain parts of sacrifices, and the priests need to work with the fact that these are sacred things. By God’s decree, they have been given over to God. They are like the Sabbath, which no one may trespass on, or like the most sacred place within the temple, which no one may trespass on. In the case of the offerings, priests may and must eat them, but lay people may not. Designating a place for eating them safeguards this point, and the partitions discourage laypeople from coming too near. The most sacred things are specified portions of the grain offering, the expiation offering, and the restitution offering (cf. Lev 6:17–18 [10–11]). Laypeople may partake of the shared offering (see 43:27) in the chambers in the outer courtyard, so questions about them do not arise here. And the entirety of the burnt offering (see 40:39) is burnt, so the question of bringing part of it away from the altar does not arise. In addition, priests mark the distinctiveness of their actions in leading worship by putting on special clothes, and the chambers will also function as vestries or sacristies.

**42:15–20** The guide brings his task of guiding and measuring to a close, and Ezekiel brings his account to a close. This paragraph thus forms an interim pair with 40:1–4. The guide takes Ezekiel out of the inner courtyard by the way they came in and sets about confirming the measurement of the entire complex.

Until the mid-twentieth century, translations assumed that the complex measured 500 rods on each side, but many subsequent translations have assumed that the measurements that were indeed made in rods produced a result in cubits, 500 cubits on each side. The first assumption generates a complex that is a mile square, rather larger than the Temple Mount as it is now. It would be unrealistic, which would be an aspect of its significance: these temple plans are not for someone to set about implementing (Fairbairn, 469–70). The second assumption would mean a complex that would fit within the Temple Mount as it is now, but is still larger than Solomon’s temple. It matches better the scale of the other measurements in Ezek 40–42, where for an east-west measurement, for instance, 40:27 has given 100 cubits as the distance across the outer courtyard and 41:13 has listed four further 100-cubit measurements beyond that one to take the measurements to the other side of the complex.

Either way, instead of a temple that was a royal chapel surrounded by the palace courtyard, this is a temple that is the heavenly King’s palace surrounded by a courtyard that anyone could go into, with a city wall and city gates. “In the vision of restoration, the king’s palace is not rebuilt but replaced by Yahweh’s compound” and “the dimensions of this new house for Yahweh are literally palatial. Whereas the temple built by Solomon was only 20 cubits by 60 cubits (1 Kgs 6:2), Ezekiel’s is 50 cubits by 100 cubits, exactly the dimensions of Solomon’s palace (1 Kgs 7:20). Even the areas encompassed by just one of the six outer and inner gates exceeds that encompassed by Solomon’s temple” (Odell, 490).

### Biblical Theology Comments

Distinguishing between the sacred or holy and the ordinary (42:20) is an important theme in Exodus, Leviticus and Ezekiel, but not so much in Genesis and Jeremiah. Further, sacredness or holiness is a more important theme in the First Testament than in the New Testament, though ironically it is the New Testament that puts an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and it urges people to present themselves to God as something holy or sacred (Rom 12:1). Yet further, one of the first things God did was make a day sacred (Gen 2:3), while one of the last things the Scriptures talk about is a holy city, a sacred city, which these chapters in Ezekiel helped John picture (Rev 21–22). While occasionally holiness suggests moral qualities such as faithfulness and rectitude, most often it denotes God in his distinctive supernatural God-ness, and to denote aspects of the world and of life that come to be identified with that. They cease to be ordinary, regular, and everyday, and constitute a reminder that the ordinary, regular, and everyday is not all that there is. They lift our eyes heavenwards and hinder us taking ourselves too seriously. God is holy, the Holy Spirit is holy: the Scriptures do not describe God as our partner or our buddy. They offer us the encouragement that he is our loving master and they challenge us, in offering ourselves to him as something sacred, to embody in the world something extraordinary. The sacred space, sacred time, sacred actions, and sacred people that we develop or are, may likewise speak of the out-of-the-ordinary God who has made himself known to us.

### Application and Devotional Implications

Sacredness extends to sacrifices in varying senses. “Every whole-burnt offering is a sacrifice but not every sacrifice is a whole burnt-offering. For in a sacrifice part of a beast, but indeed in a whole burnt offering the whole beast, is wont to be offered.… For when someone consecrates one thing and not another it is a sacrifice. But when he shall consecrate to Almighty God everything he has, everything he knows, his entire life, it is a whole burnt-offering.” Then this person does not offer a whole burnt-offering, but becomes a whole burnt-offering (Gregory, 409–10).

Given that the grain offering, the expiation offering, and the restitution offering are not given wholly to God, as the burnt offering is, different questions about sacredness arise in relation to the different offerings. They all issue reminders of priorities and possible failures. We can live our lives for ourselves, not least in offering God worship whose main significance is to make us feel good. We can get stained by things that we do: adultery, incest, and pornography are spectacular ways of becoming stained. We can rob people of what is rightfully theirs (and thereby offend God, too): our respect, appreciation, or faithfulness. The grain offering compares with the burnt offering as something people give to God simply as an act of commitment. They get nothing out of it. The expiation offering has a mysterious capacity to dissolve the stain that wrongdoing can generate. The restitution offering makes up for some way in which we have deprived God as well as other people of something that belonged to them. In due course Jesus’s offering of himself to God on our behalf is the ultimate act of commitment, it has the ultimate capacity to dissolve our stain, and it compensates for our failure. But that didn’t absolve the Israelites from taking responsibility for their self-offering, cleansing, and reparation, and neither does it absolve believers in Jesus.

### Selected Bibliography

Block, Daniel I. “Guarding the Glory of YHWH: Ezekiel’s Geography of Sacred Space.” In Block, *Beyond the River Chebar: Studies in Kingship and Eschatology in the Book of Ezekiel*, 175–96. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.

Driver, Godfrey R. “Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems. “ *Biblica* 35 (1954): 145–59, 299–312.

Japhet, Sara. “Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Space.” In Benjamin Z. Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, ed., *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land. Proceedings of the International Conference in Memory of Joshua Prawer*, 55–72. London: Macmillan, 1998.

Simon, Bennett. “Ezekiel’s Geometric Vision of the Restored Temple: From the Rod of His Wrath to the Reed of His Measuring.” *HTR* 102 (2009): 411–38.

## Mine Eyes Have Seen the Coming of the Glory of the Lord[[63]](#footnote-64) (43:1–27)

### Outline

Part One of the Ezekiel scroll began with Yahweh’s magnificence appearing. Part Two began with this magnificence distancing itself from the temple. Part Six began with a vision that comes to a climax with Yahweh’s magnificence returning to the temple. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that “this great scene, so simply described, is really the culmination of Ezekiel's prophecy” (Skinner, 422).

After the completion of his temple tour, Ezekiel resumes his narrative, though the narrative becomes an account of Yahweh speaking:

Yahweh in his magnificence comes into the temple and a spirit takes Ezekiel there (43:1–5)

Yahweh speaks to Ezekiel there (43:6):

The Israelites are to put away their idolatry (43:7–9)

Ezekiel is to describe the temple to them (43:10–12)

What the altar is to be like (43:13–17)

Yahweh speaks further to Ezekiel about the altar (43:18aα):

about offerings on the day it is made (43:18aβ–21)

about offerings on six succeeding days (43:22–27a)

about daily offerings from then on (43:27b)

In 44:1 Ezekiel resumes a narrative account of Yahweh’s conducting him around the temple complex and making this the basis for instructions regarding the temple and its worship. Ezek 43 is thus a viable sequence within the temple vision for one to work with for convenience, though it matches the nature of Part Six as a whole in not being the only way to see the organization of the material. MT, for instance, sees 43:1–9 as continuing from 40:1–42:20 without any kind of break. And even more than Ezek 40–42, this chapter switches between different forms of address, such as narrative, something like parenesis, shorthand description of the altar in noun clauses, and detailed instructions for its dedication. Maybe it comprises a compilation of elements of different origin.

Yahweh’s issuing explicit expectations and instructions in this chapter further highlights their absence from Ezek 40–42 and supports the idea that the building of the temple in the form described there is Yahweh’s business not Israel’s. The instruction to Ezekiel to describe the temple to the Israelites makes this point even more explicit. Israel’s business is forsaking idolatry, dedicating the altar, and offering the sacrifices on it. Yet paradoxically, in itself this chapter is a little ambiguous about whether Israel builds the temple and the altar. They are to “keep” the plan, Yahweh is giving them “instruction” for the house, and the altar will need to “be made” (43:11, 12, 18). Perhaps that ambiguity points to the realistic fact that Israel will actually need to build the temple and the altar, but they will need to do so in light of the reality of temple and altar as they already exist with Yahweh.

### Translation

1Then he had me go to the gateway, a gateway that faces eastward. 2And there: the magnificence of the God of Israel coming from eastward, with its sound like the sound of much water and the earth lighting up with his magnificence. 3The appearance was like the appearance that I saw, like the appearance that I saw when I came for the destruction of the city. And the vision[[64]](#footnote-65) was like the appearance that I saw at the Kebar waterway. I fell on my face. 4As Yahweh’s magnificence came to the house by way of the gateway whose orientation was eastward, 5a spirit lifted me up and got me to come into the inner courtyard, and there: Yahweh’s magnificence, filling the house.

6I listened to someone speaking[[65]](#footnote-66) to me from the house, while there was someone standing[[66]](#footnote-67) next to me. 7He said to me, My man, the place for my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites for all time.…[[67]](#footnote-68) Israel’s household will not again defile my sacred name, they and their kings, with their whoring and with their kings’ carcasses, their shrines. 8When they put their threshold with my threshold and their doorframe by my doorframe, with the wall between me and them, and defiled my sacred name with their outrages that they performed, I consumed them in my anger. 9Now they will put their whoring and their kings’ carcasses far from me, and I will dwell among them for all time.

10You, my man, give Israel’s household an account of the house so that they may be ashamed of their acts of waywardness. They will measure the dimensions. 11If they are ashamed of all that they have done, the house’s form, its design, its exits, its entrances, all its plans, all its laws, all its forms, all its instructions—make them known to them. Write it in front of their eyes, so that they may keep its entire plan and all its laws and act on them. 12This is the instruction for the house on top of the mountain. The entire territory all round is most sacred.[[68]](#footnote-69) There: this is the instruction for the house.

13And these are the measurements of the altar by cubits (a cubit: a cubit and a handbreadth). The trench: a cubit [in depth] and a cubit in width. Its rim at its edge, around: one span [in height]. This is the size of the altar. 14So from the trench in the earth to the lower ledge: two cubits, and in width one cubit. From the small ledge to the big ledge: four cubits, and in width, a cubit. 15The hearth: four cubits. From the hearth upwards: four horns. 16The hearth: twelve in length by twelve in width, foursquare for its four sides. 17The ledge: fourteen in length by fourteen in width for its four sides. The rim, around: half a cubit. Its trench: a cubit, around. Their steps: to face east.

18He said to me, My man, the Lord Yahweh has said this. These are the laws for the altar on the day it’s made, for making a burnt offering to go up on it and for sprinkling blood on it. 19You will give to the Levite priests who are from the offspring of Zadoq, who approach me (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh) to minister to me, a bullock from the herd[[69]](#footnote-70) as a decontamination offering. 20You will get some of its blood and put it on its four horns, at the four corners of the ledge, and at the rim round it, and decontaminate it[[70]](#footnote-71) and make expiation for it. 21You will get the bullock for the decontamination offering and someone will burn it in the house’s appointed place, outside the sanctuary.

22On the second day you will bring forward a buck from the goats, whole,[[71]](#footnote-72) as a decontamination offering, and they will decontaminate the altar as they effected decontamination with the bullock. 23When you have completed the decontamination, you will bring forward a bullock from the herd, whole, and a ram from the flock, whole. 24You will bring them forward before Yahweh, and the priests will throw salt on them and cause them to go up as a burnt offering to Yahweh. 25For seven days you will make a buck decontamination offering each day, and a bullock from the herd and a ram from the flock. As they make them, whole, 26for seven days, they will make expiation for the altar and cleanse it, and “fill its hands.” 27So they will complete these days.

Then, on the eighth day and onward, the priests will make your burnt offerings and your shared offerings on the altar. And I will accept you (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh).[[72]](#footnote-73)

### Textual Notes

MT has markers\* after 43:9, 27a, and 27b.

**43:2** For “its sound like the sound of much water,” LXX reads “and the sound of the army,” which MT had in 1:24 and LXX lacked there (*HUB*), then reads “like the sound of many doublings”: cf. the praises of Rev 14:1–3; 19:6 (Olley, 519).

**43:3** For בְּבֹאׅי, “when I came,” Vg. “when he came” (cf. Theod.) suggests בְּבֹאוֹ.

For לְשַׁחַת, “to destroy,” LXX “to anoint” suggests a reading such as לׅמְשַֹׁח, which would fit with Yahweh’s speaking much about anointing in connection with the wilderness sanctuary (Exod 30:22–29; 40:9–11).

**43:7** LXX has Yahweh’s name dwelling among the Israelites, in keeping with the common formulation in Deuteronomy as a way of saying that Yahweh is there but not of implying that the entirety of Yahweh was there in a way that meant he was nowhere else.

For וּבְפׅגְרֵי מַלְכֵיהֶם בׇּמוֹתׇם, “and with their kings’ carcasses, their shrines,” it then has “and by themurders of their leaders in their midst.” For בׇּמוֹתׇם, it suggests בְּתוֹכׇם, while Theod. “at their death” suggests בְּמוֹתׇם, the reading of some later manuscripts (*BHS*).

**43:10** For וּמׇדְדוּ, “and they will measure,” LXX “and its appearance” suggests וּמַרְאֵהוּ (Ewald, 208).

For תׇּכְנׅית, “dimensions,” Vg. has *fabrica*,“plan,” the same as its translation for תְּכוּנׇה, “design,” in 43:11. Both are rare words.

**43:11** For וְאׅם, “and if,” LXX, Vg. “and they” suggests וְהֵם.

MT has ten noun expressions, with significant repetition; LXX has seven, with almost no repetition.

On K צורתו and תורתו (cf. ידו in 43:26) see the textual note on 40:6. But K צורתי, “my plan,” for Q צוּרׇתׇי, “its plans,” looks more like an alternative reading.

**43:13** LXX has “depth” before “a cubit.”

For גַּב, “size,” LXX “height” suggests גֹּבַהּ.

**43:15–16** MT הַרְאֵל, then later K אראיל/Q אֲרׅיאֵל, are variant spellings of the word for an altar hearth, reflecting similarity with the phrase “mountain of God” and “lion of God” (see Isa 29:1–2).

**43:26** For Q יׇדׇיו and K ידו with the shorter spelling, LXX “their hands” (the priests’ hands) suggests יְדֵיהֶם.

**43:27a** LXX lacks this sentence.

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**43:1–3** The unidentified “he” indicates that the narrative carries straight on from Ezek 40–42, though it’s not clear where Ezekiel and the surveyor were at the end of Ezek 40–42. Were they somewhere in the outer courtyard? Did the surveyor work by holding up his rod toward the wall or by speeding round the wall? By implication they were not far from the eastern gateway, but Ezekiel still needs conducting there. The coming of Yahweh’s magnificence from the east fits its having halted on the mountain to the east in 11:22–23. Ezekiel thus makes a link with that vision. While his own language about destruction was performative, it seems unlikely that he implies that he himself then came to destroy the city. More likely he came in connection with Yahweh’s or Nebuchadrezzar’s doing so. In describing the coming of Yahweh’s magnificence, he also makes a link with his first vision. Then, too, there was also a sound like that of much water, and then, too, he fell on his face and heard Yahweh’s voice (1:24, 28). “The earth lighting up with his magnificence” is a new note that recalls Yahweh’s coming at the Red Sea, when his cloud “lit up the night” (Exod 14:20).

**43:4–6** That parallel helps one imagine what Ezekiel is referring to: a bright light like the light of the sun. Its coming from the east also then fits. Its having a brightness like that of the sun might be what the First Testament implies when it speaks of Yahweh’s magnificence filling the wilderness sanctuary and the Jerusalem temple at its dedication (Exod 40: 34–35; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3). The similar expressions in Hagg 2:7–9 (Mayer, 488) have more down-to earth implications, while Isa 60:1–3 might go either way. In a continuing wondrous reversal of events described in Ezek 8–11 in Ezekiel’s second vision, then, Yahweh’s magnificence fills the house that it left. The spirit’s lifting Ezekiel up and Ezekiel’s hearing someone speaking compares further with his first vision (1:28–2:2). He does not immediately identify the voice, though he indicates that it is not the surveyor’s, because he is standing next to him.

**43:7a** The speaker’s own words implicitly identify the voice. While either the surveyor or Yahweh could address Ezekiel as “My man” (40:4), only Yahweh could speak of “the place for my throne.” His words make explicit a point implicit in Ezek 40–42. The temple is a palace, and he is the sovereign who lives there. “Ezekiel 40–48 is the territorial claim of Yhwh to be the only King of Israel. Yhwh is the only power-holder.“[[73]](#footnote-74) More stunningly, behind Yahweh’s beinga king with his feet set down in this sanctuary, one who intends to dwell here (שׇׁכַן) on an ongoing basis, is Yahweh’s being a human-like quasi-bodily person, an embodied God.[[74]](#footnote-75)

**43:7b–8** But his kingly position has been compromised by the kings who have ruled in Jerusalem, especially in Ezekiel’s day. Ezekiel interweaves two pieces of critique. One implies sharpening a consistent censure, summed up by the word “outrages” (תּוֹעֵבׇה, traditionally translated “abominations”) and more sharply by the word “whoring” (זְנוּת). It means serving other gods or serving Yahweh in ways that indicate an understanding of him that turns him into another god. And it means looking to other nations for the covenantal support for which Israel is supposed to look to Yahweh, relationships that will also involve acknowledging their deities. Here Ezekiel associates those practices with the kings in particular. They took a lead in them insofar as they took a lead in the nation’s religious policies, and they obviously took a lead in them as they made decisions about the nation’s political policies. Their exercise of their kingship therefore compromised the notion that Yahweh was the nation’s sovereign. Ezekiel’s distinctive take on this matter is to see it expressed spatially or geographically. The human king’s palace and the divine sovereign’s palace had been next door to each other, “with [just] the wall between me and them.” It was possible to slip from one into the other (e.g., Jer 26:10). One could almost see the temple as the royal chapel and see the divine sovereign as part of the king’s support structure.

The reference to carcasses (פֶּגֶר) makes that point in a snide way. Carcass is the regular meaning of Ezekiel’s word and one connotation it would have for his listeners. The word might suggest an attack on the burial of kings in the city of David. But Ezekiel earlier used the word in the context of a contemptuous reference to Israel’s idols (6:5) that corresponds to Lev 26:30. That would fit with the reference to the shrines (בׇּמות, traditionally “high places”) where people served their idols—in this context, they are the idols that the kings encouraged, or the idols to whom people made offerings on the kings’ behalf when they died, or the kind of images that featured in Ezekiel’s vision of outrages in the temple in Ezek 8 (Joyce, 229). It might refer to some kind of memorial to the kings. “Ezekiel 43:7–9 severs the utopian temple not only from monarch and palace, but also from any connection with the underworld” (Cook, 190).

**43:9** The good news is that Yahweh had prefaced his denunciation (and its note about its consequence in the expression of his anger in the temple’s destruction) with a positive statement of intent about “the place for my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites for all time” (43:7). He now follows it with a renewal of that undertaking, “I will dwell among them for all time.” It is a notable expression of commitment, given the denunciation. But there is another element in the palistrophic\* sequence:

Statement of intent (43:7a)

Declaration about Israel’s future faithfulness (43:7b)

Denunciation of Israel’s outrages and their consequences (43:8)

Declaration about Israel’s future faithfulness (43:9a)

Statement of intent (43:9b)

Yahweh’s relationship with his people always involves the tricky relationship between divine grace and human faithfulness. While saying that God’s promises are conditional on human commitment gives a misleading impression, the relationship between God and his people does require both divine grace and human commitment. Here, Israel’s faithfulness is not simply Yahweh’s mandatory requirement of Israel. Indeed, it is as an aspect of Yahweh’s promise.[[75]](#footnote-76) But Yahweh does imply that it is a description of what Israel has to give itself to.

His words draw attention to another aspect of his intentions, which concern his presence as well as his position as sovereign. In this vision he is really present in the temple, though not exclusively present there, as Ezekiel’s first vision made particularly clear. He is in the heavens, but he could visit Ezekiel in Kebar. Here, Yahweh is in the heavens, but his feet can be in the temple, with his throne invisibly towering above it. Ezekiel affirms in “vivid, anthropomorphic colors” that “the Temple is God’s permanent home” where he has his throne and puts his feet up.[[76]](#footnote-77) Paradoxically, the emptiness of the most sacred place testifies to the reality of Yahweh’s presence there. It is the location of a more real presence than one that might be implied merely by the presence of covenant chest, griffins and bread table. Suppose they were all plundered or destroyed, that need not mean the presence will cease. “Is this coming of Yahweh to his sanctuary once again a coming which will one day end in a new departure from the temple?” Yahweh here answers the question (Zimmerli, 2:413). Though subsequent history implies that Yahweh retains the freedom to change his mind.

**43:10–11bα** “Being ashamed before God is the required procedure for a new life in the land,” so Ezekiel “never stops encouraging the audience to show that virtue.”[[77]](#footnote-78) One can imagine more than one reason why an account of the visionary temple, of the kind that Ezek 40–42 has given, would make the Israelites ashamed of their waywardness. It has pointed to Yahweh’s being their sovereign. It is dazzlingly impressive. It has embodied the distinction between the ordinary and the sacred. Paradoxically, Yahweh’s instructions to Ezekiel about making known the nature of this temple apparently envisages a two-way relationship between revelation concerning the temple and recognition of waywardness. The point is expressed in another palistrophe, in an ababa format:

Give them an account of the house (43:10aα)

So that they will be ashamed of their waywardness (43:10aβ)

They will measure its dimensions (43:10b)

If they are ashamed of all that they have done (43:11aα)

Make known to them everything about the house (43:11aβbα)

Interwoven with an account of the visionary temple issuing in shame is shamemaking it appropriate to give the people all that information about the visionary temple. Their acknowledging their shamefulness will suggest a willingness to follow the information and the directions. The logic of this palistrophe thus overlaps with that of the previous one.

**43:11bβ–12)** Among further implications in Yahweh’s words are his use of the word “instruction” (תּוֹרׇה). Yahweh treats Ezekiel both as a prophet and as a priest whose responsibility includes giving torah. Indeed, Yahweh speaks of this torah-giving not merely as if Ezekiel is any priest giving Israelites guidance in connection with a personal question or urging them to live by the Torah, but as if he is speaking to him and commissioning him to speak as he once did Moses, through whom he gave the instructions for the wilderness sanctuary. Ezekiel is something of a “new Moses.”[[78]](#footnote-79) And he commissions him not only to speak but also to write, and to write not merely in a scroll but “in front of their eyes,” like Moses on some occasions (e.g. Deut 27:1–8). Perhaps he is to draw what he has seen (Zimmerli, 2:419). Is he to write or draw on the walls of his house?[[79]](#footnote-80)

Yahweh’s words manifest an ambiguity matching the one in the first palistrophe and one in the vision in Ezek 40–42, an ambiguity about the people’s responsibility. The aim of the writing is that they should take action. They are to “act on them.” Israel “must do more than passively listen to the prophet’s vision.” They must engage with it and deepen their dedication to their restoration.[[80]](#footnote-81) They must abandon their whoring and follow the “laws” and “instructions” that Yahweh lays down, as they have not in the past. They must live in light of “the instruction for the house on top of the mountain” that requires a recognition that “the entire territory all round is most sacred.” It will not be enough merely to recognize the inner room as “the most sacred” (Joyce, 229–30). The ambiguity here lies in the relationship between requiring that the people “measure the dimensions” of the temple (43:10) and that they “keep” the temple plan. The first requirement points away from the idea that they have responsibility for constructing the temple, as Solomon did, facilitating Israel’s acting in such shameful fashion.[[81]](#footnote-82) But the second requirement could suggest some responsibility for implementing the plan, as Moses did for the wilderness sanctuary. Yahweh might be being realistic about the fact that the Israelites are actually going to need to rebuild the temple. The important thing is that they should do so in light of “the entire plan” that he has shown Ezekiel, even if not in a straightforward literal sense.

**43:13–17** Ezekiel reverts to the kind of message that featured through Ezek 40–42, with precise measurements for the altar in verbless clauses (there is not one verb in 43:12–17). The altar is central to the worship Yahweh expects of Israel and it has merited mention in 40:46–47, but here is the full information about it. In keeping with the temple’s nature as a whole, the altar is square.[[82]](#footnote-83) It is presumably at least framed of stone, though perhaps filled with soil, and it presumably has a grating on top. But 43:13 indicates that again in keeping with the nature of these chapters, Ezekiel is concerned only with measurements, in long cubits. Once more, while Ezekiel provides details on the specifications for the altar, picturing it involves some uncertainty (probably more for modern readers than for Ezekiel’s original ones), but one understanding is that it comprises:

* A trench round the bottom for drainage, one cubit deep and one cubit wide.
* A curb along the edge of the trench, a “span” or half a cubit high.
* A bottom plinth, sixteen by sixteen, set on the ground within the boundary set by the trench, rising two cubits up from ground level, and extending one cubit wider than the plinth above it.
* A middle plinth fourteen by fourteen, rising four cubits up from the bottom plinth, and extending one cubit wider than the top plinth.
* A top plinth twelve by twelve, rising another four cubits, it being the hearth on which offerings were burned.
* At the corners of the top plinth, four horns, whose significance the First Testament does not explain.
* Another drainage trench and rim, associated with the top plinth.
* Steps by which the priests would climb onto the altar.

Whereas altars in Christian churches, like some Israelite altars, have a size and shape that presuppose ministers stand in front of them, this altar is more like a worship platform onto which priests climb (hence it has steps). They then stand in front of the fire on the platform, into which they put the pieces of the animal that has been slaughtered at the tables by the gateway to the inner courtyard (40:39–43). Though the altar is slightly smaller than the one attributed to Solomon in 2 Chr 4:1, and significantly smaller than the one in Herod’s temple (*m. Middot* 3:1), it is larger than the one in Exodus, and in itself is of monumental size. A crowd of priests could be officiating on it. Its graduated form could remind some people of a ziggurat.

**43:18a** Whereas Ezekiel’s words about the altar mostly recall Yahweh delivering instructions to Moses, Ezekiel here begins momentarily speaking like a prophet again, does the same momentarily in 43:19, and closes 43:27 that way (Zimmerli, 2:430). He will continue to interweave prophetic and priestly ways of speaking through the rest of the scroll. Whether Yahweh addresses him as prophet or priest, the return of Yahweh’s own voice suggests the importance of the instructions that follow (Fishbane, 89). There is again no direct indication that Israel is to construct the altar, but Yahweh’s reference to “the day it is made” presupposes that someone is going to make it, and building an altar was one of the first things that Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and company did when they got to Jerusalem from Babylonia (Ezra 3:2).

**43:18b** The immediate “laws for the altar” concern its dedication so that it may then be able to fulfill its vital daily function of facilitating burnt offerings. There are two aspects to the significance of a burnt offering. The whole of its goes up in smoke, so that it is simply a gift to Yahweh, and in this sense it sums up the nature of worship. Only in this paragraph does Ezekiel work with the etymological link between the word “burnt offering” (עֹלׇה) and the verb “go up” (עׇלׇה), adding that the priest makes the offering go up “on” (עַל) the altar. The second significance of a whole burnt offering is one it shares with any sacrifice. When people make an offering, they do so as people who are stained by their waywardness, even if they are relatively committed to Yahweh. The offering recognizes that fact. As well as giving the animal to Yahweh, then, the priests sprinkle its blood all round the altar so that it makes expiation for the offerers (Lev 1:3–9).

**43:19–21** If the altar is subsequently to facilitate ongoing worship, it needs an initial “decontamination offering” (חַטׇּאת). The traditional translation is “sin offering,” but this offering does not deal with sin itself. No offering can do that. It depends on people’s turning from sin and Yahweh’s freely pardoning them. The decontamination offering deals with the consequence of sin in terms of the taboo or stain or contamination it brings on a person, and with the taboo or stain or contamination that can issue from things that don’t count as sins, such as having a baby or having a skin ailment (Luke 2:22; 5:14; cf. 17:14). One way or another the altar will inevitably be affected by such contamination. So Ezekiel is again to act in a Moses-like fashion in getting “the Levite priests who are from the offspring of Zadoq” (see 40:46; 44:15) to make the appropriate decontamination offering. Ezekiel will also thus “make expiation for it” (כׇּפַר piel) (see 16:63), clean it up in Yahweh’s eyes so as to make it possible for him to accept offerings made to him there. Rashi (in MG) comments that Ezekiel will thus “wipe away” the altar’s ordinariness so as to “introduce it into sacredness” and make it able to function is connection with making expiation, and he thus draws explicit attention to the other side to the process of dedication. There is a distinction between the clean and the defiled, and there is also a distinction between the everyday and the sacred (Lev 10:10). As well as needing cleansing from contamination, the altar needs sanctifying so that it no longer belongs to the everyday, like the rest of the temple (42:20) (Zimmerli, 2:433).

Since a decontamination offering is not wholly burned on the altar like a burnt offering, it needs to be disposed of appropriately, “in the house’s appointed place, outside the sanctuary.” This is the vision’s first reference to “the sanctuary” (הַמּׅקְדׇּשׁ). It has referred to “the sacred place” (הַקֹּדֶשׁ), literally “the sacredness” or “the sacred thing,” and to the “house” (הַבַּיׅת), both of which denote the actual temple in the inner courtyard. “The sanctuary” (הַמּׅקְדׇּשׁ) has a broader reference, to the temple complex as a whole. That is its consistent meaning in Ezek 40–48, covering both the outer and the inner courtyard. While it may sometimes imply reference to the inner courtyard in particular (see 44:5), it will not refer to the inner as opposed to the outer, for which purpose Ezekiel has that other expression, “sacred place.” So “outside the sanctuary” means outside the entire complex rather than within in it (cf. Lev 16:27), though Yahweh doesn’t indicate where “the house’s appointed place” then is. Maybe the implication is that he can leave that to them.

**43:22–27a** The process of dedication continues in order to see that it is properly done, like the completing of an entire course of antibiotics or chemo (cf. Exod 29:36–37). The reference to “salt” compares with Lev 2:13 and has covenantal implications.[[83]](#footnote-84) It may carry the further connotation that salt preserves and can encourage the dedication of the altar continuing and the effectiveness of its offerings persisting. Ezekiel adds two further terms. As well as decontaminating and making expiation for the altar, the offerings will “cleanse it.” These are all parallel images for the effect of the offerings, but this one is especially important in Ezekiel because of its emphasis on the defilement of city, temple, and people. Lev 16:18–19 specifies the offerings needed to make expiation and effect cleansing for the altar from the defilements that Israel had brought upon it. This new altar will need such cleansing at the beginning of its life. Ezekiel’s other, final extra expression is that the priests will need to “fill its hands.” It is what Moses was to do for Aaron and his sons (Exod 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35), though the expression also occurs elsewhere. As a metonymy\* for ordaining or commissioning, it denotes giving someone the symbols of authority and/or the emoluments that go with their responsibility. Only here does the expression have a thing as its object, so the metonymy combines with a catachresis.\*

**43:27b** Yahweh closes by pairing “burnt offerings” with “shared offerings” (שְׁלׇמׅים), which commonly appear in association with burnt offerings (cf. 45:15, 17; 46:2, 12). Whereas the entirety of the first goes to Yahweh, the second are shared between Yahweh and the offerers and among the offerers themselves. They thus involve a meal. On the basis of a possible link with שׇׁלוֹם, they are commonly referred to as peace offerings, well-being offerings, or fellowship offerings. First Testament references do not suggest any of these precise connotations, but the offerings being shared suggests that these translations are not far out in their implications. The other difference over against burnt offerings is that Israel offers burnt offerings routinely each day, whereas shared offerings relate to special occasions (see Lev 7:11–36). So Yahweh’s closing words envisage a regular routine of daily worship and of worship on special occasions. Although contamination will always be a reality, Ezekiel does not assume that sacrifices will be unnecessary when relationships are fine between Yahweh and Israel, as if the main point about sacrifice was to deal with the problem of sin. Israel will still want to express its worship of Yahweh in these concrete ways. “And I will accept you” (cf. 20:40–41).

### Biblical Theology Comments

“Yahweh is king” and Israelites worshiping in the temple are bowing down at the king’s footstool (Psa 99:1, 5). Concretely, he used to put his feet up on the covenant chest (Psa 132:7–8). But he has now put the chest out of mind and surrendered it (Lam 2:1). The First Testament doesn’t indicate what happened to it. Never mind, you won’t miss it, Jeremiah said, because “Jerusalem will be called Yahweh’s throne” (Jer 3:16–17). Yahweh is not giving up his position as king. Indeed, he is reasserting it. Ezekiel, however, never explicitly refers to Yahweh as king, and only once speaks of Yahweh reigning (20:33). Perhaps it is an aspect of his avoiding what the scholarly construct calls Zion theology.[[84]](#footnote-85) The question also relates to the First Testament’s mixed feelings about whether human kingship is compatible or incompatible with divine kingship. In principle, it is incompatible, but Yahweh was prepared to give in to the Israelite desire for a human king as long as he chose him and this king stayed subordinate to him. But this policy didn’t work any better than requiring Israel to do without kings. While Ezekiel and Jeremiah then themselves both have mixed feelings about the monarchy, Ezekiel is closer to simply dismissing it and implying that human kings compromise Yahweh’s position as sovereign, even while also avoiding calling Yahweh “king” and suggesting that the whole idea of kingship is tainted. Further, in describing the temple as Yahweh’s footstool, he takes a position in between idea that the covenant chest is Yahweh’s footstool and the idea of having no temple footstool (Isa 66:1) (Zimmerli, 2:415–16). Each of these three positions suggests positive theological insights. Ezekiel likewise takes a mediating position over seeing Yahweh as king. He does not use the language, but he sharpens the picture of Yahweh as sovereign by picturing Yahweh living in a palace with his magnificence as sovereign filling the “house” where he has his throne and footstool.

In the twenty-first century, talk in terms of kingship may seem patriarchal in more than one sense (Bowen, 249). For us, Ezekiel’s avoiding the word “king” is then fortuitous for a reason he did not have in mind, and it is useful that we can use the gender-neutral word “sovereign.” But the essential point about the image of Yahweh as king is not that he is king and not queen but that he is king and the Israelites are his subjects, Which links with the other sense in which talk of kingship may seem patriarchal. No, the Scriptures do not picture an egalitarian relationship between God and humanity. He is the sovereign. We are his servants.

### Application and Devotional Implications

The pattern of relationships expressed in sacrifices suggests an ongoing pattern for relationships with God. Whole burnt offerings and shared offerings give concrete expression to praise and commitment (and acknowledgment of failure) on one hand, and shared experience of God’s generosity, blessing, and deliverance on the other. These are the two poles of regular worship. Western Christians do not go in for much concrete expression of either praise or thanksgiving in a way equivalent to sacrifices, which raises the question whether our response to God falls short of what it might be.

Ezek 43 also speaks of offerings designed to achieve decontamination, expiation, or cleansing. Such offerings contribute to an understanding of the significance of God’s bringing about a once-for-all decontamination, expiation, and cleansing through Jesus. That makes it hard to think about offerings we might make that are designed to achieve that end. But churches may again thereby fall short of what Ezekiel would encourage. They may incorporate purely formal confession of sin in worship, or may not incorporate consideration of sin at all. The routine incorporation of confession in Christian worship may be purely routine, but it corresponds to the routine awareness in the First Testament that we always come before God as people needing to be cleansed.

“And I will accept you.” Yahweh’s closing words deserve an open-mouthed moment o silence.

### Selected Bibliography

Block, Daniel !. “Zion Theology in the Book of Ezekiel.” In Block*, Beyond the River Chebar: Studies in Kingship and Eschatology in the Book of Ezekiel*, 1–9. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.

Boyle, Brian. “Holiness Has a Shape”: The Place of the Altar in Ezekiel’s Visionary Plan of Sacral Space (Ezekiel 43:1–12, 13–17, 18–27). *Australian Biblical Review* 57 (2009): 1–21.

Clark, Terry R. “I Will Be King Over You”: The Rhetoric of Divine Kingship in the Book of Ezekiel. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2014.

Cook, Stephen. “Ezekiel’s God Incarnate! The God that the Temple Blueprint Creates.”In Paul M. Joyce and Dalit Rom-Shiloni, ed., *The God Ezekiel Creates,* 1–49. LHBOTS 607. London: T&T Clark, 2015

DeLap, Nevada Levi. “Ezekiel as Moses—Israel as Pharaoh: Reverberations of the Exodus Narrative in Ezekiel.” In R. Michael Cox, ed., *Reverberations of the Exodus in Scripture*, 51–73. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014.

Kasher, Rimmon. “Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40—48.” *ZAW* 110 (1998): 192–208.

Kim, Soo J. “Ashamed before the Presence of God: Theological Contexts of Shame in the Book of Ezekiel.” In Marvin J. Sweeney, ed., *Theology of the Hebrew Bible, Volume 1: Methodological Studies*, 213–44. Resources for Bible Study 92. Atlanta: SBL, 2019.

Leveen, Adriane. “Returning the Body to Its Place: Ezekiel’s Tour of the Temple.” *HTR* 105 (3012): 385–401.

Ludwig, “Ezekiel 43:9.” In Dean O. Wenthe, Paul L. Schrieber, and Lee A. Maxwell, ed., *"Hear the Word of Yahweh": Essays on Scripture and Archaeology in Honor of Horace D. Hummel*, 67–78. St Louis: Concordia, 2002.

McCall, Robin C. “The Body and Being of God in Ezekiel.” *RevExp* 111 (2014): 376–89.

McKeating, Henry. “Ezekiel the ‘Prophet Like Moses’?” *JSOT* 61 (1994): 97–109.

Peterson, Brian. “Ezekiel’s Rhetoric: Ancient Near Eastern Building Protocol and Shame and Honor as the Keys in Identifying the Builder of the Eschatological Temple.” *JETS* 56 (2013): 707–31.

Stevenson, Kalinda Rose. *Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48*. SBLDS 154. Atlanta: Scholars, 1996.

Strong, John T. “The God Ezekiel Inherited.” In Paul M. Joyce and Dalit Rom-Shiloni, ed., *The God Ezekiel Creates,* 24–54. LHBOTS 607. London: T&T Clark, 2015.

*–––* “Grounding Ezekiel's Heavenly Ascent: A Defense of Ezek 40–48 as a Program for Restoration. *SJOT* 26 (2012): 192–211.

## Prince, Foreigners, Levites, and Priests (44:1–31)

### Outline

The guide is again conducting Ezekiel to the eastern gateway and Yahweh is again speaking to him there, then Yahweh’s magnificence is again appearing and Yahweh is again giving Ezekiel some instructions about the temple. Ezekiel thus keeps the narrative framework in which he reports the vision in which he is being conducted round the visionary temple and receiving revelations concerning matters that relate to it, and he will keep this narrative framework through Ezek 44–47. But a significant transition happens at this point, as Ezek 44–46 comprises instructions relating to the ongoing worship and life of the community focused on this temple, rather than revelations about its nature or instructions about the initiation of its worship.

The instructions in Ezek 44–46 are miscellaneous in content and form. They again reflect Ezekiel’s being both a prophet and a priest, who can give exhortations like a prophet and lay down the law like a priest. And once again the medieval chapter division is not the only way of seeing the structure of the material. MT had only a setumah\* after 43:27 and it has a petuhah\* after 44:14. But the medieval chapter division works, at least for convenience.

In Ezek 44, then, Yahweh’s revelations concern the east gateway and the prince, the exclusion from the work of the temple of uncircumcised foreigners, the role of the Levites in doing the work that these foreigners might have done, the discipline of the Zadoqites in fulfilling the priestly ministry, their role in teaching and their own obligation to that teaching, and their emoluments. Given Ezekiel’s revelation concerning the temple and his knowledge about the Jerusalem temple, the issues the chapter covers might all be matters of controversy in the community in the mid-sixth century or during subsequent periods, though the material again provides no clear clues to indicate whether it derives from Ezekiel or from an associate or from prophets or teachers in a later period. The questions are:

* Does the east gateway have to stay shut?
* What is the position of the prince in relation to it?
* What is the position of foreigners in relation to work in the temple?
* What is the role of non-priestly Levites in the temple?
* What is the role of Zadoqites in the temple?
* What discipline applies to the Zadoqites in this connection?
* What limitations apply to the Zadoqites?
* How do the Zadoqites get their material needs met?

While the chapter thus comprises a sequence of separate issues, they form a chain in which one thing leads to another. It unfolds:

Ezekiel is taken back to the east gateway and finds it shut (44:1–2)

Yahweh explains about the prince’s position there (44:3)

Ezekiel is taken back to the inner sanctuary and sees Yahweh’s magnificence there (44:4)

Yahweh bids Ezekiel listen to his instructions about the sanctuary (44:5)

Ezekiel is to rebuke the community about foreigners working there (44:6–8)

The Levites are to be responsible for the sanctuary’s practical work (44:9–14)

The Zadoqites are to be responsible for ministry in the inner courtyard (44:15–16)

They are to accept various disciplines in that connection:

In the practice of their ministry (44:17–21)

In their lives (44:22–24)

In connection with bereavement (44:26–27)

With regard to their livelihood (44:28–31)

For the different people on whom the chapter focuses, the instructions combine good news and bad news. The prince does not have the impressive position that the king once had, but he has a scaled-down privileged position. For the Levites, there is rebuke about the past but the gift of an important ministry. For the Zadoqites, there is a hugely privileged ministry but a long list of constraints. For foreigners, there is simply an exclusion from service in the sanctuary, though maybe even they could find good news between the lines, in that their disqualification lies in not being circumcised in flesh and spirit. If they put that right, then.… The point becomes explicit in Isa 56:3–7, which speaks enthusiastically about foreigners “ministering” in the temple (שׇׁרַת, the verb in Ezek 44:11–12, 15–17, 19, 27).[[85]](#footnote-86)

For most of the first two millennia CE, a dominant topic of debate for Christian scholars was the significance of the question about the eastern gateway for an understanding of the incarnation, in that the gateway’s closed nature made them think about the closed nature of Mary’s womb after Jesus’s birth.[[86]](#footnote-87) For Jewish scholars, a key topic of debate was the tension between Ezekiel’s instructions to the Zadoqites and the instructions in the Torah, which made them wonder whether the Ezekiel scroll should be removed from regular use (גׇּנַז; *b. Shabbat* 13b), like Qohelet. In the nineteenth century, the development of critical scholarship and an interest in the development of the Pentateuch and the related question of the history of the Israelite priesthood led to a different scholarly focus in connection with this chapter.[[87]](#footnote-88) The framework of that debate changed at the end of the twentieth century with renewed scholarly inclination to emphasize the significance of the Persian and Hellenistic period for these two questions and thus for the significance of Ezek 44 in this connection.[[88]](#footnote-89) It changed in a different way with interest in sociological approaches to the text and attempts to understand and critique “hierarchical thinking.”[[89]](#footnote-90)

In Ezek 44 “the temple functionaries differ from their biblical precedents, on the one hand, and from what was known of their Babylonian environment on the other. What determines the roles of the priests, the Levites, and the *nasi* [the prince] in Ezekiel’s temple vision is the driving theological force of preserving the temples’ sanctity.”[[90]](#footnote-91) Ezekiel then here urges some points about the position in the visionary temple of the prince, of foreigners, of Levites, and of Zadoqites. He does so in a similar way to his urging of points about Israel’s unfaithfulness in Ezek 16; 20; 23.[[91]](#footnote-92) He picks up aspects of Israel’s story and of Yahweh’s instructions to Israel as the story and the instructions appear in the Scriptures as we have them, though it would be anachronistic to assume all those formulations apply to Israel in Ezekiel’s time. And he makes them the mirror through which he looks at Israel in the present, like the preacher that he is. His treatment of the past is thus selective and revisionist, being shaped by his present agenda. It also means that his statements about the present are allusive and oblique, because he is translating his account of the present into quasi-scriptural code. We therefore have to be wary about what we infer about the situation the chapter is reflecting (in the sixth century, or some later context). But the chapter may imply that:

* Some people either want to see kingship restored to what it once was, or to see it abolished altogether. So here is what the prince’s position should be.
* Israel has been employing foreigners to work in the temple without asking too many questions about their fleshly or spiritual status. So Israel should not do that in the future.
* The Levites do not or may not accept as much responsibility for practical work in the temple as they should. So here is what they need to do in the new temple.
* The Zadoqites do not or may not accept as much responsibility for the discipline and constraints that their privileged position requires of them. So here is what they need to do.

### Translation

1He took me back by way of the outer sanctuary gateway that faces east. It was shut. 2Yahweh said to me, This gateway being shut, it will not open and no one will come through it, because Yahweh the God of Israel has come through it. It will be shut.[[92]](#footnote-93) 3The prince,[[93]](#footnote-94) being prince: he will sit in it to eat food before Yahweh, coming in by way of the gateway foyer and going out by its way.

4He had me come by way of the north gateway to the front of the house. I saw, and there: Yahweh’s magnificence filling Yahweh’s house. I fell on my face. 5Yahweh said to me, My man, apply your mind, look with your eyes, with your ears listen to all that I am speaking to you regarding all the laws of Yahweh’s house and regarding all his instructions.[[94]](#footnote-95) Apply your mind to the house’s entrance, with all the sanctuary’s exits. 6And say to the rebellious[[95]](#footnote-96) (to Israel’s household), “The Lord Yahweh has said this. Too much for you, with all your outrages,[[96]](#footnote-97) Israel’s household, 7in having foreigners, foreskinned in mind and foreskinned in flesh, come in and be in my sanctuary and make it ordinary, my house, when you bring forward my food, fat and blood. They have violated my covenant in connection with all your outrages. 8You have not kept my sacred charge. You have appointed them[[97]](#footnote-98) to keep my charge in my sanctuary for you.

9The Lord Yahweh has said this. No foreigner, foreskinned in mind and foreskinned in flesh, will come into my sanctuary, that is,[[98]](#footnote-99) any foreigner who is among the Israelites. 10Rather, the Levites who went far from me when Israel was wandering, who wandered from me after their lumps, will carry their waywardness, 11but[[99]](#footnote-100) they will be in my sanctuary as ministers with appointment regarding the gateways of the house and ministries to the house, as they slaughter the burnt offering and the shared offering for the people, and stand before them to minister to them.

12Since they used to minister to them before their lumps, and for Israel’s household they used to be something causing their downfall into waywardness, therefore I am raising my hand over them (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh). They will carry their waywardness. 13They will not come forward to me as a priest for me or come forward over any of my sacred things, regarding my most sacred things. They will carry their shame and their outrages that they committed. 14But I will make them keepers of the charge of my house for all its service and for all that is done in it.

15But the Levite priests, the Zadoqites, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the Israelites wandered from me, coming forward to me to minister to me and standing before me to bring fat and blood forward for me (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh), 16they will come into my sanctuary and come forward to my table to minister to me and keep my charge.

17Then, when they come to the gateways of the inner courtyard, linen clothes they will wear and they will not put wool upon them when they are ministering in the gateways of the inner courtyard or inside. 18Given that there will be linen turbans on their head and there will be linen shorts on their hips, they will not wear anything sweaty. 19When they go out to the outer courtyard (to the outer courtyard to the people), they will take off their clothes in which they were ministering and set them down in the sacred chambers, and put on other clothes. So they will not make the people sacred with their clothes. 20While they will not shave their head but not let their hair flow, they will certainly trim their heads. 21Wine they will not drink, any priest, when coming into the inner courtyard.

22A widow or a divorced woman they will not get for themselves as wives. Rather, girls from the offspring of Israel’s household or a widow who will be the widow of a priest they will get. 23My people they will instruct between sacred and ordinary, and between clean and defiled they will enable them to know. 24As they stand to give a ruling over a dispute, by my rulings they will rule it. My instructions and my laws during all my set occasions they will keep. My Sabbaths they will keep sacred.

25In connection with a dead person an individual will not come in to incur defilement, yet for father or for mother or for son or for daughter, for brother or for sister who has not become someone’s, they may defile themselves. 26After he has become clean, seven days they will count for him, 27and on the day he comes into the sanctuary, into the inner courtyard, to minister in the sanctuary, he will bring forward his decontamination offering (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh).

28A domain for them there will be (me being their domain and no allocation being given to them in Israel, me being their allocation), 29as they eat the grain offering, the decontamination offering, and the restitution offering, and everything devoted in Israel will be theirs, 30and the first of all the early fruits of everything, and every reserve of anything from all your reserves[[100]](#footnote-101) will be the priests’. The first of your dough[[101]](#footnote-102) will be the priest’s, for a blessing to rest on your household. 31No carrion or roadkill of bird or of animal will the priests eat.

### Textual Notes

MT has markers\* after 44:8, 14, and 31.

**44:2** I take **בׇּא** as *qatal\** and as referring back to 43:4 (Qimhi, in MG; cf. Vg.). Rashi, in MG (cf. LXX) takes it as ptpl. referring to the future.

**44:3** Q **לֶאֱכׇל** andK **לאכול** are both forms of the inf.

**44:7** For **וַיׇּפֵרוּ**, “they have violated,” LXX, Vg. “you have violated” suggests **וַתׇּפֵרוּ.**

**44:8** LXX lacks 44:8a.

**44:12** LXX lacks “and they will carry their waywardness,” perhaps to eliminate the repetition from 44:10 (*HUB*).

**44:20** LXX translates **יְשַׁלֵּחוּ** “strip off” rather than “let flow,” implying **שׇׁלַח** II (*DTT*, 1580).[[102]](#footnote-103)

**44:24** For **רׅיב,** “dispute,” LXX “dispute over blood” might suggest **רׅיב דׇּם** (Cornill, 488).

For “to give a ruling,” K has simply the verb **לשפט**, Q simply the noun **לְמׅשְׁפׇּט.**

Then K has **ושפטהו**, “and he will rule it,” Q י**ׅשְׁפְּטֻהו**, “they will rule it.”

**44:28** For **וְהׇיׇה לׇהֶם לְנַחֲלׇה**, “a domain for them there will be,” LXX Papyrus 967 and some Vg. mss read “there will not be a domain” (cf. Jerome, 528, 532).

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**44:1–2** Again the chapter begins with an unidentified “he,” who takes Ezekiel back to the east gateway. That would be Yahweh on the basis of what precedes, but Yahweh usually speaks (as he goes on to do here) rather than leading Ezekiel from place to place. It could be the spirit on the basis of 43:5, but he usually acts only to move Ezekiel in supernatural fashion. Rather the narrative again takes up from the guide’s leading in 43:1, and the guide takes Ezekiel back to the sanctuary’s outer gateway. “Sanctuary” (מׅקְדְׇּּשׁ) thus continues to denote the complex as a whole (cf. 43:21). Its gateway’s being shut implies that there is an actual gate of some kind. It is shut not because no one may come in, surely, but because Yahweh does not intend to go out. He has come through this gateway into the temple (43:1–5) and he intends to stay there for all time (43:7, 9). Whereas he once left in an eastward direction (Ezek 11–12), he has now closed off his options by shutting the gate or allowing it to be shut (Cook, 203). Some exiles would know of the annual festival when Marduk came into Babylon, and the liturgy for the Babylonian New Year Festival refers to the opening of the gate (*ANET*, 331–34). Yahweh will not be coming in each year because he will not be leaving. Yahweh’s speaking highlights the declaration here (Block, 2:620). The closed gate is a “sign,” a sign “for the new, definitive turning of God to his people,” a constant reminder “that God has taken up his dwelling in the midst of his people” (Zimmerli, 2:441). But could he slip out through the northern or southern gateway? Is that what he eventually did?

**44:3** So what is the use of a gateway that never opens? It constitutes a neat place for a meal, from where someone could look straight into the inner courtyard and into the house. “The prince” (הַנׇּשֹׅיא) will do so. The gateway will be shut on the outside, but open on the inside. The prince will come into it via the foyer that leads into the courtyard (40:7–9), and will leave that way. Ezekiel has referred a number of times to the king of Judah as prince rather than king (see 7:27), but always somewhat pejoratively, so that there is a parallel with his downgrading the significance of the city. He has also referred to a coming David as the prince (e.g., 37:25), and one might infer that he refers to David here (so Qimchi in MG), but Ezek 45–48 will imply an ordinary ruler of Judah to whom Ezekiel refers quite positively. The new Israel will have a ruler, then, but Ezekiel introduces the prince in an offhand way. The prince will not function like a priest, though he will have a privileged relationship with Yahweh. But he will be a prince, not a king. He does not build the temple, bring in the covenant chest, and then stand in front of the altar to lead prayer, as Solomon did (1 Kgs 6–8). Ezekiel again works with the ambiguity of monarchy.[[103]](#footnote-104)

**44:4** Once more the guide resumes the tour. The “north gateway” leading to the front of the house denotes the north gateway into the inner courtyard through which the guide had led Ezekiel out from the inner courtyard earlier (42:1). “There: Yahweh’s magnificence, filling Yahweh’s house” were Ezekiel’s words earlier (43:5). Perhaps he is here repeating 43:1–5 in summary form rather than implying a repeat of the actual event. In 43:1–5, the words suggested something happening, not a stationary reality, and presumably the same is true when the words recur here. Ezekiel presupposes another aspect of the mystery that is involved in speaking of Yahweh’s presence. As well as being in the heavens and in the temple, he has been at the gateway speaking in a way that is not overwhelming. Ezekiel is now once more assuming an overwhelming presence in the sanctuary.

**44:5** This time there is no spirit standing Ezekiel up, unless that is presupposed in the formulation that is abbreviated compared with 43:1–5. Rather, Yahweh issues an exhortation that picks up the guide’s bidding in 40:4, but here the bidding does concern things that Israel must do and not just things that they need to imagine or measure. In that connection, Ezekiel must listen to what follows, which concerns the (single) entrance to the house, the actual temple, and the sanctuary’s various exits. In other contexts that could mean the complex’s gateways to the outside, but Yahweh’s subsequent “instructions” more concern the boundary between the inner and outer courtyard, so he is likelyreferring here to the gateways to and from the inner courtyard.

**44:6–7a** Yahweh is outraged about foreigners in the sanctuary. In calling them “foreigners” (בְּנֵי־נֵכֶר) rather than “resident aliens” (גֵּרׅים), Ezekiel reflects the language of Lev 22:25 as opposed to that of Num 16:40; 18:4, 7 (both Lev 21–22 and Num 16–18 are significant background to Ezek 44). His reference to their outward and inner shortcoming also makes more specific what kind of foreigners Yahweh has in mind.[[104]](#footnote-105) He is not merely being xenophobic,[[105]](#footnote-106) though “foreigners” is a more pejorative term than resident aliens. It implies people who do not choose to become full members of the community (cf. Exod 12:43; Neh 9:2). “Resident aliens” are people who can be expected to live like circumcised Israelites (cf. 14:7), whatever their physical state in this respect. They are to be treated well (22:2, 29), and they will get a share in the new land (47:22–23). Israel has never banned foreigners from living in Jerusalem, but it was supposed to ban them from taking part in festivals and other forms of worship unless they took on the commitment that a resident alien accepts. Yahweh implies a parallel assumption here. He also makes clear that circumcision of the heart is not the only important thing and that circumcision of the flesh does matter[[106]](#footnote-107)—any more than for Christians baptism in the Spirit is what really counts and water baptism doesn’t really matter. Human beings are inward and outward creatures, spirit and body.

**44:7b–8** Yahweh makes clear that he is interested here not in the general question of foreigners coming into the sanctuary to take part in worship but in the question of foreigners being engaged in facilitating the worship, in “keeping Yahweh’s charge in the sanctuary,” when they don’t acknowledge Yahweh. He is concerned with what they do when you “bring my food, fat and blood.” Fat and blood are the parts of animals that especially belong to Yahweh (see 39:19)—the fat because it suggests succulence and the blood because it symbolizes life that comes from God and goes back to God. So they are “my food.” Yahweh otherwise uses this rather scandalous expression only in Num 28:2, though Lev 21–22 can speak in terms of “your God’s food.” The Israelites knew well that Yahweh didn’t eat the sacrifices they gave him, though he liked the smell. But the startling turn of phrase expresses Yahweh’s outrage.

He expresses again the scandalous nature of what has been happening in the paradoxical declaration that “they have violated my covenant with all your outrages.” Ezekiel refers to violation of the covenant less often than one might have expected. The main occurrence is in 16:59. In 17:15–19 a link with a political commitment is presupposed, and perhaps it is here, if Judah’s violating its covenant with Egypt lies in the background.[[107]](#footnote-108) Yet in substance violating the covenant is what the Israelites have been consistently doing with their outrages. In this context the foreigners have been the agents of the violation as they have become involved with those outrages. Facilitating the worship of the temple was a “sacred charge” and the Israelites have appointed people uncircumcised in flesh and in mind to “my charge” in “my sanctuary.” They are outside the covenant physically and spiritually. “Keep my charge” (שׇׁמַר מׅשְׁמַרְתּׅי) is a general expression that could cover many aspects of what Yahweh expects. The context would decide what it referred to. Here Yahweh’s earlier reference to entrance and exits and his later reference to gateways suggests that he may have in mind the supervision of access to the inner court and the temple building itself.

The question of foreigners involved in facilitating worship in the temple arises first in the amusing story of Joshua and the Gibeonites (Josh 9), who escape being slaughtered as Canaanites by pretending to be something else. Like Rahab, they acknowledge that Yahweh has brought the Israelites out of Egypt and is giving them the land of Canaan, and they maneuver their way into a covenant with the Israelites. The Israelites can’t then slaughter them but instead turn them into people who look after practical needs for the sanctuary by being the people who collect the wood for the altar fire and haul the water for the needs of the sanctuary—a huge ongoing task. That is their role “to this day” (Josh 9:27). We don’t know when “this day” is, but on the usual scholarly view it could easily be in Ezekiel’s day. Then in Ezra-Nehemiah there are repeated references to the Nethinites, the נְתׅינׅים, usually translated as “temple servants,” which may be a new name for the Gibeonites. They, too, seem to be not regular Israelites, but they are members of the Jerusalem community and they take part in rebuilding the wall there (Neh 3:26).

Yahweh’s comments about the foreigners and the Levites might therefore look odd alongside the references to the Nethinites in Ezra-Nehemiah, where they appear alongside the Levites as temple servants with practical roles to fulfill that match the picture in Joshua (e.g., Ezra 8:20). Maybe Ezekiel would start an argument with Ezra about them, and if this message in 44:4–14 comes from one of Ezekiel’s later associates or curators, this person could be in conflict with Ezra. Maybe Yahweh would not approve of them being in the position they were. But the Nethinites’ commitment might mean they would not count as “foreskinned in mind and foreskinned in flesh,” any more than the Gibeonites would. And the severe stance of Ezra and Nehemiah in relation to other foreigners makes it difficult to imagine them tolerating foreign temple servants if they were foreskinned. But in Ezekiel’s day, if things in the temple had been anything like as outrageous as he has described them, one can imagine that the temple authorities had not been too careful in examining the physical or spiritual qualifications of people working there.

**44:9** Ezekiel’s “The Lord Yahweh has said this” presumably means a new paragraph begins here, though all Yahweh does initially is sum up the point in 44:6–8. He has especially in mind foreigners who were not committed to Yahweh coming into the sanctuary to assist in its worship, but he would likely take the same view with regard to their coming into the sanctuary at all without that commitment. But Yahweh’s sense of outrage here is that Israel has been delegating responsibility in the sanctuary to uncircumcised foreigners.

**44:10** If the uncircumcised foreigners are to be excluded, it is the Levites who must keep that charge, the Levites who “went far from me when Israel was wandering.” Ezekiel is thus critical of Israel’s household as a whole as well as of its leadership, and that is background to what he has to say here about foreigners and Levites.[[108]](#footnote-109) But the Levites, in particular, “wandered from me after their lumps.” The reference to lumps (גּׅלּוּלׅים) marks this as a typical Ezekiel charge regarding Jerusalem and its temple, and talk of going far from Yahweh and wandering fits Ezekiel’s earlier charges, though those verbs are not his characteristic ones. Yahweh’s comments about the Levites themselves raises further complicated questions. The Torah has things to say about the commitment and the waywardness of the clan of Levi as a whole. Neither the Torah nor other First Testament works have anything to say about the waywardness of non-priestly Levites during Israel’s wandering from Yahweh over the generations, such as would explain Yahweh’s confinement of priestly work to the line of Aaron.[[109]](#footnote-110) Typically, Yahweh just chose Aaron, as he chose his brother Moses for his role. He did so notwithstanding his failure (Exod 32) rather than on the basis of his faithfulness.

Looking for a time when some Levites got themselves into trouble takes one to Num 16–18, and Ezekiel reflects some of the language of those chapters (the expression “keep my charge” recurs in Num 18:1–8). They chapters indeed refer to a time when Israel was wandering (תׇּעׇה), though Numbers also does not use that verb (Psa 107:4 does). Some Levite leaders challenged Moses and Aaron about their exalting themselves over the rest of the people, as if the entire people was not sacred. In doing so, these leaders used the rare quirky idiom that Yahweh used in Ezek 44:6: “Too much for you!” And Moses himself uses it twice in his response: “Too much for you, Levites,” and “Is it too little for you” (Num 16:3, 7, 9).[[110]](#footnote-111) The Levites have been given a significant ministry in the wilderness sanctuary but they want the priestly ministry. An act of judgment on these particular Levites follows. Then in Num 18 Yahweh confirms and gives more precision to the distinctive responsibilities of Aaron’s line as priests and to the responsibilities of the rest of the Levites, though without making a link with the Num 16 story.

Ezekiel is here engaging in a variant on the procedure he used in Ezek 16; 20; and 23. He is not retelling Israel’s story on a large scale here, but picking up an incident from Israel’s beginnings and letting it be the mirror through which Israel is to see the story of its own time. He may also be alluding to Josiah’s decommissioning of the priests from shrines around Judah (2 Kgs 23:8–10)[[111]](#footnote-112) as well as to the covenant-breaking involved in Judah’s subsequent dealing with Egypt. He thus recalls a story that presupposes the Levites having a less impressive role than the Aaronides and objecting to it, and reaffirms the arrangement. “The Levites were not former priests who were demoted because they colluded with the people in the idol worship. The Levites are merely assuming the tasks assigned to them by the Priestly tradition (P) as guards in the sanctuary (Num 18:3a, 4a).”[[112]](#footnote-113) But he is turning it into one whereby they will now “carry their waywardness” (see 4:4; Num 18:23). They will pay the penalty for their objections way back then and/or now.

**44:11** They do not lose all involvement in the work of the temple. They will have other vital ministerial responsibilities in connection with it. Yahweh confirms and gives precision to their role. First, they will indeed have an “appointment regarding the gateways of the house” to ensure that people other than priests do not come into the inner courtyard. They will have “ministries to the house,” a significant charge in connection with it (as Num 16:10 notes). Their work will include the “chores” (Block, 2:630) that the Levites undertook in the wilderness sanctuary, and it wouldn’t be surprising if for those purposes they would go into the inner sanctuary. Their tasks are not just chores. They will slaughter the animals for sacrifice, both the sacrifices offered for the whole people and the ones brought by individuals. They will thus “stand before them to minister to them,” the expression in Num 16:9. The sacrifices they slaughter will include decontamination offerings and restitution offerings (40:38–43). Yahweh may here be tightening the Leviticus regulations, if they allow for people killing their own animals, though the Leviticus references are ambiguous (see, e.g., Lev 4:15, 24). One wonders about Ezekiel’s stance regarding a broader question raised by Deuteronomy, which does not obviously make a distinction between priestly Levites and other Levites. But Ezekiel does not concern himself with that question.

**44:12–14** What is to happen is thus yet again something paradoxical. The Levites will have that important ministry, yet in fulfilling it they will be living with the consequences of their moral or spiritual failure. They will not be priests, making the offerings on the altar. They will not be directly engaged with or partaking of Yahweh’s “sacred things,” his “most sacred things.” Ezekiel referred to them in 42:13 and made explicit that they comprised the grain offering, the expiation offering and the restitution offering. It is another expression from Num 18:9–10, which already itemized them in that way (Cook, 211). It will be part of how “they will carry their shame and their outrages that they committed.”

**44:15–16** Likewise the First Testament does not relate how the Zadoqites (see 40:44–46) kept Yahweh’s charge when the Israelites wandered from Yahweh, and everything Ezekiel has said about the temple and the priesthood in his day makes it difficult to imagine him saying that they actually had kept Yahweh’s charge. Indeed, 2 Chr 29:34 later portrays the Levites on one occasion more concerned about sacredness than the priests were.[[113]](#footnote-114) Zadoq did back the right horse in connection with the succession to David. But Ezekiel likely has in mind again the way Num 16–18 implicitly portrays Aaron as faithful in the wilderness, and as contrasting with the other Levites.[[114]](#footnote-115) Anyway, they have access to Yahweh’s “table,” which means the altar—but using this word fits the reference to the fat and the blood, Yahweh’s “food (44:7).

**44:17–20** Ezekiel’s focus in connection with the Zadoqites lies elsewhere, in points they need to bear in mind in connection with their ministry in the sanctuary. Ezekiel restates uncontroversial and typical requirements in Leviticus[[115]](#footnote-116) about which one is presumably to infer that the Zadoqites were not inclined to be too strict. Neither Leviticus nor Ezekiel provides rationales for most of the requirements and their origin and meaning may be lost in the eons of time (as is the case with the horns on the altar), but they may have become important as markers of separateness.

* They mustn’t wear anything sweaty. This may link with concern about other ways in which the body may be affected by “leakiness” (Cook, 219; e.g., Lev 15:1, 16, 19, 32, 33) and thus lose its integrity.
* They must keep their vestments and regular clothes separate lest they affect other people with their sacredness, given that sacredness can be transmitted by indirect touch.[[116]](#footnote-117) Sacredness is not necessarily dangerous but it does place constraints on people’s ordinary activity, even if only temporarily (like the Sabbath).
* They must not let their hair flow. Here there is comparison and contrast with Lev 10:6; 21:5, 10. Both Leviticus and Ezekiel are likely concerned with practices that relate to mourning among people who worship other gods. *B. Sanh. 22b* tells a story about Ben Elasa spending a lot of money at the hairdressers in this connection.
* Presumably for obvious reasons, they must not drink before coming to work (cf. Lev 10:9).

**44:21–24** Yahwehmakes some broader points about them and their priesthood.

* They must marry only an unmarried girl or another priest’s widow, perhaps to protect the sacredness of their offspring (compare and contrast Lev 21:7, 13–14).
* Their task is to teach people to make important distinctions (cf. the classic formulation in Lev 10:10–11).
* They must stick with Yahweh’s rulings in decisions they give when people come for help in connection with some tricky question. Here, Ezekiel’s bidding links more directly with Deuteronomy (e.g., 17:8–12).
* They must stick by Yahweh’s instructions and rules in the way they keep set occasions.
* Likewise they must keep Sabbath.

**44:25–27** They must observe some points about defilement, specifically in connection with the death of people they know (cf. Lev 21:1–3).

* Generally, they are to avoid such defilement.
* They may make an exception for close family members.
* They then must observe the seven-day rule (cf. Lev 12:1–2; 15:13), on the basis that some defilement fades over time.
* At the end of the seven days, they must bring a decontamination offering (cf. Lev 12:6–8; 15:14–15).

**44:28–31** Finally, there are some rules about their support, which again compare with Num 18. Near the end of these biddings, Yahweh specifically speaks to “you” (pl.), to the Israelites, for the only time in 44:9–31.

* The background is that the priests have no regular “domain” (נַחֲלׇה) or “allocation” (אַחֻזׇּה). The first is more a Deuteronomy and Joshua word, the second more a Leviticus word. Numbers uses both. In Num 18:20 Yahweh is Aaron’s domain and “share” (חֵלֶק). The words refer to the stretch of land given to a family when the land in Israel is distributed to the clans, giving them somewhere to live, grow their food, and keep their animals. The priests do not get such a share, but they have Yahweh as their domain or allocation.
* As a concrete expression of that, they have a share in the offerings made to Yahweh, which are again the ones listed in Num 18:9–10.
* They get everything that is “devoted” to Yahweh (חֵרֶם; cf. Num 18:14). While “devoting” most often refers to something being given over to Yahweh in a way that involves killing it, the term need not have that connotation (see Lev 27:21, 28).
* They get the first of the harvest and they benefit from the people’s other “reserves” (תְּרוּמׇה; the word recurs in Num 18:8–29), including their dough (cf. Num 15:20–21), if that is what it is (see the translation note).
* They mustn’t eat carrion or roadkill, which would convey defilement (cf. Lev 17:15; 22:8), perhaps because the blood cannot have been properly drained.

### Biblical Theology Comments

When Jewish scholars were troubled by Ezekiel (see “Outline” above), it was because it “contradicted” the Torah (*b. Shabbat* 13b). The verb (סׇתַר) means “hide” in the First Testament, but in PBH this verb or a homonym\* tellingly means “tear down” or “destroy” or “invalidate” (*DTT*, 1033).Out of such concern, the Talmud says, Hezekiah ben Hananiah used up 300 jugs of oil for his lamps to keep his room lit while he sat and “interpreted” the Ezekiel texts (דׇּרַשׁ, the verb from which we get the word midrash).[[117]](#footnote-118)

Cook (211) suggests that it’s better to describe Ezekiel’s rules as intensifications of the Torah than as contradictions of it. But Fishbane (139–43) uses the word *contradiction* five times in a study of Ezek 44:15–31. He notes, for instance, that Ezekiel’s rule about priests drinking is less strict than Lev 10:9, while his rule about haircuts is stricter than Lev 21:10. His rule about whom priests can marry differs from the one in Lev 21:7. Both Leviticus and Ezekiel assume a distinction between priests and other Levites, whereas Deuteronomy does give the impression that all Levites are priests.

There are several reasons why would God might be happy for different teachers in Israel to lay down different rules. Jesus comments on the difference between the way things were from the beginning and the allowances Moses made for his people’s stubbornness (Mark 10:2–12), and Ezekiel’s assumptions about kingship fit that dynamic, given that it wasn’t Yahweh’s idea for Israel to have kings. It also wasn’t Yahweh’s idea to have a fixed temple but he gave into that idea. The same may apply to sacrifice, which first features as a human instinct (Gen 4:3–4), and to priesthood, though in that connection Ezekiel points toward another consideration. Priesthood relates to the appropriateness of distinguishing between the sacred and the ordinary, which goes back to creation (Gen 2:1–3) and expresses the need to distinguish between God and us.

Another reason why it might be fine for the First Testament to include “contradictory” rules, a reason emerging from a modern framework of thinking, is the situational character of biblical rules. Exod 21–23 suggest the kind of state Israel is in its early days, while Leviticus and Deuteronomy presuppose the kind of state it becomes during the monarchy. “In ancient Israel no less than today liturgical experimentation was demanded by new situations” (Taylor, 268).

Yet another consideration emerges from another kind of saying by Jesus, that (for instance), a person whose right hand commits an offense should cut it off (Matt 5:30). He means this with absolute seriousness, but he means it metaphorically, not literally. The First Testament gives the impression that the same applies to the Torah. Rarely does the First Testament indicate that Israel treated the rules in the Torah as literally binding, and not just when the Israelites were simply disobeying them. The same applies to Mesopotamian “laws,” which could be more concrete expressions of commitments that the nation accepted than a set of laws for implementing in court. The rules in the Torah often cover matters that Israel needs to take really seriously. They are theology and ethics in the form of laws. And formal consistency between them matters less than vivid embodiment of what to believe and what to do.

God’s willingness to lay down incompatible rules in different contexts and for varying reasons it is a typical act of grace. To seek to reconcile the rules risks missing their point and imperils their fulfilling their vocation to be profitable (2 Tim 3:16).

### Application and Devotional Implications

Wright (351) comments that “in relation to the law of God, the priests were to be *teachers*, *conflict* *resolvers* and *moral* examples.” He goes on (352):

It was a bold stroke that consigned Israel's priestly tribe to landlessness. This meant that Israel was not meant to be a nation in which a clerical hierarchy could wield economic power (and all its derivative forms of social influence) as an exploitative, land-owning, elite. In this way Israel was remarkably different from surrounding societies. In Egypt, for example, the temples and priests were major landholders. But in Israel, the priesthood of Yahweh the liberator was not to be a tool of religiously sanctioned oppression. In the history of the Christian church, somehow the “clergy” sadly forgot this aspect of its biblical roots and pursued economic wealth and power, while re-introducing other, sacerdotal, aspects of Old Testament priesthood that it was meant to have shed in the light of the sacrifice of Christ. But secondly, the landlessness of Israel's priestly tribe was not intended to impoverish them. They would be *dependent*, indeed. But dependence on an obedient people should have meant perfectly adequate provision for their material needs, just as Israel’s dependence on their faithful God would include full provision.… Churches or other Christian groups that fail to pay their workers adequate living wages are not “living by faith,” but are simply living in disobedience.

### Selected Bibliography

Awabdy, Mark A. “Yhwh Exegetes Torah: How Ezekiel 44:7–9 Bars Foreigners from the Sanctuary.” *JBL* 131 (2012): 685–703.

Cook, Stephen L. “Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44 and the History of Israel’s Priesthood.” *JBL* 114 (1995): 193–208.

Cook, Stephen L., and Corrine L. Patton, ed., *Ezekiel’s Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*. SBLSymS 31. Atlanta: SBL, 2004.

Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*. VTSup 56. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

*–––* “Putting Priests in Their Place: Ezekiel’s Contribution to the History of the Old Testament Priesthood.” In Cook and Patton, *Ezekiel’s Hierarchical World* (see above), 43–59.

Galambush, Julie. “The Northern Voyage of Psammeticus II and its Implications for Ezekiel 44:7–9.” In Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis, ed., *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets, and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, 65–78. JSOTSup 408. London: T&T Clark, 2004.

Ganzel, Tova. “‘The Rabbis Sought to Withdraw the Book of Ezekiel’: The Rabbinic Re-Authorization of the Book of Ezekiel.” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 11 (2020): 251–70.

Goerwitz, Richard L. “Long Hair or Short Hair in Ezekiel 44:20?” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123 (2003): 371–76.

Hunt, Alice W. “Ezekiel Spinning the Wheels of History.” In Brad Kelle and Megan Moore, ed., Israel’s Prophets and Israel’s Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes, 280–90. LHBOTS 446. London: T&T Clark, 2006

Jaeyoung, Jeon. “The Levites and Idolatry: A Scribal Debate in Ezekiel 44 and Chronicles.” In Jeon Jaeyoung and Louis C. Jonker, ed., *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, 348–74. BZAW 528. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021.

Jonker, Louis C. “Melting Pots and Rejoinders? The Interplay among Literature Formation Processes during the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods.” *VT* 70 (2020): 42–54.

Kilchor, Benjamin. “Ezechiel und Ägypten: Ein Vorschlag zur Identifikation der Fremden in Ezechiel 44,7.9.” *BN* 179 (2018): 3–17.

*–––* “The Meaning of Ezekiel 44,6–14 in Light of Ezekiel 1–39.” *Biblica* 98 (2017): 191–207.

Klein, Reuven Chaim (Rudolph). “Reconciling the Sacrifices of Ezekiel with the Torah.” *JBQ* 43 (2015): 211–22.

Konkel, Michael. *Architektonik des Heiligen: Studien zur zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48).* Berlin: Philo, 2001.

Lemke, Werner. “Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor.” In Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen, ed., *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, 299–319. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.

MacDonald, Nathan. *Priestly Rule: Polemic and Biblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44.* BZAW 476. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Milgrom, Jacob. “Ezekiel and the Levites.” In Shawna Dolansky, ed., Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R. E. Friedman on His Sixtieth Birthday, 3–12. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008.

Mitchell, Christine. “The Righteousness of the Levites in Chronicles and Ezekiel.” In Jaeyoung and Jonker, *Chronicles* (see above), 337–47.

Nihan, Christophe. “The *nāśîʾ* and the Future of Royalty in Ezekiel.” In Ian Douglas Wilson and Diane Gersoni-Edelman, ed., *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi*, 229–46. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015.

*–––* “Reconsidering Davidic Kingship in Ezekiel.” In Diane V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi, ed., *Leadership, Social Memory, and Judean Discourse in the Fifth-Second Centuries BCE*, 89–110. Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2016.

Salvador-González, José María. “*Haec Porta Domini*: Exegeses of Some Greek Church Fathers on Ezekiel’s *Porta* *Clausa* (5th–10th Centuries). *Cauriensia* 15 (2020): 615–33.

Schaper, Joachim. “Rereading the Law: Inner-Biblical Exegesis of Divine Oracles in Ezekiel 44 and Isaiah 56.” In Bernard M. Levinson and Eckart Otto, ed., *Recht und Ethik in Alten Testament*, 125–44. Münster: Lit, 2004.

Sweeney, Marvin A. "The Problem of Ezekiel in Talmudic Literature." in Andrew Mein and Paul M. Joyce, ed., *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet*, 211–23. LHBOTS 535. London: T&T Clark, 2011.

Tiemeyer, Lena-Sofia. “The Question of Indirect Touch: Lam 4,14; Ezek 44,19 and Hag 2,12-13.” *TynB* 87 (2006): 64–74.

Tuell, Steven S. “The Priesthood of the “Foreigner”: Evidence of Competing Polities in Ezekiel 44:1–14 and Isaiah 56:1–8.” In John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell, ed., *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride, Jr.*, 183–204. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

Warren, Nathanael James. "‘The Sin of the Sanctuary’ and the Referent of מקדש in Ezekiel 44.” *BBR* 25 (2015): 311–23.

Wellhausen, Julius. *Prolegomena to the History of Israel with a Reprint of the Article* Israel *from the “Encyclopaedia Britannica.”* Trans J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies. Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885.

Yang, Inchol. “King Josiah’s Religious Reformation in Ezek 44:4–16.” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 113 (2019): 5–40.

## Sanctuary Layout, Integrity, and Offerings (45:1–25)

### Outline

A series of paragraphs take further matters about the life and worship of the Judahite community, regarding the sanctuary, the ministers, the offerings, and the prince. It thus covers a miscellany of topics that have in common only that they evidently seemed important in relation to the sanctuary. As is often the case, it looks more likely than not that the material comprises a sequence of units of independent origin, teaching that Ezekiel or a successor gave on different occasions. They provide no definite indications of their background, but Ezekiel or his curator assembled them here and as usual invites listeners to imagine them in the context of Israel between the fall of Jerusalem and the restoration of Judah.

The classic introduction to a message from Yahweh, “the Lord Yahweh has said this,” in 45:9 and 18, would invite the inference that the chapter comprises three sections, 45:1–8, 9–17, and 18–25, but this inference doesn’t work well with the content of the material. Like Ezek 44, then, the chapter comprises material of varying origins assembled into a sequence, though the basis of the sequencing is different. The arrangement does mean that one thing leads to another.[[118]](#footnote-119)

* 45:1–6. To complement the detailed information about the sanctuary’s square ground plan in Ezek 40–44, information follows here on its setting in a much wider square of land allocated to the priests, the Levites, and the city. The focus on this square leads into 45:7–8.
* 45:7–8. Either side of the square is land allocated to the prince, with which it forms a strip from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. Ezek 47 will make explicit that this strip is set in the context of a series of strips of land allocated to each clan. The allocation to the prince(s) leads into 45:9.
* 45:9. Princes are challenged to accept a commitment to faithfulness in relation to the community. The expectation of faithfulness leads into 45:10–12.
* 45:10–12. The community is expected to accept an obligation to faithfulness in trading, buying and selling with honesty, by having consistent weights and measures. The theme of *ephah, bat,* and *homer* leads into 45:13–17.
* 45:13–17. Measures such as *ephah*, *bat*, and *homer* also apply to the community’s offerings. People and prince both have obligations in connection with grain offerings, burnt offerings, shared offerings, and decontamination offerings, and thus with making expiation. The theme of decontamination and expiation leads into 45:18–20.
* 45:18–20. In that connection, the priests’ sacramental action involves the slaughter of a bullock and the daubing of its blood on the sanctuary altar and doorframe. The theme of the sacrifice of a bullock leads into 45:21–25.
* 45:21–25. The prince will provide for a bullock sacrifice on Passover along with other animals as burnt offerings on other occasions, and with the therewithal for grain offerings.

### Translation

1When you[[119]](#footnote-120) allot the country as a domain, you will raise a reserve[[120]](#footnote-121) for Yahweh, as something sacred from the country, a length of 25,000 [cubits] in length and a width of 10,000, it being something sacred in its entire border all round.[[121]](#footnote-122) 2From this, for the sanctuary there will be 500 by 500 square around, and fifty cubits common land for it around. 3So by this measurement you will measure a length of 25,000 and a width of 10,000, and in it will be the sanctuary, the most sacred, 4it being the sacred place out of the country for the priests, the sanctuary’s ministers who come forward to minister to Yahweh, and it being for them a place for houses and a sanctuary for the sanctuary. 5Then 25,000 in length and 10,000 in width will be for the Levites, who minister in the house, for them as an allocation, twenty chambers. 6And as the city’s allocation you will give 5,000 in width and in length 25,000, alongside the sacred reserve, it being for the whole household of Israel.

7Then for the prince, on each side of the sacred reserve and of the city’s allocation, facing the sacred reserve and facing the city’s allocation, on the west side toward the west and on the east side toward the east, a length corresponding to one of the shares from the west border to the eastward border 8of the country: it will be his as an allocation in Israel. My princes will no more exploit my people, as they give the country to the household of Israel, to their clans.

9The Lord Yahweh has said this: Plenty for you, princes of Israel. Violence and plundering: abandon it. Faithful exercise of authority: do it. Give up[[122]](#footnote-123) your evictions of my people (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh).

10Faithful balances, a faithful *ephah* and a faithful *bat* you are to have, 11the *ephah* and the *bat* being one size, for the *bat* to carry a tenth of a *homer* and the *ephah* a tenth of a *homer*, with the *homer* being its standard, 12and the *sheqel* twenty *gerahs*, twenty *sheqels*/twenty-five *sheqels*/ten and five *sheqels* being a *mina* for you.

13This is the reserve that you will raise. A sixth of an *ephah* from a *homer* of wheat, and a sixth of an *ephah* from a *homer* of barley. 14The law for oil, oil [by] the *bat*: a tenth of a *bat* from a *kor* (ten *bats* a *homer*, because ten *bats* are a *homer*). 15One sheep from the flock from [every] 200. From Israel’s irrigated land,[[123]](#footnote-124) something as[[124]](#footnote-125) a grain offering, and a burnt offering, and shared offerings, to make expiation for them (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh). 16While the entire people (the country)[[125]](#footnote-126) will be involved in this reserve for the prince in Israel, 17incumbent upon the prince will be the burnt offerings, the grain offering, and the libation, on festivals, on the [first day of] months, and on Sabbaths, on all Israel’s household’s set occasions, as he will make the decontamination offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the shared offerings, to make expiation for Israel’s household.

18The Lord Yahweh has said this. In the first [month] on the first of the month, you[[126]](#footnote-127) will get a bullock from the herd, whole, and decontaminate the sanctuary. 19The priest will get some of the blood of the decontamination offering and put it on the doorframe of the house, on the four corners of the altar’s ledge, and upon the doorframe of the gateway to the inner courtyard. 20And so you will do on the seventh of the month because of someone straying or being naïve. So you will make expiation for the house.

21In the first [month] on the fourteenth day of the month you will have the Passover as a festival, when flat bread will be eaten for seven days. 22The prince will make a bullock decontamination offering on that day on his behalf and on behalf of the entire people of the country, 23and for the seven days of the festival he will make a burnt offering to Yahweh, seven bullocks, and seven rams, whole, each day for the seven days, and a decontamination offering buck from the goats each day, 24while making a grain offering of a *ephah* for a bullock and an *ephah* for a ram, and oil, a *hin* for an *ephah*.

25In the seventh [month], on the fifteenth day of the month, during the festival, he will make the same as these for seven days, the same as the decontamination offering, the same as the burnt offering, the same as the grain offering, and the same as the oil.

### Textual Notes

MT has markers\* after 45:8, 15, 17, and 25.

**45:1** For עֲשׇֹרה, “ten,” LXX “twenty” suggests עֶשְֹרׅים. 10,000 would simply cover the sanctuary and the priestly tract (cf. 48:9), 20,000 would also include the Levites’ tract (cf. 45:5).

**45:3** Q חֲמׅשׇּׁהis f., K חמש is m.

**45:4** For וּמׅקְדׇּשׁ לַמּׅקְדׇּשׁ, “a sanctuary for the sanctuary,” LXX “set aside for their sanctuary/sacredness” suggests וּמׅגְרׇשׁ לַמּׅקְדׇּשׁ, “common land for the sanctuary” (cf. 45:2) (Cooke, 505).

**45:5** K has יהיה, “will be.” Q וְהׇיׇה, “and [there] will be,” would imply that “25,000 in length and 10,000 in width” links with what precedes.

For עֶשְֹרׅים לְשׇׁכֹת, “twenty chambers,” LXX “cities to live in” suggests עׇרׅים לׇשֶׁבֶת (cf. Num 35:2; Josh 14:4; 21:2 (*HUB*).

**45:8** For נְשֹׅיאַי, “my princes,” LXX “Israel’s princes” suggests נְשֹׅיאֵי יׅשְֹרׇאֵל.

LXX renders “the household of Israel allocate the country” rather than “ they give the country to the household of Israel,” ignoring the לְ.

**45:12** For “twenty *sheqels*/twenty-five *sheqels*/ten and five *sheqels*,” LXX has “five *sheqels* five and ten *sheqels* ten and fifty *sheqels*.”

**45:15** For“one sheep from the flock from [every] 200,” LXX “a sheep from ten sheep, a deduction” matches the tithing regulation.

For the difficult מׅמַּשְׁקֵה, literally “from the irrigation” (BDB, 1052b), LXX “from all the paternal families” suggests מׅכׇּל־מׅשְׁפְּחוֹת (cf. Jer 31:1; Cooke, 507).

**45:16** LXX lacks “(the country).”

**45:20** For בְּשׁׅבְעׇה בַּחֹדֶשׁ, “on the seventh of the month,” LXX “in the seventh month” suggests a reading such as בַַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבׅיעׅי.

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**45:1–4** By implication, Yahweh continues to speak, but he refers to himself in the third person. His instructions recall the ones he gave Joshua (e.g.; Josh 13:1–7). Whereas he does not use the verb “share out” (חׇלַק piel) as he did there (he will use it in 47:21), he does describe the country as Israel’s “domain” (נַחֲלׇה) as he did there. And “allot” (נׇפַל hiphil), literally “cause the land to fall,” was a verb Joshua used (Josh 23:4). There, Joshua and the people caused the lot to fall to determine the allocation of the land, whereas here the verb involves a metonymy.\* One way or another, however, Yahweh is commissioning the people (the “you” is plural) to undertake an allocation of the land like the one long ago, and Ezekiel is once again seeing Yahweh’s act of restoration not as a new exodus but as a new entering into Canaan. So “directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and, God having warranted them to do it, [it] would be an act of faith, and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it” (Henry, 1433). While the original allocation of the land worked realistically with the lie of the land, the allocation presupposed in Ezekiel ignores that. It is visionary, like the plan of the temple. Jenson (321) comments:

The sensibility is the same: as the divine layout of the temple and its close took no account of the facts on any ground conceivable in this age, so this edict outdoes the most arbitrary and mathematically obsessed practitioners of earthly land-use planning. Where—and especially around Jerusalem—could you actually lay out these rectangles? The reason for the abstraction is plain: planning for the eschatological holy district and its neighborhood need not concern itself with antecedent topography, since the holy district creates its own incommensurably perfect topography. The old temple had its precincts; and the eschatological temple will be like it in this. But the new precincts will be such a geometrically exact layout as no zoning of this age could encompass.

Ezekiel will expound this theme more broadly in Ezek 47–48 and describe how each clan will receive a strip of land extending from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, “like rows in a vineyard” (Rashi, in MG). Initially, he is interested in an eight-miles square central subdivision in just one of the strips of land. Strictly, this strip not a domain at all (see 44:28), and most of it doesn’t actually belong to the priests or Levites. It is “a reserve for Yahweh” (see the translation footnote). Roughly, the middle third of the strip is Yahweh’s in a narrower sense. The sanctuary sits at its center of it and thus (it will emerge in Ezek 48) at the center of the land as a whole. Immediately around the sanctuary is a narrow belt of “common land,” land that doesn’t belong to anyone. Usually one would think of common land as land where anyone can pasture their animals, but this band looks too narrow for that purpose. It is more a buffer zone between the priests’ residential area and the sanctuary.

**45:5–6** While the priests’ area where they will build their houses is thus around the sanctuary, on the north side of the priests’ area is the Levites’ area, which is termed an allocation (אֲחֻזׇּה). They will need to grow food and pasture animals there, so they can “minister in the house” in indispensable ways (44:11–14), while not benefiting from the sacrifices as the priests do. They will presumably have their homesteads there. The “chambers” will be facilities related to their work in some way, like the various other chambers that Ezek 40–44 has mentioned.

On the south side of the reserve is the area allocated to the city, and its land. As usual, Ezekiel does not refer to “Jerusalem,” whose significance he implicitly downgrades as a place of waywardness and false trust, a place that grew bad figs and bad grapes. It is one of the ways he speaks more like a “state enemy” than a “state priest.”[[127]](#footnote-128) As with the monarchy, he does not simply dismiss the city, but here makes explicit its relatively insignificant place. He will speak much more positively in 48:15–35, though even there the city is subordinate to the clans, as it was through Israel’s story until the time of David and Solomon. Here the city is “for the whole household of Israel.” Is it a place to stay when you come to the sanctuary? The allusion to the city also makes more explicit that the “city-like” sanctuary area (40:2) is not an image for the entire country. The city, and the clans, lie outside the sanctuary.

**45:7–8** The eastern third of the strip, extending inland from the Jordan, and the western third, extending inland from the Mediterranean, is the prince’s allocation, which thus lies either side of the central “reserve for Yahweh,” the “sacred reserve,” and of the city’s allocation. The allocation may seem generous to the prince, though the emphasis in the paragraph lies on the limitation it places on him. This prince is not a king. He cannot behave as if the entire country belongs to him, and as if therefore (for instance) he could tax all of it or vastly extend the area where he pastures his flocks and herds. He is to “give the country to the household of Israel, to their clans,” to let them have it rather than appropriating it for himself. Like the earlier little note about the prince (44:3), then, this paragraph privileges the prince but also constrains him. Israel had, after all, proved that it didn’t do very well without a king, and in some ways it did better when it had a king, so Yahweh continues his compromise about Israel having a human sovereign. The prince is the “temple patron,”[[128]](#footnote-129) but in a way that makes him subordinate to the temple as the temple’s servant.

The constraints become explicit when Yahweh makes a further declaration about “my princes.” The “my” points to the fact that he appoints them to rule on his behalf. In a country such as the UK, a prince is subordinate to the sovereign, and this prince is subordinate to the Sovereign. “My princes will no more exploit my people,” Yahweh declares, with the telling double use of “my.” The verb (יׇנׇה hiphil) is not common, and Ezekiel has seven of the fourteen occurrences of the hiphil. It played a key role in critiques in Ezek 18 and 22.

**45:9** Yahweh puts the point more pointedly in his closing words to the princes. They begin, “the Lord Yahweh has said this,” the expression that often leads into a prophetic message. Here it is one that “rhetorically addresses the oppressive rulers of pre-exilic times” (Allen, 2:252). The forceful introductory expression underlines the weight of the pungent phrases that follow, and the message closes with another such expression, “an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh,” to underscore it further. The introductory expression leads into a reworking of the earlier quirkily-expressed comment about the Israelites having “plenty,” indeed, “too much,” by way of outrages (44:6). Here Yahweh adapts that expression for Israel’s princes. They have been too much characterized by violence, plundering, and throwing people off their land. The Naboth story in 1 Kgs 21 is the classic example (but see also, e.g., Jer 22:1–3; Mic 2:2). There needs to be the opposite application of royal energy and power, that faithful exercise of authority (מׅשְׁפׇּט וּצְדׇקׇה) which is a consistent concern of Torah, Prophets, and Writings. It is another phrase that recurs from Ezek 18 and 33, translated there “acting on a faithful ruling” (the traditional translation is “justice and righteousness” or “what is just and right”). It was the great commitment of David at the highpoint of his reign (2 Sam 8:15). “This can properly be referred to bishops and priests” who have no business plundering the people of God but who, Jerome (536) implies, may do so. “The Common-wealth, set forth by the City, in generall is to be preferred before the King, even though he be the Head.… God keep us that be Teachers of the Church of *England* from ever changing this our Tenet” (Mayer, 501). In Ezekiel’s day, it would be important reading for the one subsequent “prince of Judah” in the First Testament, Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8), agent of the Persian king (cf. Clements, 201–3).

**45:10–12** Acting in a way that expresses what is just and right finds expression in honesty in trading. When people come in from the country to sell their produce or barter for what they don’t grow, they can be the victims of people who cheat by having different weights and measures that they use according to what favors them. In isolation, treated as an independent exhortation, this paragraph challenges the community as a whole. Following the charge to the princes, it implies that they have responsibility to oversee trading standards.

*Ephah* and *homer* are basket-size measures of volume for produce such as grain or barley. *Bat* is a tub-size measure of volume for liquids such as wine or oil. *Sheqel* and *gerah* are measures of weight for gold or silver. So is the *mina*, equivalent at different times to fifty or sixty *sheqels*. That change in definition is at least part of the explanation for the tortuous formulation in the text.Different measures have different value for different peoples in different contexts. Yahweh’s point is that there must be consistency in any one context. The point recurs through the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings (Deut 25:13–16; Hos 12:7[8]; Amos 8:5; Mic 6:10–11; Prov 11:1; 16:11; 20:10). Ezekiel’s formulation especially compares with Lev 19:35–36 (Zimmerli, 2:476). Following the passionate bidding in 45:9, this charge about weight and measures gains a different emphasis. It’s not just a technical ordinance (Zimmerli, 2:479).

**45:13–17** The measures are relevant to the way people contribute to communal worship, making their contributions via the prince and his administrative system. These contributions are separate from the tithe system for the support of people who cannot grow their food. They are also separate from the offerings that individuals may make on particular occasions, as accompaniments to prayer or thanksgiving, or in connection with a need to seek cleansing or offer compensation, or simply as an act of worship. Ezekiel’s concern here is with communal worship on “set occasions” through the year, as is confirmed by the absence of reference to the restitution offering (Milgrom, 198). His biddings again work with responsibilities that attach both to the community and to the prince, and one can perhaps see why the prince needs quite a stretch of land in order to meet his obligations.

**45:18–20** Yahweh moves on from offerings in general to a focus on decontamination offering, expiation, and the priest’s action with the blood. Presumably “the priest” is the person who is elsewhere called “the great priest” (הַכֹּהֵן הַגׇּדֹל; e.g., 2 Kgs 22:4, 8), conventionally “high priest” or “chief priest,” but Ezekiel may avoid this expression purposefully, as he avoids the word “king.” Presumably “you” is the prince, but he is supplying the animals from the ones the people have given over to him as their “reserve.” The emphasis in the worship calendar in 45:18–25 lies on cleansing (Cook, 239). The rite for the decontamination of the sanctuary is an equivalent to the Day of Atonement in Lev 25, but the association with Passover in 45:21–25 indicates that “the first [month]” of the year in 45:18 denotes the spring, whereas the Day of Atonement falls at the beginning of a year starting in the fall. But like the Day of Atonement, this rite in the spring ensures that the accumulated defilement of the sanctuary over the previous year is dealt with and the community and its sanctuary get a new start. Both the association of the new year with the spring and the stress on purgation make for comparison with Babylonian practice.[[129]](#footnote-130)

**45:20** After the act of decontamination on new year’s day, it is surprising that another such act follows a week later. One assumption underlying the approach to waywardness and cleansing in Ezekiel, as in Leviticus, is that they need to take account of both the inward, subconscious, or subjective, and the outward, conscious, or objective. Someone might get defiled through contact with a dead body or something they ate or a sexual discharge, and might not realize or might forget, or it might have been an accident. They still need cleansing. The seventh day, second offering covers needs of that kind. But the sense of such a need does hint that one might not be sure that the “proper” decontamination offering has really worked. “In Ezekiel 40–48, evil remains a dark, potent force. A literary utopia is not the eschaton, where evil and death are defeated by God, but an alternate world that exists alongside present reality and challenges it” (Cook, 234; see further the “Application and Devotional Implications” below).

**45:21–25** Yahweh moves on from decontamination and other offerings at new year to these offerings a few days later at Passover/Flat Bread, and then further offerings at the fall festival. There are thus further differences as well as similarities in relation to the rules in the Torah, which has no decontamination offering in connection with Passover, and has Shavuot (Pentecost) between Passover and the fall festival—to which Ezekiel does not refer by its name, Sukkot (Tabernacles). It was differences such as these that led to Hananiah using up his 300 jugs of oil (Rashi, in MG: see the “Biblical Theology Comments” on Ezek 44). Ezekiel himself seems relaxed about such differences.

### Biblical Theology Comments

In the twentieth century, a number of theologians emphasized the theme of “salvation history,” though it had varying implications for different theologians. Ezekiel assumes the importance of this theme, though he puts at least as much stress on Israel’s history as a history of sin and chastisement as a history of salvation. He also points to the importance of salvation geography or “theological geography” (Joyce, 234) or “geo-theology.”[[130]](#footnote-131) In Ezek 45 he thus begins with the allocation of the country of Israel, which presupposes the importance of Yahweh’s restoring Israel’s possession of a particular piece of geography. Within that piece of geography, it is important that Yahweh makes a home in a particular tract of the land. There is a location where people know they can find him. They therefore need to be wary about the sacredness of this location. Even if they approach it as people who are committed to him, they approach it as creatures coming before the creator, and they need to be wary as one is wary of electricity, fire, or pounding water. Further, insofar as they slight him by their attitude and life, and bring stain on themselves and potentially on his house, they need to clean themselves up in order to approach him there. But they can approach him and know they are in his presence there. His relationship with them is not only a spiritual relationship with individuals but a bodily relationship in a place. The importance of theological geography will continue after the resurrection of our bodies, as this relationship continues in the New Jerusalem, even if though it will not have a temple. Jenson (303–4) comments:

The Lord’s eschatological presence will involve material accommodation—to be sure, of a sort appropriate to its provision by the Lord himself. If all the describing and measuring communicate anything, it is that the eschatological presence will not be a merely—in our modern sense—“inward” reality: the Lord’s final dwelling with his people will bring a house with this wall of so many cubits and that set of windows making a sort of clerestory and those sacristies for changing out of vestments and so forth.… The plan of Ezekiel’s eschatological temple is at once a rebuke of the old earthly temple and its fulfillment. Herein it embodies the great blessing and conceptual challenge of all Jewish and Christian eschatology: the “world to come” or “kingdom of heaven” will be at once the undoing of all earthly power and achievement and their perfecting.

### Application and Devotional Implications

Ezek 45 links decontamination and expiation with the entirety of Israel’s worship in a distinctive way. Grain offerings, burnt offerings, shared offerings, Passover, are all given a link with decontamination and expiation. So are festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths. Making a mistake or being unaware of what you have done is given a link with decontamination and expiation. Likewise, while Christian worship traditionally incorporates confession and absolution in every service, it also focuses on confession and absolution on an annual occasion such as Ash Wednesday. It is both paradoxical that Christian worship does so, because Jesus’s dying and rising and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit surely solved the problem of sin once for all. But it is also proper, because the church has been sinning for two millennia since then, often dreadfully, and individual believers have been doing the same, often dreadfully. It’s mysterious that it should be so. Human waywardness was mysterious from the beginning, and continues to be.

It's also mysterious, in a different sense, that Jesus’s letting us kill him should have been the means of our being decontaminated and of our offensiveness being expiated. His letting us kill him and refusing to be diverted from loving us were the ultimate embodiment of God’s love. The mystery lies in the fact that Father and Son continued and continue to love us. It reflects the mystery of who God is. Ezek 45 again implies some similar assumptions. Despite the wonder of the restoration Yahweh is going to effect for Israel, Israel going to continue to need decontamination and expiation. It is a mystery, but Ezekiel knows it will be so. And Yahweh will continue to make decontamination and expiation possible, which is also a mystery, but Ezekiel knows it will be so. It is expressed in the fact that he talks about Yahweh making expiation for Israel (16:63), not just Israel making expiation for itself. Behind the logical oddness of the idea that killing an animal and burning it can effect people’s decontamination is the mystery of God’s loving his people so much that he is prepared to ignore their offensiveness, and thereby rob it of its power. Indeed, it thereby ceases to exist. Yahweh thus decontaminates the people. He expiates their waywardness. They become clean.

### Selected Bibliography

Boyle, Brian. “The Figure of the *Nāśî’* in Ezekiel’s Vision of the New Temple {*Ezekiel 40–48*).” *Australian Biblical Review* 58 (2010): 1–16.

Cook, Stephen L. “The Prophet Ezekiel: State Priest, State Enemy.” In Christopher Rollston, ed, *Enemies and Friends of the State: Ancient Prophecy in Context*, 395–410. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018.

Ganzel, Tova. “First-Month Rituals in Ezekiel's Temple Vision: A Pentateuchal and Babylonian Comparison.” *CBQ* 83 (2021): 390–406.

Goswell, Gregory. “The Prince Forecast by Ezekiel and its Relation to Other Old Testament Messianic Portraits.” *BN* 178 (2018): 53–73.

Nevader, Madhavi. “Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40–48?” In Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, ed., *Exile and Return : The Babylonian Context*, 268–91. BZAW 478. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Tuell, Steven Shawn. *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*. HSM 49. Atlanta: Scholars, 1992.

Wagenaar, Jan A. *Origin and Transformation of the Ancient Israelite Festival Calendar*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005.

*–––* “Passover and the First Day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the Priestly Festival Calendar.” *VT* 54 (2004): 250–68.

## Sanctuary Offerings, Integrity, and Layout (46:1–24)

### Outline

Another series of paragraphs take further some questions regarding the ongoing life of the sanctuary, the ministers, the offerings, and the prince. It thus covers a further miscellany of topics that have in common only that they evidently seemed important in relation to issues opened up there. Once again, it looks likely that they comprise material of varying origins that, teaching that Ezekiel or a successor gave on a number of different occasions, though they provide no indications of their background. Ezekiel or his curator assembled them here in a way that invites listeners to imagine them in the context of Israel’s situation between the fall of Jerusalem and the restoration of Judah, anticipating that restoration and important in relation to the life of Judah in the context of that restoration.

Once again, the classic introduction to a message from Yahweh, “the Lord Yahweh has said this” (46:1 and 16), invites inferences about the chapter’s structure, as comprising 46:1–15 and 16–24. This understanding does work better than the equivalent inference for Ezek 45, but 46:16–18 and 46:19–24 look quite separate. As is suggested by the heading above, “Sanctuary Offerings, Integrity, and Layout,” the chapter’s arrangement broadly constitutes a reverse of the one in Ezek 45 (with 46:16–18 paralleling 45:7–10), so that Ezek 45–46 as a whole work abcc′b′a′. This chapter unfolds:

Points about access and about offerings, alternating (46:1–15)

Opening gateways on Sabbaths (46:1–3) The offerings (46:4–7)

Entering and exiting on festivals (46:8–10) The offerings (46:11)

Opening gateways for voluntary offerings (46:12) The daily offerings (46:13–15)

Instructions about allocations and exploitation (46:16–18)

The sanctuary’s layout: the kitchens (46: 19–24)

As happens elsewhere in these chapters, there are detailed differences in the instructions about offerings compared with the instructions in the Torah: see notably 46:4–6 compared with Num 28:9–11. As usual, this suggests several insights. There is nothing absolute or timeless about the instructions Yahweh gives in the Torah or in the Prophets. Sometimes they represent different contexts to which Yahweh speaks. Sometimes they are alternative embodiments of the same principles. Sometimes they are embodiments of different principles. Sometimes they are not designed for literal implementation but are more sample embodiments of the way the same principles may be embodied. Although Jewish and Christian exegetes have worried about the differences between them, it seems that the Judahite community that accepted Numbers and Ezekiel (for instance) into their Scriptures was not worried by them. It was later generations that felt this worry. This suggests a paradox. In the Second Temple period, Judah was in a position to implement the instructions and might have been expected therefore to fret about differences. But the subsequent communities that have fretted about them lived in later centuries when there was no temple where they could be implemented. For these communities, it was then the Scriptures as Scriptures that counted, rather than the practical question about what the priests should do tomorrow. And fortunately, it is possible to learn from the Torah or from Ezekiel without knowing how one might actually organize worship in the temple tomorrow, as it is possible to learn from the Torah and from Ezekiel without knowing the date or authorship of its material.

### Translation

1The Lord Yahweh has said this. The gateway to the inner courtyard that faces east: it will be closed for the six work days, but on the Sabbath day it will open, and on the [new] month day it will open. 2The prince will come in by way of the gateway foyer from outside[[131]](#footnote-132) and stand at the [inner] doorframe of the gateway, and the priests will make his burnt offering[[132]](#footnote-133) and his shared offerings.[[133]](#footnote-134) He will bow down in worship[[134]](#footnote-135) at the gateway porch and go out, though the gateway will not close until evening. 3The citizenry[[135]](#footnote-136) will bow down in worship at that gateway entrance on Sabbaths and on [the first day of] months before Yahweh.

4The burnt offering that the prince brings forward to Yahweh on the Sabbath day: six lambs, whole, a ram, whole, 5with a grain offering, an *ephah* for the ram, and for the lambs a grain offering that is the gift of his hand,[[136]](#footnote-137) and a *hin* of oil for [each] *ephah*. 6On the [new] month day: a bullock from the herd, whole, six lambs, and a ram, which will be whole, 7while he will make an *ephah* for the bullock and an *ephah* for the ram as a grain offering, and for the lambs such as his hand gets hold of, with a *hin* of oil for an *ephah*.

8When the prince comes in, it will be by way of the gateway foyer, and by its way he will go out. 9But when the citizenry come before Yahweh on the set occasions, someone who comes in by way of the north gateway to bow down in worship will go out by way of the south gateway, and someone who comes in by way of the south gateway will go out by way of the north gateway—he will not go back by way of the gateway through which he came in, but go out [by] its opposite, 10while the prince will come in among them when they come in, and when they go out, they will go out [together].

11On festivals and on set occasions, the grain offering will be an *ephah* for the bullock, an *ephah* for the ram, and for the lambs that are the gift of his hand, with a *hin* of oil for an *ephah*.

12When the prince makes a voluntary offering (a burnt offering or shared offerings), a voluntary offering to Yahweh, someone will open the [inner] gateway facing east for him. He will make his burnt offering and his shared offerings as he does on the Sabbath day, and go out, and someone will close the gateway after he goes out.

13A yearling lamb, whole, you will make as a burnt offering, daily, to Yahweh. As morning by morning you make it, 14you will make a grain offering with it, morning by morning: a sixth of an *ephah* and a third of a *hin* of oil to moisten the fine flour, a grain offering to Yahweh. As laws for all time with regularity,[[137]](#footnote-138) 15they will make the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil morning by morning, a regular burnt offering.

16The Lord Yahweh has said this. When the prince makes a gift to one of his sons, it being his domain, for his sons it will become their allocation, as a domain. 17But when he makes a gift from his domain to one of his servants, it will become his until the year of release, and go back to the prince, as exclusively his domain, his sons—it will belong to them. 18And the prince will not take from the people’s domain so as to exploit them in respect of their allocation, as he will give a domain to his sons from his allocation, in order that my people do not scatter, anyone from his allocation.

19Then he had me come by the entrance that is at the flank of the gateway to the sacred chambers, to the priests, facing northwards. And there: a place on the sides to the west, here. 20He said to me, “This is the place where the priests will cook the restitution offering and the decontamination offering, where they will bake the grain offering, so that they do not have them go out to the outer courtyard so as to make the people sacred.” 21Then he had me go out into the outer courtyard and pass by the four corners of the courtyard. And there: a further courtyard in each corner of the courtyard.[[138]](#footnote-139) 22In the four corners of the courtyard, smoke-filled courtyards, forty [cubits] in length and thirty in width, one measurement for the four of them (set in the corners), 23with a [masonry] row around them, around the four of them, and cooking places made under the rows, around. 24He said to me, “There are the cooks’ rooms[[139]](#footnote-140) where the house’s ministers cook the people’s sacrifice.”

### Textual Notes

MT has markers\* after 46:11, 15, 16, and 19.

**46:9** For the last “go out,” for Qיֵצֵא , K has pl. יצאו.

**46:12** “Someone will open/close”represents simple וּפׇתַח and וְסׇגַר. LXX assumes that the subject continues to be the prince, who thus opens and closes the gateway himself.

**46:13** For MT “you,” LXX has “he” in 46:13–15 (and “you” pl. for MT “they” in 46:15).

**46:14** For חֻקּוֹת, “laws,” a Cairo Geniza ms (*BHS*)reads sg. חֻקַּת, “a law” (cf. LXX, Vg.).

**46:15** Q יַעֲשֹוּ follows straightforwardly from 46:14 (see the translation note). K ועשו would imply that “as laws for all time with regularity” is extraposed.

**46:16** For נַחֲלׇתוֹ, “his domain,” LXX “from his domain” (cf. NRSV, NIV) implies מׅנַּחֲלׇתוֹ.

**46:17** For נַחֲלׇתוֹ, the second “his domain,” LXX “the domain of [his sons]” suggests נַחֲלת.

**46:19** For Q’s dual בַּיַּרְכׇתַיׅם, “on the sides,” K has בירכתם, “on their side.”

**46:22** For קְטֻרוֹת, “smoke filled,” literally “smoked”(cf. Altschuler, in MG; see further *CTAT*, 406–7), LXX “small” (cf. Vg.) suggests קְטַנּוֹת. EVV “enclosed” assume the word is a hapax\* that has this meaning in PBH (BDB, 883b; *DTT*, 1352–53).

LXX lacks “set in the corners,” מְחֻֻקְצׇעוֹת, which has dots over it in MT that suggest the Masoretes had questions about it (see the textual note on 41:21–22).

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**46:1–3** Ezekiel is concerned first with access to the inner courtyard for laypeople and for the prince. Access is perhaps the wrong word, in that neither laypeople nor prince will set foot on the inner courtyard. During the week, on the “six ordinary days” (יוֹמֵי חוֹלא, Tg.), they will all have free access to the outer courtyard, and they will know that Yahweh is present in the inner sanctuary and that they are in his presence by virtue of being in the sanctuary. If they come there in early morning they will know that the daily offering is being made there, and if there is no wall round the inner courtyard (see the verse-by-verse comment on 40:28–37), they will be able to watch. But the actual eastern inner gateway (and presumably the others) will be shut, symbolically safeguarding Yahweh’s sacredness. On Sabbaths (when people were freer to take time to come to the sanctuary) and on the first of the month, however, the eastern gateway will be open, symbolically safeguarding Yahweh’s accessibility. Its being open will also facilitate the prince’s coming through the gateway to the threshold of the inner courtyard and watching the priests make the offerings he has brought on the people’s behalf. He thus again enjoys privilege that is the other side of responsibility: “the prince is more a functionary of the worshipping community than its focus” (Joyce, 235). He will then bow down in worship at the threshold and leave. And the gateway will remain symbolically open all day, continuing to symbolize that accessibility, so that any time all day laypeople will be able to bow down there in worship before Yahweh. Even if there is a wall, they may be able to get a glimpse of the altar and house if they can find a place in the right position outside the gateway. This chapter is second only to Ezek 40 in its emphasis on the gateways, which here even more clearly symbolize right of access but also control of access to different groups (see the verse-by-verse commentary on 40:6–7a).

In 8:16, Ezekiel used the verb “bow down in worship” (הׅשְׁתַּחֲוָה) in a negative way in connection with bowing down to the sun in the temple. In 46:2, 3, and 9 at last he uses it in a positive way in the context of worship in the visionary sanctuary. “A counterpart to the vision of abominations in the Temple (8:5-16), this unit envisions the perfect worship of Yhwh” (Bowen, 259). The verb has two implications. LXX translates “bow down,” which conveys the word’s essential implications in terms of a bodily movement. Vg. translates “worship,” which conveys the word’s essential implications in terms of an inner attitude. Once agin, Ezekiel implies the assumption that humanity is both body and spirit, so that engaging with Yahweh involves both physical posture and inner attitude. Neither is complete without the other.

**46:4–7** Yahweh goes on the itemize the offerings the prince will bring on the Sabbath and on the first of the month, with a prescription for the animals but with the grain left to the prince’s discretion. The inclusion of a bullock at the celebration of the new month points to the importance of this occasion each month in the cycle of the year, as God created it. “Anyone who blesses the month at its time, it is as if he greets the face of the Shekinah” (*b. Sanh*. 42a).

**46:8–10** The priest will be coming from his domain to the north or south, and will enter the outer courtyard by the appropriate gateway and go out the same way. The people will likewise come in one or other of those gateways when they come to the sanctuary on set occasions such as Passover, then they will come to bow down in worship before Yahweh from their position in the outer courtyard. They will go out the opposite way to the way they came, perhaps to safeguard order in the sanctuary in the outer courtyard on these set occasions when there would be great crowds. The prince comes in and goes out among them, which expresses his identification with them.

**46:11** Yahweh lays down some details regarding offerings on the annual pilgrimage festivals and on other “set occasions” (מוֹעֲדׅים), a term that might include Sabbath and the new month as well as occasions such as Shavuot (not mentioned in 45:21–25) and the Day of Atonement (see the list in Lev 23).

**46:12** For the third category of offerings, voluntary ones that the prince brings on his own behalf or the people’s, the inner east gateway will need special opening so that he can again bring forward the offerings to the priests and watch the sacrifice.

**46:13–15** Apparently nothing more needs to be said by way of prescribing the voluntary offerings (see Lev 7:11–18). On the other hand, something needs to be said about the daily offerings, in connection with which questions of access to the inner sanctuary do not arise. Who is the “you” (sg.) whom Yahweh here addresses? The parallel with Num 28:4, 8 would suggest that it is the people as a whole (Milgrom, 213), but the people are not the ones whom Ezekiel elsewhere describes as “making” sacrifices (עׇשׇֹה). Given that the prince “makes” them in 46:7, 12, he is more likely the “you” here. The priests “make” them in 46:2 and they will be the “they” of 46:15. The prince evidently sees that the animals reach the priests by some other route than him personally bringing them each day. Ezekiel does not mention the evening offering (contrast Exod 20:38–42; Num 28:3–8), which might mean he takes it for granted, though his threefold “morning by morning” rather implies that he views it as inessential (Allen, 2:268).

**46:16–18** Perhaps the reason a prince might pass on part of his land to one or another of his sons would be to forestall possibilities of strife after his death—in other words, he is making a will. The reason for the rule in 46:17 banning the passing on of land to a servant in perpetuity may have more than one implication. It safeguards the principle that land cannot be transferred out of the family. It coheres with the principle underlying Lev 25:10–17 that lays down the specifications for the year of “release” (דְּרוֹר), when everything was to go back to the level playing field that had once applied. Yahweh here extends the application of this rule. The rule would also protect the rights of the sons from their father’s giving away parts of their domain for some reason. And a motivation of this kind would link with the further rule about land in 46:18, which takes up the warning about exploitation from 45:8 and safeguards the principle that land cannot be transferred for the sake of the ordinary Israelite.

**46:19–20** Ezekiel gave up the narrative framework of the vision report after 44:1–8, and 44:9–46:18 has comprised simply a series of instruction paragraphs. He now resumes the narrative framework briefly, as his guide (presumably) points out two locations of sanctuary kitchens. First he takes Ezekiel in the direction he had previously taken him, presumably starting from the northern gate out of the inner sanctuary and going westward to the area of the priests’ chambers, west of the inner courtyard. There was a single kitchen there attached to the chambers (perhaps there was a twin one the other side of the chambers). While the parts of animals that were offered to Yahweh were barbecued on the altar until they were crisp and humanly inedible, the parts of animals that were eaten by the priests needed to be cooked in a more palatable way, but to be cooked in a location that would confine their sacredness to the priests, on the same basis as the priests taking off their sacred robes before they rejoined laypeople in the outer sanctuary

**46:21–24** Then in the four corners of the outer sanctuary were kitchens where “the people’s sacrifices,” specifically their shared offerings, could be cooked by “the house’s ministers”—presumably the Levites (44:10–12; 45:5). They would first be slaughtered by the Levites at the tables in place for that purpose (40:42). Then, after being cooked, they would be eaten by families and friends in one of the chambers that surrounded the outer courtyard. The courtyards where cooking took place would indeed be smoky. They apparently had rows of masonry with the fire underneath them and holes on top, where the cooking pots would be set (Rashi, in MG). The First Testament does not otherwise refer to temple kitchens, and “one suspects that in the old temple, practice with respect to cooking and such matters may have been decidedly more lax” (Jenson, 332). Whether kitchens had formerly existed or not, Ezekiel’s point will be to safeguard the proper sanctity even of the people’s celebrations and feasting (contrast Prov 7, which hints at the possibility of a post-sacrifice dinner-for-two at home!).

### Biblical Theology Comments

There is a schedule to God’s relationship with his people, with an annual, a monthly, a weekly, and a daily rhythm. He relates to them on the basis of an annual calendar to which Passover/Easter is key because it reaffirms and brings home the reality of what God did to redeem his people, though Shavuot/Pentecost is also important, and so is New Year when God reaffirms his cleansing his people from the stain of the past year and invites them to enjoy a new beginning. So these are holidays, holy days. God relates to his people on the basis of a monthly rhythm, when once more he invites his people to start again. God relates to his people on the basis of a weekly rhythm whereby they set aside the activities of the past six days and are free to focus on his reality and presence in their midst. God also relates to his people on the basis of a daily rhythm. In past centuries in England, the priest would go to the church to worship, and ring the church bell so that people working in the fields or at home would know and could join in from a distance. That was an equivalent to the rhythm presupposed by Ezekiel. And God relates to his people on the basis of their need. When they need to come to plead with him for healing or protection, or to appeal to him for cleansing, or to give thanks for special gifts or blessings or acts of deliverance, they can come, any time. He is always there.

Heb 10:19 talks about “having boldness about entering the sacred places through the blood of Jesus.” This could give the impression that people didn’t have that boldness in Ezekiel’s time, which could give a wrong impression. Ezekiel and the rest of the First Testament make clear that Israelites well knew the presence of God. They knew it an objective sense, in that Yahweh really was present in the sanctuary and they were in his presence even though they didn’t have access to the most sacred place. And they knew it in a subjective sense, in that they were aware of being in Yahweh’s presence in the sanctuary and elsewhere and could thus pray and praise accordingly.

The other aspect to the false impression that one might derive from Heb 10:19 is that Hebrews’ point in this connection (and the point elsewhere in the New Testament) is that the new blessing that Jesus brings is not the possibility of being in the presence of God now but possibility of being in the presence of God in the context of a resurrection life. As passages such as Ezek 32 make clear, the First Testament recognizes that when you die you die, and in Sheol you are not in God’s presence in the same sense as you were when you were alive. You cannot praise or pray now. It is here that Jesu’s death and resurrection makes all the difference. He “consecrated a fresh and living way for us” into the sanctuary (Heb 10:20) which gives us the basis for confidence about resurrection life rather than “a fearful prospect of judgment” (Heb 10:27). Ezekiel didn’t have to think about judgment after death or life after death. Jesus makes the first avoidable and the second possible. Meanwhile, he and his people can continue to enjoy the reality of the presence of God in the sanctuary.

### Application and Devotional Implications

Worship needs to be done “decently and in order” (1 Cor 14:40; Allen, 2:270). In some churches, the congregation stands for the procession when small boys (and maybe girls) in the choir come in, then the grown up members of the choir, then the associate ministers, then the verger (carrying a mace which in the old days he might use to protect the senior minister), then the senior minister himself or herself. In many churches, ushers welcome people for the service. Centuries ago, they might have told people which seats they could or could not sit in, perhaps because a particular family had paid the rent for them. A century ago, some African Americans moved from the south to California, went to the same sort of church as they had before, and the ushers asked them to sit on their own at the back. In many churches, a minister stands outside the church after the service to be available to people and wish them well. In some churches, people stand for the reading of a passage from the Gospels, and they used to kneel down for prayers. In many churches, they stand up for praises. In some churches they shake hands or hug each other as a gesture of friendship at some point in the service. How and where people stand and sit is in part a matter of tradition, but it may say something about the way we understand God and ourselves and his relationship with us.

## The Sanctuary, the River and the Land (47:1–23)

### Outline

As the Ezekiel scroll draws near its end, it raises its horizon to focus more on the land as a whole and to suggest further how the new temple is set in the context of a new allocation of the land (see the verse-by-verse commentary on 45:1–4). Ezekiel’s narrative account of his visionary journey round the visionary sanctuary comes to a conclusion back at the entrance of the temple, from which a river flows down to transform the waterless scene as far as the Dead Sea (47:1–12).

A prophetic message follows, setting the boundaries of the country where the Israelite clans will live, so that the people can go about dividing it up (47:13–23). The message goes on to describe the allocation of the land to the different clans, with an emphasis on Judah and the place of the sanctuary there (48:1–29). Then the scroll’s final section describes the exits to the city and gives it its name: “Yahweh There” (48:30–35). The introduction to the prophetic message, “the Lord Yahweh has said this” (47:13), introduces all the final three sections that follow (47:13–23; 48:1–29; and 48:30–35). And while the expression “an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh” commonly marks emphasis within a section, it can mark the end of a section, and it does so here at the end of 47:13–23 and of 48:1–29.

So 47:1–12 and 47:13–48:35 are the two final units in the book, though they are interdependent. Both interconnect a concern with the sanctuary and a concern with the wider country. At least part of the logic of the scene in 47:1–12 with water flowing from the temple is that it brings fertility to the great infertile part of the land and makes the land fertile for all the clans who will receive allocations there in accordance with 47:13–48:35 (Milgrom, 229). It is thus for convenience that we consider the two chapters in accordance with the medieval chapter division.

Once again these final units offer no direct indications of a context in which they had their origin. They would fit in the mid-sixth century in Kebar or in Judah during the later Babylonian, Persian, or Hellenistic period. Once again the curator invites people to read them against the background of Ezekiel’s ministry in Kebar, while priests, theologians, and other leaders would also find them suggestive reading in those later periods. And as is often the case, one can see background in Ezekiel’s vision in the Jewish Scriptures and also in Mesopotamian works, and these links point to ways in which Ezekiel is making his distinctive points.

### Translation

1He took me back to the entrance of the house. And there: water going out from below the porch of the house eastward, because the house’s orientation was east, with the water going down from below the flank of the house on the south,[[140]](#footnote-141) to the south of the altar. 2He got me to go out by way of the northward gateway and took me round the outside way to the outer gateway, the eastward-facing way. And there: water pouring[[141]](#footnote-142) from the southern flank. 3As the person went out eastward with a line[[142]](#footnote-143) in his hand, he measured a thousand by the cubit. He got me to cross through the water, water ankle-deep.[[143]](#footnote-144) 4He measured a thousand and got me to cross through the water, water knee-deep. Then he measured a thousand and got me to cross, water waist-deep. 5Then he measured a thousand, a wadi that I couldn’t cross, because the water had risen, swimming water, a wadi that couldn’t be crossed. 6He said to me, Have you seen, my man? And he got me to go and to return to the wadi’s bank.

7When I returned, there, on the bank of the wadi: very many trees each side. 8He said to me, This water is going out to the eastern region and going down to the Arabah and coming to the [Dead] Sea, to the sea that is made to go out, and the water is becoming healthy. 9Then, every living being that teems, wherever the wadis come, will live, and the fish will become very many because this water has come there and it has become healthy, and everything will live where the wadi comes. 10Then, fishers will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglayim, while there will be a spreading place for nets and their fish will be of kinds like the fish in the Great Sea, very many, 11though its marshes and its swamps will not become healthy, as they have been given for salt. 12And by the wadi, on its bank each side, every tree for food will grow, its foliage not withering and its fruit not coming to an end, bearing its new fruit[[144]](#footnote-145) month by month because its water is going out from the sanctuary. So its fruit will be for food and its foliage for healing.

13The Lord Yahweh has said this. This[[145]](#footnote-146) is the territory,[[146]](#footnote-147) the country that you will give yourselves as a domain[[147]](#footnote-148) for the twelve clans of Israel (Joseph, allotments). 14You will give it as a domain, each individual the same as his brothers, that I raised my hand [to swear] to give to your ancestors. So this country will fall to you as a domain. 15This is the country’s territory.

* On the northward side, from the Great Sea, the Hetlon road, Lebo, Zedad, 16(Hamat), Berotah, Sibrayim (which is between Damascus’s territory and Hamat’s territory), Hazer Hattikon (which is toward Hauran’s territory). 17So the territory will be from the sea [to] Hazer Enon, Damascus’s territory and north, northwards, and Hamat’s territory. So as to the north side.
* 18The east side: from between Hauran and Damascus, and from between Gilead and the country of Israel, as you measure the Jordan from territory on the eastern sea. So as to the eastward side.
* 19The south side, Teman-ward,[[148]](#footnote-149) from Tamar to Meribot Qadesh Water, to the Wadi toward the Great Sea. So as to the Teman-ward side, southward.
* 20The west side, the Great Sea, from territory opposite Lebo Hamat. This is the west side.

21You will share out this country for yourselves, for Israel’s clans. 22Then, you will allot it[[149]](#footnote-150) as a domain for yourselves and for the aliens who are residing among you who have had children among you. To you they will be like an indigenous person among the Israelites, as they fall[[150]](#footnote-151) with you as a domain among Israel’s clans. 23Then, in the clan with which the alien resides, there you will give his domain (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh).

### Textual Notes

Ezek 47:1–12 has more than usual “uncharacteristic lexical forms, doublets, repetitions, grammatical anomalies, substantive infelicities, and awkward interruptions” (Block, 2:689),[[151]](#footnote-152) though once again the inclination of editorial work to smooth as much as roughen means this is hardly a sign that the text has been glossed or revised.

MT has markers\* after 47:12 and 23.

**47:3** Here and in following verses, LXX has “crossed” rather than “got me to cross,”

**47:8** Forהַמּוּצׇאׅים**,** “that is made to go out,” hophal ptc. from יׇצׇא, Syr, NRSV “stagnant” implies a form from צׇוׇא, while NIV “salty” implies a form from חׇמֵץ (cf. Zimmerli, 2:507).

For Q וְנׅרְפּוּ, “becoming healthy,” K has the longer spelling ונרפאו.

**47:9** The dual נַחֲלַיׅם is surprising, but John 7:38 may presuppose it (Cooke , 523; cf. *CTAT*, 413), and it may allude to the motif of a double current in Mesopotamian writings.[[152]](#footnote-153)

**47:10** K’s *yiqtol\** יעמדו, “will stand,” is easier that Q’s qatal\* עׇמְדוּ, unless one takes the latter to mean “will have taken their stand.”

**47:11** K בצאתו, “its swamps,” has the short spelling of the suffix, Q בּׅצֹּאתׇיו the long form.

**47:12** Q’s sg. וְהׇיׇה, “[and] will be,” implies “fruit” as subject. K’s pl. והיו implies the two subjects “fruit” and “foliage.”

**47:13** LXX lacks “Joseph, shares.”

**47:15–16** For **“**Hetlon, Lebo, Zedad, (Hamat),” LXX has “the entrance of Hemath, Seddada.” “The entrance of Hemath” would elsewhere be a translation of “Lebo Hamat” (cf. 48:1) and MT’s separation of the two words is odd. Perhaps “Hamat” got lost and reinserted.

**47:18** For תׇּמֹדּוּ,“you measure,” LXX “Palmgrove” suggests תׇּמׇרׇה, “to Tamar.”

**47:22** For תַּפּׅלּוּ, “they will fall,” LXX “they will eat” suggests יֹ[א]כְלוּ(*HUB*).

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**47:1** Much of the vision so far has been realistic in the sense that human ingenuity and energy could feasibly have implemented it, as a plan associated with reoccupying the land. And Ezekiel’s vision has interwoven instructions from Yahweh regarding what Israel must do with visions of what is to happen, some of which might be visions also intended as revealing what Israel should do, some as revealing what Yahweh intends to do. The vision of the river comes in the latter category, and the end of the tour in 47:1–12 pictures something more like an allegory than anything that has preceded. At an earlier stage in his visionary tour, a climactic stage, Ezekiel saw Yahweh’s magnificence come to the house, with a sound like that of much water. When the guide takes Ezekiel back to the house, there is water going out from its porch. “It is the divine presence in the sanctuary which brings life to a world threatened with infertility and death” (Blenkinsopp, 231–32). This closing episode in the tour confirms the impression that the vision as a whole is not a plan for implementing, unless it is a plan that Yahweh intends to implement. It also confirms and takes further the sense in which Ezekiel is taking up imagery and motifs that appear elsewhere in the Jewish Scriptures, especially Gen 1–3, but also Psa 46:4.[[153]](#footnote-154) And it confirms and takes further how Ezekiel takes up imagery and motifs that appear in Mesopotamian writings that could be known in Babylon. In particular, a Sumerian hymn commemorates the building of a “house” for the god Ningirsu by Gudea, the king of Lagash in Mesopotamia.[[154]](#footnote-155) The hymn portrays the building of the temple to which the god then comes, which issues in the rising of water to great heights, the bringing of abundance, the flourishing of trees and the assumption of a flourishing of fish (not so much of a surprise between the Tigris and the Euphrates). Once again, then, Ezekiel invites people to let motifs that they might know help them imagine what Yahweh intends when he restores the land, which might compare or contrast with what appears in these writings. For instance, in the Sumerian hymn it is definitely the king who builds the temple. Israel would certainly have to fulfil its responsibilities toward the temple, as the vision has implied, but Ezekiel does not make the point here. He rather pictures blessing coming to the land through the temple Yahweh envisions.

**47:2–6** The guide then makes this motif a living experience for Ezekiel. The two of them presumably have to exit the sanctuary by the north gateway because the east gateway is closed. But they then proceed in an approximately eastward direction to follow the lie of the land to the Arabah. In order for water to reach the Arabah from Jerusalem, there would be no need for geophysical transformation of the land, though Ezekiel would not fret about the need for such transformation if it were necessary. Literally, Ezekiel would be referring to the Wadi Qidron, which descends from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, though there is some irony in Ezekiel using the word wadi (נַחַל) to describe the water’s path. That word suggests a river flowing only intermittently, but it looks as if this river is now to keep flowing. The word does denote a river that can flow with astonishing force when it does flow. Perhaps the picture of it starting as a trickle and becoming such a force relates to the way a wadi may work, but the picture adds to the drama of the account. “Hope rides out, irreversibly and uncontrollably, into the world on an increasingly powerful flow of healing water.”[[155]](#footnote-156)

**47:7–12** The wadi flows, then, down into the Arabah. While the Arabah now denotes especially the area south of the Dead Sea, in the First Testament it denotes the Rift Valley more generally from the Jordan Valley down to the Dead Sea. Ezekiel then pictures several forms of transformation, which between them constitute a complement to the picture in Ezek 37, of God bringing a human company back to life (Bowen, 263). The sea that is full of chemicals and supports virtually no life is turned into fresh water, in a reversal of the picture in Gen 19, except that some of the beneficial aspects to its chemical harvest remain (Ezekiel doesn’t discuss what then happens to the dynamic whereby water evaporates from the Dead Sea so that it becomes heavily chemical). Animate life “teems” (שׇׁרַץ), an aspect of the restoration of creation life (the verb occurs in Gen 1:20–21; 7:21; 8:17; 9:7). Fishers are at work from En Gedi, half way down the west side of the Dead Sea, and En Englayim, which might be En Feshka further north or might be on the opposite side of the Dead Sea (Zimmerli, 2:513–14). The fishers having somewhere to dry their nets is a positive image, whereas it was a negative one earlier (26:5, 14). The land that is dry wilderness and grows virtually nothing is turned into orchard, in a restoration of the creation picture in Gen 2. It all happens because “the water is going out from the sanctuary.” Yahweh has seen to the embodiment of his presence there on the top of the mountains, and that brings renewal to the deadest part of the country. It is a symbol of the whole land (not just part of it) flowing with milk and molasses.

**47:13** The introduction, “The Lord Yahweh has said this,” marks the beginning of a prophetic message, which continues to the end of the scroll. Here “the spiritual fantasy of the vision in 47:1–12 gives way to the down-to-earth geographical and demographic details of 47:13–48:29” (Allen, 2:278). “The transition… leads to another world” (Zimmerli, 2:526), though these details are also visionary. Yahweh had trailered the question of allocating the country back in 45:1–6, but now he is to deal with the entire allocation. Trailering the question had implied a distribution to the twelve clans, but only now does it become explicit that the renewal of Israel’s occupation of the land will involve not only the reunion of the relationship between Judah and Ephraim but the renewal of Israel’s twelve-clan structure (Zimmerli, 2:527–528). The land as a whole is the people’s domain, but each clan will have a share. The asyndetic\* phrase “(Joseph, allotments)” looks like an addition to clarify a question that might need clarifying. Given that Levi has the allocation to which 45:1 refers, who exactly count as the twelve clans? The answer is that the Joseph clans get two “allotments” (חֲבׇלׅים—not a word that Ezekiel otherwise uses in this connection, though it occurs in Josh 17:5, 14; 19:9, 29). It’s a nice theoretical question in a context when centuries have passed since the two Joseph clans, Ephraim and Manasseh, were operative. It shows how seriously Yahweh takes his commitment to the twelve clans, the oath he swore to Israel’s ancestors (20:28, 42; Exod 6:8; Num 14:30).

**47:14** A further statement anticipates another possible issue when Yahweh speaks of “each individual the same as his brothers.” The formulation underscores the principle it lays down. The twelve clans are the descendants of twelve brothers, and they need to take the distribution as a family business. Ezek 48 will imply that Israel is therefore to divide the land into twelve strips of equal width, though they will be of a length that varies because of the shape of the country as a whole. Not unreasonably, Num 33:54 prescribed that clan allocations should reflect the different sizes of the clans. Ezekiel’s vision makes a complementary point and perhaps hints that large clans “were never again to swamp the interests of smaller ones” (Allen, 2:286). As the new exodus and the new sanctuary will be more glorious than the first, so will be the new allocation of the land (Zimmerli, 2:527).

**47:15–17** The First Testament has several versions of the bounds of the promised land. This one compares with the one in Num 34. Its account likely parallels the bounds of the Egyptian province of Canaan in Moses’s day (e.g., Allen, 2:280). It, too, covers the ground clockwise, but starts from the north (the direction from which Ezekiel and the Kebarites came) rather than the south (closer to where Moses and the Israelites were). We cannot interpret the details of the account of Israel’s northern territory (see Block, 2:712–15)—this is regularly the trickiest of the borders to interpret in the First Testament. It begins somewhere on the Mediterranean, “the Great Sea.” Lebo Hamat commonly features in describing the land’s northern extent (e.g., Josh 13:5; 1 Kgs 8:65), but we don’t know what it refers to. Hamat is a city in northern Syria, rather far north to be the reference of Lebo Hamat, but that might denote “the entrance to Hamat.” Sibrayim and Hazer Hattikon are especially mysterious, even if the latter is the same place as Hazer Enon. Perhaps the inclusion of the extra information about them indicates that they would be unfamiliar to people. Hauran is east of the Rift Valley. One way or another Ezekiel is referring to a geographical line from west to east somewhere north of the traditional northern boundary of Israel at Dan, and also one comparing with Israel’s mini-empire in the time of David and Solomon.

**47:18** Hauran being east of the Rift Valley and Damascus being west of it, “between” these two suggests the Rift Valley itself. Following it south takes one into the Jordan Valley between Gilead on the east and Israel on the west, and on down to the Dead Sea. The Jordan is thus Israel’s eastern extremity, and the land across the Jordan that was once allocated to Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh does not here count as Israel.

**47:19** The southern boundary is also clear enough. Tamar is south of the Dead Sea. Qadesh is half way from there to the Mediterranean, and Num 20:1–13 tells the story of Meribot Water at Qadesh. Wadi Egypt is on the Mediterranean.

**47:20** The western boundary is straightforward. Its implicitly including Phoenicia indicates that it follows the prescription in Num 34 in not taking any account of political practicalities, any more than Ezek 47:1–12 takes account of natural practicalities.

**47:21–23** Initially, Yahweh simply brings his instruction to a close in a way that matches 47:13–14. But 47:22b–23 then makes a startling further point. “The aliens who are residing among you” are immigrants who as such have no land on which they can grow food, so they have to get employment or rely on people’s charity. The Torah therefore urges Israel to be generous to them, and Isa 56:1–8 envisages their full participation in the worship of Yahweh. But the Torah is also concerned about the consequences if they are not committed to Yahweh, and Lev 25:44–46 doesn’t assume that resident aliens necessarily have the same rights as Israelites (see Milgrom, 244–46). Ezekiel’s further point is that the reallocating of the land makes it possible for resident aliens who have really settled in Israel as families (they are not just people who may be here today but gone tomorrow) to share in that reallocation like Israelites. They can have an allocation in the domain of the clan in whose midst they settled. “Among the Israelites” (בּׅבְנֵי יׅשְֹרׇאֵל) is literally “among the sons of Israel,” and the language may be significant: they are being adopted into Israel as sons.[[156]](#footnote-157) One wonders what led Ezekiel to make this astonishing point, or what made Yahweh make this point at this moment. It might have a background in Babylonian economics,[[157]](#footnote-158) but if so, that facilitated an insight of great generosity in this prescription that “is much more radical than anything else in all the legal corpora of the Hebrew Bible.”[[158]](#footnote-159) “If there was no longer room in the temple for pagan staff who cared nothing for Yahweh (44:7, 9, there was room aplenty in the land and so in the covenant for non-Israelites who were committed to him” (Allen, 2:286). For Palestinians it then raises questions when modern Israel has paid much attention to the implications of the original exodus but has not heeded these instructions of Yahweh through Ezekiel.[[159]](#footnote-160)

### Biblical Theology Comments

As well as having a background in Genesis and the Psalms, Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, the stream, and its effect has a varied foreground. On Yahweh’s day

While the hills will run with milk,

all Judah’s channels will run with water.

A fountain will go out from Yahweh’s house,

and it will water Acacias Wadi. (Joel 3:18 [4:18])

Living water will go out from Jerusalem,

half of it to the eastern sea,

Half of it to the western sea,

in summer and in winter it will happen. (Zech 14:8)

“The person who trusts in me, as the Scripture said, rivers will flow from his insides, of living water.” This he said about the Spirit. (John 7:38–39)

He showed me a river of living water… going out from the throne of God and of the lamb.… Either side of the river, a tree of life making twelve kinds of fruit.… And the tree’s leaves, for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:1–2).

As well as conveying its own message for the Judahites in the sixth century and subsequently, and for us, Ezekiel thus contributed to an understanding of Yahweh’s day, of Jesus, and of the new Jerusalem (see further Jerome, 560–70).

### Application and Devotional Implications

The land of Israel is an important theme through the First Testament, though the first Testament does have several versions of the land’s bounds. It becomes a key theme in the context of Yahweh’s first words to Abraham (Gen 12:1). It is necessary that it does so, because those same words include a promise to make Abraham into a big nation (גּוֹי). Israel could perhaps be a people (עַם) without having a land, but having a land is bound up with being a nation. It is then through being a nation with a land that Abraham will become a blessing (Gen 12:2).

When Yahweh announces the theme of the land, he makes no reference to the temple. But Ezekiel’s interweaving of these two themes fits with their interweaving on the last pages of the Jewish Scriptures. In one reads them in the traditional Greek order, then they feature in Malachi, who wants to see the community taking Ezekiel seriously.[[160]](#footnote-161) If one reads them in the traditional Hebrew order, then they feature in their last paragraph, 2 Chr 36:22–23. They feature there a little paradoxically, because it will turn out that a Persian king facilitates the return of people such as the Kebarites to the land to build Yahweh a house. That is now Yahweh goes about facilitating a partial embodiment of his vision for the land and the temple. It explicitly fulfills Jeremiah’s message, but it implicitly fulfils Ezekiel’s, too.

Yet in the Second Temple period (the term is significant) the land becomes less central to Jewish thinking, and it stays that way in the New Testament. There are then two senses in which it remains important. It provides a useful metaphor for understanding the blessing that Jesus brings both Jews and Gentiles.

I commend you to the Lord and to the message of his grace which can build you up and give you the domain among all the people who have been made sacred. (Acts 20:32)

In the Messiah… we have been given a domain. (Eph 1:11)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah, who has rebirthed us… to domain imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. (1 Pater 1:3–4)

This metaphorical use of the land image is powerful but dispensable. The New Testament’s other dependence on the land theme is indispensable. Jesus was born to the people of Israel that has the land of Israel as its domain and he was born in that land, ministered in that land in a way that gave him a link with every clan,[[161]](#footnote-162) died in that land, and rose to resurrection life in that land. The gospel is essentially and integrally dependent on that land.

### Selected Bibliography

Ateek, Naim S. “A Palestinian Perspective: Biblical Perspectives on the Land.” In Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 3rd ed., 165–70. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006.

Bodi, Daniel. “The Double Current and the Tree of Healing in Ezekiel 47:1–12 in Light of Babylonian Iconography and Texts.” *WO* 45 (2015): 22–37.

De Vries, Pieter. “The Relationship between the Glory of YHWH and the Spirit of YHWH in Ezekiel 33–48.” *OTE* 28 (2015): 326–50.

Di Pede, Elena, and Claude Lichtert. “**Figures** de la fin des temps chez Ézéchiel: Nouvelle création ou recherche du paradis perdu?” In Jacques Vermeylen, ed., *Les prophètes de la Bible et la fin des temps : XXIII[e] congrès de l'Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible (Lille, 24-27 août 2009)*, 317–29. Paris: Cerf, 2010.

Kopilovitz, Ariel. “Land for the Landless: Assigning Land to Gerim in Ezekiel’s Restoration Program.” *Biblica* 101 (2020): 352–72.

Lapsley, Jacqueline E. “Doors Thrown Open and Waters Gushing Forth: Mark, Ezekiel, and the Architecture of Hope.” In Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Patrick D. Miller, ed., *The Ending of Mark and the Ends of God: Essays in Memory of Donald Harrisville Juel*, 139–53. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Lee, Minkyu. “Creation Symbols: River and Tree in the Beginning of Time (Urzeit) and the End of Time (Endzeit).” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 102 (2016): 379–406.

Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*. HSM 10. Cambridge, MA: Scholars, 1976.

Mulzer, Martin. “Wasser vom Tempel (Ez 47,1–12).” In Stephanie Ernst and Maria Hӓusel, ed., *Kulte, Prieste, Rituale: Beitrӓge zur Kult und Kultkritik in Alten Testament und Alten Orient. Festschrift fϋr Theodor Seidl zun 65. Geburtstag,* 403–18. St. Ottilien: EOS, 2010.

Sharon, Diane M. “A Biblical Parallel to a Sumerian Temple Hymn? Ezekiel 40–48 and Gudea.” *JANES* 24 (1996): 99–109.

Tuell, Steven. “The Rivers of Paradise: Ezekiel 47:1–12 and Gen 2:10–14.” In William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr., *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Siblev Towner*, 171–89. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Warren, Nathanael. “Adoption-Alíenatíon in Ez 47,22.23 and in the Ancient Near East.” *ZAW* 126 (2014): 421–24.

Wielenga, Bob. “The Gēr (Immigrant) in Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology: The Perspectives of Ezekiel 47:22–23 and Malachi 3:5.” *In* *die* *Skriflig* 54/1 (2020).

## The Allocations, the Sanctuary, and the City (48:1–35)

### Outline

The chapter comprises the second and third sections of the message from Yahweh introduced by 47:13a. Following the first section describing the borders of the land that the people are to be allocated, the second and third sections unfold:

The individual clans’ territories (48:1–29)

Seven clans, from north to south (48:1–7)

The central reserve containing the sanctuary (48:8–22)

The priests’ and the Levites’ reserves (48:8–14)

The city’s allocation (48:15–20)

The remainder, belonging to the prince, each side of the reserve (48:21 - 22)

The other five clans, continuing from north to south (48:23–29)

The exits from the city, its circumference, and its name (48:30–35)

Whereas the vision in Ezek 8–11 comes to an end with the spirit bringing Ezekiel back in his vision to Kebar and him telling the Kebarites what he has seen, this vision simply stops, without any record of Ezekiel fulfilling the instruction in 40:4. No doubt the writing of this report constitutes such a fulfillment.

### Translation

1So these are the clans’ names.

* At the northern frontier, toward[[162]](#footnote-163) the Hetlon road, Lebo-Hamat, Hazer Enan, Damascus’s territory northward, toward Hamat. So they will belong to it,[[163]](#footnote-164) east side to west: Dan, one [allocation].
* 2Beside Dan’s territory, from east side to westward side: Asher, one.
* 3Beside Asher’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Naphtali, one.
* 4Beside Naphtali’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Manasseh, one.
* 5Beside Manasseh’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Ephraim, one.
* 6Beside Ephraim’s territory, from east side to westward side: Reuben, one
* 7Beside Reuben’s territory, from east side to westward side: Judah, one.

8Beside Judah’s territory, from east side to the westward side, will be the reserve that you raise: 25,000 [cubits] in width, and in length the same as one of the shares from the eastward side to the westward side. The sanctuary will be in the middle of it. 9The reserve that you raise for Yahweh: in length 25,000 and in width 10,000.[[164]](#footnote-165) 10The sacred reserve will be for these: for the priests, northward, 25,000; westward in width 10,000, eastward in width 10,000; and southward in length, 25,000. And Yahweh’s sanctuary will be in the middle of it: 11for the priests who were made sacred, the descendants of Zadoq, who kept my charge, who did not wander when the Israelites wandered, as the Levites wandered. 12So theirs will be a special reserve[[165]](#footnote-166) from the land reserve, something most sacred, by the Levites’ territory. 13The Levites alongside the priests’ territory: 25,000 in length and in width 10,000—the entire length 25,000 and width 10,000. 14They will not sell[[166]](#footnote-167) any of it, and no one will exchange, and they will not pass it on, the finest of the country, because it is sacred to Yahweh.

15The 5000 that remains in width, by 25,000 [in length]: it will be ordinary [land] for the city, for dwellings and for common land. The city will be in the middle of it. 16These are its measurements: north side, 4,500; south side, 4,500; east side, 4,500; westward side, 4,500. 17The common land for the city will be: northward 250, southward, 250, eastward 250, westward 250. 18What remains in length alongside the sacred reserve, 10,000 eastward and 10,000 westward: it will be alongside the sacred reserve, and its yield will be for food for the city’s servants. 19The person who serves the city, they will serve it from all Israel’s clans. 20The entire reserve, 25,000 by 25,000 square, you will raise as the sacred reserve, with the city’s allocation.

21What remains will be for the prince, on each side of the sacred reserve and of the city’s allocation, facing the 25,000 reserve, as far as the eastward border and westward, facing the 25,000 to the westward border, next to the [clans’] shares—the prince’s. So the sacred reserve and the house’s sacred place will be in the middle of it, 22and the Levites’ allocation and the city’s allocation will be in the middle of what belongs to the prince, with what belongs to the prince being between Judah’s territory and Benjamin’s territory.

* 23The rest of the clans. From eastward side to westward side: Benjamin, one.
* 24Beside Benjamin’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Simeon, one.
* 25Beside Simeon’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Issakar, one.
* 26Beside Issakar’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Zebulun, one.
* 27Beside Zebulun’s territory, from eastward side to westward side: Gad, one.
* 28Beside Gad’s territory, toward south side, Teman-ward: the border will be from Tamar to Meribat Qadesh Water, to the Wadi, to the Great Sea.

29This is the country that the clans will allot as a domain for Israel’s clans. These are their shares (an affirmation of the Lord Yahweh).

30And these are the city’s exits. On the north side: 4,500 in measure, 31with the city’s gateways by the names of Israel’s clans, three gateways northward, a[[167]](#footnote-168) Reuben Gateway, a Judah Gateway, a Levi Gateway. 32To the eastward side: 4,500, and three gateways, a Joseph Gateway, a Benjamin Gateway, a Dan Gateway. 33The southward side: 4,500 in measure, and three gateways, a Simeon Gateway, an Issakar Gateway, a Zebulun Gateway. 34The westward side: 4,500, their three gateways, a Gad Gateway, an Asher Gateway, a Naphtali Gateway. 35Around: 18,000. The city’s name from this day: “Yahweh There.”

### Textual Notes

MT has markers\* after 48:11 and 29.

**48:9** For MT 10,000, LXX has 25,000.

**48:10** For MT‘s first 10,000, LXX has 25,000.

**48:13** For MT’s second 10,000, LXX has 20,000.

**48:14** For Q’s hiphil יַעֲבׅיר, “pass on,” K has qal יעבור.

For יׇמֵר, “exchange,” LXX “measure” implies יׇמֵד.

**48:15** For חֹל, “ordinary,” LXX “outer wall” suggests חֵל, as at 42:20 (*HUB*).

**48:16** Q חֲמֵשׁ followed by חמש suggests a recognition that the repetition is a slip.

**48:21** For Q בְּתוֹכוֹ, “in the middle of it,” with m. suffix, K בתוכה has f. suffix.

**48:35** For יְהוׇה, “Yahweh,” LXX “it happens” suggests יׅהְיֶה.

### Verse-by-Verse Commentary

**48:1–7** Ezekiel begins by characterizing Dan’s position on the far northern border, in terms that are largely an abbreviated version of 47:15–17.

47:15–17 48:1

On the northward side, from the Great Sea, At the northward frontier,

the Hetlon road, toward the Hetlon road

Lebo, Zedad, 16(Hamat), Berotah, Lebo-Hamat,

Sibrayim (which is between Damascus’s

territory and Hamat’s territory),

Hazer Hattikon (which is toward Hauran’s

territory ). So the territory will be from the sea

[to] Hazer Enon, Damascus’s territory Hazer Enan, Damascus’s territory

and north, northward, and Hamat’s territory. northward, toward Hamat.

The two substantial omissions, of Sibrayim and Hazer Hattikon, are the places that are most puzzling to us and might have been most mysterious in Ezekiel’s day.

Ezekiel goes on to list the clans from north to south in an order that does not closely correspond to their earlier interrelationship. This is inevitable because some were then on the same latitude, though the order does to some extent correspond where possible. So Dan (in its later location), Asher, and Naphtali were all in the far north, and they were also the three on the north side of the camp in Num 2:25–31 (Cook, 289). Manasseh and Ephraim belong together in the middle of the country. Judah is then to the south, and Judah and Benjamin are on either side of the city (though the opposite way from the original historical one), but Reuben had been re-located in the southeast this side of the Jordan. A further consideration interwoven in the arrangement is the relative status of the eponymous sons of Jacob. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin, the clans that trace themselves back to Jacob’s primary wives, Leah and Rachel, are at the center, while Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali, the clans that trace themselves back to Jacob’s secondary wives, are further away.[[168]](#footnote-169) Ezekiel says nothing about the size of the allocations, though 47:14 specified that they were all to be the same width, and 45:1–4 would imply all about eight miles wide. But the country is much wider in the north, so “the land is apportioned symmetrically, if not necessarily equally” (Bowen, 265). Northerners are bound to have more. But neither Ezekiel nor any other Judahites would know much about the actual dimensions of the land and the formulations in terms of thousands of cubits are more symbolic than literal. Indeed, so is the very idea of distributing the country among the clans. The idea reflects how “the tribal system was and remained a decisive factor in Israelite collective identity.”[[169]](#footnote-170) It is also significant that no allowance is made for the distinction between Judah and Ephraim, which was rather a newcomer distinction that lacked serious scriptural authority.[[170]](#footnote-171) In fact, the clans were never reestablished, whereas in an odd way the Judah-Ephraim distinction persisted in the Yehud-Samaria tension of the Persian period.

**48:8–14** Ezekiel pauses to cover the country’s central strip, which focuses on the sanctuary and thus largely repeats 45:1–8.

45:1–8 48:9–14

1When you allot the country as a domain,

you will raise a reserve for Yahweh, 9The reserve that you raise for Yahweh:

as something sacred from the country,

a length of 25,000 in length in length 25,000

and a width of 10,000, and in width 10,000

it being something sacred

in its entire border all round.

2From this, for the sanctuary there will be

500 by 500 square all round,

and fifty cubits common land for it all round.

3So by this measurement you will measure 10The sacred reserve will be for these:

a length of 25,000 and a width of 10,000, for the priests, northward, 25,000.…

and in it will be the sanctuary, And Yahweh’s sanctuary

the most sacred, will be in the middle of it.

4it being the sacred place out of the country

for the priests, the sanctuary’s ministers 11For the priests who were made sacred…

who come forward to minister to Yahweh, who kept my charge.…

and it being for them a place for houses 12So theirs will be a special reserve

from the land reserve,

and a sanctuary for the sanctuary. something most sacred,

by the Levites’ territory

13The Levites alongside the priests’ territory:

5Then 25,000 in length and 10,000 in width 25,000 in length and in width 10,000.

will be for the Levites, who minister in the house,

for them as an allocation, twenty chambers.

In 48:8–14, then, the priests and the Levites have a “sacred reserve” of their own.” For the Levites, it is a kind if equivalent to the provision in Num 35:1–8.

But the most significant aspect of the repetition is the setting of the sanctuary material in the context of the allocation to the twelve clans. In Ezek 40–47, there has been no mention of the possible relationship of the city-like sanctuary complex to the country of Israel as a whole. One would never have realized it had such a setting. Now it gains one. “It is not to be that everyone is now to rush on the land, seeking to snatch as his prize as much as he can snatch,” and God is to be given the best bit (Zimmerli, 2:542). The existence of the sanctuary allocation at the center is another way in which the new allocation of the land differs from the original allocation, in Joshua (Zimmerli, 2:527).[[171]](#footnote-172) Conversely, the location of this strip in the midst of the clans’ allocations makes a point about their focus, a point that recalls the account of the wilderness sanctuary in the middle of the camp in Numbers. It is further significant that the sanctuary does not sit within one of the clan allocations. It once straddled Judah and Benjamin, as it does not here, though it does come between them. But the dynamic that led northern Israel to cut itself off from the location of the sanctuary would have a harder time recurring. It is further noteworthy that Ezekiel still makes no mention of Zion, and here makes no mention of Jerusalem “which was, after all, the chief target of Ezekiel’s prophecies of doom” (Jenson, 344), even though the city’s position between Judah and Benjamin is Jerusalem’s position. Ezekiel’s not referring to Jerusalem thus speaks loudly. He does say more about the prince, who gets an allocation of land that is substantial but goes along with his obligations in connection with providing animals for sacrifice, which is specified and circumscribed in a way that could further pressure him not to be appropriating land from ordinary people (Ezek 46).

**48:15–22** Ezekiel further elaborates his earlier comments about the city’s allocation and the prince’s allocation

45:6–8 48:15–21

6And as the city’s allocation you will give 15The 5000 that remains in width

5,000 in width and in length 25,000, by 25,000 [in length]:

alongside the sacred reserve, it will be ordinary [land] for the city,

it being for the whole household of Israel. for dwellings and for common land.

The city will be in the middle of it.…

7Then for the prince, 21What remains will be for the prince,

on each side of the sacred reserve on each side of the sacred reserve

and of the city’s allocation, and of the city’s allocation,

facing the sacred reserve and facing the city’s allocation, facing the 25,000 reserve,

on the west side toward the west as far as the eastward border and westward

and on the east side toward the east, a length facing the 25,000 to the westward border

corresponding to one of the shares from the west next to the [clans’] shares—

border to the eastward border 8of the country.

It will be his as an allocation in Israel. the prince’s.

The significant new feature in this material in 48:15–21 is thus the substantial elaboration of the prescription concerning the city. Its land is something “ordinary” (חֹל) as opposed to sacred. It’s available for ordinary people to live there and it doesn’t belong to anyone. It’s “common land” (מׅגְרׇשׁ). Indeed, But Ezekiel doesn’t make clear what it is for or what the city is for or what its workers are doing or who they are working for. Perhaps the city is the country’s administrative center, or a base for people to stay when they come to the sanctuary for the festivals, or perhaps the workers to whom Ezekiel refers are support staff for the sanctuary, like the Gibeonites (Rashi, in MG).

**48:23–29** Ezekiel listing of the other six clans again mixes logic and apparent randomness. Benjamin appears with Judah either side of the sanctuary strip, reflecting its geographical association with Judah. Simeon comes next, reflecting its nominal position within Judah. Issakar and Zebulun have moved from the north and Gad from across the Jordan. The spelling out of Gad’s location pairs with the spelling out of Dan’s, as it restates 47:19.

**48:30–35a.** Ezekiel’s closing words about the city look at it from another angle, and have a different understanding of the twelve clans, which might suggest they are a separate message that has been added to the preceding one. The twelve clans are now the original twelve, with Levi as one of them and Joseph counting as one instead of two. The picture of the city with its gates on four sides differs from the image of the city within the reserve in the middle of the twelve. The order of the gates has points of connection with the identities of the mothers of the different eponymous ancestors, like the order of the allocations in 48:1–29 (Cook, 295). The twelve gates on four sides do not make literal geographical sense, but the image of gates on all four sides does suggest that people can gain access this city from any direction (Greenhill, 829). The twelve gates are twelve exits, but they are surely also twelve entrances, indicating that anyone from any clan can go in or out of this city. There is an implicit enthusiasm here for the city as a place where Yahweh is in the midst (Psa 46:5[6], where he is to be praised (Psa 48:1[2]), where his commitment can be celebrated (Psa 48:9[10], and where he keeps his den (Psa 76:2[3]), which is more of a vision than is implied by 48:15–21. But the city is still not Jerusalem.[[172]](#footnote-173) And its gates are just gates, so that Ezekiel’s enthusiasm compares and contrasts with the enthusiasm expressed in Isa 60 for the city whose gates are always open (for the nations to bring their wealth), “the Zion of Israel’s Sacred One, and with the picture in Isa 54:12 of the city whose gates are jewels” (Zimmerli, 2:547).[[173]](#footnote-174)

**48:35b** It would be an exaggeration to say that the theme of the vision as a whole becomes explicit only here at the end, though it would be like Ezekiel to work that way (Odell, 481), but Ezekiel’s final phrase does bring his final paragraph to a fine conclusion. It may also bring the Ezekiel scroll to a fine conclusion, though the city has not been a main focus of the scroll or of Part Six, so that this fine declaration does not link particularly with either. The scroll as a whole and Part Six in particular are more concerned with the sanctuary than with the city. But in this last half-verse, the city that is not identified as Jerusalem is a wonderful locus of Yahweh’s presence. And after all, Ezekiel’s second vision had almost closed with Yahweh leaving the city to abide on the mountain to its east (11:23). And the city’s future name is more literally “Yahweh Thither” (יהוה שׇׁמׇה: while Ezekiel has used שׇׁמׇה simply to mean “there” in 23:3; 32:29, 30, it meant “thither” in 1:12, 20; 11:18; 29:13; 36:31; 40:1, 3; 47:9, twice). The city’s name will draw attention to the fact that Yahweh has gone back there.

### Biblical Theology Comments

“The consummation of this vision substantially corresponds with the object prayed for by our Lord [in John 17:21], when he sought respecting his people that they might be where he was, and that they might be all one, as he and the Father are one; he in them, and they in him, that they might be made perfect in one” (Fairbairn, 500). One might then wonder whether Jesus’s prayer is a spectacularly unanswered one. Ezek 48 stands alongside it as a spectacularly unimplemented vision. Israel does rebuild the temple, it does become the focus of Jerusalem’s relationship with Yahweh, and as far as we know, Israel’s worship is not again subject to the kind of critique that Ezekiel has issued. But there is no restoration of the clans through the entire land of Israel.

John the Revelator then has a vision that constitutes a paradoxical, almost amusing riff on Ezekiel’s vision. Ezekiel enthuses over the temple but is equivocal about the city. But “if Ezekiel is suspicious of the city, John is suspicious of the Temple” (Bowen, 267). The foursquare new Jerusalem has no temple, though also no sun or moon (Rev 21:16, 22–23), and suspicion is perhaps the wrong word. The new Jerusalem “has a big high wall with twelve gates. On the gates are twelve angels, and names are inscribed, which are those of the twelve clans of Israel: on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the east three gates. The city’s wall has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the lamb” (Rev 21:12–14) (cf. Blenkinsopp, 239, who also notes how Acts 1:15–26 relates that the first believers in Jesus had to take steps to ensure that there continued to be twelve of them).

### Application and Devotional Implications

Imagine Kebarites listening to Ezekiel, twenty-five years after they had been forced to leave Jerusalem, some of them coming back from a business trip to Babylon itself where they had been impressed by its culture, worship, and architecture, some of them fretting over the state of their home town and of the temple where they should have been leading worship. Imagine Judahites back in Jerusalem itself a century later in the Persian period, reflecting on Ezekiel’s message and fretting over the goings on in the city and in the temple that Ezra and Nehemiah confront. Imagine their descendants reflecting on Ezekiel’s message in the Hellenistic period when the city is divided over how to respond to Hellenistic culture. Imagine some of them reflecting on Ezekiel’s message a little later and deciding to abandon Jerusalem so as to set up a community by the Dead Sea: the Qumran Temple Scroll testifies to their reflection as it takes up some of Ezekiel’s words. Imagine communities of Jews and Gentiles in Turkey in the Roman period who are threatened because they believe in Jesus and call him Lord, and imagine John the Revelator reflecting on Ezekiel as he seeks to formulate a message for them. It is in such contexts that Ezekiel urges people to raise their heads and see that their redemption is approaching—to put it the way Jesus does (Luke 21:28). “The first act of care for a trauma victim is to get him or her to a tangible place of safety.… What Ezekiel does in chapters 34–48 is to imagine a place of safety” (Bowen, 269). Ezekiel does so by picturing God reestablishing the twelve clans in the land, restoring their temple, and restoring their city, “Yahweh There.” To put it from the human angle, Ezek 40–48 indicates how “as an exilic construct, it is clear that the temple is part of the architecture of exilic identity and is part of the postexilic theology of recovery and identity.”[[174]](#footnote-175) To put it from the divine angle, “the Lord keeps an exact account of the time of his church and people's sufferings.… When the church is low, in the worst, most desperate, and deplorable condition, even then the Lord hath a care of his church” (Greenhill, 776).

Jenson (345) comments:

The gods of the religions have no “there”.… The God of Israel “has an address”.… Thus this concluding two-word grammatical construct … carries in its canonical context much of the weight of Ezekiel’s whole affirmative message: the God of Israel has been and will again and finally be there with his people. Ezekiel has told the story: in judgment, the Lord removed himself from his place among them; in mercy he showed himself available (→1:25–28) on the banks of Babylonian Chebar, to be there even for his exiles; and at the end he will be so sheerly there, so strictly and with such concentration present to his people that he cannot again be hidden by sin or the uproar of nations. [[175]](#footnote-176)

Which (Jenson goes on to note) means after Jesus’s coming that he is “there” in the middle (48:8–11) of the gathered congregation. He has not gone away. And If much of modern and postmodern culture has a prevailing sense of the absence of God, then Ezekiel’s promise of God’s presence is particularly important to communities living in that context. “And the call to believers in relation to their neighbors is “to bear into their presence the gift of that name by which alone access into the presence of the Father is finally granted.”[[176]](#footnote-177)

### Selected Bibliography

Brodsky, Harold. “The Utopian Map in Ezekiel (48:1–35). *JBQ* 34 (2006): 20–26.

Ganzel, Tova. “The Reworking of Ezekiel’s Temple Vision in the Temple Scroll.” In Jutta Jokiranta and Molly Zahn, ed., *Law, Literature, and Society in Legal Texts From Qumran: Papers From the Ninth Meeting of the International Organisation for Qumran Studies, Leuven 2016*, 230–52. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Hubbard, Robert L. “Only a Distant Memory: Old Testament Allusions to Joshua’s Days.” *Ex* *Auditu* 16 (2000): 131–48.

Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*. HSM 10. Cambridge, MA: Scholars, 1976.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Warren, Nathanael. “Tenure and Grant in Ezekiel’s Paradise (47:13–48:29).” *VT* 63 (2013): 323–34.

Weingart, Kristin. “The Tribes of Israel in Ezekiel and Chronicles.” In Jaeyoung Jeon and Louis C. Jonker, ed., *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, 160–72. BZAW 528. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021.

## List of Foreign and Technical Words

Allegory: a story that provides a detailed analogy for an event: compare parable\*

Alliteration: the recurrence of the same sound in words that come close to each other

Anaphora: deliberate repetition for rhetorical effect, especially at the beginning of lines

Antanaclasis: repeating of a word in different connections, which can suggest a link between the things they refer to

Apodosis: the then-clause following an if-clause

Apostrophe: an address to the personification of something abstract or otherwise non-personal.

Asyndeton, asyndesis: putting clauses one after each other without links such as “and”

Bicolon: a poetic line comprising two cola\*

Byform: an alternative form of a verb: e.g.,עׇתַר is a byform of עׇשַׁר, both meaning “be rich”

Catachresis: an original extension or contorting of a word’s meaning

Collective: a noun referring to a group of things, such as sheep

Colon (plural cola): one semi-complete half of a poetic line (or one of the three parts of a line)

Denominative: a verb derived from a noun rather than the opposite, usual order

Ellipsis: leaving out one or more word or other links, which leaves readers to work out the links

Extraposed: placed before and syntactically independent of the clause it qualifies

Haftarah: the set reading from the Prophets accompanying the set reading from the Torah in the synagogue lectionary

Hapax [legomenon]: something “said once,” a word occurring only once

Haplography: something accidentally “written once” instead of twice.

Hendiadys: two words joined by “and” that form one idea

Homoioteleuton: a similar ending that issues in the loss of some words

Homonym: two words that look the same but are different: e.g., the two words “mean” in English

Hyperbole: overstating something to emphasize it

Lemma: a heading indicating the subject of a comment

Litotes: understatement for emphasis: e.g., something “not good” is something really bad

Marker: a petuhah\* or setumah.\*

Metonymy: using something’s name instead of something it stands for: e.g., the crown for the king

Modal: expressing what might, could, or must happen

Palistrophe: a literary structure following an abba or abccba sequence, often referred to as a chiasm

Parable: in Ezekiel, a story that provides an analogy for an event: compare allegory\*

Paragogic: a letter lengthening a word without changing the meaning

Parallelism: a second colon\* restating (with variation or heightening), completing, or contrasting with the first colon

Paronomasia: a word used alongside another word that is similar but has a different meaning

Performative/instantaneous speech: speech that does something: e.g., “I have commissioned you” means “I hereby commission you”) or describes one’s intention to act as if one has already acted: e.g., “I have delivered you” means “I have determined to deliver you”

Periphrastic verb: one incorporating an auxiliary verb: e.g., ”I will make”

Petuhah: an open space at the end of a line in MT so that the next sentence starts a new line, indicated in printed texts by P

*Qatal*: one of the two finite forms of Hebrew verbs, often referring to a past event, traditionally called the perfect tense, alternatively called the suffix conjugation: contrast *yiqtol*\*

Qere: the read out Hebrew text, with vowels, sometimes different from the Ketiv\*

Setumah: a closed space within a line in MT, indicated in printed texts by S: contrast petuhah\*

Synecdoche: a part of something used to signify the thing itself: e.g., a wing for a bird

Tricolon: a poetic line comprising three cola\*

*Wayyiqtol*: the *Waw*-consecutive verb form that commonly links clauses and has the odd effect of giving a *yiqtol*\* verb the meaning of a *qatal*\*

*Weqatal*: a verb form that can have the same effect on a *qatal* verb.

*Yiqtol*: one of the two finite forms of Hebrew verbs, often referring to a future event, traditionally called the imperfect tense, alternatively called the prefix conjugation: contrast qatal\*

Zeugma: the use of a word in two different connections

## Bibliography

### Monographs on Ezekiel other than Commentaries

Ahn, John J., and Jill Middlemas, ed. *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of Exile.* LHBOTS 526. London: T&T Clark, 2012.

Block, Daniel I. *Beyond the River Chebar: Studies in Kingship and Eschatology in the Book of Ezekiel.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.

*––– By the River Chebar: Historical, Literary, and Theological Studies in the Book of Ezekiel*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.

Bodi, Daniel. *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*. OBO 104. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991.

Carvalho, Corrine L., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Cook, Stephen L., and Corinne L. Patton, ed. *Ezekiel’s Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*. SBLSymS 31. Atlanta: SBL, 2004.

Damsma, Alinda. *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

De Boer, Erik A. *John Calvin on the Visions of Ezekiel: Historical and Hermeneutical Studies in John Calvin's "Sermons inédits", especially on Ezek. 36–48*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Diesel, Anja Angela. “*Ich bin Jahwe”: D*[*er Aufstieg der Ich-bin-Jahwe-Aussage zum Schlüsselwort des alttestamentlichen Monotheismus*](https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=oxfaleph016134347&context=L&vid=SOLO&lang=en_US&search_scope=LSCOP_ALL&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=local&query=any,contains,Diesel,%20A.%20A.,%20Ich%20bin%20Jahwe.&offset=0). Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2006.

García Martínez, Florentino, Marc Vervenne, and Brian Doyle, eds. *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust.* BETL 192. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.

Gertz, Jan Christian, Corinna Körting, and Markus Witte, ed. *Das Buch Ezechiel: Komposition, Redaktion und Rezeption*. BZAW 516. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.

Gile, Jason. *Ezekiel and the World of Deuteronomy*. LHBOTS 703. London: T&T Clark, 2021.

Hiebel, Janina M. *Ezekiel's Vision Accounts as Interrelated Narratives: A Redaction-Critical and Theological Study*. BZAW 475. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.

Hurvitz, Avi. *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem*. Paris: Gabalda, 1982.

de Jonge, Henk Jan, and Johannes Tromp, ed. *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.

Joyce, Paul M. *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* JSOTSup 51. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989.

*–––* and Dalit Rom-Shiloni, ed. *The God Ezekiel Creates*. LHBOTS 607. London: T&T Clark, 2015.

Kiraz, George Anton, Joseph Bali, Gillian Greenberg, and Donald M. Walter, ed. and trans. [*The Syriac Peshiṭta Bible with English translation: Ezekiel*](https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=oxfaleph020363586&context=L&vid=SOLO&lang=en_US&search_scope=LSCOP_ALL&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=local&query=any,contains,ezekiel%20syriac&offset=0&pcAvailability=false). Piscataway, NJ : Gorgias, 2015.

Klein, Anja. *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34-39*. BZAW 391. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.

Klein, Ralph W. *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message*. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1988.

Konkel, Michael. *Architektonik des Heiligen: Studien zur zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48)*. Berlin: Philo, 2001.

Krüger, Thomas. *Geschichtskonzepte im Ezechielbuch*. BZAW 180. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989.

Kutsko, John F*. Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*. BZAW 301. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000.

Launderville, Dale F. *Spirit and Reason: The Embodied Character of Ezekiel’s Symbolic Thinking*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007.

Levenson, Jon D. *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48.* HSM 10. Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976.

Levey, Samson H. *The Targum of Ezekiel: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*. The Aramaic Bible 13. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987.

Lust, Johan, ed. *Ezekiel and His Book. Textual and Literary Criticism and their Interrelation*. BETL 74. Leuven: Peeters, 1986.

Lyons, Michael E. *An Introduction to the Study of Ezekiel*. London: T&T Clark, 2015.

McKeating, Henry. *Ezekiel*. Old Testament Guides. Sheffield: JSOT, 1993.

Mein, Andrew. *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

*–––* and Paul M. Joyce, ed. *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet*. LHBOTS 535. London: T&T Clark, 2011.

Min, Hoo Yong. *Die Grundschrift des Ezechielbuches und ihre Botschaft*. FAT 2.81. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.

Odell, Margaret S., and John T. Strong, ed. *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*. SBLSymS 9. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.

Pikor, Wojciech. *The* *Land* o*f Israel in the Book of Ezekiel*. LHBOTS 667. London: T&T Clark, 2018.

Pohlmann, Karl-Friedrich. *Ezechielstudien: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches und zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten*. BZAW 202. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992.

Premstaller, Volkmar. *Fremdvölkersprüche des Ezechielbuches*. FB 104. Würzburg: Echter, 2005.

Renz, Thomas. *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*. VTSup 76. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Robson, James E*. Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*. LHBOTS 447. London: T&T Clark, 2006.

Rochester, Kathleen. M. *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*. Leuven: Peeters, 2012.

Rooker. Mark F. *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*. JSOTSup 90. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.

Rudnig, Thilo Alexander. *Heilig und Profan: Redaktionskritische Studien zu Ez 40–48*. BZAW 287. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000.

Schöpflin, Karen. *Theologie* *als* *Biographie* *im* *Ezechielbuch*: *Ein* *Beitrag* *zur* *Konzeption* *alttestamentlicher* *Prophetie*. FAT 36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002.

Strine, Casey A. *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile*. BZAW 436. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Tooman, William A., and Michael A. Lyons, ed. *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*. Cambridge: Clarke, 2020.

Tooman, William A., and Penelop Barter, ed. *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*. FAT 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

Torrey, Charles Cutler. *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930.

Yip, Hei Yin. *Ezekiel's Message of Hope and Restoration: Redaction-Critical Study of Ezekiel 1-7*. BZAW 532. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

Zimmerli, Walther. *The Fiery Throne: The Prophets and Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2003.

*–––* *Gottes Offenbarung: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament*. Munich: Kaiser, 1963.

*–––* *I am Yahweh*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982.

### Articles and Essays on Ezekiel

Batten, Jim. “Ezekiel (1)” *Affirmation & Critique* 24/1 (2019): 87–92.

Beach, J. Mark. “Actions Louder than Words.” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 29 (2018): 183–219.

Becker, J., "Erwägungen zur ezechielischen Frage." In Lothar Ruppert, Peter Weimar, and Eric Zenger, eds., *Künder* *des* *Wortes:* *Beiträge* *zur* *Theologie* *der* *Propheten*, 137–49. Würzburg: Echter, 1982.

Boadt, L., "Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel.” in L. J. de Regt, Jan de Waard, and Jan P. Fokkelman, eds., *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, 211–31. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996.

Brownlee, William H. "'Son of Man Set Your Face': Ezekiel the Refugee Prophet." *HUCA* 54 (1983): 83–110.

Clements, Ronald E. "The Ezekiel Tradition: Prophecy in a Time of Crisis." In Richard Coggins, Anthony Phillips, and Michael A. Knibb, ed., *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd*, 119–36.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Compton, R. Andrew. “Deixis Variation as a Literary Device in Ezekiel: Utilizing an Oft Neglected Linguistic Feature in Exegesis.” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 28 (2017): 77–107.

Conrad, Edgar W. “God’s Visions and God’s Eyes in Ezekiel’s Surrealistic Imagery.” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 9 (2013): 54–60.

Davidson, Richard M. "The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel." In David Merling, ed., *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea,* 71–93. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archaeology, 1997.

Greenberg, Moshe. "Notes on the Influence of Tradition on Ezekiel." JANES 22 (1993): 29–37.

Haran, M., "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School", VT 58 (2008) 211-218.

Keck, Elizabeth. “The Glory of Yahweh in Ezekiel and the Pre-Tabernacle Wilderness.” *JSOT* 37 (2012): 201–18.

Konkel, Michael. "Die zweite Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48): Dimensionen eines Entwurfs." In Othmar Keel and Erch Zenger, ed., *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels*, 154–79. Freiburg: Herder, 2002.

Lapsley, Jacqueline E. "Body Piercings: The Priestly Body and the 'Body' of the Temple in Ezekiel." *HeBAI* 1 (2012); 231–45.

Launderville, Dale. "Ezekiel's Priestly Imaginary: A Symbolic or Idolatrous Reality?" *CBQ* 82 (2020) 1–16.

Luther, Martin. “Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel” and “A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel.” In *Works of Martin* *Luther* 6:411–20. Philadelphia: Holman, 1932.

Marlow, Hilary. “‘As I Looked’: Visionary Experiences and Conceptions of Place in the Book of Ezekiel.” In Hilary Marlow, Karla Pollmann, and Helen Van Noorden, ed., *Eschatology in Antiquity: Forms and Functions*, 76–89. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2021.

Mein, Andrew. "Ezekiel: Structure, Themes, and Contested Issues.” In Carolyn J. Sharp, ed., *The* *Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*, 190–206. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Morgan, David M., "Ezekiel and the Twelve: Similar Concerns as an Indication of a Shared Tradition?" *BBR* 20 (2010): 377–96.

Nevader, Madhavi. "On Reading Ezekiel by the Rivers of Babylon." *WO* 45 (2015): 99–110.

Popović, Mladen. "Ancient Jewish Cultural Encounters and a Case Study on Ezekiel." In Mladen Popović, Myles Schoonover, and Marijn Vandenberghe, eds*., Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World*, 1–12. JSJSup 178. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Renz, Thomas.“Ezekiel.” In Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed. *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, 226–35*.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Roehrs, Walter R. “Watchmen in Israel: Pastoral Guidelines from Ezekiel 1–3.” *Concordia Journal*  16 (1990): 6–17.

Sabo, Theodore. “All Eye: A Metaphor from Ezekiel in the Desert Fathers, the School of Gaza, and Gregory Palamas.” *Journal of Early Christian History* 5 (2015): 117–31.

Schöpflin, Karin. “The Destructive and Creative Word of the Prophet in the Book of Ezekiel.” In Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, ed., *Stimulation from Leiden: Collected Communications to the XVIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leiden 2004*, 113–18. Frankfurt: Lang, 2006.

Sedlmeier, Franz. "'Schöpfung' und Transformation: Überlegungen zum Schöpfungsdiskurs im Ezechielbuch.“ *Theologie der Gegenwart* 64 (2021): 267–78.

*–––* "Transformationen: Zur Anthropologie Ezechiels." In Andreas Wagner, ed., *Anthropologische Aufbrüche: Alttestamentliche und interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur historischen Anthropologie*, 203–33. FRLANT 232. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009.

Tov, Emanuel. “Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Ezekiel.” Reprinted in Emanuel Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*, 397–410. VTSup 72. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Zurro Rodríguez, Eduardo. "Notas lexicográficas al libro de Ezequiel." *Estudios* *Bíblicos* 60 (2002) 169-188.

1. See, e.g., Zimmerli, 2:547–53; Michael Konkel, *Architektonik des Heiligen: Studien zur zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48)* (Berlin: Philo, 2001), who sees the chapters as a polemic against the temple that Zerubbabel built; Thilo Alexander Rudnig. ***Heilig****und Profan: Redaktionskritische Studien zu Ez 40–48*, BZAW 287 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), and Rudnig’s contribution to Pohlmann’s commentary—he sees it as a draft constitution resulting from a religious and social process of discussion in the Second Temple period (Pohlmann, 531); Janina M. Hiebel, *Ezekiel's Vision Accounts as Interrelated Narratives: A Redaction-Critical and Theological Study*, BZAW 475 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Quoted by Hiebel, *Vision Accounts*, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Cf. Tuell, Ezekiel 40–42”; Joyce, “Ezekiel 40–42.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Gaius Marius Victorinus was an African rhetorician with whom Jerome studied, who came to believe in Christ in later life and become a theologian. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. That is, to the city just mentioned. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See the verse-by-verse commentary on 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. חוֹמָה is the word for a city wall. בַּיׅת denotes the actual temple at the center of the complex (e.g., 40:7, 45–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. That is, six “long cubits.” A regular cubit is about half a yard, a long cubit is about three inches longer (*cubitum* is the Latin word for a forearm). So the reed is a little over three yards, nearer to three meters, though a little longer than that, too. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. That is, of the perimeter wall. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Literally, “face”; cf. 40:20, 22, 44–46; 42:15; 43:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The words in brackets, which repeat the preceding words, perhaps make explicit that what applies to the eastern gateway also applies to the others. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. 40:10–15 will make explicit that the gateway is a passageway, with three alcoves. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. That is, at the other, inside end of the gateway, the end nearer the actual temple. מֵהַבַּיׅת is literally “from the house” (cf. 40:8, 9; see BDB, 578b). Most EVV have “on the inside”: cf. מׅבׇּיׅת (7:15). But this fuller expression (for which cf. 43:6) is less likely to have that meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. That is, the posts on either side of the gateway opening: see the verse-by-verse commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. That is, its total width, including the jambs. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. A גְּבוּל, a boundary marker; Ezekiel does not indicate its nature. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Literally, “from the alcove’s roof to its roof”—a measurement across the walkway at roof level. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. That is, the open front of one alcove with its bar to the open front of the alcove the other side of the walkway. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. That is, the inward end of the gateway, leading into the courtyard. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. אֲטֻמות, literally “constricted”; perhaps implying narrowing from the inside to the outside. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. The pl. and the spelling of אֵלַמּוֹת contrasts with 40:7–15; there is more variation in 40:21–36. Some instances suggest mistaken resolution of K by Q (Zimmerli, 2:338). I take sg. and pl. and all three spellings to refer to one foyer. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. That is, the courtyard that is outside the inner area where the temple was, but inside the complex’s wall and gateways. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. To distinguish it from the higher pavement in the inner courtyard. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. הַתַּחְתּוּנׇה is oddly a f. adjective as in 40:19; and “lower” will have to be used loosely to denote “inward.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. That is, this is the measurement across the outer courtyard from the inside of the gateway to the outside of the inner courtyard. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. The variable use of אֶל contributes to uncertainty in understanding 40:39–43. I translate “at” each time. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. That is, “outside” when one has gone through the inner gateway and entered the inner courtyard. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. See, e.g., O’Hare, *“Have You Seen,”* 61–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Ironically, it may seem, after this comment, Gregory (259–459) goes on to a magnificent allegorical exposition of the chapter. Mayer (459–77) follows him in his allegorical exposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Cf. Bergsma, “Restored Temple.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. E.g., Young, “Ezekiel 40:1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. See, e.g., Ganzel, “Between Prophet”; Ganzel, *Ezekiel’s Visionary Temple*. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Liss, “Describe,” 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Cf. Rhyder, “Gates.” Odell, 494, compares the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* in this connection (4Q400–6; see *DSS* 2:806–37). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Ganzel and Holtz, “Ezekiel’s Temple.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Hunt, *Missing Priests*,143. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. See, e.g., Jeffrey, *New Temple*, on current plans. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Stevenson, *Vision*,34. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Martin Luther, “A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel,” in *Works of Martin* *Luther* 6:412–20 (Philadelphia: Holman, 1932) 6:420. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. These are the distances side to side and front to back—what Western parlance would call the breadth and length. This difference in parlance recurs in the vision. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. That is, the same as the width of the hall at its front, where it reaches the most sacred place. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. בׇּאוֹת, cf. Driver, “Ezekiel,” 305; literally “things coming in,” possibly a technical term. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. בַּקּׅיר אֲשֶׁר־לַבּיׅת, literally “in the wall that [belonged] to the house”: this pleonastic expression recurs in 41:9, 22; 42:1, 3, 7, 8, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. מְלוֹ, literally “fullness,” a short spelling for מְלֹא, perhaps making explicit a reference to long cubits (see the translation footnote to 40:5, and the next footnote). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. אַצּׅילׇה is a hapax\* of unknown meaning, perhaps a building term. Tg. has “span,” but Qimhi (in MG) takes it to denote thelong cubit. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. אַתּׅיק (אתוק K) occurs only in 41:15; 42:3, 5 and its meaning has to be guessed. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. שׇֹחׅיף is another hapax whose meaning has to be guessed. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Literally, “measurements.” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Literally, “the appearance in accordance with the appearance.” [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. עׇב, as in 1 Kgs 7:6, another “archit. term, meaning unknown” (BDB). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Here הַלּׅשְׁכׇּה is collective sg. (contrast 42:4, and see the verse-by-verse comment on 41:10). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. The elliptical\* statement signifies that the structure measures a hundred cubits south to north with its entrance on the north side. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. That is, three levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. הֲגׅינׇן is a hapax in the First Testament, but see *DTT*, 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. The f. suffix on בְּבוֹאׇן refers to the chambers. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. That is in this context, the entirety of the inner courtyard around the temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. See Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the* BiblicaHebraica (third ed., revised and expanded by Alexander Achilles Fischer, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. See Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia. Volume II: Historical Records of Assyria from Sargon to the End* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927) 2:251–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Simon, “Geometric Vision,” 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. But if Ezekiel is using the long cubit, in measurements on the ground Ezekiel’s temple would be bigger (Cook, 148). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Cf. Block, “Guarding,” 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Cf. Japhet, “Biblical Concepts,” 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Bowen, 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Whereas “appearance” translates מַרְאֶה, “vision” translates מַרְאוֹת (see the verse-by-verse commentary on 1:1). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. On מׅדַּבֵּר, see the translation footnote on 2:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. הׇיׇה עֹמֵד is a periphrastic\* verb not a regular *qatal\** or *yiqtol\** (compare and contrast the noun clause in 40:3). See Daniel E. Carver and Edward M. Cook, “Situation Aspect, (Un)Boundedness and the Participial Periphrastic Construction in Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 68 (2021): 1–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. The sentence breaks down at this point. The noun expressions are preceded by the object marker אֶת but there is no verb of which they are the object. The verb לֹא יְטַמְּאוּ, “they will not defile,” effectively governs them (Block, 2:575). But the presence of the object marker suggests that Ezekiel knew he was going to let the sentence break down. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. קֹדֶשׁ קׇדׇשׁׅים, as opposed to קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדׇשׁׅים, “the most sacred,” which applies to the inmost room in the house (41:4). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. The phrase perhaps suggests a domesticated animal, one of your own, not a wild animal. So also with the “buck from the goats” and the “ram from the flock” (43:22, 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Allen’s translation (2:259); he notes that חׇטׇא piel is a piel privative, the form that reverses a verb’s meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. That is, having four legs, for instance, not substandard. At 46:13 Aq. has “perfect” (τέλειον; cf. Jerome, 554). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. “Your” and “you” was sg. through 43:1–26; in 43:27 it is pl. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Stevenson, *Vision*,78. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. See Cook, “Ezekiel’s God Incarnate”; McCall, “Body.” [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Ludwig, “Ezekiel 43:9.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Kasher, “Anthropomorphism,” 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Kim, “Ashamed,” 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. DeLap, “Ezekiel as Moses,” 72; cf. McKeating, “Prophet Like Moses.” [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Strong, “Grounding,” 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Leveen, “Returning the Body,” 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. See Peterson, “Ezekiel’s Rhetoric.” [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. See Boyle, “Holiness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. See Don Garlington, “‘The Salt of The Earth’ in Covenantal Perspective,” *JETS* 54 (2011): 715–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Block, “Zion Theology,” 2. Contrast Clark’s emphasis in *“I Will Be King Over You”;* and Strong, “God Ezekiel Inherited.” [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. See further Tuell, “Priesthood”; MacDonald, *Priestly Rule*; Schaper, “Rereading the Law.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. See, e.g., Salvador-González, “*Haec Porta Domini*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, esp. 121–27; Duguid *Leaders*; Duguid, “Priests in Their Place.” [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. See, e.g., Jonker, “Melting Pots”; Jaeyoung, “Levites.” [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. See Cook and Patton, *Hierarchical Thinking*. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Tova Ganzel, “Priests, Levites, and the *Nasi*: New Roles in Ezekiel’s Future Temple,” in *OHE*. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. On which chapter Hunt (“Spinning”) calls Ezek 44 a midrash. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Ezekiel uses the periphrastic\* expression וְהׇיׇה סׇגוּר signifying “it will remain closed” not a *weqatal*\* such as וְסֻגַּר, “it will be made to close” (see the translation footnote on 43:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. אֶת־הַנׇּשֹׅיא has what is usually the sign of the object, but occasionally prefaces a subject to draw attention to it. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Yahweh continues to refer to himself in the third person, as he does in the expression “Yahweh’s house.” [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. See the translation note on 2:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. רַב לׇכֶם מׅכׇּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, literally, “you have plenty, more than all your outrages.” Ezekiel puts a quirky spin on the already quirky idiom noted in BDB, 582b–583a. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. The odd ending on וַתְּשֹמוּן perhaps incorporates an extra (“paragogic”\*) ן, adding emphasis (JM 44e). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. *IBHS* 11.2.10h sees here an instance of לְ marking apposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. For this understanding of the relationship between 44:10 and 11, cf. Duguid, *Leaders*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. On תְּרוּמׇה, see the translation footnote on 45:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. עֲרׅיסׇה (pl.) occurs only here and in Num 15:20, 21; Num 10:37 [38], and its meaning is a matter of guesswork. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Cf. Goerwitz, “Long Hair.” [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. See further Duguid, *Leaders*, 10–57; Nihan, “*Nāśî*′”; Nihan, “Reconsidering.” [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Awabdy, “Yhwh Exegetes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. Cf. Warren, “Sin of the Sanctuary”; see Konkel, 286–348. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. See Lemke, “Circumcision.” [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. See Galambush, “Northern Voyage,” Kilchor, “Ezechiel und Ägypten”; Kilchor, “Meaning.” [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Cf. Duguid, *Leaders*, 122–23, 127–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. On approaches to this question, see, e.g., Jaeyoung, “Levites.” [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Yahweh’s version in 44:6 is quirkier because he combines the “too much” version followed by לׇכֶם with the “two little” version followed by מׅכֶם in Num 16:9: cf. מׅכׇּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיכֶם in Ezek 44:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. See, e.g., Yang, “Josiah’s Religious Reformation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. Milgrom, “Ezekiel,” 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Mitchell, “Righteousness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. See Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. MacDonald (*Priestly Rule*, 63–111) studies carefully the relationship of the requirements in 44:17–27 to Leviticus, and of 44:28–31 to Num 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Tiemeyer, “Question.” [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. See Ganzel, “Rabbis”; Sweeney, “Problem”; Klein, “Reconciling.” [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Häner (520) makes the point in terms of verbal links: תְּרוּמׇה, עַמּׅי, נׇשֹׅיא, חַטׇּאת. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. “You” is pl. in 45:1, 6, sg. in 45:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. The traditional translation of תְּרוּמָה is “heave offering,” on the basis of its link with רוּם hiphil, “raise,” used here. One might infer an etymological link, but there is no evidence that a תְּרוּמָה was lifted up, and one cannot lift up a stretch of land. In light of usage, we can be no more precise about the word’s meaning than words such as “reserve” (Block, 2:649), “dedication,” or “contribution.” רוּם hiphil may then function as in effect a denominative,\* so that the phrase here simply means “reserve a reserve,” but the regular English translation of this verb, “raise,” works. See further *HALOT*, 1788–90;L. Wächter and T. Seidl, *TDOT* 15:770–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. As in passages such as 40:7 (see the verse-by-verse comment), in Ezek 45 *length* and *width* have the opposite connotations to the ones an English speaker would expect. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. With irony, the verb is רוּם hiphil, the verb meaning “raise” a reserve in 45:13,and the verb to which the noun תְּרוּמׇה, “reserve,” is related. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. מַשְׁקֶה from שׇׁקׇה, literally “irrigation.” Sheep pasture in the wilderness, not on irrigated land, so this expression relates to what follows, specifically to the grain offering. It compares with the expressions “from the flock,” “from the herd,” and “from the goats” (45:15, 18 and 23); see the translation footnote on 43:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. On this לְ, see *IBHS* 11.2.10i. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. כֹל הׇעׇם הׇאׇרֶץ with the two articles is odd: contrast כׇל־עׇם הׇאׇרֶץ in 45:22. Perhaps הׇאׇרֶץ here assimilates the phasing to 45:22 (Allen, 2:247), though there the phrase might denote the citizenry (see the verse-by-verse commentary on 7:27). But 46:19 has another instance of a construct with the article leading into an absolute with the article. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. “You” is sg. in 45:18 and 20a, then pl. again in 45:20b, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Cook, “Prophet.” [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. Tuell, *Law*,109; see also Boyle, “Figure”; Goswell, “Prince,” 57–60; Nevader, “Picking Up.” [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. See Ganzel, “First-Month Rituals”; Wagenaar, *Origin*, 101–34*;* Wagenaar, “Passover,” 255–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. Wojciech Pikor, *The Land of Israel in the Book of Ezekiel*, LHBOTS 667 (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. While “outside” could imply outside the complex, the context suggests the outer courtyard. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. They are “his” in the sense that he delivers them to the sanctuary, but the context suggests that they count as the people’s offerings which he brings on their behalf. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. The Torah does not require shared offerings on the Sabbath, though maybe Ezekiel speaks loosely. “Burnt offerings and shared offerings” suggests offerings in general in 43:27, and 46:4 refers only to the burnt offering. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Scholarly opinion differs on whether to view הׅשְׁתַּחֲוָה as hitpalel from שׇׁחׇה (BDB, 1005) or eshtaphel from חׇוׇה (*HALOT*, 296–97). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. See the verse-by-verse commentary on 7:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. That is, he freely decides how much; cf. 46:11, and so also the expression in 46:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. I thus link “as laws for all time, regular” with what follows (so Altschuler, in MG). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. Literally, “there: a courtyard in a corner of the courtyard, a courtyard in a corner of the courtyard.” [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Literally, “houses.” [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. יׇמׅין and יְמׇנׅי usually refer to the right (e.g., 39:3) but they can refer to the south on the basis of orientation facing east (e.g., 16:46). This makes better sense here, otherwise the water gets involved in some contortions, even though Ezekiel goes on to use another word for south, נֶגֶב. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. The hapax\* פׇּכַךְ (piel) is a denominative\* from the word for a flask (*DTT*, 1174), suggesting oil pouring out (not too voluminously) from a flask. There will be a link in substance with the pouring out of Yahweh’s spirit in 39:29 (see De Vries, “Relationship”), though there is no indication that Ezekiel made the link. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. קׇו, a different word from the קׇנֶה in Ezek 40 for an object with a different purpose. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. While the context does suggest that מֵי אַׇפְסׇיׅם means “water of ankles,” the second noun is a hapax so the translation is a guess. LXX ὕδωρ ἀφέσεως, “water of release” or “remission” perhaps encouraged Christian interpreters to link Ezekiel’s vision with the water of baptism (Blenkinsopp, 232). “We go down into the water full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing awe as fruit in our heart, and having hope toward Jesus in the Spirit” (Epistle of Barnabas 11:11; see further Stevenson, 146–47). [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. יְבַכֵּר, “bear new [fruit],” is a denominative from בְּכוֹר, “firstborn,” and a hapax\* as regards this meaning [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. גֵּה is a hapax, apparently a slip for זֶה. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. See the translation note on 11:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. נׇחַל is hitpael here, piel in 47:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. On Teman, see the verse-by-verse comment on 20:46 [21:2]. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. See the verse-by-verse comment on 45:1–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. תַּפּׅלּוּ, “they will fall,” involves a catachresis;\* elsewhere, land not people is the subject of this verb (cf. 47:14). LXX has “they will eat,” a loose translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. Cf. Mulzer, “Wasser,” 403–11 [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. Bodi, “Double Current.” [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. See, e.g., Tuell, “Rivers”; Lee, “Creation Symbols”; Di Pede and Lichtert, “Figures.” [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. See Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once.… Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 386–444; “The Building of Ninĝirsu's Temple (Gudea, cylinders A and B),” in *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature****,***  [https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#](https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7); cf. Sharon, “Biblical Parallel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. Lapsley, “Doors,” 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. So Warren, “Adoption-Alienatíon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. See Kopilovitz, “Land.” [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. Levenson, *Theology*, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. Ateek, “Palestinian Perspective,” 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. Wielenga, “The Gēr.” [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. See John Goldingay, *Joshua*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Historical Books (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023), 19–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. אל־יַד, literally “toward the hand of”; so also later in 48:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. That is, those areas will be Dan’s—the “it” anticipates the reference to Dan (Allen, 2:275). [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. Thus the word “reserve” (תְּרוּמׇה) is used in a narrower sense here than in 48:8 (where it applied to the entire strip, including the prince’s sections). In 48:10 the qualification “sacred reserve” makes the point more specific. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
165. “Special reserve” translates the hapax\* תְּרוּמׅיׇּה, the reserve within the reserve. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
166. לֹא יׇמֵר: a jussive preceded by לֹא when one would expect אַל. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
167. 48:31–34 illustrates אֶחׇד having the significance of an indefinite article (BDB, 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
168. Cf. Brodsky, “Utopian Map.” [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
169. Weingart, “Tribes,”168. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
170. Hubbard, “Distant Memory,” 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
171. Cf. Warren, “Tenure.” [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
172. See Ganzel, “Reworking.” [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
173. But Levenson (*Theology*, 7–24)emphasizes that really Ezekiel is talking about Zion and Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
174. Smith-Christopher, *Exile*, 114–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
175. Jenson’s quotation is from Michael Wyschogrod, “Incarnation,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1993): 208–15 (210). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
176. Trevor Hart, “Complicating Presence: Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives on a Theological Question,” In Izaak J. de Hulster and Nathan MacDonald, ed., *Divine Presence and Absence in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1–21 (20).. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)