

Ezekiel 40–48: Various Exegetical Issues

*Comments on selected topics. Version 4. 2023. Peter Schmidt.
All underlining in quotations is added.*

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Commentaries

Keil (KD, German ed. 1868)

Zimmerli (BKAT, 1969; English HERM, 1983)

Taylor (TOTC, 1969)

Allen (WBC, 1994)

Block (NICOT, 1997)

Maier (Wuppertal, 1998)

Duguid (NIVAC, 1999)

Thompson (CBC, 2010)

Handbook (Gross & Stine, UBS, 2016)

Cook (AB, 2018)

Chapter 40

Where were the palm tree decorations in the gatehouses of Ezekiel's Temple? (Ezek. 40:16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37)

There is both repetition and variation in the description of the six gatehouses. The verses Ezek. 40:16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37 talk about the palm tree decorations. (In addition to these decorations, each of these verses – except for v. 16 – also mentions the position of the vestibule, and the stairs that lead up to the gatehouse.)

Looking at all of them together, a fuller picture emerges. Since the difference in the wording is almost certainly stylistic, and not meant to convey a difference in the gatehouses' construction, this will help to know what information is assumed, and maybe made explicit, in those verses where the wording is briefer.

About the first gatehouse, v. 16 simply states:

On each jamb wall were palm tree decorations.

V. 22 only says:

Its windows, its porches, and its palm tree decorations had the same measurements as the gate which faced east.

V. 26 adds the bit about “one on each side”:

וּמַעֲלוֹת שְׂבָעָה עֲלוֹתָיו וְאֶלְמוֹ לְפָנֵיהֶם וְתַמָּרִים לוֹ אֶחָד מִפּוֹ וְאֶחָד מִפּוֹ אֶל-אֵילָיו:

It had palm tree decorations on its jamb walls, one on each side.

It is difficult to determine whether this means “on the left and on the right side [of the corridor]”, or “**in the front and in the back (of each jamb wall)**”. This question is not pursued here in detail, but the former option is so obvious by the demands of symmetry, that the latter option seems more meaningful.

In any event, the “one” shows that the jamb walls were not covered with a lot of small palm tree pictures, but had one big one taking much of the wall's space.

V. 31 is shorter again:

Palm tree decorations were on its jamb walls.

Vv. 34, 37 both say identically:

וְתַמָּרִים אֶל-אֵילָיו מִפּוֹ וּמִפּוֹ

Palm tree decorations were on its jamb walls, on each side.

The question for translating is whether the “it/its” in the above-quoted verses refers to the *gatehouse* – the topic of the whole paragraph, or only to its *vestibule* –which was mentioned last.

The respective preceding verses 40:21, 33, 36 contain several “its”, and they all talk about the gatehouse. (Note in particular the phrase וְחַלְלוֹנוֹת לוֹ in v. 33, which is *followed* by a remark about the vestibule.) **So it seems preferable to think of the palm trees also as belonging to the gatehouse. I.e., they are not only found on the jamb walls of the vestibule, but also on the jamb walls of the guard rooms.**

Translation: In a case such as in v. 31, the referent of “it” does not need to remain ambiguous (as in many versions, e.g. ESVUS16 “Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its [i.e. the gatehouse's or the vestibule's?] jambs”), nor should it refer to the vestibule only (as in NLT07 “The entry room to the south gateway faced into the outer courtyard. It had palm tree decorations on its columns”), but “it” can be translated clearly as referring to the gatehouse (as in GNTD “Its entrance room faced the other courtyard, and palm trees were carved on the walls along the passageway.”).

Other resources:

In most places, Zimmerli translates according to the above understanding (i.e., “**it**” **is the gatehouse**, see e.g. verses 25-26, German edition pp. 980f.).

Cook sees it differently. He thinks that in vv. 26, 34, 37, “the Hebrew syntax indicates that these trees pertain specifically to the porch and constitute a unique pair exhibiting bilateral symmetry”.

As to the question *where on the jamb walls* the decoration is found, according to the UBS *Handbook*, the palm trees are on the corridor’s side of the jamb walls. On Ezek. 40:16, it says:

Since there were windows, or niches, on most of the internal walls, these carvings were on **the jambs**, that is, on the ends of the intervening walls between the small rooms and on the doorways at each end of the gatehouse.

In contrast, the videos by bibliaprints.com show the palm trees **on the front and back of the walls**. See, for instance, the slide below.¹



¹ Slide “03_FB_Ezekiel_40_Temple_1024” from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/ezekiel-41-temple/>

The eight tables in Ezek. 40:39-42

These verses raise several questions:

- How many tables were there altogether – eight or twelve?
- Where were they located exactly?
- If the tables in v. 39 are in the vestibule of the gatehouse, and the ones in v. 40 are outside the vestibule, this means they are on different levels. (The vestibule was accessed via eight steps.) Is this really the intended meaning? Is this not impractical?
- How does “burnt offering” in v. 42 relate to the list of “burnt offering, sin offering, and guilt offering” in v. 39?
- Which set of tables does v. 42 talk about?

Kilchör, referring to Gese and Konkel, explains the following:²

- V. 39 states that the animals for the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering are slaughtered on the four tables inside the vestibule. These are most holy offerings.
- Vv. 40-41 mention another four tables outside the vestibule, “on which they slaughter” (v. 41; NASB explicates in italics: “... slaughter *sacrifices*”). These tables are located in front of the gatehouse’s steps, in the outer court.
- V. 42 refers to the first set of tables, those in the vestibule, not another four.
- In line with the overall concern in Ezek. 40–48, the focus is on the most holy offerings.

The logic behind these two sets of tables is that **the most holy offerings have to be slaughtered in the area that belongs to the inner court** – and the gatehouse with its vestibule is part of that –, **while the holy offerings, namely the peace offerings, may be slaughtered in the outer court.**

In addition to this, Kilchör observes that the people who slaughter the most holy offerings, by entering the vestibule **will be on the higher level of the inner court, but only on the edges of this area – without entering the inner court itself!** This is highly significant in the wider context. According to 44:11, **it is the Levites who serve the people by slaughtering the offerings – all offerings –, but for reasons given in that chapter, they are barred from entering the inner court** (cf. 44:13). Thus, having two sets of tables on two different levels is intentional.

The vestibules of the inner gatehouses function as a lock: they are accessible to the Levites, who must not make the inner court unclean by entering it, and they are holy enough so that the most holy offerings are not defiled. In the vestibule, the Levites hand over the animals to the priests who take them to the altar.

² Benjamin Kilchör, *Wiederhergestellter Gottesdienst: Eine Deutung der zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48) am Beispiel der Aufgaben der Priester und Leviten*. Herders Biblische Studien 95 (Freiburg: Herder, 2020), pp. 61-63.

Chapter 41

How is 41:14 to be understood?

The verse reads:

וְרֹחַב פְּנֵי הַבַּיִת וְהַגִּזְרָה לְקִדְדִים מֵאָה אַמָּה:

In NASB, it says:

Also the width of the front of the temple and *that of the separate areas along the east side totaled* a hundred cubits. [Italics in the original, underlining PS.]

I think this reflects the right understanding: in order to end up with 100 cubits, one has to add up the temple building's front of 50 cubits (and the platform on both sides, 2 x 5 cubits = 10 cubits), and the space on both sides. This space is the extension of the "restricted area / separate area" (*gizrâ*) behind the Temple (2 x 20 cubits = 40 cubits).

Several versions are unclear in this regard. They take *גִּזְרָה* *gizrâ* as referring to the square of the inner court. This leads to imprecisions.

NET08 says:

and also the width of the front of the temple and the courtyard on the east as 175 feet.

This takes "the width of the front of the temple" loosely as referring to the whole front area, and lines it up with the courtyard. But the text says *בַּיִת* *bayit* 'house', and the width of the temple building is only 50 cubits (25 meters).

NJPS expresses the same more clearly:

The front side of the Temple, like the vacant space on the east, was 100 cubits wide.

But "like" is not in the text.

NIV11R says:

The width of the temple courtyard on the east, including the front of the temple, was a hundred cubits.

Here, one wonders why it would be needed to point to the front of the temple specifically. The translation is also quite removed from the Hebrew syntax.

Block translates:

The width of the front of the temple including the restricted area on the east side was also one hundred cubits.

He explains (p. 552, note 59) that *gizrâ* is "restricted space" in the back (west) in v. 12, and goes on to say:

V. 14 employs the same word for space in front of the temple."

It is not clear where the calculation leaves room for such an extra space in the front. If the inner court is in view, then the word "including" in the translation is unhelpful.

NLT07 says:

The inner courtyard to the east of the Temple was also 175 feet wide.

This leaves *pāneh* 'front' and *gizrâ* 'separate area' untranslated.

GNTD gives the right understanding. It says:

The distance across the front of the Temple, including the open space on either side, was also 168 feet.

Translations should follow the models of NASB and GNTD.

What did the doors in 41:23-24 look like?

Ezek. 41:23-24 reads:

(23) וּשְׁתֵּי דְלָתוֹת לְהִיכָל וְלִקְדָּשׁ:

(24) וּשְׁתֵּי דְלָתוֹת לְדְלָתוֹת שְׁתֵּי מוֹסְבֹת דְלָתוֹת שְׁתֵּי לְדְלָת אַחַת וּשְׁתֵּי דְלָתוֹת לְאַחֶרֶת:

NASB: ²³ The nave and the sanctuary each had a double door.

²⁴ Each of the doors had two leaves, two swinging leaves; two leaves for one door and two leaves for the other.

The word דְלָת *delet* can mean both the ‘door’ as a whole, and an individual ‘(door) wing/leaf’.³ The question is how to interpret “double door”, and how each of them was made up.

The simplest understanding would be this: all the sentences say is that both the outer and the inner sanctuary had **one left door wing and one right door wing**. But that seems to be a matter of course and hardly worth mentioning. Apart from GNT, no version expresses this understanding – at least not unambiguously.

Gese’s diagram, reproduced in Allen and in the UBS *Handbook*, show two pairs of doors, **one in front of the other**: one pair is fixed on the front side of the jamb wall, and opens frontward, the other pair is fixed on the back side of the jamb wall and opens backward. What speaks in favor of this is the observation that in Solomon’s Temple, there was a door and a curtain. So when there is no curtain, a second door could replace that. But one can argue the other way round too: if one of the distinctive features of the new Temple is that the curtain is missing, what would be the point in replacing it with another door? Further, this explanation would not work for the double door at the entrance of the outer sanctuary, where there was no curtain. Even apart from these considerations, such a double construction is questionable. I do not have Gese’s work in front of me, but the above text does not really encourage “double doors” arranged behind each other, so that one has to pass through two doors for entering the room. Also, the mention of “swinging” would seem almost superfluous then. Whether fixed on hinges or on pivots – either way a door will swing.

The above verses have to be read keeping in mind the details from Solomon’s Temple as background. 1Ki. 6:34 reads:

וּשְׁתֵּי דְלָתוֹת עֲצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים שְׁנֵי צָלְעִים תְּדָלָת הָאֶחָת גָּלִילִים וּשְׁנֵי קָלְעִים תְּדָלָת הַשְּׁנִית גָּלִילִים:

Literally: and two doors of cypress wood; the two compartments [צָלְעַיִם *šēlā*] of the one door (being) round/rolling ones [גָּלִילִים *gālil*], and the two compartments of the second door (being) round/rolling ones.⁴

The verse is difficult, partly due to the rare word גָּלִיל *gālil*.⁵ What seems clear is that there were two doors. Whether this means one on the left and one on the right side of the entrance, or two behind each other, is already a matter of interpretation, but the first idea seems natural, and this is how most versions take it.⁶ Also clear is that *each* door consisted of two parts. But the versions are divided between two interpretations, represented in the examples below. Some take the two halves as two elements of a *horizontal division*, sitting on top of each other, some as two

³ Cf. Gesenius₁₈, HALOT, BDB.

⁴ Note also v. 32 “two doors of olive wood”.

⁵ Some say: “revolving” [= turning, rotating].

⁶ GCLNR00’s “Auf jeder Seite waren hintereinander je zwei drehbare Türflügel angebracht.” (= On each side were fixed behind each other two turnable door wings each.) is quite interpretive.

elements of a *vertical divisions*, being placed next to each other, as it can be seen in modern closet-doors:⁷

NASB: and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots.

NRSV: and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding.

Language-wise both seems possible. The first would explain the construction, either as an innovation or in contrast to other constructions. But how are we to picture *two* leaves on top of each other? If both turned on the same pivot, why would they be divided? Even if hinges were used, the purpose of a division is still not clear. Neither the Holy Place nor the Most Holy Place were exhibition rooms to be looked into – quite the opposite. **So there would hardly be a point in building a door, of which the upper half could be opened while the lower half remained shut. By contrast, one can imagine that a fairly wide opening required more than one door leaf on each side to cover it up.**⁸ This is an argument in favor of those who suggest **folding doors**. The fact that in Jer. 36:23 the word *delet* is used of a scroll's columns (not: rows), supports the understanding of a vertical division. Konkel speaks of "some type of hinge mechanism", but thinks that "the sense of folding is not compatible with the root" (NIDOTTE 1:868, referring to Dahood, 542). But then he cites the occurrence of a noun *gelilta* ' in the Talmud for a "folding couch". While 'rolling' (the more basic meaning of גלל) and 'folding' differ, the turning/flapping movement of a door wing could be perceived of as rolling. Or *gālil* could refer to the round staff-like element that holds the inner and outer wing together. Folding doors are also what Keil had in mind.

The point about the doors having to cover a wide entrance opening is even more relevant in Ezekiel's Temple than in Solomon's. In Ezekiel's vision, the measurements of the door openings are as follows:

Front room: 10 cubits wide, half of it: 5 cubits ≈ 2.5 meters

Most Holy Place: 6 cubits wide, half of it: 3 cubits ≈ 1.5 meters.

That is, one door wing had to cover a distance of 2.5 or 1.5 meters respectively, which makes for rather broad door wings.

Result: Both 1Ki. 6:34 and Ezek. 41:23f. speak of two doors, each of which consisted of two leaves. The remark about these leaves being "turning" ones is probably not a redundant statement about what door leaves normally do, but is meant to describe a special feature, namely, to say that these were folding doors. Although the text in Ezekiel uses different vocabulary [צֶלַע > דָּלָת; גִּלְלָה > סִבְבָה], it hardly describes a completely different arrangement from the one in 1 Kings.

Translation: Interestingly, in 1Ki. 6:34, several versions speak of folding doors, whereas in Ezek. 41:24 most speak of swinging leaves. This reflects the different Hebrew words. But if both writers think of the same mechanism, one could speak of folding doors in both places.

⁷ NJPS and REB are still different.

⁸ Depending on the interpretation of the words קַמְיָשׁ and רִבְעֵי in 1Ki. 6:31/33, the door openings to the outer and inner sanctuary might have been five cubits wide (≈ 2.5 meters) and four cubits wide (≈ 2 meters) respectively. This view is presented, but not favored by the UBS *Handbook*. The openings might have been even wider.

Chapter 42

גלריה attîq: Probably “ledge / terrace / roof platform”, not “gallery / balcony”

42:5 is rendered by many English versions in a way similar to what NIV has:

for the galleries took more space from them than from the rooms on the lower and middle floors of the building

The word gallery, in my view, is not helpful here.

Britannica defines (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/gallery>):

gallery, in architecture, any covered passage that is open at one side, such as a portico or a colonnade. More specifically, in late medieval and Renaissance Italian architecture, it is a narrow balcony or platform running the length of a wall. In Romanesque architecture, especially in Italy and Germany, an arcaded wall-passage on the outside of a structure is known as a dwarf gallery.

There is also this further clarification for the terms “portico” and “colonnade”:



portico

portico, colonnaded porch or entrance to a structure, or a covered walkway supported by regularly spaced columns. Porticoes formed the entrances to ancient Greek temples. The portico is a principal feature of Greek temple architecture and thus a prominent...



colonnade

colonnade, row of columns generally supporting an entablature (row of horizontal moldings), used either as an independent feature (e.g., a covered walkway) or as part of a building (e.g., a porch or portico). The earliest colonnades appear in the temple architecture of antiquity...

It continues to explain:

Facing into a structure, a gallery may either be set into the thickness of a wall at ground level or be elevated and supported on columns or corbels. It would function as a communicating passage. Within an interior space a gallery may be a platform projecting from a wall, as in the example of a musicians’ gallery, or may be a second-story opening onto a large interior area, such as the gallery in a church intended to provide additional seating. In legislative houses such a gallery might be intended for spectators or the press. In theatres the gallery is the highest balcony and generally contains the least expensive seats.

Thus, “gallery” serves to name two very different kinds of constructions: (1.) one is a **covered passage or walkway**, held up by columns, like a portico, and as such “carved into” the substance of a building, and situated *under* the rest of it; (2.) the other, by contrast, is situated *on top* of the building, or a part of a building, either on top of a solid story, or **on top of a kind of roof held up by columns, and serves to seat people**. More typically we find this inside a building, and it provides extra space. In short, the first is to walk under a building, the second to sit on a kind of inside balcony.

This distinction is important when it comes to discussing what *attîq* might mean.

Back to 42:5 in NIV etc.: if the *attîqîm* “take space from the upper floors”, then they cannot be “galleries” in the first sense described above, because such galleries would take space from the lower floors. Further, v. 6 tells us there were no columns. [But then again, what is this comment meant to say? what would the perceivable other construction *with* columns look like??] Therefore, “gallery” in these versions should be taken in the second sense described above. The problem with that is that we are talking about something on the outside of the building, not a gallery for seating inside. But “balcony” is no ideal alternative, because it usually

protrudes from the building, which is not the case here. **What comes closer is the idea of a roof garden or viewing platform.**

Also, these versions say the galleries “took away space”, which is true in regard to the rooms themselves (they become smaller), but a little awkward, because normally galleries are there to make *more* space.

In the end, Galling’s drawing (as found in Allen, or the *Realia Handbook*) makes sense, and others show it similarly. We are talking about terraces, or even simpler, “steps”.

Rather than speaking of “galleries” or “balconies”, “balustrades”, “parapets”, which evoke rather different objects with functions alien to our subject, I find it more helpful to speak of “ledges”, “terraces”, “roof deck/platforms” or the like. The UBS *Handbook* on 42:5 also offers “platform”.

Zimmerli (1044), following Elliger,* holds that a possible etymology is from a verb meaning “abreißen, abschneiden” [= rip off / cut off], which hints at a meaning that supports the idea of a ledge/step. The great advantage is that this can be applied also to 41:16 (window frames), without having to assume a totally different meaning there than in the other places (but a much smaller scale).

Zimmerli (1056) further considers the fact that **ט** has something like “Balkone, Ausbauten; Absätze?”. He then talks (1061) of “ein Absatz, ein zurückfliehender Bauteil” [~ a ledge / a pulled-back element]. LU84NR06 translates “Absätze” [~ ledges], but not in 41:15. — * For English, cf. Block (p. 553, n. 67).

Result: Quoting the UBS *Handbook* on 42:3, the straight underline and wave underline show what I find helpful and what not:

Gallery renders the unknown Hebrew term that we understood as decorative “ledges” in 41.15-16, but here these “ledges” (so NJPSV) seem to have been much larger because the width of the building reduced noticeably as the “ledges” became wider (see verses 5-6). They may have been “balconies” (NCV) or open areas on the roofs of lower rooms (so GNT with “It was built on three levels, each one set further back than the one below it”). Even though it is not certain exactly what these galleries or balconies were, scholars agree that the building was **three stories** high, that is, there were three levels of rooms built one above the other. A **gallery** or a “balcony” is a platform that extends out from a building. In regions where buildings with “balconies” are not known or common, translators may say “platforms that extended out from the building.” ...

A model for this verse is:

- ... The building itself was three stories high. It had balconies.

In 41:15, either of the two senses of “gallery” could apply – protruding balconies or covered porticos. We do not know. 42:5 seems the most helpful verse, because it describes the effect that the *attiq* has on the overall structure. 41:16 further narrows down our options, because not everything we could imagine would prove viable in this verse. A ledge makes some sense. The verse is really difficult, but perhaps it means that some sort of panelling went up to the ledge(s?), and some different panelling reached up to the windows. Cf. Block (p. 558). 42:3 is another touchstone. Cf. Block (p. 554; he uses the words “gallery” and “balcony” though.)

Chapter 42–44

Legal terms in regard to the Temple

In Ezek. 40–48, we find the following legal terms in connection with the Temple:

- תִּוְרָה occurs in 43:11-12(4x); 44:5(2x),
- חֻקֵּי occurs in 43:11(2x)/18; 44:5,
- מִשְׁפָּט occurs in 42:11.

(The occurrences of תִּוְרָה in 44:24, חֻקֵּי in 44:24; 46:14, חֻק in 45:14, and מִשְׁפָּט in 44:24(2x); 45:9 are less problematic and less relevant here.)

The question is **whether the terms are used in their more typical sense for cultic and other regulations, or whether they are used in their more concrete sense, relating to the construction and architecture**. I suggest architecture is only in view with מִשְׁפָּט in 42:11. This also seems to be the majority's opinion.

- מִשְׁפָּט ('order' etc.) in 42:11 is captured by English versions with “arrangement / design / layout / plan”, which fits with Contex (1) given in KTOT: “the plan/pattern, which is the right way for something to be done or created.” So this is a case where no judicial or cultic ‘order’ is in view.
- A similar usage could then be supposed for חֻקֵּי ('statute' etc.) in 43:11(2x); 43:18; 44:5
... because חֻקֵּי can be a “limit or set amount” etc. (KTOT, Context (1a-c)), but this is less obvious.

חֻקֵּי can be used for ‘amount’ (of stones, of time, of food). It can denote a city's boundaries, as in Mic. 7:11, or natural boundaries, as the sea's boundary in Pro 8:29. But even with regard to creation, ‘boundary’ is not the only possible meaning; it can also be an ‘order’, as of moon and stars in Jer 31:35-36, and the rain in Job 28:26.

Applying these meanings to the Temple is possible. Since chapters 40–42 give us a lot of measurements, including the size of the overall Temple compound, “set amount” or “boundary” makes sense.

- **43:11** reads (NASB):
make known to them the design of the house, ... all its statutes [חֻקֵּי], and all its laws [תִּוְרָה]. And write it in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes [חֻקֵּי] and do them.

The context is about a model for the Temple, and 44:5, too, talks about looking at the future Temple. Thus, here the word חֻקֵּי could “describe the **boundaries** of the future temple” (cf. KTOT). What further speaks for חֻקֵּי as “limit / boundary” is that 43:10 contains the command to *measure*.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the legal sense is more likely. One reason is the pairing with תִּוְרָה in all three verses. While תִּוְרָה can be, for example, a parent's *practical* instruction in every-day life, it is mostly used of ‘instruction / teaching’ in *religious* matters, and that is how it is used in the neighboring verse 43:12.

Keil, with regard to חֻקֵּי, speaks of “regulations for divine worship” and with regard to תִּוְרָה of “instructions ... for sanctification of life”.

Zimmerli (p. 1085), too, does not take חֻקֵּי as a building term:

... über die bloße Erkenntnis der Baugliederung ... hinaus ... die Regeln, die nun das Leben bestimmen sollen.

Allen holds:

Second, the temple procedures that promoted and protected Yahweh's holiness, which were also revealed to the prophet (and presented in the course of what follows) would bring a challenging message.

Thus, he also prefers the cultic-legal meaning – as does Block, who observes: While little has been said so far about the temple ritual, this addition [i.e., of the legal terms. PS] recognizes that knowledge of the lay of sacred space and of the principles of access is insufficient for the maintenance of its holiness. Its sanctity is also affected by the manner in which cultic activities are performed within its borders.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The juxtaposing of the verbs *šāmar*, “to keep, guard,” and *‘āsâ*, “to do, perform,” in the last line of v. 11 is deliberate.

Kilchör assumes cultic-legal usage as well.⁹

The UBS *Handbook* comments (on 43:11):

“All its ordinances” refers to the all the rules and regulations set down for the priests and the people for the rituals of the Temple.

“All its laws” may refer to the “instructions” (NJPSV) God gave about the Temple itself or, more likely, the instructions and rules he gave for the operation of the Temple.

As to the English versions, most of them use traditional legal terms like “statute”, not terms related to the architecture. An exception is REB, saying “all the details and particulars of its elevation and plan”.

- 43:11 might include an additional מִשְׁפָּט, if reading with LXX against MT (מִשְׁפָּטֵי-צוֹרֵתֵי). The accumulation of legal terms would be further in favor of reading them as legal terms like elsewhere.
- **43:18** shows quite clearly a use of הִקְוֹת as “cultic requirements” (KTOT, Context (2a)). This, too, makes a different usage in v. 11 a bit unlikely.
- **44:5** and its context is not so much about the architecture anymore, but introduces the speech about how the Temple's rules had been neglected.

Allen translates “... use your eyes to see and your ears to hear everything I tell you about all the regulations for Yahweh's temple and all the instructions for it ...” and says:

V 5 echoes 40:4, as a parallel element of introduction; the focus on showing there changes to one on speaking here, in line with the change in theme from temple plan to temple procedure. V 5 more closely echoes 43:11, in an indication that the long introduction is drawing to a close.

Most English versions translate literally, or convey the sense that is found in GNTD:

I am going to tell you the rules and regulations for the Temple. Note carefully which persons are allowed to go in and out of the Temple, and which persons are not allowed.

Conclusion: Although Ezekiel talks much about architecture, and although in some of the above-mentioned verses meanings like “limit / boundary / plan” of the “legal terms” are possible, the cultic-legal meanings like “statute / instruction” make good sense and are supported by most commentaries and versions. An exception is מִשְׁפָּט in 42:11.

⁹ He has no discussion on this topic under the heading “2.4.2 Die Ansage der ‘Satzungen und Weisungen’” on pp. 90ff., but see his remarks on p. 223, n. 117.

Chapter 43

The idolatry in 43:7-9

These verses prophecy the LORD's dwelling among the Israelites and their true worship. What is difficult are some details regarding the former idolatry, which will cease, and some logical connections. I can only make a few remarks here.

The assumption is that there was some sort of ancestor cult going on where they built monuments (מִזְבָּחֵי in v. 7) for their dead kings, which in the extreme took on the form of idol houses – and all that on the Temple grounds.

Textual and interpretation problems

- The **vicinity of the palace to the temple** is not mentioned as a problem in the historical books. But maybe at Ezekiel's time, this became a more sensitive issue.
- As far as we know, it was **not the kings' graves themselves** that were placed on the Temple ground.
- In v. 7, Cook translates “and by rites venerating their kings when they die”, and comments:

The Hebrew term *peger*, rendered “corpses” in the NRSV, is better understood here ... as **a reference to offerings for the dead and the funeral pillars** at which they occurred.

The problem with that is that pillars alone (idol steles in the court) would not have thresholds and doors (as mentioned in v. 8). But thinking of shrines that one could enter is perhaps putting too much into the text?

Hypothesis: The neighborhood of temple and palace as such cannot be the problem, because it was like that in Solomon's time, and later (cf. Block, p. 585). Also, God just said he wants to dwell among them! **The problem is the harlotry and abomination, and that is aggravated by happening so close to where God wants to live.**

The last words of v. 7 are difficult:

by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places[?]:

As Block says, “The second name-defiling activity is less clear, because the meanings of all three words in *pigrê malkêhem bêmôtām* are debated”.

- There is a textual issue. Cook, like several others before him, makes a slight emendation and reads “when they die” instead of “at their high places / shrines”:
 - Zimmerli translates “Denksteine ihrer Könige bei ihrem Tode”
 - Allen has “with the memorials of their kings erected at their death”, commenting: 7.c. MT בְּמוֹתָם; usually “their high places,” may here mean “funeral shrines” and be short for בְּמוֹתָם “in ...” (Albright, *VTSup* 4, 247). But some MSS Theod. Tg.^{ed} represent a pointing בְּמוֹתָם “at their death,” which is generally preferred.
 - Block translates “the funerary offerings of their kings at their deaths” and notes: Vulg., Syr., and Targ. (Sperber) interpret MT *bāmôtām*, “on their high places,” viz., from *bāmâ*. LXX reads *bētōkām*, “in their midst.” Most modern translations reprint *bēmôtām*, “in their deaths,” with numerous Hebrew mss., Theodotion, and several rabbinic editions of Targ. See Gese, *Verfassungsentwurf*, p. 34.

He comments:

pēgārīm should be interpreted not as corpses themselves but as some aspect of a cult of the dead. The present usage relates to the pagan practices cited in Lev. 26:30, where *pigrê gillûlīm* seems to refer not to “the corpses/carcasses of idols,” as in the usual understanding, but to some element of the cult of the dead. Whether this involved memorial stelae to the gods erected in honor of kings, or special offerings to the deceased, akin to Akk. *pagru*-offerings, the issue is some sort of ancestor cult.

The structure of the passage

In order to show the structure of the passage more clearly, I present this table:

Table: The Division of Ezek. 43:7-9	
NASB	Remarks
<p>⁷ ... This is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever.</p>	<p>These verses do not show a chiasm, but there are frames and repetitions, which are highlighted.</p>
<p>And the house of Israel will/shall not again defile My holy name,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - neither they - nor their kings, - by their harlotry - and by the corpses of their kings when they die. 	<p>~ I will not allow them to do this anymore.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ⁸ by setting their threshold by My threshold - and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them, <p>And they have defiled My holy name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by their abominations which they have committed. <p>So I have consumed them in My anger.</p>	<p>This might just be a circumstantial clause; the “setting ... beside ...” as such is not the core problem.</p> <p>This clause either continues the preceding one (as in ESVUS16), or goes together with the following one (Allen; Block; Cook: “<u>When they placed</u> their threshold by my threshold ..., <u>they defiled</u> my holy name ...”). Zimmerli takes both this and the next clause as dependent on v. 7.</p>
<p>⁹ Now let them put away</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their harlotry - and the corpses of their kings far from Me; <p>and I will dwell among them forever.</p>	<p>put away: רחק <i>literally</i> put far away; the issue is distance.</p>

Promise or exhortation?

In vv. 7 and 9, there is the question **whether God utters a promise / prediction or an exhortation / imperative.**

The verbs אֶלֶּאֱטַמְּאוּ in v. 7 and יִרְקְּוּ in v. 9 could be read as future or as jussive, thus either:

“they will not defile” ... “they will put away”

or:

“they shall not defile” ... “they shall put away”

or with a switch from future to jussive:

“they will not defile” ... “they shall put away”.

What speaks for a prediction is that the earlier verb in v. 7 “where I will dwell” cannot be an imperative.

What could speak for the last of the three options above (the switch) is the עָתָה at the beginning of v. 9, if it is taken as pointing to a consequential action at the end of the paragraph.

In v. 7, the English versions are divided (“shall not defile” versus “will not defile”, e.g. ESVUS16 versus NASB), but all have a jussive in v. 9. Zimmerli (1081) too sees jussives in v. 7b (“shall” [German: “soll”]) and v. 9a (“may they” [German: “mögen sie”]). – But in v. 9, some have it differently: HFA says: “Doch jetzt werden sie ... Dann will ich ...” (= “But now they will ... Then will I ...”); Elberfelder also has future.

I think in v. 7, the first and second half should match each other, thus: “I *will* dwell ..., they *will* not defile ...”. And then there is little reason to do it differently in v. 9, thus: “they *will* put away ..., and I *will* dwell”. But this is open to the interpretation “they will *have* to put away ... and only then *can and will* I dwell among them”.

Chapter 44

The Punishment for the Levites in 44:9-16

This section is complicated in its logic. Several versions are incomprehensible or misleading, and their section headings of little help. Without much discussion, I offer the table below with remarks that enable a coherent reading of these verses. This is a tentative suggestion.

Three things are happening:

- Instead of uncircumcised foreigners, the Levites are given the right and duty to minister at the Temple and guard it. This is nothing new, but rectifying a bad state of affairs, and going back to how things were supposed to be anyway.
- At the same time, the Levites are punished (“bear iniquity”): they are degraded and are not allowed to share in priestly tasks. This is, as such, not new either. They were subordinate to the priests before, and could probably access the altar only from the east side, and not go beyond that. But now this distinction of the priestly and the Levitical realms is strengthened by the strict separation of the outer and the inner court, and by revoking the permission for the Levites to enter the inner court and thus come close to the altar. In Solomon’s Temple, they could at least enter the inner court.
- Furthermore, the Levites are obliged to serve the people by slaughtering their sacrifices. They did so before in times of need (2Chr. 29:34; 30:17; 35:10-15), but it was not a strict rule. The slaughtering now happens in the outer court.

The conjunction *kî ’im* in v. 10

This double conjunction is difficult. BDB p. 475 allows for כִּי וְאִם to mean:

- b. the *if* being neglected, and treated as pleonastic, so that the clause is no longer a limitation of the preceding clause but a contradiction of it : but rather, but (= a slightly strengthened *ki*),

as e.g. in Gen. 15:4, and lists our reference Ezek. 44:10 under this as well. – But a contrast does not fit with v. 9 too well – unless one sees the contrast between v. 9 and v. 11 (the Levites’ oversight at the gates). To bring that out, one would have to make v. 10 a subordinate clause to v. 11.

BDB also says:

- Sts. also, though rarely (and not certainly), *ki im* appears to have the force of *only* even without a previous neg.,

mentioning Gen. 40:14; Num 24:22; and Job 42:8.

Perhaps option (4) given in the table below could be argued for simply by saying that *’im* opens up a new scene.

For Keil, here כִּי וְאִם is like Latin *imo*, “ja selbst” (= yeah, even), as in Isa 33:21.

Further remarks

- Although there is mention of past failure, possibly, אָוֹן *’āwōn* (in vv. 10, 12b) should not be taken too strongly as “punishment”, but in a weaker sense here, as “responsibility” (as it does in some other places too), or even (renewed) “duty”[?].
- The problem in v. 9 are “foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh”. Their condemnation does not mean that foreigners are barred categorically from accessing the Temple. Compare Ezek. 47:22-23.

Development	Model Translation <i>Based on ESVUS16, adapted. Key statements marked by emphasis.</i>	Explanation
I.		
<p><i>Problem:</i> The Levites had admitted foreigners to the Temple.</p>	<p>9 Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary.</p>	<p>> This is in contrast to the wrong practice described in vv. 7-8. Some add “from now on” (GCLNR00: “Von jetzt an”), or say “not anymore” (FC97: “n’entrera plus”).</p>
<p><i>Announcement:</i> They will be punished.</p>	<p>10 As for [כִּי יָצְאוּ מִיָּמִי] the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, they shall bear their punishment:</p>	<p>> The meaning of כִּי יָצְאוּ מִיָּמִי <i>ki'im</i> is much debated.</p> <p>(1) Many versions say: “<u>But the Levites ...</u>”. That is problematic, because like the foreigners (v. 9), the Levites’ access to the sanctuary is <i>restricted</i>. Thus, there is no contrast which would validate a “But”.</p> <p>(2) Some read a restrictive relative clause: “<u>(Only) Those Levites who</u> went far ...” / “Some of the Levites ...” The background to this understanding is that some see only one of the two groups in 40:45-46 as Zadokites. That is highly problematic in the wider context.</p> <p>(3) Possibly, the special conjunction <i>ki'im</i> could be understood progressively or climactically here (“<u>All the more / Even</u> the Levites ...”). That is, like the foreigners, the Levites are banned as well. (Cf. Keil, see above.) (Cf. HFA: “sogar die Leviten” (= even the Levites); but they turn the relative clause into a main clause.)</p> <p>(4) Perhaps the most innocuous is what FC97 does: “Quant aux lévites” (= <u>As for the Levites</u>).</p> <p>> The colon points to what the punishment looks like.</p>
<p><i>Rectification:</i> The Levites will guard the Temple (again).</p>	<p>11 They shall be ministers in My sanctuary, and have oversight at the gates of the temple and minister in the temple.</p>	<p>One could add (like NIV etc.): “They may [<u>still</u>] be ministers ...”</p>

<p><i>Punishment:</i> They have to help with slaughtering.</p>	<p><u>They [הֵמָּה]</u> shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before the people, to minister to them.</p>	<p>> ‘They’ is an emphatic pronoun. > Assumed knowledge: The slaughtering is lower than priestly service, which would be the burning up of the sacrifice on the altar (but that was never the Levites’ task). > God makes them <i>serve</i> the people by helping with slaughtering (after they “volunteered” to support the people in idolatry before). – Earlier, they were not obliged to do so.</p>
<p>II.</p>		
<p><i>Problem:</i> The Levites had become idolaters.</p> <p><i>Announcement:</i> They will be punished.</p>	<p>12 <u>Because [יַעַן אֲשֶׁר]</u> they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel,</p> <p>therefore [עַל־כֵּן] I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, that <u>they shall bear their punishment:</u></p>	<p>> “<u>But</u> because ...”, as some English versions have it, is not fitting, because part of the punishment is that they have to do the slaughtering (v. 11b). The slaughtering of sacrifices is here not considered a privilege, but a new servant task. So, there is no contrast between v. 11 and v. 12. > The colon points to what the punishment looks like.</p>
<p><i>Punishment:</i> The Levites’ access to the inner court and the altar is prohibited.</p>	<p>13 <u>They shall not come near to me,</u> to serve me as priests, <u>nor come near any of my holy things</u> and the things that are most holy, <u>but they shall bear their shame</u> and the abominations that they have committed.</p>	<p>> Compare v. 15: “The <i>priests</i> shall offer me the fat and the blood”. > “... not come near as priests anymore” (so several German versions) is perhaps too much. Normal Levites never were priests. > Here, the “holy things” and “most holy things” are the furniture in the sanctuary, and/or the sacrifices. > At the Tabernacle and in Solomon’s Temple, the priests and Levites were distinguished as well. But the Levites could get close to the altar. That is not the case anymore.</p>
<p><i>Rectification:</i> The Levites are assigned servant and menial tasks (again).</p>	<p>14 And I will appoint them to guard the temple, to <u>perform all its chores</u> and <u>everything that needs to be done</u> in it.</p>	<p>> That the Levites have to do the physical labor is not new, but this double expression might stress that they do menial work. (Cf. NJPS.) > Beginning with “Yet / Nevertheless ...”, as some English versions do, is possible, but one could equally well consider inserting “I will appoint them ... [<u>again</u>].”</p>

Chapters 45 & 48

The special-purpose land (תְּרוּמָה *tərûmâ*) in 45:1-8 and 48:8-22:

Its designation, and: What's new? (Quotes by NASB)

This is on character & function of the portions of land, not on geography & measurements. For diagrams, see e.g. the UBS Handbook, pp. 1109 & 1179.

- **The Temple and the principle city do not belong to one tribe (Judah) anymore.** They are situated on national/neutral land.
- **The Prince and his descendents receive their own portion of land.** On the one hand, this is a privilege that was not granted in the same way before; on the other hand, the prince's claims are definitely limited, and the population is protected against him abusing his power.
- **The תְּרוּמָה *tərûmâ* 'contribution' includes the land for the priests (which includes the Temple compound) and the land for the Levites. The prince's land and the city lands are not part of the *tərûmâ* in its stricter sense** (see 45:1 LXX; 45:7; 48:9 LXX; 48:15; 48:18-19). However, the term *tərûmâ* is used somewhat flexibly. 48:20 sounds as if the city belongs to it. Here, one could get away with rendering "together with the property of the city" (cf. ESV, NRSV). But in 48:8, not only the prince's lands, but the whole land from west to east, i.e. from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan is included in the *tərûmâ* (cf. Keil, German ed. p. 489; Zimmerli, German ed. p. 1221).
- **The תְּרוּמָה *tərûmâ* 'contribution' is also called קֹדֶשׁ *qodes̄* 'holy (portion/area)'**. It must not be given away. 48:14 NASB:

They shall not sell or exchange any of it, or alienate this choice portion of land; for it is holy to the Lord.
- **As for the priests' portion: 45:4** says:

it shall be for the priests, ..., and it shall be a place for their houses.

It is significant that the priests' portion is not called נַחֲלָה *nah^alâ* 'inheritance' or הֻזְזָה *huzzâ* 'possession'. In 44:28, God says: "I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel—I am their possession." (NASB). In Hebrew, the above verse 45:4 just says the land "will be to/for them". Cf. **48:10-12**. They still do not properly own any land. **It is more a "right of use / life estate"** (Zimmerli, pp. 1145-7).
- **The Levites are now assigned one connected tract of land (הֻזְזָה *huzzâ* 'possession') to build their cities (45:5)**. Cf. **48:13**. By contrast, in the Pentateuch they had been given 48 cities including pasture land, situated in the other tribes' territories (Num 35:1-8 etc.).
- **The Levites live on holy ground, the priests on most holy ground.** Compare 45:1, which speaks of "a holy portion of the land", with 48:12, which says:

It shall be an allotment to them [i.e., to the priests. PS] from the allotment of the land, a most holy place.

(Cf. Allen, pp. 264-265).
- **The city possession (הֻזְזָה *huzzâ*) is for common use. 45:6** says:

It shall be for the whole house of Israel.

And **48:15** says:

The remainder, 5,000 cubits in width and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open spaces;

And 48:18-19 adds:

¹⁸ The remainder ... Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city.
¹⁹ The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it.

The Possession of the City (אַחֲזֵת הָעִיר): Measurements & Usage

The possession of the city is described in 45:6 and 48:15-19.

The expression itself occurs in 45:6, 7 (2x), 48:20, 21, 22.

According to 45:6, the אַחֲזֵת הָעִיר ‘the possession of the city’ is

25,000 cubits x 5,000 cubits

(\approx 12.5 km x 2.5 km) large.

48:16

- The city itself is a square of
4,500 cubits x 4,500 cubits
(\approx 2.25 km x 2.25 km).

48:17

- The stripes of 250 cubits (\approx 125 m) width on the four sides of the city are *pastureland*, מִגְרֵשׁ.

With its pastureland, the city takes up

5,000 cubits x 5,000 cubits

(\approx 2.5 km x 2.5 km).

48:18

- To the east and west of this square, there are two stripes which serve **for agricultural purposes** (“Its produce shall be food”). They are each
10,000 cubits x 5,000 cubits
(\approx 5 km x 2.5 km) large.

Note that the introductory verse 48:15 (where the expression אַחֲזֵת הָעִיר ‘the possession of the city’ does not occur) is imprecise in that it talks of the 25,000 x 5,000 cubits large territory as being “for dwellings and for open country / pastureland [מִגְרֵשׁ]” – without mentioning that it also comprises the remaining agricultural land. So it could sound as if the whole area served as pastureland, which is not the case. The following verses explain that.

For comparison:

The whole Temple compound measures 500 x 500 cubits (\approx 250 m x 250 m).

The Temple compound is enclosed by a green belt of 50 cubits (\approx 25 m), see 45:2.

Chapter 47

47:5-6: Did Ezekiel go swimming, and where did he return to?

On v. 3, the *Handbook* aptly comments:

And then led me through the water is literally “and he caused me to pass through the water.” It is not clear whether the guide went into the water with Ezekiel after they were 500 meters from the Temple wall, or whether he sent Ezekiel by himself. Either interpretation is possible. JB and NJB say “he then made me wade across the stream,” and GNT has “and told me to wade through the stream there” (similarly CEV).

Things become more problematic in v. 6. There are the following questions:

- Did Ezekiel swim through the river?
- If so, did the guide go into the river as well?
- Afterwards, did Ezekiel return *to* the bank of the river (with or without the guide), or did the two of them return to the Temple compound *along* the bank of the river?

The *Handbook* brings up the issues:

Then he led me back along the bank of the river: RSV includes the word **along** to remove the implication that Ezekiel was actually in the river. The Hebrew reads literally “and he caused me to go and caused me to return [to] the bank of the river” (similarly KJV/NKJV), which implies that Ezekiel, and perhaps his guide as well, were in the river and had to return to the bank. Good models for this clause are “Then he brought me back to the bank of the river” (NASB) and “Then, guiding me, he got me back to the riverbank” (CJB).

I do not find this short comment satisfactory. The questions cannot be solved with certainty, but here are some arguments for the various scenarios:

1. As to the locative in v. 6, it could be taken to mean *either*:

“He brought me back to the bank of the river.” (so most versions).¹⁰

... *or*:

“He brought me back along the bank of the river.” (only NRSV, NLT).

(Actually, there are two verbs. The Hebrew of v. 6b says וַיֹּזְכֵנִי וַיִּשְׁבְּנֵי שְׂפַת הַנָּחַל. Both verbs are in the *hiphil*, thus causative. So, literally:

“and he made me go and he made me return”.

But there is a textual issue.)

שְׂפַת הַנָּחַל ‘bank of the river’ has **no directional *He***. It could either be read as “to the bank of the river” (so most English versions, and Allen (without comment); Zimmerli and Block see an **accusative of direction** here), or as “along the bank of the river” (only NRSV, NLT, but many German versions; Keil: “by the bank of the river”; he reads the **textual variant with ‘al** and says: “... not “to the bank,” as he had never left it.”). The missing of a preposition would favor “to the bank of the river”.

2. In the preceding verse 5, Ezekiel says that the river “could not be crossed by wading” (so NASB) and that the water was deep enough to swim in. **He does, in fact, not state that he went swimming.** One rather gets the impression that he shied away from going into the water. So, we may assume that he and his guide still stand on the bank together. (By the way, it is not even clear the river *could* be

¹⁰ GCLNR00 goes so far as to say “Dann half er mir aus dem Wasser und führte mich ans Ufer” (= Then he helped me out of the water and lead me to the bank).

crossed by swimming. The *Handbook* is correct when it says: “All Ezekiel says is that the water was deep enough to swim in, not that a person could swim across it.”)

hiphil verbs are used all the way from v. 1 to v. 6. In vv. 1-2, the guide and Ezekiel are on their way together, that is, the guide accompanied Ezekiel. It is only in v. 5 that Ezekiel turns to using the 1. person. In vv. 3-4, he uses the form וַיַּעְבְּרֵנִי ‘he made me cross’ three times. This could mean both of them crossed together – which is not unlikely, given the fact that so far they walked together –, or he told Ezekiel to cross. At the fourth stage (after 4,000 cubits) the same root is not used anymore except to state that crossing is not possible. At this point the guide does not send Ezekiel into the water (for which we would expect a *hiphil* of the word for ‘swim’). Rather, he asks him that question “Have you seen?”. **It does not sound like either of them went into the water.** If neither Ezekiel nor the guide went into the water, they would not have to go back *to* the bank.

3. The first verb is הָלַךְ *hlk* ‘walk’. Walking would not happen in the water of which he just said it could not be crossed. But *hlc* can be also used for other movements: for riding, and for ships on water, and for flowing (cf. “go”). So **the verb by itself does not allow us to decide** whether Ezekiel “came” out of the water, or “walked” along the bank.

4. An argument for saying that Ezekiel did swim could be that by just looking at the river, Ezekiel could not know how deep it was. However, that could be inferred (cf. Keil).

5. Something else that speaks for only Ezekiel coming out of the water is **the 1. p. singular** in v. 7. It says “When I came back” (not: “As we were walking back”).

6. Further, as far as I can tell, the verb *šub* almost always means ‘**get back (arrive)**’, not ‘go back (be on the way back)’[?]. So this suggests that the guide took Ezekiel “to” the bank, not “along”. – The infinitive לָשׁוּבָנִי in v. 7 could be read both ways, either imagining Ezekiel stepping out of the water (“As I came back”), or walking along the river (“As I went back”).

Result: We cannot be certain, but I lean to the view that neither Ezekiel nor the guide swam, and that they went back (to the Temple) *along* the river.

In any event, “Then he led me back to the bank of the river.” (as NIV11R has it, for example) *neither* makes sense if Ezekiel did swim, nor if he did not swim!

If Ezekiel *did* swim, the angel would not lead him back, unless one thinks of the angel going into the water with Ezekiel, which seems awkward. One would have to follow NASB’s footnote and translate “he had me come back / told me to come back to the bank”.

If Ezekiel did *not* swim, he does not have to come back to the bank!

However, if both the angel and Ezekiel remained standing on the bank, and Ezekiel only observed the grown river, it is an easy continuation to say that the guide took him back along the way they had come (“along the bank”). Admittedly, we are missing a destination, like “to the gate [of the Temple compound]”.

Translation:

Either: “Then he told me to come back to the bank of the river.” But that seems to be an unusual usage of *hlc hi*. [?].

Or (preferred): “Then **he led me back along the bank of the river.**” This fits the context and other movements.

Chapter 48

48:8, 10, 15, 21, 22: Where is “in the middle”?

The phrase בְּתוֹכָהּ *bəṭōkô* ‘in its middle’ occurs a few times in ch. 48:

Ezek. 48:8, 10, 15 (once in the *Ketiv*, once in the *Qere*), 21 (once in the *Ketiv*, once in the *Qere*), and once more as בְּתוֹךְ *bəṭōk* in v. 22.

Here are the sentences (quoted from NASB):

- V. 8 The sanctuary shall be in the middle of it.
This refers to the whole special land (תְּרִימָה) ‘contribution’, in this case even including the ruler’s (= prince’s) land on both sides of it.
- V. 10 The sanctuary of the Lord shall be in its midst.
Here, “it” is only the priestly portion of the special land.
- V. 15 The city shall be in its midst.
Here, “it” is the city’s land.
- V. 21 The holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the middle of it.
“It” are the western and eastern part of the ruler’s territory.
- V. 22 in the middle of that which belongs to the prince [= ruler]
Like in v. 21, the territory is the ruler’s.

- V. 15 is not problematic. The city might well be exactly in the center of its land.
- Vv. 21-22 are not difficult either. But a literal translation can make them sound strange. NASB’s “in the middle of it” – although grammatically correct by the Hebrew, and in English referring to “the remainder” – might not be very clear, because it refers to the ruler’s land as a whole, and that was divided into two halves, thus one should talk of “them”.

Further, the preposition “between” might be a better choice than “in the middle”, because the preceding sentences talk about two *halves*, and the special area is *not surrounded* by them. Cook also uses “between”. He adds the point that “in the middle of it” could wrongly sound as if the holy land were part of the ruler’s land. Astonishingly, no English version uses “between”. But NIV11R, for instance, avoids “it”, and speaks of “them”:

Both these areas running the length of the tribal portions will belong to the prince, and the sacred portion with the temple sanctuary will be in the center of them.

- Vv. 8 and 10 are a bit more tricky. How can they be reconciled? V. 8 says the sanctuary is in the middle of the whole special land, v. 10 says it is in the middle of the priestly portion.

Remark: Scholars do not agree whether the portion of the priests is in the north, and the portion of the Levites in the middle, or vice versa (see separate notes, and the figures below).

As the UBS *Handbook* points out, *bəṭōkô* cannot mean “exactly in the center” in both v. 8 and v. 10, because even if the priests’ portion lies south of the Levites’ portion, it does not lie exactly in the center of the whole “contributed land”, because the city’s part is smaller than the priests’ and the Levites’ part.

Option A

Levites' portion		
Priests' portion with Temple ■?		
city lands	city	city lands

Option B

Priests' portion with Temple ■?		
Levites' portion		
city lands	city	city lands

If the Levites' portion is in the north, and the priests' portion in the middle, and the city's portion in the south of the special territory, then *bātôkô* in v. 8 may indeed be translated "in the center of it" (that is, exactly in the middle), but then in v. 10 it has to be "inside" it (that is, not exactly in the center), because both is not possible. It is also possible to translate both simply as "[somewhere] inside".

Or it is the other way round: If the priests' portion is in the north, and the Levites' portion in the middle, and the city's portion in the south of the special territory, then *bātôkô* in v. 8 has to be "in the middle" in the sense of "somewhere inside", not precisely in the middle, and *bātôkô* in v. 10 could indeed be exactly in the center, or also "somewhere inside".

48:9-13: The division of the special-purpose land (תְּרוּמָה *tərûmâ*) into two parts

The first words of v. 10 are essential for the understanding of these verses.

וּלְאֵלֶּהָ 'for these' and לַכֹּהֲנִים 'for the priests' do not refer to the same group! Rather, וּלְאֵלֶּהָ announces two different groups: (1.) the priests – for whose portion see the rest of v. 10, and (2.) the Levites – for whose portion see v. 13.

The *Handbook* on v. 10 only says that “**The holy portion** refers to the area in verse 9”, but does not present the two different understandings of אֵלֶּהָ ‘these’.

Table: Which part of the <i>tərûmâ</i> is referred to where?				
Vers	Measurements		Area	Remarks
	<i>in cubits</i>	<i>metric (rounded)</i>		
8	all the way from eastern to western border x 25,000 north-to-south	east-west x 12.5 km	Introduction to the whole special-purpose land including the prince's parts	
9	25,000 east-to-west x 20,000 north-to-south	12.5 km x 10 km	Introduction to the core special portion	So with LXX. MT: 10,000 cubits (5 km); cf. 45:1.
10-12	25,000 east-to-west x 10,000 north-to-south	12.5 km x 5 km	the priests' portion	In v. 12, this is called a תְּרוּמָה <i>tərûmiyyâ</i> 'small special portion' from the (whole) תְּרוּמָה <i>tərûmâ</i> 'special portion'.
13a	25,000 east-to-west x 10,000 north-to-south	12.5 km x 5 km	the Levites' portion	
13b	25,000 east-to-west x 20,000 north-to-south	12.5 km x 10 km	In concluding, both combined again	So with part of LXX. MT: 10,000 cubits (5 km).

One understanding is modelled by ESVUS16 (cf. the translations in Allen and Block):

⁹ The portion that you shall set apart for the Lord shall be 25,000 cubits in length, and 20,000 in breadth.

¹⁰ These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring 25,000 cubits on the northern side, 10,000 cubits in

breadth on the western side, 10,000 in breadth on the eastern side, and 25,000 in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the Lord in the midst of it. ¹¹ This shall be for the consecrated priests, ... ¹² And it shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites.

¹³ And alongside the territory of the priests, **the Levites** shall have an allotment 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in breadth.

The whole length shall be 25,000 cubits and the breadth 20,000.

Alternatively, follow the MT. How this reads can be seen from NASB [italics removed]:

⁹ The allotment that you shall set apart to the Lord shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width.

¹⁰ The holy allotment shall be for these, namely for the priests, toward the north twenty-five thousand cubits in length, toward the west ten thousand in width, toward the east ten thousand in width, and toward the south twenty-five thousand in length; and the sanctuary of the Lord shall be in its midst. ¹¹ It shall be for the priests who are sanctified ... ¹² It shall be an allotment to them from the allotment of the land, a most holy reserve, by the border of the Levites.

¹³ And alongside the border of the priests, the Levites shall have twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. The entire length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and the width ten thousand.

The textual problem in v. 13

MT (HOTTP rates it {C}):

the Levites shall have 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in width.

The whole length shall be 25,000 cubits and the width 10,000.

The *Handbook* does comment on the textual issue in v. 13. The second sentence is a total repetition. Further, there is the question why the text speaks of “whole length”, when there is nothing added.

↔

LXX:

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

The whole length ... 25,000 ... and the width 20,000.

NB: In Paratext (status 2022), the entry referring to HOTTP is placed wrongly at the *first* instance of “10,000” instead of at the second.

The reading of 20,000 (which would mean, the priestly and the Levitical portion are added up) is accepted in BHS, Zimmerli, Allen, and Block. The *Handbook* can accept both textual variants. In translation, if one uses 20,000, a wording with “(both) combined” is recommended.