

## Ketiv-and-Qere Questions in Ezekiel 40–44

*Study Notes, Version 2, 2023, PS*

*I am not a specialist in textual criticism. I share these findings nevertheless, because there does not seem to be much material on Ketiv and Qere available.*

My questions were these: **How much can we rely on the Qere being superior to the Ketiv?** How serious do we have to take the Qere? How helpful is it?

Taking Ezekiel 40–44 as text selection was my personal choice. The reason is not conditioned by the matter of study.

Ketiv-and-Qere questions are not discussed in HOTTP/CTAT except in a case like 40:37, where the Ketiv and the Qere together differ from another variant, or in a case like 42:16, where the Ketiv and the Qere show a highly significant difference.

Ketiv-and-Qere questions are complicated by the fact that the vowels for the Ketiv have to be reconstructed (JM § 16e, p. 65). I follow those given in Paratext's SLT.

Below, I list all Ketiv-Qere cases in Ezek. 40–44. In general, I follow this format:

I give the relevant text passage in English,

present the Ketiv and the Qere,

state what the difference is,

and comment, with referring to some of the literature, before

concluding with a “Result” regarding the value of the Qere.

I am grateful to a few colleagues who have explained certain details to me.

Remaining errors are mine.

Abbreviations: K = Ketiv

Q = Qere

*Remark:* The words for ‘jamb’ and for ‘vestibule’ occur frequently in this section of Ezekiel, and they look similar. The word for ‘jamb’ is יָלֵךְ. Independently of the Ketiv-and-Qere question, the word for ‘vestibule’ occurs in various spellings: יָלֵךְ, יָלֵךְ, and יָלֵךְ.

### 40:6

K: בְּמַעְלֹתָיו ‘on its steps’

Q: בְּמַעְלֹתָיו ‘on its steps’

The standard spelling of the noun and its suffix is as in the Q. The K lacks the Yodh. The pronunciation is the same.

(Comparing with vv. 22, 26 we may assume that there were seven steps.)

**But this kind of spelling is a special issue in Ezek. 40–48.** Allen explains:

The defectively written form in K, whereby י is written for י, is legion in chaps. 40–48. It represents an orthographical style that is not to be “corrected” (see Gese, *Verfassungsentwurf* 133; Zimmerli 333). It represents an older convention of writing: see Andersen and Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* 323–28.

Block agrees. Cf. the discussion of different views in JM § 94d, note 6, pp. 263f.

(The variant spelling without Yodh also occurs elsewhere, e.g. Exod. 35:11; 1Sam. 2:10.)

**Result:** The Q eliminates a peculiar spelling, although it is not, strictly speaking, “wrong”.

The meaning of the K and the Q is the same.

#### 40:9

K: וְאֵילָיוּ 'and its jamb walls'

Q: וְאֵילָיוּ 'and its jamb walls'

Zimmerli notes that the K's spelling is found in many other places, i.e., in vv. 21, 24, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37; it is thus not a mistake, but a conscious different spelling. Allen and Block do not comment again.

The jamb walls always come in pairs, thus plural makes the best sense.

**Result:** Cf. the remark on 40:6.

To quote one other example, such a K/Q case is found in 44:5 with the word הַיָּדָה.

Further occurrences of this phenomenon are not recorded anymore below.

#### 40:15

K: הַיָּאֲתוֹן 'the entrance' (point of entry? façade?)

Q: הַיָּאֲתוֹן 'the entrance' (point of entry? façade?)

The Q corrects the order of the letters *Yodh* and *Aleph*.

The word הַיָּאֲתוֹן might mean 'entrance'.

Allen:

K הַיָּאֲתוֹן and Q הַיָּאֲתוֹן may be errors for a *hapax legomenon* הַיָּאֲתוֹן (ה), an adjectival form from אָתָּה / אָתָּה "come" referring to the part of the gate at which one enters (cf. Cornill 440; Gese, *Verfassungsentwurf* 145). A nominal phrase "the entry of the gate" would be a more natural expression. But it may function as a counterpart to הַשַּׁעַר הַפְּנִימִי "the inner gate," which seems to refer to the inner part or western end of the (outer!) east gate (cf. Zimmerli 336). LXX ἔξωθεν "outside" is an intelligent guess or correct paraphrase suggested by the contrasting phrase that follows.

Block:

The hapax *yī'tôn* is an architectural term of unknown meaning. The context (and LXX ἔξωθεν) suggests a reference to the outer side of the east gate, perhaps the molding or the decorative frame, which represented the point of reference for the measurement of the gateway.

**Result:** Whether or not the Q actually corrects the K's spelling, the word itself remains an unknown one. That is, the Q does not solve the difficulty. But scholars agree on the general meaning.

#### 40:21 (1. K/Q)

K: וְחַמָּיו 'and its chambers'

Q: וְחַמָּיו 'and its chambers'

The same spelling issue as in 40:6. So also vv. 29, 33, 36.

#### 40:21 (2. K/Q)

As in 40:9.

#### 40:21 (3. K/Q)

K: וְאֵלָמוּ 'and its porch'

Q: וְאֵלָמוּ 'and its porches'

So also in vv. 24, 29, 31, 33, 36.

The Q corrects the K into an unmistakable plural form.

This looks analogous to the cases in 40:6; 40:9 etc. However, while there is more than one "step" (v. 6), and more than one "jamb wall" (v. 9), here the

**matter is different. There is only one “porch/vestibule” in each gatehouse!** (Cf. Zimmerli). That is to say, the Q – while attempting to correct the orthography – creates a highly unlikely meaning.

That K is correct is also suggested by the singular verb form הָיָה. (Block: “The sg. verb *hāyā* was determined by the nearest subject.”)

Independently from the suffix, there is the issue of the spelling of the word for ‘vestibule’. Block further explains:

The defective form *’lm* for *’ylm* (a variant spelling of *’wlm*; cf. vv. 29, 31, 33, 36) recurs in v. 24 (cf. vv. 29, 31, 33, 36).

**Result:** Interpreters agree that logic demands that the K is to be retained and Q is a wrong “correction”.

#### 40:22 (1.-3. K/Q)

As in 40:6.

#### 40:22 (4. K/Q)

K: וַאֲלִמּוֹ

Q: וַאֲלִמְיוֹ

As 40:21 (3. K/Q), but both K and Q come from a different spelling of the base form: וַאֲלִמּוֹ instead of the defective וַאֲלִמּוֹ.

#### 40:37 (1. K/Q)

NET08: Its jambs faced the outer court.

The MT (Q) reads “and its jambs”, as does the K (rightly understood).

By contrast, the LXX and the Vulgate read “and its vestibule”. In Hebrew, this would mean a change from וַאֲלִמּוֹ (K) or וַאֲלִמְיוֹ (Q) to וַאֲלִמּוֹ.

HOTTP gives a {C} rating to the MT.

Zimmerli, Allen, and Block all read ‘vestibule’ instead of ‘jamb’ here. Block:

MT may be defended as the *lectio difficilior*, but it makes little sense here.

The UBS *Handbook* says:

**Its vestibule faced the outer court:** See verse 31. Instead of **vestibule**, the Hebrew text has “jambs” (so KJV/NKJV, NASB, NJPSV, HOTTP). We recommend following the Septuagint and the Vulgate here, which have “vestibule/porch” (compare verses 31 and 34).

**Result:** Both the K and the Q present a problematic text.

If one accepts the MT, it could be rendered as for example in KJV54: “And the posts [= “jambs”] thereof were toward the utter court”. This is not a very natural sentence. But what it implies is that the vestibule lies in the direction of the court. If, for the sake of clarity in translation, one adapts it to something like “Its vestibule faced the outer court”, then the difference between the MT and the LXX becomes irrelevant.

#### 41:8

NASB: the foundations of the side chambers

K: מִסְדָּוֹת ‘the founded ones’[?]

Q: מוֹסְדָּוֹת ‘the foundations’

The word for ‘foundation’ is מוֹסְדָּה. The Q suggests its plural form. In the consonantal text, the difference between the K and the Q is only between a *Yodh* and a *Waw*. The Q makes better sense than the K. The vocalization of the K is not entirely certain, but it could be read as the fem. plur. constr. participle of יָסַד *pu ‘al*

‘found / establish’, used as a noun, which would translate into something like ‘the founded ones / the raised foundations [of the side chambers]’. Thus, there would be no difference in meaning to what the Q offers. (A vocalization involving the preposition *min* is less likely.)

Allen reads the Q. He also says:

LXX διάστημα “dimension” implies a misreading מדות “measurements.”

The reading of the LXX is an issue that is separate from deciding between the K and the Q.

Block translates with “foundations”, noting:

Reading *mwsdwt* with Qere in place of Kethib *mysdwt*. The measurement that follows is not “from the foundation” to some unspecified point, but the foundations themselves.

So already Zimmerli:

... da es sich hier um die Beschreibung der Fundamente und nicht um eine Messung “von den Fundamenten her”, welche dann eine entsprechende Zielangabe forderte, handelt.

**Result:** Assuming that the vocalisation of the K as a substantival participle is correct, it is a complicated construction, or it results from a fairly common mistake of writing *Yodh* instead of *Waw*. The Q replaces it with a simpler wording that renders the same meaning, or else simply provides the original spelling. It is a helpful correction.

#### 41:15

NASB: And he measured the length of the building along the front of the separate area behind it, with a gallery [literally ‘and its gallery’, PS] on each side, a hundred cubits.

(The meaning of the word translated as “gallery” might more likely be “ledge”, but this is not discussed here.)

K: אֶתִּיקָיָהּ, based on the spelling אֶתִּיק.

Q: אֶתִּיקָיָהּ, based on the normal spelling אֶתִּיק.

The spelling in the K is a mistake, or at least unusual.

Block:

The Masoretes recognized the irregularity of Kethib *w'twqyh* pointing the *taw* with a *hireq* (cf. Qere *'tyqyh*). ... Many treat *wē'attiqēhā' mippō ūmippō* as a secondary gloss. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, p. 224. [Cf. Zimmerli, PS.]

Whether read with the K or the Q, the meaning of the word remains unclear.

**Result:** The Q provides the standard spelling and is thus a helpful correction, but without difference in meaning.

#### 42:9

NASB: And below these chambers was the entrance on the east side, as one enters them from the outer courtyard.

#### 42:9 (1. K/Q)

K: וּמִתַּחַתָּהּ לְשִׁכּוֹת ‘and [was] from under it rooms’

Q: וּמִתַּחַת הַלְשִׁכּוֹת ‘and [was] from under the rooms’

Remark on the appearance in the text in BHS: the vowel mark for the *Pathah* comes without corresponding consonant. It belongs to the *He* in the Q.

The question is where the *He* goes. One difficulty is that the “it” in the first word seems to lack a reference. Another difficulty is that “these” has the article, but

“chambers/rooms” does not. Pulling the *He* to the following word solves both problems. There is no change in the number or order of consonants involved.

#### Comments

Keil, nevertheless, with arguments for its grammar, keeps the K. (“It” refers to הַיָּדִי ‘wall’ in v. 7.) He translates “Out from underneath it rose up these cells.” and explains:

Toward the bottom these cells were covered by the wall, which ran in front of them, so that ... they appeared to rise out of the wall. ... The design ... was to hide the windows of the lower row of cells ... so that, when the priests were putting on their official clothes, they might not be seen from the outside.

But Zimmerli translates:

Und zu den Türen dieser Gemächer ging man von Osten her hinein.

*English:* And to the doors of these rooms one went in from the east.

According to his comments, he prefers Q over K, but asks where “under the rooms” would be. What LXX and Syr. offer is confirmed by v. 12., cf. v. 4. So he follows LXX. This results in the meaning:

Und was die Türen dieser Gemächer anlangt – der Eingang war, wenn einer in sie hineingehen wollte, von Osten.

*English:* And concerning the doors of these rooms – the entrance was, when one wanted to enter them, from the east.

But Allen translates:

At the base of these rooms there was an entry from the east.

He comments:

Q is to be followed. LXX found a reference to the “doors” (פֶּתָחַי), as in v 12, which Zimmerli (395) prefers, but it was probably due to assimilation.

Block translates:

At the base of these chambers was an entryway from the east.

He comments:

Reading *wmṯḥt hlškwṯ* with Qere in place of Kethib *wmṯḥt lškwṯ*. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 2, p. 395) follows LXX in reading *wēpithê hallēšākôt*, “and the doors of the chambers.” Syr. *tr. ʿ d’kdr’* compares with MT *ûkēpithê hallēšākôt* in v. 12. MT is seen to be the result of miswriting two letters and dividing the words in the wrong place. But Allen (*Ezekiel* 20–48, p. 226) suggests plausibly that LXX is due to assimilation.

Block further comments on vv. 7-10a:

The function of the wall is not indicated, but its purpose seems to have been to guard the sanctity of the complex by screening the area where the priests prepared for and cleaned up after their official duties from the view of lay worshipers.

So he goes with the MT, but not with its K.

**In summary**, Keil keeps the K, Allen and Block read the Q, Zimmerli follows the LXX.

The UBS *Handbook* explains:

**Below these chambers** means “on the ground floor of the three-story building of rooms.” Allen says “At the base of these rooms” (similarly Block), and NRSV has “At the foot of these chambers” (similarly NJPSV).

**Result:** Q might correct a mistake. But the text remains difficult. Whether LXX should be followed is a separate issue.

#### 42:9 (2. K/Q)

K: הַמְבִּיא ‘the entrance’

Q: הַמְבִּיא ‘the [one] bringing’

The Q reads a *Yodh* instead of a *Waw*. Again, this is a common phenomenon (we had the reverse in 41:8).

The Q could be understood as a *hip ‘il* participle. But it is not clear what would be “brought” (unless it means “approach”).

Zimmerli, Allen, and Block all reject the Q, without further reasoning.

The UBS *Handbook* follows along:

**An entrance** refers to an opening to the walkway on the northern side of the building (see “D” in Figure 22). **On the east side** means the opening faced east. ...

A model for combining verses 9-10a is:

- At the base of the building of rooms, at the point where the [screening] wall started, was an opening through which a person could go from the outer courtyard into the rooms. This opening faced east.

**Result:** The Q does not change the meaning significantly, but it does not make the sentence simpler either.

This verse 42:9, then, is a showcase for how every instance of K/Q has to be decided on its own. Here, both Allen and Block decide the first K/Q question in favor of the Q, the second K/Q question in favor of the K.

#### 42:14

K: יִלְבְּשׁוּ ‘they will put on’

Q: וְיִלְבְּשׁוּ ‘and they will put on’

The difference is that according to the K, the verb is a *yiqtol*, but according to the Q, it is a *weqatal* form.

After the preceding verbless clause, both is possible: a *yiqtol* begins a new series, whereas a *weqatal* continues the series that began before the verbless clause with וַיִּיחֲוּ ‘they lay down’. The Targum and many manuscripts read like the Q. The same form is found in 44:19. That verse is similar, but the preceding sentence there has a *weqatal*.

The K is asyndetic. This makes the relationship between the actions (putting down the old garments and putting on the new) somewhat ambiguous. The motivation for the Q – besides mere harmonizing with 44:19 – might have been to make the logical and chronological sequence clearer by tying them together syntactically. But there is no real *need* for this, neither grammatically nor meaning-wise.

Zimmerli would add a *Waw* to the K (rather than putting a *Waw* instead of the *Yodh*), and takes the ancient versions to read the same. He translates “und sollen andere Kleider anziehen” (= “and shall put on other clothes”).

Allen translates like the K, “They are to put on other clothing”, without comment.

Block translates “Instead they shall don other garments”.

The UBS *Handbook* does not comment, the issue is probably too minor.

**Result:** There is nothing wrong with the K. The Q is a harmonization to a similar verse, and/or a clarification regarding the sequence of actions. But the K’s meaning is clear enough.

#### 42:16

K: אַמֹּת ‘[five] cubits’

Q: מֵאוֹת ‘[five] hundred’

This is another case of metathesis, the switching of two consonants – here *Aleph* and *Mem*.

Going by the context (see vv. 17-19), it is clear that the text must read 500 cubits. (There is another textual question following the K/Q question.) Nevertheless, HOTTP gives the Q only a {C} rating. Allen explains how the K may have occurred, saying that “K אַמֹּת “cubits” makes the unit explicit in a conflated text, perhaps as a correction of קנים “rods.” In MT it has displaced the necessary מאות “100.””.

The UBS *Handbook* fully deals with the question. All versions follow the Q.

**Result:** The Q corrects an obvious mistake, restoring a text that makes much better sense.

## 43:11

ESVUS16: And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out.

The whole verse is difficult to begin with. “The series of nouns in this list is irregular and overloaded.” (Block). Commentators largely agree that the verse got partly distorted. In short: after the words “and its entrances”, the words **וכל-צורתו** (“its whole design”) were an assimilating error for **וכל-תורתו** (“and all its laws”).<sup>1</sup> This triggered further “mis-corrections”. Thus, Zimmerli, Allen, Block and others only let the pair **תורתו** and **חקתיו** stand:

Zimmerli: “Weisungen und Satzungen” (= instructions and ordinances) (**חקתיו** and **תורתו**) (in this order) [cf. 44:24]

Allen: “and all the instructions [**כל-תורתו**] and regulations [**כל-חקתיו**] for it”

Block has the same pair, but does not place **כל-תורתו** in the front: “as well as all its laws [or: ordinances; **כל-חקתיו**] and instructions [**כל-תורתו**] ...” [cf. 44:5].

**This means that the K word** to which the second Q in BHS (the first in Paratext) refers **is deleted**, and the word that the third Q in BHS (the second in Paratext) refers to is either deleted as well, or considered misplaced.

The first Q in BHS (not found in L) remains.

Also, as to K/Q questions, there is a difference between BHS and Paratext. BHS shows three K/Q cases in this verse (shown with grey background in the text above), whereas Paratext shows only two. The first Q in BHS (which concerns the first occurrence of **וכל-צורתו**) is not found in *Codex Leningradensis* (L) [?] – which is an interesting point in itself to take note of. In BHS, the second Q concerns the identical phrase where it occurs the second time.

Futhermore, there is the issue that in *Leningradensis*, the two phrases that are represented in ESV above with “its whole design” are not fully identical. Regarding the second occurrence, Allen claims that “... In *BHS* צורתו is a printing error for צורתו (cf. *BHK*).”, but I am told that in *Leningradensis*, the final consonant is shorter than a typical *Waw* and similar to other *Yodhs* in the context. A *Yodh* would result in ‘and all my designs’. However, it could be that that is a mistake in L, and there should be a *Waw*, resulting in ‘and all its designs’. This is what all English versions represent.

All K/Q in this verse are further examples for the spelling issue that we encountered earlier (Allen; see on 40:6).

### 43:11 (1. K/Q)

K: **וכל-צורתו** ‘and all its designs’

Q: **וכל-צורתיו** ‘and all its designs’

### 43:11 (2. K/Q)

In BHS as above, but in *Leningradensis*, the K is **וכל-צורתי** ‘and all my designs’.

<sup>1</sup> Allen, note d.: “וכל-צורתו” “and all its shape” was an assimilating error for **וכל-תורתו** “and all its instructions”.



### 43:11 (3. K/Q)

K: וְכָל-תּוֹרָתוֹ 'and all its laws'

Q: וְכָל-תּוֹרָתָיו 'and all its laws'

In contrast to the commentaries, the English versions retain three nouns in the middle of the verse, but not all retain the second repetition of צִנְיָה (even without the Q it occurs four times in the MT of this verse), e.g. NASB: "..., all its plans, all its statutes, and all its laws. ...".

The UBS *Handbook* does not mention the K/Q question. As to the textual problem in general, it takes the MT as the basis for its comments, though it points out the problematic repetition of צִנְיָה:

- c. "Its entire design": "Design" renders the same Hebrew word as earlier in this verse, but here it is plural. Here it may refer to the carvings of the cherubim and palm trees on the walls. ...
- d. "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.
- e. "All its forms": "Forms" renders the same Hebrew word translated "design" two times earlier in this verse. This repetition is very awkward and its meaning here is quite uncertain. It may refer to some architectural or design element in the building, except that it appears between "ordinances" and "laws," which are not physical objects. Most translations omit it (so GNT).

#### Result:

43:11 The first Q in this verse is an example for how manuscripts differ in which Qeres they record.

The first Q (according to BHS) makes the usual adaptation (see on 40:6). The second and the third Q do the same. All three are part of a questionable text. They do not help to address the obvious textual problem.

### 43:15-16

The name of the upper part of the altar is referred to three times in these two verses – with noun phrases in two different spellings, both of which present a highly interesting difficulty. The second spelling occurs once in v. 15 and once in v. 16, and both come with a Q.

CBC (referring to the first word, הַהָרֵאֵל) explains:

**43:15 The top of the altar, the hearth.** This is called *hahar'el* [<sup>TH</sup>2022, <sup>ZH</sup>2215] in MT, but the versions read it as *ha'ari'el* [cf. <sup>TH</sup>738, <sup>ZH</sup>787], a term that occurs later in this verse, evidently as a reference to the same object. The meaning of both phrases is a puzzle; we would expect their respective meanings to be "the mountain of God/El" and "the lion of God/El," but one wonders at such a name for an altar hearth. A completely different etymology associates the word with burning and thus the simple meaning of "(altar) hearth" (HALOT 1:87). Albright's suggestion that this terminology reflects Akkadian ziggurat terminology, "mountain of God," should not yet be dismissed, especially if *har'el* is a gloss on *'ari'el* (Tuell 1992:48–51). Block's review of recent possible explanations shows how tentative any conclusion must be (1998:600–601).

Here, we leave aside the textual problem with the first word.

### 43:15

NASB: The altar hearth shall [Or *ariel* shall] be four cubits; and from the altar hearth shall [Or *ariel* shall] extend upward four horns.

K: וּמִהָאֵרֵאֵל '...' [?]

Q: וּמִהָאֵרֵאֵל 'and from the altar hearth'

The K has the *Yodh* after the *Aleph*, the Q puts it before it.



## Comments

Zimmerli sees a link to Isaiah 29, where Jerusalem is likened to an altar hearth.

The verse Isaiah 29:1 is difficult itself. It reads (NASB):

<sup>1</sup> Woe, Ariel, Ariel [I.e., Lion of God, or Jerusalem] the city where David once camped! <sup>2</sup> I will bring distress to Ariel, And she will be a city of grieving and mourning; And she will be like an Ariel [Ariel (i.e., Jerusalem) is a Heb word for “altar hearth” where offerings were burned] to me.

In Ezek. 43:15, Allen translates with “hearth” and states succinctly:

The form of the noun is variously represented in vv 15–16. In v 15a MT takes as “mountain of God” (הַר־אֵל). Q אַרְיֵאל in vv 15b, 16 aligns with Isa 29:1–2 and construes as “lion of God.” Both are popular etymologies. The term seems to mean “hearth” from a presumed stem אָרַח “burn” cognate with Arab. *ʿry*, whence *ʿiratum* “hearth” (BDB 72a; HALAT 82a; the ending is developed from an affixed *lamed* [cf. GKC 85s]).

Block translates:

The altar hearth<sup>19</sup> was four cubits [high]; and from the hearth four horns projected upward.

The footnote no. 19 is misplaced, it seems to me. Since it talks about the K/Q question, it must refer not to the first mention of “altar hearth”, but to the second mention “hearth”. But for the K it cites the *first* mention. It reads:

Qere reads *hʿryʿl*, “the lion of God” (cf. Isa. 29:1–2) for Kethib’s *hhrʿl*, which translates lit. “the mountain of God.” The *plene* spelling *hʿrʿyl* also occurs in the context (v. 16). While Vulg. and LXX transliterate rather than translate the word, Targ. reads *mdbhʿ*, “altar,” throughout ...

Block comments:

**15–16** The stage within these borders, where the sacrificial rites were performed, is identified by a special word, *harʿel* (v. 15) or *hāʿārīʿel* (v. 16). Ariel appears elsewhere as the personal name of two individuals in the OT (2 Sam. 23:20 = 1 Chr. 11:22; Ezra 8:16), and as a cryptic name for Jerusalem (Isa. 29:1–2, 7), but none of these occurrences sheds any light on the present usage. *ʿārīʿel* translates literally “lion of El,” but it is difficult to imagine why the top of an altar should have been so designated. A more likely explanation derives the word from a root *ʿārâ*, “to burn,” cognate to Arab. *ʿry*, from which has developed *ʿirat*, “hearth, fireplace,” in which case the final *lamed* represents an affirmative element, comparable to the *lamed* on *karmel*, “Carmel.”<sup>62</sup> This usage of the word is without parallel in the OT, but some have seen an altar hearth in the *ʿrʿl* of David, which Mesha dragged before his nation’s divine patron, Chemosh,<sup>63</sup> after his victory over Israel.

The other spelling, *harʿel*, is equally problematic. Albright proposed an etymological link between *ʿārīʿel* and Akk. *arallû* (*m*), which supposedly carried the dual sense of “netherworld” and “mountain of the gods.” But it has now been established that this word, borrowed from Sumerian, has nothing to do with a cosmic mountain.<sup>64</sup>

He concludes:

It seems best, therefore, to treat *harʿel* as an intentional theological play on an architectural designation for the flat surface of the altar on which the offerings were presented.

**Conclusion:** There is agreement that **the noun in its different forms refers to the altar hearth**. It seems quite possible that it simply means “place of burning”. “Mountain of God” might be an allusion to a figurative meaning. “Lion of God” is not a reasonable meaning in the context and is idiosyncratic.

The UBS *Handbook* explains what the “altar hearth” is, but without any discussion of the textual problems. NIVAC and TOTC do not take them up either.

Keil does not harmonize the two words in v. 15a and b. He takes the “mount of God” as the *basis* of the altar. Then he takes the Q, but according to him, it “does not mean “lion of God,” but “hearth of God” (אַרְיֵאֵל, from אָרַח, to burn), as in Isa 29:1–2” – and this is the *surface* of the altar.

None of the commentaries bothers to explain how the K could actually be read. It reads *neither* “mountain of God”, *nor* “lion of God”[!].

**Result:** Neither the word in v. 15a, nor the K nor the Q of the word in v. 15b give an easily comprehensible reading. The Q addresses a meaningless K, but it does so by changing it to something that is grammatically possible, but without making sense here (“lion of God” – unless one sees the Q as meaning “hearth”, with Keil). It does not take up the arguably more reasonable noun phrase “mountain of God” from earlier in the verse. Translators are faced with an untranslatable MT, but on whose intended meaning scholars agree.

#### 43:16

NASB: Now the altar hearth [Heb *ariel*] shall be twelve cubits long by twelve wide, square in its four sides.

K: יְהֹאֲרֵאֵל ‘...’ [?]

Q: יְהֹאֲרֵאֵל ‘and the altar hearth’

The alternative is the same as in v. 15b. See comments above.

#### 43:26

NASB: For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it [*literally*: fill its hand. PS].

K: יָדָו ‘its hand’

Q: יָדָיו ‘its hands’

The difference is between singular and plural.

Once more, the Q turns the K into an unmistakable plural, although the K itself should probably be read as plural anyway (cf. 40:6).

But even if the K is read as singular, the phrase is alright. The phrase “to fill one’s hand” in the sense of “to ordain” does not require the plural of יָד ‘hand’. See Lev. 16:32, where it says about the high priest (NASB): “who is ordained”, and where Hebrew has נִאֲשָׁר יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָדוֹ (who he [someone] fills his hand). – Cf. also the note on 40:21 (3. K/Q).

**Result:** The Q provides a precision that is not really needed.

#### 44:3

NASB: “As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the Lord.”

K: לֶאֱכֹל־לֶחֶם ‘to eat bread’

Q: לֶאֱכָל־לֶחֶם ‘to eat bread’

Both forms are infinitive construct. The K has a *Holem Waw*, the Q a *Qamets Hataf*. The next word, לֶחֶם ‘bread’, is connected with a *Maqqep* (hyphen).

Davidson explains (Analytical Lexicon, under “Tables of Paradigms”, Section VIII, § V (On the Infinitive ... of Kal), no. 18, pp. 19-20):

Hholem of the *inf. constr.* and *fut.*, being a pure vowel, is in most instances written without ך. The full form occurs most frequently in pause or in the later books ...

Before Makkeph, Hholem is changed into Kamets-hhatuph. ... Where ך stands in the text, it is cancelled in the Keri, so that it remains only in the Kheth.; e.g. ... Eze. 24.2 ...

Zimmerli, Allen, Block, and the UBS *Handbook* all do not mention this.

**Result:** The Q follows a different practice of spelling. There is no difference in meaning.

#### 44:24 (1. K/Q)

NASB: “In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge.”

K: לְשַׁפֵּט ‘to judge’ (inf. cs.)

Q: לְמִשְׁפָּט ‘for judgment’ (noun)

The K has the infinitive of שָׁפַט, the Q uses a noun, מִשְׁפָּט.

The UBS *Handbook* does not comment. Allen and Block both retain the K.

Allen says:

Heb. “stand to judge” (= K, supported by LXX Syr. Tg.; Q “for judgment” is clumsy in the context) refers to the formal posture of a judge delivering his verdict: cf. Isa 3:13 and de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* 156.

Block says:

Kethib *y’mdw lšpt*, “they shall stand to judge,” is supported by LXX, Syr., and Targ., against Qere *y’mdw lmšpt*, “they shall stand for judgment.”

**Result:** The ancients did not see the Q as an improvement worth following.

The meaning is hardly affected.

#### 44:24 (2. K/Q)

NASB: They shall judge it according to My ordinances.

K: וְשִׁפְטוּהָ ‘and they will judge it’

Q: וְשִׁפְטוּהָ ‘they will judge it’

The difference is between a *weqatal* verb form in the K, and a *yiqtol* in the Q.

The UBS *Handbook* does not bring up the issue. Allen and Block go with the Q.

Allen says:

Q is generally preferred with many MSS LXX Syr. Tg..

Block says:

LXX and Targ. rightly support Qere *yšpṭhw*, in place of Kethib *wšpṭhw*, ...

The choice between the K and the Q, and the accent earlier in the verse (which happens to sit on a word that also has a K and Q itself, see above) are related:

- Either one accepts the Q. Together with it, one also accepts the *Zaqep parvum* (the “colon” above the *Pe*) in לְמִשְׁפָּט; this is where the first clause ends. The next clause starts with בְּמִשְׁפָּטֵי, and this word can then not be followed by a *weqatal* as the K has it: וְשִׁפְטוּהָ. Thus:

In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; according to My ordinances they shall judge it.

- Or one reads with the K and rejects the accent. This results in:  
In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge according to My ordinances; and they shall judge it.

But accepting the Q and the accent here makes for a more balanced parallelism:

In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge;  
according to My ordinances they shall judge it.

**Result:** Although the overall meaning of the verse does not change, the decision on the K/Q question affects the syntax and the style in Hebrew. In translation, this might be the same in the receptor language. The Q offers the preferable alternative.

This is another example for how scholars can prefer the K in one case and the Q in another case in the same verse.

#### Conclusion

- The extant Hebrew manuscripts do not fully agree among each other in regard to the Qeres that they record.
- As to what the Qere does and how helpful that is, we have seen a range of possibilities:

- 1. The Qere is a **helpful correction**.  
E.g. 42:16 “five hundred” instead of Ketiv “five cubits”  
But the Qere can also be of only limited help.  
E.g. 42:9 “from under the rooms” instead of Ketiv: “from under it – rooms”.
  - 2. The Qere is a more or less helpful, and more or less necessary correction, **without a big difference in meaning**, especially in translation.  
E.g. 40:6 and often: full plural suffix instead of defective spelling in the Ketiv  
E.g. 42:14 “and they will put on” instead of Ketiv: “they will put on”
  - 3. The Qere might be superior to the Ketiv, but it **does not solve the bigger textual difficulty**.  
E.g. 40:37 “and its pillars/jambs” וַאִילָיוּ (Ketiv) & וַאִילָיוּ (Qere) versus “and its vestibule” וַאִלְמוֹ (< Septuagint, Vulgate).
  - 4. The Qere **introduces a problem in the text and is misleading**.  
E.g. 40:21 (3. K/Q) “and its porches” instead of Ketiv: “and its porch”.
- Every time a Ketiv-and-Qere question occurs, it has to be decided on its own. Ezekiel 40–44 is a small corpus and might not be representative, but the findings above correspond to the judgement of JM which says (§ 16e, p. 65): “Very often the Qre gives a reading preferable to that of the Ktiv, but there are cases where the Ktiv is as good as or even better than the Qre.”

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