EZEKIEL

Chapter 45

*Division of the Land*

**”‘When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the LORD a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits long and 20,000 cubits wide; the entire area will be holy.  2 Of this, a section 500 cubits square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits around it for open land.  3 In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place.  4 It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary.  5 An area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide will belong to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in. 6 ”‘You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to the whole house of Israel. 7 ”‘The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border parallel to one of the tribal portions.  8 This land will be his possession in Israel. And my princes will no longer oppress my people but will allow the house of Israel to possess the land according to their tribes. 9 ”‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, O princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD.  10 You are to use accurate scales, an accurate ephah and an accurate bath.  11 The ephah and the bath are to be the same size, the bath containing a tenth of a homer and the ephah a tenth of a homer; the homer is to be the standard measure for both.  12 The shekel is to consist of twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels equal one mina.**

The discussion of the priests and Levites as the legitimate worship officiants (44:6–31) now leads to the land allotments for the participants in that worship: Yahweh himself, the priests and Levites, and the Prince (45:1–8). After an exhortation to use proper weights and measures (45:9–12), a special contribution is proscribed for the sake of the Prince, and his supervisory role over worship is stated (45:13–17). Finally, the major worship festivals are given (45:18–25). The next chapter deals with the minor worship festivals (46:1–15) and further legislation about the Prince’s property (46:16–18) as well as the kitchens used in worship (46:19–24). (CC)

**45:1** *When you allot the land.*† Envisioned a new acquisition and redistribution of the land to assure acceptable worship of God. (CSB)

This allotment did not take place after exile, but envisioned how holy relationships should work among God’s people. (TLSB)

*present to the Lord.* The entire square area in the center of the land was to be set aside for the Lord. (CSB)

*20,000 cubits.* With the 5,000-cubit city area (v. 6) it was a perfect square. (CSB)

*entire area will be holy.* Set apart for the Lord and owned by no tribe. (CSB)

There is no unified English vocabulary for the term here applied to this strip of land, קֹדֶשׁ֙ מִן־הָאָרֶץ֒ (“a holy area of the land”). The noun קֹדֶשׁ can have the abstract meaning “holiness,” but usually it refers concretely to a “holy thing.” For it here and in 45:4 the translation uses “holy area,” and the construct phrase תְּרוּמַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ (45:6–7; 48:10, 18, 20–21) is rendered “holy contribution.” (CC)

**45:2** *section 500 cubits square.* The temple area discussed in 42:16–20. (CSB)

“Of this” (מִזֶּה֙) uses the preposition מִן in a partitive sense: the sanctuary occupies part of the holy area defined in 45:1. This verse is a short digression (interrupting the description of the priests’ portion, introduced in 45:1 and resumed in 45:3–4) about the temple that prevents any blurring of the distinction between the divine and human habitations. It is thoroughly characteristic of God’s self-revelation through Ezekiel that he stresses his holy separation even from his holy priesthood. He occupies a separate “square” (מְרֻבָּ֣ע, five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits. הַקֹּ֔דֶשׁ, literally, “the holy place,” is rendered “the sanctuary,” which normally in the OT is denoted by מִקְרָּשׁ. It will be further insulated from the surrounding area by a מִגְרָ֥שׁ of fifty cubits (about eighty-five feet or twenty-six meters) all around. מִגְרָשׁ usually describes a belt of common pasture land surrounding walled cities (e.g., Num 35:2–5). But since it is unclear how a “pasture” would function in this context, “open area” or the like is usually used. Its function is to insure the absolute holiness of the temple itself. Even the priestly dwellings cannot come too close to the holy temple square. In 42:20 Ezekiel speaks of a wall separating “the holy from the common.” How that wall and theמִגְרָ֥שׁ relate is not entirely clear, but there need be no contradiction. The dimensions given there for the temple compound agree with the numbers here: five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits. (CC)

*open land.* An unoccupied strip of land that served as a buffer between the more holy and the less holy, though the whole area was holy (see 42:20). (CSB)

מִגְרָשׁ will be used again for the “open area” around the city, the new Jerusalem, in 48:15, 17. (CC)

**45:3** *measure off a section.* The middle strip of the holy square was specifically for the temple. (CSB)

“From this measured-off area” (וּמִן־הַמִּרָּ֤ה הַזֹּאת֙) refers to the priests’ portion, which was measured off in 45:1; those dimensions will be given again in this verse. But before those measurements intrudes the verb תָּמ֔וֹד, which refers again (as in 45:2) to the portion measured off for the sanctuary, which is not named until the last clause of the verse. According to 45:3–4, this northern strip is to contain the sanctuary and also the priest’s houses, which, as 45:2 was at pains to stress, were to be kept an appropriate distance away from the temple. (CC)

**45:4** *land for the priests.* Not to own (see 44:28) but to live on. (CSB)

This verse distinguishes between the area set aside for the sanctuary and the priests from that for the Levites (45:5). Earlier God had specified that only the descendants of Zadok are to be priests; the other Levitical priests are demoted to the same secondary ministerial role as all the other Levites. Here and in 45:5 Yahweh uses the same verb, מְשָׁרְתֵי־, the Piel participle of שָׁרַת in construct, to describe both the priests and the Levites as “ministers, servants.” However, in each case the participle is in construct with a different noun. The priests are מְשָׁרְתֵ֤י הַמִּקְרָּשׁ֙, “the ministers of the sanctuary,” since they alone are authorized to offer sacrifice. The next clause reinforces their unique role. The priests are הַקְּרֵבִ֖ים לְשָׁרֵ֣ת אֶת־יְהוָ֑ה, the only personnel who may “draw near to serve Yahweh” for that purpose. (CC)

**45:5** *area … to the Levites.* A section of equal size just to the north was for the Levites to dwell on, even though it was in the holy area. The Levites, as opposed to the Zadokite priests, could hold land as a possession. (CSB)

A second strip of land, equal in size to that of the Zadokite priests, is to be set aside for the Levites. Their secondary status is indicated in several ways. First, they do not live in the strip that contains the temple. Second, they are מְשָׁרְתֵ֨י הַבַּ֧יִת, “the servants of the *temple*,” which in this context must mean the entire temple complex. Their service too is considered liturgical (Piel participle of שָׁרַת), but in a broader sense, since they do not offer sacrifice. Third, their land is called their אֲחֻזָּ֖ה, “possession.” This might seem to be a greater privilege than the priests have, since 44:28 states that the priests are to receive no land, and the strip in which the priests reside is never called their “possession” or “inheritance.” However, possessing land is inferior to the privilege of the priests, who have Yahweh himself as their נַחֲלָה, “inheritance” (CC)

**45:6** *city.* The former Jerusalem contained the temple area. The new holy city would not, but would be adjacent to the temple. (CSB)

*5,000 cubits wide.* The southernmost section of the city completed the perfectly square area. (CSB)

*it will belong to the whole house of Israel.* Not to any one tribe or person as in former days. (CSB)

The land that is, literally, “the possession of the city” (וַאֲחֻזַּ֨ת הָעִ֜יר) seems to have a utilitarian function: to provide produce for the city, to offer space for those making their annual pilgrimages to the temple, and the like. More details about this strip of land will be given in 48:15–20. Apparently merely for variation, this verse states the width before the length, which happens elsewhere only in 48:8 and Zech 2:2. (CC)

**45:7** *The prince will have the land.* A considerable portion of territory. In view of the next verse (cf. 46:18) the generous allotment should have kept the prince from greed like that of Ahab (see 1Ki 21). The prince was also responsible for sizable offerings (v. 17). (CSB)

This allocation is to the “Prince” (נָשִׂיא, 45:7–9, 16–17, 22), who receives a large special grant appropriate to his special status. Israel’s past kings never had their own tract of land. The Prince actually is given two large tracts, on the eastern and the western sides of the sacred presence and extending to the limits of the land, bounded on the east by the Jordan River and the Dead Sea and on the west by the Mediterranean. (CC)

**45:8** In contrast to the singular “Prince” in 45:7 (also 44:3), Yahweh now turns his attention to past “princes” who abused Israel. We met the same kind of phenomenon in chapter 34, where Yahweh condemned (plural) “shepherds” (34:2, 7–10) who had oppressed Israel in the past and promised the (singular) “Shepherd” (34:23–24) who would rescue God’s people and do for them what the others had not (cf. John 10). By calling them “my princes” (נְשִׂיאַי֨) and “my people” (עַמִּ֔י), Yahweh acknowledges that the past kings of Israel had been his appointed representatives, and the people had been in a saving covenant relationship with him. But the kings had abused their responsibilities as undershepherds of the covenant by oppressing the people. Ezekiel used the Hiphil of יָנָה (“to oppress”) before, in 18:12 (contrast 18:7, 16) and 22:7, 29, for social injustices among his covenant people. Here the reference is specifically to royal confiscation of private property, as Samuel had warned already in 1 Sam 8:14, and as classically illustrated by the narrative of Ahab seizing Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21). “According to their tribes” (לְשִׁבְטֵיהֶֽם, Ezek 45:8) harks back all the way to God’s original design for the tribes in the land, as outlined already in Numbers 34–35 and implemented under Joshua (Joshua 13–21). However, soon after the settlement under Joshua, various factors (including remaining pockets of Canaanites and tribal migrations) began to cause shifts in the tribal boundaries. Under Solomon (tenth century b.c.), Israel finally had control over the full extent of the promised land, but under subsequent kings, land increasingly was lost to encroaching hostile neighbors. No wonder Ezekiel abjures the title מֶלֶךְ, “king,” in favor of נָשִׂיא, “prince,” except in messianic references to the new “David”! (CC)

**45:9** *O princes of Israel!* The language of this verse is reminiscent of the preaching Ezekiel did before 586 b.c. (see 22:6). (CSB)

In highly idiomatic Hebrew, Yahweh addresses the malfeasant princes directly, in second person imperatives. As a frame around them he begins with the citation formula, “thus says the Lord Yahweh,” and ends with the signatory formula, “says the Lord Yahweh.” For the exasperated “enough for you” (רַב־לָכֶם֙), see on 44:6. (CC)

As with the need for ongoing sacrifices for sin (e.g., 45:15–25), the references to continuing violence here make plain that at least some parts of Ezekiel 40–48 are not yet that of a completely realized eschatology and are not yet the eternal state depicted in Revelation 21–22, although other parts are, and the whole vision is oriented in an eschatological direction. See further “Introduction to Ezekiel 40–48.” (CC)

The outrages that precipitated the exile may recur among the Israelites after their return. “Violence” is a standard translation for חָמָס “violence, havoc,” or resulting “destruction,” occurs only here in Ezekiel, but was apparently part of a standard idiom withחָמָס , possibly a hendiadys (“violent lawlessness”). I have followed Allen in using the picturesque “mayhem.” The Hiphil imperative הָסִ֔ירוּ means “remove.” (CC)

The positive antonyms to the terms for violence are מִשְׁפָּ֥ט וּצְדָקָ֖ה, “justice and righteousness,” a semi-synonymous pair throughout the Scripture that summarize the theological and moral aspects of the biblical faith. See the first textual note and the commentary on 18:5, a passage that is all about the doctrine of individual justification (see also 18:19, 21, 27). (CC)

הָרִ֤ימוּ גְרֻשֹֽׁתֵיכֶם֙ מֵעַ֣ל עַמִּ֔י is, literally, “lift up your expulsions from upon my people.” The Hiphil imperative הָרִ֤ימוּ probably is used as a correlative to the earlier הָסִ֔ירוּ, “remove.” I have freely added “the burden of” in an attempt to reproduce the Hebrew verbal picture in English. The noun גְּרוּשָׁה occurs in the OT only here, but its form is the same as the Qal passive participle of גָּרַשׁ, “expel,” which can refer to a divorced woman (Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num 30:9]; Ezek 44:22). Hence “expulsions” may well refer to “divorces” as well as evictions and forcibly expelling people from the covenant community of the faith. (CC)

**40:10-17** The reproofs in 45:9 are followed by a series of positive instructions, some specifically involving “the Prince” (see on 44:3; 45:7), others addressed to the people in general. Presumably the Prince will preside over the people, administer the divine mandates (as 45:16–17 emphasizes), and enforce God’s will. Ezek 45:11–12 is moral and economic in orientation, while 45:13–17 (as well as 45:18–25) is more specifically liturgical. (CC)

**45:10** *You are to use accurate scales.* Israel was not to repeat the economic injustices of the past. The OT often warns against cheating in weights and measures (see Lev 19:35–36; Dt 25:13–16; Mic 6:10–12). (CSB)

In this verse (and extending through 45:12) the concern is for accurate and reliable weights and measures. With so much of commerce and daily life depending on their use (no modern prepackaging!), we can understand the great temptation to cheat and defraud God’s people in one way or another by their misuse. The scope of the problem in ancient Israel is evident in the frequency with which this concern is mentioned in all three parts of the OT canon: the Torah, the Prophets (e.g., Micah 6:11), and the Writings (e.g., Prov 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23). The commands here have special similarity to Lev 19:36 and Deut 25:13–16 in the Torah. (CC)

**45:11** *same size.* A little more than half a bushel. (CSB)

*homer.* About six bushels. (CSB)

There is no agreement on the exact size of these standard measures. The variation in their size at different times and in different places is undoubtedly part of the reason God spends time on the issue. We cannot determine whether this verse seeks to reestablish existing standards or define new standards. Both of the cognate nouns תֹּכֶן and מַתְכֹּנֶת (with suffix, מַתְכֻּנְתּֽוֹ) might mean “measurement,” are best rendered as the “standard” according to which various measures are determined. The Niphal of their verbal root, תָּכַן, was used in 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20 in the people’s complaint that Yahweh’s ways were not “fair, right, equitable” (see the commentary on those verses). Here God decrees that the homer should be the standard for both the ephah and the bath: each is “to hold, contain” (לָשֵׂ֕את, Qal infinitive of נָשָׂא) a “tenth” (מַעֲשֵׂר and עֲשִׂירִית) of a homer. One commonly accepted figure defines a homer as the equivalent of 220 liters (about 233 quarts or 58 gallons) so the ephah and the bath would be about 22 liters (almost 6 gallons). Evidently, the ephah was a dry measure and the bath a liquid measure. (CC)

**45:12** The previous verse spoke of the weight or volume of the item to be sold, while this one speaks to the amount to be paid for it. It must be understood that all the terms refer to weights; coinage was not introduced until considerably later. The text fixes the weight of the shekel at twenty gerahs, Israel’s smallest unit of weight. The gerah is usually calculated as weighing about 0.57 grams, and then Ezekiel’s standardized shekel would weigh about 11.4 grams (0.4 ounces). The largest unit God mentions here is the mina (מָנֶה), whose total weight he computes as being 20 + 25 + 15 shekels, apparently meaning three pieces with those weights, giving us a total of 60 shekels, that is, 24 ounces (1.5 pounds) or 0.68 kilograms. The typical Israelite mina used elsewhere in the OT is usually estimated to have weighed only 50 shekels, that is, 20 ounces (1.25 pounds) or 0.57 kilograms. (CC)

*Offerings and Holy Days*

**13 ”‘This is the special gift you are to offer: a sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat and a sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley.  14 The prescribed portion of oil, measured by the bath, is a tenth of a bath from each cor (which consists of ten baths or one homer, for ten baths are equivalent to a homer).  15 Also one sheep is to be taken from every flock of two hundred from the well-watered pastures of Israel. These will be used for the grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the people, declares the Sovereign LORD.  16 All the people of the land will participate in this special gift for the use of the prince in Israel.  17 It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths—at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel. 18 ”‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In the first month on the first day you are to take a young bull without defect and purify the sanctuary.  19 The priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the upper ledge of the altar and on the gateposts of the inner court.  20 You are to do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who sins unintentionally or through ignorance; so you are to make atonement for the temple. 21 ”‘In the first month on the fourteenth day you are to observe the Passover, a feast lasting seven days, during which you shall eat bread made without yeast.  22 On that day the prince is to provide a bull as a sin offering for himself and for all the people of the land.  23 Every day during the seven days of the Feast he is to provide seven bulls and seven rams without defect as a burnt offering to the LORD, and a male goat for a sin offering.  24 He is to provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull and an ephah for each ram, along with a hin of oil for each ephah. 25 ”‘During the seven days of the Feast, which begins in the seventh month on the fifteenth day, he is to make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings and oil.**

**43:13-17** After describing the location of the new sanctuary, God now gave Ezekiel a series of ordinances for regulating the worship there. The offerings for the worship were to be provided by the people. The amount was to be based on their income – about 2% of the grain; 1% of the olive oil; ½ of % of their flocks. For a discussion of the various types of offerings see chapter 43:18-27. In the New Jerusalem the prince was to be the provider of the items of worship. The people would give him portions of their income, and he would use these offerings in providing the sacrificial animals. The drink offering was the wine poured out over the sacrifice in token of the worshiper’s gratitude to God. (PBC)

**45:13** *special gift.* Given to the prince as distinct from the gifts given to the priests (44:30). The prince is to use these gifts in part for the offerings to the Lord (see v. 16). (CSB)

Ezek 45:13, 14, and 15 give instructions about the offering of grain, olive oil, and sheep, respectively. While תְּרוּמָה (“contribution”) referred to land in 45:1, 6, 7, now in 45:13, 16 it refers to a “contribution” for the regular sacrifices, similar to its use for the choice firstfruits of the harvest (see further on 44:30). “Contribution” may be a bit misleading, because this one is not entirely voluntary. It may be compared to the expected OT tithe (Lev 27:30–32; Num 18:21–24; Deut 14:22–29). (CC)

**45:15** Finally, sheep, another major fungible in Israel’s economy, is considered. One sheep is to be taken from each flock, which is defined as consisting of two hundred sheep. The sheep are described as מִמַּשְׁקֵ֣ה, coming “from” (מִן) the מַשְׁקֶה, in form the Hiphil participle of שָׁקָה, “to water, give to drink.” In Ps 104:13 the participle refers to God as the “waterer” of the mountains. But here and in Gen 13:10, מַשְׁקֶה is used as a noun for land that is “well-watered” or “irrigated,” hence amply watered pasturage. There fat, healthy animals, as required by sacrifice, will proliferate. “The well-watered [land] of Israel” reminds us of Ezekiel’s frequent fond references to “(the) mountains of Israel” in earlier parts of the book (e.g., 36:1, 4; 37:22). (CC)

All of the five major kinds of sacrifice prescribed in the Torah (see Leviticus 1–7), including those three mentioned here (“the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the communion offerings”), were part of God’s overarching purpose (fulfilled in Christ) “to make atonement.” The two major kinds not mentioned in 45:15, the “sin” and “reparation” offerings, proportionately accented atonement and expiation even more than the others, so perhaps that is why they did not need to be mentioned here as accomplishing that purpose. (CC)

In 45:15, 17a, and 17b we have three slightly different lists of sacrifices. Their slight variations merely indicate that all of them are representative and none alone is exhaustive. The נֶסֶךְ, “libation,” often translated “drink offering,” is included in 45:17. Like the New Moon sacrifices (וּבֶחֳדָשִׁים֙, literally, “and in the months,” 45:17), the offering of libations was a regular ritual observance, but the OT gives few details about either. The major sacrifice omitted in all three lists is the אָשָׁם, the “guilt/reparation offering,” but it occurs often enough elsewhere in Ezekiel’s eschatological vision (40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20) that we should not assume that it was to be excluded here. (CC)

Of course, all of the various OT sacrifices, and all of their specific purposes and promises, are fulfilled by the perfect, all-availing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (CC)

**45:16-17** The Torah of Moses had stipulations for regular offerings for the firstborn, (e.g., Num 18:15–19), the firstfruits (e.g., Ex 23:19; Lev 23:9–22), and the tithes (e.g., Lev 27:30–32). But besides those, the people were not asked to make special contributions except for rare and important occasions, such as the building of the tabernacle in the desert (Ex 25:1–9) or the consecration of the Solomonic temple (1 Ki 8:62–66). The prescription in Ezek 45:16–17 of the special contribution to the Prince is unique and can only be compared to such other rare and important contributions. Therefore God here is not reinstituting the old covenant of Moses, but is looking forward to the new and greater covenant in Jesus Christ. Strengthening that view is the fact that God issues no commands like those in the Torah regarding provisions for the sacrifices needed for the major festivals, which will occupy the rest of the chapter (45:17–25), nor for the minor festivals in 46:1–15. (CC)

That the offering is for the Prince, who administers the sacrifices for the whole people, to make atonement for them (45:17), gives us further insight into this person (see also on 44:3; 45:7). Even though he is called by the royal term “the Prince” (see also his royal titles “David,” “Prince,” and “King” in 34:23–24; 37:24–25), he clearly has a priestly office too (as in Ezek 44:3), which adumbrates the office of Christ as Priest, and King. Since the vision given Ezekiel is still pictured in OT terms, we cannot expect it to reveal the person and work of Jesus Christ in the kind of detail provided by the NT, yet these verses certainly point in that direction. Whereas the covenant of Moses emphasized that atonement was made by the priests (e.g., Lev 4:20, 26; 5:6), here the Prince is charged with the responsibility “to make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel” (45:17), and thus credited with that accomplishment, even if still pictured as through the OT means of grace (grain and oil and sheep [45:13–15]). The NT will reveal that Jesus himself is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), and throughout eternity his redeemed people will still recognize him as “the Lamb” who, through his death and resurrection, provided vicarious satisfaction for all their sins (e.g., Rev 5:6, 12–13; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14; 22:1, 3). (CC)

In the vision shown Ezekiel, the people have a regular duty, although motivated by spontaneous love, to supply the offerings. Thus it might be compared to the collection taken up by St. Paul for the poor saints (Jewish Christians) in Jerusalem, which was to be collected each week as the church met for worship on “the first day of the week,” that is, Sunday, the day of the resurrection (1 Cor 16:1–3). Certainly it can be compared to the regular practice in all churches of receiving a collection during the worship service, accompanied by the Offertory. The NT, of course, prescribes no fixed minimum portion or tithe (a requirement of Law), nor does it place any upper limit on the percentage Christians can give. Instead, NT giving is based on the Gospel and our free and joyful response to it (2 Cor 9:7). But until the parousia of Christ arrives, there will always be those members who shirk their evangelical privilege to give according to the measure in which they have been blessed (cf. Lk 6:38), and always a concern with how the church will be able to meet its “budget,” which should be not just for the congregation’s own ministry, but also to support the wider ministry of the church body and its missionaries. (CC)

**45:16** The construct chain כֹּ֚ל הָעָ֣ם הָאָ֔רֶץ (“all the people of the land”) is one of a few examples where a noun following כֹּל has the article even though that noun (הָעָ֣ם) is in construct. Probably these examples are to be explained by the frequent occurrence of כָּל־ (כֹּל in construct) followed immediately by a noun with the article. Here the LXX simply dropped the second word, which some think crept in secondarily under the influence of עַ֣ם הָאָ֑רֶץ in 45:22; 46:3, 9. Meaning is unaffected. (CC)

The idiom הָיָה אֶל ordinarily means “belong to” someone, but here it is used in the idiomatic sense that the people are under obligation to provide the contribution. The next verse uses הָיָה עַל in a similar sense, for the Prince’s duty to provide the sacrifices for atonement. עַל can refer to something devolving upon a person as an obligation or duty. Ezekiel often uses אֶל and עַל interchangeably. (CC)

We too can speak of giving as a duty, but we must be careful that its evangelical motivation is clear. (CC)

**45:17** *drink offerings.* Usually wine is meant (see Nu 15:5; Hos 9:4); but wine is not mentioned here, though oil is (vv. 14, 24). (CSB)

For the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the communion offerings, see on 45:15. For וְעַֽל־הַנָּשִׂ֣יא יִהְיֶ֗ה, see on 45:16. Details about the Sabbath and New Moon sacrifices, administered by the Prince, will be given in 46:4–7. The emphatic pronoun with verb, הֽוּא־יַעֲשֶׂ֞ה, could mean “he himself will do/perform” (cf. KJV’s “he shall prepare”), but given the earlier references to the priests in the new temple (e.g., 40:45–46; 42:13–14, 19, 24, 27), it probably means that the Prince will simply “provide” (ESV, NASB) the offerings, which the priests then would sacrifice. עָשָׂה will have the same meaning again in 45:22–25. Nevertheless, the emphasis is clearly on the Prince himself as the one who procures atonement for the sake of the entire people, in harmony with the NT depiction of “the King of Israel” (Mt 27:42; Mk 15:32) and “the King of the Jews”—the title on his cross (Mt 27:37; Jn 19:19). (CC)

In the picture of mutual obligation, after the people have supplied the Prince with the “raw materials,” it is his obligation, in turn, to supply the sacrifices at Israel’s liturgical activities, to perform expiation. The Piel verb כִּפֵּר, “to atone,” used in 45:15, 17, 20, occurred earlier in an eschatological context of redemption (not just for Israel, but for other peoples as well) in 16:63, and also in 43:20, 26. Only here is it used with בְּעַ֥ד, “on behalf of” (ESV), which personalizes the vicarious role of the Prince. (בַּעַד will be repeated in 45:22.) In this eschatological context, Ezekiel’s use of “atone,” so closely associated in the OT with the tabernacle, temple, liturgy, and sacrifices, points toward the vicarious atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ on Calvary. For the theology of atonement, fulfilled in Christ, see above on 45:16–17, as well as the second textual note and commentary on 16:63; see also “The Measurements of the Altar and the Rites for Its Consecration (43:13–27).” (CC)

**45:18–46:24**† This entire section involves so many variations from Pentateuchal law that the rabbis spent a great deal of effort trying to reconcile them. For example, the provision in 45:18 for an annual purification of the temple does not mention the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev 16. The mediating function of a high priest is no longer necessary, since reconciliation with God has been achieved for the worshipers of the new covenant through the atoning “death of his Son” (Ro 5:10–11). (CSB)

In Ezekiel, God says nothing of about additional ceremonies on the seventh month. However, he does prescribe a “sin offering” (as it is labeled in 45:19) on the first and seventh days of the first month (45:18, 20). His specification of a bull also differs from the Torah, which usually required a male goat as a sin offering in conjunction with festivals (e.g., Num 28:15, 22; 29:5, 11, 16; see also the sin offerings provided for the dedication of the tabernacle in Num 7:16, 22, 28, etc.). The “young bull without blemish” recalls those in 43:23, 25 (for פַּר בֶּן־בָּקָר, see on 43:19). A bull was required when the sin offering was for the high priest himself (Lev 4:3; 16:3) or when the whole congregation had sinned (Lev 4:13–14). In Ezekiel, bulls will be required for Passover celebrations (45:21–25). The next verse will also speak of instructions concerning the use of the blood that differ from the uses of sacrificial blood described in the Torah. No reason is given for any of these differences from the covenant of Moses, but they indicate that God envisions a new covenant that is more than a reconstitution of the old, broken covenant. (CC)

**45:19** *priest.* High priest. (CSB)

The blood ritual prescribed here corresponds in its totality to nothing in Mosaic ritual. No specific instructions are given in the Torah for a blood ritual on New Moons and feasts (except for the annual Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16). Perhaps the blood ritual for those other occasions was the same as for sin offerings for the high priest and for the whole congregation (Leviticus 4). For those, the priest was to enter the Holy Place to sprinkle the blood before the curtain and on the incense altar, then pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the sacrificial altar outside in the courtyard (Lev 4:5–7, 16–18). (CC)

However, there is no incense altar in Ezekiel 40–48, just the great sacrificial altar in the court (43:13–27). Here God prescribes that the priest is to put blood on the doorpost(s) of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the post(s) of the gate to the inner court. Twice in 45:19, the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Old Testament has the singular מְזוּזַת, “(door)post of” (singular in construct), which could be understood as a collective. Similarly, the singular שַׁ֖עַר, “gate,” conceivably could refer to only one (probably then the east gate of the inner court). But if only one of the three gates were intended, one would expect some specification of which one, so that word too may be a collective. (CC)

**45:20** We are not told what happened in the middle of the week, but if the parallel in 43:25–27 is relevant, the decontamination rituals were repeated daily during the whole week. In any case, Ezekiel mandates it for the seventh day. (CC)

Unintentional sin still is sin, and it pollutes. Thus the entire Bible (and systematic theology) accents fallen man’s sin*fulness*. “Original sin,” inherited from Adam, is the root cause of all the specific sins people commit, as well as the ultimate reason for death, illness, and all the human evils in the world. “On account of anyone who sins inadvertently or in ignorance” translates מֵאִ֥ישׁ שֹׁגֶ֖ה וּמִפֶּ֑תִי, which twice uses the preposition מִן in a causal sense, attached to the person whose transgression requires the sacrifice. מִן, 2 f). שֹׁגֶ֖ה is the participle of שָׁגָה, used primarily of straying livestock, but already in Lev 4:13 and Num 15:22 for unintentional human sin. פֶּתִי is common in Proverbs as an adjective (often used as a noun) describing a “simple-minded, inexperienced, naïve,” or “gullible” individual. Here too it is used as a noun, a person who sins inadvertently. Both expressions here can be contrasted with sin committed בְּיָ֣ד רָמָ֗ה, “with a high hand” (Num 15:30), that is, consciously, deliberately, and impenitently. (CC)

The concluding clause וְכִפַּרְתֶּ֖ם אֶת־הַבָּֽיִת, “and so you shall make atonement for the temple” (with a perfect verb with *waw* consecutive), indicates both the conclusion of the occasion described in 45:18–20 and the expiatory purpose of the whole ritual. (CC)

**45:21** The day of Passover (פֶּסַח) and the following week of Unleavened Bread (מַצּוֹת) were so integrally connected that each Hebrew term could be used to refer to both together, as פֶּסַח is in Deut 16:1–8, and חַ֧ג הַמַּצּ֛וֹת is in Deut 16:16. That kind of metonymy may partially explain the expression here, although the plural שְׁבֻע֣וֹת, “weeks,” remains difficult. Some speculate that חָ֕ג was a later addition in order to tie the preceding “Passover” (which would include Unleavened Bread) with the following “weeks,” but there is no evidence for omitting חָ֕ג. Etymologically, חָג seems indisputably cognate with the Arabic *hajj* (“procession, pilgrimage”), which in Islam refers to a pilgrimage to Mecca—a site, of course, with no connection whatsoever to the one true and triune God and his salvation. But the OT applies חָג to the three annual festivals, Passover/Unleavened Bread, Weeks/Pentecost, and Succoth/Booths/Ingathering, during which adult male Israelites were expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Ex 23:14–17; 34:22–23; Deut 16:16). (CC)

**45:22-24** These Passover ordinances in Ezekiel are recognizably similar to the ones given through Moses, but again there are a number of variations. Here we immediately notice the prominent role of the Prince. In Exodus 12, the first Passover was described as a family observance by all Israelites in their homes. Later in the Torah, God gave the pilgrimage requirement for all adult men (Ex 23:14–17; 34:22–23; Deut 16:16). Especially after the conquest of the land and the centralization of worship in Jerusalem under David, the focus shifted to a national celebration. During the divided monarchy, 2 Ki 23:22 indicates that in periods of spiritual decay, the Passover was neglected, but the reforming kings (Hezekiah in 2 Chr 30:1–27 and Josiah in 2 Chr 35:1–19) revived it and provided the animals, as the Prince is to do here. Chapter 46 will address the Prince’s role in the liturgy in greater detail (see also on 44:3; 45:7). (CC)

In significant respects Ezekiel’s vision stops short of the NT revelation. The Prince has need to sacrifice a sin offering on his own behalf, as well as for the sin of the people (Ezek 45:22), in contrast to Jesus, the great High Priest (Heb 7:26–28). The Prince offers animal sacrifice, whereas Jesus offers his own blood (Heb 9:12). Nevertheless, the role of the Prince (rather than the people, as in the covenant of Moses) as the one who provides the sacrifices points toward the NT, where Jesus provides himself as the perfect, unblemished Lamb to be slain and raised (Jn 1:29–30; Heb 9:26; Rev 5:6, 12; 13:8). As the sinless Son of God, only his death has sufficient merit to atone for the sins of all. St. Paul boldly declares, “Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). He also applies the theology of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Christian congregation’s need to expel those who are sexually immoral and impenitent as “old leaven,” so that the church can “celebrate the festival … with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8, see 1 Cor 5:1–13). (CC)

The type and number of the Passover victims is somewhat different in Ezekiel than in the Torah. No mention is made in Ezekiel of the Passover lamb, which was killed on the Passover itself (the fourteenth day of the first month) and eaten by the people (Ex 12:1–11). In Ezekiel, a bull is to be offered as a sin offering on that day (Ezek 45:22). On each of the seven days of the festival, seven bulls and seven rams are to be offered as a burnt offering along with a male goat as a sin offering (45:23). In comparison, the Mosaic legislation required two bulls, a ram, and seven male lambs as a burnt offering on each day of Unleavened Bread as well as a male goat for a sin offering (Num 28:16–25). Hezekiah and Josiah provided vast numbers of animals for sacrifice (2 Chr 30:24; 35:7), which makes Ezekiel’s prescriptions appear modest by comparison. (CC)

As in Num 28:20–21, the animals of the burnt offering are to be accompanied by a grain offering mixed with oil (Ezek 45:24). However, in Ezekiel the amount of grain is larger and the amount of oil is specified (a “hin” is about a gallon or four liters), whereas it was not in the Torah. In sum, the burnt and grain offerings are richer and more copious in Ezekiel. (CC)

Moreover, the focus of the Passover celebration seems to have shifted. Originally the blood of the sacrificed lamb caused the angel of death to pass over and not strike down the firstborn of the Israelites, and that tenth and final plague upon the Egyptians initiated the exodus (Exodus 12). Later generations were to celebrate the Passover as God’s way of incorporating them into the original exodus redemption (e.g., Num 9:1–14; Deut 16:1–12; Josh 5:10–11). That purpose probably is presupposed in Ezekiel, but the description of the burnt and sin offerings in Ezekiel emphasizes the Passover’s sanctifying function to maintain the holiness of the people, lest their sin contaminate God’s temple. In all these respects, we can see anticipations of the Lord’s Supper, which recalls the original redemption accomplished by Christ on the cross (1 Cor 11:26); furnishes the communicant with the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:26–28); and thus sanctifies God’s people, even as they are called, both individually and corporately, to live in holiness because “Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7, in the context of 1 Cor 5:1–13). (CC)

**45:22** *sin offering.* See note on 40:39. (CSB)

**45:25** *the Feast, which begins in the seventh month.* In some respects the most important of the festivals—called the Feast of Ingathering (Ex 23:16; 34:22) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Dt 16:16). (CSB)

The last verse gives brief attention to a festival that is not named, but its precedent seems to be the autumnal feast of Succoth (“Booths”; also called Tabernacles or Ingathering). The salient feature here is the festival’s virtual identity in observance with the Passover. Five times this verse uses כְּ in commands to perform actions “according to” the preceding instructions for Passover. This was not at all the case in the Mosaic ritual for Succoth (Num 29:12–34). In the aggregate, Ezekiel requires less of burnt and grain offerings for it than did the Torah. (CC)

Of the three great feasts in Israel’s “church year” (Ex 23:14–17; 34:22–23; Deut 16:16), God in Ezekiel has specified only the first feast, which fell in the first month (Ezek 45:21–24), and the third feast, in the seventh month (45:25). Was it his intention to divide the calendar into two halves, each half beginning with one of these pilgrimage festivals? At any rate, left unmentioned are (1) the second great feast, Weeks/Pentecost, although שְׁבֻע֣וֹת, literally, “weeks,” in the prescription for Passover (45:21) seems to allude to it; (2) the Day of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:23–25; Num 29:1–6); (3) the eighth day as a closing festival for Succoth and its special sacrifices (Lev 23:36b; Num 29:35–38); and (4) the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), which is an especially surprising omission considering Ezekiel’s near obsession with atonement and cleanliness. (CC)

No one rationale explains the omission of all of these. One could assume that God saw nothing in need of change or correction in these areas. Or might we see in these omissions of foundational Torah stipulations at least the start of the transition to the NT, when the Law of Moses will be fulfilled in Christ (Mt 5:17–18; Rom 10:4) and its ceremonial aspects no longer are obligatory for Christians (see Acts 15; Col 2:16), and further still, part of the transition to the eschaton, to the new Jerusalem, where there is no temple, only God and the Lamb (Rev 21:22)? Already Jeremiah (Ezekiel’s contemporary) had prophesied that not even the ark of the covenant would be remembered or missed in the new covenant era, when all nations would be welcomed into the kingdom of God (Jer 3:16–17). (CC)

But for now in Ezekiel much of the old covenant remains, especially with the focus on the sin offerings, which reminded the OT believers of their fallen condition before God, yet which also anticipated the plenary atonement to be provided by the Lamb. We who now have the revelation of the new covenant in Christ can see clearly the fulfillment that Ezekiel was shown only from afar. Yet already to Ezekiel God promised the provision of “atonement” (45:15, 17, 20), furnishing forgiveness through the “sacramental” aspect of the OT offerings, to accomplish his standing desire that all should repent and live (18:32; 33:11). (CC)