EZEKIEL

Chapter 46

**“‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The gate of the inner court facing east is to be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day and on the day of the New Moon it is to be opened.  2 The prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the gateway and stand by the gatepost. The priests are to sacrifice his burnt offering and his fellowship offerings. He is to worship at the threshold of the gateway and then go out, but the gate will not be shut until evening.  3 On the Sabbaths and New Moons the people of the land are to worship in the presence of the LORD at the entrance to that gateway.  4 The burnt offering the prince brings to the LORD on the Sabbath day is to be six male lambs and a ram, all without defect.  5 The grain offering given with the ram is to be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs is to be as much as he pleases, along with a hin of oil for each ephah.  6 On the day of the New Moon he is to offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all without defect.  7 He is to provide as a grain offering one ephah with the bull, one ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he wants to give, along with a hin of oil with each ephah.  8 When the prince enters, he is to go in through the portico of the gateway, and he is to come out the same way. 9 ”‘When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, whoever enters by the north gate to worship is to go out the south gate; and whoever enters by the south gate is to go out the north gate. No one is to return through the gate by which he entered, but each is to go out the opposite gate.  10 The prince is to be among them, going in when they go in and going out when they go out. 11 ”‘At the festivals and the appointed feasts, the grain offering is to be an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram, and with the lambs as much as one pleases, along with a hin of oil for each ephah.  12 When the prince provides a freewill offering to the LORD—whether a burnt offering or fellowship offerings—the gate facing east is to be opened for him. He shall offer his burnt offering or his fellowship offerings as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out, the gate will be shut. 13 ”‘Every day you are to provide a year-old lamb without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD; morning by morning you shall provide it.  14 You are also to provide with it morning by morning a grain offering, consisting of a sixth of an ephah with a third of a hin of oil to moisten the flour. The presenting of this grain offering to the LORD is a lasting ordinance.  15 So the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided morning by morning for a regular burnt offering. 16 ”‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: If the prince makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his sons, it will also belong to his descendants; it is to be their property by inheritance.  17 If, however, he makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, the servant may keep it until the year of freedom; then it will revert to the prince. His inheritance belongs to his sons only; it is theirs.  18 The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their property. He is to give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people will be separated from his property.’” 19 Then the man brought me through the entrance at the side of the gate to the sacred rooms facing north, which belonged to the priests, and showed me a place at the western end.  20 He said to me, “This is the place where the priests will cook the guilt offering and the sin offering and bake the grain offering, to avoid bringing them into the outer court and consecrating the people.” 21 He then brought me to the outer court and led me around to its four corners, and I saw in each corner another court.  22 In the four corners of the outer court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty cubits wide; each of the courts in the four corners was the same size.  23 Around the inside of each of the four courts was a ledge of stone, with places for fire built all around under the ledge.  24 He said to me, “These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple will cook the sacrifices of the peo**ple.”

**46:1** *gate of the inner court.* While the east gate of the outer court was permanently closed (44:2), the east gate of the inner court could be opened on festival days. (CSB)

The division between chapter 45 and this one rests only on the citation formula, “thus says the Lord Yahweh,” which signals a slight change in subject matter. Major festivals, including the Passover, were covered in 45:18–25. Now the daily and monthly minor festivals are discussed in 46:1–15. The role of the “Prince” (נָשִׂיא) as the supervisor of worship and provider of sacrifices, as described in 45:16–17, is assumed, and sometimes asserted, throughout this chapter. For the Prince’s identity and role, see especially on 44:3; 45:7–9, 16–17. He is prominent enough that critics have developed considerable literature attempting to isolate a separate “prince stratum” in chapters 44–48. While they might claim to detect evidence for the compositional history, there are no grounds for positing any editor or arranger besides the author, Ezekiel himself. (CC)

Like Is 66:23, Ezekiel here still describes worship in the new era in terms of the OT rites of “Sabbath” and “New Moon” that were familiar to him and his audience. However, Col 2:16 classifies both of these liturgical occasions as adiaphora. Like regulations about food and drink, the Christian is free to observe them, or not. They were but a shadow of the coming things, and what is vital is “the body of Christ” (Col 2:17). In Baptism, “the circumcision of Christ,” Christians have been buried and raised to new life by faith (Col 2:11–14). (CC)

**46:2** *through the portico of the gateway.* The portico of the gate of the inner court faced the outer court. (CSB)

*stand by the gatepost.* Which had been ritually cleansed (45:19). From there the prince could observe the sacrifices being performed on the great altar in the inner court, but he was not allowed into the inner court itself. (CSB)

Before details on the Sabbath and New Moon observances in 46:4–7, two verses regulate the appropriate conduct of the Prince (46:2) and of the other worshipers (46:3), who are carefully distinguished from each other. (CC)

Chapters 40–48 say nothing about a high priest, but the unique privilege granted to the Prince in 44:3, although different from anything in the Torah, grants to him a leading priestly role. The same can be said about the Prince in Ezekiel 46. In this chapter too, the provisions about the Prince are different from any Torah stipulations. Nevertheless, like a high priest, the Prince has a supervisory role over the sacrifices and represents the people before Yahweh. His role may be compared to the unique High Priestly office of Jesus Christ as expounded in Hebrews 2–10 (cf. also John 17). (CC)

The Prince is obligated to be present in the gateway when the priests “offer” (as עָשָׂה, “do,” is translated here and in 46:15) the offerings that the Prince is to provide (as stipulated in 45:17) using what the people have supplied to him (45:13–16). The Prince is to enter from the outer court through the vestibule (אוּלָ֨ם). He is then to position himself by a “gatepost” of the gateway. In chapter 40, אַיִל was used for “gatepost, doorpost,” but the word here, מְזוּזָה, was used of doorposts in the temple in 41:21; 43:8; and 45:19, and of gateposts of the inner court in 45:19. The gateposts (designated by אַיִל) mentioned in the description of the inner gates in 40:28–37 were the gateposts of the vestibule (at the entrance of each inner gateway). Apparently each inner gateway also had a pair of gateposts by the exit of the gateway into the inner court, one of which is denoted here in 46:2 by מְזוּזָה. (The LXX has the plural τὰ πρόθυρα, “the gateposts.”) At the gatepost near the exit of the gateway into the inner court, the sacrificial leader could supervise and observe all that happened in the inner court during the sacrifice. That the Prince remains here also apparently means that he would not venture into the sacred space, which it seems only the priests would enter. (CC)

The Prince is not to be merely an idle spectator, but to lead the worship—and not only “spiritually,” but through the physical act of prostration. This posture has survived in Christianity only on certain special occasions in Orthodoxy and Catholicism, for example, when a Catholic priest is ordained. (CC)

The Prince is to prostrate himself on the “threshold,” denoted by מִפְתָּן (used again in 47:1), a synonym of the term for “threshold” used earlier, סַף (40:6–7, 41:16; 43:8). The verse does not specify how long the Prince should remain prostrated, but when he is done worshiping, he is to leave; 46:8 specifies that he is to go out via the same route by which he had entered. (CC)

**46:3** *at the entrance to that gateway.* But in the outer court. (CSB)

The “people of the land” does not mean merely “inhabitants” (let alone “landowners, aristocracy” as sometimes elsewhere in the Bible), but in Ezekiel it implies the rest of the worshiping community besides the Prince and priests. “That gate” can only be the previously mentioned east gate of the inner court, but the people are allowed to proceed only as far as its entrance, so they remain in the outer court. It is not clear whether any of the sacred ceremonies are visible to them from that point. It seems unlikely that they could view the priests sacrificing in the inner court, but they may be able to observe the Prince prostrating himself. (CC)

Their worship will be “before Yahweh” (לִפְנֵ֖י יְהוָֽה, at the end of the Hebrew verse, but moved earlier in the translation). The phrase implies that any activity within the temple complex was considered worship in God’s presence. That phrase will be used of the people again in 46:9 and was applied to the Prince’s meal “before Yahweh” in 44:3. Thus the more distant people are specifically linked with the Prince’s worship and the offering of the sacrifice he provides. (CC)

The correspondence here (strengthened in 46:10) between the worship of the people and the simultaneous worship of the Prince shows that he has a vicarious role. He approaches God more intimately than any of the people can and represents them “before Yahweh” (44:3), so that, by virtue of his mediation, the people too can worship “before Yahweh” (46:3, 9). Even though the correspondence is horizontal (all taking place in the same temple complex), it might be compared to the vertical correspondence in NT worship. In Revelation 4–5, the saints in heaven (represented by the twenty-four elders, twelve for the OT and twelve for the NT) worship God and the Lamb who had been slain. The worship of the (persecuted, suffering) saints still on earth is simultaneous with and at least partially corresponds to the heavenly worship. This is expressed in the traditional words of the Preface to Holy Communion, when the pastor leading the congregation’s worship on earth prays, “Therefore with angels and archangels *and with all the company of heaven* we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you …” (CC)

**46:4-7** These verses detour momentarily from the activities in the outer court (outside the inner east gate) to specify what sacrifices are required on the Sabbath and the day of the New Moon. The purpose is to explain what offerings the Prince, as patron of the liturgy, is to make available (cf. 45:17). (CC)

**46:4** *six male lambs and a ram.*† Another example of a difference from Pentateuchal laws (see note on 45:18–46:24). Nu 28:9 calls for two lambs and no ram on the Sabbath. The ceremonial laws of the old covenant, “a shadow of the things that were to come,” are no longer to be observed, since “the reality … is found in Christ” (Col 2:16–17). (CSB)

Compared to sacrifices offered during the pilgrimage festivals (45:21–25), Ezekiel’s requirements for the Sabbath sacrifices are relatively modest, but compared to the Torah provision for the Sabbath (Num 28:9), they are considerably greater. (CC)

**46:5** *ephah.* Contrast Nu 28:9. (CSB)

The phrase מַתַּ֣ת יָד֑וֹ, literally, “a gift of his hand,” describes the amount of the grain offering required with the lambs. In the OT, this exact phrase appears only here and in 46:11. There are two basic interpretations. It could require the maximum amount, “as much as he can afford” (see KJV, RSV) Or it could leave the amount undetermined, to be decided by the offerer: “as much as he wishes/pleases” (see NKJV, NRSV, NIV) It appears to be synonymous with the phrase כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר תַּשִּׂ֖יג יָד֑וֹ in 46:7 (which see). The Torah has the similar phrase כְּמַתְּנַ֣ת יָד֑וֹ, literally, “according to the gift [the synonymous noun מַתָּנָה] of his hand,” in Deut 16:17. There it describes offerings that all male Israelites are to bring during the three annual pilgrimage feasts (Deut 16:16), and the phrase is parallel to “according to the blessing of Yahweh [כְּבִרְכַּ֛ת יְהוָ֥ה], your God, which he has given to you.” (CC)

I have opted for the first alternative because voluntariness does not seem to be prominent in Ezekiel’s prescriptions. “As much as he can afford” would mean that the Prince would base this offering on the amounts of the contributions he had received from the people (45:13–16), and perhaps also on the productivity of his own two tracts of land (45:7–8). But the point can be argued either way, and there are no grounds for any definitive decision. In any case, while this amount is left indeterminate, the amount of oil required repeats verbatim the specification of 45:24. (CC)

**46:6** *day of the New Moon.* The first day of the month. Contrast the requirement of Nu 28:11. (CSB)

On the whole, Ezekiel’s prescriptions for the New Moon observance are significantly reduced from those commanded in the Torah (Num 28:11–15). Throughout the Bible, Sabbaths and New Moons are frequently paired. Through the prophets, God denounced Israel’s performance of them only when they became perfunctory, without faith (e.g., Is 1:13; Amos 8:5), as any worship ritual can become. Hence one can hardly draw any conclusions from Ezekiel’s reduced requirements. (CC)

For the phrase פַּ֥ר בֶּן־בָּקָ֖ר, see on 43:19. It is followed by תְּמִימִ֑ם, the plural of תָּמִים, not in concord with the singular פַּ֥ר, which it modifies. Either the final *mem* is dittographical or the word is assimilated to the plural used appropriately at the end of the verse. (CC)

**46:7** *as a grain offering one ephah.* Contrast Nu 28:12. (CSB)

כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר תַּשִּׂ֖יג יָד֑וֹ, literally, “as much as his hand can overtake” (Hiphil imperfect of נָשַׂג), probably means “as much as he can afford” and is synonymous with the phrase מַתַּ֣ת יָד֑וֹ in 46:5, 11. Clauses with יָדוֹ as the subject of the Hiphil of נָשַׂג are used several times in the Pentateuch (e.g., Lev 14:22, 30; 25:26). In Lev 25:47, the idiom תַּשִּׂיג יָד means “become wealthy.” (CC)

**46:8** Attention now returns to the Prince. This verse reiterates the notice already given in 46:2 that he must enter the inner gateway via the vestibule, and it clarifies that he is required to leave via the same way he entered. The infinitive with בְּ as a temporal clause (וּבְב֖וֹא, “when he enters”) adds precision to “the Prince is to enter [וּבָ֣א]” in 46:2 to preclude the possible misunderstanding that when he leaves the gateway he has permission to enter the inner court and exit through another gate. Instead, he must leave the gatepost, turn around, and return to the outer court through the vestibule, the same way as he had entered. The same regulation was given in 44:3 for the Prince entering and leaving the east gate of the outer court. (The vestibules of the corresponding inner and outer gates faced each other, both opening into the outer court. (CC)

**46:9** *whoever enters by the north gate.* These appear to be crowd control measures. If so, the new era would see masses of people thronging the sanctuary on the festival day. (CSB)

Other regulations are needed when faithful laymen come “before Yahweh” to “prostrate” themselves (the same verb used for the Prince in 46:2 and the people in 46:3) in worship. The occasions spoken of are called מוֹעֲדִים, “appointed feasts.” This broad term would cover all times and days holy to Yahweh, including Sabbaths and New Moons. It can be distinguished from the more specific חָג, “feast, festival” used for the major pilgrimage festivals in 45:21, 23, 25. The two words appear together in 46:11 to encompass all occasions when huge crowds would “ascend the hill of Yahweh” (Ps 24:3). (CC)

The main concern of the verse is that worshipers exit through the opposite gate from the one they entered. Pragmatically, this would aid crowd control by ensuring that everyone kept moving forward. It may also indicate that turning around within the holy space was inappropriate or even offensive to Yahweh. In an earlier vision prior to the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel had seen apostate worshipers in the inner court of the temple who had turned their “backsides” to Yahweh (8:16). The regulation here would prevent that orientation. (CC)

**46:10** his regulation further confirms the Prince’s solidarity with the people, even though he is elevated above them in other respects, and he alone carries out his unique priestly roles (44:3; 45:17; 46:2). Here he is more closely associated with the people than are the priests, since the priests would not need to synchronize their movements with the people. (The priests would enter the inner court to sacrifice the offerings provided by the Prince.) (CC)

What is said about the Prince and the people here can be applied to Jesus Christ and the Christian church. It also has application to the pastor as he leads the congregation in worship. Especially on festival days, traditional Christian worship can begin with a processional into the nave with a cross, representing the presence of Christ, which is then placed in the chancel. Usually an Introit or entrance hymn is sung near the start of the service. During the service, Christ comes to his people through his Word and Sacraments and bestows his gifts of forgiveness, life, and everlasting salvation. At the conclusion of the service, the cross is carried out during a recessional. Christ goes with his people as they leave and carry out their vocations during the week. He continues to abide with his people, who have been edified by God’s Word and fed in the Holy Supper. In that way, Christ can be said to enter and leave the church with his people. (CC)

**46:11** What is said about the grain offering for the Sabbaths and the New Moons in 46:5, 7 is applied in this verse to all sacred occasions. The worship of Yahweh is to be orderly, not chaotic and ad hoc. (CC)

**46:12** *freewill offering.* Above and beyond what was required of the prince. (CSB)

As the name indicates, a “freewill/voluntary offering” (נְדָבָה) was entirely spontaneous. In the Torah, it is often mentioned together with נֵדֶר, a votive offering in fulfillment of a vow, which could also have been entirely spontaneous, although certain self-imposed obligations would be entailed in the nature of the case. See the regulations for such offerings in Lev 22:18–25 and Num 15:1–12. God here apparently limits “freewill” offerings to burnt offerings or communion offerings, the latter of which involved communal meals. In the Torah also, a freewill offering could be a burnt offering (Lev 22:18; Num 15:3) or a communion offering (Lev 22:21). (CC)

“Just as he does on the day of the Sabbath” seems to imply that the rules given in 46:1–2 for Sabbath offerings would also apply to these voluntary offerings, which could be made on any day of the week. This means that on these occasions the east gate, normally “closed on the six days of work” (46:1), would be opened for the Prince so that he could observe the priests (as in 46:2), who would actually perform the sacrifice on the altar. The only difference is that for a freewill offering, the gate is to be closed after the ceremony is over and the Prince leaves, not left open until evening, as on the Sabbath and the New Moon (46:2). (CC)

Literally, וּפָ֣תַֽח ל֗וֹ could mean that the Prince would “open for himself” the gate. However, virtually all commentators and translations take that clause and the later verb וְסָגַ֥ר, “and close,” as impersonal. This would mean that “someone should open for him” and then “close” the gate. Impersonal verbs can be rendered as passives in idiomatic English, as do many translations, for example, the gate “shall be opened for him” and “shall be shut” (ESV) (CC)

**46:13-15** The shift to second singular verbs in 46:13–14 is startling, before 46:15 reverts to the third person plural, referring to the priests. (A similar shift to the second person singular was in 45:18, 20.) Hence the instructions about the sacrifices in 46:13–14 sound as though Yahweh is speaking either to the Prince, who provides the sacrifices from what the people supply to him (45:13–17), or to Ezekiel, who perhaps is merely to convey the instructions to the people. The LXX and Vulgate harmonize with the preceding verses by continuing to use third person singular verbs, as do RSV and NRSV. Many critics naturally take the change in person as a sign of an editorial addition. However, the topics in 46:1–15 follow the precedent of Num 28:1–15, which discusses the daily (morning and evening) sacrifices in connection with Sabbath and New Moon sacrifices. (CC)

The Torah required a daily burnt offering and an accompanying grain offering and libation that were to be offered twice daily, in the morning and at twilight (Ex 29:38–40; Num 28:1–8). However, in each of the three verses here (Ezek 46:13–15), God specifies that the daily burnt offering and grain offering are to be offered בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר, literally, “in the morning, in the morning,” simply translated as “every morning.” Does this mean that he wishes to drop the evening sacrifice? (CC)

Two OT passages indicate that at times the burnt offering alone (עוֹלָה) was offered in the morning and the grain offering alone (מִנְחָה) in the evening rite. But one of these passages has to do with the apostate Northern Kingdom (1 Ki 18:29, 36) and the other (2 Ki 16:15) with Ahaz, a king notoriously unfaithful to Yahweh and his Torah, so it is not surprising that both passages depart from the Mosaic regulations. In any case, God here omits the requirement of a libation of a quarter of a hin of wine, which was required for the identical morning and evening sacrifices according to Ex 29:40 (see also Num 28:7–8). (CC)

It is possible that God assumed that Ezekiel, a priest (1:3), and his Israelite audience would be so familiar with the Torah requirement for the morning and evening sacrifices that what he says of the morning rite would have its counterpart every evening. On the other hand, by their exile they had been cut off from the temple and its rites, and this was the fourteenth year (40:1) since the temple itself had been destroyed, so the old order was gone. Throughout Ezekiel 40–48, various Torah rites and commands are abbreviated, altered, or abandoned, as we have noted at many points. So it is possible that here God does limit the daily offering to the morning. There is widespread opinion in the commentaries that this is the meaning of the text. If so, it would be a step toward the “once for all” sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. His singular sacrifice fulfilled all the OT types and at the same time rendered them obsolete. (CC)

**46:13** *morning by morning.*† Contrast Nu 28:3–8, where the daily sacrifice consists of one lamb in the morning and one in the evening (see 1Ch 16:40; 2Ch 13:11; 31:3). But see 2Ki 16:15, where a burnt offering was offered in the mornings, a grain offering in the evenings. (CSB)

**46:14** *sixth of an ephah … third of a hin.* Contrast Nu 28:5. (CSB)

In contrast to the unspecified amounts for the grain offering that was to accompany the sacrificial lambs at periodic feasts (46:5, 7, 11), the amount of the grain offering that was to accompany the lamb for the daily offering is fixed. לָרֹ֣ס (“to moisten”) is the Qal infinitive of רָסַס, a hapax, although there is no doubt as to its meaning. The plural of the cognate noun רָסִיס occurs in Song 5:2 meaning “drops of dew.” Oil is used to moisten the סֹלֶת, “fine flour,” that is, the flour ground from the heart of the wheat kernel, essentially what we know as Cream of Wheat. The Hebrew word is frequently used elsewhere. (CC)

The final phrase, חֻקּ֥וֹת עוֹלָ֖ם תָּמִֽיד, is difficult. The plural חֻקּ֥וֹת, “statutes,” is commonly emended with the versions to the singular, חֻקַּת, definitely an easier reading, but the plural may refer to the burnt offering (the lamb) and the grain offering separately. The phrase חֻקּ֥וֹת עוֹלָ֖ם occurs only here in the OT, but the corresponding singular חֻקַּת עוֹלָם, “a lasting statute,” is common in the Pentateuch for a variety of rites and commands (e.g., Ex 12:14, 17; Lev 3:17; 7:36; 10:9; 16:29, 31, 34). In these contexts, עוֹלָם does not mean “forever,” but “lasting” only as long as the old covenant persists, until the fulfillment in Christ has arrived. With the death and resurrection of Christ, “the ends of the ages” (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων, 1 Cor 10:11) has already begun. (CC)

**46:15** The third person plural verb, “they will offer” (as עָשָׂה was also translated in 46:2), implies that the priests were the ones to carry out the daily sacrifices. (CC)

The construct phrase עוֹלַ֖ת תָּמִֽיד (sometimes with the article on the second word), “daily burnt offering,” can be used in the Torah to refer to the entire daily (morning and evening) burnt offering, both the lamb and its prescribed grain offering (Ex 29:42; Num 28:6, 10, 15, 24; cf. Num 28:3, 23). Other passages with that construct phrase add “its grain offering” (e.g., Num 28:31; 29:6, 11) to clarify that both are included. Ezekiel’s contemporary in exile, Daniel, uses הַתָּמִיד, “the *tamid*,” by itself for the daily burnt and grain offerings, which were offered at the temple every morning and evening (Dan 8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11). It should be stressed that תָּמִיד does not mean “perpetual,” but “regular, quotidian, daily.” In biblical scholarship, the daily offering required in the Torah is often referred to by this term in transliteration: *tamid*. (CC)

This verse concludes Ezekiel’s vision of the new order of worship. Two marginally related supplements conclude chapter 46 before totally different subjects are considered in the book’s final two chapters: 46:16–18 concerns the Prince’s rights for his landed property (cf. 45:7–9); and 46:19–24 offers a brief description of the sacrificial kitchens. (CC)

**46:16-18** The overriding concern of 46:16–18 is the maintenance of the divine division of the land to the Prince and among the tribes. Provision is made for the Prince to bequeath his property to his sons, but if his generosity causes him to grant land to non-familial servants, in the Jubilee, the land will revert to the Prince’s sons. Similarly, each man from all the tribes is to retain his property and bequeath it to his heirs. This will prevent the tendency toward social stratification that plagues all societies, as “the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer.” (CC)

Modern, secular societies view property as something to be earned by labor or acquired by shrewd business tactics. In contrast, the underlying assumption throughout the OT is that Yahweh is the real landowner: “mine is the land” (Lev 25:23). By his grace alone, he has granted to his people the privilege of living upon the promised land as his “sojourners and tenants” (Lev 25:23; cf. Mt 21:33–45) and passing it on to their heirs. He granted the land to the tribes in an equitable way (Joshua 13–21), which must not be distorted by human legalism or power plays. Of course, the people’s infidelity would cause them to forfeit their share in the land, as happened with all Israel at the exile, and again in a.d. 70 after the Jewish people as a whole rejected the Landowner’s Son and Heir (Mt 21:33–45). (CC)

In God’s eschatological scheme shown to Ezekiel, the Prince’s portion had been described in 45:7–8 and will be again in 48:21–22. The stipulations in 46:16–18 about the Prince gifting his inheritance presuppose that he would give portions of that land described in those two other passages. The allotments of the rest of the tribes will occupy 47:13–23 and most of chapter 48. (CC)

**46:16** *his descendants.* Ezekiel pictured a hereditary rulership. (CSB)

In casuistic form, this verse describes the first of two ways in which the Prince may dispose of some or all of his allotment, if he wishes, and the consequences. The first possibility is that the Prince gives some of his land to one of his sons. In that case, the son passes it on to his sons. (CC)

**46:17** *until the year of freedom.* The Year of Jubilee—held, theoretically, every 50th year (see Lev 25:8–15, especially v. 13). (CSB)

This verse describes the second of two ways in which the Prince might bequeath his property. The protasis begins with four words that were also in 46:16, וְכִֽי־יִתֵּ֨ן מַתָּנָ֝ה מִנַּחֲלָת֗וֹ, “if he gives a gift from his inheritance.” Unlike in 46:16, here the preposition *mem*, in a partitive sense (“some of”), is on מִנַּחֲלָת֗וֹ. If the Prince deeds some of his inheritance “to one of his servants” (לְאַחַד֙ מֵֽעֲבָדָ֔יו, with the prepositionמִן in a partitive sense), that is, to someone outside of his family, that transfer of title can be only temporary. (CC)

As noted on 45:7–9, the Torah of Moses (and its fulfillment in the allotment of land under Joshua) had no provision for a king of Israel to receive any special land grant other than what he possessed as a member of his tribe. Therefore in Ezekiel, the provision of two large tracts of land for the Prince (45:7–8) is a radically different circumstance. But perhaps to relate this provision to the Mosaic Law, Ezekiel here uses the Early Biblical Hebrew pattern for the rest of the conditional sentence. In contrast to the apodosis in 46:16, which was asyndetic with an imperfect, this apodosis (וְהָ֤יְתָה לּוֹ֨ עַד־שְׁנַ֣ת הַרְּר֔וֹר) is syndetic (joined with the *waw* on וְהָ֤יְתָה) and has that perfect verb with *waw* consecutive. The land will belong to the servant (לּוֹ֨, “his,” a *lamed* of possession) only “until” (עַד) “the year of liberation” (שְׁנַ֣ת הַרְּר֔וֹר). (CC)

An exactly equivalent English noun for רְּרוֹר is hard to find, but approximating it are “liberation,” “liberty,” “freedom,” “emancipation,” and “release,” but in a theological sense, not simply a political or economic one. The word cannot be fully understood until one refers to Lev 25:10 and its context. (From that verse, “proclaim liberty throughout the land” is quoted on the American Liberty Bell, but one may question whether the verse should be applied to the United States, as if this country were the new Israel.) The verse refers to “the Year of Jubilee,” as the Targum (שַׁתָא דְיוֹבֵילָא), freely but correctly renders the phrase here. According to Leviticus 25, every fiftieth year all Israelites indentured because of debts had to be manumitted, and all ancestral property had to be returned to the family of its original owner. Neither provision would have been very popular with the current owners, and hence it seems probable that both were ignored during much of Israel’s history, especially in times of unfaithfulness. Jer 34:8–11 records a temporary manumission of Israelite slaves, but the OT never reports any return of ancestral property at the Jubilee. However, Israel’s lack of obedience is no reason to doubt that the law was part of the Torah given to Moses. (CC)

LXX Lev 25:10 translates רְּרוֹר as ἄφεσις, which in the NT refers to the “forgiveness” of sins and the consequent “liberation” from bondage to sin, death, and the devil, with the promise of the resurrection (cf. Ezek 37:1–14) to life in the eternal state, which is at least partially envisioned in Ezekiel 40–48, and envisioned more fully in Revelation 21–22. Jesus cites Is 61:1, which includes רְּרוֹר and alludes to Lev 25:10, in his inaugural sermon in Nazareth, where he announces that the Father “has sent me to proclaim liberation [ἄφεσις] to the captives” (Lk 4:18). God bestows the “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) of sins through the Lord’s Supper with Christ’s shed blood (Mt 26:28), through Christian preaching (Lk 24:47), and through Christian Baptism (Acts 2:38). Compare also the bestowal of “forgiveness” through the baptismal ministry of Jesus’ forerunner, John (Mk 1:4; Lk 1:77). Everyone who believes in Jesus receives “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) simply through faith. (CC)

**46:18** *The prince must not take.* See note on 45:7. (CSB)

This verse gives a reason for the inheritance law at this point. It suggests that “the relationship between family and property” is “a microcosm of the link between the nation and the land of Israel as a whole.” It is an echo of 45:8, since it too prohibits oppression using the Hiphil of יָנָה (here the infinitive with suffix, לְהֽוֹנֹתָם֙, literally, “to oppress them”). The oppression would be by evicting people from land that they alone were entitled to inherit. This form of oppression is forbidden so that the people would not “be scattered” (יָפֻ֣צוּ, Qal imperfect of פּוּץ, which in the Qal can mean either “scatter” or, like the Niphal, “be scattered”), a vivid way of describing the inevitable dispersal of dispossessed, homeless people. The verb פּוּץ recalls the earlier prophecies that Israel would be scattered among the nations (11:16–17; 20:34, 41; 28:25). It also reminds us of the condemnation of Israel’s evil shepherds, whose abuse had caused God’s sheep to “scatter” or “be scattered” (forms of פּוּץ in 34:5–6, 12, 21). Moreover, the suffixed עַמִּ֔י here, “*my* people,” recalls the same phrase in 34:30 (and numerous references to “my sheep/flock” in chapter 34) in God’s promise in 34:11–31 to regather his scattered flock by means of the one Good Shepherd, the Son of David, Jesus Christ (34:23–24). (CC)

**46:19–24** Fits well after 42:13–14, where other rooms for priests are described. The provisions here are a fitting conclusion to the sacrifice laws. The priests’ area (vv. 19–20) was to be kept separate from the cooking areas of the Levites (vv. 21–24). (CC)

Finally, Ezekiel turns his attention to the two sets of temple kitchens, where the sacrificial meals are prepared. Ezek 46:19–20 is about the kitchens for the preparation of sacrificial meals for the priests, while 46:21–24 is about those for the laity. Block comments:

These kitchens affirm Yahweh’s determination to commune with them. … Yahweh invited his people to eat at his table. Thus Ezekiel’s kitchens symbolize paradoxically both the transcendence and the immanence of Yahweh. The concern for the sanctity of the divine residence and all that transpires therein accords perfectly with the radiance of the divine glory. However, by eating at Yahweh’s table, the Israelites celebrated their covenantal peace with God and delighted in fellowship with him. Herein lies the relevance of this text for the modern believer. True worshipers … with joyful hearts … accept his gracious invitation to eat the communion meal, the Eucharist, in his presence. (CC)

We might wonder why 46:19–20 did not appear after 42:1–14, where Ezekiel was shown the holy rooms or sacristies at the back of which are the kitchens described here (see figure 2). But the guidance formula in 46:19, “he brought me” (וַיְבִיאֵ֣נִי), indicates that the kitchens are described here simply because of the sequence in which God showed and explained the various parts of the eschatological vision to Ezekiel. Logically, these verses that describe the kitchens for the sacrifices are naturally delayed until after the regulations governing the sacrifices (the consecration of the altar of burnt offering in 43:18–27; the legitimate officiants for worship in 44:6–31; the major festivals in 45:18–25; and the minor festivals in 46:1–15). (CC)

The guidance formulas in 46:19, 21 indicate that the guide who escorts Ezekiel continues to be the supernatural man, through whom Yahweh speaks to Ezekiel. (CC)

**46:19** In Ezek 44:4 the guide had led the prophet to the front of the temple building. Now, apparently, he is conducted back through the north (inner) gate into the outer court. Then, turning west, he comes to the north-facing priestly sacristies, the “holy rooms,” considered part of the inner court. There were also holy rooms facing south. These holy rooms were described in 42:1–14 and mentioned in 44:19. Although there are entrances to the north-facing holy rooms also on the north (42:4), the latter part of 46:19 (see below) indicates that Ezekiel enters them via their east “entrance, passageway,”מָבוֹא , described in 42:9. (CC)

For the “holy rooms, sacristies,” the earlier passages used the construct chain לִשְׁכוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ (42:13; 44:19). Hebrew characteristically prefers a construct chain rather than a modifying adjective. Here the phrase is הַלִּשְׁכ֤וֹת הַקֹּ֨דֶשׁ֙, literally, “the rooms of the holiness,” since the noun in construct (הַלִּשְׁכ֤וֹת) has the article. This is one of “a fair number of exceptions” in the OT to the rule that the word in construct does not normally have the article. The same exception was encountered in 43:21 (which see). Either this testifies to the exilic decay of the Hebrew language, or, more likely, the article was inadvertently added by attraction to the following הַכֹּ֣הֲנִ֔ים. (CC)

If the phrase אֶל־הַכֹּ֣הֲנִ֔ים, “to the priests,” were parallel to the preceding אֶל־הַלִּשְׁכ֤וֹת הַקֹּ֨דֶשׁ֙ (“to the holy rooms”), it would mean Ezekiel is brought to the priests, something intrinsically unlikely. The following phrase, literally, “facing north,” refers to the “holy rooms,” so this phrase too should modify the rooms. Most likely אֶל is used for possession (“belonging to the priests”), which normally is indicated by לְ. Cooke suggests that אֶל is an abbreviation for אֲשֶׁר לְ, “which belong to.” (CC)

The “place” shown to Ezekiel was located “at the (very) back toward the west.” יָֽמָּה is יָם, “sea,” with a locative *he*. (CC)

**46:20** The guide relates nothing about the design or appearance of the kitchens, but only their function. The cuts of meat or portions of grain that need cooking are the portions of the sacrifices that the priests must eat on the premises in their official capacity. The portions burnt on the altar require no such preparation. (CC)

**46:21** The guide now leads Ezekiel to retrace his steps back into the outer court, where he is led from corner to corner all the way around the complex. For both Hiphil verbs (וַיַּ֣עֲבִירֵ֔נִי …וַיּוֹצִיאֵ֗נִי ) as forms of the guidance formula. Each of the four corners contained another miniature courtyard. The distributive idiom חָצֵר בְּמִקְצֹעַ הֶחָצֵר, “a court in each corner of the court,” is repeated. Earlier this verse had the masculine plural construct form (מִקְצוֹעֵ֣י) of מִקְצֹעַ, “corner,” while the next verse will use its feminine plural construct form, מִקְצֹע֤וֹת, but we have grown used to such variations in Ezekiel. (CC)

**46:22** There is no agreement on the meaning of קְטֻר֔וֹת, an adjective or Qal passive participle that describes the small courts. For the plural חֲצֵר֣וֹת קְטֻר֔וֹת, the LXX has the singular phrase, αὑλὴ μικρά, “a little court.” The Vulgate has *atriola disposita*, “arranged antechambers.” The Syriac cognate ܩܛܰܪ can mean “to tie, bind, join, frame,” so קְטֻר֔וֹת might mean that these courts were “joined” to the walls. (KJV has “joined,” but does not say to what.) The Targum has דָרְתָא מְקַטְרָן, which may mean “courts enclosed/fenced in,” which I, with NKJV and NIV have followed. Some propose that these courts were “framed” with timbers. Others propose “unroofed,” but courtyards by definition are unroofed. Following the LXX, some propose emending to קְטַנּוֹת, “small,” adopted by RSV and NRSV. But Cooke sagely observes that that “emendation substitutes a rather weak word for one which is worth keeping.” (CC)

**46:23** The masculine noun טוּר refers to a “row” of stones or masonry in a building wall, as also for Solomon’s temple and palace (1 Ki 6:36; 7:12). The feminine plural of טִירָה, used later in this verse, must be a synonym, though elsewhere in the OT, it usually refers to a circular encampment. Zimmerli thinks of stone walls fencing in the courts, but since the “boiling hearths” (the Piel participleמְבַשְּׂלוֹת literally means “boilers”) are built beneath or at the bottom of them, we should probably think of a “ledge” (NIV)or of a cooking facility made of tiered stones. In the phrase וּמְבַשְּׂל֣וֹת עָשׂ֔וּי, the word עָשׂ֔וּי is uninflected (not plural), as in 40:17 and 41:18–19. GKC § 121 d (c), proposes that the implied subject of עָשׂ֔וּי is a (singular) place and that the preceding וּמְבַשְּׂל֣וֹת is an accusative of result. If so, the phrase would mean that “(there was a place) constructed (to make) boiling hearths.” (CC)

**46:24** The construct phrase בֵּ֣ית הַֽמְבַשְּׂלִ֔ים, literally, “the house of the boilers,” is a rare example of a plural of a construct phrase (meaning “the house*s* of the boilers”) formed with only the genitive word in the plural (הַֽמְבַשְּׂלִ֔ים). All of the OT examples of this kind of construction have the singular בֵּית in construct with a plural noun. בֵּ֣ית must be translated as a plural, as confirmed by the preceding אֵ֚לֶּה (“these are”). (CC)

“The ministers of the temple” (מְשָׁרְתֵ֥י הַבַּ֖יִת) are all the Levites who are not sons of Zadok. In Ezekiel, God retains only the Zadokites as priests. The other Levitical priests are demoted to serve merely as Levites, and no longer as priests, because of their infidelity. See on 44:9–16. The participle in construct, מְשָׁרְתֵ֥י, is the Piel of שָׁרַת, “to minister, serve,” which described the (non-Zadokite) Levites in 44:11 (cf. 44:12), who merely serve before the people. The Piel was also used to describe the ministry of the priests in 44:15–17, 19, 27, who serve before Yahweh. (CC)

זֶ֥בַח is obviously collective (“sacrifice*s*”). Here it probably refers specifically to the “communion offerings” (שְׁלָמִים, traditionally translated “peace offerings”), in which some of the meat reverted to the worshiper(s), who could eat it in the temple precincts. See on 43:27 (also the second textual note and the commentary on 39:17, and the fourth textual note on 40:39). The accounts of the specifications and construction of the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple do not mention the kitchens, but other OT passages do (Deut 16:7; 1 Sam 2:12–17; 2 Chr 35:11–13). Archaeologically, we know that they were standard in pagan temples, where “feeding” the gods figured so prominently. However, in the worship of the one true and triune God, who needs no food (Ps 50:8–13), it is he who furnishes a meal for his people. In the Divine Service (so named because God serves his church as he comes to his people through his Word and Sacraments), the Sacrament of the Altar furnishes the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of their sins. (CC)