Tova Ganzel

Ezekiel's Visionary Temple in Babylonian Context

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Contents

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1 *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 211–26.

2 *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, Achaemenid History 15 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010).

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Jerusalem, January 2021 Tova Ganzel

1 Ezekiel's Temple Vision: An Introduction

1.1 Ezekiel's Visionary Temple

Ezekiel's visionary temple holds a unique place within the biblical canon. As revealed in its text, Ezekiel's persona bridges two roles – priest and prophet – at a momentous period, that of the Temple's destruction and the exile. The visionary temple is exceptional in the prophetic literature both in its subject matter and in its detailed and methodological descriptions. The vision represents the only instance in the biblical sources in which a prophet lays out a comprehensive system of rules and regulations that are parallel to, yet different from, those set forth in the other texts.

The last nine chapters of the book of Ezekiel begin by noting the date: "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, the fourteenth year after the city had fallen, at the beginning of the year, the tenth day of the month" (40:1). Besides the chronological date (the tenth of Nisan in the year 573 BCE),[1] this introduction also indicates the significant dates of that period, which serve as markers for counting years: the exile of Jehoiachin and the destruction. In fact, this is the only prophecy in Ezekiel which is dated in relation to the destruction. Throughout the book, Ezekiel counts years based on the exile of Jehoiachin, which may attest to its significance as a turning point: fourteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem, its grave ramifications are seeping into the consciousness of the exiles in Babylonia. Many were exiled with Jehoiachin prior to the destruction, and therefore largely cut off from what was happening in the land of Israel. Perhaps with new exiles joining their communities in Babylonia, the community may have begun to internalize the significance of the Temple's destruction in Jerusalem. It may be no coincidence that Ezekiel's prophecy of a visionary temple comes once the nation has become accustomed to the reality of life in exile. In their new reality, the exiles are left uncertain about their future and their status.

To our knowledge, this prophecy may have been a lone voice, making it a prophecy of great significance. This is emphasized by the text itself: "On that very day the hand of the Lord came upon me, and He brought me there" (40:1). The prophet's vision is of his return to the land of Israel: "He brought me, in visions of God, to the land of Israel, and He set me on an extremely high moun-

1 Throughout the volume, we refer to months by their numbers, unless we are quoting from the biblical verses or the Assyrian texts (in which case the quote will reflect what is in the original).

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tain on which there was a structure like of a city to the south" (40:2). The description of the place where he is set down gives no indication as to whether the prophecy is referring to somewhere within the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem or elsewhere; the descriptions of "land of Israel," "an extremely high mountain," "a structure like of a city," and "to the south" are vague. Is the city Jerusalem? We are left with no answer. The question is even intensified in the following chapters, which make no explicit mention of the city's name. Immediately upon arrival in the unnamed city, the prophet sees a man whose job is to measure, using a thread of flax and a measuring rod (40:3–4). God brings the prophet to the place where the land surveyor awaits him and emphasizes the importance of conveying the upcoming vision to all of Israel.[2]

From chapter 40, the units of this distinctive vision describe the temple complex (40:1–43:12). These verses present a multitude of difficulties. At first the prophet outlines the dimensions of the wall surrounding the temple and of the eastern gate (40:5–16). The prophet then describes the dimensions of the outer courtyard and the gates (the northern gate, the southern gate, and the inner court gate; 40:17–37). The end of chapter 40 includes a description of the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering upon tables at the entry to the northern gate, as well as the chambers of the priests who "keep the charge of the temple" and "keep the charge of the altar" (40:38–46). These priests are henceforth referred to as "the descendants of Zadok, who, out of the descendants of Levi, may approach YHWH to serve Him" (40:46). In verse 48, the prophet moves on to a description of the inner plan of the temple. He first describes the porch (40:48–49), followed by the holy of holies, the inner chamber, and the decorations on the walls (41:1–26). In the midst of this description the prophet notes the wooden altar and the table (41:22). In chapter 42, the prophet is brought to the outer courtyard, where he describes the chambers in between the outer courtyard and the inner one as well as the holy chambers (42:1–14). The chambers are meant to be places where the priests can eat the sacrificial meat and change their garments. Emphasized here is the distance between the priests (and their garments) on one hand, and the people, on the other. The people are not involved with the sacrifices in these verses, nor do they even see the priests in the garments in which they minister. This section of the temple tour concludes with a description of the perimeter of the Temple Mount and the wall around the temple (42:15–20).

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2 The root ר"אה (to see, look, show, appear) is repeated five times over the course of these two verses, along with a mention of eyes. This emphasis is apparently meant to convey the importance of passing on the vision precisely as the prophet has seen it.

Next, the text describes God's glory returning to the rebuilt temple (43:1–5). These verses create an exalted sense of God's complete presence. The transition to the next four verses – reminding that "the house of Israel and their kings must not again defile My holy name" (43:7) – is therefore sharp and unexpected. The sudden fall from lofty exaltation to the depths seems to reflect the fact that one of the conditions for the return of God's glory to the temple is the prevention of desecration. The aim of this prophecy is to highlight the cause of the Temple's defilement in the years in which God's glory left the Temple and the edifice was destroyed. The cessation of such activity is a necessary condition for God dwelling in the nation's midst forever. In the verses that follow, Ezekiel notes that they must "be ashamed of their iniquities" (43:10) and "ashamed of all they have done" (43:11). Although these are chapters devoted to the vision of the future temple, following the chapters of restoration, the text nevertheless emphasizes once again the severity of the sins that brought about the destruction of the First Temple. The conclusion of this prophecy represents the end of the rebuke to the nation in the book of Ezekiel. The prophet now returns to the plan of the temple, the command given to the prophet to make known the plan for the temple, to set it down in writing before them and present it in detail (43:10–12). But here, too, there is no precise mention of the location of the temple, which is conveyed with the rather vague expression, "on the top of the mountain."

The next prophecy is devoted to the ceremony of purification of the altar (43:13–27) and to setting out laws relating to the temple and the sacrificial order, the temple functionaries, the Levites and priests, and the temple's ceremony of inauguration (44:1–46:24). Some of its striking, unique features include its interior design and the near-total absence of temple vessels (the instruments for sacrifice and a number of other vessels), with the exception of the altar, as well as the new territorial allotments around the temple. In addition, the description of the sacrificial offerings in the future temple diverges from injunctions found in legal texts of Scripture, as do the roles of the temple personnel.

The final chapters conclude by depicting a spring that will issue forth from the temple and flow all the way to the Arabah (47:1–12), and by outlining the new division of the land of Israel, which is different from what is familiar from other biblical texts. These changes extend from the temple itself to the other parts of the country: the city will be shared by all the tribes of Israel, and the land will be divided among the tribes in an egalitarian manner (47:13–48:35). Finally, the book of Ezekiel closes with the words, "And the name of the city from that day on shall be, 'YHWH Is There'" (48:35).

Ezekiel's Temple Vision, unique within the Hebrew Bible in a number of ways, raises numerous questions. The present study does not include a system-

atic or comprehensive discussion of chapters 40–48 in the book of Ezekiel; it focuses primarily on the topics that we believe have significant value when discussed against the backdrop of the Babylonian milieu. In studying its distinctive features, we can learn more about its underlying motivations – but it is crucial that we view it in the proper context.

1.2 Ezekiel's Vision through the Lens of His Milieu

Three spheres impact any thematic consideration of Ezekiel's Temple Vision (40–48) and can lead to a more profound understanding of the vision: (a) its inner-biblical context, as seen through the prism of pentateuchal literature on one hand and prophetic literature on the other; (b) the vision's driving theological theme; and (c) the influence of Ezekiel's Babylonian milieu.

In this volume, we draw on the inner-biblical comparisons, mainly between these chapters and the pentateuchal literature,[3] and identify the elements in the Temple Vision that lack biblical parallels, exploring their significance against the Babylonian backdrop. Some obvious examples of the book of Ezekiel's innovations emerge in comparing the sacrificial legislation in Ezekiel 44–45 with Numbers 28–29. Ezekiel is the sole prophetic book to include laws governing the temple service in its prophecies; some of these laws are innovations, such as the sacrificial order in the temple and laws for the priests. Ezekiel 45:21–22 cites sacrifices, like the bull sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the month, that do not exist in Numbers. It also calls for a different number of sacrifices on Passover (45:22–25) than does Numbers 28:16–22. The number of sacrifices on the Feast of Tabernacles likewise differs between Ezekiel 45:25 and Numbers 29:12–34. Further discrepancies exist regarding the Sabbath (Ezek 46:4–5 vs. Num 28:9–10), the celebration of the new month (Ezek 46:6–7 vs. Num 28:11–15), and additional offerings (Ezek 46:11 vs. Num 25:4–10). Many festival sacrifices mentioned in Numbers do not appear in Ezekiel, including those for Shavuot (Pentecost), Rosh Hashanah (the New Year), the Day of Atonement, and the Eighth [day of] Assembly.

But the book of Ezekiel's innovations go beyond the realm of sacrifices. They also include the transfer of cultic responsibilities from the Levites to Za-

3 Many scholars have drawn comparisons between the temple chapters in Ezekiel and pentateuchal literature. See, e.g., Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah*, JSOTSup 358 (London: Sheffield, 2002); Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel's Use of the Holiness Code*, LHBOTS 507 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009). For a comparison of Ezekiel's temple to the Solomonic one, see: Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 547–49.

dokite priests (44:9–16) and the exegesis of earlier pentateuchal material to support an envisioned new order.[4] To this end, we take for granted the author's familiarity with priestly literature and identify stylistic-contextual links between the book's prophecies and this literature.[5]

Another striking example is the leadership of the people by the *nasi*. The term *nasi* is found when the title *melekh* – king – could have been used instead. The term *melekh* is employed in the book to refer to the kings of Israel in the past and the kings of the other nations in the present, but Ezekiel's text deliberately uses the title *nasi* for the future leader of Israel in chapters 40–48.

Finally, a new division of the land of Israel is evident in Ezekiel's Temple Vision: as noted above, the land is divided among the tribes in an egalitarian manner (47:13–48:35).

Scholars do not give a standard explanation for Ezekiel's many divergences from the details of pentateuchal law. One suggestion is that these divergences form part of a wider array of changes in, inter alia, the order of leadership and the temple building, whose collective goal is to prevent a recurrence of the tragic departure of the divine presence, the temple's destruction, and the people's exile.[6]

Emerging from this is that the unit's driving theological force is the intense desire to safeguard the sanctity of the future temple, thereby precluding it from sharing the First Temple's fate.[7] Any study of Ezekiel's theological stance cannot ignore its difficult, crisis-ridden historical context: the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple and the concomitant theological crises of Judean life without a temple. The inner-biblical comparison reveals the book of Ezekiel's explicit, pointed emphasis on erecting barriers between the deity and humans in order to preserve sanctity, as reflected by the book's polarities of holy and profane, pure and defiled. These overarching themes in Ezekiel receive treatment that has similarities to, but also differs from, both the priestly literature and the Deuteronomistic literature on which Ezekiel relies.[8] Accordingly, this thematic examination of Ezekiel aims both to draw a broad picture of its distinc-

4 Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 138; Paul M. Joyce, "Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40–48," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 422 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005).

5 See, e.g., Kohn, *New Heart*; Lyons, *Law to Prophecy*.

6 Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 181–208.

7 See Tova Ganzel, "The Concept of Holiness in the Book of Ezekiel" (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2005).

8 Tova Ganzel, "The Defilement and Desecration of the Temple in Ezekiel," *Biblica* 89 (2008): 369–79.

tive theological approach to various aspects of the crisis, and to determine in what ways the text's method of dealing with the crisis was unique and contrary to alternative conceptions expressed elsewhere in Scripture. We will suggest that Ezekiel charted an individual path, grounded in its overriding concern with preserving the sanctity of the future temple.

Current research ascribes growing importance to examining the extent to which Ezekiel's temple and theocentric worldview were influenced by the Babylonian milieu. It also highlights the range of possible reactions to the rich Babylonian cultic practices, which differed fundamentally from those with which the Judean exiles were familiar – from adoption of the surrounding culture to the erection of barriers. However, any such examination must take into account the impossibility of determining just how familiar the book's author was with the inner workings of the Babylonian institutions.

The book of Ezekiel's visionary temple belongs to a broader "program of restoration." This program draws on ancient Israelite traditions, which can be understood without reference to contemporary Mesopotamia.[9] Nevertheless, the book of Ezekiel describes the temple itself in ways that diverge from descriptions of temples elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. These divergences, could, of course, be the product of the author's view; we will never know exactly how he arrived at his vision.[10] In highlighting the similarities between Babylonian temples and the description in the book of Ezekiel, we propose that the former served as a context for, rather than influence upon, the latter. Even if we may never know the book of Ezekiel's sources, we can posit that Babylonian temples offer us a meaningful context in which to situate some of the unique features of Ezekiel's description of the temple.

Bearing these fundamental assumptions in mind, this historically contextualized analysis pays special attention to two dimensions. First, the extent to which biblical traditions influenced Ezekiel's visionary temple plan is considered. By identifying the similarities and differences between Ezekiel's cultic ori-

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9 Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Cambridge. MA: Scholars Press, 1976); Greenberg, "Design and Themes"; Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47–73.

10 It is even possible that Ezekiel's vision preserves memories of the Jerusalem Temple itself. For examples of the use of information from Ezekiel to reconstruct the Solomonic Temple, see Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Tenth Century BCE to 586 BCE: The House of the Lord (Beyt YHWH)," in *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009): 20–22. Our investigation does not take a stand on the validity of this method. Instead, we focus on how Ezekiel's description stands out by emphasizing certain features in the temple, and interpret these differences against a Babylonian backdrop.

entation and that set forth in the priestly texts, and by considering the diverse forms of relationships to pentateuchal traditions as well as Ezekiel's exegetical techniques, we examine the extent to which the Temple Vision was innovative in its conceptions. Second, Ezekiel's theology is compared to the Babylonian cultural and ritual context; we can thus identify the lexicon used to describe the visionary temple as similar to or stemming from the lexicon of Babylonian temples. We attempt to evaluate when this reflects an attempt to emulate the surrounding culture and to what extent it reflects an attempt to set the God of Israel apart from the world of the gods that surrounded the exiles.

The present study takes a methodical approach to each of the topics at hand. First, it identifies unique features of Ezekiel's Temple Vision, based on a detailed analysis of chapters 40–48 in Ezekiel, comparing it to the biblical information in the priestly literature, the description of the holy vessels in the tabernacle, and the Jerusalem Temple. It then considers the language used to describe the building, as well as Ezekiel's thematic world, with an eye to determining the extent of these links and any intertextual influence, compared to other temple descriptions, in first-millennium cuneiform sources from Babylonia. In the cases in which the Temple Vision uses unique features, we seek topical parallels in the geographical and chronological context of the Neo-Babylonian period in order to assess Ezekiel's singularity.[11]

1.3 The Temple Vision as a Unit

In addition to the studies that have been composed on Ezekiel 40–48 as a thematic entity, modern scholarship has interpreted prophetic units within the chapters partially or entirely, devoting special attention to their relationship to priestly literature and to reconstructing the history of Israel's priesthood.[12] Although it is likely that these chapters have undergone a process of redaction, the textual redaction history of Ezekiel 40–48 is not the focus of this research. In the Masoretic Text (MT), these chapters comprise an independent, coherent

11 The term "Neo-Babylonian period" is used here to refer to the political entity founded by Nabopolassar in 626 BCE and brought to an end by Cyrus in 539 BCE.

12 Nathan MacDonald, *Priestly Rule: Polemic and Biblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44*, BZAW 476 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). In addition, various studies have been devoted to thematic elements throughout the book, which play a significant role in these chapters: see, e.g., Janina Maria Hiebel, *Ezekiel's Vision Accounts as Interrelated Narratives: A Redaction-Critical and Theological Study*, BZAW 475 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

literary entity and can be read as a thematic unit.[13] In treating chapters 40–48 as a single thematic unit, we concur with the holistic approach to the book of Ezekiel posited by Greenberg[14] and with Joyce's observation that we can speak "with a measure of confidence [...] of the sixth-century witness of the book of Ezekiel, and also regard that witness as profoundly influenced, both in content and style, by Ezekiel himself."[15] Furthermore, since the Temple Vision is found in the last nine chapters of the book of Ezekiel, and these chapters can be understood as an independent unit, this research addresses their final form which, after textual editing and scribal expansions, were shaped into a coherent unit;

13 For recent reviews of the redactional history of Ezekiel 40–48, see Madhavi Nevader, "Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40–48?," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, BZAW 478 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 268, n. 3. To avoid awkward wording, we refer to Ezekiel as a prophet; this does not imply that there is a single redactor or author for the book.

14 Moshe Greenberg is among the foremost proponents of this approach. See Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 18–27; idem, "Design and Themes"; idem, "What Are Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?" in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and Their Interrelation*, ed. Johan Lust, BETL 74 (Leuven: University Press, 1986): 123–35. Other researchers who read the vision as a whole include: Levenson, *Program of Restoration*; Menahem Haran, "The Law-Code of Ezekiel XL–XLVIII and Its Relation to the Priestly School," *HUCA* 50 (1979): 45–71. See also Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, NICOT 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 17–27 (with a mediating position on redaction); Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 1: Chapters 1–24* [in Hebrew], Mikra Le'Yisrael: A Bible Commentary for Israel (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 20–28. For a selection of articles espousing the view that these chapters have undergone multiple redactions, see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin, BKAT XIII (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Hartmut Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiel (Kap. 40–48) traditionsgeschichtlich untersucht*, BHT 25 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957); Thilo A. Rudnig, *Heilig und Profan: Redaktionskritische Studien zu Ez 40–48*, BZAW 287 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000); Michael Konkel, *Architektonik des Heiligen: Studien zur zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48)*, BBB 129 (Berlin: Philo, 2001). For an attempt to trace the editing of parts of the book that developed over a longer period of time and to suggest textual evidence for tracing the history of the scribal composition of Ezekiel, see Ingrid E. Lilly, "'Like the Vision': Temple Tours, Comparative Genre, and Scribal Composition in Ezekiel 43," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions* ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, FAT 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017): 210–232, and bibliography there. Note that whether or not portions of chapters 40–48 were written and added at a later time, those portions remained much in line with the content of Ezekiel's previous chapters; see: Levenson, *Program of Restoration*, 7; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 27.

15 Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, 16.

as Tuell concludes: "In its final form, the temple vision is a purposefully constructed, unified document, possessing an overall chiastic structure."[16]

Undergirding the current study is the assumption that the prophecies under discussion were written and perhaps also partially edited in the sixth century BCE. The question of redaction is less crucial; what is important is that the core of Ezekiel's prophecy can be dated to the period preceding and following the destruction of the First Temple.[17] For the purposes of this volume, it is the Babylonian setting of the prophecy that is essential. Our analysis, then, is relevant regardless of whether Ezekiel 40–48 was written by Ezekiel, written by an anonymous prophet, or later edited by additional editors.[18]

16 Steven S. Tuell, "Divine Presence and Absence in Ezekiel's Prophecy," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 115.

17 For a discussion of sixth-century-BCE Israelite literature, including a survey of theories regarding the formation of the book, see, e.g., Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, StBibLit 3 (Boston: Brill, 2003), 345–56 and Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 75–104. For a detailed discussion of the literary depiction of Ezekiel the prophet, see Karin Schöpflin, *Theologie als Biographie im Ezechielbuch. Ein Beitrag zur Konzeption alttestamentlicher Prophetie* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2002). For a survey of the study of the phenomenon of Israelite prophecy in recent scholarship, see Brad E. Kelle, "The Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship," *CurBR* 12, no. 3 (2014): 275–320. The majority of commentators also acknowledge the Babylonian provenance of the earliest form of the book, evident from the presence of Akkadian loanwords and familiarity with Mesopotamian imagery and religious-political ideology. See: Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, OBO 104 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 35–51; John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, BJS 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 101–49; Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 76 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 27–38. This does not preclude the presence of redactional material in the book that reflects a later setting. See: Hiebel, *Ezekiel's Vision Accounts*, 27–33, 171–213.

18 Tuell asserts that Ezekiel 40–48 reflects the operation of the functioning temple in the early Persian period before Ezra. He does this by arguing there are two layers in Ezekiel, one that reflects Ezekiel's time and another layer from the Persian period: "the institutions described in the temple vision are actual institutions, which may be dated by comparative means to the Persian Period … probably dating the reign of Darius I" (Steven S. Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 49 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 14). In our opinion, there are no actual institutions that can substantiate this claim.

1.4 A Look Ahead

Contextualizing, comparing, and contrasting Ezekiel's vision to the temples that surrounded the Judeans in exile can allow us to draw a more comprehensive picture and gain a deeper understanding of the prophet's worldview.

Our first topic of discussion is the book of Ezekiel's Babylonian context. Chapter 2 details the world of the exiles as it is understood based on the sources available.

Chapter 3's focus is on linguistics. Since the influence of one culture on another is, especially when significant, usually reflected in language, the influence of the language the exiles were exposed to in Babylon on the vocabulary of the Temple Vision in Ezekiel may be substantial. Therefore, the chapter discusses the language of the Judean exiles, evaluating the extent of the Aramaic and Akkadian influence as evident in Ezekiel 40–48, and the specific influence on the future names of the temple and the city in which the temple will be located.

The subsequent chapter, chapter 4, moves from investigating words to examining the envisioned temple's structure, and discusses the temple compounds. The chapter devotes attention to the design of the sacred space, the absence of holy vessels, the kitchens, and finally the water issuing up from under the temple threshold, comparing and contrasting these with the First Temple and what is known of Neo-Babylonian temples.

Chapter 5 addresses a further feature of the envisioned temple: reforms in temple personnel. The chapter highlights a restructuring of the temple hierarchy, including the priests, the Levites, and the *nasi*. Here we first focus on enhancing priestly purity, and then on the functionaries' benefits, including land (reserve) and tithes.

In the final chapter, we observe the temple rituals, primarily the first-month rituals in Ezekiel, in comparison with the Akītu festival of Nisannu in Babylon, temple purification, the return of God to His temple, and the centrality of keeping the temple's sanctity.

Finally, we conclude our examination with insights into the overall picture that has developed as a result of the present study.

The perspective adopted in this study – focusing on Ezekiel's unique characteristics from a variety of perspectives, within its Babylonian context – lays bare the weaknesses of the approaches that seek to complement Ezekiel's visionary temple by comparing it to the First Temple, or, at the very least, demonstrates that the comparison to the First Temple is unsatisfactory. Such is the case with regard to the temple compound structure, the rituals that take place in the temple, and the functionaries that serve in the temple complex. The First

Temple belongs to the past; it is not a model for the future. On the contrary, Ezekiel presents a new, revolutionary vision of the future temple. This future temple will be less accessible to the Israelites, and will not stand in the center of most people's daily lives. Ultimately, it is Ezekiel's theocentric doctrine, which seeks to prevent desecration of the divine name, that unifies its treatment of the individual topics, and to this end it harnesses elements that are familiar from the Babylonian environment. At times these affect the exiles directly, and the text adopts models from its surroundings; at times, the book rejects the common customs in the temple communities the exiles were familiar with, and describes an alternative or even contrasting model.

Our intention is that this book can be easily read by biblical scholars and Assyriologists alike, and we thus provide essential knowledge for those who are unfamiliar with the current state of research in both fields. Specialists from both fields should find in the volume sufficient background for cross-disciplinary discussion. Finally, we note that the English translation of the verses from Ezekiel are our own,[19] and all references in the book are to the book of Ezekiel unless stated otherwise. Biblical verses are referred to using the numbering system found in the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. In the coming chapter, we describe what is known about the world in which Ezekiel's prophesies were composed; the frame of reference of the Babylonian exiles will be crucial to our understanding of the temple described in the book's final nine chapters.

19 In consultation with existing translations (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*; Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A [New York: Doubleday, 1997]; *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985]).

2 Studying the Book of Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context

2.1 The Judean Exiles in Babylonia

The link between the book of Ezekiel, the prophecies it contains, and the Babylonian context in which it was formed has been dealt with extensively in recent years. The extent of the Judeans' involvement in the world around them – and their knowledge of the temples in the Babylonian landscape in particular – are key for our discussion of the Temple Vision and its relation to the exiles' surroundings.

David Vanderhooft, for example, notes the exiles' "mercantile, juridical, industrial, professional, and architectural realms"[1] as being especially influenced by the local Babylonian context. Furthermore, he stresses the high degree of acculturation within the Babylonian landscape as can be inferred, for example, from the lack of criticism of Babylon itself in the book. A want of concern for (or about) Babylon can also be seen in Ezekiel's commission (3:4–9), where the prophet is told to target his fellow Judeans rather than those who speak foreign tongues.[2]

While there is relatively broad acceptance about the self-proclaimed context of the book, Martti Nissinen advocates for more skepticism regarding chronology and geography.[3] Too lightly, he argues, do modern scholars adopt early-sixth-century Babylonia as the book's setting. Although we do not fully agree

1 David S. Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon," in *Bible et Proche-Orient. Mélanges André Lemaire III*, ed. Josette Elayi and Jean-Marie Durand, Transeuphratène 46 (Paris: Gabalda, 2014), 107.

2 Ibid., 104–5. Another view of Ezekiel's silence regarding Babylon is advocated by David M. Carr ("Reading into the Gap: Refractions of Trauma in Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad Kelle, Frank Richard Ames, and Jacob L. Wright [Atlanta: SBL, 2010]: 295–308), who interprets Ezekiel's attitude towards Babylonia (and the Babylonians) as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the result of his deportation experience. See also Dereck M. Daschke, "Desolate Among Them: Loss, Fantasy, and Recovery in the Book of Ezekiel," *American Imago* 56, no. 2 (1999): 105–32; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 88–89; and David G. Garber, Jr., "Traumatizing Ezekiel, the Exilic Prophet," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read Scriptures*, vol. 2, *From Genius to Apocalyptic Vision*, ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport: Praeger, 2004): 215–35.

3 Martti Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?," in *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, *WO* 45/1, ed. Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

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with all of Nissinen's arguments, he puts forward several key points for the present discussion. Skepticism is of course warranted, and any claim made in the book must be approached with caution. Yet this does not mean rejecting the reliability of a claim *because* it appears in the book. Ultimately, as Nissinen himself notes, Babylonia is in fact the best suited setting for the book. As for dating, he argues that based on knowledge of Ancient Near Eastern traditions that it expresses, the book might have been composed in the Persian period as well.[4] While this is certainly possible, as are similar proposals that have been previously suggested,[5] our working assumption is that there is no reason to accept this date over an earlier Neo-Babylonian one. In fact, given the lack of obvious Persian influence on the book's language, an earlier date for the book may indeed be preferred.[6]

The book's Babylonian context is revealed to the reader throughout – directly in 1:1,[7] 3; 3:11, 15; 11:24; 40:1; and indirectly, due to its familiarity with Babylonian culture in 8:14 and 21:23–26.[8] The king of Babylon is even mentioned (21:23–32); Nebuchadnezzar's military campaign, at the conclusion of which Jerusalem is conquered, is described. In fact, the description of the king of Babylonia's use of magical practices to decide whether to advance his army towards Jerusalem or Ammon (Rabbath Ammon) – the "shaking of arrows," referring to "filling a quiver with arrows, with different answers written on

4 Ibid., 96–97.

5 See, for example, Tuell, here addressing the Mesopotamian context of the book: "The final form of the text is built on an authentic vision of Ezekiel, chosen by our editors as the perfect statement of their society's foundation and end: right worship in the right Temple. However, the text assumed its present form in the Persian period, probably during the reign of Darius I"; Steven S. Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 14.

6 A historic evaluation should not only include scrutiny of the proposed theory (in this case that Ezekiel was a Judean priest exiled to Babylon in the year 597 BCE [Ezek 1:2–3]), but must also ask the "what if" and "what would we expect" questions regarding a later date for the book's inception.

7 On the location of the Kabaru canal, see Caroline Waerzeggers, "Babylonians in Susa: The Travels of Babylonian Businessmen to Susa Reconsidered," in *Der Achämenidenhof, The Achaemenid Court: Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums zum Thema 'Vorderasien im Spannungsfeld klassischer und altorientalischer Überlieferungen', Landgut Castelen bei Basel, 23.–25. Mai 2007*, ed. Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger, Classica et Orientalia 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010): 777–813.

8 It is no coincidence that Ezekiel does not contain anti-Babylonian prophecies. Compare to Psalm 137, which includes a prophecy against the Babylonians, or to Isaiah 46:1–2, which includes a response to the Babylonian festival celebrated on the New Year. See Hanspeter Schaudig, "Bél Bows, Nabû Stoops!' The Prophecy of Isaiah XLVI 1–2 as a Reflection of Babylonian 'Processional Omens,'" *VT* 58, no. iv/v (2008): 557–72.

them,"[9] divining the future using idols, and "inspect[ing] the liver" – all correspond to archaeological and textual evidence.[10]

In recent years, the publication of the Al-Yahudu tablets (dated between 572 and 477 BCE) by Pearce and Wunsch promoted a lively scholarly discussion regarding the depicted reality vis-à-vis the biblical sources.[11] This is reflected in Dalit Rom-Shiloni's suggestion that the prophet Ezekiel prophesied in an Al-Yahudu-like rural community, namely Tel Aviv.[12] Although she does not place, nor hope to identify, the prophet Ezekiel in Al-Yahudu itself, she does remove him from Babylon, where Jehoiachin and his entourage dwelt. For Rom-Shiloni, "Ezekiel's audience *is* the ordinary people, led by the elders of Israel/Judah (Ezek 8:1; 14:1: 20:1; and see Jer. 29:1)" (emphasis in original).[13] This may be, at least partially, the reason why the prophet Ezekiel's language in the book never addresses Jehoiachin in person, nor his fellow exiles in Babylon itself – Judean courtiers, royal family members, and fellow Judean prophets/scholars. Rom-Shiloni indicates that the book refrains from placing Ezekiel in any of the well-known Babylonian urban centers, and the only geographical references are Tel Aviv and the Chebar Canal (Ezek 3:11–16).[14] Although the book does explicitly mention the Chebar Canal, Tel Aviv, and the elders of Judah and Israel coming

9 Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 1: Chapters 1–24* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 426.

10 Ettie Koryat-Aharon, "The Kingdom of the City of Megiddo" [in Hebrew], *Moreshet Derekh*, November 2001, 95.

11 See Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE*, CHANE 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 105: "The two earliest texts of the corpus were written in a place called Ālu ša Yāhūdāya (C1, 20-I-33 Nbk, 572 bce) or Āl-Yāhūdāya (B1, 7-IX-38 Nbk, 567 bce), the 'Town of the Judeans'. Already in the last years of Nebuchadnezzar (C2), the name of the village had changed to Yāhūdu, (the town of) 'Judah', and this name was still in use in 9 Xer (477 bce) when the last surviving document of the corpus (C53) was written. It is beyond doubt that the village was named after the geographic origin of its inhabitants: 34 per cent of people bear Yahwistic names in the documents written in Yāhūdu and an additional 6 per cent were related to someone bearing such a name. The practice of naming new settlements according to the geographic origin of their inhabitants is well attested in rural Babylonia, where place names such as Ashkelon, Sidon, and Neirab appear. The state settled foreign deportees in these twin towns in order to bring new lands under cultivation."

12 Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "The Untold Stories: Al-Yahūdu *and* or *versus* Hebrew Bible Babylonian Compositions," *WO* 47, no. 1 (2017): 124–34.

13 Rom-Shiloni, "Untold Stories," 128.

14 "Did the prophet gain this knowledge from his residence in such peripheral towns as Al-Yahūdu? Or was he a frequent visitor to one of the larger cultic-religious and political centers, such as Shurrupak, Nippur, or even Babylon?"; Rom-Shiloni, "Untold Stories," 129; see also note 19 there: "Another question to be addressed is what the prophet (and his fellow-deportees) would have seen of the former glories of Nippur or Shuruppak?"

to the prophet, it contains no information about Judean exiles in Babylonia directly and does not focus on life in Babylonia.

Nonetheless, existing indirect evidence makes it clear that the community of exiles was very involved in its surroundings. Astola argues that the Judean merchants in Babylonia "were integrated into the commercial sphere of Babylonian society and that they had native Babylonian merchants as well as traders of foreign origin among their acquaintances. Furthermore, because travelling and the transportation of goods are an integral part of commercial activity, Judean merchants provide an example of people who could have maintained connections between the communities in Judah and Babylonia."[15]

Textual evidence indicates that the Babylonian temples were also economic centers. The temples raised taxes; owned land, slaves, and livestock; and took part in trade and money-lending. Scribes, administrators, slaves, menial workers, expert craftsmen, food producers, shepherds, cattle drivers, salesmen, and traders came to the temples in order to prepare or present their products or to perform a variety of duties related to their professional skills. Many were directly employed by temples, while others held various jobs providing the temple with supplies or marketing its surpluses.[16]

The exiles' knowledge of the temples in Babylonia would have only been indirect. Astola concludes:

> Although many spheres of Babylonian society, including the administration, trade, crafts, and the military, were open to deportees, the temple cult was not. Rigid rules of access characterised Babylonian temples, and the sacrificial cult was run by a relatively small number of Babylonian families in each city. There was a strict hierarchy among these families as well, and only the so-called "temple enterers" (ērib bīti) were allowed to access the innermost parts of the temple. No Judeans or other deportees made their way into the closed priestly circles and participated in the temple cult. Nevertheless, temples were

15 Astola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 79–80. This is demonstrated in a case study of the descendants of Arih, a family of Judean royal merchants in Sippar, and the community of traders in Sippar.

16 For the administrative structure and temple bureaucracy in Sippar, see: A. C. V. M. Bongenaar, *The Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar Temple at Sippar: Its Administration and Its Prosopography*, PIHANS 80 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1997); Rocio Da Riva, *The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amēl-Marduk and Neriglissar*, SANER 3 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2013). For the same in Uruk, see Elizabeth E. Payne, "The Craftsmen of the Neo-Babylonian Period: A Study of the Textile and Metal Workers of the Eanna Temple" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2007); Kristin Kleber, *Tempel und Palast: die Beziehungen zwischen dem König und dem Eanna-Tempel im spätbabylonischen Uruk*, AOAT 358 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008); Bojana Janković, "Aspects of Urukean Agriculture in the First Millennium BC" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2013); and Yuval Levavi, *Administrative Epistolography in the Formative Phase of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, SbB 2, Dubsar 3 (Münster: Zafon, 2018).

> large institutions with multifaceted economic interests, and dependent personnel, hired men, and contractors of local and foreign origin took care of their holdings. Although Babylonian kings donated deportees and other spoils of war to temples, in many cases it remains unclear if a Judean person was hired by or dependent on the temple.[17]

The present study contextualizes the book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision, set forth in chapters 40–48, within the reality of Babylonian temples. The research at hand supplements many existing studies devoted to these chapters from a range of different perspectives.

In examining the Temple Vision in its context, our understanding of the exiles and their knowledge of the temples around them will be crucial. Our study benefits greatly from two recent scholarly developments, one in biblical studies and the other in Assyriology.

In biblical studies, earlier works have covered several discrete topics devoted to different dimensions of the future temple, the city, and the land in Ezekiel 40–48[18] – but current scholarship increasingly affirms the strong affinities be-

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17 Astola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 226.

18 Commentaries have been written on these chapters (e.g., Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, trans. Ronald E. Clements, BKAT XIII [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979]; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin, BKAT XIII [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983]; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, NICOT 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]; Kasher, *Ezekiel 1–24*; Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 2: Chapters 25–48* [in Hebrew] [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004]; Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* [New York: T&T Clark International, 2009]; Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018]). Many studies have also been written on Ezekiel 40–48 as a thematic unit, notwithstanding the different understandings of its aims. See Hartmut Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechietl (Kap. 40–48) traditionsgeschichtlich untersucht*, BHT 25 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957); Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Cambridge, MA: Scholars Press, 1976); Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 181–208; Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Paul M. Joyce, "Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40–48," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005): 145–63; Daniel M. O'Hare, *Have You Seen, Son of Man? A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48*, SBL 57 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Corrine L. Patton, "Ezekiel's Blueprint for the Temple of Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1991); Brian N. Peterson, *Ezekiel in Context: Ezekiel's Message Understood in Its Historical Settings of Covenant Curses and Ancient Near Eastern Mythological Motifs*, Princeton Theological Monographs 182 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012); Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48*, SBLDS 154 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Thilo A. Rudnig, *Heilig und Profan: Redaktionskritische Studien zu Ez 40–48*, BZAW 287 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000); Steven S. Tuell,

tween the book's language and imagery and that of the Babylonian cultural milieu,[19] as we will see in further detail in the next chapter.

On Babylonian temples, recent scholarship has led to an unprecedented expansion of knowledge on their physical structures and inner workings. Assyriologists have organized and mined the textual wealth of Babylonian archives, most of which belonged or pertained to temples, thereby constructing detailed portraits of these well-documented religious institutions. The temples' written records complement available architectural data, so that both the temples' physical structures, whose remains were excavated in previous centuries, and their day-to-day workings can be examined.[20] To this end, recent studies have detailed the accessible information about Babylonian temples in the Neo-Babylonian period, outlining archaeological remains, records of temple administra-

The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); and Adriane Leveen, "Returning the Body to Its Place: Ezekiel's Tour of the Temple," *HTR* 105, no. 4 (October 2012): 385–401.

19 For a discussion of the Babylonian context (beyond our discussion here, which is devoted to chapters 40–48), see the introductions to commentaries on Ezekiel: Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 16–17; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 15–17; and Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 4–6, among others. For additional scholarship, see: Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel"; Abraham Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014): 163–216; Jonathan Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, BZAW 478 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015): 223–52; Madhavi Nevader, "Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40–48?," in Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*, 268–91; Nissinen, "Babylonian Context." For previous surveys of the Babylonian influence on the book of Ezekiel, see the survey of research in Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, OBO 104 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 35–51, and the review of the Mesopotamian setting of the book of Ezekiel in John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 15–23. Note Astola's recent conclusion: "Analysis of Judean social networks reveals that deportees were in regular interaction with people from the urban upper class, because even the rural cuneiform scribes belonged to this group. At the same time, deportees and Babylonian scribes and priests did not belong to the same social circles, and they did not come together as friends or business partners or through marriage"; *Judeans in Babylonia*, 275.

20 The available Babylonian materials indicate a particularly close correlation between the archaeological remains and the written texts; Andrew George, "La Porte des Dieux: la topographie cultuelle de Babylone d'après les textes cuneiforms," in *La tour de Babylone. Études et recherches sur les monuments de Babylone*, ed. Béatrice André-Salvini (Rome: CNR, 2013): 29–42.

tion, and private archives of priestly and other families.[21] These are supplemented by descriptions of temples in topographical texts[22] as well as sources that recount royal (re)constructions of temples and other ritual texts.[23]

Furthermore, recent scholarship has helped deepen and enrich our understanding of Neo-Babylonian culture and allowed us to situate the Temple Vision in a Babylonian setting.[24] Parallels between Babylonian temples and the book of Ezekiel's temple are contextually significant.

We must note that parallels between the temples in Babylonia and the book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple do not imply that the book borrowed directly from the cultural milieu. Instead, this evidence allows us to reconstruct the temples with which the exiles would have been familiar, simply because of where the Judean went about their daily lives.[25] Temples, by virtue of their sheer size

21 For a survey of the archival material from first-millennium Babylonia, see Michael Jursa, *Neo-Babylonian Legal and Administrative Documents: Typology, Contents and Archives*, GMTR 1 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2005).

22 E.g., Andrew George, "The Bricks of Esagil," *Iraq* 57 (1995): 173–97; idem, "E-sangil and E-temen-anki: The Archetypal Cult-center," in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne. 2. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 24.–26. März 1998 in Berlin*, ed. Johannes Renger (Saarbrück: SDV, 1999): 67–86; idem, "The Tower of Babel: Archaeology, History and Cuneiform Texts," *AfO* 51 (2005–2006): 75–95.

23 E.g., Andrew George, "Four Temple Rituals from Babylon," in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature. Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. Andrew George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000): 259–300; Claus Ambos, *Mesopotamische Baurituale aus dem 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Dresden: ISLET, 2004); and Mark J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Among the relatively well-excavated temples from the periods under review are major temples in Borsippa, Babylon, Kish, Me-Turran, Larsa, Ur, and Uruk.

24 See Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho, eds., *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, WdO 45/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

25 Although note the exception of a few Judean deportees, who were more intimately acquainted with the temples, which we will see in more detail below. See Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 231: "Although the word *širku* ('temple dependant') is never used to characterise a Judean, some of the people discussed above were most likely temple dependants. At the same time, Judeans also rented temple lands for cultivation on a seemingly voluntary basis and without any formal ties to the temple. Given the huge size of the temple archives from Sippar and Uruk, very few Judeans are attested in temple-related documents. This is in stark contrast to the situation in the land-for-service sector, and it strongly indicates that the state primarily integrated deportees into its own economic sphere. Temples played only a minor role in Babylonian deportation schemes."

and splendor, dominated the Babylonian urban landscape.[26] Although we can reasonably assume that the exiles would not have been privy to the temples' administrative records themselves, these records serve to demonstrate that the temple organization complements the Temple Vision, and thus help to contextualize it. The Babylonian temples, then, may have served as a frame of reference for the author of the book of Ezekiel and the Temple Vision.

Studies devoted to the Judean exiles in Babylonia have not (directly or indirectly) addressed the visionary temple in the book of Ezekiel. Moreover, these chapters (40–48) are absent from almost every study dealing with the impact of the Babylonian context on the exiles. Earlier research examined the prophet's interaction with the Babylonian world – but a comprehensive study comparing all relevant aspects of the temple envisioned in Ezekiel chapters 40–48 to those of Babylonia has yet to be conducted. This volume aims to fill a lacuna in academic literature, tying the book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision to its Babylonian context.

In the absence of additional sources of information, it is difficult to determine unequivocally precisely where the book of Ezekiel would have been composed, but it seems fair to assume that the book's audience included different and diverse populations of Judeans from both urban and rural areas. Accordingly, the author would have been at least partly aware of temple practices and rituals that took place in Babylon's temples.

The book of Ezekiel's visionary temple, as we will see, reflects in direct and indirect ways the setting in which its words were written. The prophetic language, as well as the structure and workforce described in the Temple Vision, all indicate a firm entrenchment in the Babylonian world. Yet, despite the fact that the envisioned temple bears echoes of the world around, it is also revolutionary; the differences between the temple in Ezekiel and the Neo-Babylonian temples are starker, more noticeable, due to this contextualization. The greater our understanding of the milieu, the greater will be our comprehension of the ways in which the envisioned temple departed from the Neo-Babylonian ones.[27]

David Vanderhooft comments on the book as a whole: "while the prophet may not reflect self-consciously on the particular mechanisms of Babylonian

26 Ernst Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien: Typologie, Morphologie und Geschichte*, Denkmäler Antiker Architektur 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982), 284–85 (and the Babylon city plan on plate 382); Caroline Waerzeggers, *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, Achaemenid History 15 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten), 14–15.

27 For a recent review of the scholarly suggestions for the functions of Ezekiel 40–48, see Michael A. Lyons, *An Introduction to the Study of Ezekiel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 162–63.

imperial rule, he did adopt significant elements of the Babylonian cultural repertoire for the purpose not of criticizing the dominant culture, but for criticizing his own Judean community."[28] He further refers to "Ezekiel, whose ethereal opening vision has been widely thought to reflect influences from Mesopotamian art and which dislocates the reader from the outset."[29] He notes that

> such integration depended on the rapid adoption of economic practices and administrative norms native to the Babylonian heartland, where Hebrew speaking deportees quickly gained familiarity with administrative procedures in and around their settlements. The onomastic evidence points in the same direction. This evidence should help to reshape ideas about how to conceive what the phenomenon of exile represented for Judean deportees.[30]

Vanderhooft's assertion is supplemented by research on specific issues, such as Shawn Zelig Aster's observations with regard to the Mesopotamian *melammu* (radiance): "Ezekiel integrates the visual motifs from this art with visual motifs found in earlier biblical texts, especially those of the priestly literature."[31]

We are in a position, then, to use the available data to examine the biblical text against its Babylonian context. The language, the size of the temples, the hierarchical administrative structure of the temple staff, the activity that took place within the temples, and a variety of ritual aspects – all will be compared in the coming chapters to the details of Ezekiel 40–48's Temple Vision.[32]

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28 Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel," 101.

29 Ibid., 103.

30 Ibid., 106.

31 Shawn Zelig Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *Melammu*," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, 10–21.

32 A further dimension of research whose complexity has recently been highlighted is understanding "the Exile." Kelle, among others, has raised awareness of the need for a precise meaning of the term in recent years. He states: "Broader interdisciplinary and comparative study recontextualizes the realities of exile within Israelite/Judean history and its representations in biblical and other literature by locating it more firmly as one manifestation of a sociological, anthropological, and psychological phenomenon known in diverse times and settings. In so doing, such study pushes historians and biblical interpreters to go beyond the simple reconstruction of events and offers new perspectives involving the social, psychological, and human dimensions of both the experiences and expressions of the exile"; Brad E. Kelle, "An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Exile," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011): 34; Casey Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile*, BZAW 436 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2013). A secondary purpose of the present study, then, is to provide insight into the new dimensions of the "exilic" effect on the exiles' theological views.

2.2 Babylonian Temple Sources: An Overview

Even though it is difficult to date Ezekiel's Temple Vision with precision, and therefore to determine which Babylonian sources existed in the years of the Temple Vision in the sixth century BCE, chapters 40–48 in Ezekiel fall within the period now referred to in first-millennium-BCE Assyriology as the long sixth century, between the rise of Nabopolassar in 626 BCE and the Babylonian revolt against the Persians in 484 BCE.[33] The long sixth century is an especially well-documented period, with tens of thousands of cuneiform sources known today, most of which are archival texts from private and temple archives.[34]

For the present study, three archival groups are of special importance. The first two are temple archives: first, of the Eanna, the temple of Ištar in Uruk, and, second, of the Ebabbar, the temple of Šamaš in Sippar. These are the largest first-millennium archives (with approximately eight thousand and thirty-five thousand tablets and fragments, respectively), and they attest to the day-to-day administrative, legal, and cultic activities within the temples. These archives reflect the temples' complex administration, their position within the Babylonian social and economic landscape, and their relation and interaction with the state.

The third fount is a group of archives that come from the city of Borsippa and belonged to several priestly families who were part of the temple household of Ezida, the temple of Nabû.[35] These archives, although "private" in nature, illuminate the lives of Babylonian priests during the long sixth century. This allows us to examine not only the activities that were directly related to their positions in the temple, but also the socioeconomic milieu of Babylonian priests in the more general sense.

In addition to the archival sources, important information comes from two other groups of texts, which, though much smaller, have a wider chronological range: ritual texts and topographical texts. Most of the ritual texts known today are relatively late, primarily from the Hellenistic period, and come from Uruk and Babylon.[36] Despite postdating the Neo-Babylonian period by a few hundred years, some ritual texts contain older traditions and can therefore be used –

33 For the adoption and adaptation of the "long sixth century," see Michael Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC. Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth*, with contributions by Johannes Hackl et al., AOAT 377 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010), 4–5.

34 For a survey of cuneiform sources from first-millennium Babylonia, see Jursa, *Documents*.

35 On these archives, see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*.

36 See Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*.

with caution – for the study of cultic activity and rituals in first-millennium Babylonian temples.[37] The term "topographical texts" refers to a group of scholarly works containing lists of sacred epithets and ceremonial names of topographical features, mainly (but not exclusively) belonging to temples.[38] The topographical texts are not mere checklists; rather, they provide us with a systematic layout of temples, shrines, gates, courtyards, and more. The texts expose us to the scholarly traditions, theologies, and oftentimes functionality of sacred architectonic features.

Another perspective that should be taken into consideration is the archaeological one. The first such treatment of Babylonian temples was conducted by Robert Koldewey,[39] based on his excavations of the Ésagila temple in Babylon and the Ezida temple in Borsippa.[40] Another notable early study is by Walter Andrae.[41] The most comprehensive is still Ernst Heinrich's *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien: Typologie, Morphologie und Geschichte*.[42] Among the works published since,[43] Corinne Castel's 1991 "Temples à l'époque néo-babylonienne: une même conception de l'espace sacré," with its survey of most of the relevant Babylonian temples and their layouts, should be noted.

Babylonian temples show great continuity from earlier periods. The findings reflect a partial picture of these temples, which were often renovated by the Assyrian kings and later by Babylonian kings.[44] Thus, it is better to speak of

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37 For the texts and the issue of extrapolating and comparing older and later traditions, see Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 1–4.

38 Andrew George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, OLA 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 1–2.

39 Robert Koldewey, *Die Tempel von Babylon und Borsippa: nach den Ausgrabungen durch die Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911).

40 Ésagila was the temple of Marduk, head of the Babylonian Pantheon, in Babylon. It was the main temple in Babylonia during the first millennium BCE. Ezida was the temple of Nabû in the city of Borsippa and can be regarded as second only to the Ésagila in Babylon; see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, xv.

41 Walter Andrae, *Das Gotteshaus und die Urformen des Bauens im Alten Orient* (Berlin: Schoetz & Co., 1930).

42 See note 26 above.

43 E.g., Jean-Claude Margueron, "Sanctuaires sémitiques," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. Jacques Briend and Édouard Cothenet (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1991), col. 1104–1258; Peter Miglus, "Zwei Nergal-Tempel zwischen babylonischer und assyrischer Tradition," in *Here and There, Across the Near East: Studies in Honour of Krystyna Lyczkowska*, ed. Olga Drewnowska-Rymarz (Warshaw: Agade, 2009), 157–70; Margarete van Ess, "Gestaltung religiöser Architektur in Babylonien. Das Beispiel des Eanna-Heiligtums in Uruk," in *Heiligtümer: Gestalt und Ritual, Kontinuität und Veränderung*, ed. Iris Gerlach and Dietrich Raue (Rahden: Marie Leidorf, 2013): 197–208, to name just a few.

44 See, for example, a recent reevaluation of the archaeological data from Borsippa (Ezida) and Babylon (the E-mah temple and the Ištar gate), which resulted in the transfer of phases

Babylonian temples *during* the Neo-Babylonian period than to speak of distinct Babylonian features and innovations.[45] While we focus on Babylonian temples from the eighth century BCE (late Neo-Assyrian period) until the sixth/fifth centuries (Persian period), the slightly later Rēš temple from Hellenistic Uruk may also be a helpful reference, as it is the best example of the combination of archaeological and textual data, and more importantly, it is still a "Babylonian temple."[46] In the context of late Bronze and Iron Age temples in the Levant, different categories of sanctuaries can be discussed.[47] The decisive consideration in the discussion before us is the degree to which the exiles of Judea may have been familiar with the temple or its rituals. The temples discussed below correspond to two categories: main sanctuaries / city temples and subordinate sanctuaries. Rural temples – or any cult center that was not within an urban center, for that matter – are not discussed; the sources available on them are insufficient. Throughout this book, we will refer to information garnered from archival sources, ritual and topographical texts, and archaeological findings in order to lay the groundwork for a comparison between the Temple Vision and the Babylonian temples.

2.3 The Judean Exiles in Primary and Secondary Sources

Two sources of information regarding the Judean exiles in Babylonia are available to us: the prophetic literature in the Hebrew Bible and cuneiform records.[48]

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previously thought to be Babylonian to the Persian and Hellenistic periods. This is especially critical for the Ezida temple itself, which was treated as a *Leittypus* – or leading type – of the Babylonian temple (Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 291–94, 312–13, *apud* Wilfred Allinger-Csollich, Sandra Heinsch, and Walter Kuntner, "Babylon. Past, Present, Future. The Project 'Comparative Studies Babylon-Borsippa': A Synopsis," in *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East. 1 [6 ICAANE. 2010]*, ed. Paolo Matthiae et al. [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010], 32), but is now dated to the Persian period (and later) rather than using the previously understood Neo-Babylonian dating.

45 As noted by Corinne Castel, "Temples à l'époque néo-babylonienne: une même conception de l'espace sacré," *RA* 85 (1991), 179.

46 The Rēš temple, the temple of Anu in the city of Uruk, replaced Eanna, temple of Ištar, as the main temple of Uruk from the late Persian period onwards. See Heather Baker, "Beneath the Stairs in the Rēš temple of Hellenistic Uruk. A Study in Cultic Topography and Spatial Organization," *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 6 (2013): 18–42 for a study on the archaeological and textual data regarding the Rēš temple.

47 Jens Kamlah, "Temples of the Levant – Comparative Aspects," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. mill. BCE)*, ADPV 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012): 507–34.

48 This section is based primarily on research conducted by Yuval Levavi.

The cuneiform records are a window to the world in which the exiles lived, and give us a fuller picture of the Judeans in exile at the time, and it is to these records that we now turn.[49]

The distribution and context of Judean individuals and groups in cuneiform sources is diverse, encompassing differences both geographical and chronological.[50] Most of the sources pertain to the rural communities located in the agricultural hinterland around Nippur (most probably to the southeast towards Uruk).[51] These come first and foremost from the so-called Al-Yahudu tablets dated to the early sixth–early fifth century BCE, as well as from the Murašû archive dated to the mid–late fifth century BCE. A second source of information is the listing of the entourage of King Jehoiachin, available to us in four ration lists from Nebuchadnezzar's South Palace in Babylon.[52] These are dated to the first decade of the 597 BCE exile and allow us a glimpse into the life of the exiled Judean elite in the capital. A third dossier of seven tablets pertains to a small group of Judean royal merchants from the city of Sippar,[53] and is dated between the mid-sixth and the early fifth century BCE (that is, the last twenty years of the Neo-Babylonian period and the first forty years of the Persian period).

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49 The literature regarding the biblical sources, their perspective on the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and the exiles is vast and multifaceted; for select examples, see David S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999); Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, StBibLit 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlements of the Southern Kingdom of Judah*, BZAW 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); David M. Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Thomas Römer, "The Invention of History in Ancient Judah and the Formation of the Hebrew Bible," *WO* 45, no. 2 (2015): 255–72; Yair Hoffman, *The Good Figs: The Jehoiachin Exile and Its Heritage* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2018).

50 The most comprehensive and recent treatment of Judean exiles in cuneiform sources can be found in Tero Alstola's recently published book, *Judeans in Babylonia*.

51 See Peter Zilberg, "Lands and Estates around āl-Yāhūdu and the Geographical Connection with the Murašû Archive," *Afo* 54, forthcoming.

52 Ernst F. Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda, in Babylonischen Keilschrifttexten," in *Melanges syriensofferts a Monsieur Rene Dussaud par ses amis et ses eleves 2*, Bibliotheque archéologique et historique 30 (Paris: Geuthner, 1939), 923–35. For a recent discussion of the texts see Astola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 58–77.

53 Yigal Bloch, "Judeans in Sippar and Susa during the First Century of the Babylonian Exile: Assimilation and Perseverance under Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Rule," *Journal of Near Eastern History* 2 (2014): 119–72; Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*; Shana S. Zaia, "Another Attestation of Basiya, son of Ariḫ, a Judean Merchant in Sippar," *NABU* 2019, no. 3: 78.

As early as the late nineteenth century, Judean individuals were identified in cuneiform records.[54] These came from the well-known Murašû family archive from the city of Nippur. Early discussions on the subject include Albert T. Clay's study of Yahwistic names in the Murašû archive in his 1907 *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*[55] and Samuel Daiches's 1910 examination of the lives of the exiles in light of cuneiform sources.[56] In 1939, Ernst Weidner published the four ration lists from the archive of Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon, which listed, among others, King Jehoiachin himself, his five sons, and additional Judeans as receiving food and oil rations following their deportation in 597 BCE.[57] To date, these texts are the only published documentation of Judean exiles from the palace archive. This unique source relates to a key group of Judean exiles, living under the royal court's supervision – Judean exiles are not documented otherwise in cuneiform records in similar context – and further supports the idea that some Judeans, including the person recording the Temple Vision, would have been more familiar with the temples themselves.

The 1970s saw a series of studies dealing with West Semitic names – including, specifically, the Judean onomasticon – in cuneiform texts, conducted by Michael D. Coogan.[58] Ran Zadok's[59] prolific and continuous body of work forms much of the base for our understanding of foreign communities in sixth-century Babylonia.[60] An examination of the exilic experience in the wider sense is of-

54 Hermann V. Hilprecht and Albert T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashû Sons of Nippur: Dated in the Reign of Artaxerxes I (464–424 B. C.)*, The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania Series A, volume 9 (Philadelphia: The Department of Archaeology and Paleontology of the University of Pennsylvania, 1898).

55 Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1907.

56 Samuel Daiches, *The Jews in Babylonia in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah according to Babylonian Inscriptions*, Jews' College Publications 2 (London: Jews' College, 1910).

57 Weidner, "Jojachin." Jehoiachin is mentioned five times in the cuneiform records, and the "king of Judah" is mentioned five times (in some cases, in the same sentence), assuming the proposed completions are correct.

58 Michael David Coogan, "Patterns in Jewish Personal Names in the Babylonian Diaspora," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 4 (1973): 183–91; idem, "Life in the Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century B.C.," *BA* 37 (1974): 183–91; idem, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašû Documents*, HSM 7 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976); idem, "More Yahwistic Names in the Murashu Documents," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1976): 199–200.

59 Ran Zadok, *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: An Onomastic Study* (Jerusalem: Wanaarta, 1977); idem, *The Jews in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods according to the Babylonian Sources*, Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel Monograph Series 3 (Haifa: The University of Haifa, 1979).

60 E.g., Ran Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography*, OLA 28 (Leuven: Peeters, 1988); idem, *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic*

fered by Israel Eph'al;[61] the work of Elias Bickerman[62] and Bustenay Oded has also proved illuminating on the topic.[63]

Michael Jursa identified a family of Judean merchants from the city of Sippar who had close connections to the royal palace.[64] The same dossier was later discussed by Yigal Bloch, Tero Alstola, and Shana Zaia.[65] These Judeans did not live in a rural environment like those in the Murašû archive, nor were they "confined" to direct palace supervision like Jehoiachin and his entourage. They were well integrated within the local urban settings and had multiple cultural and economic opportunities as traders. In this context, Caroline Waerzeggers's

Mesopotamia, Publications of the Diaspora Research Institute 151 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002); idem, "The Representation of Foreigners in Neo- and Late-Babylonian Legal Documents (Eighth through Second Centuries B.C.E.)," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003): 471–589; idem, "Israelites, Judeans and Iranians in Mesopotamia and Adjacent Regions," in *God's Word for Our World*, vol. 2, *Theological and Cultural Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, ed. J. Harold Ellens et al., JSOTSup 389 (London: T&T Clark, 2004): 98–127; idem, "Judeans in Babylonia – Updating the Dossier," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 160 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014): 109–29; idem, "West Semitic Groups in the Nippur Region between c. 750 and 330 B.C.E.," in Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*, 94–156; idem, "Israelites and Judaeans in the Neo-Assyrian Documentation (732–602 B.C.E.): An Overview of the Sources and a Socio-Historical Assessment," *BASOR* 374 (2015): 159–89; idem, "Notes on the Onomastics from Yahūdu," *NABU* 2015, no. 3: 140–42; idem, "Yamu-iziri the Summoner of Yahūdu and Aramaic Linguistic Interference," *NABU* 2015, no. 3: 142–44.

61 Israel Eph'al, "The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th–5th Centuries B.C.: Maintenance and Cohesion," *Orientalia* 47, no. 1 (1978): 74–90; idem, "On the Political and Social Organization of the Jews in Babylonian Exile," in *XXI. Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 24. bis 29. März 1980 in Berlin: Vorträge*, ed. Fritz Steppat, ZDMGSup 5 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983): 106–12.

62 Elias J. Bickerman, "The Generation of Ezra and Nehemiah," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 1–28; idem, "The Babylonian Captivity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism Volume 1: Introduction: The Persian Period*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 342–58.

63 Bustenay Oded, "Observations on the Israelite/Judaean Exiles in Mesopotamia during the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE," in *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East: Festschrift E. Lipiński*, ed. Karel van Lerberghe and Anton Schoors, OLA 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995): 205–12; idem, "The Settlements of the Israelite and the Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia in the 8th–6th Centuries BCE," in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai*, ed. Gershon Galil and Moshe Weinfeld, VTSup 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 91–103.

64 Michael Jursa, "Eine Familie von Königskaufleuten judäischer Herkunft," *NABU* 2007, no. 2: 23.

65 Bloch, "Sippar and Susa"; Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*; Zaia, "Basiya."

2014 paper, in which she suggests possible contacts and interaction settings for Judean exiles with the local Babylonian elite, is also noteworthy.[66]

In the past decade there has been an increase in the number of studies devoted to different aspects of the Neo-Babylonian Empire due to the publication of the Al-Yahudu tablets. The existence of the village of Al-Yahudu, literally Judah (town), has been known to scholars since the final decade of the last century with the publication of two texts from Shlomo Moussaieff's collection by Francis Joannès and André Lemaire.[67] Two additional texts from the same collection were published a few years later by Kathleen Abraham.[68] Yet it was Laurie Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch's publication of the texts from the tablet from the Sofer Collection that allowed a wider circle of scholars to delve into the texts.[69] Additional and substantial groups of tablets still await publication: the tablet from the Schøyen Collection (ninety-seven texts)[70] and a group of about forty tablets which were confiscated by the Iraqi antiquities authorities.[71] In total, the tablets from Al-Yahudu, Našar, Abi-Râm, and their vicinity amount to about 250 texts, fifty-four of them from Al-Yahudu itself.

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66 Caroline Waerzeggers, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 160 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014): 131–46.

67 Francis Joannès and André Lemaire, "Trois tablettes cunéiformes à onomastique ouest-sémitique (collection Sh. Moussaïeff)," *Transeuphratène* 17 (1999): 17–34. Only one of the texts was from Al-Yahudu, while the other was written in nearby Našar. An earlier paper (Joannès and Lemaire, "Contrats babyloniens d'époque achéménide du Bît-Abî râm avec une épigraphe araméenne," *RA* 90 [1996]: 41–60) published seven texts from the village of Abi-râm, which is nearby; these seven texts belong to the wider, archival background of the Al-Yahudu texts.

68 Kathleen Abraham, "West Semitic and Judean Brides in Cuneiform Sources from the Sixth Century B.C.E.: New Evidence from a Marriage Contract from Āl-Yahudu," *AfO* 51 (2005–2006): 198–219; idem, "An Inheritance Division among Judeans in Babylonia from the Early Persian Period," in *New Seals and Inscriptions: Hebrew, Idumean and Cuneiform*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Hebrew Bible Monographs 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007): 206–21.

69 Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*, CUSAS 28 (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2014).

70 Cornelia Wunsch, *Judeans by the Waters of Babylon: New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia in the Schøyen Collection*, with contributions by Laurie E. Pearce, Babylonische Archive 6 (Dresden: ISLET, forthcoming).

71 These texts are slated to be published by Amena Fadhil Al-Bayati in the Babylonische Archive series; Johannes Hackl, "Babylonian Scribal Practices in Rural Contexts: A Linguistic Survey of the Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia," in *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria: Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien 5 (Weisebaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 126, n. 5.

Apart from the publications mentioned above, several studies have dealt with various dimensions of the new material. Angelika Berlejung discusses the social status of the Judeans in the Al-Yahudu community, describing a (positive) change over time.[72] Legal aspects are discussed by Abraham (marriage)[73] and Wunsch and Magdalene (slavery).[74] Onomastics is dealt with by Laurie Pearce,[75] Johannes Hackl examines the scribal practices in the rural hinterland of Nippur,[76] and Yuval Levavi tackles an administrative peculiarity concerning the Judeans within the land-for-service system.[77] Finally, we note two publications that have great significance, and should be considered before drawing conclusions based on the publications above: The first is Caroline Waerzeggers's review of *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* (CUSAS 28),[78] in which she rightly criticizes some of the basic assumptions made in the initial publication regarding the provenance of the different sources.[79] The second is the recent publication by Alstola,[80]

72 Angelika Berlejung, "Social Climbing in the Babylonian Exile," in Berlejung, Maeir, and Schüle, *Wandering Arameans*, 101–24; idem, "New Life, New Skills and New Friends in Exile: The Loss and Rise of Capitals of the Judeans in Babylonia," in *Alphabets, Texts and Artifacts in the Ancient Near East: Studies Presented to Benjamin Sass*, ed. Israel Finkelstein, Christian Robin, and Thomas Römer (Paris: Van Dieren, 2017): 12–46.

73 Kathleen Abraham, "Negotiating Marriage in Multicultural Babylonia: An Example from the Judean Community in Āl-Yāhūdu," in Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*, 33–57.

74 Cornelia Wunsch and F. Rachel Magdalene, "Freedom and Dependency: Neo-Babylonian Manumission Documents with Oblation and Service Obligation," in *Extraction & Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper*, ed. Michael Kozuh et al., SAOC 68 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2014): 337–46.

75 Laurie Pearce, "Identifying Judeans and Judean Identity in the Babylonian Evidence," in Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*, 7–32.

76 Johannes Hackl, "Babylonian Scribal Practices in Rural Contexts: A Linguistic Survey of the Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia," in Berlejung, Maeir, and Schüle, *Wandering Arameans*, 125–40.

77 Yuval Levavi, "A Peculiar Taxation Practice of Judean Exiles in Rural Babylonia and Its Possible Connection to Building Activity in Late Sixth Century Judah," in *Research on Israel and Aram: Autonomy, Independence and Related Issues: Proceedings of the First Annual RIAB Center Conference, Leipzig, June 2016*, ed. Angelika Berlejung and Aren Maeir (Tübingen: Mohr Sieback, 2019): 395–407.

78 Caroline Waerzeggers, "Review of *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* by Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch," *Strata* 33 (2015): 179–94.

79 Waerzeggers stresses that though the archival context of the tablet remains unclear, we are not dealing with three distinct archives (as argued by Pierce and Wunsch). While one may identify thematic, temporal, or individual dossiers within the sources, we should be looking for a unifying framework in which the different tablets were deposited in antiquity. Furthermore, this framework should be sought in the sphere of public administration rather than the private sector.

80 Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*.

which includes the most up-to-date discussion of Judeans within cuneiform records.

The foundations built over more than one hundred years of research give us a clearer picture of the lives of the Judeans in Babylonian exile, and make it possible for us to more accurately assess Ezekiel's Temple Vision in the context in which it was formed.

2.4 The Temple Vision and the Babylonian Temples

As we will show throughout the coming chapters, alongside the similarities between the visionary temple in the book of Ezekiel and its Babylonian counterparts, profound differences exist. These differences stem from the variance between the nature of the envisioned future temple and its immediate context; the book of Ezekiel's restoration prophecies diverge from Babylon's active and actualized temples and the important economic role the Babylonian temples played. To what extent did the Babylonian temples interact with the outside world and, given that, how likely is it that the book's author could have known how they functioned on a daily basis? As we have noted, the significant parallels between the Babylonian temples and the book of Ezekiel's temple do not necessarily imply that the text borrowed anything directly from the cultural milieu – but the book's author and readers were certainly familiar with the Babylonian temples that dominated the urban landscape.

Seemingly, the temple in Ezekiel and the book's theocentric worldview were influenced by the Babylonian milieu. They were also affected by the rich Babylonian cultic practices, which differed fundamentally from those with which the Judean exiles were familiar. Their reactions to the temples and their general environment may have run the gamut from adopting the surrounding culture to erecting barriers.

Nevertheless, an ancient audience was likely to have imagined the envisioned temple construction along the lines of the temples with which it was most familiar. Therefore, seeking a Babylonian context for the book of Ezekiel's temple is important; it is in Babylonian Mesopotamia that the Temple Vision was born and that the book's audience lived.

3 The Language of the Temple Vision

If the book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision was informed by its Babylonian surroundings, then the first indication of that influence would be in the language used within the prophecy, assuming the author was among the exiles settled among Akkadian and Aramaic speakers in Babylonia. So, what language would the exiles have heard or spoken? How might we see its influence in the book? It is to these questions that we now turn. We begin by considering what language or languages the exiles in Babylonia were familiar with and then search for evidence of their influence within the chapters that make up the Temple Vision.

3.1 The Language of Babylonia: A Transitional Period

Language was an important component of Babylonian identity during the Neo-Babylonian period – but the language used by the Babylonians shifted over time.[1] The use of Akkadian saw a gradual decrease during the first millennium, while the use of Aramaic grew.[2] As Still notes,

> Aramean and Chaldean presence in Mesopotamia [...] helps us understand the complex dynamics of the linguistic landscape of the long sixth century. [...] Assyria was starting to "Aramaicise" [from] at least the ninth century BCE, leading to the adoption of Aramaic [...] as the second administrative language in the Empire. [...] The Neo-Babylonian state administration was undoubtedly also bilingual.[3]

1 For the Babylonian language as a component of identity, see Bastian Still, *The Social World of Babylonian Priests* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 218–27.

2 Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "Aspects of Aramaic and Babylonian Linguistic Interaction in First Millennium BC Iraq," *Journal of Language Contact* 6 (2013): 358–78; Johannes Hackl, "Zur Sprachsituation im Babylonien des ersten Jahrtausends v. Chr. Ein Beitrag zur Sprachgeschichte des jüngeren Akkadischen," in *Mehrsprachigkeit: Vom Alten Orient bis zum Esperanto*, ed. Sebastian Fink, Martin Lang, and Manfred Schretter, Dubsar 2 (Münster: Zaphon, 2018): 209–38.

Here we have listed only studies that directly discuss Aramaisms in the book of Ezekiel. The extensive literature that identifies foreign influence on Hebrew, in addition to the scholarly debate on the linguistic material in Ezekiel and the extent that it reflects LBH (Late Biblical Hebrew), TBH (Transitional Biblical Hebrew), and CBH (Classical Biblical Hebrew) should be noted. See recently: Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem*, CahRB 20 (Paris: Gabalda, 1982); Mats Eskhult, "The Importance of Loanwords for Dating Biblical Hebrew Texts," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young (London: T&T Clark, 2003): 8–23; Ronald Hendel and Jan Joosten, *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 79–81, 115–18.

3 Still, *Social World*, 220–21.

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This process, in which increased use of Aramaic ultimately marginalized the use of Akkadian, began in the Assyrian Period, and continued throughout the Babylonian and Persian Periods; this transition was at its height during the late Babylonian period, the time when the book of Ezekiel was composed.[4]

Akkadian, specifically the late-Babylonian dialect, was in regular use during this period – both orally and in writing – within the Babylonian urban elite, mainly within the priestly, temple communities.[5] Furthermore, it was the language spoken by (and to) the gods, the language the general public was exposed to during the religious celebrations held in the streets, such as Babylon's Akītu festival.[6]

Since priests were part of the administrative elite, they would presumably have received scribal education. We can be "virtually certain that many, if not most of the first millennium priests could read and write." But priests did not have a monopoly on literacy;[7] scribes were also educated at home or in the temple. We can conclude that, as most of the members of the priestly class could read and write, they, too, transmitted traditions.[8] Nevertheless, Michael Jursa argues that literacy in first-millennium temple communities was certainly not only reserved for high administrators, temple clerks, and ritual specialists – for example, temple-enterers, cultic singers, and exorcists, for whom reading and writing must have been a professional necessity – but was common among the lower priestly class as well. In fact, most evidence for literacy among priests concerns prebendary (share-owning priestly) families from the latter group.[9]

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4 David Vanderhooft, "ʾEl-mědînâ ûmědînâ kiktābāh: Scribes and Scripts in Yehud and in Achaemenid Transeuphratene," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 532. Vanderhooft concludes that the Aramaic script was transmitted by the scribes, who emerged as functionaries associated with different officials at various levels throughout the empire.

5 Apart from its use in the vast administrative archives of the Babylonian temples, the daily use of Akkadian is illustrated in private and administrative correspondence, which was still carried out in cuneiform; see Michael Jursa, Johannes Hackl, and Martina Schmidl, *Spätbabylonische Privatbriefe*, SbB 1, AOAT 414/1 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2014); Yuval Levavi, *Administrative Epistolography in the Formative Phase of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, SbB 2, Dubsar 3 (Münster: Zafon, 2018).

6 For a detailed discussion of the Akītu festival, see below.

7 See Michael Jursa, "Cuneiform Writing in Neo-Babylonian Temple Communities," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 191.

8 Petra D. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausent v. Chr*, AOAT 275 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2001); Niek Veldhuis, "On the Curriculum of the Neo-Babylonian School," *JAOS* 123, no. 3 (2003): 627–33.

9 In Babylonian temples, prebendary families were part of the prebendary system of owning "shares" (*isqū*) in the cult. Prebend is defined by Van Driel as "the customary function-related

"While writing was becoming more available to lower strata of society in first millennium Babylonia," writes Still,

> much of the day-to-day business in the suburbs and certainly in the countryside did not necessitate written cuneiform documentation. If documentation was needed, then many might have favoured the Aramaic script and language. [...] Mastering the art of cuneiform was time-consuming [... and] largely reserved for those who commanded enough money and time. [...] While Aramaic was becoming the dominant vernacular in Babylonia and the principal language of empire, especially under Persian rule, it did not supplant the use of local languages.[10]

Moreover, Still notes that

> the old-stock Babylonian families aimed for a wholesale adoption of cuneiform as well as Babylonian, the language they spoke at home and presumably within their immediate social milieu. [...] In the course of their education students learned how to read and draw up documents and came into contact with the masterpieces of the Akkadian literature that proclaimed the central concepts, symbols, and values of Babylonian culture.[11]

In addition, we should emphasize, as Still has demonstrated, that this level of literacy was not exclusive to the priestly families; other groups – such as high officials, military personnel, and private entrepreneurs – most likely provided their children with these opportunities.[12] Within this framework, the urban elites were equally responsible for the preservation and transmission of scribal knowledge and the central concepts, symbols, and values of Babylonian culture from one generation to the next.[13]

Outside of the (urban-based) priestly stratum, however, Aramaic had the upper hand. The streets of Babylon were full of foreign languages from all over the ancient Near East, but Aramaic was most commonly used.[14] This is reflected in the few short notes in Aramaic alphabetic script added on the margins of

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income of the Mesopotamian institutional clergy in the combination with a task in the cult of the gods, in which the degree of direct contact with the divine was of special importance"; see Govert Van Driel, "Pfründe (Prebends)," *RlA* 10 (2005): 518–19. We will discuss prebends in further detail in chapter 5.

10 Still, *Social World*, 217.

11 Ibid., 223.

12 According to Still (*Social World*, 233–38), the accrued annual revenues of the wealthier Babylonian strata enabled them to invest in cultural capital such as scribal education. On scribal education in the first millennium, see Gesche, *Schulunterricht*.

13 Still, *Social World*, 236.

14 See Beaulieu, "Linguistic Interaction."

texts written in Akkadian in cuneiform script, which may indicate that the reader understood Akkadian but spoke Aramaic more often.[15]

The world in which the book of Ezekiel was composed contained many languages: on top of the local languages, Akkadian held a special status among the priests and other elites; nonetheless, the introduction of Aramaic had begun to marginalize Akkadian in the long sixth century's transitional linguistic period. But what languages would have been familiar to the exiles?

3.2 The Language of the Judean Exiles

In studying the linguistic distinction of the book of Ezekiel, the exiles' literacy in those languages used by the elites must be assessed. Would they have known cuneiform? Recent scholarly discourse has increasingly moved towards acknowledging the exiles' familiarity not only with the Akkadian language, but even various levels of literacy in cuneiform. Some scholars – taking for granted the stated authorship of the book – assess the prophet Ezekiel's Neo-Babylonian literacy. Abraham Winitzer, for example, argues for Ezekiel's intimate familiarity with the text of the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, as well as with other aspects of Babylonian scholarship such as mathematical hermeneutic practices.[16] Jonathan Stökl cautiously advances the argument by suggesting that Eze-

15 This was not a particularly common occurrence: "In contrast to tens of thousands of extant clay tablets written in Akkadian cuneiform, only a small number of short Aramaic inscriptions on clay tablets and bricks have survived. Aramaic was primarily written on perishable materials such as parchment and papyrus, of which nothing is left in Southern Mesopotamia" (Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE*, CHANE 109 [Leiden: Brill, 2019], 16). From the period of the Neo-Babylonian and the Achaemenid Empires, there are about three hundred known Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform. See Yigal Bloch, *Alphabet Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform: Sēpiru Professionals in Mesopotamia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press 2018), 79–88. Michael Streck lists the following Aramaic epigraphs in the Al-Yahudu corpus: *šlmyh* (CUSAS 28, 10); *šṭr xy'*? (CUSAS 28, 40); *'bd*[*y*? ...] (CUSAS 28, 41); *n*[*ny*/*'*]*ltr*⌈*ḥ*⌉ x (CUSAS 28, 42); *bl'dn* (CUSAS 28, 102); *šṭr k* (CUSAS 28, 71 and 71B); and *byt'lḥsn*⌈*y*⌉ *tmrn krn* 6 (CUSAS 28, 53). See Michael P. Streck, "Late Babylonian in Aramaic Epigraphs on Cuneiform Tablets," in *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria: Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle, Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien 5 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 169–94. Michael Streck and Eleonora Cussini (among others) have done significant work to analyze evidence of Aramaic epigraphs on late Babylonian cuneiform tablets. An overview can be found in Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 104–56.

16 Abraham Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

kiel actually underwent some kind of formal (cuneiform) scribal education.[17] The book of Ezekiel indeed reveals an impressive knowledge of the Babylonian learned landscape.[18] It appears that we can assume that there may have been a Judean elite that was in contact with the local priests, as we will see later on in this chapter.[19]

Over the years – as the Judeans' stay in exile in Babylonia and then in Persia continued – the Judeans spoke Aramaic at home and in their interactions with their neighbors. Aramaic had become the language of commerce, politics,

17 Jonathan Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, BZAW 478 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015): 223–52; idem, "Schoolboy Ezekiel: Remarks on the Transmission of Learning," in *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, ed. Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho, *WO* 45, no. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015): 50–61.

18 Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies," 206. The extent to which Babylonian Judeans, including scribes and prophets, were exposed to Akkadian sources is under debate. See for example, Wilfred G. Lambert, "Some New Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon, and Hugh Godfrey Maturin Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 30–42. The various groups of Judeans appearing in cuneiform records reflect a complex social stratification among the exiles. These groups include the Judean elite in Babylon itself (Jehoiachin and his entourage), Judean merchants from the city of Sippar (with connections to the palace as well as to the temple), subsistence farmers in the Nippur hinterland (Al-Yahudu and Murashu), and Judean clerks working in the Persian administration. Any discussion of the exiles' knowledge of Aramaic and/or Akkadian must take into consideration the specific context. See, for example, Kathleen Abraham, "An Inheritance Division among Judeans in Babylonia from the Early Persian Period," in *New Seals and Inscriptions: Hebrew, Idumean and Cuneiform*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Hebrew Bible Monographs 8 (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2007): 206–21; Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*; Ran Zadok, *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia*, Publications of the Diaspora Research Institute 151 (Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, 2002). For a discussion of the contact between Hebrew and Aramaic in the mid-sixth and the mid-fifth centuries BCE, when Hebrew began functioning as a minority language, based on Jeremiah 10:1–16, see Noam Mizrahi, "A Matter of Choice: A Sociolinguistic Perspective of the Contact between Hebrew and Aramaic, with Special Attention to Jer. 10.1–16," in *Discourse, Dialogue, and Debate in the Bible: Essays in Honour of Frank H. Polak*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2014): 107–24.

19 Later evidence, stemming from the fourth to the second century BCE, suggests links between the Judean elite and the Babylonian priests; it can be seen in the "Aḥiqar Proverbs" (second half of the fifth century BCE), the prayer of Nabonidus from Qumran, and the traditions reflected in the book of Daniel; see, for example, Caroline Waerzeggers, "The Prayer of Nabonidus in the Light of Hellenistic Babylonian Literature," in *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World*, ed. Mladen Popović, Miles Schoonover, and Marijn Vandenberghe (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 64–75.

and even law.[20] But Aramaic had been spoken in the land of Israel prior to the exile. One verse in Aramaic appears in the contemporary book of Jeremiah (Jer 10:11) and the books of Isaiah and 2 Kings include an earlier account of a request to "please, speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in Judean" (Isa 36:11; 2 Kgs 18:26), indicating that functionaries spoke Aramaic. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther reveal to us that in later decades the Judeans spoke Hebrew and Aramaic.[21] See, for example, Aaron Koller's remarks regarding the language of the book of Esther:

> The first decision he [Marduka] made was to write in Hebrew. Not all the Jews in his community could read, let alone write, Hebrew, but his own education had been quite strong, and he was confident that he could write a whole story in Hebrew. He savored the idea, too. Some had taken to calling Hebrew "Yehudite," or, in other words, the language spoken by the people of Yehud. Others called it "the language of the sanctuary" (leshon ha-qodesh).[22]

The shift in use of language around the time of the book's composition is significant. The appearance of Aramaic words and forms in the book of Ezekiel may be evidence of Babylonian influence, but it is in no way a certainty. Akkadian, on the other hand, was a language that the exiles had not yet encountered when they moved to Babylonia. Its appearance or echoes in the book of Ezekiel are far more significant.

The Babylonians had a proud linguistic heritage, one that included well-known and respected literature in Akkadian. Beyond the exiles' familiarity with the languages themselves, they may have been influenced by some Babylonian ideas. Winitzer argues for allusions to the Epic of Gilgamesh in the book of Ezekiel, especially in the oracles against Tyre (28:1–19). He suggests that numerous expressions and literary allusions reflect the Epic's title and context; the exiles' acquaintance with local (Babylonian) ideas such as the epic of Ara and

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20 See Hayim Tadmor, "The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact," in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jt. v. Chr.*, ed. Hans-Jörg Nissen and Johannes Renger (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1987): 449–70; idem, "On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," in *Near Eastern Studies Dedicated to H. I. H. Prince Takahito Mikasa on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Masao Mori, Hideo Ogawa, and Mamoru Yoshikawa (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1991): 419–35.

21 Ingo Kottsieper, "'And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit': On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Garry N. Knoppers, and Reiner Albertz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007): 95–124.

22 Aaron Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32.

Gilgamesh have no parallel in the book of Jeremiah, which, while written at the same time, was composed in Israel.

The Judeans' familiarity with Akkadian is evident, for example, in the correspondence found in the Al-Yahudu tablets, written in Akkadian cuneiform during the years immediately following the exile to Babylon (the tablets date from 572 to 477 BCE). The tablets indicate that the exiles – or at least the elites – were able to correspond in the language. Given the public nature of the Neo-Babylonian ritual events, conclusions can also be drawn about the familiarity of exiles, who were members of the Babylonian-speaking public, with the local language.[23] While they would most likely have been familiar with the visible elements of the ritual, especially the public processions through the city streets, it appears unlikely that the exiles were acquainted with all of the details of the rituals that took place within the Babylonian temples.[24]

Conducting a comprehensive classification of the terminology and language that ties the exiles to their Babylonian surroundings can give us insight into the book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision. We will see that the influence of the exiles' milieu is evident in the Temple Vision's language in three different spheres, all of which carry echoes of Aramaic or Akkadian: first, unique lexemes used to express the temple's plan; second, the names used to describe the temple; and third, the name given to the city. It is likely that this influence was a result of the interaction of the exilic community with the world in which it was situated.[25] However, when considering the linguistic data, we must keep in mind that

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23 As noted by Still, the Babylonian-speaking audience would have been present: "Indeed hearing the public recitation of the Epic of Creation, the Babylonian-speaking audience will not have failed to notice that they, in fact, were speaking the very same language that Marduk used to shape and create their universe"; Still, *Social World*, 224.

24 See Julye Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2002), 98–99; Still, *Social World*, 223–24. In Mesopotamia, public participation in religious ceremonies and festivals was a widespread phenomenon, even though evidence on this is scarce. See Julia Krul, *The Revival of the Anu Cult and the Nocturnal Fire Ceremony at Late Babylonian Uruk* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 231–32.

25 This topic is but one part of a comprehensive discussion within the broader context of the linguistics of the book of Ezekiel, their relationship to the Priestly Source, and their dating. See: Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*; Avi Hurvitz, "The Language of the Priestly Source and Its Historical Setting: The Case for an Early Date," in *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1981), 83–94; and Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Equinox, 2008), 201–22, with the bibliography on page 222. Exceptional influence of a foreign culture, revealed specifically in the chapters relating to the temple, is already found in the textual description of Solomon's Temple (see, inter alia, 1 Kgs 6). The three months mentioned, Bul, Ziv, and Etanim, are the only dates in all of Scripture of foreign origin – in this case, Phoenician.

this was a transitional period and therefore compositions, such as the book of Ezekiel, often exhibit intermediate stages of linguistic development, in which "old" and "new" coexist.[26] Still, divergences from Standard Biblical Hebrew in the book – and in the Temple Vision – are indications of the Babylonian milieu's influence on the text.

The language of the Temple Vision is instructive. The vision of the future temple's architecture, construction, and rituals are conveyed in the book of Ezekiel using several words and forms that can be attributed to foreign influences – including, most likely, Aramaic and Akkadian. Below we present the Aramaic and Akkadian words found in these chapters that demonstrate the influence of the book's Babylonian context on the language of the Temple Vision in particular. This survey supplements the existing scholarly reviews of linguistic influences on all chapters of the book, which are reviewed briefly at the beginning of each section.

3.3 Linguistic Influences in the Temple Plan

The book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision depicts a plan of the future temple. Yet its language is often unlike the language of earlier biblical sources describing sancta, and it includes many unusual words. How much of its divergence from earlier sources can be attributed to Aramaic? And what reflects an Akkadian influence?

3.3.1 Aramaic Influence

Numerous scholars have studied Aramaisms in Ezekiel. In the introduction to his commentary on Ezekiel, Walther Zimmerli surveys the state of research up to the end of the 1960s, noting that the presence of Aramaic in the book is a relatively limited phenomenon.[27] He observes that Emil Kautzsch's pioneering study in 1902 identifies sixteen or seventeen Aramaic words in Ezekiel, out of 153 Aramaic words contained in the entire Bible,[28] and that Wagner observes 371 Aramaic words in the entire Bible, twenty-eight of which appear in Eze-

26 See Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 152–53, 161–62; Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, LHBOTS 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 177–81.

27 Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, trans. Ronald E. Clements, BKAT XIII (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 21–22.

28 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 21; Emil Kautzsch, *Die Aramaismen im Alten Testament*, vol. 1, *Lexikalischer Teil* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1902).

kiel.[29] Zimmerli accepts Wagner and Kautzsch's findings, concluding that the distribution of Aramaic in Ezekiel is similar to that found in other prophetic books. However, Zimmerli's own study, based on a distinction between Akkadian and Aramaic influences, reduces the number of Aramaic words to twenty-five.

In a comprehensive study of Ezekiel's language published in 1990, Mark Rooker analyzes linguistic and syntactical influences.[30] Rooker identifies thirty-seven grammatical and lexical features characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), fifteen of which he attributes to Aramaic influence. He concludes that Aramaic influence was prevalent primarily in the Persian period. Finally, Rimon Kasher, in the introduction to his commentary, concludes that Ezekiel's language reflects only limited Aramaic influence.[31]

The vision of the future temple's architecture and construction is conveyed in several words and forms that can be attributed to foreign influences – including Aramaic. Words used in Ezekiel with regard to the temple building that may show signs of Aramaic influence include:

(a) הֵיאתוֹן (הָאֵיתוֹן), "entrance" (40:15);[32] (b) בִּנְיָן, "structure" or "building" (40:5; 41:12, 15; 42:1, 5, 10);[33] (c) וְאַתִּיקֶיהָא, "the support walls [?]"

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29 Max Wagner, *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch*, BZAW 96 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966).

30 Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*.

31 Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 1: Chapters 1–24* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 82–83.

32 For Aramaic influence, see Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 2: Chapters 25–48* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 784. This hapax legomenon appears within the phrase *sha'ar ha-iton*, "the gate of the entrance." It is written as היאתון (*ketiv*) but read as האיתון (*qere*). Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (hereafter: *HALOT*; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:44, consider the word "unexplained." Menahem Zevi Kaddari, *A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006), 36, suggests that it may mean "an entrance." The noun recurs later in the Copper Scroll from Qumran (3QTr8:2: מיד אתון, "beside the entrance" of the temple court). Although the noun אתון is not found in Aramaic, the verb אתא, "to come," is used extensively. See, for instance, the Aramaic language dictionaries: Jacob Hoftijzer and Karel Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 133; Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (henceforth *ATTM*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Band 1, 1984; Band 2, 2004), 1:525, 2:356.

33 Note that in the MT this word is found seven times only in Ezekiel 40–42, but it also appears in Aramaic texts (e.g., Ezra 4:5) and the Proverbs of Aḥiqar (בְּנָיְנָא בְּנַיִן). Arthur Ernest Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 5 pl. 2: (הקיר בנוי זי בנה; *ATTM* 533; Edward M. Cook, *Dictionary of Qumran Aramaic* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 36. *HALOT* 1:140 considers the word to be an Aramaic loanword. For an LBH classification, see Avi Hurvitz, in collaboration with Leeor Gottlieb, Aaron Hornkohl, and Emmanual Mastéy, *A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Innovations in the Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 70–71. See also Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 132–35, which concludes that this

(41:15);[34] and (d) וְכָל צוּרֹתָו, "shape" or "form" (43:11).[35] The combination (e) מִפֹּה וּמִפֹּוּ, "on each side" (40:10),[36] and the verbs (f) יָדִיחוּ, "[will] wash" (40:38), and (g) לָרֹס, "to sprinkle" or "to soften with water" (46:14)[37] may also belong on this list.[38]

Moreover, a number of words are unique in the forms they take in Hebrew and **may** be attributed to foreign – perhaps Aramaic – influence, as has previously been noted by scholars: (h) מַהֲלַךְ, "journey," "distance" (42:4);[39] (i) הָיָה

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word is a neologism that indicates lateness, and notes that the words ends with *-yan*, a grammatical termination which is ascribed by grammarians to Aramaic influence.

34 Already noted by Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 22 as Aramaic, but it may be from the Akkadian *etēqu*, see note 51.

35 For Jewish Aramaic, see *HALOT* 2:1017. See also Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 82–84, which notes that in the OT the word appears only in Ezekiel, but it is prevalent in the late period, and in various Aramaic dialects; for the classification as LBH, see Hurvitz, *Concise Lexicon*, 205–9.

36 וְתָאֵי הַשַּׁעַר [...] שְׁלֹשָׁה מִפֹּה וּשְׁלֹשָׁה מִפֹּה מִדָּה אַחַת לִשְׁלָשְׁתָּם וּמִדָּה אַחַת לָאֵילֵם מִפֹּה וּמִפֹּוּ. See Hurvitz on this combination in Ezekiel: "Since Ezekiel's מפה = from here in the Mishnah, and מכא = וזה מצדו in Aramaic, it should be said that the rise of מפה is not a coincidental and unusual phenomenon, but a well-anchored development in its environment and time"; Avi Hurvitz, *From Genesis to Chronicles: Chapters in Linguistic History of Biblical Hebrew* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2017), 79–82.

37 Known in this meaning in later Aramaic dialects, especially Syriac; Kasher, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 897; Kaddari, *Biblical Hebrew*, 1015. And see *HALOT* 2:1249–50 for possible Jewish Aramaic influence.

38 יָדִיחַ, meaning "washing," is found in Ezekiel 40:38. Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 64–65, notes: "the only occurrences of הדיח (in cultic sense) are to be found in books of the late period." The verb appears twice more, in Isaiah 4:4 and 2 Chronicles 4:6; see Kaddari, *Biblical Hebrew*, 180. (Note that the occurrence of the form הֲדִיחָנִי [Jer 51:34] is derived from דו"ח, II, "to reject." Cf., however, *HALOT* 1:216, s. v. דוח.) For an LBH classification, see Hurvitz, *Concise Lexicon*, 86–87.

39 For Ezekiel's usage of the Hebrew noun מהלך see Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 91–93, who states: "there are altogether but 4 occurrences of this word in the entire Bible and these are restricted to the Books of Ez., Neh. And Jon. The vitality of this word is post-classical period, however, as demonstrated by extra-biblical sources – particularly in MH and Aram" (p. 92). For its distinctive usage (from Hurvitz) in Ezekiel, see Kaddari, *Biblical Hebrew*, 585. DCH (David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993]), 5:164 and *HALOT* 2:552 differ ("passage in temple buildings"). Compare in later periods in Jewish Aramaic (Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003], 320) and Akkadian (Martha T. Roth, ed., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [hereafter: *CAD*; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2000], M, part 1, 159, s. v. *malāku*. 4; note, however, that this meaning of *malāku* is known from Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. The early distribution and lack of a military context in Ezekiel appear to dispute a direct Akkadian influence in this case).

עֹמֵד אֶצְלִי, "was standing at my side" (43:6);[40] (j) לְמִשְׁפָּט, "stand in judgement" (44:24);[41] and (k) וּלְמָעְלָה [...]מ, ("from [...] and above") (with the מ prefix; 43:15).[42]

In these cases, the words likely reflect influence by the Babylonian environment in which the book was composed. They are all found in the descriptions of the vision of the construction of the future temple. Moreover, some of the words used are not found outside of Ezekiel,[43] reinforcing our contention that it was the Babylonian context that inspired this terminology regarding the temple's structure; the words used reflect the local temple-related influence on the language of these chapters in Ezekiel.

3.3.2 Akkadian Influence

The use of Akkadian in Ezekiel has been extensively studied.[44] While the influence of Aramaic may also have roots in the Judeans' language before the exile,

40 Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, 108–9, concludes: "Ezekiel sides with LBH and post-biblical Hebrew in the use of the היה+ participle construction. The 'intrusion' of this construction into BH was doubtlessly due to Aramaic influence as this feature was widespread in Aramaic."

41 See Kasher, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 864. But note that למשפט could also be a noun rather than an Aramaic-like infinitive (p. 74).

42 "וּלְמָעְלָה ...מ is found another three times in technical contexts of 'space' – all of them in the Book of Ezekiel. The non-standard nature of this usage is particularly evident when we contrast it with similar technical description found in the Book of Kings. [...] In both cases the ל characterizes the late sources in the OT and outside it and in technical as well as nontechnical contexts"; Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 108–9. See also in Ezekiel 1:27 and 8:2. For an LBH classification, see Hurvitz, *Concise Lexicon*, 154–55.

43 For a list of hapax legomena including roots, words, and names in Ezekiel, see Kasher, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 83–85.

44 On the use of Akkadian in Ezekiel, see especially, in order of publication (with each new publication building on previous research): Raymond-Jacques Tournay, "A propos des babylonismes d'Ezéchiel," *RB* 68 (1961): 388–93; Stephen P. Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in the Book of Ezekiel" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1983); Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and The Poem of Erra*, OBO 104 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Peter Kingsley, "Ezekiel by the Grand Canal: Between Jewish and Babylonian Tradition," *JRAS* 2 (1992): 339–46; Isaac Gluska, "Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel," in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*, ed. Yitschak Sefati et al. (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 718–37; David S. Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon," in *Bible et Proche-Orient. Mélanges André Lemaire III*, ed. Josette Elayi and Jean-Marie Durand, Transeuphratène 46 (Paris: Gabalda, 2014): 99–119; Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies," 163–216; Stökl, "Youth Without Blemish," 223–52. See, in addition, more general studies of Akkadian loanwords, especially: Heinrich Zimmern, *Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für baby-*

Akkadian would have been new; thus Akkadisms signal a clearer influence on the part of the world that surrounded the exiles. Stephen Garfinkel identifies sixty-eight Akkadisms in Ezekiel, which he evaluates on a five-tier scale (from possible to definite).[45] Garfinkel categorizes twenty-four words as definite Akkadisms, fourteen words as probable, and twelve as possible.[46] Paul Mankowski subsequently identifies eleven Akkadisms, three of which he considers Aramaic trans-loans, words that may have been borrowed or transmitted from Aramaic into Hebrew. Thus, the number of what he referred to as "real loans" is eight.[47] A comparison of Mankowski's eleven Akkadisms (including Aramaic trans-loans) and Garfinkel's "definite" twenty-four cases reveals that the differences are not negligible. Four of Mankowski's Akkadisms are not discussed by Garfinkel at all.[48] This leaves only six cases upon which Garfinkel and Mankowski agree.[49]

It is evidently beyond our capacity to agree upon a list of Akkadisms in Ezekiel. Despite the recent progress regarding the Babylonian cultural footprint

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lonischen Kultureinfluss, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1917); Paul V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, HSS 47 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000); Hayim Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew* (Jersey City: Ktav, 2009). See also the following recent publications with regard to Akkadian influence on Ezekiel: Shawn Zelig Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *Melammu*," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 10–21; Daniel Bodi, "The Double Current and the Tree of Healing in Ezekiel 47:1–12 in Light of Babylonian Iconography and Texts," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 22–37; Dale Launderville, "The Threat of Syncretism to Ezekiel's Exilic Audience in the Dry Bones Passage," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 38–49; Christoph Uehlinger, "Virtual Vision vs. Actual Show: Strategies of Visualization in the Book of Ezekiel," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 62–84; Martti Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?" in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 85–98; Madhavi Nevader, "On Reading Ezekiel By the Rivers of Babylon," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*: 99–110.

45 Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian."

46 Of the remaining twenty-three, seventeen are designated as improbable and six as impossible. Note that Aramaic agency, though sporadically mentioned, does not preclude Garfinkel from assigning an entry as an Akkadism. Garfinkel ("Studies in Akkadian," 60, § 19) lists *gallāb*, for example, as definite, though he cannot exclude Aramaic agency.

47 See Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanword*.

48 See *šāšar* (23:14), *ʾeškār* (27:15), **mallāḥ* (27:9, 27:29), and *dĕror* (46:17) – a loan adoption according to Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords*, 168).

49 These are: *ḥabōlātô* (18:7; 12:16; 33:15), *libbatek* (16:30), and *maneh* (45:12; Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords*, 169, no. 46), *nĕdānayīk*/**nādan* (16:33), *sūgar* (19:9), and finally *ʾiššōt* (23:44) – the last of which is uncertain according to both.

in Ezekiel, many difficulties must be borne in mind when assessing linguistic influences on the text as a whole.[50]

While the research on Akkadisms in the book of Ezekiel is extensive, our study relates to the chapters that comprise the Temple Vision; the words or terms that are relevant from Ezekiel 40–48 are: (a) אַתִּיק, "the support walls" (?) (41:16; 42:3, 5);[51] (b) חֵיק הָאָרֶץ, "breast of the earth" (43:14);[52] and (c) מָנֶה, "mina" (45:12).[53] To this list we may also add (d) קְנֵה מִדָּה, "measuring rod" (40:5; 42:19),[54] and possibly (e) תָּכְנִית, "arrangement (?)" (43:10).[55]

Having seen evidence of linguistic influences on Ezekiel's vision of the future temple's plan, we will further address more specific terms that can be understood when compared to the parallel Babylonian terminology, and may possibly reflect Babylonian influence on the Temple Vision.

3.4 The Name of the Temple

The comparison between the biblical and Babylonian terminology used to describe sacred space is not a straightforward one. This is due primarily to the fact that the biblical temple exists in a landscape that is devoid of other temples

50 See, for example: Charles C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*, YOSR 18 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), republished by Ktav (New York: Ktav, 1970); Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho, "Introduction," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, 4.

51 See *HALOT* 1:102, which considers the word "uncertain," but notes it is an architectural term from Akkadian *etēqu*.

52 Albright first suggested that this unique combination reflects the well-known idiom *ina irat erṣeti*/*kigalle*, translated as "bosom of the earth" or "the breast of the netherworld." See William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1946), 147–50. Fishbane later noted its cosmological connotations; see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 370, n. 836. And see Levinson's discussion on the relationship between this term and the הראל in the following verse: Jon Douglas Levenson, "Cosmos and Microcosm," in *Cult and Cosmos: Tilting toward a Temple-Centered Theology*, ed. Michael Morales, BTS 18 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014): 227–49.

53 The word may originally be a loan adaptation from Akkadian, and not just a cognate; it may also show Babylonian influence in its use in Ezekiel. The MT of Ezekiel 45:12 has resisted easy interpretation, primarily because it asserts that the mina is comprised of smaller weights of 25 + 20 + 15 sheqels, yielding a total of 60 sheqels for the mina: "20 shekels, 25 shekels and 10 plus 5 shekels shall count with you as a mina" (Ezek 45:12; JPS translation).

54 See Winitzer ("Assyriology and Jewish Studies," 166) and Tawil (*Akkadian Lexical Companion*, 341), who attribute it to Akkadian origin, although it may be a Hebrew word.

55 For the various options for the meaning of תכנית (also in 28:12) and possible Akkadian influence, see *HALOT* 2:1734–35.

equivalent in size and prestige, and draws on ancient Israelite traditions, while the Akkadian sources refer to numerous coexisting temples, known to us from written records that complement the available architectural data.

In this section, we discuss a number of terminological dimensions that relate to descriptions of sacred space as seen in Ezekiel and cuneiform sources. This analysis will also be relevant to our discussion in chapter 4, where we embark on a detailed comparison of space and the temple's structure within its Babylonian context.

A number of names are used in reference to the temple in Ezekiel. The common term in Ezekiel for describing the temple is מקדש, a term with no direct Akkadian parallel. The term בית, on the other hand, can be compared to the Akkadian *bītu*.[56] In addition, the book of Ezekiel also uniquely ascribes the term בנין, known to us from Aramaic, to the temple (in chapters 40–42). Finally, the term היכל (in chapters 41–42), which can be compared to the non-sacral Akkadian term *ēkallu*, appears. Due to the detailed description of the temple in Ezekiel, it is not surprising that the frequency of these terms in the book is the highest relative to other biblical sources; within the book of Ezekiel, it is particularly frequent in chapters 40–48.

Let us look more closely at each of these terms:

3.4.1 מקדש

Milgrom, in his commentary to the verse וְאֶל הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא תָבֹא ("and to the Temple she will not come"; Lev 12:4), indicates that the word מקדש has two meanings in the Bible: the first is sacred objects, or sancta; the second is sacred areas or precincts. With regard to Ezekiel, Milgrom notes that מקדש is used consistently throughout the book and describes only a sacred space as a whole, and not the inner building itself.[57] Likewise, Block concludes that מקדש is a general designation for the holy precinct, including the temple and its environs; the word's selection aligns with the priestly association with defilement.[58] This

56 See Avi Hurvitz, "Terms and Epithets Relating to the Jerusalem Temple Compound in the Book of Chronicles: The Linguistic Aspect," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995): 165–84.

57 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 754–55.

58 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, NICOT 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 208.

entire area, also referred to as the "an extremely high mountain" (הַר גָּבֹהַּ מְאֹד; Ezek 40:2) and described as "most holy" (קדש קדשים; 43:12), measures 500 cubits by 500 cubits (42:16–19) and is part of a larger complex that includes the land set aside for the temple, the priests, and the Levites (25,000 cubits by 10,000 cubits; 48:9–14).

The common denominator for the territories bearing the same name, מקדש, is that they consist of a large sacred space – and not just a building. However, the dimensions of the area described in each verse may vary, and it is difficult to precisely determine the specific area. Therefore, the term מקדש may refer to the entire area, including the outer courtyard; alternatively, it may refer to the limited area of the main building and the inner courtyard only.[59] Akkadian has no direct equivalent for the word מקדש; the common Akkadian terminology for the temple was *bītu*.

3.4.2 הבית

The common meaning of הבית (the house) is "the house of God," a figurative expression used to describe the temple. Haran emphasizes that the priestly writers, like all authors of biblical literature, did not envisage their God as in daily need of food, incense, and light; for religions of the ancient Near East, on the other hand, the house was held to be essentially the dwelling-place of the divinity.[60] Hurowitz further posits that the word "house," which describes a temple, also has a literal meaning: standing in the Temple was standing in God's Presence.[61] If Hurowitz's conclusion is correct, at least some occurrences of בית and בית ה' in Ezekiel 40–48 may suggest the same meaning.

In assessing the meaning of the word according to its context, בית has two separate meanings in Ezekiel, never used interchangeably or arbitrarily. The first meaning is very limited, and refers to the sacred structure itself. We see it

59 The attribution of a number of meanings to the term is typical of Ezekiel. Thus, for example, the exact meaning of the term תרומה, which appears in chapters 44, 45, and 48, is not uniform. While all refer to a portion that is given to God (or His representatives), there are variations: it may mean a piece of land/inheritance (נחלה; Ezek 45:1, 6–7; 48:8–10, 12, 18, 20–21) or refer to the contribution given from a sacrifice (44:30; 45:13, 16).

60 Menachem Haran, *Temples and Temple-service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 221.

61 Avigdor Hurowitz, "Temple of Solomon," in *The History of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, *The Biblical Period*, ed. Shmuel Ahituv and Amihai Mazar [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2000), 136–38.

in the words אֶל חֲצַר בֵּית ה' הַפְּנִימִית ("to the inner courtyard of the house of YHWH"; 8:16) and אֶל מִפְתַּן הַבָּיִת ("to the threshold of the house"; 9:3). Within the Temple Vision, the narrow meaning is employed repeatedly in chapters 40–42 (40:7, 8, 9, etc.) and once again in 44:17 (בְּשַׁעֲרֵי הֶחָצֵר הַפְּנִימִית וָבָיְתָה, "at the gates of the inner courtyard and within the house"; the description here is of a space that begins in the courtyard and continues into the house).

The second sense of the word בית is much broader: the entire Temple Mount. Beginning in chapter 43, and until the end of the vision, both senses exist, although never in the same verse. For example, 43:12 states:

זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבַּיִת עַל רֹאשׁ הָהָר כָּל גְּבֻלוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיב קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים הִנֵּה זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבָּיִת.

This is the plan of the house, on the top of the mountain, all of its boundaries roundabout, holy of holies, here this is the plan of the house.

The term בית ה' appears six times in the book of Ezekiel, two of which are in the Temple Vision, in chapter 44; it always relates to God's presence in the temple and not to the architectural plan.[62]

The comparison between בית in Ezekiel and the parallel Akkadian term, then, is complex. The word most commonly used in Akkadian to refer to the temple is *bītu*. As in Hebrew, *bītu* can refer to several objects, including a temple, and is used in reference to the house of God (*bīt ili*) or with the name of a specific god. In Mesopotamia, the temple was clearly god's house. The deity literally resided in the home, with a physical form expressed in his or her statue; that it was a domicile was clear, inter alia, from the fact that the gods had their meals in their home, left it, and returned to it on different occasions.[63]

62 For the conception of the temple as the house of God see the description of the Ésagila temple in Babylon: "I will build a house to be my luxurious abode. Within it I will establish its shrine, I will found my chamber and establish my kingship. When you come up from the Apsû to make a decision. This will be your resting place before the assembly. When you descend from heaven to make a decision. This will be your resting place before the assembly. I shall call its name 'Babylon,' 'The Homes of the Great Gods'" (Enuma Elish, Tablet V, rows 122–129; see Joshua J. Mark, "Enuma Elish – The Babylonian Epic of Creation – Full Text," Ancient History Encyclopedia, https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/).

63 For a summary of the nature of the Babylonian temple with regard to the gods, see: Hanspeter Schaudig, "The Restoration of Temples in the Neo- and Late-Babylonian Periods: A Royal Prerogative as the Setting for Political Argument," in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible*, ed. Mark J. Boda and Jamie R. Novotny, AOAT 366 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 141–42. For Babylonian scholarly lists of names and epithets, see, e.g., tin.tir for Babylon (Andrew George, *Babylonian Topogra-*

The Babylonian temples, then, were built as houses for the gods and provided their daily needs; accordingly, they were called "house of (the god) [divine name]."[64] From the textual evidence we have, it is clear that the cult revolved around the daily care of the gods and deified symbols.[65] Given the context of the Temple Vision, it is not surprising that the image of the temple as a house is common; it was a form that we assume was familiar to Ezekiel both from the biblical Scripture and from the Akkadian terminology as well.

We can conclude that the Akkadian word exemplifies a term parallel to the Hebrew one. This is different from the use of the word מקדש and the root ש"קד, which is unique to biblical literature. The word הבית is utilized in Ezekiel to distinguish the Lord's abode from the surroundings, and may also lay the foundation for differentiating the increased degree of holiness ascribed in Ezekiel to the Temple Mount throughout the Temple Vision. This is consistent with Rimon Kasher's understanding that "the entire area of its enclosure shall be most holy" (43:12): "This conception of the supreme sanctity of the Temple and its environs is unique to Ezekiel; nowhere else in the biblical literature do we find the term 'holy of holies' as a designation for an area outside of the Temple proper."[66]

3.4.3 בנין

The term בנין is unique in Ezekiel, and the assumption is that it demonstrates Aramaic influence. In Ezekiel 40:5, the word בנין refers to a wall, while in the other six verses in which it appears (41:12, 13, 15; 42:1, 5, 10) the meaning of the word is not unequivocal. Some see it as a late alternative to the word "home"; others believe it means a wall.[67] In any event, it seems that this is part of the temple compound, and refers specifically to a building located west of the temple building itself;[68] its function is to prevent entry to the temple building from

phical Texts, OLA 40 [Leuven: Peeters, 1992], no. 1) and the Nippur Compendium and the Nippur Temple List for Nippur (George, *Topographical Texts*, nos. 18 and 19, respectively).

64 See: *bīt*/*bīt ilim* + DN, Paul-Alain Beaulieu *RlA* 13, 519–27 [2013], s. v. "Tempel A.I.a/b, Philologisch."

65 Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, StBibLit 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 98–111.

66 See Rimon Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40–48," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 201–2.

67 Menachem Haran, "Ezekiel" [in Hebrew], in *Encyclopaedia Olam Hatanach* 12, ed. Menachem Haran and Gershon Brin (Ramat Gan: Revivim Publishing House, 1984), 206, 213.

68 Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 13; Magnus Ottosson, "היכל," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 3:382–88.

the west.[69] Another possibility is that it describes the whole temple compound including the temple and its walls. The Aramaic cognate seems to point toward a more general meaning – a building rather than a wall.

3.4.4 היכל

The noun היכל itself is a non-sacral term meaning a large, luxurious house (here translated as "sanctuary"). The form ההיכל (with the definite article) at times serves to designate not the temple as a whole but only a part of it – the outer sanctum, that is, the large antechamber in front of the holy of holies.[70] In Ezekiel, the word היכל appears ten times, but it encompasses two different meanings:

1) The temple complex as a whole (וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי אֶל חֲצַר בֵּית ה' הַפְּנִימִית וְהִנֵּה פֶּתַח הֵיכַל ה' בֵּין הָאוּלָם וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כְּעֶשְׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ אַחֹרֵיהֶם אֶל הֵיכַל ה' וּפְנֵיהֶם קֵדְמָה, "Then He brought me to the inner court of the house of YHWH, and behold, at the entrance of the sanctuary of YHWH between the hall and the altar were about twenty-five men, their backs were to YHWH's sanctuary and their faces turned east"; 8:16). In this verse, the prophet stands in the inner courtyard, in the area "between the hall and the altar," and refers to the entire structure of the temple. This combination היכל ה', occurs only twice, and its meaning is similar to בית ה' (also in 8:16); in contrast, the word אולם, used in verse 16 without the name of God, denotes a more limited space.
2) The specific space in front of the holy of holies. In chapters 41–42, the term היכל expresses a specific space within the structure of the temple, between the hall in the east and the holy of holies in the west. The text uses this meaning in 41:1 (וַיְבִיאֵנִי אֶל הַהֵיכָל, "and I was brought to the sanctuary"), 41:4 (פְּנֵי הַהֵיכָל, "the sanctuary front"), 41:15 (וְהַהֵיכָל הַפְּנִימִי, "and the inner sanctuary"), 41:20 (קִיר הַהֵיכָל, "the sanctuary wall"), 41:21 (הַהֵיכָל, "the sanctuary"), 41:23 (וּשְׁתַּיִם דְּלָתוֹת לַהֵיכָל, "and two doors to the sanctuary"), 41:25 (דַּלְתוֹת הַהֵיכָל, "the sanctuary doors") and 42:8 (פְּנֵי הַהֵיכָל, "the sanctuary front").

Unlike the three terms discussed above, the Akkadian cognate *ekallu* usually refers to a palace, rather than to a cultic structure/complex. Therefore, unlike

69 See Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 55.

70 Haran, *Temples and Temple-service*, 14.

the case of בית/*bītu*, the usage of Akkadian *ēkallu* clearly differs from Ezekiel's היכל in both meaning and context. As for extrabiblical influence, היכל may have Akkadian origins, which itself may have originated in Sumerian. É.GAL means a large house in Sumerian; *ēkallu* means palace – though not temple – in Akkadian. The combination *ekal ilī* ("place of the gods") is known as the name for the Ésagila in Babylon.[71]

In Mesopotamia, in addition to these generic terms, each temple had its own names, including their common name (Ezida, Ésagila, etc.), along with other ceremonial names and epithets.[72] These names are known to us primarily from scholarly documents such as ritual, literary, and topographical texts, and were not used in mundane archival documents. In addition, not only did the temples themselves have ritual names; architectural elements and even specific objects within them had epithets. Ezekiel's additional names of the Temple prior to its destruction similarly demonstrate that temples had both generic and specific names: הַר קָדְשִׁי, "My holy mountain" (20:40); מָעוּזָּם מְשׂוֹשׂ בִּפְאַרְתָּם אֶת מַחְמַד עֵינֵיהֶם , "Their stronghold, their pride and joy, the delight of their eyes" (24:25),[73] and possibly the term צְבִי עֶדְיוֹ, "beautiful adornment"[74] (7:20–22).

We can thus conclude that the book of Ezekiel's text draws from terminology that was in use both in biblical literature and in language from the Babylonian setting. The biblical terminology is often used as found in biblical literature (מקדש, היכל), but is also used throughout the Bible in broader meanings that have parallels in Akkadian (בית). Moreover, in the descriptions of the temple, Ezekiel engages unique terminology that is apparently influenced by Aramaic, a language the exiles were familiar with (בנין).

3.5 The Name of the City

The book of Ezekiel's final verse, which concludes its vision of the future temple, is central to understanding a theme found throughout the chapters of the

71 For the use of *ēkallu* in cultic context, see George (*Topographical Texts*, 386) on the E-sagil commentary (*Topographical Texts*, no. 5), l. 5–6, and further examples in *CAD* E, 55, *s. v. ekallu* 7.

72 E-sagil: The Replica of Apsu; "House Whose Top Is High"; E-temen-anki: The Replica of E-šarra (tin.tir iv: 1–2; George, *Topographical Texts*, 58–59).

73 See Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 511–12, for the ambiguous meaning of the terms used here to describe the temple.

74 Translation taken from Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 144.

book – the departure of the glory of God from the temple and its subsequent return.[75] This theme is emphasized at the book's climactic ending in which the temple-city is renamed יְהוָה שָׁמָּה, "YHWH Is There" (48:35).[76] The accepted meaning of this name is that God, who has abandoned the city, will return to it in the future and will remain there. The city's unique name and its meaning, along with the linguistic difficulty of its place within the verse,[77] is reflected in the diversity of translations and commentaries on this verse that have been put forth through the ages.[78] Zimmerli, for example, notes in his commentary: "without sonorous phraseology one cannot postulate a direction in 'יְהוָה שָׁמָּה.'"[79] First, it is unclear if the city being referred to is Jerusalem. Second, while the Temple Vision repeatedly describes the return of God's glory to the temple area, this verse would seem to indicate a broader scope – the return of God's presence to the entire city.[80]

When addressing the city's name, it is important to note that many Babylonian cities from the first millennium BCE commonly had theophoric names; the name of the god was either included as part of the city's name[81] or was identical to it.[82] In addition, cities in the region were named after deities. Such was the case in Aššur, for example, where the name of the city was identical to the name of the god in both written and spoken form.

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75 For an expanded discussion, see Tova Ganzel, "And the Name of the City from That Day On: 'YHWH Is There' (Ezek 48:35): A New Interpretation," *VT* 70 (2019): 1–8; see other explanations of the verse.

76 See John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, BJS 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 79.

77 The syntax is problematic in the connection between the word מיום and the words יהוה שמה; however, from an examination of biblical parallels it appears that the meaning of מיום is "from this day on," as in, "Take note, from this day forward – from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month" (Hag 2:18). See also Ezra 3:6 and Neh 5:14, among other examples.

78 This combination of words appears in only one other place – "among all the peoples to which the Lord will drive you" (Deut 28:37) – but its meaning there is different.

79 See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin, BKAT XIII (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 545.

80 Regarding the reference to the city rather than the temple, see Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, LHBOTS 482 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 241.

81 See Ran Zadok, *Geographical Names according to New- and Late-Babylonian Texts*, RGTC 8 (Weisbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1985), 8 (Ālu-ša-Amurru [URU *šá* ^{d}KUR.GAL]), 9 (Ālu-ša-Bēl [URU *šá* $^{d+}$EN]), and 15 (Ālu-ša-Nabû [URU *šá* ^{d}PA]).

82 See Zadok, *Geographical Names*, 64 (Bānītāya, $^{uru.d}$DÙ-*tú*/u_4-*a*-*a*), 73 (Bēl, $^{uru.d.}$+EN, ^{uru}URU ^{d}+EN), and 74 (Bēltiya, $^{uru.d.}$GAŠAN-*ia*). The city of Aššur, in contrast, was also named after its god, although both names were pronounced the same way: Aššur ($^{kur(.d)}$*aš*-*šur*^{ki}); Zadok, *Geographical Names*, 34–35.

Another fascinating example is the city of Nippur.[83] The written version of the city's name, EN.LÍL^{ki}, which reads literally "(the place) Enlil," is in fact pronounced "Nippur"; the city's name was pronounced differently than the deity's name.[84] Aramaic speakers, who did not read Akkadian, knew the city only as "Nippur" – while its written form was known solely to readers of cuneiform. The spelling of the name of Nippur is unique because, although cities in the region were commonly named after deities, there is no other case in which the name of a city contains the name of a deity in written form only.

Noting how unique this phrase is as the name of a biblical city, we recognize that it should be compared with Ezekiel 48:35 as it appears in the Masoretic Text: "יְהוָה שָׁמָּה," "YHWH is there,"[85] meaning the geographical location in which God can be found. Leveen notes that the use of this term at the end of the book emphasizes its Babylonian context: "The final use of שם raises the question of the prophet's location. It appears that he is still in exile – desperately wanting to leave there (Babylon) to arrive there (Jerusalem)."[86]

It is our contention that the new name of the city was influenced – along with biblical sources – by the Babylonian surroundings in which the exiles lived, and it is on this basis that we can fully understand the meaning of the name in its biblical context. If we assume that the book's author was in contact with members of the Babylonian elite and was able to read cuneiform writing, he would have recognized the name of the city rendered in cuneiform as EN.LÍL^{ki}. The first part, written with the sumerogram EN.LÍL, represents the name of the city, and the second part, the sign KI, is a determinative, marking the word as a geographical name.[87] The two signs, EN.LÍL, when not attached

83 On the city of Nippur during the first millennium BCE, see George, *Topographical Texts*, 143–62, and Steven William Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian Times: c. 755–612 BC*, SAAS 4 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1996). Regarding the size of the city, see the archeological reports: McGuire Gibson, "Patterns of Occupation at Nippur," in *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers Read at the 35e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Philadelphia, 1988*, ed. Maria deJong Ellis (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1992): 33–54. For an overview of Nippur, see the entry "Nippur" in *RlA* 9:532–65.

84 The "KI" following a city name does not as a rule change the pronunciation of the deity's name. However, the KI following the word "EN.LÍL" indicates that we are not to read "Enlil," but rather "Nippur."

85 Stephen L. Cook (*Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018]) recently translated it as "the Lord Is Just Over There" (p. 293); and see Soo J. Kim, "*YHWH Shammah:* The City as Gateway to the Presence of YHWH," *JSOT* 39 (2014), 196.

86 Adriane Leveen, "Returning the Body to Its Place: Ezekiel's Tour of the Temple," *HTR* 105, no. 4 (October 2012), 401.

87 When the name "Nippur" is written as "EN.LÍL^{ki}," the determinative ^{d} (DINGIR) for divinity is not used. See Zadok, *Geographical Names*, 239–42, for the different spellings of the name.

to the determinative ^{ki} (but preceded by a divine determinative), signify the divine name "Enlil," the patron deity of Nippur. If the author was familiar with cuneiform, when he read the name of the city, he would have seen the sign of the deity's name, followed by a sign indicating that this was the name of a city.[88]

In that case, the cuneiform spelling of the name of Nippur and its meaning may have served as the model for the name the Temple Vision gives to the new city that would replace Jerusalem. The phrase יְהוָה שָׁמָּה includes two components: (1) YHWH, the name of God, and (2) the additional word שָׁמָּה (there), functioning like a cuneiform determinative, indicating that in this case the name of God is being used as a geographical place name, as the name of the city. Thus, the meaning of the verse is that the city mentioned at the end of the book of Ezekiel will merit, from that day on, to be called by the name of its God, YHWH. This knowledge of the name of the city of Nippur, written as the name Enlil, enabled the author to convey a theological message by giving the name "YHWH Is There" to the holy city.

If this suggestion is correct, it resolves difficulties not only in the verse's language but also in its meaning. In Ezekiel's Temple Vision, God's glory returns to the temple alone. A new, future city lies atop the ruins of Jerusalem and God is not necessarily present in all parts of it. Nonetheless, the entire city is called by the name of God, as indicated by the word שָׁמָּה.[89] Familiar with Babylonian toponyms and their forms, the author employed the language that was known to him to reflect his understanding of the return of God's glory in the future.

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88 This phenomenon also occurs in the name of the city of Larsa, written UD.UNUG^{ki}, where UD is the sign for "sun" and UNUG is the word for sanctuary (the meaning is thus: "City of Utu's Sanctuary"). Similarly, the written name of the city of Ur is understood as a representation of a sanctuary with the symbol of that city's deity (Nanna/Sîn) and so forth. See: Piotr Michalowski, "On the Early Toponymy of Sumer: A Contribution to the Study of Early Mesopotamian Writing," in *Kinattūtu Ša Dārâti*: *Raphael Kutscher Memorial Volume*, ed. Anson F. Rainey (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1993): 119–35. However, it should be noted that the case of Nippur is different. The name of the deity was not one element of the name of the city, but the name itself, a fact which would have been noteworthy and thus probably known to a resident of Nippur, even if he were not a reader of cuneiform.

89 In contrast, Zimmerli suggests that "the last sentence of the book of Ezekiel shows how the old tradition of the city of God has forcefully obtained justice for itself against the priestly reform project, which, through the separation of city and temple, has robbed the city of much its dignity"; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 547. See also Paul M. Joyce, "Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40–48," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 422 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005): 145–63.

Above we acknowledged that the author of Ezekiel was familiar with Aramaic and Akkadian and saw various levels of literacy in cuneiform as well. We suggested eleven words and unique forms that demonstrate Aramaic influence, and five additional words and unique forms that demonstrate Akkadian influence. The terminology describing the sacred building and space was reviewed; it suggests that the precise usage of the terms מקדש, בית, בנין, and היכל has additional meaning when examined against the exiles' Babylonian setting. The book's final verse, which gives the city's future name, may demonstrate that its author was able to read cuneiform writing; this significant knowledge was a factor in the name given to the future city where the temple will reside: ה' שמה. Through it, the book emphasizes God's central place in the future city, and at the same time corresponds with accepted forms in its Babylonian surroundings.

Armed with a greater understanding of the linguistic influences within the book of Ezekiel's description of the future temple, we can progress to the question of design. In the coming chapter, we look at the temple described in the final nine chapters of Ezekiel, examining the possible influence of the Neo-Babylonian milieu on the structure of the envisioned temple.

4 Ezekiel's Temple Compound and the World of Babylonian Temples

The Temple Vision in Ezekiel is shot through with hints of its Babylonian setting. While the language, as we saw, is the first and most obvious place to search for Babylonian influence, the temple described is an equally rich vein to mine. The space's design, vessels, and kitchens can all be viewed as bearing a likeness to – or diverging significantly from – the temples that the exiles would have seen around them. The water described issuing forth from the temple, and the position on a mountaintop, too, may be meaningful in this context. Below we delve into the temple described in the Temple Vision, comparing and contrasting it with Babylonian temples.

4.1 The Visionary Temple

The singularity of the temple in Ezekiel is quite evident. The Temple Vision opens with a detailed description of the dimensions of the temple area, including its courtyards (40:5–42:20). These are unusually large, substantially larger than those of the Jerusalem Temples. In this context the description of Ezekiel's visionary temple focuses heavily on the areas that surround the temple. The book devotes sixty-three verses to walls, courtyards, and gates and only twenty-six verses to describing the temple building itself.[1] Emphasis is placed on the future temple's courtyards (42:15–20), of which there are two: an outer one (40:17) and an inner one (40:39). Although largely empty, the outer courtyard houses chambers for the consumption of sacrificial offerings and for storing the priestly vestments (42:1–14). The inner courtyard, defined primarily by vestibules along its perimeter, is accessed through large gates, eight steps up from the outer courtyard, that line up with the three great outer gates (40:23–44). The northern inner gate contains additional chambers and cultic tables used for washing and slaughtering the sacrifices (40:35–44). On the western end of this courtyard lies the temple itself, which has a thick wall on three sides that separates it from the courtyards (41:5–15).

The temple building is divided into three sections: an entrance hall (40:48–49), a sanctuary (41:1–2), and the holy of holies at the westernmost end (41:3–

1 The following verses refer to gates and courtyards: 40:5–47 (forty-three verses); 42:1–3, 7–12, 15–20 (fifteen verses); and 46:20–24 (five verses). The following verses describe the temple building itself: 40:48–49 (two verses); 41:1–21 (twenty-one verses); and 42:4–6 (three verses).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740844-004

4). Chambered gates, each six cubits long, separate these sections, while the space between the entrance hall and the sanctuary is wider (10 cubits; 41:2) than the entrance between the great hall and the holy of holies (7 cubits; 41:3).

Following the dimensions of the temple building comes a description of the auxiliary structures of the temple (41:5–12), the structure and dimensions of the temple complex (41:12–15), the decorations of the temple walls, the doors and windows (41:15–26), and two altars: the wooden altar (41:22) and later the sacrifice altar (43:13–18).

Despite the detailed description in Ezekiel regarding walls and the building's structure, there is no reference to the identity of the builders.[2] This can be examined in light of the evidence with regard to the construction of the Babylonian temple walls during much of the period covered by this study.[3]

The courtyards described formed the center of temple ritual, and are to be accessible only for a select, elite group of priests and Levites (44:9–19) who can enter the inner courtyard – with the exception of the *nasi*, who holds special status (46:2–15). Even on holidays, when the people are required to visit the temple, they are forbidden to enter the inner courtyard, permitted only to stand at the entrance to the outer one (44:19; 46:3).

Not only is Ezekiel's future temple less accessible to the Israelites and less a center of daily life, but no ritual role is assigned to the people. The general public's function is secondary in nature; sacrifices are offered in the people's names but not by them.

In the vision related in chapters 40–48, the temple is the permanent dwelling place of God Himself (43:7; 44:2). One gate is permanently closed (44:1–2); the divine presence enters the temple through it (43:1–2; 46:1). The barring of entry to laymen is just one of the rules that aims to guard the future temple

2 In comparison to the priests, who were responsible for the building in Babylon. When walls and gates were being built, each priest was given a section of the wall and was in charge of the entrances there. In exchange for silver from the temple, they were responsible for the manufacturing of the bricks and the actual building of the wall.

3 For the Babylonian descriptions of the construction of temple walls, see Still, *Social World*, 220. It was precisely then that the Ezida temple, its ziggurat, and the walls and streets of Borsippa were under construction (a project that occupied the priests for thirty-five years). The official report of this project can be read in the "Ezida-cylinder" of Nabonidus. Caroline Waerzeggers (*The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, Achaemenid History 15 [Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010] notes: "The renovation of Ezida's riverside wall is also mentioned in the archives of Borsippa's priests. These texts reveal that the priestly divisions of Ezida contributed to the rebuilding of the temple wall. Their participation did not constitute a voluntary act nor did it result from entrepreneurial initiative – it was an obligation imposed by the treasury, and it created crippling financial distress among those who bore the burden" (p. 338).

from defilement; its geographical location outside the tribal territories is another. This is not a new conception in the book of Ezekiel. The absence of the Israelites from the temple emerges from the near-total absence of the future temple from chapters 1–39 in the book, including in the prophecies devoted to the peoples' restoration in the future (34–39).

In addition to the temple complex, additional sacred spaces exist in the vision: the sacred land for the priests, for the Levites, and for the *nasi* are all described. The chapters detailing the division of the allotments to the tribes contain sanctified territory (45–48).

The design and sacred space in the description of the future temple, in our opinion, was inspired by the Babylonian milieu, and we will demonstrate that sacred spaces corresponding to the description in our text were common in Mesopotamia.

The sketch of the temple complex below demonstrates the division of space in and around the temple in Ezekiel (Fig. 4.1).

4.2 The Israelite Forerunners of the Visionary Temple

4.2.1 Biblical Descriptions of Israelite Temples and the Tabernacle

Before examining the Neo-Babylonian temples that the exiles may have been familiar with, we must first review the earlier temples described in the Bible that preceded it.

The descriptions in Ezekiel of the visionary temple building's measurements, structure, and dimensions (40:48–49; 41:4) as well as the entire temple building (42:15–20) include an outer wall which is functionally distinct from the outer enclosure structures of both the tabernacle and Solomon's Temple.

The tabernacle had two parts (Exod 26). The first was the "holy," which housed the table, the lamp, and the altar of incense; its dimensions were twenty cubits by ten cubits. The second was the "holy of holies," where the ark of the testimony was, and which the high priest entered once a year on the Day of Atonement, and its dimensions were ten cubits by ten cubits.

In Solomon's Temple, some changes were evident (1 Kgs 6; 2 Chr 3–4). The length and breadth were doubled, and the names of the sections were different: the inner room ("holy" in the tabernacle) was the sanctuary (היכל), and its dimensions were forty cubits by twenty cubits. The "holy of holies" was called the *dvir* (דביר), and its dimensions were twenty cubits by twenty cubits.

The main structure of the temple in Ezekiel's Temple Vision consists of **three** parts: The entrance hall (אולם), the sanctuary (היכל), and the holy of

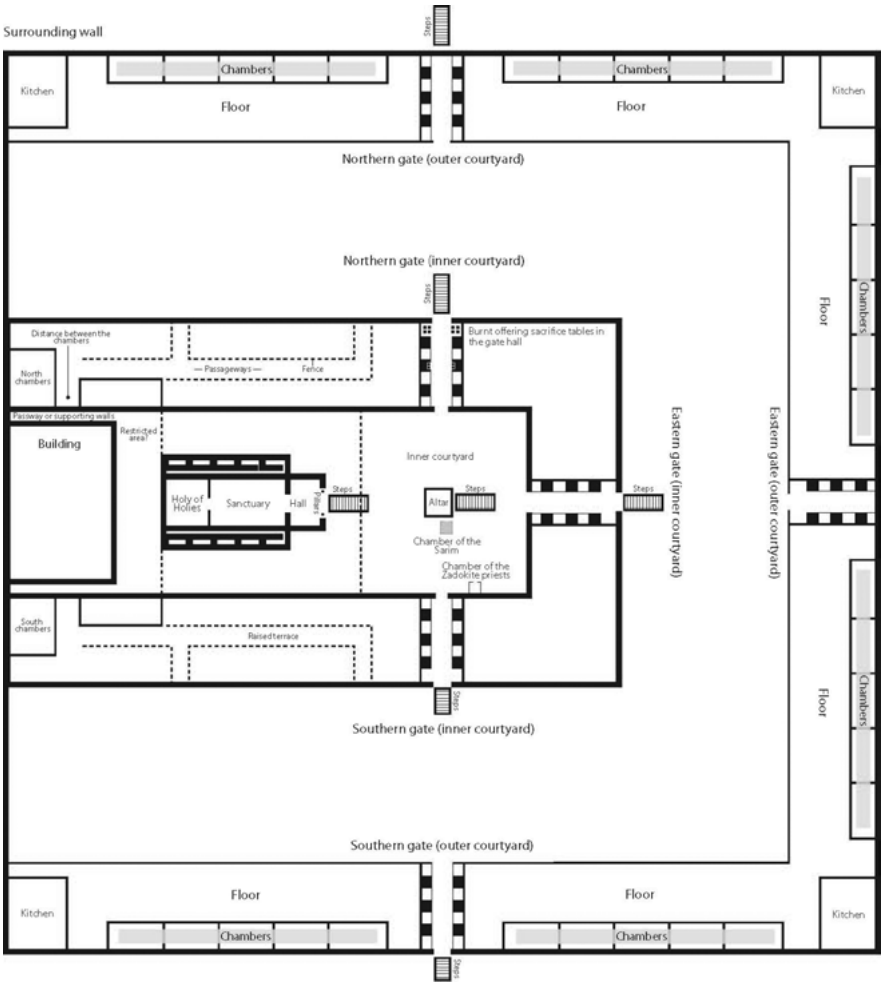

Fig. 4.1: Structure of the Visionary Temple.

holies (קדש הקדשים) (40:48–41:4). The additional entrance hall (אולם) dimensions were ten cubits by twenty cubits; the sanctuary (היכל) named as in the first temple, and the inner part "holy of holies" (קדש הקדשים) named as in the tabernacle, rather than *dvir* as in Solomon's Temple. The dimensions of the entire temple building are five hundred by five hundred cubits (42:15–20) – roughly 250 meters. Surprisingly, no mention is made of holy vessels as they are known to us from the tabernacle and the First Temple.

The wall of Ezekiel's temple plays a role beyond that of marking the temple's outer perimeter and defining the sacred precinct for those (like the pro-

phet) approaching from the outside. In Ezekiel, the wall and its gates form part of a larger outer court complex that includes thirty chambers along the outer court's rim (40:17–18) and four "unroofed enclosures" in each corner of the outer court (46:21–24). According to biblical narratives describing events that took place in the pre-exilic Temple, similar chambers existed there, too, even though they are not mentioned in the formal description in the Book of Kings (2 Kgs 23:11; Jer 35:2, 4; 36:10).[4] One verse is devoted to "the inner enclosure of three courses of hewn stones and one course of cedar beams" (1 Kgs 6:36), which apparently refers to a wall that defined the limits of the sacred precinct. There is no description of gates or other ways of entering the space beyond this wall, even though there must have been some means of access.[5] Occasional references to events that took place in the chambers can be found in the general Temple plan in 1 Chronicles 28:10–14 when the plans were transmitted to Solomon by David.[6]

Despite the substantial departure from Solomon's Temple, with the absence of large courtyards around the entire temple building, the three-part architectural plan of the book of Ezekiel's temple building itself resembles Solomon's temple plan, with its large anteroom and smaller inner sanctum. Hurowitz notes that both Ezekiel's temple and Solomon's partake of a common Near Eastern architectural vocabulary of temple building, attested most famously in Northern Syrian temples at 'Ain Dara and Tell Tayinat.[7]

4 See Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Tenth Century BCE to 586 BCE: The House of the Lord (Beyt YHWH)," in *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009): 21–22.

5 Hurowitz, "Tenth Century," 20.

6 For more mentions of chambers in the First Temple, see: 2 Kgs 23:11; Jer 35:2–4; Jer 36:10–12. According to 2 Chronicles 31:11, Hezekiah was responsible for constructing chambers in the pre-exilic temple for the donations and tithes. These chambers are to be distinguished from the "side chambers" that surround the temple itself both in 1 Kings 6:5–8 and Ezekiel 41:5–9. In the Second Temple (Neh 10:38–40; 13:9), the donations and tithes were brought to the chambers; temple vessels were stored there; and the silver and gold donations were housed there (Ezra 8:29).

7 See Hurowitz, "Tenth Century," 25. Also see Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Solomon's Temple in Context," *BAR*, March/April 2011, 46–58.

4.2.2 Archaeological Discoveries

Archaeological discoveries have revealed several temples in the territories corresponding to the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah.[8] But while temples – i.e., structures built to serve solely cultic purposes and as the abode of a god – existed in Israel and Judah,[9] to date no temple or holy complex similar to the one described in Ezekiel has materialized in the land of Israel.

The temple precincts described in Ezekiel are unique, consisting of a square compound enclosing a square structure, chambers, gates, and a network of courtyards; the temple structure itself has unusual measurements. Our exploration of the temple described in Ezekiel's vision relates to the entire compound rather than to specific details, which on occasion do have features that correspond to the archaeological findings.

Three temple structures have been exposed in Israel, usually located inside a bounded courtyard.

1. **Arad:** The only temple to be unearthed in archaeological excavations whose architectural design is clear is the one found at Arad.[10] The temple unearthed in Arad differs from the temple described in Ezekiel in its courtyard surrounding the temple, among other things; in the rectangular temple at Arad, the courtyard is somewhat distinct from the temple and clearly serves as its anteroom.
2. **Dan:** An excavation at Dan has found an external complex whose dimensions are not clear;[11] in any case, they are different from those found in Ezekiel – but the temple building itself has yet to be discovered.
3. **Motza:** The archaeological excavations at Motza (near Jerusalem), only partially excavated, have recently uncovered the remains of a large temple dating from the early First Temple period through the early Second Temple

8 For an overall view of sanctuary architecture and structures identified as temples by their excavators, see, inter alia, William E. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries from the Early Iron Age Levant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

9 Avraham Faust, "The Archaeology of the Israelite Cult: Questioning the Consensus," *BASOR* 360 (2010): 23–35; Amihai Mazar, "Temples of the Middle and Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel from the Prehistoric to the Persian Period*, ed. Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992): 161–87.

10 Yohanan Aharoni, "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple," *BA* 31 (1968): 1–32; Miriam Aharoni, "Arad, the Israelite Citadels," *NEAEHL* 1:82–87; Ze'ev Herzog, "The Arad Fortresses," in *Arad* [in Hebrew], ed. Ruth Amiran et al. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Israel Exploration Society, 1997): 113–292.

11 See Jonathan S. Greer, *Dinner at Dan: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sacred Feasts at Iron Age II Tel Dan and Their Significance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

period, but the findings published so far indicate that it, too, lacks a network of courtyards.[12]

Thus, the temples unearthed in the land of Israel are smaller and have courtyards with different functions and structures than the courtyards described in Ezekiel's vision.[13]

The general design of Ezekiel's envisioned temple, then, diverges from that of the known Israelite temples descriptions in Exodus, 1 Kings, and Chronicles; the functions related to the design also seem different from what may be conjectured based on the structures and courtyards that have been found.

The divergences between Ezekiel's envisioned temple and the remains found in Israel rule out local parallels and bolster our assertion that the text in Ezekiel is influenced by its milieu. It seems reasonable to compare the design of Ezekiel's temple and the sacred space the book describes in detail to those of the Babylonian temples.

4.3 The Structure of Neo-Babylonian Temples

The Neo-Babylonian temples' basic structure was significantly large, with their courtyards, chapels for secondary gods, deified goddesses' alleyways and streets, workshops, storerooms, open spaces, and administrative and living quarters.[14] Neo-Babylonian temple precincts could therefore be remarkably large in size, as was the case with Nabû's temple in Borsippa, which must have

12 The meaning of these finds for understanding the Jerusalem temple is controversial. See Shua Kisilevitz, "The Iron IIA Judahite Temple at Tel Moza," *TA* 42 (2015): 147–64; Nadav Na'aman, "The Judahite Temple at Tel Moṣa near Jerusalem: The House of Obed-Edom?," *TA* 44 (2017): 3–13; David Shapira, "The Moza Temple and Solomon's Temple," *BO* 75 (2018): 25–48.

13 Indirect evidence for the uniqueness of the temple courtyards described in Ezekiel can be found in the recent publication on the dimensions of Solomon's Temple as compared with relevant archeological discoveries, which does not refer to the courtyards at all. The publication discusses all areas of the Temple extensively and includes the Temple hall but not the courtyards. Its comparison of different temples' features highlights the fact that one element that is central to the book of Ezekiel's temple – the gate hall – is unique. See Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, "The Temple of Solomon in Iron Age Context," *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 1–17.

14 For an initial review of the structures of the temples, rooms, and courtyards, see Andrew George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, OLA 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992) and bibliography there; Corinne Castel, "Temples à l'époque néo-babylonienne: une même conception de l'espace sacré," *RA* 85 (1991): 169–87.

measured around 56,000 square meters.[15] These Neo-Babylonian temples were central and monumental both as institutions in Babylonian society and as architectural elements within Babylonian cities/urban centers. They often consisted of a rectangular broad-room, with the god's statue standing on one of the room's long sides opposite the entrance to the room, which was located on the other long wall.[16] This area was the holiest part of the temple, the *sanctum sanctorum*, and architecturally secluded; it could be reached only by passing through a series of numerous smaller rooms and/or corridors.

One particularly well-documented feature of the outer wall was the brick abutted reinforcement, known as the *kisû*.[17] Babylonian kings, including the Neo-Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar II, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus, specifically mention this feature as part of their temple-building projects.[18] One topographical text begins with the measurements of no less than nine "thicknesses of wall" (*kuburrû*),[19] demarcating eight distinct spaces that one passes through from one end of the described temple to the other.[20] According to this text, at least, walls are a primary feature of the temple; proper description of the temple begins with them.

The Neo-Babylonian temples came in a wide variety of sizes.[21] Although our knowledge is limited, and currently based only on the available archaeological

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15 Judging based on the ground plan in Walter Kuntner and Sandra Heinsch, "Die babylonischen Tempel in der Zeit nach den Chaldäern," in *Tempel im Alten Orient*, ed. Kai Kaniuth et al., CDOG 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013): 119–266.

16 Ernst Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien: Typologie, Morphologie und Geschichte*, Denkmäler Antiker Architektur 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982); Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture: Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Kai Kaniuth et al., eds., *Tempel im Alten Orient*, CDOG 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013); for "Breitraum," see definition in Peter A. Miglus, *Städtische Wohnarchitektur in Babylonien und Assyrien*, *BaF* 22 (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 245–54.

17 Castel, "Temples," 174; Wilfred Allinger-Csollich, "Birs Nimrud II: 'Tieftempel' – 'Hochtempel': Vergleichende Studien Borsippa – Babylon," *BaghM* 29 (1998): 146–53.

18 See references in CAD *kisû* (K, pp. 429–30).

19 According to CAD, *kuburrû* (K, p. 489) is either the (actual) thickness or an architectural feature of a wall ("*kuburrû* most likely designates a niche or an angle formed by protruding part of the wall, at the gate"). In any event, it is a massive structure and a central one in the text.

20 George, *Topographical Texts*, no. 14, lines 1–26 (pp. 126–27), with comments on pp. 120–25 and pp. 435–38. Relating this text to archaeological facts on the ground poses significant difficulties, even regarding which temple the text describes. See George's comments and the discussion in Allinger-Csollich, "Birs Nimrud II," 235–52.

21 Castel, "Temples," 173. Babylonian temples can be divided into two groups based on their size: small temples (< 2250 m^2) and larger/major temples (> 5000 m^2).

excavations, we can point to four temples that were considered to be large, keeping in mind that the majority of the temples were small. These four temples can be considered "major temples" in a variety of senses, including their centrality as urban or regional centers. The temples are: E-gig-par in Ur, Ésagila in Babylon, Ezida in Borsippa, and temple A in Kiš.[22]

When describing a "major temple," historical and topographical factors must also be taken into consideration.[23] Thus, Marduk's temple in Babylon, the Ésagila, may be considered to be the central Babylonian temple during the first millennium BCE. Ésagila had a central building attached to two large courtyards to the east and southeast; together, the buildings gave the entire complex an L-shaped layout. Ésagila, including the two large courtyards, measured 19,468.5 m^2, with a 1:1.43 length-breadth ratio (167 × 116.5 m). The main western building alone was obviously smaller, 6,640 m^2, with a 1:0.9 ratio (77.3 × 85.9 m). Next was Ezida, temple of Nabû in Borsippa. Although its central building was larger than the Ésagila's central building, the temple complex as a whole was smaller than that of the Ésagila. The Ezida temple of Nabû in Borsippa's measurements were 11,460 m^2 with a 1:1.25 ratio (120 × 95.5 m). Temple A in Kish also had a general square layout; E-gig-par of Ur had two large courtyards. Temple A in Kish had a 1.12 ratio (91 × 81 m), measuring 7,371 m^2. The E-gig-par of Ur measured 5,000 m^2; unlike the other temples, it was rectangular, with a 2:1 ratio (100 × 50 m).[24]

To these large and central temples, listed by Castel, we can add the Eanna temple in Uruk, which measures approximately 300 × 300 m,[25] and perhaps the Ebabbar temple in Sippar.[26] These temples relate to the size and structure of the visionary temple in Ezekiel.

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22 Castel, "Temples," 169–87.

23 Admittedly, at least in theory, the Babylonians considered the originality of the temple to be crucial, and invested in restoring or preserving the gods' "original" plan. However, things evolved over the years, and changes may have taken place in some of the Babylonian temples. Some were built in layers, and wings may have been added in later periods (e.g., the Ésagila), and their layout changed. The Babylonian temples were therefore not symmetrical. This differs from the vision in Ezekiel, which describes a utopian – and, thus, symmetrical – structure.

24 Regarding proportions, in Babylonia most temples are practically or almost squares, presenting a length-width ratio of 1–1.25. Three temples have a 1.4–1.55 L:W ratio, and three temples are in the 2–2.333 range. See: Castel, "Temples," 173, table: Measurements of Neo-Babylonian Temples. Castel's table includes Temple A (535.50 m^2) and Temple B (57 m^2) from Aššur.

25 Joachim Oelsner, *Materialien zur Babylonischen Gesellschaft und Kultur in Hellenistischer Zeit* (Budapest: Eötvos, 1986), 78.

26 See Rassam's plan of the Ebabbar in Sippar apud George, *Topographical Texts*, 220 (fig. 8); its ground plan is only partially known. See A. C. V. M. Bongenaar, *The Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar Temple at Sippar: Its Administration and Its Prosopography*, PIHANS 80 (Istanbul: Neder-

Although no Neo-Babylonian temples align perfectly with cardinal directions of the compass, there are some trends. As a general rule, the Babylonian temples present a direct-axis scheme (the entrance gate leads inside in a straight line).[27] According to Castel, the preferred axis in Neo-Babylonian temples was northeast to southwest,[28] though other possibilities are known and no one geographical pattern can be observed. George describes temples of the "grand north Babylonian" type, with which he associates four temples (Ésagila in Babylon, Ezida in Borsippa, Ebabbar in Sippar, and the double temple in Kiš). In these temples, the cult statue more or less faced the sunrise during the summer solstice.[29] None of the Neo-Babylonian temples, however, are perfectly aligned with the direction of the compass.[30]

4.4 The Structure and Dimensions of the Visionary Temple in Its Context

Having surveyed the context in which the Temple Vision was composed as well as the Israelite temples, we now turn to the book of Ezekiel's description of the envisioned temple to compare and contrast.

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lands Historisch Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1997). It seems that the Ebabbar itself was not an especially large structure, but the entire complex, which included the chapels of Aya and Bunene as well as the ziggurat, would certainly fit within the group of large Babylonian temples. See the discussion in George, *Topographical Texts*, 219, and the ground plan on p. 220. Castel does not indicate what the dimensions for the Ebabbar temple in Sippar are nor the estimated length based on the southwestern wall (adjacent to the ziggurat) as seen in the partial plan published by Rassam. For more information on the Neo-Babylonian temples, see the catalog in Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 305–35.

27 See Castel, "Temples," 171. Theoretically, a man could stand on the street outside the temple and see from the main gate through the courtyard and into the cella (e.g., in the main building of Ésagila, there was one straight line that stretched from the main gate to the cella). In practice, however, many "obstacles" – altars and other installations or simply doorways and curtains – stood in the way; in some cases, the main gate, courtyard, ante-cella, and cella were not all perfectly aligned. see George, *Topographical Texts*, 87.

28 Castel, "Temples," 172.

29 Andrew George, "E-sangil and E-temen-anki: The Archetypal Cult-centre," in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne*, ed. Johannes Renger (Saarbrück: SDV, 1999): 67–86; idem, "Four Temple Rituals from Babylon," in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. Andrew George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000): 259–300.

30 Examples of temples with a northeastern direction, in addition to the four temples mentioned above, are Nin-Ezen, Ningal (Ur), and Mê-Turnat. Examples of temples with an entrance from the north are Z temple and E-mah. Examples of temples with entrances from the east

4.4.1 The Measuring Rod

The description of the temple measurements in Ezekiel is unique in the biblical sources from its outset. It begins by describing the rod used to measure the wall that surrounded the temple complex and buildings, despite the absence of many other dimensions for different parts of the temple complex. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the length of the measuring rod itself as described in the verse:[31]

וְהִנֵּה חוֹמָה מִחוּץ לַבַּיִת סָבִיב סָבִיב וּבְיַד הָאִישׁ קְנֵה הַמִּדָּה שֵׁשׁ אַמּוֹת בָּאַמָּה וָטֹפַח וַיָּמָד אֶת רֹחַב הַבִּנְיָן קָנֶה אֶחָד וְקוֹמָה קָנֶה אֶחָד.

And there was a wall outside of the house [i.e., the temple] roundabout, and the man had a measuring rod in his hand six cubits long, [each cubit measured] a cubit plus one more handbreadth, and he measured the width of the building: one rod; and the height: one rod. (40:5)

The measurement of the rod in this verse is unique, and therefore has been explained in several different ways.[32] Zimmerli's suggestion that this verse is a clarification necessary for properly understanding the measurements used in the temple description appears appropriate. His suggestion is relevant especially given the fact that cubits were different in Babylonia and Egypt and may have also evolved within Babylon over time. In his words: "It is the principal concern of v 5 to make clear that what is used in the measurements in the sanctuary is the 'long cubit' which consists of a (normal) cubit and a handbreadth. [...] The relationship of short cubit and long cubit to each other is one of 6:7."[33] It may be difficult for us to determine the exact dimensions described in the verse, but we can assume that the need to precisely describe the exact

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are Ésagila, Emašdari, and Epatutila. Note that the E-gig-par temple also has a northwestern entrance.

31 See Leonid M. Dreyer, "The Temple of Ezekiel: Why Are Some Data Lacking?," in *Memoriae Igor M. Diakonoff. Annual of Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, and Semitic Studies*, ed. Leonid E. Kogan et al, Orientalia et Classica 8 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005): 727–30.

32 See, for example, the explanations given by medieval commentators: one option is that it was the length of six cubits (אמה) and a handbreadth (וטפח; Rashi). Alternatively, it may have addressed specific parts of the wall (Eleazar of Beaugency). See commentaries in Menachem Cohen, ed., *Mikra'ot Gedolot "Haketer": Ezekiel* [in Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000).

33 Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin, BKAT XIII (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 349, and see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 516–17.

measure in the description of the temple plan reflects the influence of the text's Babylonian setting.[34]

Another dimension of Mesopotamian influence may be noted here. Hurowitz links the description of a man with a measuring rod in this verse (40:3), as well as in Zechariah 2:5–9, to Mesopotamian traditions:

> This character, unheard of in the biblical building accounts per se and only mentioned in the words of these two prophets, in fact possesses roots deep in ancient Near Eastern iconography and texts. The Ur-Nammu Stele from Ur pictures the various stages of the building project, beginning with the divine command and the granting of the measuring rope and rod (symbols of divine revelation of the plan) and ending with the dedication ceremonies ... The presentation of the measuring rod and measuring rope to the king in preparation for his building a temple is the ultimate origin of the motif of the linen-clad angel who carries a measuring rod and line and surveys the eschatological temple and the restored Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 40.3 and Zech. 2.5). Note also the descriptions of Nabû and Inanna as carriers of the measuring rod.[35]

If within biblical texts the book of Ezekiel's detailed descriptions devoted to the measurements are unique – it is well recorded in Babylon. Several texts that measure walls, gates, and structures of temple compounds in Babylon are available to us. See, for example, the measurements Ésagila and Ezida:

1. From south to [north:]
2. 7 thicknesses of wall at 4 cubits each
3. 2 thicknesses of wall at 1 reed each, (i.e.) 1/10 [Suppan(?):]
4. total: 40 cubits, the thickness of [the temple's(?)] walls;
5. 8 cubits: the interior of the lobby
6. of Ka-ude-babbarra;
7. 14 cubits: the chariot house;

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34 Note that the rabbinic literature demonstrates a change of the dimensions attributed to the cubits over time. First, the cubit measurement was longer and was six hand-breadths; in later generations it was shortened to five hand-breadths (see Yehiel Zvi Moskowitz, *Ezekiel* [in Hebrew], Daat Mikra [Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1985], 326; Adin Even-Yisrael (Steinsaltz), *The Steinsaltz Tanakh: Ezekiel* [in Hebrew] [Jerusalem: Koren, 2016], 193). For contemporary dimensions, see Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 110, who relates this explanation and converts it to current measurements: "The length of the measuring stick in the man's hand was 10 1/2 feet (based on a measuring standard of a cubit and a handbreadth [that is, 18 inches plus 3 inches]). He measured the thickness of the wall as 10 1/2 feet, and its height as 10 1/2 feet."

35 Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, JSOT/ASOR Monograph Series 5, JSOTSup 115 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 326.

8. 77 cubits: the Court of Bel;
9. 6 cubits: the breadth of the chapel of Ea(?);
10. 6 cubits: the south room of the chapel of Beltlya;
11. 7 cubits: the breadth of the court of the chapel of Beltlya;
12. 6 cubits: the breadth of the entrance to the chapel of Anu (and) IStar;
13. 6 cubits: the lobby of Ka-Lamma-(a)rabi:
14. total: 170 (cubits), the length of E-sagil.[36]

The measuring rod, absent in other biblical descriptions in the Bible, seems to be a direct outgrowth of the exiles' surroundings.

4.4.2 The Direction of the Temple's Description

The accepted description of Babylonian temples, which moves from the main axis to the main gate to the cella, can also be compared to Ezekiel's tour of the temple, which moves from the profane space to the most sacred space, that of the holy of holies where the divine presence resides.

In the Temple Vision, as in the Babylonian temples, the description moves from outside inward. It begins with the eastern gate of the outer courtyard, addresses the outer courtyard and its other gates, is followed by a description of the gate of the inner courtyard and its chambers, and finally discusses the temple building itself. Once inside the holiest area, an additional description then ranges from the inside to the outside, and includes the chambers, passageways, and fences in the inner courtyard, and finally the perimeter of the wall.[37]

4.4.3 The Temple's Structure

In the Temple Vision, Ezekiel is brought to the land of Israel, to a very high mountain; on it, on the southern side (40:2), lies the structure of a city (40:2; 43:12). The extensive description of the design of the sacred space includes a detailed portrayal of the temple building and surrounding complex, dimensional and territorial space of the temple compound, standard temple features and unique features (40:1–42:12, 15–20; 43:10–18; 46:19–24; 47:1–12). The description, moving from the outside inwards, shows that the compound is surrounded by

36 George, *Topographical Texts*, 127, and see throughout the book; see, e.g., pp. 120–27.
37 There is no parallel description of Solomon's Temple.

a wall and has gates to enter the outer courtyard. From the outer courtyard there are stairs that ascend; one enters the inner courtyard through another set of gates, and, from there, the temple building itself.

The structure of the temple in Ezekiel (40:5; 42:15–20), and the dimensions of the temple area, including its courts, are unusually large, substantially larger than those of the earlier temples in Israel (Solomon's Temple and the temples found in excavations), and include a wall surrounding the building complex (40:5). Given the difficulty of interpreting the text in Ezekiel with regard to the size and structure of the visionary temple, which refers to a compound that measures 500 × 500 rods (3000 × 3000 cubits),[38] it seems fair to assume that the uniquely large structure of the temple is, inter alia, a means of protecting its sanctity.

As we have seen, the Neo-Babylonian temples' basic structure was large, and often contained a rectangular broad-room, with the god's statue standing on one of the room's long sides opposite the entrance to the room, in the secluded, holiest space, reached through a series of corridors and chambers. These findings may shed new light on Ezekiel's large outer court complex, unparalleled in biblical predecessors; it appears to be designed to protect the purity of the temple.[39]

Safeguarding the purity of the temple in the Temple Vision is expressed in the physical layout of the temple and its courtyards, and the restriction on entry to the precincts. This layout also contributes to the exclusion of the masses from the temple's inner area in order to maintain its purity or, as the prophet emphasizes: לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְחֹל, "to separate the holy from what desecrates it" (42:20).

4.4.4 The Wall

Ezekiel describes the outer wall surrounding the Temple Mount and the outer eastern gate (40:6–16) as a wall that surrounds the temple complex all around

38 The word *qanim* appears four times in Ezekiel. However, its deletion in the Septuagint (hereafter: LXX) left these verses with no system of measurement; see Block, *Ezekiel, 25–48*, 568–70. Furthermore, based on the absence of the word for rods in the LXX, commentators suggest that Ezekiel meant cubits (אמות). See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 404; Block, *Ezekiel, 25–48*, 568–70.

39 There does not seem to be any correlation between a temple's size and its proportions; both large and small temples could be in either one of these ranges. The layout in Ezekiel, however, has the sanctified area significantly larger than that of the temple.

(40:5). The man measures it with the measuring rod and finds its breadth and height are equal: both one rod (see below). Next, the text notes the eastern gate structure of the wall, the first of the three wall gates described. There are no other biblical descriptions of a wall surrounding a temple in the First or Second Temple and therefore the details of the wall here are all unique.

The prominent wall that surrounds Ezekiel's entire temple complex, described in detail, finds its analogue in the outer wall that also surrounds many Neo-Babylonian temple complexes.[40] Neo-Babylonian texts indicate that walls are a primary feature of the temple; proper description of the temple begins with them. One text[41] describes a temple in two dimensions, without any mention of height. Here, then, is a Babylonian contextual parallel to the overwhelming (though not total) description in Ezekiel that, with the exception of the surrounding wall (40:5), omits the mention of height. In both cases not only the buildings structures are parallel, but even the way in which the buildings structures are presented to us is parallel: in two dimensions.

4.4.5 Physical Layout

The physical layout of Ezekiel's temple and its courtyards was square, similar to some of the temple structures known in Mesopotamia.[42] The Neo-Babylonian world, as we saw, included at least four major temples. Of these, only Temple A was generally square; others were rectangular or L-shaped.

It appears that the book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple bears similarities to Solomon's Temple in the building's shape and ante-cella/cella structure; however, the outer walls, the great hall, the series of chambers, the double ante-cella structure, and the square courtyards all echo the Neo-Babylonian temples that the exiles would have seen around them. We suggest that the wall forms a boundary between the sacred compound that houses the temple and its courtyards and the profane world outside it. In addition, a larger structure means more protection, keeping impure elements away from the temple.

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40 For the wall as a general feature of Neo-Babylonian temples, see Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 294; Castel, "Temples," 174; and Allinger-Csollich, "Birs Nimrud II," 146–53. For specific examples, see discussions in Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 284 (Babylon), 291 (Borsippa), 296 (Ur), and references to the plans.

41 George, *Topographical Texts*, no. 14.

42 The inner courtyard was also square; it measured 100 by 100 cubits (40:47).

4.4.6 Orientation

A noticeable distinction between the book of Ezekiel's temple and Babylonian temples concerns the direction of their entrance into the temple. While Nabû's entry and exit in the temple in Babylon, much like the entrance to the Borsippa temple, was north-southwards (possibly influenced by the direction of the Euphrates River, which flowed southwards), in the Temple Vision, God's glory returns through the eastern gate (44:1–2).

As we have noted, Neo-Babylonian used a direct-axis plan, with a preference for northeast to southwest and the cult statue often approximately oriented toward sunrise during the summer solstice. The book of Ezekiel's temple may, therefore, align itself to create a conscious contrast.

4.4.7 Gate Halls and Chambers

A number of features of the visionary temple can be compared to Neo-Babylonian temples.

4.4.7.1 The Gate Hall

The biblical temples, as we saw, call to mind the "ante-cella/cella" arrangement of space which is a common feature of the main sanctuaries within Neo-Babylonian temples. In order to reach the cella – the location of the deity's statue and the most sacred part of the temple – one must first pass through an ante-cella.[43] The plans of the Ezida at Borsippa and the larger "double temple" at Hursagkalama provide an even closer spatial analogue to the Israelite descriptions. These temples have two rooms, rather than just one, leading to the cella, analogous to the book of Ezekiel's gate hall (אולם השער) and sanctuary (היכל) leading to the holy of holies (קדש הקדשים).[44]

One specific point of comparison pertains to Ezekiel's mention of a vestibule or gate hall (אולם השער) within the gate complexes; in the book of Ezekiel, the term אולם is used exclusively to relate to temple architecture. Of all the biblical temple descriptions, only in Ezekiel do we find the term אולם השער, "gate hall" (40:7, 8, 9, 15), describing the vestibule within these gates as a noteworthy space.[45] This includes a detailed description of the width and length of the gate from the inside and outside, the halls within the gate, the

43 Castel, "Temples," 171–72.

44 On Ezida see Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 292, pl. 397 (rooms A_1, A_2, and A_3). On Hursagkalama, see Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 283, pl. 380 (rooms 7, 4, and 1).

45 The same term also applies to vestibules in the inner gates; see 40:39, 40; 44:3; 46:2, 8.

cells, the rams (columns?), and the sealed windows, encompassing a large complex consisting of many spaces. Although the portrayal of a "gate hall" is unique to Ezekiel within biblical literature, "gate structures" are common in the description of Mesopotamian temples.[46] The term describes the temple building hall or a hall attached to an outer or inner gate.[47] Several Babylonian texts refer to *ašrukkatu*-chambers associated with gates.[48] For example, two of the nine "thicknesses of wall" measured in the Sippar text belong to the *ašrukkatu*-chambers of the gates called Ka-ude-babbara and Ka-Lamma-rabi.[49]

4.4.7.2 Chambers

After passing through the eastern gate, Ezekiel enters the temple's outer courtyard, noting that it has gates as well as thirty chambers (40:17–27). Their function is not described, but we can assume that they should be used for the different needs of the temple. Again, there is no parallel biblical description of the number of chambers or their location in the Temple, except for mentions of events that took place in Temple chambers. Since the outer courtyard has three gates (there was no gate on the west side), the floor and chambers described may have also been on three of the four sides of the wall, i.e., thirty chambers along three sides: the eastern, the northern, and the southern – ten chambers in each direction, five on each side of each gate (40:17–19). The narrative then describes the northern gate and the southern gates of the outer courtyard (40:20–27). The two gates are said to be one hundred cubits away from the courtyard gates parallel to them.

The structure of the inner courtyard, the gates, and their dimensions (40:28–37) are the same as the structure and dimensions of the outer courtyard gates (the eastern, northern, and southern gates are also similar). There are two exceptions: the inner courtyard gates face the outer courtyard, and, in addition, there is a difference in the number of stairs to the gates: the outer courtyard gates have seven stairs, and the inner courtyard gates have eight.

Various actions are to take place at the inner courtyard's northern gate, where there is a chamber to wash the burnt offering sacrifice and tables for the

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46 Note that there is an element in the gate's direction that resembles the priestly literature: at the entrance to the northern gate there is a room where the sacrificial organs are slaughtered on the northern side (40:38); see Lev 1:11; 4:33; 7:2.

47 For a definition of the אולם in Ezekiel in comparison to Kings and Chronicles, see Peter Dubovský, *The Building of the First Temple: A Study in Redactional, Text-critical and Historical Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 144–50.

48 George, *Topographical Texts*, 436.

49 Ibid., no. 14:5–6, 13 (pp. 14–15).

guilt offering, burnt offering, and sin offering (40:38–43). This is in line with Leviticus (1:1; 4:24; 7:2), although washing the burnt offering first has no biblical parallels. This addition is in line with the book of Ezekiel's extra strictness, which requires washing and cleaning not only the organs but also the entire animal before slaughtering it (we will discuss the sacrificial tables below).

The chambers for the שרים (officials) are different from the chambers for priests (40:44–46). The square inner courtyard measured 100 by 100 cubits, with the altar located in the front of the building (40:47).[50] This is in addition to the chambers intended for the holy of holies (42:1–12). Additional chambers – this time facing the south, near the southern gate – are described in chapter 46. At their western end, Ezekiel sees a special place where the priests will cook the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the meal offerings. Cooking and baking would also take place in the chambers (46:20), as we will see in greater detail below.

Apart from the arrangement of the temple, the situation of Ezekiel's temple within a warren of chambers and courtyards resembles, in general, the layout of Neo-Babylonian temples. In both the biblical and Mesopotamian descriptions, the courtyards are the widest spaces.[51] The placement of chambers around the periphery of the courtyards is a feature attested in Babylonian temples as well. In Babylonian temples, some of these outer chambers were themselves areas of cultic activity devoted to deities other than the main one to whom the temple was dedicated.[52] Some topographical texts specifically list, and even measure, these various cultic areas.[53]

Baker, for example, notes that

> the Exalted Gate of the Rēš had a staircase to the left and [...] a cella to the far right as one entered the gate. A similar design can be observed with the main entrance to the *Kernbau* in the Rēš, which faced north-east and had a staircase leading off the left side of the gate chamber, and a cella opening off the right side.[54]

50 One cubit is roughly 50 centimeters, so 100 cubits is roughly 50 meters.

51 Castel, "Temples," 170–71; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 11.

52 On this phenomenon in general and the difficulties of identifying these areas within archaeological remains, see, for example, Andrew George, "The Bricks of E-Sagil," *Iraq* 57 (1995): 174–75; Allinger-Csollich, "Birs Nimrud II," 212; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Cuneiform Monographs 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 29–34; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 11.

53 Lists of shrines within temples appear in Andrew George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts,* OLA 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), nos. 21 (pp. 185–91) and 25 (pp. 198–201). Texts with measurements of these shrines can be found in George, *Topographical Texts,* nos. 13 (pp. 114–18), 14 (pp. 126–29), and 37 (pp. 220–21).

54 See Heather Baker, "Beneath the Stairs in the Rēš Temple of Hellenistic Uruk. A Study in Cultic Topography and Spatial Organization," *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 6 (2013), 18–42 (the text is on p. 23).

The following illustration of the temple at Borsippa illustrates the centrality of the chambers in the temple complex (Fig. 4.2).[55]

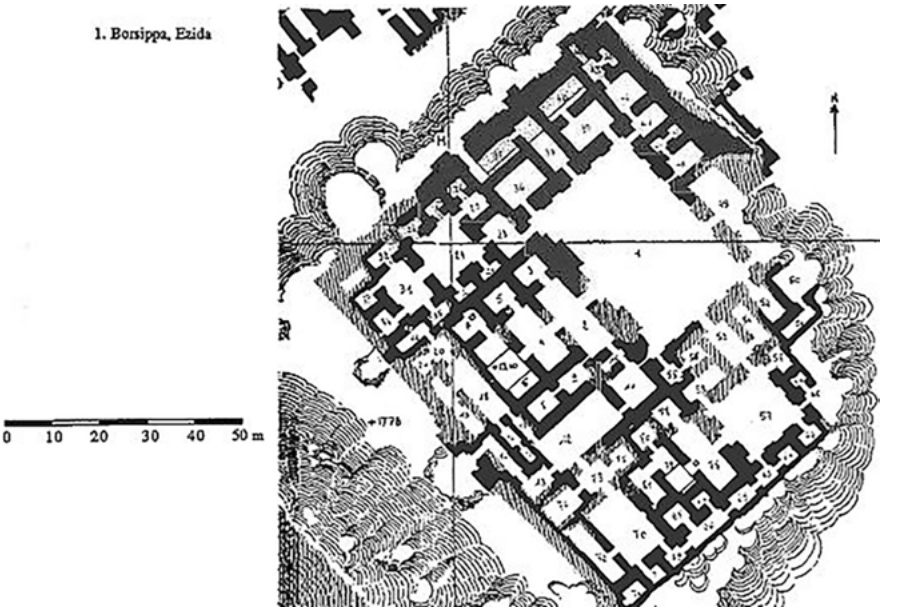

Fig. 4.2: Borsippa, Ezida (Castel, "Temples," Pl. 1, 1).

In addition to the cultic space dedicated to other deities – which would be out of place in Ezekiel's monotheistic vision – textual and archaeological records attest to workshops and storerooms within the temple precinct.[56] These areas correspond most closely to the chambers (לשכות) that Ezekiel describes – the thirty chambers (40:17–19) and the priestly chambers (40:44–46). In addition, there were chambers for the priests between the inner and outer courtyards. In these chambers the priests ate the sacred parts of the sacrifices and changed their clothes (42:13). It is also apparent that the verses in Ezekiel describe upper, lower, and central chambers located on three different floors of the building (42:5–6).

55 See additional layouts of temple plans in Castel, "Temples," pl. 1, 1–5.

56 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 11–13. For references to similar locations in other temples, see CAD *šutummu* ($Š_3$, pp. 413–14). For a discussion of archaeological remains, see Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 287 (Ésagila), 291 (Ezida), and 297 (Ur temple complex).

4.4.7.3 Gates

Neo-Babylonian evidence also complements the Temple Vision's description of the gates that provide access to and within the temple complex.[57] Archaeological reconstructions of Neo-Babylonian temples contain monumental gates marking the entrances.[58] Topographical texts indicate that these gates were themselves significant loci; several specifically list and explain the names of the gates as a group, rather than as components subordinate to broader descriptions of the temple.[59] One text from Sippar details the measurements of various gates of the Ebabbar,[60] furnishing an example of the book of Ezekiel's description of the gates with their measurements.

One text – "a Neo- or Late Babylonian tablet, almost complete, of the shape associated with commercial documents" – lists the numbers of towers along a city wall.[61]

1. 12 towers from the bank of the Euphrates
2. to the Gate of the Sul)i Canal;
3. 18 towers from the sill of the Gate
4. of the Sul)i Canal to the district of the Court of the Steward;
5. 8 towers from the district of the Court
6. of the Steward to the sill of the Gate of the Madanu Canal;
7. 29 towers from the Gate of the Madanu Canal
8. to the "Bond" of the Gissu Gate;
9. 23 towers from the Gissu Gate
10. up to the upper tower
11. of the Gate of the Sun of the Gods;
12. 30 towers from
13. the upper tower
14. of the Gate of the Sun of the Gods
15. to the Gate of the Seashore.

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57 For a different comparison of the gate system in Neo-Babylonian temples within the city and the book of Ezekiel's temples gates, see John Wesley Wright, "A Tale of Three Cities: Urban Gates, Squares and Power in Iron Age II, Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Judah," in *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture*, ed. Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 36–39.

58 See Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer,* plates 387, 392, 399, 402, 407, 408, and 422a–b.

59 George, *Topographical Texts,* 91. The gate lists include: George, *Topographical Texts*, nos. 6–8 (pp. 92–98; Ésagila) and the reverse of no. 31 (pp. 210–11; Eanna). For other fragmentary gate lists, see George, *Topographical Texts*, 91.

60 George, *Topographical Texts,* no. 36 (pp. 215–17).

61 BM 55441 (82-7-4, 12), plate 29; see George, *Topographical Texts*, 137, 140.

The following illustration of Babylon demonstrates the importance of the wall and gates (Fig. 4.3).

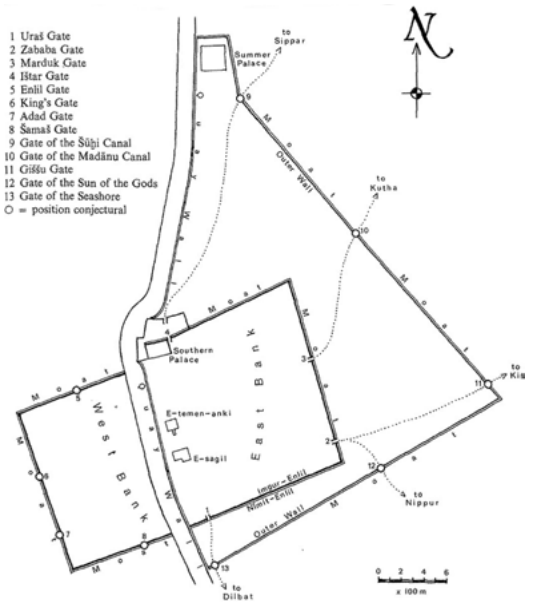

Fig. 7. Babylon: Inner and Outer Defences in the 6th Century B.C.

Fig. 4.3: Babylon: Inner and Outer Defence in the 6th Century B.C. (George, *Topographical Texts*, 141, fig. 7).

A second example of the centrality of the gates in the temple, and specific terms that address specific gates (e.g., the "entrance gate") is evident in the well-documented Rēš temple, where the names of the gates are also documented.[62] It has been previously noted by Hurowitz that "the most important event in the dedication of the Temple is the introduction of the Ark and the entry of the *kabod*, respectively the natural and 'supernatural' symbols of God's presence. This parallels the Mesopotamian accounts of the introduction of divine statues into the temples."[63] This conclusion is consistent with Ezekiel's three references to the eastern gate (43:1–12; 44:1–5; 46:1–3), in addition to its description (noted above) as part of the temple plan (40:28–37), which reflects its importance. The text includes Ezekiel's prophecy that God's *kabod* (or honor) will enter from the gate on the east and fill the future temple (43:1–7), which thus fulfills its designation as God's permanent dwelling place (43:7; 44:2). From this time onward the gate will be permanently closed (44:1–2) as the divine presence will have entered the temple through it (43:1–2; 46:1).

62 See Baker, "Beneath the Stairs," 21, and the temple gate terms in the following pages.
63 Hurowitz, *I Have Built,* 273.

This description parallels God's departure in Ezekiel's opening chapter (1:8–12).[64] It further parallels another detailed description given of the closed gate and additional temple entrance matters (44:1–5). These passages take the entrance of God's honor one step further when addressing the gate on the eastern side. Since God's honor will enter the temple through the eastern gate (44:2), in the future this gate will be closed to everyone but the *nasi*, who will enter through the eastern gate at fixed times on a regular basis (46:1–2).[65]

The Babylonian temples, too, emphasized the opening and closing of the temple gate, which they describe as taking place, for the most part, on a regular basis. Thus, for example, the first few days of the Akītu festival began with the daily opening of the gate by the *ahu rabû*.[66] This, too, may accord with the general perception found in the Temple Vision of disconnecting and restricting the entrance to the sacred precincts.[67]

An explicit example is found in Nabonidus's description of the dedication of Shamash's temple, Ebabbar. Nabonidus drenches the doorposts, locks, bolts, and door leaves with oil, purifying the entrances in preparation for the entry of the god:

> The door posts, locks, bolts and door-leaves
> I drenched with oil and for the entry of their exalted divinity
> I made the contents of the temple full of sweet fragrance.
> The Temple, for the entry of Shamash my lord, its gates were wide open, and it was full of joy.[68]

---

64 For an explanation of the meaning of the combination *kabod Hashem*, its presence throughout the book of Ezekiel, and its meaning in the light of the Mesopotamian *melammu* (radiance, splendor), see Shawn Zelig Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *Melammu*," in *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, ed. Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho, WO 45/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015): 10–21. "Melammu is one of the oldest royal and divine attributes in cuneiform culture, and appears in its Sumerian form ME.LAM2 early in the second millennium. [...] However, in Neo-Assyrian times, usage patterns gradually changed so that melammu came to be used in a manner identical to other Akkadian terms for radiance and luminosity. [...] In Assyrian royal ideology, melammu expressed the insuperable power of the god Aššur and his representative, the Assyrian king" (Aster, "Melammu," 15).

65 For a comprehensive review of those permitted to enter the temple courtyards, see Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 1: Chapters 1–24* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 848–49.

66 We will elaborate on the personnel in the Babylonian temples in chapter 5 and discuss the *ahu rabû*'s role in the Akītu festival in chapter 6, section 6.2.

67 On the opening and closing of the temple gates, see Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 25 ff. Every morning, the temple "awakened" (*dīk bīti*) and the doors opened (*pīt bābi*). For additional extrabiblical parallels, see Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 576–77.

68 *Nabonidus* no. 6 col. II13–15; see Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 278.

The god moves from the area of the profane into an area now made sacred by his presence.

Thus, it seems clear that the structure of gate features that were present in Neo-Babylonian temples appear in the book of Ezekiel's visionary temple as well.

4.4.8 Kitchens

The text points Ezekiel to the outer courtyard to see the four corners where the sacrifices were cooked, בית המבשלים (44:11; 46:19–24). Each measures 40 cubits length by 30 cubits width. Unlike the sacrifices in the holy of holies, cooked by the priests in the chambers described above, the outer courtyards are for cooking the sacrifice on behalf of the people; in these cases, the meat from the sacrifice is given to the person who brought the sacrifice. This role was assigned to servants of the house, the non-Zadokite Levites, who cooked the sacrifices in addition to slaughtering them (46:23).

Designating a place to **cook** sacrifices (and not only sacrifice them) is unique to the book of Ezekiel; no other biblical descriptions of temples include the kitchens. This appears to be part of the effort to keep the people away from the different areas within the holy precincts (see also 44:19).

The text begins by addressing the priests:

> וַיְבִיאֵנִי בַּמָּבוֹא [...] אֶל הַלְּשָׁכוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים הַפֹּנוֹת צָפוֹנָה וְהִנֵּה שָׁם מָקוֹם בירכתם (בַּיַּרְכָתַיִם) יָמָּה. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי **זֶה הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יְבַשְּׁלוּ שָׁם הַכֹּהֲנִים** אֶת הָאָשָׁם וְאֶת הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר יֹאפוּ אֶת הַמִּנְחָה **לְבִלְתִּי הוֹצִיא אֶל הֶחָצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה לְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת הָעָם.**
>
> And He took me through the entrance [...] to the sacristies of the priests, which faced north. And there was a space at the rear facing west. And He said to me: This is the place **where the priests will cook** the guilt offering and the sin offering, that they will bake the meal offering, **so as not to bring [them] outside courtyard, thereby (exposing) the people to holiness.** (46:19–20)

The priests prepare the food from the sacrifices, cook the guilt and sin sacrifices, and bake the offering; the chambers are designed to prevent the taking out of the guilt, sin, and meal offerings so that they do not come into contact with the people in the outer courtyard; the people are thus separated from the sacrifices given on their behalf. The relatively detailed description of the practical workspaces, the cooking houses, includes restrictions on carrying sacrifices out to the passageway from the temple kitchens to the courtyard.

Once more, there is a shared principle of separation between the sacred and the profane realms in Ezekiel's vison and the Babylonian priests' reality: evidently, the priests who cooked the holiest sacrifices in the Babylonian tem-

ples belonged to the higher echelons of the priesthood, and were of higher rank than the supporting functionaries who did guard duty or cooked.[69]

The second section of the description of the kitchens (46:21–24) is where the cooking of the people's offerings (זבחי העם) is explained. It describes the kitchens (בית המבשלים) – four places in the corners of the outside courtyard, where the "servants of the temple compound" (משרתי הבית; 46:24) cook the people's sacrifices that are eaten by their owners.

The text describes the place where the sacrifices of the people will be cooked, in the outer court – by the Levites, not the priests:

אֵלֶּה בֵּית הַמְבַשְּׁלִים אֲשֶׁר יְבַשְּׁלוּ שָׁם מְשָׁרְתֵי הַבַּיִת אֶת זֶבַח הָעָם.

> These are the kitchens where the servants of the temple compound cook the people's well-being sacrifices. (46:24)[70]

Descriptions of the Borsippa brewers, bakers, and others gathered in the temple's courtyard to deliver their products for the god Nabû's meals show similar motifs. There, too, the detailed description speaks about a passageway leading from the courtyard to the (ante-)cella.[71] In both instances the passageway is discussed in reference to an increase in the level of sanctity concurrently with the decrease in accessibility when moving from the passageway towards the inner sanctum.[72]

The diagram below demonstrates that the cooking spaces were external. The texts we have indicate that the entrance to the more internal areas was limited to unique functionaries while the entrance to the outer houses was more common (Fig. 4.4).

Hence, two distinct areas are described: the inner courtyard is reserved only for the priests (46:19–20) and the cooking takes place in the kitchens, located in the four corners of the outer courtyard (46:23–24). This singular mention of the kitchens in the book of Ezekiel's temple provides a glimpse of the multiple tasks carried out by the temple priests. Perhaps the thirty chambers (לשכות)

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69 See, e.g., Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 47–48.

70 For a division of the sacrifices, see Frances Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism*, trans. J. E. Crowley (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 211–14.

71 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 11. The Babylonian texts focus more on serving the food in the temple complex to the gods and less on consumption.

72 The notion of protecting the places where contact between the world of man and the realm of the supernatural existed is true for Mesopotamia in general; see Julia Keel, *The Revival of the Anu Cult and the Nocturnal Fire Ceremony at Late Babylonian Uruk* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 223.

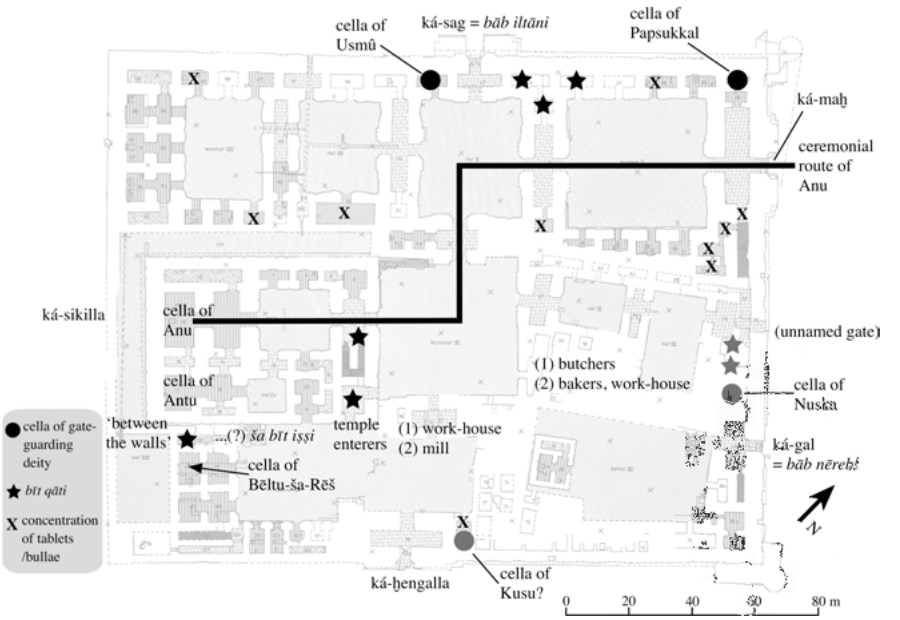

Fig. 4.4: Layout of the Rēš Temple (Baker, "Beneath the Stairs," 37).

found in the visionary temple (40:17), whose purpose and dimensions remain undefined, echo the comprehensive descriptions of the temple personnel in the Babylonian temples, such as Ezida, with its many workshops (*šutummu*).

Unlike in Solomon's Temple, where no description is given of the kitchens or the work that took place therein, the book of Ezekiel's visionary temple describes the kitchens in detail, in a way that echoes descriptions of temples in the Neo-Babylonian temples with which the exiles would have been familiar.

4.4.9 Temple Wall Decorations

Walls and different parts of the laver stands in the First Temple courtyard (1 Kgs 6:29–35; 7:29, 36; 2 Chr 3:7) are described as containing inscriptions of lions and cattle, among other things – in line with the Assyrian Empire's temple reliefs that were a significant part of their palace.[73] The Temple Vision includes de-

73 See, for example, Clifford Mark McCormick, *Palace and Temple: A Study of Architectural and Verbal Icons* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 69–71.

scriptions of wall decorations, on the walls of the temple building and the temple doors – murals of cherubim and palm trees:

וְעָשׂוּי כְּרוּבִים וְתִמֹרִים וְתִמֹרָה בֵּין כְּרוּב לְכְרוּב וּשְׁנַיִם פָּנִים לַכְּרוּב. וּפְנֵי אָדָם אֶל הַתִּמֹרָה מִפֹּה וּפְנֵי כְפִיר אֶל הַתִּמֹרָה מִפֹּוֹ עָשׂוּי אֶל כָּל הַבַּיִת סָבִיב סָבִיב. מֵהָאָרֶץ עַד מֵעַל הַפֶּתַח הַכְּרוּבִים וְהַתִּמֹרִים עֲשׂוּיִם וְקִיר הַהֵיכָל.

And there made cherubim and palm trees [decorations], with a palm tree between keruv to keruv, and the keruv had two faces. And the face of a man to [=faced] the palm tree [decorations] on the side, and the face of a lion to [=faced] the palm tree [decorations] on the [other] side. Thus was the whole house roundabout. From the ground to over the opening, the keruvim and palm trees [decorations] were made, and the sanctuary wall. (41:18–20)

Raanan Eichler[74] highlights characteristics that are unique to Ezekiel on one hand; on the other, he describes features in Ezekiel that are similar to those found in the Mesopotamian context. Temple decorations in the Temple Vision that were unique within biblical literature include the two faces of the cherubim decorating the temple's walls (41:18): "The deliberate statement in Ezekiel's vision of the future temple, that the cherubim decorating the temple's wall have two faces (41:18), is actually an indication that cherubim normally did *not* have two faces."[75] He concludes: "The iconographic motif of two-faced cherubim flanking תמרים, described in Ezekiel's temple-of-the-future vision (41:18–20; cf. 1 Kgs 6:29), probably reflects a similar conception of cherubim as guarding a sacred tree. (A sacred tree flanked by two creatures who shelter it with their outspread wings is a common motif in the visual art of the ancient Levant)."[76]

There are significant divergences between the wall inscriptions of Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 6:28, 30, 32; 2 Chr 3:7) and those of the Babylonian kings, with their common description of gold and silver coatings – while in the book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple there is no mention of gold or of silver.

We can conclude that the iconographic motifs are significantly different from Solomon's Temple; the comprehensive picture they reveal indicates that the temple structure shares some similar features with the surrounding Babylonian temples (of cherubim guarding a sacred tree) and in other ways is distinct from them (the cherubim with two faces).

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74 Raanan Eichler, "The Ark and the Cherubim" (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016).

75 Ibid., 215. For an evaluation of the cherubim, and his proposal for understanding cherubim and wings in the Hebrew Bible, see pp. 257–74. This conclusion is consistent with other passages (Exod 25:20 = 37:9; 2 Chr 3:13) which reveal in passing that the cherubim of which they speak had one face.

76 Eichler, "Ark and Cherubim," 287, and see the figures he addresses there.

4.4.10 The (Absence of) Holy Vessels

Alongside the structure of the visionary temple, its contents also warrant examination. Da Riva lays the groundwork that leads her (and others) to conclude that "in the Mesopotamian tradition, the symbolic aspect of royal ideology finds its expression in monumental architecture. […] In any case, a dilapidated temple or wall is an indication of a land in decline, led by a poor ruler who is not supported by the gods. If the buildings are successful, clearly, the king enjoys their favour."[77] A monarchy in its glory will be reflected in a glorious temple, while a declining king will be reflected in a simple or minimal temple.

In the book of Ezekiel, the opposite is true: the Lord is perceived to have all abilities but the visionary temple is very simple, has no silver and gold, and is practically devoid of any vessels. In many ways, temples reflect theology, determining the nature of the temple plan as well as the form of participation in the rituals that take place. For this reason, we must supplement our contextualized understanding of the temple in Ezekiel by considering what is missing (and, in the next chapter, who is missing), in an attempt to understand the significance of these missing items and in what way they supplement the book of Ezekiel's temple ideology.

The temple contains no hint of ark, cherubim (other than those decorating the walls), table for showbread, or menorah; all that is explicitly described in the Temple Vision are altars and a table.[78] The description of the altars includes, first, a simple wooden altar (41:22),[79] not a gold-plated one (compare with Exod 30:3–5, where the gold plating is highlighted time and again).

But the description of an altar made entirely of wood, and the absence of gold plating, raises the question of what the use of such an altar would be. Commentators seemingly understand this description of an altar to be a place (a table) where bread was placed.[80] As can be understood from the second part of the verse – זֶה הַשֻּׁלְחָן אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי ה', "This is the table before YHWH" (41:22) – the second altar is a large one for the burnt offerings, located in the courtyard,

77 Rocio Da Riva, "The Neo-Babylonian Palace as Centre of the World," *Aramazd* 12, no. 1 (2018): 96.

78 It has been suggested by medieval commentators – and we disagree with this approach – that the absence of the holy vessels from Ezekiel's vision does not necessarily imply their absence from the planned future temple. See, for example, Abrabanel to Ezekiel 41.

79 Note that the Septuagint has measurements for the altar in Ezekiel that are different from the measurements in the Temple Vision's envisioned altar; Ezekiel's dimensions are also different from the altar's measurements in Exodus.

80 Kasher, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 810.

described from the bottom up (43:13–27).[81] As for the tables, while the verses can be interpreted in different ways, it seems that the hall itself has four tables, two on each side, and four more in the gate hall; in total, there are eight tables for sacrificing. Apart from the eight (slaughtering) tables, there are four additional tables. These four tables are made of ashlar stones and are intended for the vessels. Unlike the eight slaughtering tables, these have dimensions, seemingly smaller than the other tables. The place where the burnt offerings will be washed is also described (40:39–42). These simple objects remain because a table and an altar meet the basic essential needs of any temple that functions as a place where sacrifices are given.[82]

The fact that Ezekiel found no place for vessels in his vision is explained by Joyce's description of a God who is freed from his dependence on the people. This will be accomplished, inter alia, by the lack of objects: "the deity has indeed returned to his special place, where he will dwell among the people of Israel forever. But his freedom, mobility, transcendence and universalism have also been established forever."[83] This change may be meant to preserve the sanctity of the temple. The absence of any holy vessels means less involvement on the part of the temple's various office-bearers, reducing the chance of defilement.[84]

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81 There may be another Mesopotamian influence here if Levenson is correct in proposing that "the mysterious term הראל (43:15) strongly suggests the connection of creation with the Temple through the idea of the sacred mountain, which the two complexes share" (Jon Levenson, "Cosmos and Microcosm," in *Cult and Cosmos: Tilting toward a Temple-Centered Theology*, ed. Michael Morales BTS 18 [Leuven: Peeters, 2014], 241), and see above, chapter 2, note 52, for the term חיק הארץ and הראל.

82 For a detailed comparison of the features in the book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple to I Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Exodus and including the outer gates, outer court, inner gates, inner court, sanctuary, אולם, היכל, דביר, side chambers, western בנין, internal furnishings, doors, outside altar, kitchens, and cherubim, see the appendix in Corrine L. Patton, "Ezekiel's Blueprint for the Temple of Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1991), 210–11.

83 See Paul M. Joyce, "Temple and Worship in Ezekiel 40–48," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 422 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 155.

84 This is also substantially different from Solomon's Temple. The dimensions for the sanctuary (היכל; 40 cubits by 20 cubits) and for the holy of holies (20 cubits by 20 cubits) are the same as the dimensions of Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 6:2–3, 16–17), and are double the dimensions of the tabernacle (Exod 26:15–25). The entrance hall (אולם) is similar to the one in Solomon's Temple (40:49). The substantial difference is that Solomon built a palace in addition to the Temple. In Ezekiel there is no house for the *nasi* (and there is no king). Ezekiel also does not have wood paneling from Lebanon, gold, cherubim made of gold, cherubim in the דביר (there is no דביר), or an Ark of the Covenant. Nothing is described in the holy of holies. The wall decorations include "cherubim and timbers" on the walls, with "human face" and "the face of a lion" (41:18–20) as in Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 6:35; 7:36), but without gold. No gold

Ezekiel's vision is reformative and attempts to protect the visionary temple from sin and abomination, which were the cause of the destruction of the glorious First (golden) Temple and of the palace Solomon built. Attempts are also made to protect the visionary temple from the First Temple's politics. This included, among other things, materials imported for the building from foreign lands. Therefore, no materials are imported for the visionary building from foreign lands. The detailed description in Ezekiel is restricted to the precise measurements of the house and its walls.[85]

4.5 Temple Mythology and Its Parallels

4.5.1 Mountains

The vision opens with the description of the sacred space as located in the highest part of an extremely high mountain: וַיְנִיחֵנִי **אֶל הַר גָּבֹהַּ מְאֹד** וְעָלָיו כְּמִבְנֵה עִיר מִנֶּגֶב, "and he set me on an extremely high mountain on which there was a structure like of a city to the south" (40:2). This is noted again later: זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבַּיִת עַל רֹאשׁ הָהָר כָּל גְּבֻלוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיב קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים הִנֵּה זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבָּיִת, "This is the plan of the house, on the top of the mountain, all of its boundaries roundabout, holy of holies, here this is the plan of the house" (43:12). That temples were located on mountains is not an innovation in Ezekiel; it can be seen in various Babylonian topographical texts in Ancient Near Eastern contexts[86] and has been addressed in other prophecies.[87] A comparative analysis to motifs in the Book of Psalms was conducted by Keel.[88]

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lamps (מנורות) are mentioned in the היכל (compare to ten made by Solomon in 1 Kings 7:48–49); no gold-plated bread table (לחם הפנים), no gold altar. The inner altar is made from wood (3 cubits in height as in the tabernacle, and 2 cubits in length, twice the tabernacle), and is also named the "table which is before the Lord" (41:22) – the only vessel mentioned in the היכל. There are no vessels for the washbasin (ים or מכונות). There are two pillars (עמודים) on both sides of the entrance (40:49), but no capitals (כותרות) are mentioned.

85 See Patton, "Ezekiel's Blueprint," 203, who concludes: "It is expressly not some static plan or blueprint rendered on papyrus, leather or clay. The whole point of this account is that the plan never is a plan. It is an existential reality, whose message must be communicated to the people textually."

86 George, *Topographical Texts* (for the relevant pages, see below, notes 89–90).

87 See Isaiah 2:2: וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נָכוֹן יִהְיֶה הַר בֵּית ה' בְּרֹאשׁ הֶהָרִים וְנִשָּׂא מִגְּבָעוֹת וְנָהֲרוּ אֵלָיו כָּל הַגּוֹיִם, "In the days to come, The Mount of the Lord's house shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy."

88 See Othmar Keel's chapter titled "Temple and Mountain," in *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 113–20.

There is no mention in these verses – or elsewhere throughout the Temple Vision – of the name of the mountain or the city (Zion, Jerusalem). Furthermore, Solomon's Temple, like the temples found in the land of Israel, did not have any relation to mountains. This is no coincidence, and may be a perception of the place and status of the temple in the future.[89] In Babylonian culture, some temples had a "mountain" in their name. These mountains were usually the mountains from the east (i.e., the Zagros), and expressed the distant, the strange, or the unknown, playing a mythological role.[90] Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar states that he turned Babylon into a mountain, when addressing its fortification; his meaning is that under his rule Babylon was a safe place for its inhabitants.[91]

The details of the construction reported by Nebuchadnezzar (CT 37 l1 f., ii 22–29) include:

> As for Babylon, the cult-centre of the great lord Marduk, and its great walls, Imgur Enlil and Nimit-Enlil, of which Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, my father who begot me, built the foundations, and which he surrounded with a double moat wall of bitumen and baked brick, but whose construction he did not complete – I, his firstborn son, his favourite, raised high the tops of those walls and finished their construction. I fashioned fierce bulls of copper and frenzied dragons, and stationed them at the sills of its city gates. A third moat wall, (with) towers and turrets, I dug deeper than the original foundation platform and laid its footings on the breast of the netherworld. This moat wall I joined to the moat walls my father had built **and raised its top as high as a mountain** (emphasis mine).[92]

In addition, Nebuchadnezzar describes his New Palace:

> The size and the magnificence of the palace, the qualities it symbolises and the significance of the building as a royal residence are emphasised in the texts, C35/1 II 13 ff.: "I

89 Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Cambridge, MA: Scholars Press, 1976), 41–42, suggests the "extremely high mountain" (40:2) is typologically related to Sinai, so that Ezekiel becomes a new Moses and the text is a new Torah. However, in our opinion, it is intentional that neither Jerusalem nor Zion is mentioned in the Temple Vision in chapters 40–48, which the text differentiates from earlier traditions in addition to separating the temple from the city (45:6; 45:15).

90 For the most part, holy places on mountains were Western Semitic and not Mesopotamian. See, for example, the Lebanese mountains that are also present in Babylonian culture.

91 Temples with mountain names included the temple of Gula in east Babylon, called E-qursag-sikilla, "House, Pure Mountain" (George, *Topographical Texts*, 305). This is in addition to the gates named mountain gates – e.g., the City Gates of Aššur, "Establisher of the Throne of Kingship, the Mountain Gate" (George, *Topographical Texts,* 177); E-nigal-kurkurra-dulla, "Whose radiance envelops the temple of Zabban; the mountains of the lands" (George, *Topographical Texts,* 181); and "House of the Silent Mountains" (George, *Topographical Texts*, 203).

92 George, *Topographical Texts,* 347.

> [...] reached the depth of the water, [...] **I built it very high like a mountain** with bitumen and baked bricks [...]. "[93] "**I built it high as a mountain** with bitumen [*and baked brick. I stretched*] for its roofing [*strong*] cedars [*from Lebanon*]. Strong wall [...] land [...]." (Emphasis mine.)[94]

Nabopolassar notes (in the inscription of the ziggurat, the Etemenanki in Babylon) that he raised the ziggurat as a mountain, when describing the sacred structure.[95]

The link between temples and high mountains is attested by temple names that included the word "mountain"[96] and by the usage of mountain imagery as a metaphor for a temple. Moreover, the Mesopotamian descriptions resemble biblical texts with regard to God's presence in the future temple.[97] Consequently, the emphasis on the Temple Vision's appearance on an "extremely high mountain" (40:2) and "on the mountain top" (42:12) alongside the absence of any name or location for this mountain glorifies the temple's place as supernatural and timeless – and once again echoes the world in which the exiles lived.

4.5.2 Water Issuing Up from under the Temple Threshold

There is no more appropriate way to end this chapter than with the apex of Ezekiel's Temple Vision: the detailed description of water issuing up from under the temple threshold. Here the guide returns to show Ezekiel a stream flowing out from beneath the temple, past the altar, and out from under the exterior east gate:

> וַיְשִׁבֵנִי אֶל פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת וְהִנֵּה מַיִם יֹצְאִים מִתַּחַת מִפְתַּן הַבַּיִת קָדִימָה כִּי פְנֵי הַבַּיִת קָדִים וְהַמַּיִם יֹרְדִים מִתַּחַת מִכֶּתֶף הַבַּיִת הַיְמָנִית מִנֶּגֶב לַמִּזְבֵּחַ [...] וְהִנֵּה מַיִם מְפַכִּים [...] וַיַּעֲבִרֵנִי בַּמַּיִם מֵי אָפְסִים. [...] וַיַּעֲבִרֵנִי בַּמַּיִם מַיִם בִּרְכָּיִם [...] וַיַּעֲבִרֵנִי מַי מָתְנָיִם [...] נַחַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲבֹר כִּי גָאוּ הַמַּיִם מֵי שָׂחוּ נַחַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵעָבֵר [...] כִּי מֵימָיו מִן הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הֵמָּה יוֹצְאִים וְהָיָה פִרְיוֹ לְמַאֲכָל וְעָלֵהוּ לִתְרוּפָה.

93 In Da Riva, "Neo-Babylonian Palace," 100.

94 Ibid., 102.

95 C31/1, Iii: 27–28 (in Rocio Da Riva, *The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amēl-Marduk and Neriglissar*, Studies in Near Eastern Records 3 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013]). For Ancient Near Eastern sources' use of mountain imagery as a symbol for power, see, for example, the words "Temple [...] Kesh Temple growing up like a mountain embracing the heaven / Growing up like Ekur when it lifts its head in the Land"; Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 66–67.

96 See: CAD Š 1, p. 57, s. v. *šadû* A, as well as towns on mountain peaks: CAD Š 1, p. 54 (cf. "extremely high mountain on which was a structure like of a city,").

97 See Richard J. Clifford, "The Temple and the Holy Mountain," in Morales, *Cult and Cosmos*, 85–98.

> And He brought me back to the entrance of the [temple] house, and behold, water issuing up from under the threshold of the house eastward, for the house faced the east, and the water flowed downward, beneath [...] the house, south of the altar [...] and behold, water was trickling out. [...] Then He led me through the water, ankle-deep water [...] and led me through the water, knee-deep water [...] and led me through water up to my waist [...] and there was a stream I could not cross. For the waters had risen to become waters for swimming, a stream that could not be pass through [...] because their waters emanate from the sanctuary. Its fruit shall yield food and its leaves medicine. (47:1–12)

The text describes a wondrous stream that emerges from under the temple threshold and flows all the way to the Arabah. At first, the water level is low. But then it rises until it becomes a raging river, impossible to cross. This is a shift in tone from the descriptions of the temple's plans. The prophet is commanded to sit on the banks of the stream and observe its wonders. The act of sitting at the bank of the stream – unlike a tour inside the plan of the temple – relates an encounter between divine and human outside of the temple.

The properties of this stream are unique and wondrous: all who take refuge in it are healed; the salty water of the Dead Sea is sweetened; the fishermen are promised an abundance of fish; the trees growing on the banks not only do not wither, but will bear fruit throughout the year, and their leaves have medicinal properties. The language used to describe Ezekiel's encounter with the river (47:2) is similar to the language of his tour of the future temple (42:2). There are additional parallels between the temple and the river: the measuring of the level of the water (47:3–5) recalls the measuring of the plan of the building (40:6, 8, 9, and others); it also accords with God's appeal to Ezekiel to see the plan of the temple (40:4).

There are no straightforward comparable sources for this unique component of Ezekiel's vision. Nonetheless, water imagery had already been associated in Ezekiel with the presence of the deity (1.24; 43.2). The feature's sources may be biblical but may also stem from the influence of the Babylonian milieu in which the vision took place, such as the relationships between springs originating from the temple and trees with unique qualities in Mesopotamia.[98]

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98 For the centrality of water in the temples see: Keel, *Symbolism*, 136–44. For the relationships between springs originating from the temple and trees with unique qualities in Mesopotamia, see Daniel Bodi, "The Double Current and the Tree of Healing in Ezekiel 47:1–12 in Light of Babylonian Iconography and Texts," in Rom-Shiloni and Carvalho, *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, 22–37; John M. Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1984): 53–76; and Nathanael Warren, "Tenure and Grant in Ezekiel's Paradise (47:13–48:29)," *VT* 63 (2013): 323–34.

The biblical connection is supported in two prophecies that display ties to Ezekiel's prophecy of water flowing from the temple precincts. One is found in the book of Joel:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִטְּפוּ הֶהָרִים עָסִיס וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תֵּלַכְנָה חָלָב וְכָל אֲפִיקֵי יְהוּדָה יֵלְכוּ מָיִם, וּמַעְיָן מִבֵּית ה' יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת נַחַל הַשִּׁטִּים.

And on that day that the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall run with milk, and all the watercourses of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come out from the house of YHWH and water Wadi Shittim. (Joel 4:18)

As Zimmerli (among others) has noted,[99] Joel's prophecy echoes that of Ezekiel. Zechariah's eschatological oracles also contain a comparable feature:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵצְאוּ מַיִם חַיִּים מִירוּשָׁלַם חֶצְיָם אֶל הַיָּם הַקַּדְמוֹנִי וְחֶצְיָם אֶל הַיָּם הָאַחֲרוֹן בַּקַּיִץ וּבֶחֹרֶף יִהְיֶה.

And on that day fresh water shall come out from Jerusalem, half to the Eastern Sea and half to the Western Sea, in the summer and the winter it shall be. (Zech 14:8)

Although there are clear links to a river originating from the temple or from Jerusalem, as found in these texts, the motif of flowing water does not share strong linguistic affinities; moreover, the motif of water flowing from the temple is absent from the other prophetic books.

Scholars also suggest that Ezekiel 47 complements the description of the Garden of Eden, since the river reflects the motif of the deity's garden or dwelling as a watery and fertile place (Gen 2:10–14),[100] or even of the days of Creation.[101] In both descriptions, in Genesis and Ezekiel, we find a stream that fertilizes the surrounding area. Moreover, the Garden of Eden is found in the east and in Ezekiel the water emerges from the temple on its eastern side. In addition, the Temple Vision' description of water coming out from under the temple threshold is reminiscent of the water that flows out of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:10).

Others rightly reject the possibility that the prophet was using "Eden creation traditions" including the "paradisal river(s)."[102] Indeed, these biblical com-

99 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 515.

100 Levenson, *Program of Restoration*, 27.

101 Leah Mazor, "The Journey of the Magical River from the Temple to the Sea (Ezek 47, 1–12): The Removal of Chaos and a New Creation" [in Hebrew], in *A Garden Eastward of Paradise*, ed. Rachel Elior (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2010): 81–104; Yair Zakovitch, "*Who Proclaims Peace, Who Brings Good Tiding": Seven Visions of Jerusalem's Peace* [in Hebrew] (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2004), 65; Block *Ezekiel 25–48*, 696.

102 Susan Niditch, "Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context," *CBQ* 48, no. 2 (April, 1986): 217; Madhavi Nevader, "Creating a Deus Non Creator: Divine Sovereignty and Creation in Ezekiel,"

parisons only accentuate the uniqueness of the book of Ezekiel's description. Beyond the shared motifs of water and fertility, the stories in Genesis and the aforementioned prophecies share neither descriptive detail nor close linguistic affinities.

The description in Ezekiel is significant, especially as the exiles lived in a land in which water sources were associated with temples. There is no textual evidence from the land of Israel attesting to the existence of such a layout of flowing water nor are there such archeological findings relating to ancient Israelite temple compounds. By contrast, in Mesopotamia, the geographical area in which the Temple Vision was written, water sources were prominent in general,[103] and are mentioned specifically with reference to temples.[104] The exiles' sphere of activity is ascribed to an area where there was water: the Chebar Canal and the town of Tel Aviv situated on it (1:1–3; 3:15).[105]

Obviously, it is not enough simply to state that Babylonia was a country that was rich in water resources. We suggest that it is possible to arrive at an

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in *The God Ezekiel Creates*, ed. Paul M Joyce and Dalit Rom Shiloni, LHBOTS 607 (London: T & T Clark, 2015): 55–70.

103 Note Jeremiah 51:13 and Psalms 137:1, both of which associate Babylon, the city, with water or watercourses.

104 This was first discussed by Milgrom, who noted that this motif is common to the Ancient Near East (Jacob Milgrom and Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel's Hope: A Commentary on Ezekiel 38–48* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012]). Water flowing out of a temple as the source of widespread fertility may have been first observed by Patai (Raphael Patai, *Water* [in Hebrew] [Tel Aviv: Ha-Maareb, 1936]). Milgrom further notes: "the cylinder inscription B of Gudea after the consummation of the sacred marriage of Ningirsu and Ba'u, waters stream forth from a basin placed near the couch of the gods and bring forth waters that match the size and fertility of the Tigris and Euphrates" (Milgrom and Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 229–30). Milgrom and Block refer to Diane M. Sharon, "A Biblical Parallel to a Sumerian Temple Hymn," *JANES* 24 (1996): 102. See Milgrom and Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 230; and see Steven S. Tuell for parallels to the Gudea cylinders: *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 69–70. We note the Assyrian relief from the palace of Assurbanipal (668–626 BCE) in Nineveh where the entire temple complex rises on a mountain, but notice that there the water does not emerge from the temple itself. See: Keel, *Symbolism*, 150 (figure 202), and Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 67. In addition, Daniel Bodi demonstrates how the Hebrew text's reference to two rivers in Ezekiel 47 makes sense in light of the iconography of double streams flowing from vases in Middle and Neo-Assyrian texts and iconography. This widespread Mesopotamian motif is borrowed in Ezekiel to portray the renewal of nature and of life, health, fertility, and an abundance of food, and Bodi concludes his study with a sketch of the historical development of this motif over time and cultures (see Bodi, "Double Current, 22–37).

105 Daniel Bodi has noted a specific connection between the Mesopotamian traditions of the tree of healing and the Temple Vision. See Bodi, "Double Current," 22–37.

understanding of the book of Ezekiel's description against the backdrop of Babylonian mythology, with its emphasis on the primeval waters, and Babylonian topography, as a land with major rivers and flowing springs. These have been described in studies on water sources in Babylon – for example, Pedersén's recent study, "Waters at Babylon."[106]

Babylonian cities contained rivers and flowing springs. Many of the watercourses in and around Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar have been mapped. Pedersén's "Waters at Babylon" provides detailed information, including surveys that vividly and clearly portray the waterways of Babylon.[107] These water sources, in addition to the Euphrates and the Tigris, were Mesopotamia's lifelines.[108]

These pictures, taken from Pedersén's book, depict both the river that runs through the city and the centrality of the square temple structure within the city (Fig. 4.5 and Fig. 4.6).

At present it is difficult to identify watercourses which passed through temples, or springs issuing from within temples, in Babylonian archaeological findings. Such discoveries require the concerted use of archaeology and philology.[109] Moreover, they require special attention to the existence of springs, which have not been noted in the archaeological reports of the relevant excavations. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, the available *archaeological* data contain no evidence of a spring that emerged from a Babylonian temple.

In the absence of concrete archeological data, we rely on textual evidence, an appropriate methodology for studying a textual source such as Ezekiel. What Mesopotamian traditions can shed light on the Temple Vision's image of water emerging from the future temple?

First, the Mesopotamian traditions most relevant to the imagery of the waters emerging from Ezekiel's temple are probably those connected to Ésagila, the main temple of Marduk in Babylon. This temple was situated on the banks of the Euphrates, which passed through the inner city, though not through Ésagila

106 Olof Pedersén, "Waters at Babylon," in *Waters and Urbanization*, ed. Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014): 107–29.

107 Pedersén, "Waters at Babylon"; note especially the illustrative computer-generated images (e.g., fig. 1, fig. 2).

108 For a general discussion on the waterways in northern Babylonia in the first millennium BCE, see Steven W. Cole and Hermann Gasche, "Second- and First-Millennium BC Rivers in Northern Babylonia," in *Changing Watercourses in Babylonia: Towards a Reconstruction of the Ancient Environment in Lower Mesopotamia*, ed. Hermann Gasche and Michel Tanret, Mesopotamian History and Environment, series 2, Memoirs 5/1 (Ghent: University of Ghent; Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1998): 147–58.

109 Cole and Gasche, "Rivers," 1–64.

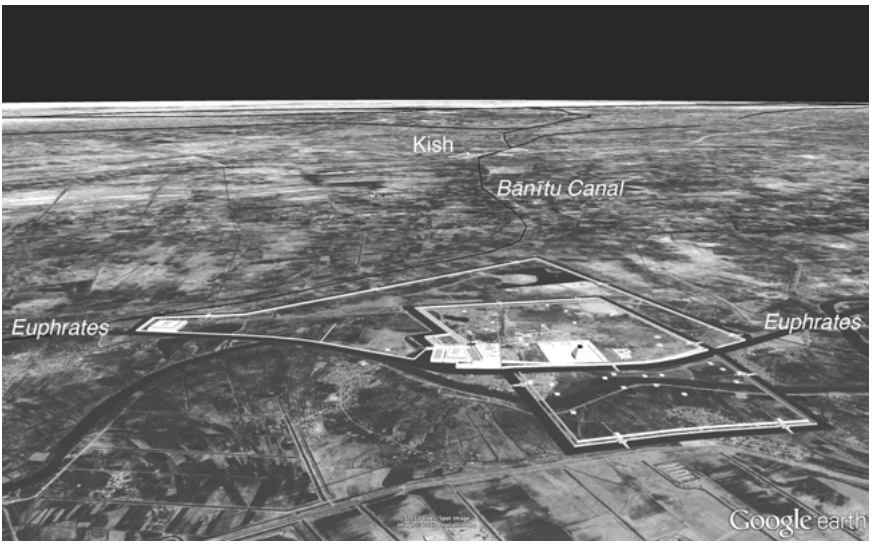

Fig. 4.5: Babylon Waterways: North (Pedersén, "Waters at Babylon," 116).

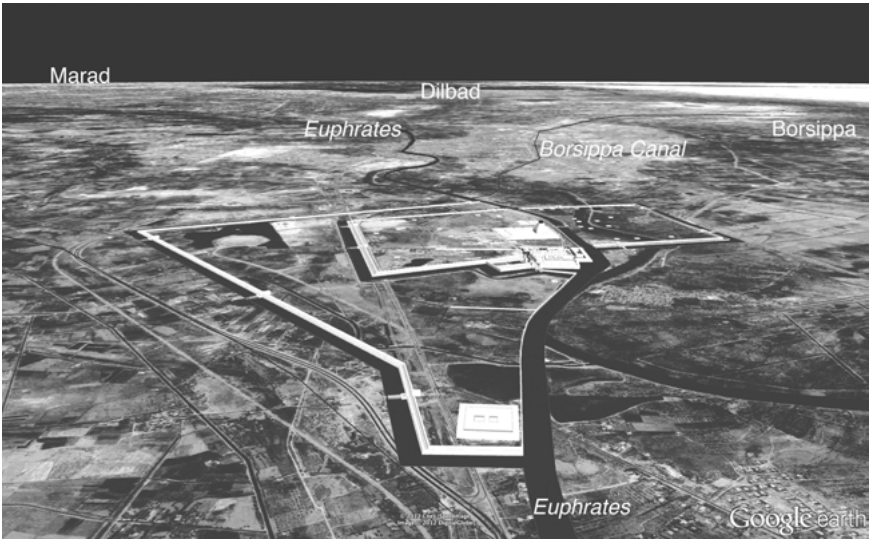

Fig. 4.6: Babylon Waterways: South (Pedersén, "Waters at Babylon," 117).

itself. An interesting text in this respect is a cylinder inscription of Neriglissar in which he notes that the mighty river has flowed alongside the Ésagila since the dawn of time and how he has restored its former channel: "[The Euphrates, the river of abundance], whose mighty waters had flowed since its creation beside Esagil, (but) its waters during the reign of an earlier king withdrew from beside Esagil (and) became too distant for drawing (water); I found its old bed and I redirected the course of its waters beside Esagil as of old."[110] It is interesting that Neriglissar, the king, took pride in the fact that he diverted the stream of water towards the temple. The Temple Vision's description goes one step further: the water comes out from within the temple, and from under the temple threshold itself.

Second – and more important for our purposes – is the account in Enuma Elish, which relates that Marduk built Ésagila, his temple, atop the Apsû, the fresh deep waters from underground aquifers, the dwelling place of his father, Ea. Moreover, the fourth tablet of tin.tir describes the temple of Marduk as, "Esagil, the replica of the Apsû."[111] Thus, we see that Ésagila was not just built on top of the Apsû, but that fresh, life-giving waters formed the very foundations of the main Babylonian temple.[112] The descriptions are common: In Ezekiel, we see: "Water issuing out from under the threshold of the house" (47:1); compare to E-kar-zaginna, "The Gate of Apsû House: Foundation Platform of Heaven and Underworld."[113]

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110 See Da Riva, *Inscriptions*, C23: i 41–ii 5. See also George, *Topographical Texts*, 355.

111 This is from tin.tir, in George, *Topographical Texts*, 59: "é.sag.íl gaba.ri abzu." Line 2 of this tablet states that the Etemenanki (the ziggurat) is the replica of Enlil's dwellings in heaven. The Ésagila is in fact described as a replica of both Ea and Enlil's dwellings, and there is no distinction between Ésagila = Apsu and Etemenanki = Ešarra (see En.el v: 119–122, and see a similar concept in Rykle Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien*, *AfO* Beiheft 9 [Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956], 21:47–51). As pointed out by George (*Topographical Texts*, 297), however, the distinction in tin.tir = Babylon is probably due to its nature as a list and this is in fact an artificial distinction.

112 Regarding foundations, Wayne Horowitz (*Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 1998], 124) interpreted tablet 5 of En.el this way. In any event, the Ésagila, like the city of Babylon, was built on top of the Apsû. Many gods had shrines within and adjunct to Ésagila, and the presence of several Ea cult installations should not be seen as unique. This is especially true in light of Ea's central position in the Babylonian pantheon and the fact that he was considered to be Marduk's father. Since the Apsû was his home, we should not take every reference to water as an indication of its special role in Ésagila's cult. The same is true when the protagonist of Ludlul bēl nēmeqi mentions several gates of Ésagila, stating that he was purified in ká.a.sikil.la, "gate of pure water" (*Ludlul* IV: 88). The same gate is probably mentioned in BTT 8 (BM 76312): 3'.

113 This is from tin.tir IV: 2–3, in George, *Topographical Texts*, 59.

Another important part of the Ésagila complex was Ea's temple west of Ésagila, E-kar-zaginna, literally, "house, bright quay." It is called a quay for two reasons: First, it was actually situated on the riverbank and seems to have been the point of access to the Ésagila complex from the Euphrates. Second, E-kar-zaginna was perceived as the Gate of Apsû, a "cosmic quay."[114] The possibility that the gate of the Apsû would open is mentioned in a middle Assyrian text from the second half of the second millennium, known as Astrolabe B.[115] Andrew George notes that "the water of the deep will well up and replenish the rivers, wells, and springs."[116] If the gate to the Apsû, which was within the Ésagila complex, were to open, the water of the deep would flow in and out of it,[117] assuming that the Euphrates flowed near the Ésagila.

Third, among the different cellae, chapels, and shrines in Ésagila, we find "the House of the foremost (?) spring (?)," which is described in the text as "the seat of the Tigris and the Euphrates in the chapel[?] [of well(s)[?]]."[118] George suggests that this was the source of water used during the New Year rituals and in the purification of the temple.[119]

Finally, the idea of a temple as a gate to the Apsû, or fresh deep waters, can also be found in a text known as the "Nippur Compendium," which lists the various temples in the city of Nippur.[120] Among these temples, we find the E-ka-ešnun-gal,[121] which is described as "the house whose gate opens on to Apsû."[122]

In sum, the Ésagila temple was physically located near rivers; at the same time, it was also seen as built on the life-giving waters of the Apsû. It seems, then, that the Babylonian setting in which the book of Ezekiel's Temple Vision was composed directly or indirectly influenced the utopian description of water emerging from the temple.

Another difficulty faced by historians and archaeologists should be noted here. It stems from the gap between Ezekiel's utopian description and an attempt to reconstruct historical reality. Waterways and rivers are ever-changing

114 George, *Topographical Texts*, 300.

115 Otto Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aud Assur verschiedenen Inhalts* (KAV) 218 A ii: 27, 35.

116 He also notes that this text refers to the Apsû as a cosmic locality with no specific reference to Babylon and Ésagila; George *Topographical Texts*, 301.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., 47, 279.

119 Ibid., 297.

120 Ibid., no. 18, pp. 143–62.

121 This temple may also be an Ea temple, but this is uncertain (George, *Topographical Texts*, 466, commentary to lines 12 and 13).

122 George, *Topographical Texts*, no. 18, ii: 13'.

in their course, either because of human acts or natural phenomena (climate, geomorphology, etc.); they require constant maintenance to keep the water flowing in the same course.[123] Cities were often abandoned, rivers changed their course, and canals dried up.[124] Therefore it is difficult to establish or follow a consistent course of any river.

The role of the rivers in Mesopotamian mythology as reflected in the textual evidence cannot be overstated. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that the exiles visualized the future temple's structures and its waters in line with the Babylonian milieu.

However, the description of the water coming out of the temple has another dimension – one that links the description of the stream that emerges from the temple to the temple as an integral part of the temple structure itself. This is evident from its placement within chapters 40–48, between the descriptions of the temple kitchens and the new division of the land of Israel. While this indicates that it is part of the temple plan, it also signifies that it is part of the new division of the temple estate. Moreover, the language used to describe the spring issuing from the temple resembles that used to describe Ezekiel's tour of the future temple (וַיּוֹצִאֵנִי דֶּרֶךְ שַׁעַר צָפוֹנָה וַיְסִבֵּנִי דֶּרֶךְ חוּץ אֶל שַׁעַר הַחוּץ, "And He led me out through the north gate and took me around through the outside to the outer gate"; 47:2). The four measurements of the water levels by Ezekiel's heavenly guide (47:3–5) recall the measurements of the building plan outlined in earlier chapters, and the words addressed to the prophet – הֲרָאִיתָ בֶן אָדָם, "Do you see, son of man," (47:6) – are similar to the words with which God addresses Ezekiel when He shows him the deeds of the people in the temple; they also correspond to God's appeal to Ezekiel to view the plan of the temple.

Finally, we supplement the discussion here with another suggestion. The water flowing from the temple in a way that enabled the people to benefit from its unique qualities (43:1–13) may be tied to the Babylonian custom of distributing the remains of the sacrifices after cleaning. The leftovers were divided by the priests and the king, enabling the people to take part in some way, however indirect, in the holy and divine, granting them a form of access to the spaces

123 This, incidentally, is an area in which the Neo-Babylonian state excelled, an important factor in its ability to maintain stability and wealth at the core of the empire (i.e., Mesopotamia proper); Michael Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC: Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth*, with contributions by Johannes Hackl et al., AOAT 377 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010), 40–41.

124 This, according to Woolley, was probably the reason for the final abandonment of Ur; Leonard Woolley, *Ur Excavations IX: The Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), xi.

from which they were restricted and the world that was out of their reach. The wondrous river that appears at the end of the book is evidently a way of bringing the sanctuary into the very midst of the people, through connecting with the miraculous abundance and healing forces of the river, powers not found in the usual course of nature.

Ezekiel's visionary temple, then, reflected the temples that the exiles would have seen in Babylonia in design, vessels, and kitchens, and the spring described as emerging from it can be seen to relate to the world around them, rife as it was with water. Moreover, much of the design seems to be intended to safeguard the temple, restricting access to a select few. Thus, while access inside the temple is restricted, its effects radiate outward to all.

5 Officials' Roles in the Temple Vision

The book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple, as we have seen, bears some similarities to the temples the exiles saw around them – and diverges from them in significant ways as well. In the previous chapter, we argued – based on Moshe Greenberg's observations – that the underlying ideology of these unique features may have been fueled by the aspiration to prevent repetition of the disaster that befell the First Temple: the departure of the divine presence from the temple and its destruction.[1] This insight is essential – and, moreover, the unique status of Ezekiel's functionaries and their roles in the temple (mainly chapters 43–46) can and should be added to the discussion. The past, pre-destruction acts of the officials – the priests, the Levites, and the *nasi* – and the roles assigned to them in the future temple are intricately linked.[2]

Ezekiel's Temple Vision describes many of the functionaries in the future temple as well as the roles they are slated to play. Here the narrative departs from the structures described in other biblical texts in a number of ways, some of which may reflect the world in which the book was composed. Below we explore the roles of the priests, Levites, and *nasi*, comparing and contrasting with the world of the Neo-Babylonian priests and officials; in so doing, we can further assess the motives behind the book of Ezekiel's innovations.[3]

5.1 A Restructured Hierarchy

The architecture that we examined in the previous chapter provides a physical marker of different levels of sanctity. However, this zonal organization is mainly manifest in the distinctions between which humans could enter the different areas.

In the book of Ezekiel's envisioned temple, the general population is distanced from the inner courtyard. Furthermore, the Temple Vision restructures

1 See Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 202.

2 For a detailed discussion of all the functionaries in Ezekiel, see Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, VTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Our proposal for a unifying factor differs from what he has noted. See also Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 582–83.

3 These descriptions are found in Ezekiel in various places throughout the visionary chapters: temple personnel and priestly gifts and responsibilities: 42:13–14; 43:19–27; 44:1–30; 45:1–15; 46:1–18; 47:13–23; 48:1–35; temple rituals: 45:16–25; purification: 43:1–9.

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the hierarchy within the future temple, specifically with regard to the role of the *nasi* (45:1–46:18), service by Zadokite priests alone (44:15–31), and the limiting of Levitical authority – Levites, like the non-Zadokites priests, can perform certain functions, but are excluded from the most sacred temple precincts (44:10–14).[4] Only the Zadokite priests can enter the inner courtyard (44:15–17); their privileged access allows them to perform the cult rituals that lead to God's acceptance of the populace at large (43:19–27).[5]

To appreciate the changes in Ezekiel, a comparison of these roles to the personnel in other biblical temples is necessary. In the First Temple, the functionaries included king, high priest, priests, Levites, and prophets (e.g., 2 Kgs 23:4); in the Temple Vision, the functionaries consist of *nasi*, Zadokite priests (members of the Zadokite priestly lineage), non-Zadokite priests (likely descended from other priestly families, some of them associated with old provincial sanctuaries), and Levites who function much like the non-Zadokite priests.

Thus not only does the structure of the book of Ezekiel's future temple separate between the general public and the priests and Levites – it also separates the priestly classes from one another.

Much like the architectural structure, the book of Ezekiel's choice of the Zadokites for their fidelity to proper cultic practices appears to illustrate a broader motive of concern for preserving the temple's sanctity – the same motive that stands behind the emphases on walls, gates, and courtyards. The explicit purpose of the perimeter wall is "to separate the holy from what desecrates it" (לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְחֹל; 42:20). Beyond this wall, Ezekiel's temple plan "introduces rigor into the separation and gradation of areas in the sanctuary precincts."[6] The people are confined to the outer courtyard, designed to be large enough to accommodate them; at the same time, access to the interior,

4 Scholars note that the Zadokites and Levites are distinguished starting in chapter 44, and address the possibility that the shifts in language indicate later additions; alternatively, it has been suggested that they explicitly spell out matters that are merely implied in earlier parts of the book. For a detailed analysis of chapter 44, see Nathan MacDonald, *Priestly Rule: Polemic and Biblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44*, BZAW 476 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

5 Neither these verses nor 20:12 indicate that the general population can perform sacrificial actions in the temple (cf. Margaret S. Odell, "The Wall Is No More: Temple Reform in Ezekiel 43:7–9," in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible*, ed. Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny, AOAT 366 [Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010], 343). Even the *nasi*, who has somewhat more access to the temple, relies on them to offer sacrifices (46:2). On the role of the priests in Ezekiel's vision, see Tova Ganzel, "The Status of Functionaries in the Future Temple of Ezekiel" [in Hebrew], *Shnaton* 19 (2009): 21–23.

6 Greenberg, "Design and Themes," 203.

more sacred, spaces, is sealed. God's seat is effectively isolated, in order to properly preserve its sanctity.

Apart from the change in the status of the functionaries, the prophetic vision also differs from legal texts in relation to people bringing the sacrifices. In Leviticus 1:2–5, the people may slaughter their own sacrifices; it is only the other tasks that are relegated to the priests:

אָדָם כִּי יַקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָּן לַה' [...] אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יַקְרִיב אֹתו [...] וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֹלָה [...] וְשָׁחַט אֶת בֶּן הַבָּקָר לִפְנֵי ה' **וְהִקְרִיבוּ בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת הַדָּם וְזָרְקוּ אֶת הַדָּם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב** אֲשֶׁר פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד.

When man presents an offering [...] to YHWH. [...] He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting. [...] He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering. [...] The bull shall be slaughtered before YHWH; **and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against roundabout the altar** which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, designates the slaughtering to the Levites: הֵמָּה יִשְׁחֲטוּ אֶת הָעֹלָה וְאֶת הַזֶּבַח לָעָם, "they shall slaughter the burnt offerings and the sacrifices for the people" (44:11).

The structure of the book of Ezekiel's future temple, meant to protect its sanctity, is supplemented by a new hierarchy among the temple functionaries – a hierarchy that is similar in some ways to the hierarchy that existed in Neo-Babylonian temples, as we will soon see.

5.2 Neo-Babylonian Temple Functionaries

Before delving into the roles played by officials in Ezekiel's envisioned temple, we must expand our discussion of the functionaries within Neo-Babylonian temples. We have already seen that the Neo-Babylonian temples can shed light on the architectural arrangement of the Temple Vision. Interpreters of the archeological remains have observed the architectural isolation of the deities' cellas, the most sacred areas, from the larger temple precinct.[7] A study of archival records fleshes out this interpretation of the built space beyond what can be seen archeologically or architecturally. Waerzeggers, considering the Ezida Temple at Borsippa, demonstrates that the main courtyard (*kisallu*) "established

7 Corinne Castel, "Temples à l'époque néo-babylonienne: une même conception de l'espace sacré," *RA* 85 (1991): 171; Ernst Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien: Typologie, Morphologie und Geschichte*, Denkmäler Antiker Architektur 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982), 294–95.

an invisible line of division in the organization of space [...] as this was the area where the distinction between the initiated and uninitiated crystallized. Only those who were deemed qualified were allowed to enter the courtyard to participate in its busy ritual program."[8] In Babylonian temples, the gates (to the inner parts of the temple compound) were obviously a critical point, where the offerings were transferred from the purveyors, who supplied food and drink for the priests. Either the gatekeeper or a senior official took the offerings from the purveyors and transferred the offerings to the "temple enterers," who then presented the meal to the gods.

These observable arrangements in Neo-Babylonian temples express the same concern for separating the sacred from the profane that Ezekiel 42:20 makes explicit. Both Ezekiel's envisioned temple and the Babylonian temples are designed to maintain that separation.

5.2.1 The Neo-Babylonian Hierarchy

In Babylonian temples, the prebendary system of owning "shares" (*isqu*) in the cult created a division of priestly labor, with the highest-ranking priests holding the most prestigious prebends and having the closest contact with the deities themselves.[9]

Babylonian temples housed an elite lineage of priests,[10] and displayed an explicit expression of "concern with erecting barriers between humans and deities in order to preserve sanctity."[11] Although there is no Akkadian word for an individual priest (כהן),[12] there are words describing priestly collectives (*kiništu*, "temple college/assembly") from a legal/social point of view, and expressions

8 Caroline Waerzeggers, *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, Achaemenid History 15 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 11. See also Caroline Waerzeggers and Michael Jursa, "On the Initiation of Babylonian Priests," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 14 (2008): 15–17.

9 Caroline Waerzeggers, "The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Cultures*, ed. Eleanor Robson and Karen Radner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 735–737.

10 See Tova Ganzel and Shalom E. Holtz, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," *VT* 64 (2014): 211–26, for evidence from Babylonian sources that bear on two aspects of Ezekiel's visionary temple: the description of space and the internal hierarchy among the priests.

11 A study of available records shows that Neo-Babylonian temples shared this concern. See Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 46–49 (§1).

12 Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 16.

pertaining to one's affiliation with a deity (PN/official of [*ša*] DN/temple).[13] In this study we adopt Waerzeggers's definition of a priest as *a person who enjoyed the right to partake in the temple worship on account of his possession of the required legal title and on account of his ritual qualifications*.[14] A priest, then, is someone who *owns* a prebend (*isqu*) and *performs* it. This definition is legal – and therefore also socioeconomical – in nature.

Another dimension that temple authorities examined when checking the candidates for temple service was "genealogical purity." A priest needed to be the legitimate biological son of an initiated priest; an adopted son could not qualify for priesthood, nor could a son born out of marriage. The genealogical

13 Socioeconomic aspects of the Babylonian priesthood were recently studied by Bastian Still, *The Social World of Babylonian Priests* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). From a cultic perspective, however, it is important to keep in mind that not all ritualists were necessarily part of the prebendary system, although it seems that they were remunerated by tax payments. Thus, for example, the *tēlītu* was a system of redistribution between the food preparers and support staff. As much as 20 percent of the *pappasu* of the food preparers was held back in fees payable to the barbers, measurers, caterers, scribes, gatekeepers, and others whose services they used. Therefore, the *tēlītu* payment was a type of tax levied from priests to pay other members of the priesthood; see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 329–37. Note also the diviners (*barû*), who traced their lineage to a mythical past and thus could (theoretically) come only from certain families in Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon (in practice this was almost never the case; see Wilfred G. Lambert, "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," in *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994*, ed. Stefan Maul, CM 10 [Groningen: Styx, 1998]: 141–58; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed. Richard J. Clifford, SBLSymS 36 [Atlanta: SBL, 2007], 3–19; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 77–78). There is, however, no evidence that they were prebendary priests per se. Priests were also part of a larger socioeconomic group that can be referred to as the Babylonian urban elite. See John Nielsen, *Sons and Descendants: A Social History of Kin Groups and Family Names in the Early Neo-Babylonian Period, 747–626 BC*, CHANE 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 7–11.

14 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 34; see also Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 1, n. 1. Unless noted otherwise, the following section is based on the work of Caroline Waerzeggers (*Ezida Temple*, especially pp. 301–53), who examines the prebendary system as reflected in the sources from the archives of the priestly families affiliated with Ezida, the temple of Nabû in Borsippa. Waerzeggers's discussion focuses on the purveyor priests such as the bakers and brewers. Generally speaking, we have less information regarding the administrative and logistical aspects of prebendary ritualists. Two additional studies that should be mentioned in this context are A. C. V. M. Bongenaar's *The Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar Temple at Sippar: Its Administration and Its Prosopography*, PIHANS 80 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1997), which studies the temple archive of the Ebabbar of Sippar, and Govert Van Driel, *Elusive Silver*: *In Search of a Role for a Market in an Agrarian Environment*: *Aspects of Mesopotamia's Society*, PIHANS 95 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2002), who laid much of the groundwork for our understanding of the Babylonian prebendary system.

restriction created a limited number of priestly families over time. The prebendary brewers of Nippur, for example, claimed to be the descendants of an eponymous Absummu.[15] Note that we do not have evidence for these traditions in all of the sources (there are no such traditions known for the priests of Borsippa, for example), but it is reasonable to assume that a "deep-rooted concern for lineage and origins" prevailed in all of the major Babylonian urban centers.[16]

Furthermore, following his initiation, a priest had to be approved by the king or his local representative. When it came to the high-level priesthood in the major temples, the king was personally involved. These positions held great political and economic power and were an intrinsic part of the political power game at its highest levels.[17]

Babylonian prebendary nomenclature preserves a distinction between cultic functionaries who may approach the deity and enter the sanctuary and those who may not. The highest rank of priests was known as the "temple enterers" (*ērib bīti*); its members could enter the innermost regions of the temple.[18] This group fulfilled central functions, and by dint of its rank could enter the innermost parts of the temple.[19] Those who prepared the gods' food – mainly the brewers, bakers, and butchers – belonged to a slightly lower rank of temple personnel.[20]

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15 See Francis Joannès "Les archives de Ninurta-ahhê-bulliṭ," in *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers read at the 35e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. M. deJong Ellis (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1992), 90, apud Still, *Social World*, 189, n. 8. The concept of a single ancient eponym was more common amongst the ritualists. See, e.g., Rykle Borger, *Die Weihe eines Enlil-Priesters*, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 30 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1973), 163–76; see especially p. 172 (apud Still, *Social World*, 190 note 9; Lambert, "Babylonian Diviners," 142; Beaulieu, "Babylonian Wisdom Literature."

16 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 78.

17 On the interaction between the priestly families in the major Babylonian cities and the crown, see Yuval Levavi, "Betting on the Right Horse: Loyalty in the Early Years of the Neo-Babylonian Empire," in *Fortune and Misfortune in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 60th RAI, Warsaw, 2014*, ed. Olga Drewnowska and Małgorzata Sandowicz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017): 177–90.

18 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 1–23.

19 Waerzeggers, "Pious King," 735 and idem, *Ezida Temple,* 46, with additional references in n. 247.

20 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation"; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*; Still, *Social World*. See Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 47–48 for references to the same ranking in other temples (n. 252). Note that both groups underwent the same ritual induction by shaving, and were thus separate from other groups such as the minor craftsmen, who did not (Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 49–56). This duality of titles and prebends was explained by Bongenaar (*Ebabbar Temple*, 158–59, apud Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 47) as a blank check that entitled its owner to enter the cella but required an additional specific prebend. Van Driel (*Elusive Silver*, 89–90, apud Waerzeg-

5.2.2 Priestly Tasks and Income

The Babylonian prebend combined two different, although related, dimensions: income and tasks.[21] Owning a prebend meant the responsibility for a certain cultic task, and compensation was connected to performance of the task rather than to the legal ownership of the prebend. However, owning a prebend did not oblige one to perform a task; a prebend owner could hire someone else to perform his task for him. In this way, it was possible for a person who was unfit for cultic duty, for any reason, to own a prebend. The reasons for one to be(come) unfit varied from physical impurity (whether born or temporary) to young age to being a woman.

Most available sources on prebendary tasks pertain to the purveyor priests. Waerzeggers uses those sources to illustrate how the prebendary system functioned in the Ezida temple. A purveyor's prebend was made up of two sets of tasks: preparation of the materials (*naptanu*) and taking part in the *manzaltu* ceremony. The preparation of materials could mean cutting the meat, cooking, baking, grinding, brewing, or the like – transforming regular raw products into sacrificial foodstuff. The temple supplied the required raw materials or production means: barley, dates, animals, palm trees, fishing rights, and so forth. There were strict rules for the way sacrifices were prepared. In some cases, specific prayers were recited at certain parts of the process. The sources on these proceedings, however, are scarce.[22] The *manzaltu* ceremony was the "bringing of the meal" (*qurrubu ša naptani*);[23] it was not the actual sacrifice. The purveyors brought the *naptanu* to the temple's court, where it was received to be brought into the temple's inner rooms.

The quality of the materials and meeting deadlines were of utmost importance. In fact, leasing contracts for prebendary tasks contain guarantee clauses ensuring that deadlines would be adhered to. The people hired to perform the

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gers, *Ezida Temple*, 47) adopted this view but added that "the *ērib-bīti* prebend could stand by itself, as the right to place the meal before the god."

21 This section is a summary of Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, chapter 8, entitled "Tasks and Income" (pp. 301–26).

22 There is only one known ritual text from Seleucid Uruk, TCL 6 38, which describes the daily meals presented to the gods (in the Rēš temple). For a discussion on TCL 6 38 and its relevance to sixth-century cult activities (in Borsippa), see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 115–118 (§ 3.2.2).

23 The verb *qurrubu* (cf. Heb. לקרב), to approach/bring near, is often used in cultic contexts. In a judicial text from Eanna (YOS 7, 89), we see that the same wording is used to address the tasks of the gatekeeper (*atû*), a prebendary profession whose identification as priest from the modern perspective is less obvious.

tasks, the contractors, were often priests as well – but that was not essential, and slaves could be hired to perform some of the tasks as well. Some of the preparatory tasks took place outside of the temple (e.g., fishing), while others occurred around the temple in the milling stations and the workshops (*bīt šutummi*). No social restrictions were in place for these workshops, but one had to be clean (body and clothes) to enter.

Several types of income were attached to the different parts of the prebend. The *utur ginê*, "surplus of the regular-offering," came from the raw materials distributed to the purveyors, while the *pappasu*, which was paid (in kind or in silver), was connected to participation in the *manzaltu* ceremony;[24] the *panātu*,[25] usually consisted of unprocessed barley, dates, and emmer; and the *mašša*ktu consisted of meat portions carved from the sacrificed animals.[26]

Prebends also included fees to be paid by the owners, and were then used to pay for purveyor priests, temple personnel, and various state officials.[27] An owner had to pay the "ration of the temple administrator" (*kurummat*(*u ša*) *šatammu*) and the *tēlītu*, paid both in kind and in silver to the temple's treasury, was used to pay the non-purveyor priests – for example, gatekeepers and surveyors, barbers, washermen, overseers (*šāpiru*), the royal resident (*qīpu*), oven workers (*ša tēnūri*), bread-smearers (*ṭehu*), organizers of the sacrificial table (*mubannû*), and ritualists. Thus, the *tēlītu* was a fee for some priests, but an income for others.[28]

Waerzeggers, as noted, focuses on the Borsippa sources. The study of other temples from the Neo-Babylonian period makes it clear that other temples functioned in a similar manner. In Sippar, for example, texts mention rations (*kurummatu*) for the high priest (*šangû*) taken from the daily offering (*sattukku*) deliveries of the overseer (*šāpiru*) of bakers. From the same funds, rations were taken for the temple scribes. Weavers also paid rations (*kurummatu*) from their *pappasu* to gatekeepers.[29]

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24 Helmut Freydank, *Spätbabylonische Wirtschaftstexte aus Uruk* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971) studied the Eanna material, and interpreted the *pappasu* slightly differently; see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 303, for a summary of his view.

25 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 308–13.

26 Ibid., 313–14.

27 The different fees and additional costs are discussed in Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 327–37.

28 The god Nabû is also mentioned among *tēlītu* receivers. He is the only non-human to appear in the *tēlītu* lists, and the payment listed is still unclear. See, e.g., BM 29093 (= Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* no. 85); see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 330.

29 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 336–37.

Another obligation that could be attached to the prebends was the contribution to state-initiated public construction works. The Borsippa sources are especially informative regarding the bricks for the wall of Ezida imposed on the priests. The documentation regarding this specific episode stretches over thirty-five years, beginning with the reign of Neriglissar. While this seems to have been unusual in the burden it placed on the Borsippean prebend owners, it shows that they were susceptible to this kind of demand by the state.[30]

It must be noted that the prebendary income played a small role in the overall income of priestly families. Estimates of the total income of a priestly family from Borsippa – and not just prebendary income – run between three and thirty times the subsistence level in mid-first-millennium Babylonia.[31] Property was of much greater fiscal value in the portfolio of Babylonian priests. It seems better to speak of prebendary ownership in terms of non-economic value. Performing the cultic duty attached to the prebend was a right more than it was a task. It was a privilege which allowed the priest access to the divine, a personal relationship with the god. Families went to great effort in order to keep prebendary ownership and we often see the "paternal household" (*bīt abi*) involved in individual cases in which there was a danger losing a prebend.[32]

Neo-Babylonian temple functionaries formed a complex hierarchal system, with each playing an assigned role. In some senses, this system – with only certain ranks invited into the more sacred realms of the temples, protecting the temples' sanctity – may be reflected in the roles played by the Temple Vision's functionaries.

5.3 Ezekiel's Priests and Levites

The professional roles delineated in the Temple Vision underscore the conceptual proximity between the priestly systems in Ezekiel and the Babylonian sources. Terms for entering or approaching reflect the central focus on space – specifically, who may enter which spaces. The language of Ezekiel's innovative

30 Ibid., 337–45. This was not part of the corvée (*ilku*) obligation imposed on the priests (like on other parts of Babylonian society). It is only recorded from the Persian period, but there is no reason to think it was not imposed on the priests during the Neo-Babylonian period as well.
31 Michael Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC: Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth*, AOAT 377 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010), 304. A range of between three and thirty times the subsistence level in income is obviously substantial; it illustrates the social gap within priestly society itself.
32 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 81–91; Still, *Social World*, 222–31.

distinction between the Levites and the Zadokite priests (44:11–16) emphasizes this point:

> וְהָיוּ בְמִקְדָּשִׁי מְשָׁרְתִים פְּקֻדוֹת אֶל שַׁעֲרֵי הַבַּיִת וּמְשָׁרְתִים אֶת הַבַּיִת הֵמָּה יִשְׁחֲטוּ אֶת הָעוֹלָה וְאֶת הַזֶּבַח לָעָם [...] וְלֹא יִגְּשׁוּ אֵלַי לְכַהֵן לִי וְלָגֶשֶׁת עַל כָּל קָדָשַׁי אֶל קֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים. [...] וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָם שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַבַּיִת לְכֹל עֲבֹדָתוֹ וּלְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יֵעָשֶׂה בּוֹ. וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי צָדוֹק. [...] הֵמָּה יִקְרְבוּ אֵלַי לְשָׁרְתֵנִי וְעָמְדוּ לְפָנַי לְהַקְרִיב לִי חֵלֶב וָדָם נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי ה׳. הֵמָּה יָבֹאוּ אֶל מִקְדָּשִׁי וְהֵמָּה יִקְרְבוּ אֶל שֻׁלְחָנִי לְשָׁרְתֵנִי וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתִּי.
>
> And [The Levites] shall be servitors in My sanctuary, appointed to the house gates, and performing the chores of My house; they shall slaughter the burnt offerings and the sacrifices for the people. [...] They shall not approach Me to serve Me as priests, and come near any of My holy things, to the most holy things. [...] And I will make them keep the charge of the house, to perform all its chores, everything that needs to be done in it. But the Levitical priests descended from Zadok [...] they shall approach Me to serve Me; they shall stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood – declares the Lord YHWH. They [alone] may enter My sanctuary and they shall approach My table to serve Me; and they shall keep my charge.

Although there is no scholarly consensus regarding the role or status of the priests in Ezekiel's Temple Vision,[33] the distinction between Zadokite priests (descendants of Zadok[34]) and other priests (40–45), which is grounded in Ezekiel's interpretation of their behavior before the destruction, is recognized as a striking innovation.[35]

In Ezekiel, preferential treatment of the Zadokites is based on their adherence to God at a time when others abandoned Him:

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33 See, e.g., the articles by Friedrich Fechter, Iain M. Duguid, Baruch J. Schwartz, and Corrine L. Patton in Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton, eds., *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*, SBLSymS 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

34 The expression בני צדוק (descendants of Zadok) appears only in Ezekiel. See Duguid, *Leaders of Israel*, 87–90. Although nowhere mentioned explicitly in the book of Ezekiel, the notion that Ezekiel was himself a Zadokite priest is a commonly held one. See Marvin A. Sweeney, "Ezekiel, Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile," in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, SBLSymS 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000): 728–51. A similar preference for Zadokite priests is attested in the Second Temple period at Qumran. See Philip R. Davies, "Zadok, Sons of," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 2:1005–7 and the bibliography cited there.

35 The discussion assumes that the status of the priests in Ezekiel is based on the priestly sources. See Raymond Abba, "Priests and Levites in Ezekiel," *VT* 28 (1978): 1–9; J. Gordon McConville, "Priests and Levites in Ezekiel: A Crux in the Interpretation of Israel's History," *TynBul* 34 (1983): 3–31; Rodney K. Duke, "Punishment or Restoration? Another Look at the Levites of Ezekiel 44.6–16," *JSOT* 40 (1988): 61–81; Stephen L. Cook, "Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44 and the History of Israel's Priesthood," *JBL* 114 (1995): 193–208; and, recently, MacDonald, *Priestly Rule*.

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי צָדוֹק אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ אֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִקְדָּשִׁי בִּתְעוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעָלַי הֵמָּה יִקְרְבוּ אֵלַי לְשָׁרְתֵנִי וְעָמְדוּ לְפָנַי לְהַקְרִיב לִי חֵלֶב וָדָם.

But the Levitical priests descended from Zadok who keep the charge of My sanctuary, when Israel strayed from Me, they shall approach Me to serve Me; they shall stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood. (44:15)

It has been correctly observed that historical circumstances form the backdrop for this choice;[36] clues to Ezekiel's preference for Zadokites can also be found in the accusations tendered against the non-Zadokite priests for desecrating the sancta prior to the destruction:

כֹּהֲנֶיהָ חָמְסוּ תוֹרָתִי וַיְחַלְּלוּ קָדָשַׁי בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל לֹא הִבְדִּילוּ וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא לְטָהוֹר לֹא הוֹדִיעוּ וּמִשַּׁבְּתוֹתַי הֶעְלִימוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וָאֵחַל בְּתוֹכָם.

Her priests did violence to My Torah [=instructions]; they have desecrated My holy things, they have not separated between holy and profane, have not announced [the difference] between impure and pure, and they have hidden their eyes from my Sabbaths; I have been desecrated in their midst. (22:26)

The text positions this group – which also failed to instruct the people as to proper behavior – in opposition to another that will serve in the future temple and will enjoy especial closeness to God:

הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר קְרוֹבִים לַה' ...

The priests who [are qualified to] come before YHWH ... (42:13)

לַכֹּהֲנִים מְשָׁרְתֵי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ יִהְיֶה הַקְּרֵבִים לְשָׁרֵת אֶת ה' ...

For the priests who serve in the sanctuary it shall be, those who approach to serve YHWH ... (45:4)

These priests should most probably be identified as the Zadokite priests; they, unlike the sinning priests, שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַבָּיִת, "who kept the charge of the

36 See Iain M. Duguid, "Putting Priests in Their Place: Ezekiel's Contribution to the History of the Old Testament Priesthood," in Cook and Patton, *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, 46; Friedrich Fechter, "Priesthood in Exile according to the Book of Ezekiel," in Cook and Patton, *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, 38. It appears that historical events also contributed to the book of Ezekiel's preference for Zadokite priests. The absolute trust placed in the priestly family of Zadok by David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, alongside its adherence to divine directives in times of crisis and distress, served after the fact as another reason for its selection to serve in the future temple. On the acts of the Zadokite priests, see 2 Sam 15–16; 19:12; 20:25; 1 Kgs 1:8; 4:2; 1 Chr 15:11; 16:39; 18:16; 29:22. The preference for the house of Zadok continued after David's day; see 2 Chr 31:10; Ezra 7:2.

house" (40:45).[37] Ezekiel (40:45–46) describes the roles of these two different groups of priests: verse 45 refers to the priests who, like the Pentateuch's Levites (see Num 18:2–3), guard the temple but do not offer sacrifices on the altar. Verse 46 refers to:

לַכֹּהֲנִים שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הֵמָּה בְּנֵי צָדוֹק הַקְּרֵבִים מִבְּנֵי לֵוִי אֶל ה' לְשָׁרְתוֹ.

The priests who keep the guard of the altar – they are the descendants of Zadok, who, out of the descendants of Levi, may approach YHWH to serve Him.

This second group of priests offers sacrifices and distances foreigners from the altar.

The first group's past failure to distance impurity from the Temple and to prevent the desecration of the divine name (22:26) frames its exclusion from cultic duties in Ezekiel. The restricted number of priests also suggests a wish both to preserve the purity of the temple and to enhance priestly proficiency.

The absence of the high priest in Ezekiel's vision is perhaps another facet of the aim to preserve the temple's heightened sanctity; conceivably, the vision seeks to make the holy of holies inaccessible to human contact. Moreover, the text views the temple as God's permanent place and the holiness that surrounds the temple and its environs as permanent, too (43:7; 44:2). Consequently, and in addition to the absence of the high priesthood, it reduces the activity in the sanctuary, such as lighting candles, replacing the bread, and burning incense.

Neo-Babylonian (as well as early Persian) rulers demanded loyalty oaths from important office holders within the royal administration; even temple personnel of a particular status swore a loyalty oath to the reigning monarch. Some oaths mentioned the specific duties for which the oath-takers were responsible, while others focused on the more general obligation of being loyal to the king and not supporting those who would weaken or overthrow his rule.[38]

In Ezekiel's prophecy, the temple in which the priests and Levites serve as the people's representatives before God is the undisputed kingdom of the Zado-

37 See Eliezer of Beaugency's commentary on Ezekiel 40:45 (Menachem Cohen, ed., *Mikra'ot Gedolot "Haketer": Ezekiel* [in Hebrew] [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000]). The phrase שמרי משמרת means "to keep, to guard, to watch," and does not include cultic service. See Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 537.

38 See Bruce Wells, "Temple Loyalty and the Loyalty Oath in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods," *MAARAV* 24, nos. 1–2 (2020): 137–70; for the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, see pp. 156–70. One text about the cultic impurity of a man who worked with temple fishermen demonstrates how infringements of regulations were dealt with; see BM 63755 in Malgorzata Sandowicz, *Neo-Babylonian Dispute Documents in the British Museum*, Dubsar 11 (Münster: Zaphon, 2019), 60–63.

kite priests, and of the Levites to some extent – but the source of their authority is God alone. Ezekiel's priests, like the priests serving in Neo-Babylonian temples, are split into groups, with the Zadokite priests clearly higher in rank. However, unlike the priests whom the exiles may have seen around them, those serving in the envisioned temple would answer to God rather than to a king.

5.3.1 Entrance Restrictions

As noted, for Ezekiel, the people's involvement in sin that defiled the Temple shapes the limited link between the people and the temple in the future: they will be forbidden access to the inner courtyard, and foreigners will be forbidden to enter the area of the temple. This, too, is a means of protecting the future temple from impurity, thereby ensuring that it will stand forever.[39]

This model, of a distinct temple designated for an elite team of experts who restrict entry for the masses, can be compared to the descriptions of the functioning Neo-Babylonian temples. There, too, entrance was permitted only to a relatively small and exclusive community of temple servants.[40] On this count, Ezekiel's visionary temple is in line with the Babylonian temples, which contained limited (priestly) activity and lacked accessibility.

The Babylonian temples, however, were also the means by which kings cemented their status. They built glamorous temples and palaces, substantially different from Ezekiel's temple plan:

> Nebuchadnezzar calls the South Palace "pure cella, royal shrine and royal temple," and he refers to the New Palace as "my lordly cella". [...] The palace appears as a counterpart of the temple: just as the god dwells in a temple, the palace is the abode of the king. The symbolism of temples and palaces shares many features. [...] The worship of the gods is expressed in the construction and in the magnificence of their temples; this in turn ensures their support.[41]

From the narrative of the Babylonian inscriptions we learn that the king builds the temple – which includes many magnificent vessels – in honor of his god.

The lack of vessels, which we saw in the previous chapter, significantly reduces the activity that takes place within the temple; in that way it is safe-

39 See Rimon Kasher, "Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40–48," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 192–208.

40 Still, *Social World*, 13–14.

41 Rocio Da Riva, "The Neo-Babylonian Palace as Centre of the World," *Aramazd* 12, no. 1 (2018): 97.

guarded from any future destruction. In order to preserve its sanctity, the temple is maintained by the minimal entry into it. This development also explains why there is no high priest in the future Temple Vision; this office, it is assumed, would not exist in the future temple.[42] There is no need for a king, a high priest, or temple vessels; all reflect political power and are to be removed from the ritual space. Therefore, it is not surprising that the emphasis given in the verse is that the *nasi* must close the gate when he leaves. The hermetic protection is apparent in the verses:

> וְכִי יַעֲשֶׂה הַנָּשִׂיא נְדָבָה עוֹלָה אוֹ שְׁלָמִים נְדָבָה לַה' וּפָתַח לוֹ אֶת הַשַּׁעַר הַפּוֹנֶה קָדִים וְעָשָׂה אֶת עֹלָתוֹ וְאֶת שְׁלָמָיו כַּאֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וְיָצָא **וְסָגַר אֶת הַשַּׁעַר אַחֲרֵי צֵאתוֹ**.
>
> And should the *nasi* make a voluntary offering, a burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily offered to YHWH, and the gate facing eastward shall be open for him and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings just as he would do on the Sabbath, **and when he leaves, he should close the gate after he leaves**. (46:12)

The restriction on entrance to the temple described here is consistent with that of the Babylonian setting. Ezekiel's visionary temple, then, diverges from the biblical commandment in Deuteronomy and Exodus to come to the temple three times a year (Deut 16:16; Exod 23:17), as well as the commandment for the people to bring sacrifices to the temple on many different occasions.[43] The restrictions on the public and the limited functionaries allowed in the sancta appear to be closer in nature to the Babylonian temples.

5.3.2 Zadokite Purity

The general rule was that a Babylonian priest had to be physically pure in order play an active part in the cult and had to possess pure heredity as well.[44] Moral purity was required, as was appropriate behavior. Priests were disqualified if they had a criminal record, such as murder or theft; moreover, they had to be

42 We differ here from Duguid (*Leaders of Israel*, 63–64), who assumes the existence of the post of high priest in Ezekiel, even though it is not explicitly mentioned.

43 Compare legislation regarding the tabernacle's priesthood, for example, in Numbers 17:5 and 18:4–7.

44 Waerzeggers and Jursa's "Initiation" provides the basis for this section's understanding of Babylonian priests and leaders and their activities. See also Still, *Social World*, 191–95; Walther Sallaberger, "Reinheit. A. Mesopotamien," *RlA* 11 (2006): 295–99; Anne Löhnert "The Installation of Priests According to Neo-Assyrian Documents," *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 16 (2007): 273–86 (for the Neo-Assyrian period).

certified as possessing personal devotion and humility. When necessary, the temple authorities conducted interrogations of candidates, and called for witnesses to testify on priests' behalf. All priests were initiated. Pure priests eligible to practice cult rituals had a number of common characteristics.

In Ezekiel, as in the biblical literature, a moral level as a condition of proper observance of the laws was a necessary precondition for a priest's participation in the temple service. However, the Temple Vision sets out unique laws for priests that diverge from the Israelite legal texts and/or First Temple descriptions. Some of these laws – examined below in detail – are innovations, found nowhere else in the Bible.

5.3.2.1 Hairstyle

Ezekiel emphasizes the prohibition against priests shaving their heads;[45] at the same time, the text uniquely mandates that they must keep their hair short:

וְרֹאשָׁם לֹא יְגַלֵּחוּ וּפֶרַע לֹא יְשַׁלֵּחוּ כָּסוֹם יְכַסְּמוּ אֵת רָאשֵׁיהֶם.

> They will neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long[46] but keep their hair trimmed. (44:20)[47]

The Neo-Babylonian priests' requirement to shave is known already from the late second millennium as well as from the Neo-Assyrian period.[48] Not all priests shaved before performing their duties; it was only those who came into contact with the deity or entered the restricted areas of the temple. These included the temple enterers and some of the purveyors responsible for preparing the raw materials for the gods who took part in the daily ceremonies in the temple courtyards.[49] The *gullubu* (shaving) ceremony took place in the temple bathhouse and it is likely that these visits to the temple barbers were routine for initiates.[50] One consequence of the *gullubu* requirement was that the priests

45 Even though the wording differs, this is similar to Leviticus 21:5, where the prohibition to shave the edge of their beards is preceded by "they shall not make bald patches on their head."

46 For the debate on precise meaning of ישלחו, see Richard L. Goerwitz, "Long Hair or Short Hair in Ezekiel 44:20?," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 371–76.

47 Other biblical hair-related imperatives include the prohibition against cutting his hair in Numbers 6:8: the Nazirite must shave his head if he is exposed to corpse impurity. In the Pentateuch, only the high priest is forbidden to let his hair grow untended as a sign of mourning (Lev 21:10; see also Lev 10:6).

48 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 1, n. 2, with literature regarding earlier periods.

49 Ibid., 14–15; Borger, "Enlil-Priesters," p. 166.

50 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 9.

were visually distinguished from others in their appearance – most of the people in Babylon kept their heads covered.

It is possible that this unique law in Ezekiel, unlike in the priestly law – instructing the priests to "not make bald patches on their head," and relating that the Zadokite priest is forbidden to let his hair grow untended – has a dual purpose. The Zadokite priests are described as looking unlike the Babylonian priests, who shaved all their body hair before serving in the temple,[51] and unlike the people walking in the streets of Babylon, who did not maintain a uniform appearance. In this case, we assert that the book of Ezekiel aimed not to imitate, but to distinguish the Zadokite priests from the Babylonian temple priests, who shaved all their body hair before serving in the temple.[52]

It should also be noted here that a byproduct of the shaving requirement was that priests stood out visually, and it seems fair to assume that the exiles were well familiar with the local priests' custom of shaving their heads. If, as we assume, the text applies this injunction only to priests offering sacrifices inside the temple, it thereby creates a visible distinction between the priests of the future temple and the priests of similar status in the Babylonian environment.[53]

5.3.2.2 Drinking Wine

In Leviticus, Aaron and his sons are forbidden to drink wine before and during working in the tabernacle:

יַיִן וְשֵׁכָר אַל תֵּשְׁתְּ אַתָּה וּבָנֶיךָ אִתָּךְ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תָמֻתוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם.

Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages. (Lev 10:9)

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51 Regarding the Ezida temple, see Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 51. On the connection between a clean-shaven priest and a pure priest eligible to practice the cult rituals, see Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 1–23.

52 Although it can be assumed that all Babylonian priests underwent some sort of initiation ceremony, only those who came in contact with the deity or entered the restricted areas of the temple had to be shaved for performance of their duties. This is attested by seals and reliefs depicting priests. See for example Stefania Altavilla and Christopher B. F. Walker, in collaboration with Jana C. Finke, *Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Tablets in the British Museum*, part 2, *Babylon and Its Vicinity*, Nisaba 28 (Messina: Di Sc. A.M., 2009–2016), e.g., B132 (butcher), B134 (brewer), A183 (brewer), A213 (exorcist).

53 In the Pentateuch we find shaving of the body in the purification of the Levites (Num 8:7) and of the leper (Lev 14:8–9); it is not mentioned in the context of the washing of garments in the laws of the red heifer in Numbers 19. In the cases of the purification of the Levites and the leper, this is a one-time ceremony.

The Temple Vision emphasizes the prohibition against priests drinking wine in the inner courtyard, an innovation that expands upon priestly law:

וְיַיִן לֹא יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל כֹּהֵן בְּבוֹאָם אֶל הֶחָצֵר הַפְּנִימִית.

> And wine they shall not drink – any priest – when they enter the inner courtyard. (44:21)[54]

Wine was used regularly in the Babylonian temples with the sacrifices.[55] To the best of our knowledge, there is no parallel prohibition found in the Babylonian sources.

5.3.2.3 Marriage

The Temple Vision emphasizes the prohibition against a priest marrying a widow who was not previously married to a priest.

אַלְמָנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה לֹא יִקְחוּ לָהֶם לְנָשִׁים, כִּי אִם בְּתוּלֹת מִזֶּרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָאַלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶה אַלְמָנָה מִכֹּהֵן יִקָּחוּ.

> They shall not take as wives a widowed or divorced woman; they shall only take virgins of the seed of Israel, and a widow who is the widow of a priest they shall take. (44:22)

This directive diverges from the biblical prohibition against marrying a widow, which is relevant only with regards to the high priest (Lev 21:7, 13–15); in Ezekiel, the text refers to all priests.

At the same time, it is not in line with the specific case documented that addresses the requirement for the Babylonian priests to marry: "Purity of descent applied to all sons born within their father's marriage, so the emphasis **was on the mother's virginity at marriage, not on her own descent** which was irrelevant."[56] The emphasis in the Babylonian temples is on the son: a son born from a priest who married a widow may have faced difficulty if he wanted to be an active priest. But this does not necessarily imply that priests could not marry widows, and, in the absence of Babylonian law, we note the comparison carefully. Nevertheless, this is fundamentally different in two respects: First, while the Temple Vision attributes importance to the family origin ("a widow who is the widow of a priest"), in Babylonia, it has no importance. Second,

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54 As opposed to the prohibition against drinking wine in Leviticus, where the rule applies to Aaron and his sons, in Ezekiel the rule is general.

55 See, e.g., Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 95, 132, 156.

56 See Caroline Waerzeggers, "The Babylonian Priesthood in the Long Sixth Century BC," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 54 (2011): 66 (emphasis mine).

Ezekiel does not prohibit marriage to a widow (who is not a virgin), but in Babylon, from the case study noted, it may be the case that virgins were preferred, and in that case widows were irrelevant candidates for marriage to the priests in cases where they took into consideration their descendants' eligibility to serve in the temple (in addition to the need for a known lineage from the father's side).

An example can be seen in Camb. 273, where the widow of a high priest pledges not to remarry. If she does remarry, she will lose property rights:

> Ummi-tabat, daughter of Nabfi-bel-usur, the wife of Samas-uballit, son of Bel-Ebabbar, the sangfi of Samas, who has died and has ... -ed her/his sons Samav-etir, Nidittu, and Arad-Bunene, spoke as follows to Bel- uballit, the sangui of Sippar: "(I swear that) I will not enter another man's house (in marriage). I will live with my children and raise my young children until they are considered grown men."[57]

Note that widows without economic or social support could find themselves dependent upon the temple authorities to provide their necessities.

In this case, Ezekiel's description is entirely unique – both against the backdrop of the biblical texts and relative to the ancient Near Eastern texts.

5.3.2.4 Diet and Cleanliness

Ezekiel emphasizes the prohibition against eating scavengers and prey:

כָּל נְבֵלָה וּטְרֵפָה מִן הָעוֹף וּמִן הַבְּהֵמָה לֹא יֹאכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים.

> Any creature that died on its own, or was torn to pieces as prey, from a bird or from a beast the priests shall not eat. (44:31)

The pentateuchal verses apply this prohibition to all Israelites, and not only the priests (see Exod 22:31; Lev 17:15).[58]

From the outset, exploring the Temple Vision's priestly diet (as another aspect of purity) in comparison to the Babylonian priestly diet is difficult. We have limited information regarding the priestly diet in the Babylonian context. There is some indication that eating leeks rendered a priest, in Ezida, unfit to serve (Sp TU III 58), as did onion and garlic.[59] But most diets were limitations associated with specific times of year – e.g., during the first month (Nisānu) and the seventh month (Tašrītu) – and not general taboos for priests.[60]

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57 See Martha T. Roth, "The Neo-Babylonian Widow," *JCS* 43/45 (1991–1993): 22.

58 But see Leviticus 22:8, where the stipulation devolves specifically on priests.

59 Still, *Social World*, 195.

60 Markham J. Geller, "Speiseverbote (food prohibition/taboo). A. In Mesopotamien," *RLA* 12 (2011): 640–42.

Nonetheless, it is interesting that carcasses have converse consequences in the cultures; in Leviticus (11:39–40), they are a source of impurity; no use is made of carcasses in the Bible. In Ezekiel, they are noted specifically as forbidden. In Babylon, they are part of the purification process (though not to be eaten). Linssen describes the use of the carcass to purify the temple: "an exorcist purifies the cella by using the carcass of a sheep, after which it is thrown into the river."[61]

Furthermore, the text in Ezekiel calls for an additional week of purification for a priest suffering from corpse impurity. Therefore, for the laity it takes seven days to get rid of corpse defilement, and for the priests two weeks:

וְאַחֲרֵי טָהֳרָתוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים יִסְפְּרוּ לוֹ.

And after he is purified seven days are counted for him. (44:26)

Babylonian priests had to submit to physical examination to make sure they bore no defects and maintained their ability to serve.[62] The level of physical purity varied between the different priestly roles in accordance with their position: the closer a priest was to the cultic images, the purer he must be. Monitoring purity was in the hands of the priestly community – both the physical procedures (such as shaving and washing) and the legal aspects of the priests' status.[63] Priests had to wash their bodies to partake in cultic activity. The washing of the body did not only verify that the priest's body was clean; it was also an opportunity to examine any bodily irregularity which might disqualify a priest from performing the cultic rituals.[64] The importance of bodily purity can be seen in ritual texts from Nippur, in which priests (*nešakku* and *pašīšu*, in this case) are required to be "as pure as golden statues."[65] The requirement to wash oneself before entering the temple applied to everyone (and was relevant even to those who were not required to shave). A priest – any priest – who was not able to perform the washing was unfit and removed from duty. The fact that this was such a basic aspect of priesthood is illustrated by the use of *ramku* (lit.

61 Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 149, and see the text in the appendix, p. 230.

62 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 20.

63 The following discussion is based on Still, *Social World*, and Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation." See specifically the texts discussed in Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation" and Still, *Social World*, 191–95.

64 "And be free from physical imperfections such as bad eyesight, kidney-stones, birthmarks (?) and an asymmetrical face" (as expressed by Still, *Social World*, 192).

65 Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation," 4.

"washed/washee") as a designation for a priest in a number of literary and monumental texts.[66]

The Temple Vision's heightened purity demands, similar in nature to those of the Babylonian temples, seem, once again, to be designated for the safeguarding of the future temple.

5.3.2.5 Priestly Clothing

Another aspect of the priestly appearance in Ezekiel that invites comparison – first to the rest of Scripture, and then to the Babylonian priestly world – is clothing, which differs in some details from what we find elsewhere:

> בְּבֹאָם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְלֹא יֵצְאוּ מֵהַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל הֶחָצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה וְשָׁם יַנִּיחוּ בִגְדֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר יְשָׁרְתוּ בָהֶן כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הֵנָּה ילבשו (וְלָבְשׁוּ) בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְקָרְבוּ אֶל אֲשֶׁר לָעָם.
>
> When the priests enter, they may not leave the holy area to the outer courtyard, there they shall leave the garments in which they minister, for they are holy. They are to wear other clothes and then approach [the area designated for] the nation. (42:14)
>
> וְהָיָה בְּבוֹאָם אֶל שַׁעֲרֵי הֶחָצֵר הַפְּנִימִית בִּגְדֵי פִשְׁתִּים יִלְבָּשׁוּ וְלֹא יַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם צֶמֶר בְּשָׁרְתָם בְּשַׁעֲרֵי הֶחָצֵר הַפְּנִימִית וָבָיְתָה. [...] וּבְצֵאתָם אֶל הֶחָצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל הֶחָצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל הָעָם יִפְשְׁטוּ אֶת בִּגְדֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה מְשָׁרְתִם בָּם וְהִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָם בְּלִשְׁכֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְלָבְשׁוּ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְלֹא יְקַדְּשׁוּ אֶת הָעָם בְּבִגְדֵיהֶם.
>
> And when they approach the gates of the inner courtyard they will wear linen clothes, and no wool shall be upon them when they serve at the gates of the inner courtyard and within the house ... And when they exit to go to the outer courtyard – to the outer courtyard to the people – they shall remove the clothes in which they serve, leaving them in the holy chambers, and put on other clothing, so they do not purify the people in their holy garments. (44:17–19)[67]

Ezekiel's separation of the clothing worn by the priests in the temple precincts from that worn when they approach the people, which is perhaps grounded in the ancient concept of sancta contagion (impurity), resembles the praxis in the

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66 See, for example, YOS 1 45 (Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschrifte: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, AOAT 256 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001], 373–77). The En-nigaldi-Nanna cylinder of Nabonidus, in which *ramkūtu*, "washes," is used to introduce a list of priests, while *kiništu* summarizes the list at the end. Later, in the Hellenistic period, we find *ramku* in everyday documents as well (Still, *Social World*, 194[40]).

67 For a comparison of Ezekiel to priestly literature, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991): "Furthermore, Ezekiel's rule on sancta contagion is the key that explains his difference from P [...] even to the point of preventing the laity from direct contact with the priestly clothing and the sacrifices" (448–53; quote found on 452–53).

Ezida temple, where the priests stored their ritual garments in the workshops, though we do not know if they shared the ancient notion.[68] At Ezida, special care was taken regarding how the priests entered the inner rooms of the temple; this protected the temple from impurity.[69]

Furthermore, there was a distinction between cultic dress, such as the garments worn by the *kalû* during ceremonies, and clothes of purveyor priests like the baker and brewers.[70] Such garments worn by the priests were kept in the workshops (*bīt-šutummi*) and it is likely that these clothes never left the temple precinct,[71] as is demonstrated by the documented stipulations recorded in contracts for performing of prebendary service, which include consequences if tools or clothes are missing from the workshops.[72] Much as in other aspects of their activity, the priests' garments must be pure or clean. This we learn from the payments of priests to the prebendary washerman.[73]

Note that in the Babylonian temples there were also garments of the gods – such as in the administrative documents (mainly from Borsippa and Sippar) that describe the transferring of garments from the weavers to the temple for the *lubuštu* ceremony, as well as back for cleaning and mending.[74] As noted by Gabbay, it is not clear whether these clothes were used by the *kalû* priest routinely, or just in that specific ceremony.[75] But in any case, some of the garments

68 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 12, 55.

69 Ibid., 52–53.

70 Only general remarks can be made regarding the purveyor priests, and the discussion here focuses on the *kalû*. See first and foremost Stefan Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods*, OBO 260 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006), but also Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*, CM 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), and Bongenaar, *Ebabbar Temple*, 301–14.

71 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 55. An interesting text in this context is PTS 3853 (Karlheinz Kessler, "Ein Einbruch in ein Bit Shutummu eines Tempelbäckers," in *Festschrift für Johannes Renger*, ed. Barbara Bock, Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum, and Thomas Richter, AOAT 267 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1999], 245–46), which is a court record of the return of stolen goods taken from such a workshop.

72 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 36, n. 59.

73 Ibid., 55; Still, *Social World*, 193[34]; Bongenaar, *Ebabbar Temple*, 312–13; Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods*, 57 ff. We do not, however, have specific references to the actual cleaning of priestly garments.

74 See Bongenaar, *Ebabbar Temple*, 301–13. and Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods*, 3 ff. for the administrative context of the texts and their typology. Sources for priestly garments are found in several ritual texts (mostly from Hellenistic Uruk), as well as some documentation (from Borsippa) of the payments made by the priests to the washerman (also a prebendary priest). Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 55; Still, *Social World*, 193.

75 Uri Gabbay, *Pacifying the Hearts of the Gods: Sumerian Emesal Prayers of the First Millennium BC*, Heidelberger Emesal-Studien 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), 75.

used by priests during their cultic duties were those otherwise known to be worn on other occasions (before the deity) too.[76] These (garments of the gods) were visually distinct from everyday Babylonian clothes and were archaic in their fashion.[77] Lastly, wool was the main material for garments in Babylonia, but linen had more prestige; both were used for priestly garments.[78] Thus, for example, the chief lamentation priest was distinguished by his luxurious headdress: a red-purple *sūnu*-headband.[79] If indeed the intention is to distinguish the priests, then it is not surprising that in Ezekiel the priests "will wear linen cloths, and no wool shall be upon them when they serve at the gates of the inner courtyard and within the house."[80]

Clothing may constitute an example in which the Temple Vision echoes the pentateuchal mandate that priests had to change their clothes when moving

76 The *lubāru*, *mēzehu*, and *ṣibtu*; Louise Quillien, "Flax and Linen in the First Millennium Babylonia BC: The Origins, Craft Industry and Uses of a Remarkable Textile," in *Prehistoric, Ancient Near Eastern and Aegean Textiles and Dress: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Mary Harlow, Cécile Michel, and Marie-Louise Nosch (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014): 271–98; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 776; Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods*, 245 (see the attestations of UVB 15 40).

77 Quillien, "Flax and Linen."

78 In Adam Falkenstein, "Zwei Rituale aus seleukidischer Zeit," in XIV. Vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft aus Mitteln der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, ed. Heinrich Jakob Lenzen, Charlotte Ziegler, and Burkhart Kienast, UVB 15 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1959): 36–44. And recently translated to English by Louise Quillien, in "Identity Through Appearance: Babylonian Priestly Clothing During the 1st Millennium BC," *JANER* 19 (2019): 71–89. See also the explicit description of linen (six times in the parts of the text available) in the text edition of the Hellenistic ritual of Uruk UVB 15 40 (W 18728), e.g.: "The consecrated lamentation priest is clad in a linen *lubāru*-garment; when he is covered by the *lubāru*-garment"; see Quillien, "Identity Through Appearance," 87–89.

79 See also: "As soon as the eclipse of the moon begins, the lamentation priests will put on a linen garment"; Quillien, "Identity Through Appearance, 75–76.

80 Interestingly, the *kalamāhu* priest had to take off his *lubāru* before sitting by the drum (note that the *kalû* priest did not need to). Taken at face value, the necessity to take off the *lubāru* before sitting by the drum seems to be a matter of purity. Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 93, identifies a difficulty, since no such restriction is mentioned in the (eclipse) ritual; see BRM 4, 6: 42'ff. (Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 306–8), where the *kalû* priest wears the *lubāru* garment while lamenting and being accompanied by the kettledrum. It must be noted, however, that it is the *kalû*, rather than the *kalamhu*, and that the *lubāru* are torn as a symbol of mourning while covering the priest's head. Having said that, the fact that the *lubāru* garment is taken off in UVB 15 40 is indeed unclear. As a divine garment, the *lubāru* could not have been considered to be impure in and of itself. But, as noted, we do not know whether UVB 15 40 refers to a specific ritual or constitutes general instructions and so no further conclusions can be drawn at this point.

outside the sacred precinct (Lev 6:4) as a means of preserving the future temple's sanctity – but, at the same time, the vision also draws on Babylonian temple praxis. Much like Babylonian priests' imperative to wash before entering the temple[81] and meet standards of physical perfection,[82] Ezekiel does not explicitly require ritual immersion, but does call for an additional week of purification for a priest suffering corpse impurity, at the conclusion of which he must offer a sin offering (חטאת).[83] In sum, these directives – the clothing and the ritual immersion – share a common purpose: to preserve the purity of the temple.

5.3.3 The Non-Zadokite Priests and Levites

In the book of Ezekiel, the Levites are mentioned explicitly in both the pre-destruction context and in the future temple,[84] appearing four times in the Temple Vision chapters.[85] Two of these instances relate to their past deeds, for which they will be barred from assuming priestly tasks – as opposed to the sons of Zadok, who did not go astray. The Levites' role in the future temple is mentioned twice in the vision; they will be assigned guard duty and other chores:

כִּי אִם הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר רָחֲקוּ מֵעָלַי בִּתְעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר תָּעוּ מֵעָלַי אַחֲרֵי גִלּוּלֵיהֶם וְנָשְׂאוּ עֲוֹנָם. וְהָיוּ בְמִקְדָּשִׁי מְשָׁרְתִים פְּקֻדוֹת אֶל שַׁעֲרֵי הַבַּיִת וּמְשָׁרְתִים אֶת הַבָּיִת הֵמָּה יִשְׁחָטוּ אֶת הָעוֹלָה וְאֶת הַזֶּבַח לָעָם [...]. יַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְשָׁרְתוּ אוֹתָם לִפְנֵי גִלּוּלֵיהֶם וְהָיוּ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַכְשׁוֹל עָוֹן עַל כֵּן נָשָׂאתִי יָדִי עֲלֵיהֶם נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי ה' וְנָשְׂאוּ עֲוֹנָם. וְלֹא יִגְּשׁוּ אֵלַי לְכַהֵן לִי וְלָגֶשֶׁת עַל כָּל קָדָשַׁי אֶל קֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים וְנָשְׂאוּ כְּלִמָּתָם וְתוֹעֲבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ. וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָם שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַבָּיִת לְכֹל עֲבֹדָתוֹ וּלְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יֵעָשֶׂה בּוֹ.

But the Levites who became distanced from Me when Israel went astray, who strayed from Me to follow their idols – they shall bear their sin. And [the Levites] shall be servitors in My sanctuary, appointed to the house gates, and performing the chores of My house; they

81 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 12–13, 55.

82 Ibid., 36, 52.

83 In the Pentateuch, the seven-day period was followed by ritual immersion. On the חטאת in Ezekiel as compared to P, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16,* 281–84.

84 This discussion of the Levites is grounded in the assumption that this was a group with a known, defined role from First Temple times, which is based on the priestly sources. See Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48*, SBLDS 154 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 66–78.

85 Ezek 44:10; 45:5; 48:11–13, 22. For the treatment of the status of the Levites in these chapters, see Duguid, *Leaders of Israel*, 58–87; Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary*, Baruch J. Schwartz, "A Priest Out of Place: Reconsidering Ezekiel's Role in the History of the Israelite Priesthood," in Cook and Patton, *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World,* 63.

> shall slaughter the burnt offerings and the sacrifices for the people […]. Because they served them in front of their idols, and they caused Israel to be stumbling to sin, therefore I have raised My hand against them – this is the word of the Lord YHWH – and they shall carry their sin. They shall not approach Me to serve Me as priests, and come near any of My holy things, to the most holy things. They will bear their shame for the disgusting things they did. And I will make them keep the charge of the house, to perform all its chores, everything that needs to be done in it. (44:10–14)

> לַכֹּהֲנִים הַמְקֻדָּשׁ מִבְּנֵי צָדוֹק אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ מִשְׁמַרְתִּי, אֲשֶׁר לֹא תָעוּ בִּתְעוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר תָּעוּ הַלְוִיִּם

> The sanctified shall belong to the priests descended from Zadok, who kept My charge, who did not stray when Israel went astray like the Levites did. (48:11)

Another mention appears in 45:5, where the Levites' role is מְשָׁרְתֵי הַבַּיִת, "to serve the temple."

Taken together, we can infer that the sin of the Levites, non-priestly members of the tribe of Levi,[86] inhered in their serving the people when the latter engaged in idol worship which, according to the prophets, led to the destruction of the Temple. In the future temple, as in the one that was destroyed, the job of the Levites will be to guard the gates and to slaughter the burnt and peace offerings. Thus the vision in Ezekiel does not lower their status relative to the past;[87] rather, the ramifications of their behavior are reflected in the fact that they have no additional authority in the visionary temple.[88] Ezekiel therefore distinguishes between the temple responsibilities of the priests of the Zadokite line and those of the other priests and the Levites. This distinction impacts not only participation in cultic rituals which devolves only on Zadokite priests, but also limits access by Levites and non-Zadokite priests to the temple precincts.

It is in fact possible that the role of the Levites in the future temple is the same as that of the non-Zadokite priests,[89] who, like them, belong to the tribe of Levi but are not descendants of Zadok. Both groups serve as guards – the Levites as guards of the temple compound (44:14), and the priests as guards of the temple (40:45). Support for this distinction comes from Ezekiel 44:15, which contrasts with 44:10: the Zadokites did guard duty while the people of Israel

86 See Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 626–32.

87 Duguid, *Leaders of Israel*, 83–87; Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 66–78.

88 A unique purification ceremony for the Levites (that has no parallel for priests or *nesi'im*) is found in Numbers 8:5–22. It consists of the sprinkling of purification water, the shaving of their bodies, and the washing of their clothes.

89 Radak (David Kimhi) has already drawn a parallel between the groups. See Radak on Ezekiel 44:10–11: "The Levites that he mentioned – regarding the *kohen* he said that every Kohen is a Levite" (Cohen, *Haketer: Ezekiel*, ad loc.).

were deserting God; the Levites, like the non-Zadokite priests, deserted God when Israel strayed and served the idolaters.[90] Nonetheless, the Levites will be allowed to continue to serve in the future temple because their sins neither defiled the temple nor desecrated the divine name. Thus, despite the criticism targeting the Levites in Ezekiel's prophecies, they retain a function as gatekeepers and slaughterers of sacrifices in the vision of the future temple.

Ezekiel's separation of the Zadokite priests from the other priests and the Levites, as reflected in restrictions on entry to the sacred precincts, also has a Babylonian parallel. Those who prepared the gods' food, mainly the brewers, bakers, and butchers, belonged to a slightly lower rank of temple personnel and can be seen as an analogue to Ezekiel's Levites, whose activities are limited to slaughtering, but not actually presenting, the burnt offerings.

As noted, there is no Akkadian equivalent word for an individual priest or the modern Western concept of a priest as an individual authorized to perform religious rituals, acting as a mediator between humans and god(s). Therefore, the priests include not only the ritualists, but also the purveyors (e.g., bakers and brewers) who supplied the food and drink for the cult, and other functionaries, such as gatekeepers, measurers, and scribes, whose duties were more administrative in nature.[91] This definition of the Babylonian priests as a community is beneficial for our comparison, notwithstanding the gaps between groups of priests. Furthermore, it allows us to address a Babylonian priestly *community*, rather than the individual priest, which is of the most value in the context of the religious, cultural, and even linguistic Babylonian influences in the book of Ezekiel.[92] In sum, the non-Zadokites and Levites can and should be compared to the purveyors; their more preparatory roles are similar and reflect a desire to leave the truly sacred work in the hands of the elite few, thus safeguarding the temple.[93]

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90 See Eliezer of Beaugency on Ezekiel 44:10–11 (Cohen, *Haketer: Ezekiel*, ad loc.).

91 See, Walther Sallaberger and Huber Vulliet, "Priester I. A. Mesopotamien," *RlA* 10 (2005): 617–40 (in the general context of Mesopotamia); Löhnert, "Installation of Priests" (in the context of the Neo-Assyrian period).

92 It is important to bear in mind that not all members of a priestly family were priests. Many did not inherit prebends (entire family branches, in fact), and others did not practice for various reasons. Furthermore, since the prebends themselves were not a substantial income, alternative income sources had to be found. Still, even though only a small number actually practiced, the priestly communal identity was kept, via, e.g., the flexible social institution of *bīt abi* ("paternal households"). On the institution of *bīt abi* and its centrality in priestly Babylonian society, see Still, *Social World*, 211–28.

93 Generally speaking, the priests were divided into three classes that were well known: those who could also sacrifice, those who could engage in other rituals, and those who sang and prayed. These classes may have had implications for how the priests walked in the streets, but

As noted above, the priests in the Neo-Babylonian temples had strict procedures for personal purification. Qualification depended on the candidate's physical, mental, social, and legal status. Most requirements derived from purity concerns and involved the demand to be whole.[94] Each priest, before joining the workforce and entering the position, was required to undergo a ceremony that included shaving his head and body (*gullubu*), a ceremony that included a physical and personal examination of the incoming priest and then his purification.[95] It seems that the description in Ezekiel that distinguishes the Zadokite priests from the other priests and the Levites is consistent with the Babylonian priestly culture and the manner in which Babylonian priests were chosen in their temples. The selectivity of the priestly dynasties and maintaining their purity were influenced not only by the priestly literature but also by the Mesopotamian culture in which the exiles lived.

5.3.4 Functionaries' Roles and Privileges

The Zadokite priests in the Temple Vision – as opposed to the non-Zadokites and Levites – are assigned special tasks but also receive special privileges and economic benefits by dint of their rank. In Babylonia, land was the main component in priestly families' income. Yet there is a substantial difference: In Ezekiel, all priests are entitled to an estate. The Babylonian priests, on the other hand, received prebends, which guaranteed them income (in barley, etc.) but not necessarily land. In addition, the state, under the supervision of the king (mostly on a political basis) granted estates.[96] This stable income enabled them to live, and to invest their time in what were seen as unprofitable activities such

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we do not have enough information to distinguish the priests' classes by their dress code, neither in Babylonian sources nor in Ezekiel.

94 See Waerzeggers, "Long Sixth Century," 66.

95 For a parallel comparison see Ben-Dov, who compared the figure of the ideal priest and the methods of examining and purifying them in the book of Malachi with our knowledge of the Babylonian priests;

Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Priests and the Cult in the Book of Malachi in the Light of Neo-Babylonian Sources" [in Hebrew], in *Marbeh Ḥokmah: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, ed. Shamir Yona et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), *73–*90.

96 On the implications of landownership to the temple income, see Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 84–91.

as the service of the gods and literacy[97] – or, as in Ezekiel, in addition to sacrificing the sacrifices, instructing the people (44:23–24).[98]

5.3.4.1 The Reserve

The Jerusalem Temple had its own estate and economy (see: Lev 25:34; Num 35:3; 2 Chr 31:19). Ezekiel's innovation is particular in the application and distribution of territories.

2 Chronicles 31:19, devoted to the days of Hezekiah, states explicitly that the priests resided in cities throughout the land:

וְלִבְנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים בִּשְׂדֵי מִגְרַשׁ עָרֵיהֶם בְּכָל עִיר וָעִיר ...

And for the Aaronite priests, in each and every one of their towns with adjoining fields ...

This is fundamentally different from the book of Ezekiel, in which functionaries are entitled to separate estates. Note that the terminology Ezekiel uses to describe these territories is intertwined and at times uncommon: נחלה, "land possession" (44:28; 45:1); אחוזה, "inheritance" (44:28; 45:5–7); אחוזת העיר, "city inheritance" (45:6); תרומה, "gift offering" (44:30; 45:1, 6, 13–16); and the use of מגרש, "land" without שדה, "field" (36:5; 45:2; 48:15, 17). The description of the land given to the functionaries, in Ezekiel's vision, includes the holy precinct of the city and encompasses an additional sector of the city and the temple that is distanced from the city. The reserve from the land includes the temple (45:1–8), God's estate[99] (45:1–8; 48:9–10, 20–21), the priestly estate (45:4; 48:10–14, 20), the Levites' estate (45:5; 48:12–13, 22), the *nasi*'s estate (45:7–8; 46:16–17), and the sacred city (48:15–19, 30–35).[100] In all cases, there is a prohibition on changing the land's designation in order to keep the stability of the estate (46:18) as a whole, and therefore the land is inherited (46:16–18). Entitling the functionaries to land is surprising, especially when compared to the Levitical priests, who traditionally had no land holdings (Num 18:20–24; Josh 13:14; 18:7).

The central region is located between the seven northern strips and five southern strips that are the tribal allotments.[101] In this region we find a reserve

97 Still, *Social World*, 209.

98 See below.

99 Literally: תרומה, contribution.

100 See Joel Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 97–98. Note that the foreigners (גרים) receive an estate (47:22–23). The workers from all tribes receive grain (48:18–19). This is new; there is no similar demand to assign land/estates for the foreigners. Other biblical literature (Lev 19:34; 24:22; Num 15:29) suffices with the demand that the foreigners be treated with respect and justice.

101 See, e.g., map in Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 711.

set aside as a gift (תרומה; 45:1; 48:8, 20) and the "*nasi*'s property" (45:7). The reserve has two sections that are "holy of holies" (45:3; 48:12), in which the temple is located. This also includes the space that surrounds the temple and is between and around the walls (43:12) in which the priests live (תרומה) and the sacred reservation designated for the Levites (תרומת הקדש).[102] Alongside that is another narrow strip of the "city" that is not holy and belongs to all Israelites, in which representatives of all the tribes live and in which grain is grown for the city of the temple (45:1–8; 48:8–22).[103]

Ezekiel's new architecture and territorial division of the temple compound and other secular buildings[104] contain a variety of implications for the priesthood gifts.[105] Nonetheless, it is not just the division of land that the Temple Vision revolutionizes, but also the distinction between the territories – noting that some are sacred and some are not. This distinction between the holiest part of the city and its other sections is emphasized to protect the sacred city from defilement:

וַחֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים הַנּוֹתָר בָּרֹחַב, עַל פְּנֵי חֲמִשָּׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף **חֹל הוּא לָעִיר** …

> And the five thousand that remain in width in front of the twenty-five thousand is **for ordinary (profane) use, for the city** … (48:15)

The Babylonian cities were centralized; the primary institutions of the religious and civil authorities lay in the middle of the city, where a *temenos* (a separate piece of land designated for official or spiritual purposes) separated them from the rest of the city.[106] This contrasted with the Assyrian cities, in which the major institutions lay on the cities' edges.[107] Moreover, evidence of priests living

102 Note that the holiness is ascribed not only to the temple but to the entire Temple Mount and the priestly portion of land (45:3; 48:12).

103 For the challenge of understanding the content and order of the chapters, see, for example, Steven S. Tuell, "The Temple Vision of Ezekiel 40–48: A Program for Restoration?," in *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society* 2 (1982): 98; idem, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

104 For an illustration of the layout, see Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, StBibLit 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 375.

105 See, for example, Albertz's summary of these implications in *Israel in Exile*, 369–76.

106 Muayad Said Basim Damerji, *The Development of the Architecture of Doors and Gates in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Tokyo: Institute for Cultural Studies of Ancient Iraq, Kokushikan University, 1987). For the relationship between the Neo-Babylonian temples and their urban context, see Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer*, 284–86.

107 Damerji, *Doors and Gates*. See, for example, the place of the temple of Aššur on the city map (Mario Fales, "The Temple and the Land," in *Tempel im Alten Orient*, ed. Kai Kaniuth et al., CDOG 7 [Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013], 92, fig. 2), or the reconstruction of the citadel in Dūr-šarrukin with the fields in its background (p. 94, fig. 4).

around the temple and owning land everywhere is available regarding Babylon; however, unlike in Ezekiel, to the best of our knowledge there is no known substantiation of legislation to regulate housing. In addition to the main temple, inside the *temenos* were other smaller temples and shrines, as well as storehouses and logistical installations.

The most impressive structure in the *temenos* – and the entire urban landscape for that matter – was the temple-tower, the ziggurat. The main temple and the ziggurat could have been dedicated to the same deity (e.g., Marduk in Babylon), but could also be cult centers for two different deities (e.g., Anu and Ištar in Uruk).[108] Although, strictly speaking, not all Neo-Babylonian temples had a complex that was like a courtyard-house,[109] those were obviously the prominent structure in the Babylonian temples.

Interestingly, the Babylonian context suggests the separation of the temple from the monarchy;[110] Babylonian texts describe separate living areas for the priests, some of which were located around the temple.[111] In Ezekiel, it is God who grants the land to the functionaries, priests included; in Mesopotamia, the inheritance was granted by the king to the priestly family, who had the authority to grant land to private people or in other cases designate land as part of the temple estate. This had concrete implications: the priests were able to privately own estates and property, which they could rent out to the residents, thereby increasing their income.

Ezekiel's detailed description of the measurements of the walls, gates, and courtyards (40:5; 42:15–20) was compared above mainly to the Ezida temple.[112] Now, after laying out the larger picture, and by taking the preliminary conclusions one step further, and addressing additional temples, we can reinforce and enhance our initial conclusions, striving for a more nuanced comparison. Property was a key attribute of priestly families, forming the traditional counterpart to their prebendary titles. Unlike a private house where the priest lived, landholdings represented the main income-producing asset. They allowed these priestly families to live a (relatively) luxurious life, and enabled them to enter the less profitable service of the gods, or to invest in cultural capital such as scribal education and participate in local politics and decision-making.[113] Land

108 In later periods the Rēš temple took Eanna's place as Uruk's main sanctuary, making both the main temple and the ziggurat cult centers of Anu.

109 Damerji, *Doors and Gates*, 42.

110 Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 375–76.

111 Still, *Social World*, 64–108.

112 Discussed in a preliminary study; see Ganzel and Holtz, "Ezekiel's Temple," 216–22.

113 Still, *Social World*, 209.

was economically and socially important and therefore highly valued by the priestly families. Individuals were clearly reluctant to sell their land, as the goal was to pass it on to the next generation. In numerous cases we learn that the priestly families tried to avoid the sale of land as much as possible and sellers were prepared to sell their property only as a result of economic straits or obligation. Moreover, in many cases property was not only important to the individual owner, but contributed to the status and identity of the family at large.[114] Borsippean priests owned houses around the Ezida temple;[115] this was probably common in other urban centers in proximity to major temples. These holdings had substantial monetary value but, perhaps more importantly, a "symbolic, social, and emotional significance."[116]

5.3.4.2 Priestly Gifts

In Ezekiel, while the Levites have no land holdings, the temple functionaries are all granted portions of the land. It is possible that it was the Babylonian priests, serving as the exiles' backdrop – or, specifically, the priests' dependence on their estate – that contributed to the Temple Vision's uniquely detailed description of the functionaries' reserve as well as the existence of other priestly gifts.[117] The priestly gifts make it possible for the priests to devote themselves to their cultic duties. The priests and Levites are assigned – both in Ezekiel and in the corresponding priestly literature – the tithes of agricultural produce, other offerings such as first fruits and a portion of each sacrifice offered (with the expectation of the whole burnt offering), and the right to have the priestly portion of the meal offering:

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114 As observed by Nielsen (*Sons and Descendants*), there was a correlation between ownership of specific property and the desire among the upper-stratum families to claim more permanent identities.

115 Still, *Social World*, 229.

116 Ibid.; Heather Baker, "From Street Altar to Palace: Reading the Built Environment of Urban Babylonia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 533–52; Peter A. Miglus, *Städtische Wohnarchitektur in Babylonien und Assyrien*, *BaF* 22 (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 206; Still, *Social World*, 204.

An additional area to explore is the nature of the relationship between the temple, the temple management, and the political establishment. For example, some findings indicate that the management of the temple's estate and ration system might have been in private hands (Jursa, *Economic History*, 660–80).

117 Caroline Waerzeggers has shown that craftsmen, including goldsmiths and jewelers, were part of the temple prebendary personnel at the Ezida temple in Borsippa. See: Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 38–39, 49.

הַמִּנְחָה וְהַחַטָּאת וְהָאָשָׁם הֵמָּה יֹאכְלוּם וְכָל חֵרֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לָהֶם יִהְיֶה.

They shall eat the meal offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering, and everything consecrated by vow in Israel shall be theirs. (44:29)[118]

וְהִקְרַבְתָּם לִפְנֵי ה' וְהִשְׁלִיכוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלַח וְהֶעֱלוּ אוֹתָם עֹלָה לַה'.

You shall sacrifice them in front of YHWH and the priests shall throw salt upon them and offer them up as a burnt offering to YHWH. (43:24)

The Babylonian priests contributed considerable fees to the running costs of their temple. In Borsippa the size of the contribution seems to have been related to the size of the prebend, and the obligations ceased to exist when property rights were ceded.[119] Furthermore, the priests of Ezida handed a part of their income over to the head of their institution, the *šatammu* (collective payments in silver, and individual payments in commodities).[120]

While the Babylonian priests were in fact the ones who held the temple, in Ezekiel, it appears that the commitment of the people to bring gifts regularly provides steady income for the priests. It is possible that this distinction engenders a crucial relationship between the priests and the people and limits their power – a relationship that is especially striking given the Babylonian priests' independence from the people.

5.3.4.3 Mandatory Contributions

In Ezekiel's visionary temple plan, a relatively small tax is demanded of the people:[121]

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118 Compare with the pentateuchal meal offering (Lev 2:3), sin offering (Lev 6:24), and guilt offering (Lev 7:6); more generally, see Numbers 18:9–13. On "every devoted thing," cf. Num 18.14; Lev 27:28–29. Other priestly income:

וְרֵאשִׁית כָּל בִּכּוּרֵי כֹל וְכָל תְּרוּמַת כֹּל מִכֹּל תְּרוּמוֹתֵיכֶם לַכֹּהֲנִים יִהְיֶה, וְרֵאשִׁית עֲרִסוֹתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לַכֹּהֵן לְהָנִיחַ בְּרָכָה אֶל בֵּיתֶךָ.

And the prime piece of all first fruits of every kind, and every contribution out of all your various contributions belongs to the priests. And your prime dough shall you give to the priest so that blessing settles upon your home. (44:30)

Cf. Num 18:25–30.

119 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 327.

120 In Borsippa, it was the *tēlītu* system that created a division among the trades by distinguishing between "producers" and "supporters," givers and receivers; Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 328–35.

121 On the tithes and temple gifts in Mesopotamian temples in general and in comparison to the Jerusalem Temple, see Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes*, 93–118; Kim Yeong Seon, *The Temple Administration and the Levites in Chronicles*, CBQMS 51 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014), 113–48.

זֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תָּרִימוּ שִׁשִּׁית הָאֵיפָה מֵחֹמֶר הַחִטִּים וְשִׁשִּׁיתָם הָאֵיפָה מֵחֹמֶר הַשְּׂעֹרִים. וְחֹק הַשֶּׁמֶן הַבַּת הַשֶּׁמֶן מַעְשַׂר הַבַּת מִן הַכֹּר עֲשֶׂרֶת הַבַּתִּים חֹמֶר כִּי עֲשֶׂרֶת הַבַּתִּים חֹמֶר. וְשֵׂה אַחַת מִן הַצֹּאן מִן הַמָּאתַיִם מִמַּשְׁקֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִנְחָה וּלְעוֹלָה וּלְשְׁלָמִים לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם.

This is the contribution that you shall contribute one-sixth of an epha per homer of wheat and one-sixth of an epha per a homer of barley. The rule regarding oil, the bat is the measure of oil: [you shall offer] one tenth of a bat out of the kor, one tenth of the bat which is a homer since a tenth of the bat is a homer. And one lamb from your flock, from two hundred, in the well-watered pastureland of Israel: these serve as the meal offering and as the burnt offering and as the peace offerings to atone for them. (45:13–15)

Although the verses are not straightforward or easy to understand, they specifically note that the tax on wheat and barley are one sixth of an epha for every homer of grain, which amounts to a one sixtieth levy, or 1.6 percent (about 3.3 liters). The rate for olive oil is one tenth of a bat for every homer, which is 1 percent. This is fundamentally different from the biblical "king's law," in which the king was entitled to one tenth of the crop (1 Sam 8:15). In Ezekiel, moreover, the number of sacrifices is substantially reduced. This is due to a combination of two factors: First, the number of sacrifices overall is dramatically lower, since the general public is no longer welcome in the temple or required to bring private sacrifices. On the other hand, and perhaps as a result of the lowering of the priests' "income" from sacrifices, the priests are given (central) estates, as noted above.

The compulsory tithe in Babylonia probably amounted to one tenth of the yearly production given as annual tithe or income, in addition to additional gifts given on a voluntary basis. These were bequeathed to local shrines and major temples. The term taxes can, at times, refer to the regulated payments owed to the governing political authority, often charged as a percentage of income or as a specified fee (they can be viewed as a secular version of tithes). In many cases, both were managed by the king.[122]

Ezekiel's cookhouses and sacrifices, the law regarding the altar, and the daily offerings (43:13–44:31) can be compared to the daily offerings throughout Mesopotamia (a mandatory contribution from agriculture and animals, or the equivalent payment in precious metals). Unfortunately, the information we have on the agricultural taxes is insufficient, especially with regard to the quan-

122 See, for example, Bojana Janković: "The amount of these rations was a fraction of the yield from both the arable land and the orchards. This fraction, according to the 'Edict', was 1/12 (or 8 1/3 %) of the yield or 2 s¹tu 3 qû per each kurru delivered. However, this amount included also the rations of other officials, †up¡arr¹, m¤did¹ and atû"; "Aspects of Urukean Agriculture in the First Millennium BC" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2013); see p. 59 and see pp. 75–76 for additional fee ranges.

tities that were given. In addition, any information we have is subject to differences in accordance with the specific status of the land. Therefore, despite acknowledging Ezekiel's unique conception of taxation, we are unable to compare it to what was common in the exiles' Babylonian surroundings.

5.3.4.4 Instructing the People

The book of Ezekiel mandates that the priests instruct and judge the people. Since the Temple Vision includes no king and no prophets, these roles which, during the First Temple period, were slated for other leaders are here all transformed into priestly responsibilities:

> וְאֶת עַמִּי יוֹרוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל וּבֵין טָמֵא לְטָהוֹר יוֹדִעֻם. וְעַל רִיב הֵמָּה יַעַמְדוּ לשפט (לְמִשְׁפָּט) בְּמִשְׁפָּטַי ושפטהו (יִשְׁפְּטֻהוּ).
>
> And they shall teach My people, between pure and profane, and between holy and defiled they shall notify them. And when there is controversy, they shall stand in judgement, adjudicating according to My laws. (44:23–24)[123]

The Temple Vision's omission of judges and elders is deliberate. They were not meant to exist – or, at least, not with any relation to topics of law – in the vision. The authority remains entirely in the hands of the priests.

The role the Temple Vision assigns to the priests evokes that of the Babylonian priests only partially. The priests in Babylon did indeed serve as judges; this was part and parcel of their administrative role in the temples.[124] In addition, a temple assembly (*kiništu*) ruled on matters related to the temple. Thus, in addition to the temple authorities, civil authorities in Babylonia existed too, side by side with the temple authorities. Temple-related issues were judged by the temple personnel, and civil issues were dealt with by a separate "civil" system under the king's authority.[125] The Temple Vision's elevation of the Zadokites

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123 Compare with Deuteronomy 17:8–9; 19:17, which also designates judgment to the priests, and Deuteronomy 21:1–5, where judgment is assigned to elders and judges.

124 See, for example, BM63551 and BM 67595, in Sandowicz, *Dispute Documents*, 19–23. Both texts were composed during the same time period, between the end of the rule of Nebuchanezzar II (605–562 BCE) and the beginning of Nabonadus's regain (556–539 BCE), corresponding to the exilic period. In these texts "the body that conducted the questioning was composed of high officials of two Babylonian temples, the Ebabbar of Sippar (its resident, high priest, temple enterers, and temple assembly) and the Elumašt of Akkad (its *sēpiru*, temple enterers, and the temple assembly)" (quote from p. 22).

125 F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Now-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job*, BJS 348 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007), 60–64. For a recent survey of judicial authority in the Neo-Babylonian empire, see F. Rachel Magdalene, Cornelia Wunsch, and Bruce Wells, *Fault, Responsibility, and Administrative Law in Late Babylonian*

stands out as one of its greatest innovations, inviting consideration against the exiles' particular context. Moreover, this specific innovation serves as one of the correctives to previous cultic wrongdoings; the Zadokites' reward is also God's own way of ensuring that proper personnel will run His temple in the future. Babylonian sources, too, show motivations for proper standards within the priesthood, particularly in the thorough investigations carried out as part of the ritual induction of higher priestly ranks.[126] This process included investigation of purity of body, descent, and behavior, in which we may see further analogues to Ezekiel's insistence on Zadokite lineage (descent) and its basing of this insistence on the Zadokites' upstanding behavior, i.e., their fidelity to proper service. Ezekiel's theocentric doctrine, seeking to prevent desecration of the divine name, unifies its treatment of individual topics. In this case, the role given solely to the priests (in the absence of any mention of elders and judges) – to judge the people in contexts that are not necessarily directly related to the temple – influences the perception of daily reality as theocentric. Thus, the priests – or, in other words, those associated with serving the temple – were involved in the daily lives of the people.

5.4 The *Nasi*

In Mesopotamia, the king worshipped the god, gave him gifts that glorified his name, and supervised the high officials, dignitaries, and representatives of the people.[127] The king also chose who would benefit from the income that came to the temple or palace. In Ezekiel, the *nasi* represents the people, but is equally subject to God. Therefore, we must first examine the biblical interpretation of the *nasi* in Ezekiel, and then compare it to the relevant Babylonian personnel in order to understand how the text was influenced by its surroundings.

Legal Texts (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019). For a review of the central officials in the state and temple, see pp. 7–26; and note the existence of distinct royal courtesans (pp. 12–13) among other officials who served as judges.

126 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 52–53. For a more in-depth study of the initiation process, see Waerzeggers and Jursa, "Initiation." Waerzeggers and Jursa make passing comparisons with the biblical materials without specifically referring to Ezekiel. See Ganzel and Holtz, "Ezekiel's Temple," 224.

127 *Hofkalender* is a common name given to a specific building inscription of Nebuchadnezzar dated to the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar II (598 BCE.). It lists the chief dignitaries of the state, who had contributed to the construction of the palace. See Rocio Da Riva, "Nebuchadnezzar II's Prism (EŞ 7834): A New Edition," *ZA* 103, no. 2 (2013): 196–229.

Although it is perhaps tempting to define the *nasi* as a king or a prince, nothing in Ezekiel's Temple Vision suggests such a role.[128] The biblical meaning of *nasi* commonly denotes leader or ruler,[129] usually a tribal head or local leader, though the *nasi* is occasionally placed in a royal role, as in Solomon's case (1 Kgs 11:34).[130] Against the backdrop of Ezekiel's criticism of the severe sins of the kings of Israel (17; 43:7–9), in the Temple Vision, the designation *nasi* is assigned to the future leader.[131]

In Ezekiel, the term *nasi* frequently applies to the leader of the people in the chapters of the vision of the future temple (40–48),[132] where the prophet delineates his functions. But the *nasi* is also mentioned in various contexts in chapters 1 to 39, where the use of this honorific – as opposed to "king" – is ambiguous.[133] As for the other functionaries, Ezekiel notes the failure of the *nesi'im* in the past to fulfill their task of preventing bloodshed.[134] On the other

128 For a comprehensive treatment of the role of the *nasi* as compared to his Babylonian counterparts, see Madhavi Nevader, "Picking Up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40–48?," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, BZA 478 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015): 268–91.

129 Menahem Z. Kaddari, *A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006), 736 (s. v. נשיא).

130 The common meaning of the word *nasi* was local leader, regional leader, or leader of a tribal allotment. See 2 Chr 1:2; see also 1 Kgs 8:1; 1 Chr 4:38; 5:6, and the exceptional use in 1 Kgs 11:34.

131 On the position of the king, see, among others, Duguid, *Leaders of Israel*, 10–57; Erling Hammershaimb, "Ezekiel's View of the Monarchy," in *Studia orientalia Ioanni Pedersen septuagenario*, ed. Johannes Pedersen (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953), 130–40; Paul M. Joyce, "King and Messiah in Ezekiel," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998): 323–37; Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Cambridge, MA: Scholars Press, 1976), 55–129; Stephen S. Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 103–17.

132 In Ezekiel 1–22, נשיא ישראל is mentioned seven times, whereas in chapters 40–48, he is mentioned twenty times, in addition to the two times that the phrase דוד עבדי appears in chapter 37 with reference to the future *nasi*.

133 At the beginning of chapter 12, the prophet is commanded into symbolic exile and Ezekiel connects this act to the exile of the *nasi* (12:10–11). In chapter 19 the prophet utters an elegy for the last kings of Judea, calling them נשיאי ישראל. Chapter 21 speaks of the punishment by the sword of the *nasi* and the people because of their evil deeds (21:17), and the prophet declares: "As for you, you wicked corpse, chief of Israel" (21:30). At the same time, these chapters do not contain an explicit description of their sins. Only in chapter 22 does the prophet refer to the deeds of the *nesi'im*: "See, the chiefs of Israel have each resorted to force in you, in order to shed blood" (v. 6).

134 See Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 453–54; Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and*

hand, Ezekiel devotes many verses in the vision of the future temple to the status of the *nasi* (45:1–46:18), granting him a separate eternal inheritance in the division of the land, outside that of the tribes; the people are also obligated to give him a fixed contribution (45:1–8). Although the *nasi* enjoys special privileges with regard to the temple, his position, as defined by Ezekiel, also carries social and ritual obligations: doing justice (45:9–12); a prohibition against confiscating the territory of the people; an obligation to keep honest weights and measures (45:10–12); and the sin offering (45:17) and festival sacrifices (45:22; 46:1–15). He enjoys limited privileges in the temple; it is the priests who have overwhelming authority for teaching law and maintaining the cult.[135]

The *nasi* must fund the sacrifices, but his privileges are limited in comparison to those of the kings throughout the First Temple period. There is no king in Ezekiel's Temple Vision; instead, a *nasi* is appointed and his functions delineated – and this will protect the temple from royal caprice, from royal opposition to the divine command.[136] Thus, the role of the *nasi* in Ezekiel's vision of the future places greater stress on religious functions than on political ones.[137] The *nasi* "is a constrained, 'tribal' Davidic head [... in] a new, tribally organized people of God. He is fully subordinate to the Lord."[138]

Comparison to the personnel in the Babylonian temples is instructive and demonstrates Babylonian influence on Ezekiel. While our first instinct might be to compare to the Babylonian king, there actually were functionaries who were closer in function to Ezekiel's *nasi*: the *šatammu* and the *qīpu*.[139] The *šatammu* was responsible for the functioning of the priests and had many administrative

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Commentary, Volume 1: Chapters 1–24 [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 441. Perhaps the choice of the designation *nasi* rather than king for the future Israelite leader in the chapters describing the *nasi*'s sins before his removal from his post (12, 19, 21, and 22) aims to indicate that the king, here termed *nasi*, ruled a shrunken kingdom.

135 See Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 742–46.

136 The Israelite kings engaged in the most heinous acts before the destruction of the temple, defiling the temple and the divine name; they have no role in the future cult (43:7–8). Although Babylonian kings were not part of the temple hierarchy, they did have a representative in the temple administration, and people with ties to the palace frequently interacted with the temple on various levels. The king himself had access to the temple, as he participated in certain ceremonies, such as the Festival of the New Year.

137 We should note an additional tactical element: perhaps circumstances do not allow the prophet to state explicitly anything that might create resistance within the Babylonian system in which he lives.

138 See Stephen L. Cook, "Ezekiel's Recovery of Premonarchic, Tribal Israel," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, FAT 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 367.

139 See one example among others: Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 42–43.

obligations, including ensuring that the sacrifices were consistently offered (even though he himself did not offer them). In effect, he was the temple supervisor who oversaw the cult activities. His role was purely administrative; to the best of our knowledge he had no role in the cult itself.[140] The *qīpu* was also mainly responsible for the economic and legal administration of the temple to the king's benefit and supervised the temple's obligations vis-à-vis the palace.

The *nasi* in Ezekiel, then, may integrate the roles of the two Babylonian temple officials who exercised broad administrative powers but did not actually participate in offering temple sacrifices. In this manner the Temple Vision places in the future temple a central figure who is responsible for its day-to-day functioning. However, as opposed to the Babylonian functionaries, and as a corrective to the Judean monarchy that brought the destruction of the temple, the *nasi* is not second to a human king, but answers only to God. Moreover, the relationship in Ezekiel is not dependent on a royal authority, nor does the king appoint priests. The status of the priests inheres in their lineage, and nowhere is there a description of the appointment of the *nasi*, just a description of the land he will receive and his administrative functions. In Babylonia, on the other hand, following his initiation, a priest had to be approved by the king or his local representative. Occasionally in priestly echelons in the major temples, the king was personally involved. And since these positions held great political and economic power, they were an intrinsic part of the political power game at the highest levels.[141]

In Ezekiel, *nasi* denotes the highest official among the people; however, as opposed to "king," which is a defined governmental designation, *nasi* is rather – as its derivation indicates – the person who is above the people. Ezekiel's appointment of a *nasi* creates a distinction from the kings of the nations, who also represented their gods. In his role as the highest official, the leader of the people in Ezekiel's Temple Vision represents God neither directly nor indirectly. As shaped by Ezekiel's vision, the function of the *nasi* as an administrator also protects him from the defects of the Israelite and Judean kings who ruled during the First Temple period.

In Babylonia the king was not part of the temple hierarchy; he had a representative in the temple administration, and people with ties to the palace fre-

140 Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple*, 43–44. See also, e.g., Yuval Levavi, *Administrative Epistolography in the Formative Stage of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, Dubsar 3, Spätbabylonische Briefe 2 (Münster: Zaphon, 2018), esp. 97–103.

141 On the interaction between the priestly families in the major Babylonian cities and the crown, see Levavi, "Loyalty."

quently interacted with the temple on various levels.[142] The Babylonian king himself had access to the temple, as he participated in certain ceremonies, such as the Festival of the New Year. By contrast, and in order to protect the temple from defilement by functionaries who betrayed their roles in the First Temple period, the book of Ezekiel not only reshapes the roles of the temple personnel, but as we understand from their absence in the verses, also eliminates the king and the high priest from the envisioned future temple.[143]

It is possible, then, to conclude that three spheres make an appearance in the personnel delineated in Ezekiel's vision of the future temple: the broader biblical context, the more restricted context of the book of Ezekiel, and the Babylonian backdrop. As we have seen, the unique status of the functionaries in Ezekiel's future temple reflects a desire to demarcate and differentiate their roles, both from prior biblical models and from the model of the Babylonian milieu. The division between priests, ultimately allowing for a smaller number of functionaries in the sacred space; the distancing of the Levites and non-Zadokite priests to preparatory and guarding positions; the absence of high priest, king, elders, and judges; the *nasi*, with his administrative position – all are innovations. The Temple Vision's underlying desire to safeguard the temple from sins past is reflected in the tasks assigned to its functionaries.

142 Kristin Kleber, *Tempel und Palast: die Beziehungen zwischen dem König und dem Eanna-Tempel im spätbabylonischen Uruk*, AOAT 358 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008).

143 And from the presence of foreigners. See Tova Ganzel, "The Defilement and Desecration of the Temple in Ezekiel," *Biblica* 89 (2008): 376. At Ezida, foreigners were also barred from entering the temple.

6 First-Month Temple Rituals in Ezekiel's Vision

The Temple Vision's description of ceremonies to be conducted in the first month once again demonstrates the cultural weight of its Babylonian milieu. The purification and purgation ceremonies on the first and seventh days of the first month in Ezekiel should be examined against the backdrop of the annual celebrations of the Akītu festival in Babylonia in the same month.[1] Below, we make use of recent scholarly attention devoted to the Akītu festival, which facilitates a more profound comparison of the ceremonies than has been undertaken to date; Ezekiel's Temple Vision sheds light on this intercultural contact from the perspective of a priest exiled from his temple and land.

6.1 First-Month Temple Rituals in Ezekiel

The rituals described in the Temple Vision bear similarities to the first-month ceremonies described in the Pentateuch – but depart from them in significant ways as well. Below we examine the rites in Ezekiel and how they compare to other rituals in the month of Nisan.

6.1.1 The Purification Ritual in Ezekiel's Visionary Temple: An Overview

The date at the head of the prophetic unit of the Temple Vision makes specific mention of the first month: "at the beginning of the year, the tenth day of the month" (40:1).[2] The text goes on to explicitly single out the first and seventh

1 Extensive research has recently been published on the Akītu festival in the Assyrian Empire, as well as in the Neo-Babylonian period. The following studies are instructive: Julye Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2002); Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993); Mark E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2015); Mark J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 71–86; Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 6 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 416–27; Annette Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat: Struktur und Deutung des babylonischen Neujahrsfestes," in *Festtraditionen in Israel und im Alten Orient*, ed. Erhard Blum and Rüdiger Lux (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006): 11–80. For a reconstruction of the Neo-Babylonian Akītu festival during Nisannu, see, e.g., Bidmead, *Akītu Festival,* 45–106; Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 21–41.

2 For the link between the specification of the tenth day of the first month and the Akītu festival (based on Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, OBO 104 [Göttingen:

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740844-006

days of what later became known as the month of Nisan[3] – "the first day of the first month" (45:18) and "the seventh day of the month" (45:20) – as the dates on which the purification of the temple and its purgation are to take place.

In the vision of the future temple, Ezekiel's prophecy gives the following description of the ceremony of cleansing and purgation:

> בָּרִאשׁוֹן בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ תִּקַּח פַּר בֶּן בָּקָר תָּמִים וְחִטֵּאתָ אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ. וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדַּם הַחַטָּאת וְנָתַן אֶל מְזוּזַת הַבַּיִת וְאֶל אַרְבַּע פִּנּוֹת הָעֲזָרָה לַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעַל מְזוּזַת שַׁעַר הֶחָצֵר הַפְּנִימִית. וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּשִׁבְעָה בַחֹדֶשׁ מֵאִישׁ שֹׁגֶה וּמִפֶּתִי וְכִפַּרְתֶּם אֶת הַבָּיִת.
>
> On the first day of the first month, you shall take an unblemished bull, and you shall purify the sanctuary. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and apply it to the doorposts of the house, to the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and to the doorposts of the gate of the inner courtyard. And you shall do the same on the seventh day of the month, for anyone who has sinned by mistake and ignorant persons, you shall provide atonement to the house. (45:18–20)

The following details regarding the ceremony – some of which are unique to Ezekiel – can be extracted from the verses:

1. On the first day of the first month, the temple is to be purified through the sacrifice of a bull as a sin offering.[4]

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991]), see Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48*, SBLDS 154 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 52–53, 139.

3 For a discussion of the absorption of the names of the Babylonian months in Hebrew menology, see Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Calendar and Festivals," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Law*, ed. Brent A. Strawn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87–93 (available online at https://www.academia.edu/10615128/Calendar and Festivals in Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Law).

4 The Temple Scroll (columns 14–17) and Megillat Ta'anit contain additional postbiblical evidence of a festival for the generations, which was celebrated from the "first day of the first month" to the "eighth day of the first month." See Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 1:190–92; Elisha Qimron, *The Temple Scroll: A Critical Edition with Extensive Reconstructions*, JDS (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996), 24–27, 61–73. In addition, Megillat Ta'anit, which opens with the month of Nisan, states: "From the beginning of the month of Nisan until the eighth of it the daily sacrifice was settled – one is not to eulogize. From the eighth of it [Nisan] until the conclusion of the festival the holiday was fixed – one is not to eulogize." See Vered Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit: Versions, Interpretation, History with a Critical Edition* [in Hebrew], Between Bible and Mishnah: The David and Jemima Jeselsohn Library (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2003), 43 (English trans. cited from Vered Noam, "Megillat Taanit: The Scroll of Fasting," in *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, ed. Shmuel Safrai et al., CRINT 3b [Assen: Gorcum, 2006], 342). Without going into the question of the relationship between the Temple Scroll and Megillat Ta'anit, it appears that both instances can be tied not just to the erection of the tabernacle (Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit,* 167), but also to the traditions of purification in Ezekiel. A link between Ezekiel and Megillat Ta'anit is already noticeable in the tradition that Megillat Ta'anit's author, Hananiah

2. The priest must apply the blood of the sin-offering to the doorposts (the entrance gate), the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and the doorposts of the gate of the inner courtyard.[5]
3. These actions must be repeated a week later on the seventh day of the month in order to purge the temple of uncleanness caused by "anyone who has sinned by mistake and ignorant persons" (מֵאִישׁ שֹׁגֶה וּמִפֶּתִי; 45:20). Although it appears that the actions carried out on the first of the month must be repeated on the seventh, the verses can also be understood as requiring the purgation only of the temple doorposts on the latter date.[6]
4. The ritual will effect the atonement of the temple.[7]

Immediately after describing the purgation ceremony, Ezekiel notes the sacrifices to be offered on Passover and Sukkot:

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ben Hezekiah, saved the book of Ezekiel from being withdrawn from circulation. On this tradition, see Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit*, 333–36. Finally, we note another link in Jubilees (in addition to the Passover holiday, chap. 49) that fixes 12 Nisan as the day on which "there were voices in heaven regarding Abraham" (17:15; translation cited from James VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols.; CSCO 511; Scriptores Aethiopici 88 [Leuven: Peeters, 1989]) and that this festival was ordained to be celebrated by later generations (18:18–19). Because Jubilees is familiar with Passover and notes it separately, this perhaps constitutes additional evidence of the celebration of another holiday before Passover.

5 This has no biblical parallel. In Leviticus 16, the consecration of the tabernacle takes place mainly inside of the holy place. Blood is to be sprinkled in front of the atonement lid (כפרת), in front of the curtain (פרכת) in front of the altar.

6 The formula שבעה בחודש is rare in the Bible; this perhaps explains why the LXX renders it as "in the seventh month, on the first of the month" (see NETS). According to the LXX, the ceremony is performed in Tishri: the word בחדש is understood as the first of the month, and בשבעה is understood as בשביעי. David Hoffmann (*Das Buch Leviticus/übersetzt und erklärt von D. Hoffmann*, 2 vols. [Berlin: Poppelauer, 1905], 2:183–84, starred note **) adopts the LXX rendering and interprets באחד לחודש as the New Year. Nonetheless, many scholars maintain that the verse refers to Nisan. See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, trans. James D. Martin, BKAT XIII (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 482; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 662.

7 Nonetheless, there are verses in Ezekiel that display affinity to the pentateuchal descriptions of the dedication of the tabernacle, including וְהִנֵּה מָלֵא כְּבוֹד ה' הַבָּיִת ("the presence of YHWH filled the temple"; 43:5), which parallels Exodus 40:34–35, and to the dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 8:11). See Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, JSOT/ASOR Monograph Series 5, JSOTSup 115 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 268–69; idem, "Tenth Century BCE to 586 BCE: The House of the Lord ('Beyt YHWH')," in *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009), 15–35.

בָּרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַפָּסַח חַג שָׁבֻעוֹת יָמִים מַצּוֹת יֵאָכֵל. וְעָשָׂה הַנָּשִׂיא בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בַּעֲדוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל עַם הָאָרֶץ פַּר חַטָּאת. וְשִׁבְעַת יְמֵי הֶחָג יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹלָה לַה' שִׁבְעַת פָּרִים וְשִׁבְעַת אֵילִים תְּמִימִם לַיּוֹם שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְחַטָּאת שְׂעִיר עִזִּים לַיּוֹם.].[...] בַּשְּׁבִיעִי בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בֶּחָג יַעֲשֶׂה כָאֵלֶּה שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים כַּחַטָּאת כָּעֹלָה וְכַמִּנְחָה וְכַשָּׁמֶן.

On the fourteenth day of the first month you will have the Passover, a festival of seven days, [when] unleavened bread [*maṣot*] shall be eaten. The *nasi,* on that day, shall prepare a bull of sin offering on behalf of himself and on behalf of the entire population. And during the seven days of the festival, he shall provide daily for seven days seven bulls and seven rams, without blemish, for a burnt offering to YHWH, and one goat daily for a sin offering [...]. On the seventh month, from the fifteenth day, during the festival, he shall prepare offerings just like those on the seven days; sin offerings, burnt offerings, meal offerings, and oil. (45:21–25)

Because the description of the purification of the temple in Ezekiel appears only in 45:18–20, and because its precise nature is difficult to establish from the verses, there is scholarly debate regarding what exactly these verses mandate.

One possibility is that this is a description of a one-time ceremony of purification and purgation of the temple on its dedication,[8] and that these verses in essence refer to the dedication of the future temple.

The idea that the temple's purgation ceremony is meant to serve as a once-only dedication service should be examined in light of the unique ceremony of purification of the altar outlined earlier in the book (43:18–27). The altar's purification ritual appears appropriate as the dedication ceremony for the future temple, particularly as there is no set date for its being carried out (as opposed to the purification of the temple in 45:18–20), which suggests that the altar's purification is a one-time ceremony. Medieval commentators draw comparisons between this ceremony and the consecration of the tabernacle,[9] and conclude that this was a one-time ceremony to be performed after constructing the altar according to the plan and the performance of the rituals of purification in preparation for the offering of sacrifices (vv. 18–27). Some similarities between the purification of the altar in Ezekiel and the dedication of the altar in the tabernacle (Exod 29:1–37; Lev 9) are evident. In both, the altar requires daily purification and atonement on each of the seven days; a major difference, however, is that in Ezekiel, the first day (43:18–21) is distinguished from the others (43:22–24).[10]

8 See Block, *Ezekiel: 25–48,* 662–64.

9 See Rashi and Eleazar of Beaugency on Ezekiel 43:18–26, in the wake of b. Menaḥ. 45a (Menachem Cohen, ed., *Mikra'ot Gedolot "Haketer": Ezekiel* [in Hebrew] [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2000]); see also Maimonides, *Code: Book of Temple Service,* "Manner of Offering Sacrifices," 2:14.

10 For this comparison, see Rimon Kasher, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary, Volume 2: Chapters 25–48* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 832–34, 840.

So is Ezekiel describing an annual purification ritual? Or is this a one-time ceremony? We will return to this question later in the chapter.

6.1.2 Ezekiel's Purification Ritual and the Pentateuchal Nisan Rituals

Ezekiel's purification ceremony bears many similarities to the Nisan rituals mandated in the Pentateuch. However, it diverges from some of the instructions in ways that must be addressed. Below, we take a look at some of the significant divergences.

6.1.2.1 The Dates of Ezekiel's Nisan Ceremonies

The dates given for Ezekiel's ritual – the first and seventh days of the first month – have no scriptural parallels. Moreover, the date cited in the Temple Vision for the beginning of the Passover festival, the fourteenth of the first month (45:21), is unusual – the accepted date for the beginning of the seven-day *ḥag ha-maṣot* is the fifteenth of that month (Lev 23:6; Num 28:16–17).[11] The book of Ezekiel, we also must note, makes no mention of the paschal sacrifice. As Gesundheit observes: "It is difficult to know whether the institution of the paschal sacrifice exists in Ezekiel's law or whether all that has remained is the name *Pesaḥ* marking the fourteenth day of the first month. It stands to reason that the extra-temple character of the paschal sacrifice did not fit the conception of a centralized cult presupposed in Ezekiel's law."[12] For the purposes of the discussion here it is not necessary to determine the precise import of "Passover; a festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten" in Ezekiel.

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11 This biblical holiday has two different components and a distinction must be made between the paschal sacrifice/holiday on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, which commemorates the sacrifice offered the night before leaving Egypt and lasts only one day (Exod 12:6; Num 28:16), and *Ḥag ha-Maṣot*, a seven-day festival that begins on 15 Nisan (Lev 23:6; Num 28:16–17) and marks the haste in which the Israelites left Egypt, which forced them to bake unleavened bread on the morning when leaving Egypt. Due to the proximity of the two, and the fact that *maṣot* are eaten with the paschal sacrifice (Deut 16:3), it was possible to speak of the sacrifice as part of *Ḥag ha-Maṣot* (Deut 16:4, 15). This is the case in 2 Chronicles 35:17. In Deuteronomy 16:3, the two prohibitions regarding *ḥameṣ* have been conflated. The commandment to eat *maṣa* with the paschal sacrifice is also found in Numbers 9:11, the celebration of *Pesaḥ Sheni*, where it is not followed by *Ḥag ha-Maṣot*. See Baruch M. Dillard, "Unleavened bread and Passover, feasts of," *ABD* 6:755–59. For a literary-critical study of Passover and unleavened bread and the combination of the two, see Shimon Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year: Studies on Festival Legislation in the Pentateuch*, FAT 82 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

12 Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 81, n. 86.

6.1.2.2 The Sukkot and Passover Sacrifices

Although the unleavened bread and Sukkot festivals are mandated in the Pentateuch, the details found in the Temple Vision, including the number of sacrifices to be offered, are unique to Ezekiel:

1. Ezekiel transfers the ceremony to the inner courtyard of the temple, into which only temple officials enter; in the Pentateuch, the Nisan ceremonies took place in the courtyard, into which those bringing sacrifices could enter.
2. In Ezekiel, a bull is sacrificed as a sin offering on the fourteenth of the month by the *nasi* in his and the entire population's name,[13] in addition to the paschal sacrifices.[14]
3. During the seven days of the festival the *nasi* offers the daily sacrifices in his and the entire population's name. In Ezekiel, the number of sacrifices to be offered on the festival of unleavened bread is equivalent to that offered on *the* festival (which parallels the date of Sukkot). This applies to both holidays and differs from the stipulations in Numbers (28:19–24; 29:11–34).
4. At the end of the unit, the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) is noted as a day on which the same sacrifices as those offered on the festival of unleavened bread should be offered for a week (45:25).[15] This also differs from Numbers (29:12–34), where a descending number of bulls is offered on each day of Sukkot. Moreover, the sacrifices mandated for Shemini Atzeret in the Pentateuch have no parallel in Ezekiel.

6.1.2.3 Ezekiel's Purification Ritual and Day of Atonement

Within the discussion about whether Ezekiel's Nisan ritual was an annual one or not, a comparison has been made at times to another annual ceremony: the Day of Atonement. Some scholars maintain that Ezekiel's ceremony substituted for the atonement ceremony carried out on the Day of Atonement (10 Tishri) as

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13 See n. 11 above. Note that in all of its biblical occurrences, 14 Nisan refers to the *Pesaḥ* festival only; the fourteenth at night or at twilight and the fifteenth of the month marks the beginning of *Ḥag ha-Maṣot*. All of these occurrences differ from Ezekiel, who only mentions the fourteenth (not the fifteenth) as the date for the *Pesaḥ* festival: בָּרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַפָּסַח, "On the fourteenth day of the first month you will have the Passover" (45:21). In addition, Deuteronomy 16:1–9 mentions *Pesaḥ* without noting the day of the month.

14 A reference to the fourteenth may also occur in the Temple Scroll 17:6–7 (ועשו בארב[עה בין הערבים] עשרבחודש הראישון). If the proposed reconstructions are correct, this constitutes additional testimony to a separate sacrifice on 14 Nisan; in effect the sacrifice is the paschal one, offered on the eve of the holiday (15 Nisan).

15 For the rendering in the LXX, which may refer to the New Year, making it then uncertain to which festival Ezekiel 45:23 is referring, see n. 6 above.

described for the tabernacle (Leviticus 16).[16] We note, however, that despite the similarities between the aim of the ceremony in Ezekiel and the Day of Atonement ceremony in Leviticus – purification –some differences are evident:

1. In Leviticus, the main feature of the ceremony is the sprinkling of the blood indoors (first in the holy of holies, then in the holy, and, finally, by the altar). In Ezekiel the ceremony is carried out in the inner courtyard, outside of the temple building but within the sacred precincts (perhaps because Ezekiel describes almost no entry to the temple and no high priest, whereas in the priestly literature there is regular access to the sacred precinct).
2. In Leviticus, the Day of Atonement ceremony lasts one day; in Ezekiel, seven.

Ezekiel's description of the purification of the altar in 43:18–27 is, rather, closer to some aspects of the purification ritual in Leviticus 16, which includes purification of the burnt-offering altar in the courtyard (16:20; parallel to Exod 29 and Lev 8).

In the book of Ezekiel, the uniqueness of this ritual also inheres in the identity of the person who carries it out. The ritual of purification of the altar in Ezekiel 43, which is a one-time dedication ceremony of the temple, is the prophet's responsibility, and the purification is performed by a priest (perhaps similar to Moses' role in the dedication of the tabernacle – in which he oversaw the dedication of the altar). But it is the priest who is responsible for the purification-purgation of the temple on the first of the month (45:19) and the *nasi* is charged with offering the paschal sacrifice by dint of his role as the person who offers sacrifices in the name of the people in the temple.[17]

Before we can come to a full understanding of these divergences, however, we must paint a picture of the rituals that the exiles would have seen around them. This entails an examination of the events that took place on similar dates in Babylonia.

16 See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 482; Kasher, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 885.

17 In these verses the role of the *nasi* is not clear because of inconsistencies in grammatical person. It seems, however, that the *nasi* is responsible for overseeing temple activity, whereas the purgation ritual is carried out by the priests (45:19). This is because the *nasi* represents the people and is responsible for seeing to the needs of the temple, for which he receives (in these chapters only) donations for the temple (45:16–17). Through these donations the people share in the sacrifices he offers in their name (45:17) to "make expiation for the house of Israel," namely, to atone for and purify the temple for and in the name of the people.

6.2 The Akītu of Nisannu in Babylon

The main holiday celebrated in the Mesopotamian calendrical cycle[18] was the Akītu festival.[19] During the first millennium, it was celebrated throughout Babylonia, primarily in the months of Nisannu and Tašrītu, just prior to the dates of the biblical Passover and Sukkot holidays, respectively.

The following description of the Akītu festival stems from several sources relating to different cities (primarily Uruk, but also Babylon), genres, and periods during the course of the first millennium.[20] In this framework, the elements relating to sixth-century-BCE Babylonia – the time and place of the book of Ezekiel's prophecy – are most pertinent to the discussion. Clouding the picture, however, is a lack of uniformity regarding the information on the Akītu festival from different places and periods. It is nonetheless a matter of consensus that the central event took place in Babylon, where the festivities were held in the temple dedicated to Marduk – the Ésagila – and in his honor, and that it took place at the beginning of the year,[21] in the first half of the month of Nisannu, and lasted for a variable number of days in the first half of the month.

The Akītu festival began with ceremonies carried out in the temple, peaking with the procession of the image of Marduk through the streets of Babylon to the Akītu-house (just outside the city) and his return to the city and the temple.[22] There is evidence of the celebration of Akītu festivals elsewhere; for exam-

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18 The description that follows is based on Bidmead, *Akītu Festival*; Cohen, *Cultic Calendars*; Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*; and Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat" – without, however, taking a side in the dispute regarding the exact dates on which each part of the ritual took place in the various cities or for which gods. The discussion here focuses on the Akītu New Year festival in Babylon.

19 Like Passover, on the date of the Hebrew New Year (to be celebrated "at the set time in the month of Abib" [Exod 23:15]) and Sukkot ("the Feast of the Harvest" [Exod 23:16]), which are celebrated mid-month, it has been suggested that the Akītu festival was also linked to the agricultural cycle.

20 For a list of the relevant sources, see Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 72–75; Céline Debourse, "Of Priests and Kings: The Babylonian New Year Festival in the Last Age of Cuneiform" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2021).

21 The beginning of Nisannu was the date on which kings were installed throughout the Middle East (Cohen, *Cultic Calendars,* 306). This is also the source for the dictum in m. Roš Haš. 1:1: "the first day of Nisan is the new year for kings."

22 Thus Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars,* 400. The essence of the festival remains a matter of debate. Some view its focus as the affirmation of the king by Marduk; others the reenactment of Marduk's victory over Tiamat (as described in Enuma Elish); and still others the king's confession and affirmation of the social order. For a summary of the various opinions, see Bidmead, *Akītu Festival,* 17–24; Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 16–17. Nonetheless, the com-

ple, in Uruk two Akītu festivals were held, one in Nisannu and one in Tašrītu; in Nippur four such festivals have been described in various texts, including one in Nisannu. The celebration of Akītu festivals is attested in additional places in the first millennium (before and after the Neo-Babylonian period).[23]

Since the dates and the ritual timetable varied from place to place, the festival's main features and themes are addressed here, on the assumption that these were the ones to which the public was exposed.[24]

In the Ésagila, the rituals began in the temple and lasted for the first three-and-a-half days of Nisannu, which were devoted to prayers led by the *ahu rabû* (high priest),[25] who blessed the temple. At the end of the fourth day, the *ahu rabû* recited the Enuma Elish. On the fifth day, the image of Nabû arrived from Borsippa and the submission ceremony of the king took place: the king was brought to the temple, where he was stripped of his royal paraphernalia and slapped by the *ahu rabû*.[26] The king then recited a confession in which he stated that he had not sinned, and by his confession in which he swore that he had not harmed the temple he reiterated his commitment to carrying out the rituals in their correct order and to upholding the rights of the city's citizens. The secret

plexity of an "eleven-day" Akītu festival in first-millennium Babylonia cannot be reduced to single elements.

23 For Nippur, see Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars,* 394–95; for Uruk, see Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars,* 402–8; Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon*, 71–73; Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 387–89 (Nisannu in Mesopotamia), 389–90 (overview, with further literature), 392–93 (the meaning of the Akītu festival), 395–99 (Assyria), and 400–402 (on the praxis in Babylon).

24 Linssen, *Uruk and Babyklon,* 78–86; Cohen, *Cultic Calendars,* 438–40; Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 21–41; Bidmead, *Akītu Festival,* 45–106. For evidence on the centrality of the Nisannu Akītu festival in Babylon and the trip of the god Nabû from Borsippa, see Caroline Waerzeggers, *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives*, Achaemenid History 15 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 119–30.

25 Because the first three days of the festival were devoted solely to prayer, some scholars ascribe the beginning of the Akītu festival to 4 Nisannu, the date on which ceremonies were held in the temple. See Karel van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and Their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 332, n. 7. Debourse uses the literal translation "Elder Brother" for *aḫu-rabû*; Debourse, "Priests and Kings," 212.

26 Based on Waerzeggers's descriptions of an economic text from Borsippa, from the Ezida temple archive, during this month (including preparations for the dress ceremony and offerings), and the understanding of a description of Nabû's arrival in Babylon on 5 Nisannu, where the central event took place. In addition, inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, who renovated some of the sites, contain information on Nabû's trip from Borsippa to Babylon (Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 123–25). Additional information on events in Nisannu comes from descriptions of the rites at Borsippa in Nabû's absence and his return. See Waerzeggers, *Ezida Temple,* 119–30.

assembly of the gods took place on the eighth day.[27] After the decreeing of destinies, the gods set out in a public procession, accompanied by the king and priests, to the Akītu-house, where they stayed for three days, returning to the city on the eleventh day.[28] Another secret assembly took place in the Ésagila, and the gods then left Babylon to return to their home cities. In short, during the Akītu festival, the gods left the temple, went out through the city gate to the house of Akītu, and remained there. They then left the house of Akītu and returned in a procession to the temple in the city. The ceremony in Babylon concluded with the return of the gods to their cities, along with the priests and functionaries who had accompanied them.

As has been noted, great care was taken to preserve the sanctity of the Neo-Babylonian temple and prevent the non-initiated and ritually unfit from entering the inner spaces or touching the god's food. A temple's sanctity was protected by means of architectural features that created spaces that enveloped the more sacred areas and isolated them from the profane region outside. The performance of purification rituals, the requirement that those entering the temple wash their hands and change their clothes, and the examination of a person's ancestry, level of initiation, and ritual fitness all contributed to the effort to protect the sacred,[29] and are similar to the sanctity rituals and restrictions set down in Ezekiel (40:45–46; 43:13–14).

It appears unlikely that the exiles would have been acquainted with all the details of the rituals that took place within the Babylonian temple. Nonetheless, the exiles were probably familiar with the visible aspects of the ritual, especially the public processions through the city streets on fixed dates, from the temple to the house of Akītu and back.[30] Details of the ceremony would most likely have been freely discussed as well. Thus the comparison undertaken here relates to elements of the ritual that it is reasonable to assume were common knowledge.

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27 The texts vary. For a general description of the events between the fifth and eighth days, see: Debourse, "Priests and Kings," 33.

28 Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars,* 401, does not definitively determine whether this took place at the end of the tenth or on the eleventh day; Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 40, maintains that they returned on the eleventh day.

29 Caroline Waerzeggers and Michael Jursa, "On the Initiation of Babylonian Priests," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 14 (2008): 1–36.

30 See Bidmead, *Akītu Festival,* 99; Bastian Still (*The Social World of Babylonian Priests* [Leiden: Brill, 2019]) notes the impressive nature of the Akītu festival events in which "the crowd saw the priests alongside the gods as well as the king" (215–16); see also Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Prozession(sstrasse). A," *RlA* 11 (2006–2008): 98–103: "Due to its public character, its theological and political messages, the procession of the deity often is the climax of a festival" (p. 98).

6.3 Ezekiel's Purification Ceremony

It appears that two sources fueled the unique ritual in Ezekiel slated to be held in the future temple at the beginning of the first month: one, precedents for purification of the temple before Passover (found in the Prophets); two, the Babylonian environment in which the exiles lived, where the temple was purified, and which saw the holding of rituals on these dates whose purpose was to aggrandize the Babylonian gods and to support the existing religious and monarchic social order.[31]

6.3.1 Purification Ceremonies in the Prophets

The dates noted in Ezekiel are the first, seventh, and fourteenth of the first month, all of which are in proximity to Passover. The biblical commandment in the Pentateuch to observe Passover for the generations appears in Exodus (12:14–29) and in Leviticus (23); indications that the holiday was celebrated after the Exodus from Egypt are found in Numbers 9:1–5, which describes the celebration held in the first month of the second year to the Exodus.[32] Note that the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month, and Passover was celebrated not long after its dedication (Exod 40:17; Num 7:1). While there are no biblical parallels in the Pentateuch to a *fixed* ritual with elements whose aim is to purify the temple at the beginning of the month, before the Passover holiday, texts in the Prophets describe events prior to the Passover celebrations, including reforms whose purpose was to purify the temple. We suggest that these precedents to a large extent underlie the fixed annual ritual of purification of the temple in Ezekiel.[33]

Four descriptions of the Passover holiday appear in the Prophets. The first took place in Joshua's day in the absence of a temple.[34] The next celebrations

31 See Bidmead, *Akītu Festival*, 125 (gods), 163–64 (kings).

32 The descriptions of Egyptian Passover and Passover in the wilderness in the first month of the second year after the Exodus are similar. In the latter, Passover was celebrated close to the dedication of the tabernacle, which was carried out at the beginning of that month (Exod 40:1, 17; Deut 16:1–11).

33 To the pre-Passover purification of the temple we can also add the dedication of Solomon's Temple, which was carried out in proximity to the Sukkot festival (2 Chr 7:8–9). Perhaps this indicates a general tendency to hold dedication ceremonies close to the dates of the festivals celebrated in the Temple.

34 Here the preparation required to observe Passover is the circumcision ceremony that preceded it: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּעֶרֶב בְּעַרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ, "And the Israelites

are found in the scriptural descriptions of the holiday in Hezekiah's (2 Chr 30:1–27), Josiah's (2 Kgs 23:21–27; 2 Chr 35:1–19),[35] and Ezra's days (Ezra 6:19–22).[36] In the latter examples, in which Passover was celebrated while the Temple was standing, we find descriptions of efforts to purify the temple before the holiday.

It is highly probable that the dates for the temple purification ritual in Ezekiel, which are also close to Passover, were chosen for the same purpose: the desire to offer the paschal sacrifice in the first month when the temple is at the height of its purity.[37] Perhaps, consistent with the unifying factors of the visionary temple, the people would also make special efforts to purify themselves before the first of the month, and take care not to be defiled until Passover, on the fifteenth, in order to celebrate the holiday in purity. Indeed, the sacrifices offered on the seventh were intended to purify the temple. To this, the Temple Vision adds the purification of the altar on the fourteenth, also intended for those who had become impure.[38] Nowhere in Ezekiel is the type of impurity from which the temple must be cleansed specified; there is only the general statement that the temple must be atoned for "for anyone who has sinned by mistake and ignorant people" (45:20), without reference to a specific act of defilement.

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offered the paschal sacrifice on the fourteenth day of the month, toward evening, in the steppes of Jericho" (Josh 5:10).

35 Here the verse notes that the paschal sacrifice was slaughtered on 14 Nisan (2 Chr 35:1) which reflects a distinction between the paschal sacrifice offered on 14 Nisan and the Passover festival celebrated for a week starting on 15 Nisan (Lev 23:5–6; Num 28:16–17). See n. 11 above.

36 The celebration of Passover in Hezekiah's day was preceded by efforts to purify the Temple from idolatry (2 Chr 30). Another description refers to Josiah's day, in which the purification of the Temple (2 Chr 34) was immediately followed by what was seen as proper observance of the festival (2 Kgs 23:21; 2 Chr 35:18), which included the slaughtering of the paschal lamb on 14 Nisan (2 Chr 35:1) and observance of *ḥag ha-maṣot* for a week beginning on 15 Nisan. Finally, in the early Second Temple period the returned exiles celebrated Passover on 14 Nisan.

37 Purity means removal of physical impurity that defiles the temple through contact. A corollary of this notion is Ezekiel's distancing the people from the temple, which is found in additional contexts (43:7–9). For a comparison of Ezekiel to P, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 1991): "Furthermore, Ezekiel's rule on sancta contagion is the key that explains his difference from P [...] even to the point of preventing the laity from direct contact with the priestly clothing and the sacrifices" (see pp. 448–53; quote taken from 452–53).

38 See: Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 243.

6.3.2 Neo-Babylonian Ceremonies and Their Influence on the Temple Vision

A second source of influence, as noted, is the Babylonian backdrop to Ezekiel's vision. The description of the purification ceremony carried out on 5 Nisannu during the Akītu festival describes:

> Two hours after sunrise, when the preparations for the table of Bēl and Bēltiya have been completed, he [i.e., the High Priest] summons the **exorcist,** (who) **purifies the temple** and sprinkles the temple with water from a well along the Tigris and from a well along the Euphrates. [...] He moves the censer and the torch to the center of the temple. [...] When he has finished the purification of the temple, he enters the Ezida,[39] to the chapel of Nabû, **purifies** the temple with a censer, torch, and holy water vessel, and sprinkles the chapel with water from a well along the Tigris and from a well along the Euphrates. [...] He (the High Priest) summons the ritual slaughterer and he cuts off the head of a sheep, **and the exorcist purifies the temple with the carcass of the sheep**.[40] He recites the spells for exorcising the temple. **He thoroughly purifies the entire chapel** and (then) removes the censer.[41] [Emphases added.]

A number of elements of this Akītu ritual are germane for our discussion:[42] first, the purification is carried out by a priest;[43] second, it appears that the ritual was intended not just to purge the temple but also the people;[44] and, finally, because this was the only time the king was allowed to enter the holy of holies,[45] one of the ritual's main purposes was to ratify the king's obligations to-

39 Note that this Ezida is the chapel of Nabû in the Ésagila itself (in Babylon), rather than the actual temple of Nabû in Borsippa bearing the same name.

40 Note a resemblance to purifying the temple in Ezekiel, when the priest takes the blood of the sin-offering and applies it to the doorposts, the altar, and the doorposts of the inner courtyard's gate.

41 Translation from Cohen, *Cultic Calendars,* 445. For another translation, see Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon,* 353–62.

42 Here we follow in the wake of the scholarly consensus regarding these lines (e.g., Zgoll, "Königslauf und Götterrat," 25), as opposed to the position taken by Benjamin D. Sommer ("The Babylonian Akītu Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos," *JANES* 27 [2000]: 81–95, see 86–87).

43 Water was also used for purification: e.g., "(the priest) offers (a bowl of) hand water to Anu and Antu and sprinkles the king and the (other) attendees" (François Thureau-Dangin, *Rituals accadiens* [hereafter: Racc.; Paris: Editions E. Leroux, 1921]. 102:17–18, translation from Cohen, *Cultic Calendars*, 435). See also a ritual in Tašrītu: "(the priest) offers a (bowl of) hand water to Anu and Antu and sprinkles the king and the (other) attendees" (RAcc. 90:22–23, 33; translation: Cohen, *Cultic Calendars,* 431, and passim with other deities as well). In Ezekiel the return of "the Presence of Israel's God" to the future temple is described as thundering like "the voice of many waters" (43:2).

44 See Bidmead, *Akītu Festival*, 79.

45 Ibid., 80.

ward – and especially the protection of – the citizens of Babylon. If so, the submission ceremony in effect embodies the royal promise to preserve the social order.

6.3.2.1 The Purpose of the Ritual

In comparing the two rituals, we take note of a few major dimensions. First, the features shared by Ezekiel and the Akītu festival relate to *purification*. In Ezekiel, the cleansing of the temple and its purification are carried out by a priest on the first and seventh days of the first month; during the Akītu festivities a priest also purifies the temple. The actions of the priests during the purification ceremony in Ezekiel resemble the sacrifices offered by the *āšipu* (ritual worker).

6.3.2.2 Purification Functionaries

One parallel between Ezekiel and the Akītu festival concerns the functionaries involved. In Ezekiel we have the priest, who carries out the pre-Passover purification ceremony, and the *nasi*, who from 14 Nisan, offers the festival sacrifices in the name of the people.[46] In contrast to the biblical sources, the people only observe, but are not involved in, the offering of sacrifices. This resembles the function of the *ahu rabû* in the context of the Akītu festival. The *ahu rabû* is responsible for overseeing the temple rituals, including those of the Akītu, and, like the *nasi*, has yearlong responsibilities – although these responsibilities vary in different periods and in different texts.[47] Thus, like the *nasi* in Ezekiel (46:1–18), he opens the temple in the morning and closes it in the evening. Note, however, that the *ahu rabû* enters the holy of holies, whereas in Ezekiel this is not the case: neither the *nasi* nor the priests enter the holy of holies. And, in addition, Ezekiel's vision has no king among its functionaries; the *nasi*, who is not a priest, functions like the *ahu rabû*.

Another parallel relates to the actions prescribed for the priests in Ezekiel during the purification ceremony, which include taking the blood of the bull to cleanse the temple by placing blood on the doorposts, the horns of altar, and the gate of the inner court. These can be compared to the sacrifices offered by the Babylonian *āšipu* – although in the text at our disposal, the Babylonian sources do not specify how exactly the blood is being used.

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46 This differs from the pentateuchal Passover celebrations in which the people offer the paschal sacrifice.

47 For his various functions and the festivities in which he participates, see Linssen, *Uruk and Babylon,* 16, n. 106.

6.3.2.3 The Locations of the Ceremonies

The location of ritual activity is another axis of comparison between Ezekiel and the Neo-Babylonian temples. In Ezekiel 45, the ceremony takes place not in the temple building but in the courtyard. This resembles the days of consecration of the tabernacle, and differs from the pentateuchal Day of Atonement ceremony (Lev 15), many parts of which are performed within the tabernacle. Perhaps by this means the *nasi*, who represents the people, makes them partners in what happens in the temple courtyard.

Although the Akītu festivals began in the temple, they came into the public eye during the parading of the deities around the city, when they were presented to the people, on their way out of the city and on their return. At the center of these processions were the statues of the gods, with an emphasis on Marduk (in Babylon), accompanied and served by the priests who were reciting prayers and blessings for the gods.[48]

In Ezekiel's Temple Vision the purification ceremony is compartmentalized, performed inside the temple by a priest and the *nasi* in preparation for the Passover holiday. This holiday, which is characterized by the eating of unleavened bread (45:21), symbolizes the historic link between God and His people, but without the mass participation of the entire people. There is thus a striking disparity between the temple preparations undertaken for the Babylonian god and those that take place in Ezekiel's vision. In the Babylonian environment, part of the locus of the festivals celebrated at the beginning of Nisannu took place in the streets, whereas in Ezekiel, perhaps purposely in contrast to these rituals, the preparations for the Passover holiday are performed in purity within the temple and the people are largely excluded from its precincts.

6.3.2.4 The Return of the Deity to His Temple

In Ezekiel, as in the Babylonian ceremony, after the purification rituals comes the return of the deity to the temple. In Ezekiel, the need for purification stems from the events of the day: the recent destruction of the Jerusalem Temple that included God exiting the Temple, creating a need to ensure the purity of the future temple with God taking up permanent residence there. In the Akītu rituals, on the other hand, the purification of the temple was one element of the ceremony; the return of the deity to his temple was a fixed ritual that included an annual procession in the streets. Moreover, Ezekiel's ceremony is for the purification of the temple and not the people. The leader's obligation to the

48 Pongratz-Leisten, "Prozession(sstrasse). A."

people does not appear to be an element of Ezekiel's ceremony.[49] While both ceremonies relate to an exit and return, the Babylonian exit and return was an annual event; the Temple Vision's goal is to preserve the sanctity of the space after the return takes place.

6.4 An Overarching Goal: Preserving the Temple's Sanctity

The first-month rituals in Ezekiel's visionary temple diverge from biblical texts in a number of ways and should be examined in light of the world in which the exiles lived. The purification ceremony envisioned in the Temple Vision is consistent with the overall theme we have noted throughout: the strict preservation of the temple's holiness.[50] This goal is achieved by a variety of means. First is the ceremony of purification of the temple on the first and seventh days of the first month (45:18, 20). The ritual's performance, combined with the other unique elements designed to prevent defilement and ensure the temple's purity in Ezekiel's vision – the enlargement of the courtyard surrounding the temple and guarding the gates (42:15–20), the prohibition against sinning (non-Zadokite) priests participating in the temple rites in the future temple, and the unique fact that all sacrifices are public ones – guarantees that the divine presence will remain in the temple in the future (44:11–16).[51] Reforms in Ezekiel's vision also include other means of preserving the future temple's sanctity, as we have noted: the distancing of the temple from the city; the absence of many temple utensils, also intended to keep out impure persons;[52] and the hermetic sealing of one of its entrances (44:2).

The date chosen in Ezekiel, at the beginning of the first month, parallels the period during which celebrations for the Babylonian gods were at their height.[53] Moreover, it is no coincidence that Passover and Sukkot – in the first and sev-

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49 For another interesting example that demonstrates that the Babylon Judeans were well acquainted with the New Year festivals, culture, and theology, see Isaiah 46:1–2; see Hanspeter Schaudig, "'Bēl Bows, Nabû Stoops!' The Prophecy of Isaiah XLVI 1–2 as a Reflection of Babylonian 'Processional Omens,'" *VT* 58, no. iv/v (2008): 557–72.

50 See, among others, Tova Ganzel, "The Defilement and Desecration of the Temple in Ezekiel," *Biblica* 89 (2008): 369–79.

51 Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 203–8.

52 On the overall significance of the differences between the First Temple and the temple in Ezekiel's vision, see Corinne L. Patton, "Ezekiel's Blueprint for the Temple of Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1991), 143–71.

53 See Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 496, 513.

enth months – parallel the period during which celebrations for the Babylonian gods were common, in Nisannu and Tašrītu. This too may have contributed to the creation of fixed dates for purification ceremonies in Nisan.

Verses 44:18–20, as we saw, are the subject of much debate: they may be guidelines for an annual ceremony to be carried out in the future temple[54] or, as noted by some scholars, they may relate to a one-time purification ritual. Based on the discussion above, it appears most likely that the explicit mention of dates indicates that this is a fixed ritual whose purpose is to purify the temple annually, so that the purity of the temple in which the presence of God resides (44:4) will be preserved. If this were a dedication ceremony, it would be held on the completion of construction and not on a fixed calendrical date. Furthermore, the purification of the temple prior to the mid-Nisan festival, while not discussed in the Pentateuch, clearly has precedents in the Prophets, which describe similar rituals in advance of *Ḥag ha-Maṣot*.

Ezekiel's transfer of the ceremony's location to the interior of the temple is, once again, consistent with his overarching principle of preserving the temple's purity. And while *Ḥag ha-Maṣot* appears in Ezekiel, the *Pesaḥ* holiday (biblical paschal sacrifice on 14 Nisan) is not found because the concept of mass attendance at the temple has no relevance in the Temple Vision.

While the Temple Vision's functionaries for the ceremony can be better understood in light of the Neo-Babylonian ritual, the *ahu rabû* enters the holy of holies, whereas in Ezekiel this is not the case: neither the *nasi* nor the priests enter the holy of holies; the book of Ezekiel's goal of protecting the temple from defilement is realized by limiting access to its precincts.

Much like the changes to the structure and functionaries evident in Ezekiel's envisioned temple, the institutionalization of the purification rituals in the Temple Vision is part and parcel of its response to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Before the destruction, the return of the deity to His temple was not an issue for the prophets. Following the destruction, the book of Ezekiel addressed this issue in an environment in which the notion that the deity exited and reentered the temple was a well-known element, as celebrated on days eight to eleven of the Akītu festival.

Despite this similarity, the rituals display opposing elements and have different aims. Whereas for Ezekiel the preservation of the divine presence from defilement was tantamount (43:2–9) and therefore the entrance used by the deity was from that point on hermetically closed (44:2), in Babylon the central element of the ritual was in its public dimension; it therefore included proces-

54 This was Jacob Milgrom's opinion, which was based on a comparison of the details of the sacrificial offerings in the Priestly Source with those in Ezekiel (*Leviticus 1–16*, 281–84).

sions in the city streets from the temple to the house of Akītu and back to the temple. The theological contrast can be summed up as follows: "In Mesopotamian ideology it was the presence of the god in his house, the temple, which assured the cosmic order within the civilized space enclosed by the city wall. Outside the wall lay the chaotic space, the lair of demons and populations perceived as uncivilized (nomads)."[55] In contrast, "Ezekiel 40–48 is a narrative of the return of YHWH from exile to his shrine, to renew his Kingship and take possession of his House on the tenth day of the New Year ceremony. However, unlike the Babylonian *akitu* ceremony, there is no human king to take the god by hand and lead him unto the house. This god comes alone."[56] It is precisely God's coming alone that accentuates the difference between the functionaries in the Neo-Babylonian and visionary temples, and answers questions posed above. The book of Ezekiel's concern is the temple and god, and more specifically keeping the temple pure and God's name holy.

It appears, then, that a shared aim of preserving the temples' purity generated some of the similarities between the purification rituals described in Ezekiel's Temple Vision and the celebration of the Akītu festival. These similarities include similar dates, partial participation by the people, who mainly observe, but do not actively participate in, the ritual, and the functions of the *ahu rabû* and the *nasi*. We have suggested that the exiles' exposure to the Babylonian cult can partially explain the unique rituals found only in Ezekiel's Temple Vision, delivered in Babylonia. We further suggest that the annual nature of the Akītu festival strengthens the argument that the ritual described in Ezekiel is an annual one. On the other hand, the text's response to its Babylonian cultural environment is not one of blind acceptance. The main thrust of the Temple Vision is to protect the future temple from impurity; the main thrust of the Akītu festival was to enhance the status of the deity and legitimate the role of the king.

We have seen that the book of Ezekiel adopts and adapts elements of biblical descriptions of pre-Passover purification rituals. Both the inner-biblical and the Babylonian comparisons demonstrate how the Temple Vision relates to both contexts, striking an individual path that underscores an absolute need for purity for the future temple to function and serve as the house of God. Preserving the temple's sanctity facilitates the return of God's glory in the book's final chapters, after the description of its departure in the first part of the book (8–11):

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55 Lorenzo Verderame, "The Moon and the Power of Time Reckoning in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 133.

56 Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 53.

וְהִנֵּה כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא מִדֶּרֶךְ הַקָּדִים וְקוֹלוֹ כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים וְהָאָרֶץ הֵאִירָה מִכְּבֹדוֹ.

> And behold! – the glory of the God of Israel came from the eastern path, and His voice is like the voice of many waters, and the earth lit up from His glory. (43:2)

Ezekiel's designation of the sound of God coming to the temple, with many waters, is consistent with the description of God in the opening chapter and elsewhere.[57] Leveen suggests: "Already preoccupied with the fate of his temple, in response to a Babylonian landscape littered with ruins and repairs, the prophet might have found further reinforcement and perhaps even some solace in turning his thoughts and memories to his own equally revered, though ruined, structure dating to a much more recent past – his temple, his house of God."[58] The rituals related in the Temple Vision and their divergences from earlier ceremonies – much like the adjustments made to the temple structure and functionaries – aim to preserve the temple's purity and enable the deity to return and reside among His people.

57 See Herbert G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbîm*, 'Many Waters,'" in *Cult and Cosmos*, ed. Michael Morales, BTS 18 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014): 259–71.

58 Adriane Leveen, "Returning the Body to Its Place: Ezekiel's Tour of the Temple," *HTR* 105, no. 4 (October 2012), 389.

7 Conclusion

Perhaps it is not surprising that the scholars who have studied different dimensions of Ezekiel from a variety of perspectives, comparing elements from Ezekiel to Mesopotamia, have come to similar conclusions. Corrine Patton (Carvalho), in discussing the first of the exilic prophets, notes that the book displays a "marked divergence from all other temple accounts, both ancient Near Eastern and biblical [...] thus the primary purpose of the narrative of the temple plan is to relate the one true form of a sanctuary that can house an eternally present God."[1] Stevenson corroborates her thesis, suggesting that the Temple Vision's purpose was to address the needs of the people in exile, to transform them from a society based on flesh-and-blood monarchy to a society revolving around a kingless temple.[2]

Almost two decades later, Winitzer concluded:

> This change in directionality [...] reflects the conscious reworking of a foreign idea, something akin to the sort of code switching that sociolinguists point to when one group incorporates an idea of another but brings it in line with its own assumptions or preferences. In the case at hand [...] the points of contact [...] testify not only to a reflection on things Babylonian but also to a refraction of this world – to a willingness to engage this world, to incorporate elements therefrom into the prophet's message, and to begin thereby to help chart a new and fateful course for the exiled Judean community.[3]

To a large extent this conclusion is consistent with Aster's: "Besides addressing exiles' concerns about diminution of Divine Power, he [Ezekiel] may also be subverting neo-Babylonian theology. [...] He implicitly denies the power of the Babylonian gods, and affirms the power of YHWH, thus addressing exilic concerns that their God had been supplanted."[4]

It seems that the common denominator of these and other scholars is the conclusion that the author of the book of Ezekiel was familiar with his Babylo-

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1 Corrine L. Patton, "Ezekiel's Blueprint for the Temple of Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1991), 206.

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

3 Abraham Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 207.

4 Shawn Zelig Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *Melammu*," in *Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context*, ed. Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Corrine Carvalho, WO 45/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 21.

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nian surroundings. Removed from their ancestral home, the exiles now had a new frame of reference, as the research makes clear. The text of the Temple Vision, delineating the plan of the future temple, can and should be examined in light of the exiles' surroundings along the lines of the earlier academic work.

But the book of Ezekiel also charts an individual path, grounded in its overriding concern with preserving the sanctity of the future temple. The present study, we assert, provides another understanding of one aspect of the exile's effects on the exiles' theological views. This understanding emphasizes that the driving theological force was the intense desire to safeguard the sanctity of the future temple, thereby forestalling it from sharing the First Temple's fate.

In this volume, we examined the Temple Vision against the backdrop of the Babylonia the Judeans were exiled to. The Judeans in Babylonia, we saw, lived in both rural and urban communities, and would have interacted with the people around them and been aware of their temples. The language of the Temple Vision indicates that the book's author was not only familiar with Aramaic and Akkadian, but was well-versed in cuneiform – and, indeed, in the Akkadian form of naming cities, which may be echoed in the name given to the temple's city at the prophecy's end.

The future temple described in Ezekiel's prophecy departs in significant ways from its predecessors; the Temple Vision describes a temple that in many ways replicates certain elements of the Babylonian ones. The temple's design includes large square dimensions, diverging from the First Temple. The chambers described, which have no parallel description in the First Temple, may also reflect the temples that the exiles would have seen. The public is barred from entering the envisioned temple, much like the Babylonian population. The functionaries bear similarity to those of the Babylonians; some of its rituals, too, echo those of the Babylonians. The water emerging from the temple is paralleled only in Babylonian sources.

But while it may draw on its Babylonian surroundings, the Temple Vision also diverges from the temples in its vicinity. In many ways it is revolutionary: its unrelenting goal is to preserve the prophesied temple's purity in order to prevent God from leaving His temple once again. And, indeed, the entire temple is structured to prevent desecration; many physical features are meant as safeguards. The absence of mention of temple vessels, perhaps indicating that the temple would not contain many vessels, is an innovation; both the First Temple and the Babylonian temples were well-equipped. The division of labor, too, keeps Levites and non-Zadokite priests at arm's length, permitting only the Zadokites, who in the past had protected the temple, to perform the sacred service. No high priest, prophet, or king is mentioned; a *nasi*, rather, holds an administrative position. The rituals described in the future temple pose a difficulty as

well: features parallel both Babylonian rites and biblical ones, but with deliberate modifications: their goal, once again, is the preservation of the temple's purity. Finally, the city's name, while perhaps reflecting the form of Babylonian city names, maintains allegiance to the one God whom the Judeans are yearning for in exile.

It is this relentless demand for purity that leads into the prophesied return of God in the book's final chapters. With a rush of waters, the deity will once again reside among His people, in a temple that is safe and protected from the consequences of past deeds. But the God of the exiles is not the god of the Babylonians. His home is not the home of the gods the exiles saw around them. The temple described in Ezekiel is the house of the God of the Judeans – a God who has let them down, who has not protected His temple, land, or nation, leaving them irreparably shattered. The Judeans in exile, still mourning the loss of their Temple and homeland, are grappling with their God and their future. The Temple Vision that closes the book offers them hope: the God of the Judeans will return, it tells them, and with His return the gate will close, keeping the returned God forever among His people.

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Abbreviations of Periodicals, Reference Works, and Series

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATTM	*Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BaF	*Baghdader Forschungen*
BaghM	*Baghdader Mitteilungen*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Bible Quarterly Monograph Series
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesselschaft
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orietnalium
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
FAT	Foruschungen zum Alten Testament
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
KAV	*Keilschrifttexte aud Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

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JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NABU	*Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*
NETS	*A New English Translation of the Septuagint*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
Racc.	*Rituals accadiens*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RGTC	Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SbB	Spätbabylonische Briefe
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
YOSR	Yale Oriental Series, Researches
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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