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SYMBOLISM OF TEMPLE GATES IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

TALITHA HART

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Abstract: The gates of the city and the temple establish boundaries between inner and outer space, while also allowing access to an area that is clearly separated from its surroundings. Throughout ancient Israel, the city gate was seen as representing economic activity, belonging, justice, and strength. I would argue that the gate of the temple represented many of the same things and was seen in a similar way. I have decided to include the tabernacle, as well as both Solomon's and Herod's temples, in this analysis, as they seem to have been seen in a similar light even if they were built and patronized in different periods.

Throughout ancient Israel, the city gate was seen as a symbol of economic activity, belonging, justice, and strength. In this paper I argue that the gate of the temple, because it served similar functions, acquired the same symbolic meaning in Israelite thought. In this paper I will first describe the various uses and roles of the city gate as understood by modern scholars, while contributing similar trends that I have observed and extracted from primary texts referencing Israelite temple gates. Then, I will examine a few specific examples where ancient writers described the temple gate with symbolic language similar to that used to describe city gates.

I have decided to include the tabernacle, as well as both Solomon's and Herod's temples, in this analysis, as they seem to have been part of a common cultural legacy even if the structures themselves were built and patronized in different periods. This study will allow for increased understanding of the Israelite temple and its symbolic value in the minds of the Israelite people. As a central institution in their society, the Israelite temple is integral to our understanding of the Israelites as a people.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The term “gate” can be rather ambiguous in ancient literature, and refers to a larger and more complex structure than what modern thinkers naturally envision, so we need to begin by defining what physical area the research is referring to. David Ussishkin described the Lachish gate,¹ a typical example of the early Iron Age gate, as one where the individual would enter the outer doors, cross a courtyard, and pass through the inner doors, which would be the ones that led into the city.² He later added, “The outer gatehouse and the open courtyard . . . constituted a rectangular structure . . . which protruded from the slope of the mound and from the walls.”³ Some ancient Israelite gates, such as the Solomonic gates of Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo, would have as many as three sets of these chambers on the inner gate, in order to deter would-be conquerors, as the gate is inevitably the weakest point of a wall.⁴ The courtyards between the doors frequently had small rooms built into the side where city business could be conducted, and many included benches built into the walls for the city elders.⁵ These rooms were also considered to be part of the overall gate structure. The entire public area around the gate is typically included when “the gate” is mentioned in ancient literature, and modern scholars follow suit for the sake of clarity and continuity. Natalie May summarized the situation well when she said, “By the ‘space of the gates’ I mean the space before, inside, and behind the gates.”⁶ When speaking of gates, we are referring to the entire structure: the building, the courtyards, the chambers built in, the open area before the gates *within* the city, and the surrounding public buildings; not merely a door in a wall.

It seems evident that the gate to the temple complex was constructed along similar lines. Both 1 Kgs 6–7 and 2 Chr 3–5 describe the structure of the temple at Jerusalem built by Solomon, but neither describes the courtyards, walls, or gates. However, Ezekiel gives a detailed description of a future temple that may

1. I have used the Lachish gate at several points in this paper because it does seem to be a typical example, as well as being well-preserved, excavated, and documented.

2. David Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish: A Tale of Construction, Destruction, Excavation and Restoration*, trans. Miriam Feinberg Vamosh (Atlanta: Albatross, 2014), 227.

3. Ussishkin, *Lachish*, 230.

4. The Solomonic dating of the gate at Megiddo is disputed by many scholars, cf. David Ussishkin, “Was the ‘Solomonic’ City Gate at Megiddo Built by King Solomon?,” *BASOR* 239 (1980): 1–18.

5. Dale Wallace Manor, “Gates and Gods: High Places in the Gates,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 2 (1999): 235–53, here 252.

6. Natalie N. May, “Gates and Their Functions in Mesopotamia and Ancient Israel,” in *The Fabric of Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome*, ed. Natalie N. May and Ulrike Steinert (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 77–121, here 78.

be modeled on the temple that was in Jerusalem, and he includes these features.⁷ He gives specific measurements for the temple and describes three “recesses” on either side of the gate, each of which are six cubits wide and deep, with five cubits separating each of the recesses (Ezek 40:5–16).⁸ The entire gate structure is twenty-five cubits wide and fifty cubits long, easily a comparable construction to the gate complexes found at city entrances.

The portable nature of the tabernacle precluded the possibility of a large or elaborate gate structure, and the entrance to that sanctuary was merely a curtain, although it is still referred to as “the gate of the court” (Exod 27:16). Exodus 27 details the manner in which the courtyard of the tabernacle is to be set up, and the “screen” of that gate is commanded to be made of “blue, purple, and crimson yarns,” which distinguishes it from its surroundings (Exod 27:9–19). The difference in the tabernacle’s physical structure may cause some to hesitate at assigning it similar functional and symbolic significance to later temples, but I would argue that the tabernacle as a whole, although quite different from Solomon’s temple in many aspects of construction, nevertheless performed the same functions and held the same cultural significance as the later building.

PRACTICAL USES

Controlling Access

One of the main purposes of a wall is to protect the city within, and one of the main purposes of the gate is to limit access to one, or a few, points of that wall in order that it may be better controlled. Basic city defense depends first and foremost on a strong wall and an easily defensible gate. The aforementioned gate of Lachish illustrates this principle rather well. That gate protrudes from the wall of the city, and due to the nature of the hill and the path leading to it, the only practical approach is a frontal one.⁹ This effectively narrows the approach, and guards would also be present to prevent the entry of any hostile elements through the gates.

Controlling access to the temple was also of great importance, as even animals entering in a state of uncleanness risked divine wrath.¹⁰ Hermann Gunkel proposed that at one time there may have been a question-and-answer exchange

7. It is also possible that Ezekiel’s temple is modeled on the city of Jerusalem.

8. All scriptural passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

9. Ussishkin, *Lachish*, 230.

10. E.g. Lev 22:21–24, Exod 30:21, Lev 10:1–2. This is also implied by the care taken to purify priests before they begin service, as in Exod 29.

at the temple gates, as per certain psalms,¹¹ but Moshe Weinfeld disputes the likelihood of such an exchange because of the lack of evidence.¹² I believe that Weinfeld is correct to view this idea with a certain amount of wariness, as the text of the Pentateuch has not preserved any such exchange, which seems unlikely if it were indeed common practice. However, in the same article, Weinfeld suggests that the text of these psalms may have been inscribed on the gate, as a reminder of who was or was not worthy of entrance, similar to some royal inscriptions found on city gates.¹³ He draws this idea from the similarities between these psalms and certain Egyptian texts that were inscribed on their temple gates, as well as by analogy with the Israelite practice of inscribing the Shema on houses and city gates.¹⁴ This would likely serve as reminder enough for most pious Israelites.

There may be objections to this point on the grounds that these ideas are highly speculative in nature, with no physical evidence to support them. But the idea of access being limited to the worthy is proved by the mere existence of these psalms. Psalm 24 is the best example. In verse three it asks, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” Asking the question means that not everyone will enter, and the answer tells us the reason. The next verse reads, “Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully” (Ps 24:4). Thus by implication, those who are guilty of such transgressions will not be permitted in “the hill of the Lord.” The possibilities of inscriptions or ritual exchanges in the gate are interesting and supply methods whereby these standards might have been enforced, but there was certainly a cultural understanding of worthiness requirements, with or without formal determinations of who met them.

Dividing “Us” from “Them”

The wall serves as a physical way to demonstrate who belongs to the community and who does not, while the gate allows for exchange between the two. Those who live within and without the wall may speak and dress and act similarly, but they are not the same, and the wall stands between them as a barrier to ensure

11. E.g. Pss 15 and 24, which ask and then answer several questions regarding who is permitted to enter the Lord’s house. The idea was that the priest would ask the question, and the Israelite would give the answer according to the formula. See also Donald W. Parry, “Who Shall Ascend into the Mountain of the Lord?: Three Biblical Temple Entrance Hymns,” in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Stephen D. Ricks, and Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2002), 734–39.

12. Moshe Weinfeld, “Instructions for Temple Visitors in the Bible and Ancient Egypt,” *ScrHier* 28 (1982): 224–50, here 231.

13. Weinfeld, “Instructions,” 237–38.

14. Weinfeld, “Instructions,” 237–38.

that this is not forgotten. Tina Blomquist, in her book *Gates and Gods*, begins by making clear the importance of the gate as a liminal space that allows for exchanges between the ordered “inside” and the chaotic “outside,” with guards likely posted at these gates to keep out those elements considered a little too foreign or dangerous.¹⁵ She demonstrated this by exploring the connection between the words “city” and “to protect” in Semitic languages, expressing the idea that a city is “something that is protected by a wall.”¹⁶ This idea of separation was a comfort and protection in an ancient world where the people had so little control over those things that could most profoundly affect them and their lives.

It seems likely that the gate between temple and city represents another and higher level of division between order and chaos. All space within the temple gates is dedicated to Jehovah; it is set apart, consecrated, holy. The glory of God descended on the tabernacle to claim it when Moses had finished its construction (Exod 40:33–34), and Solomon offered an eloquent prayer to invite God to dwell in the temple he had built (1 Kgs 8:22–53). Even in the tabernacle, care was taken to separate this holy inner space from the profane outside by means of tall curtains,¹⁷ despite the transitory nature of that structure. Josephus tells us that Levites were stationed at the temple gates to ensure that nothing unworthy entered the temple precincts.¹⁸ I believe priests must have been stationed at the gates as well, which I will discuss more in a later section.

Economic Center

As ancient cities were usually quite densely packed with buildings, the gate would frequently have been one of the only places with sufficient room to set up and operate a market. When speaking of the long, low, rectangular buildings that are found near many ancient city gates, Avraham Faust suggests that a possible use for them would have been to house or support these markets, which would make them easily accessible, without blocking the flow of traffic in and out of the city.¹⁹ He cites several scholars who have expressed various opinions on their use, including many, such as Kochavi and Blakely, who believe there may have been

15. Tina Haettner Blomquist, *Gates and Gods: Cults in the City Gates of Iron Age Palestine, An Investigation of the Archaeological and Biblical Sources*, ed. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger and Stig I. L. Norin, ConBOT 46 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1999), 15–16.

16. Blomquist, *Gates and Gods: Cults in the City Gates*, 16.

17. See Exod 40:8 as one of many examples.

18. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 81–82. Sanders references sections in Josephus’s *Against Apion*, *Jewish Antiquities*, and *Jewish War*.

19. Avraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 101–2.

markets because of the types of vessels found in these areas.²⁰ Cat Quine observed that the open areas surrounding the gate complex made it “naturally . . . the place where people would gather.”²¹ The gate would also be convenient for such activity because strangers entering the city to buy and sell would immediately find themselves in the place where they could do so.

Like the city, the temple seems to have had a market in or near its gates where those seeking to offer sacrifice to Jehovah could purchase the animals they needed to offer. Sanders finds serious problems with the idea of animals being sold actually within the temple precincts, based on the requirements of holiness described in both Leviticus and Philo’s *On the Special Laws*.²² However, he does believe the market must have been quite near based on the writings of Philo and Aristeas,²³ and I believe this is correct. All of the Gospel writers refer to those “who were selling and buying in the temple” (Matt 21:12), and John specifically mentions the selling of oxen, sheep, and doves (John 2:14; see also Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45). It’s unknown whether any of the money went into the actual temple treasury and therefore whether the market served as a literal representation of the temple economy or not. But all those who experienced the hustle and bustle of the temple market would have found it remarkably similar to the ordinary city markets. In their minds, it would have represented everything that the city market did, but in connection with the temple.

SOCIOCULTURAL USES

Justice

In the ancient world, court cases were frequently tried and sentences carried out in the side chambers that were built into the gates of the city. Manor explains that since city gates were frequently put under the protection of a city’s chief deity, they were “suitable places to hear cases in [the gods’] presence.”²⁴ He cites both Korah (Num 16) and the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27) as prominent biblical examples of such practices. Stephen Russell points out that the entire story of Absalom’s undermining of his father David “depends on the assumption that city

20. There are very large quantities of everyday vessels, which makes stables or warehouses seem unlikely, although these are two of the more common suggestions by scholars (Faust cites Yadin, Holladay, Currid, and Herzog). A market would seem more likely to have large quantities of these vessels for storing and measuring purposes. Faust himself believes that these buildings were used to care for the poor and needy according to the dictates of the Law.

21. Cat Quine, “On Dying in a City Gate: Implications in the Deaths of Eli, Abner and Jezebel,” *JSTOT* 40 (2016): 399–413, here 401.

22. Sanders, *Judaism*, 87.

23. Sanders, *Judaism*, 86.

24. Manor, “Gates and Gods: High Places in the Gates,” 252.

gates were a well-known location of judicial activity.²⁵ Absalom's strategy consisted of standing in the gate so that when people came to seek justice from the king, he could point out that no officer or judge was appointed by the king to sit in the gate and hear their cause (2 Sam 15:1–6). This would have been an odd choice of venue if people did not expect to find judges in the gate.

In addition to cases being judged in the gates, sentences were carried out there, most notably executions. May notes that every aspect of the judicial process, from beginning to end, was accomplished in that space. She writes, "The gate space was used not only for tortures [involved in eliciting confessions in a trial], but also for executions."²⁶ She references such cases as Deut 17:5 and 21:18–22, which prescribe stoning to death in the gates as the punishment for adulterers or rebellious children. Cat Quine uses this to shed light on David's mourning for Abner.²⁷ This man had been an enemy in David's struggle for the rule of Israel but had recently come over to his side as a valuable ally. When Joab then slays him in the city gate, he does so as vengeance for the death of his own brother. David then laments, "Should Abner have died as the lawless die?" (2 Sam 3:33, NIV). These sources all agree that the city gate was the site of the entire judicial process, from trial through punishment.

Temple gates were also a location for justice and judgment, which is evidenced by the temple's association with the cities of refuge. Like these cities, the temple was a place to which those who had accidentally killed someone could flee to avoid the גאל הדם²⁸ until a trial could be held. It seems that at times trials were held in the temple gates, as we see in the book of Jeremiah. In chapter 26 the prophet declared that the Jerusalem temple would become like Shiloh because of the transgressions of the people of Israel. The "officials of Judah" heard about his prophecies, and the text records that they "took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the Lord" (Jer 26:10). They then held a trial in the gate of the temple, just like those in the city gates (Jer 26:11–19).

There is another evidence for judgment in temple gates. In Leviticus, instructions are given for determining cleanliness in those who have exhibited symptoms of leprosy. They are instructed to be brought to the priest, but one who may be leprosy could not be permitted to enter the temple gates, lest they defile the

25. Stephen C. Russell, "Gate and Town in 2 Sam 15:1: Collective Politics and Absalom's Strategy," *Journal of Ancient History* 3, (2015): 2–21, here 14.

26. May, "Gates and Their Functions," 100–104.

27. Quine, "On Dying," 408.

28. This is generally translated as "the redeemer of blood," but it is worth noting that the word גאל inherently refers to a relative. A more complete rendering might be "the redeeming kinsman of blood," but this is cumbersome in English, as well as being of a slightly different grammatical construction.

sanctuary (Lev 13:2). In order for the afflicted to meet with the priest, there would need to be a designated area where such a meeting could be accomplished, which was not actually within the temple precinct. I suggest that priests may have been stationed in or near the gate for the purpose of making such determinations. I readily admit the tenuous nature of the latter idea, but even if it is found to be untenable, the others still support the basic idea of judgment in the temple gates.

Propaganda

As a prominent public fixture, the city gate was also a convenient location for kings to proclaim their greatness in various stelae and inscriptions. Russell notes that kings would often “assert their claim to a town” by constructing monuments and stelae in the gates to proclaim their might, and many such monuments have been rediscovered by archaeologists.²⁹ As kings could not be forever sitting in the gates themselves, these monuments served to assert their power, even in the case of their physical absence, to the daily crowds of outsiders and city inhabitants who would pass beneath their shadow. Carey Walsh details another common illustration of power: “The posting of the heads or bodies of vanquished enemies at or on the gate for all to see is a graphic, symbolic gesture that signals a city’s strength.”³⁰ For instance, when King Jehu of Israel ousted his predecessor, Joram, he had those in charge of educating Joram’s sons kill the boys and send him the heads. When he received word that the heads had arrived, he gave orders to “lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until the morning” (2 Kgs 10:5–8). A king would never let his citizens or his enemies forget the ways in which he had already proven his mettle and his right to rule the city.

The gates of the temple may also have been decorated with tributes to the god’s triumphs in order to remind those who entered of the glory of the being they were approaching. To reintroduce an idea referenced earlier, Moshe Weinfeld believed it might be possible that certain psalms, most of which praise the glory of Jehovah, may have been inscribed on the temple gates.³¹ For instance, Ps 118:20 says, “This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it,” which almost seems to state that the verse belongs on that gate. This does not prove that these inscriptions existed, but it does support the theory. It should also be

29. Russell, “Gate and Town,” 11–12. Some examples he gives are monuments located at Carchemish and Tell Tayinat, as well as a limestone Israelite stela found at Samaria. Although it is not a monument, he also references 1 Kgs 22:10 (when the kings sit in the gate of Samaria as they make the decision to go to war) as an example of the same idea.

30. Carey Walsh, “Testing Entry: The Social Functions of City Gates in Biblical Memory,” in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 43–60, here 44.

31. Weinfeld, “Instructions,” 37–38.

mentioned that in most of the rest of the Near East, the images of the gods would regularly be paraded through the gates in various religious festivals.³² While there is no exact parallel of this in Israel due to the prohibition against images of the divine, the sentiment was likely common throughout the area.

Clearly this theory is one of the more tenuous that I have proposed, and there are several objections that could be raised. Chief among these is the lack of any archaeological evidence to support the existence of Israelite temple gate inscriptions. However, I believe there are two points that, while they do not negate that fundamental lack of evidence, do make this idea worthy of serious consideration. The first is the strong correlation between city and temple gates in other areas. We know that the Israelites were commanded to inscribe the Shema on their family doorposts and city gates (Deut 11:20), so it would make sense for similar words to be inscribed on the gate of the sanctuary, the holy city.³³ The second point is in the trace of a tradition, found in Ps 24, of gates themselves acknowledging the deity. The seventh and ninth verses in that psalm command the gates³⁴ to lift their heads in preparation for the “King of glory [to] come in” (Ps 24:10).

Place of Worship

Alongside the king’s monuments, we can also find cultic installations indicating a more pious aspect to the gates. De Geus points out that there are several references in the Hebrew Bible to “the high places of the gates” (or *במִוֹת*, singular *בְּמִוָּה*), with the implication of a devotional facet.³⁵ He makes particular mention of some basins found by gates in Northern Israel, including one in the gate of Bethsaida, of such a size and shape as to be impractical for almost any non-ritual purpose.³⁶ Such a structure would be dedicated to a god, and its presence in the gate implies that the gate was seen as an appropriate holy place for that god. Ussishkin also wrote extensively to describe the cultic installation—which he suggests may be a *בְּמִוָּה*—found at Lachish of a similar structure.³⁷ This indicates a certain continuity across Israel. The presence of a cultic installation at a location indicates that the location held symbolic religious meaning for the ones who placed it there. While some of the structures found are mere tributes to deity, it does appear that many were intended for use by devotees passing through. As mentioned by de Geus above, these items are “too small . . . to have served

32. For instance, the Akitu festival in Babylon.

33. Weinfeld, “Instructions,” 238.

34. Presumably the temple gates, due to the subject matter of the psalm.

35. De Geus, *Towns*, 37. See also 1 Sam 9:12–14; 2 Kgs 23:8; and Amos 5:21.

36. De Geus, *Towns*, 95. He specifically notes Tell el-Far’ah, or Tirzah, and Bethsaida.

37. Ussishkin, *Lachish*, 233.

practical purposes; it is more likely to have been involved in some ritual using liquids.³⁸ These cultic functions tie the gate closely to the religious life of the community, and therefore to the temple itself.

SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES (CITY AND TEMPLE)

The roles played by the gates of both city and temple in everyday life informed how they were employed symbolically by the biblical writers. Above I have drawn comparisons between the physical functions of the two gates. In the following paragraphs, I will compare three commonly accepted symbolic uses of the city gate with three instances where I believe the temple gate is being used symbolically to convey similar ideas.

Economy

In 2 Kgs 7 the prophet Elisha uses the gates to reference upcoming economic reversal for Israel as a result of their deliverance from the Aramaeans. In the first verse of the chapter he prophesies, “Tomorrow about this time a measure of choice meal shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.” In this matter Elisha uses the gate to prefigure the entire economy of the city, and even the nation. The prices charged at the market set in the gate become an image depicting the economic situation of the entire nation in the wake of the retreating army.

In all four Gospel accounts, Jesus, after entering Jerusalem for his final Passover,³⁹ goes directly to the temple and cleans out those who are buying and selling in it. This is described as a purifying act. John records Jesus as saying, “Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace” (John 2:16), and Matthew reports it as, “My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a den of robbers” (Matt 21:13). It is clear that the Gospel writers perceived the market as both belonging to the temple and representing its condition. They believed that the house of Jesus’s Father was being made into a corrupt marketplace by the nature of the transactions being carried out there and that the purifying of the temple precincts required the purifying of the market.

The main challenge to this point is the difference in time between the Old and New Testament periods. But I do not believe the difference is as great as it may appear, for several reasons. To begin, while somewhat disparate in time, the location and culture of the writings is still quite propinquant. The Gospels describe events that occurred in Judea, as do the events and prophecies of the Old

38. De Geus, *Towns*, 95.

39. In John’s account this is actually set at a different period in Jesus’s ministry, but this is not especially relevant in the current instance.

Testament. While certain changes in culture did occur, most notably through the introduction of Hellenism, it is also important to note the tenacity with which the Jews clung to their former culture. The writings of the old kingdom of Judah were still treasured, as were many of the most sacred traditions of their ancestors.⁴⁰ It is also true that the authors of Matthew and John, especially, draw extensively on Old Testament imagery and symbolism in their accounts, making the case for parallels even stronger.⁴¹

Belonging

In the book of Ruth, the eponymous main character is seeking an appropriate husband who can care for her and her mother-in-law. She identifies Boaz as the nearest living relative of her deceased husband, who thus has the responsibility as גאל of marrying her.⁴² When Ruth approaches Boaz by night to ask that he grant her this right, he offers her a compliment by saying, “all the *gate* of my people know that you are a woman of strength” (Ruth 3:11, emphasis added).⁴³ This is a clear case of anthropomorphism, where the gate is standing in for the people of Boaz’s city of Bethlehem.⁴⁴ The reverse could be said as well, that the people are identified with the gate. To be included in the gate makes you part of the community; it gives you a larger role in the society as a whole. It means that you belong.

There appears to be a similar concept associated with the temple, illustrated by Ps 100,⁴⁵ where being brought into the gates establishes you as a member of the people of God, a more prestigious association than being a member of a village community. This is a psalm of thanksgiving and has a lot of temple imagery in it. The second verse urges the worshipper to “come into His presence,” which generally implies a temple setting.⁴⁶ Then we read, “Know that the Lord is God.

40. Passover, circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance being among those traditions that many Jews died to protect.

41. For instance, Matthew begins his account with a Davidic genealogy of Jesus, and then quotes Isaiah in the angel’s revelation to Joseph as to the nature of the child Mary will bear. He also repeatedly casts stories such as the Sermon on the Mount and the Temptations in the Wilderness to reflect episodes in Moses’s life. John has a similarly strong tradition, especially in the extensive parallels he draws between Jesus and the lamb of Passover and in Jesus’s frequent quotations from the Hebrew Bible, cf. John 7:38; 12:38, 40.

42. See footnote 28 for a discussion of this term.

43. My translation. The NRSV translates this as “all the assembly of my people,” but the Hebrew word is שער, lit. “gate.”

44. This is generally stated by implication, cf. Dan G. Kent, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, Layman’s Bible Book Commentary 4 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 151. See also the translation in the NRSV and to a lesser degree the KJV translation.

45. Ps 118 also has some of these themes, but I elected 100 as the clearer example for my purposes.

46. Because God was believed to dwell in the temple, it was really the only place that

It is He that made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Ps 100:3). This is a statement of belonging, and moreover, as *a people* and *sheep of a pasture*, it is a statement of belonging within a community, God’s community. The next phrase in the psalm is, “Enter His *gates* with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise” (Ps 100:4, emphasis added). Thus, immediately after the establishment of belonging in the divine community comes an invitation to enter within the walls of that community via the gate.

Judgment

When Absalom sought to overthrow his father, David, he stood in the city gates waylaying those who came to the city of Jerusalem seeking justice. He would say, “Your claims are good and right; but there is no one deputed by the king to hear you. . . . If only I were judge in the land! Then all who had a suit or cause might come to me, and I would give them justice” (2 Sam 15:3–4). The choice to stand in the gate was both strategic and symbolic. Because the elders of a community traditionally administered justice in the city gates, to stand in them gave additional weight and poignancy to the point he was making about the supposed lack of justice under the reign of his father.

In 1 Sam 1 we are introduced to the woman Hannah, who is unable to have any children. Although her husband does not hold this against her, it grieves her deeply, and she approaches the Lord while they are at Shiloh to make a vow that if He will give her a son, she will return him to the Lord “until the day of his death,” making the boy a Nazarite from birth (1 Sam 1:1–11). While she is offering her prayer in the tabernacle, Eli the priest is sitting by the doorpost observing her (1 Sam 1:9). If our earlier suppositions are correct, this means he is sitting in a place where judgment is customarily passed, as by the officials of Judah in the book of Jeremiah. While he sits there, he also passes judgment on her (1 Sam 1:17), which plays a role in the rest of the narrative.

CONCLUSION

In summation, I have demonstrated the similarity of the temple gate to that of the city in both practical and symbolic qualities. I have endeavored to show the distinct connections that exist between the two institutions in many of their most basic functions, and to illustrate these connections with several specific examples.

However, I have been able to do these things only in a very cursory manner, and much work remains. Each of the sections which I have covered could easily

ordinary people could come into His presence (prophets, kings, etc. sometimes seem to have received special visions outside of the temple). For example, Hannah says she will bring Samuel to “the presence of the Lord” (1 Sam 1:22), meaning to the tabernacle at Shiloh.

inspire multiple papers, not to mention the work that could be done in comparing Israel with the surrounding cultures. I urge that this work be further pursued in order that we may deepen our understanding of this ancient culture and one of its central institutions.