

# What Can 1 and 2 Chronicles Tell Us About *ta hagia* in Heb 13:11?

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The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place [*ta hagia*] as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. (Heb 13:11)

## Introduction

On the day of atonement the high priest offered a sin offering for himself. That sin offering pointed forward to Jesus' death on the cross. This does not mean, however, that the cross marks the beginning of the antitypical day of atonement. The high priest offered a sin offering for himself on other days as well. Each one of them, whenever offered, pointed forward to the same antitypical death. The sin offerings that the high priest offered for the entire congregation were ministered in substantially the same way as his own and had the same antitypical event in view. So if it is true that the day of atonement sacrifices typified Christ's death, so did all the others. They all pointed forward to the same thing--the same event, the same Person--without distinction. So it is one thing to say that the cross was typified by the day of atonement sacrifices and another to imply that it was not typified by anything else.

Here the question is not so much whether *ta hagia* (lit., "the holies") in Heb 13:11 refers to the day of atonement but whether it refers to the second apartment. If *ta hagia*, being plural, refers to both apartments of the sanctuary conjointly, as I assert, then the second apartment is one of the apartments the term refers to and would be included within its scope whenever context demands. So yes, *ta hagia* can refer to the second apartment--as one part of the larger sanctuary. It can also refer to the first apartment. Either apartment could be the focus of special attention if the word in question includes both. There are terms that refer to the second apartment and nothing else, but *ta hagia* is not one of them.<sup>1</sup>

We have considerably more to learn about the Greek term *ta hagia* and the Old Testament background for its use. In this paper I examine one aspect of the meaning of *ta hagia* by first reviewing the data from Hebrews and then bringing together all of the relevant sanctuary terms found in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

## Hebrews

Forms of the word *hagios* ("holy") appear eighteen times in the book of Hebrews. Five times it refers to the Holy Spirit (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15), three times to God's people (3:1; 6:10; 13:24), and ten times to all or part of the sanctuary (8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11). Only the last group of references are controversial.

Three times NIV translates "sanctuary" (8:2; 9:1, 24), once "Holy Place" (9:2), and six times "Most Holy Place" (9:3, 8, 12, 25; 10:19; 13:11). Of the ten references only one is singular (*hagion*, "sanctuary," 9:1). Of the nine plural examples, all have the article except two (*Hagia*, "Holy Place," 9:2; *hagia*, "sanctuary," 9:24) and the nominative or accusative case (*hagia* or *ta hagia*, 9:2, 3, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11) is represented seven times while the genitive case (*hagiōn* or *tōn hagiōn*, 8:3; 9:3, 8) is represented three times. (Heb 9:3 combines the two: *Hagia Hagiōn*, lit. "Holy of Holies.")

Grammatical differences of case and the presence of the article are irrelevant to the lexical meaning of the term. When one looks up a word in a dictionary (e.g., "sanctuary") it is still the same word when he uses it as the subject or object of a sentence or whether he says "sanctuary" or "the sanctuary." The word used in these varied ways is still the same word we looked up initially. And I doubt that pluralizing the word makes it any different either ("sanctuary," "sanctuaries"), although I will not press that point because there is a question how many apartments the word *hagion* (or *hagia*) refers to. So let us concentrate on the nine plural examples in 8:3; 9:2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11).

The uses of *ta hagia* in Heb 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, and 25 are discussed further in a separate monograph.<sup>2</sup> Of these 9:8, 12, 24, and 25 are of special interest. There are two reasons for this. First, the author's intended meaning has been questioned. Some take it one way (*ta hagia* refers exclusively to the second apartment) while others take it another way (the term refers to the sanctuary as a whole with the focus of attention in any given case determined by context). And second, the issues that follow from the above difference of views are unusually important. If Christ entered the second apartment exclusively on His ascension, we will have a different concept of His ministry than if He entered the sanctuary as a whole. The latter interpretation leaves open the possibility that He has a first apartment ministry as well as a second apartment ministry, with a transition between them at some point in history.

In some passages context makes it clear that the author has a second apartment/day of atonement setting in view. One of these passages is Heb 13:11 ("The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place [*ta hagia*] as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp"). On the day of atonement there were two special sin offerings--the high priest's bull and the Lord's goat. I say special because the blood of a sin offering was normally taken into the first apartment, whereas the blood of these animals was taken into the second apartment. Our attention in Heb 13:11 should not be taken up with deciding whether the author has day of atonement rituals in view. He does. The question is how that fact should influence our understanding of other passages. But before we do that let us be very sure we understand what the facts of the case are.

The facts of this particular case are that the author says *ta hagia* and that he means "Most Holy Place." But what part of his meaning derives from the lexical meaning of the word and what role does context play in all of this? It is a crucial distinction, one which we dismiss at our peril. I submit that context plays a determining role, that *ta hagia* in and of itself simply means "the sanctuary." The sanctuary, after all, had two apartments. How reasonable it would be to suggest that *ta hagia* is plural because it refers, at least potentially, to both of them.

It is not my purpose to challenge the meaning--in context--that NIV gives the term *ta hagia* in Heb 13:11. In that passage it does mean "Most Holy Place." But the reason why it has such meaning is because context demands it, not because *ta hagia* demands it irrespective of

context. The significance of saying this is that in other passages with different contexts the same term might well require other meanings. Thus, the meaning of *ta hagia* in Heb 9:8, 12, 24, and 25 must be evaluated individually, each on its own merits, taking into account which bloc of text it appears in. I am not saying the word can mean anything we like but rather that its meaning is determined by context.

## 1 and 2 Chronicles

The reason why it is germane here to use data from 1 and 2 Chronicles is that those data offer an example, parallel to the present one, of a term which can mean "second apartment" in context but is used far more commonly to mean "sanctuary." This is the Hebrew word *bayit* ("house").

Below I have gathered all the sanctuary terms used in 1 and 2 Chronicles that have anything to do with the structure of the temple itself. The point being made is that that even when an action clearly takes place within a specific apartment, that fact does not obligate a writer to use an apartment-specific term when describing it. One cannot be inside the second apartment without also being inside the temple or sanctuary. So it is simply a matter of emphasis whether one uses a specific or general term. Either alternative is equally open to the writer at any time. Hebrew *báyit* ("house") is not interchangeable with Greek *hagia* ("holies") but their ranges of use are remarkably similar.

We begin by listing examples where terms that are usually specific to one apartment or the other are applied in the expected manner--i.e., to a specific apartment. The writer will always need at least some latitude. The term *hêkāl*, for example, is translated "main hall" once. This is its expected usage.<sup>3</sup> But in 2 Chr 26:16; 27:2; and 29:16 it is translated more generally as "temple." (The latitude here is that taken by the translator.) See text exhibit 1. Similarly, the general term *báyit* (lit. "house") is translated "main hall" twice, with specific reference to the first apartment, and twice it refers to the second apartment.<sup>4</sup> But normally it just means "temple." See text exhibit 2.

### Text Exhibit 1 Specific Terms Applied to Specific Apartments

#### First Apartment

*hêkāl*

2 Chr 4:22	the main hall	lahhêkāl
2 Chr 26:16	the temple of the Lord	hêkal YHWH
2 Chr 27:2	the temple of the Lord	hêkal YHWH
2 Chr 29:16	the temple of the Lord	b <sup>e</sup> hêkal YHWH

Text Exhibit 1 - *Continued*

haḥḥúšâ (lit. outside)

2 Chr 5:9	the Holy Place	haḥḥúšâ
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miqdāš

2 Chr 26:18	the sanctuary	hammiqdāš
2 Chr 36:17	the sanctuary	b <sup>e</sup> bêt miqdāšām

haqqódeš

2 Chr 5:11	the Holy Place	haqqódeš
2 Chr 29:5	the sanctuary	haqqódeš
2 Chr 35:5	the holy place	baqqódeš

## Second Apartment

bêt hakkappōret

1 Chr 28:11	and the place of atonement	ûbêt hakkappōret
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d<sup>e</sup>bîr

2 Chr 3:16	the inner sanctuary	badd <sup>e</sup> bîr (margin)
2 Chr 4:20	the inner sanctuary	hadd <sup>e</sup> bîr
2 Chr 5:7	the inner sanctuary of the temple	d <sup>e</sup> bîr habbáyit
2 Chr 5:9	the inner sanctuary	hadd <sup>e</sup> bîr

m<sup>e</sup>qôm hā'ārôn

2 Chr 5:8	the place of the ark	m <sup>e</sup> qôm hā'ārôn
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qódeš haqq<sup>o</sup>dāšîm

2 Chr 3:8	the Most Holy Place	bêt-qódeš haqq <sup>o</sup> dāšîm
2 Chr 3:10	the Most Holy Place	b <sup>e</sup> bêt-qódeš haqq <sup>o</sup> dāšîm
2 Chr 4:22	the Most Holy Place	l <sup>e</sup> qódeš haqq <sup>o</sup> dāšîm
2 Chr 5:7	the Most Holy Place	qódeš haqq <sup>o</sup> dāšîm

ḥéder

1 Chr 28:11	its inner rooms	wah <sup>a</sup> dārāyw
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Text Exhibit 2  
The General Term *bayit* Applied To  
Specific Apartments

## First apartment

2 Chr 3:5	the main hall	habbáyit haggādōl
2 Chr 3:13	the main hall	labbáyit
2 Chr 4:19	God's temple	bêt hā <sup>e</sup> lōhîm
2 Chr 7:2	the temple of the Lord	bêt YHWH
2 Chr 26:19	the Lord's temple	b <sup>e</sup> bêt YHWH
2 Chr 29:15	the temple of the Lord	bêt YHWH
2 Chr 29:16	the sanctuary of the Lord	bêt-YHWH
2 Chr 33:15	the temple of the Lord	mîbbêt YHWH

## Second apartment

2 Chr 33:4	the temple of the Lord	b <sup>e</sup> bêt YHWH
2 Chr 35:3	the temple	babbáyit

Uzziah offers incense in "the temple"

Notice two passages in particular. In 2 Chr 26:16-20 Uzziah enters "the temple of the Lord [*hêkal YHWH*] to burn incense on the altar of incense" (26:16, text exhibit 1), whereupon Azariah and eighty other priests confront him inside the first apartment. The expression *hêkal YHWH* is just what we would expect in this case because *hêkāl* often refers specifically to this part of the temple. "While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple [*b<sup>e</sup>bêt YHWH*], leprosy broke out on his forehead" (26:19, text exhibit 2). Here the general term *bêt YHWH* is used, which is equally correct. The place is no different in either verse but it is described with a specific term in 26:16 and then with a general term in 26:19.

Josiah returns the ark to "the temple"

In 2 Chr 35:3 (text exhibit 2) Josiah commands the Levites to stop removing the ark from the second apartment:

He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated to the Lord: "Put the sacred ark in the temple [*babbáyit*] that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your shoulders. Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel." (2 Chr 35:3)

The reference here cannot possibly be to anything other than the second apartment. But the word used to describe that location is simply *báyit* ("house"). So does *báyit* always mean "second apartment"? I will let the reader judge whether it does or not in the data listings of the

appendix accompanying this paper. By my count the word occurs twenty-six times in 1 Chronicles and 139 times in 2 Chronicles for a total of 165 occurrences. Of these it refers to the second apartment twice (2 Chr 33:4; 35:3)--unless we include *bêt hakkappōret* ("place of atonement") in 1 Chr 28:11, where *bêt* (<*báyit*) obviously means "chamber" or "compartment" rather than "house." Even so, there is a question about the first example. The only sure reference to the second apartment using *bêt* ("house of") without any qualifying words over and beyond <sup>s</sup>*lōhîm* ("God") or *YHWH* ("Yahweh") is 2 Chr 35:3.

But, although *báyit* is a general term (especially because it is a general term), it cannot be made to exclude the second apartment--except by context (as in 2 Chr 29:19). Nor does it normally exclude the first apartment. It takes in both. Similarly, the Greek term *ta hagia* ("the holies") includes the second apartment within its scope of reference, but only because the sanctuary contains the second apartment.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

The Greek term *ta hagia* does not mean "Most Holy Place." It means "the holies" and refers to both apartments until context indicates otherwise. Consider Heb 9:2, where the text reads *Hagia* in a clear reference to the first apartment. Putting the article on or leaving it off does not normally change the lexical meaning of a word. And in any event there is a textual variant which does include the article in vs. 2. The manuscript which contains this reading is Codex Vaticanus (B). Vaticanus also puts articles on both terms in vs. 3. Thus, we have *TA HAGIA* in vs. 2 (rather than *Hagia*) and *TA HAGIA TŌN HAGIŌN* (rather than *Hagia Hagiōn*). Capital letters do not change the lexical meaning of words either. (In Vaticanus all the letters are capitals.) So if we were studying Codex Vaticanus instead of Textus Receptus, Westcott and Hort, Nestle-Aland, or the UBS text, what would we do with Heb 9:2 ("A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place [*ta hagia* according to Vaticanus])? In Heb 9:3 *Hagia Hagiōn* means second apartment (lit. "Holy of Holies") not because of the word *Hagia* (elsewhere *ta hagia*) but because of the word *Hagiōn* ("of Holies") which is added to it.

Hebrew *báyit* ("house") or *bêt* ("house of") provides a useful analogy to Greek *ta hagia*. It also is a general term referring to the entire sanctuary or temple and it also can be given a meaning that is specific to one apartment or the other (either one) as required by context. The irony here is that this much could have been worked out by simple intuition guided by the Holy Spirit. Context is just as available to the humble Bible student with a paperback KJV as it is to any scholar familiar with the original languages.

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Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

<sup>1</sup>Some of these are brought together in text exhibit 1 below, but on the basis of the Hebrew rather than Greek text. Greek equivalents for the second section of text exhibit 1 are as follows: 1 Chr 28:11 *tou oikou tou exilasmou* ("of the house [=chamber] of atonement"); 2 Chr 3:16 *tō dabir*, 4:20 *tou dabir*, 5:7 *to dabir*, 5:9 *tou dabir* (the entire phrase reads: *ek tōn hagiōn eis prosōpon tou dabir*) (=Hebrew *d'bîr*); 5:8 *ton topon tēs kibōtou* ("the place of the ark"); 3:8 *ton oikon*

*tou hagiou tōn hagiōn* ("the house [=chamber] of the holy of the holies"), 3:10 *tō oikō tō hagiō tēn hagiōn* ("to the house [=chamber] the holy of the holies"), 4:22 *tou oikou hē esōtera eis ta hagia tōn hagiōn* ("of the house [=chamber] the inner into the holies of the holies"), 5:7 *ta hagia tōn hagiōn* ("the holies of the holies"); 1 Chr 28:11 *tōn esōterōn* ("of the inner [places]").

<sup>2</sup>See Hardy, "A Cross-Linguistic Survey of *ta hagia* in Heb 9," *Historicism Supplement/Oct 91*.

<sup>3</sup>See Hardy, "A Context for the Sanctuary Terminology of Ezek 41," *Historicism No. 20/Oct 89*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>There is a question whether 2 Chr 33:4 has the second apartment in view or the second. It could be either. But if Manasseh had so little regard for the temple as to put idols in it at all, he would not have considered the second apartment too sacred to support such outrages. If he put idols anywhere, he would have put them there.

<sup>5</sup>Some have even missed the fact that the second apartment is not the whole sanctuary (Hebrew *miškān*), preferring rather to identify the two terms with each other. According to Ralph E. Hendrix ("*miškān* and *ʾōhel mōʿēd*: Etymology, Lexical Definitions, and Extra-Biblical Usage," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 [1991]: 215), G. H. Davies identifies the term *miškān* with the second apartment on the basis of the word's etymology. If *miškān* means "tabernacle, dwelling, dwelling-place, habitation, abode, encampment" (ibid.) and if the second apartment is preeminently the place where God dwelt, then *miškān* refers preeminently to the second apartment, excluding or minimizing the first. "G. H. Davies, 'Tabernacle,' in IDB, 1962 ed., 4:498. The breadth of this definition is not justified in Exod 25-40. Certainly Exod 26:1 is not only the 'holy of holies,' as Davies suggests. The larger context of which Exod 26:1 is a part (Exod 26:1-37; especially v. 33) includes both *haqqōdeš* ('the holy') and *qōdeš haqqōdāšīm* ('the holy of holies'). In Exod 26:1, *miškān* refers to the two-compartment unit" (ibid.).