

ISRAEL'S LATER PROPHETS: EZEKIEL

HEBREW TEXT WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND FOOTNOTES

Ezekiel lived at a time of great national tragedy and upheaval, sharing in the exile of the people of Judah to Babylonia, and living through the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 586 B.C.E. His ministry began in 593 B.C.E., and continued on until 573 B.C.E. This means that Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah (626-586 / 587 B.C.E.), beginning his preaching in the closing years of Jeremiah's proclamation.

Mighty Assyria, that had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel (in 722 \ 721 B.C.E.) had begun to crumble before the rapidly emergent new Kingdom of Babylon. In 612 B.C.E., her capital city of Nineveh fell before the combined forces of the Babylonians and Medes. Just three years later, Pharaoh Necho of Egypt marched north to the aid of the beleaguered Assyrians in their fortified city of Carchemish on the northwestern Euphrates River. King Josiah, the brave young King of Judah, marched north to meet and stop Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo--but his attempt was ill-fated, and Josiah died in the battle (609 B.C.E.). A number of kings followed in succession after Josiah--Jehoahaz first, who after only three months was replaced by Pharaoh Necho's choice, Yehoyaqim. But in 605 B.C.E., the combined forces of the Egyptians and the Assyrians were dealt a crushing blow by the Babylonians at Carchemish, and the Babylonians entered into a long period of almost absolute rule over Syria and Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar, the victorious general at Carchemish, was made King of Babylon, and he ruled over the newly acquired areas with an iron hand.

Upon Yehoyaqim's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful Babylonian army was sent into Judah, and Jerusalem was captured in 597 B.C.E.--Yehoyaqim's son Jehoiachin, along with some 10,000 Jews (including Ezekiel), were carried away as exiles into Babylon, where they joined other Jews who had already been taken captive before them. Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah was placed on the throne of Judah, but within a few years he too rebelled against the Babylonians, and the final destruction of Judah and Jerusalem began to unfold. The armies of Babylon placed Jerusalem under siege in 588, and in July of 586, the city's walls were broken through, and the city was plundered. Then, on August 14, 586 B.C.E., both the city and her beautiful Temple were burned to the ground, and the large majority of Judah's people followed their predecessors into Babylonian captivity.

Babylon continued on as the most powerful nation in the Near-East until 539 B.C.E., when Babylon herself was overcome by the armies of the Medes and Persians under the great Persian Emperor Cyrus, who after a short while allowed the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to their native land of Judah. Such were the frightening times during which Ezekiel delivered the Divine message to the people of Judah who were exiles in Babylon, and sent his messages to the people still living in Judah before the final fall of Jerusalem.

All that we can know about the man Ezekiel is derived from the **Scroll** that bears his name. He was among those Jews exiled into Babylon in 597 B.C.E., and it was there in captivity that he received his Divine call to speak for YHWH. We learn from his writing that he was a married man (**24:15-18**), that he lived in a private home of his own (**3:24; 8:1**), and that he lived a fairly decent life of freedom while a captive in Babylon.

Ezekiel, whose name in Hebrew, **יְחֶזְקֵאל**, **yechezqe**l, means "Supreme God Strengthens," was evidently from a priestly family, and the marks of his priestly upbringing are found throughout his

writing, as he shows a deep concern for the temple and its rituals (see **chapters 8-11**, and **40-48**), even though the temple of Solomon was destroyed in the 11th year of his ministry.

His writing reveals Ezekiel to have been a man of great knowledge--both of international affairs, and history, as well of his own national traditions. He had a broad understanding of early Near-Eastern culture, including ship-building and literature. He constantly delivered his message through acted-out symbolism (which we call "vision-stories," or "vignettes" performed in what was like "street-theater"). Ezekiel used imagery in a powerful manner--in such a way that we are convinced that he is the greatest "allegorist" in the **Hebrew Bible**. We wonder if Philo of Alexandria learned his "allegorical" method of interpretation from Ezekiel.

For the first seven years of his proclaiming of the Word of YHWH (593-586 B.C.E.), Ezekiel constantly spoke a devastating word of Divine judgment against Judah. Many of his fellow exiles expected a quick return to Judah from their captivity, as Jerusalem, they believed, would escape destruction, and there were many prophets who proclaimed and defended their view--meaning that Ezekiel was constantly in danger because of his constantly speaking and acted out a devastating word of judgment that rejected any such premature hopes. Jerusalem was certain to fall, and her temple would be destroyed (**chapters 1-24**). The fact that Judah claimed to be YHWH's people of the covenant, and the fact that the temple was YHWH's chosen place of worship, would not alter the fact of devastating, soon-coming judgment and the "end" of Judah as a nation and the "end" of the temple in Jerusalem. We think that Ezekiel had been influenced by Jeremiah's letter to the exiles to settle down in their captivity, and learn to live in peace both with themselves and with YHWH, Who Ezekiel had envisioned, was present with them even in distant Babylon. See **Jeremiah 29:1-23**.

In **24:1-14**, Ezekiel was told by YHWH that Jerusalem was under siege for the last time, and that his wife would shortly die. The delight of Ezekiel's eyes, his wife, would be taken away from him, just as the temple in Jerusalem, the delight of Judah's eyes, would be destroyed and taken away. YHWH instructed Ezekiel not to openly lament his wife's death, just as Judah was not to lament the destruction of Jerusalem (**24:15-27**).

Immediately following that terrifying message, Ezekiel was given Divine messages against seven foreign nations (**chapters 25-32**), in which he announced the coming of YHWH's "Day" upon those foreign nations.

Then, when the news came to Ezekiel that the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple had actually occurred (**33:21-33**), he began to proclaim a completely different message--it was a Divine word of hope and consolation for the people of Judah, coming from the great Shepherd of the sheep. YHWH still had a future for his people, in spite of the destruction of their capital city and center of national worship, and despite the fact that there would still be terrifying enemies to fight, and victory to be won (**chapters 38-39**). Judah, together with Israel, would be brought back to life through the Spirit of YHWH, and the reunited Israel would be restored to its native land. The temple would be rebuilt on a much grander scale, as the people fulfilled the Divine purpose of blessing to the world--as life-giving water would pour forth from the renewed temple to bring life to the deadest place on earth (the Dead Sea), and as other prophets insisted, extend from there to the ends of the earth!

The **Scroll of Ezekiel** contains more exact dates than do the writings of any other of the prophets for YHWH, and as a result his various messages can be dated with a great deal of certainty. Having received his call to speak for YHWH in July, 593 B.C.E., Ezekiel continued his work of proclamation

for a total of 22 years, with his last dated message being given in April, 571 B.C.E. Thus his work began seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and continued after it for fifteen years.

Ezekiel proclaims the fact that YHWH God is present in all the earth. He is not a God whose presence is only to be found at his chosen site of worship (in the temple in Jerusalem). In an overwhelming vision-story in the first three chapters of his **Scroll**, Ezekiel was granted the vision of the Divine Presence among the exiles in the Land of Babylon. At the close of his **Scroll**, Ezekiel's vision of the renewed temple closes with the name of that city being given: "YHWH Is There!"

This Great God YHWH Who is Present (both in Babylon and in Jerusalem) Deeply Desires to be Known and Acknowledged by His people--not only by Judah and Israel, but also by all the nations. Some 65 times the phrase "They will know that I am YHWH" occurs throughout the **Scroll of Ezekiel**. **Chapters 1-24** teach that YHWH will be revealed through the destructive judgment that comes upon Jerusalem and its temple. **Chapters 25-32** teach that the surrounding nations will likewise come to know YHWH through His Judgments. Then, in **chapters 33-48**, there is the Promise that YHWH God Will Be Known in all the world as a result of the restoration and renewal of the united Judah and Israel, and the going forth from their new temple of the Water of Life, to the deepest, deadest place on earth.

Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel follows a sequence of first, Divine messages directed against [YHWH's] people themselves; second, Divine messages against surrounding nations; and third, Divine messages of hope and consolation for the restored and renewed people of YHWH. Ezekiel speaks with a sharpness and repetitiveness of style, that has a "hammering effect" upon the reader (see especially **chapter seven**, with its repetition over and over again that "the end has come!").

The **Scroll of Ezekiel** contains four great "vision stories":

- (1) Ezekiel's inaugural vision story of YHWH's Mysterious Presence in Babylon, the land of captivity, **chapters 1-3**;
- (2) The vision story of the corrupted Temple, **chapters 8-11**;
- (3) The vision story of national resurrection, **37:1-14**; and
- (4) The vision story of the new temple and a renewed worship, **chapters 40-48**.

At this point we need to heed an observation made by Reimer concerning Ezekiel's vision-stories: "Much of the scroll consists of visionary writing, which transports readers to a world of the imagination where the rules of reality are obviously suspended in favor of highly unusual visions. To understand and relish the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, readers often need to abandon expectations of realism. Second, Ezekiel employs a technique known as symbolic reality, which occurs when a writer consistently transports the reader to a world of visionary experience where the most important ingredients are symbols—symbols like a vine, a boiling pot, or a valley full of dry bones." Yes, indeed!

The **Scroll of Ezekiel** also contains many symbolic acts on the part of the prophet for YHWH, involving what we may call "street theater," in which Ezekiel (and his helpers) act out symbolically the message intended for the exilic leaders—but that obviously are not meant literally:

- (1) Ezekiel is tied up with ropes and lies silent, **3:22-27**
- (2) Jerusalem's siege is drawn on a clay tablet by Ezekiel, **4:1-3**
- (3) Ezekiel lies upon his left side for 390 days, then upon his right side for 40 days, **4:4-8**
(no street theater can expect its audience to stay that long!)

- (4) Ezekiel eats meager provisions, even unclean foods, such as people eat during siege, **4:9-14**
- (5) Ezekiel shaves his head and beard, burning a third of the hair, striking a third of it with a sword, and scattering a third part to the wind. Still he tucks away safely a few strands of hair, a small part of which is also burned, **5:1-4**
- (6) Ezekiel packs his belongings for exile, digs through a wall, and goes out of the city, **12:1-16**
- (7) Ezekiel trembles and shudders as he eats his food, **12:17-20**
- (8) Ezekiel groans with broken heart and bitter grief, **21:6-7**
- (9) Ezekiel marks out two roads for the sword of the King of Babylon, **21:18-24**
- (10) Ezekiel refuses to follow customary mourning rites over the death of his wife, **24:15-27**
- (11) Ezekiel joins together two sticks of wood into one stick, **37:15-28**

In all of these symbolic actions, what Ezekiel does becomes an "acted parable," a "vision-story," a "vignette," concerning YHWH's Word and relationship with Israel. Hilmer puts it this way: "More than any other prophet he was directed to involve himself personally in the Divine Word by acting it out in prophetic symbolism." (P. 1226)

There are five other sections of the **Scroll of Ezekiel** that can be labeled simply as "parables":

- (1) **Chapter 15**--Jerusalem, a useless vine
- (2) **Chapter 16**--An allegory concerning Jerusalem--the orphan daughter, who grew up to be the King's queen, but who became a prostitute without pay--who now deserves capital punishment--but YHWH resolves to remarry her and restore her fortune, along with restoring the fortunes of Samaria and Sodom!
- (3) **Chapter 17**--Two eagles and a vine
- (4) **Chapter 19**--A lament concerning a lioness and her cubs, a vine and its branches
- (5) **Chapter 23**--The two prostitutes, Oholah and Oholibah (Samaria and Jerusalem)

Ezekiel focuses his attention on Israel / Judah as the set-apart people with its set-apart temple in its set-apart city, in its set-apart land. Because Israel has defiled its worship, it has become unclean--and so has its temple, its city, and its land. It is this deep-seated defilement of its set-apartness that calls forth the inescapable Judgment of YHWH through national destruction.

But Judgment and destruction are not the final word for Ezekiel. Because YHWH Is Faithful to the covenant he made with Israel's ancestors, and because His Love for His people is so great, Israel in captivity can know that YHWH Will Revive His united people once again. Their great Shepherd Will Come to them in David His servant to shepherd them once again, binding up their wounds, seeking their lost sheep, and renewing Israel as His covenant people. He will lead them to Divine Victory over all the evil forces arrayed against them, and restore them to their land, their city, and their temple, from which the Water of Life will flow forth to all of Israel, and even to all the nations, so that all people will come to know YHWH as the God of all the earth. The reader of the closing chapters of **Ezekiel (33-48)** is reminded once again of how the prophets for YHWH "stood on tip-toe," looking out into a future filled with vibrant hope and promise for YHWH's people who return to him.

Davidson-Streane begin their commentary with the statement that "The [**Scroll**] of **Ezekiel** is simpler and more perspicuous [clearly expressed and easily understood; lucid] in its arrangement than any other of the great prophetic [scrolls]. It was probably committed to writing late in the prophet's

life, and, unlike the prophecies of Isaiah, which were given out piecemeal, was issued in its complete form at once.” (P. ix) We say, Yes—to some extent; but we also say No—**Ezekiel’s Scroll** is not by any means “easily understood”!

In this translation and its accompanying footnotes, we will be paying close attention to the Hebrew text, taken from Codex Leningradensis, and noting differences between it and its Greek translation (**Rahlfs Septuagint**). We will follow the comments of Rabbi Dr. S. Fisch in his **Ezekiel** (The Soncino Press, Ninth Impression, 1978) as well as the comments of David J. Reimer in the **English Standard Version Study Bible**, of Mark Hilmer in **The NIV Study Bible**, the first commentary I read on **Ezekiel**; those of Gordon Matties in **The New Interpreter’s Study Bible**, and the helpful footnotes in the **New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)**.

We are also indebted to other scholars who have spent long years of their lives in the study of **Ezekiel**, including Walther Eichrodt in his **Ezekiel, A Commentary** (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia) whose two volume **Theology of the Old Testament** has played such an important role in twentieth century biblical understanding. Eichrodt handles the text very cavalierly, dismissing large sections of the text, re-writing others, in a manner reminiscent of much twentieth century scholarship; but nevertheless, makes very important and insightful comments throughout his commentary. We have also been privileged to use the 2015 **The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary**, Volume 5, where the commentary on **Ezekiel** is by Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, Associate Professor of Hebrew at Boston University, who has returned to a much more conservative treatment of the Hebrew text. Even more helpful is the earlier commentary on **Ezekiel** in the **International Critical Commentary** series, by G.A. Cooke, whose love for the **Scroll of Ezekiel** is beautifully expressed again and again:

A vision of [YHWH] in His Glory and Holiness, Enthroned yet in Motion, Approaching to Reveal Himself outside the land of Israel: this conveyed to Ezekiel in Babylonia a call to prophecy. It determined the substance of his message. He could never forget what he had seen and heard and the reader is intended to bear it in mind throughout (**3:23; 8:4; 10:15, 20, 22; 43:3**). Accordingly the **Scroll** begins with a narrative of the vision written in the first person, **chapter 1**.

“Three main subjects are dealt with in the chapters which follow: denunciation of Israel’s sin and warning of the inevitable punishment, **chapters 2-24**; judgments upon foreign nations, especially Tyre and Egypt, **chapters 25-32**; the restoration of Israel in the future, **chapters 33-48**. Thus the **Scroll** falls into three parts, the third being sub-divided into **chapters 33-39**, which describe the outward and inward renewal of the nation, and **chapters 40-48**, which outline a scheme for the future temple as seen in vision.”

These present notes have been begun at a late stage in my life, at 88 years of age, following long years of work in the **Scroll of the Prophet Isaiah**. And I wonder how many more years I will be given to work in the Hebrew text—which I have loved since the age of 19. It is my hope that my work will be helpful to younger students coming after me, and that the message of **Ezekiel** can be returned to a prominent role in Christian interpretation!

There are some fourteen end-notes on the **Scroll of Ezekiel**:

1. David Qimchi, Jewish commentator on the Hebrew Bible;
2. The Hebrew noun רוּחַ, **ruach**, “wind”; “spirit” and “Spirit”;

3. The Navel of the Earth;
4. Gillul, “Idol” in the Hebrew Bible;
5. Predictions / Proclamations of the End of the World;
6. Ehrlich, Polish American Jew / Christian’s Life-Work in the Hebrew Bible;
7. The Jewish Sanhedrin;
8. The God Tammuz;
9. YHWH, the Returner of Captivities and Restorer of Fortunes;
10. Long-Lasting Covenants in the Hebrew Bible;
11. The Future Verb “He Shall / Shall Not Live” in the Hebrew Bible;
12. Pekod;
13. The Phoenician God Melqart;
14. Bashan
15. Lebanon

Hebrew Text of the Scroll of Ezekiel, with Translation and Notes:

Ezekiel's Visions of God (1:1-3:27)

1:1-3: Setting of Ezekiel's Visions: (Note that Ezekiel is speaking in the first person in **verse 1**, and perhaps also in **verse 2**. But **verse 3** is in the third person, perhaps written by a disciple of Ezekiel, who is editing the final edition of Ezekiel's prophetic writing.)

"1:1 And it happened in year thirty, in the fourth (month), on the fifth (day) to / of the month. And I (was) in (the) midst of the exile upon / beside (the) River Kebhar--the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 1:2 On the fifth (day) to / of the month--it (was) the fifth year of exile of the king Yoyakhiym. 1:3 YHWH's word certainly was / came to Yechezqel / Ezekiel, son of Buziy the priest, in (the) land of (the) Chaldeans, beside (the) River Kebhar. And YHWH's hand was upon him there."

1:1¹ וַיְהִי בַּשָּׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרַב־עֵי בְּחֻמְשָׁה לְחָדָשׁ

And it happened in year thirty,² in the fourth (month),³ ¹ on the fifth (day) of the month.

1

Reimer entitles **1:1-3:27** "Inaugural Vision." He comments that "The opening sequence of **Ezekiel** is the most elaborate and complex of the prophetic call narratives in the **Old Testament**, and also one of the most carefully structured. In a vision, Ezekiel witnesses the awesome approach of the glory of [YHWH] (**1:1-28**). Ezekiel receives his prophetic commission through swallowing the scroll [YHWH] offers (**2:1-3:11**), thus both fortifying him and training him in obedience. After the glory of [YHWH] withdraws (**3:12-15**), Ezekiel's role is further refined by his appointment as a 'watchman' (**3:16-21**). The sequence concludes with a further encounter with [YHWH's] glory (**3:22-27**)." (P. 1502)

Matties states that "Ezekiel's prophetic call stands boldly at the beginning of the [Scroll] ...In 593 B.C.E., Ezekiel is commissioned to mediate the Divine Word that comes to him in a land considered unclean [Babylonia], and through him, to those who have lost everything [that is, the exiles from Jerusalem and Judah, who have been taken into captivity from their home-land]." (P. 1156) Yes, Ezekiel, a mere mortal, has been chosen by YHWH to speak for Him to the people of Israel, first of all to those who are now exiles in Babylon, but also to those who still remain in the homeland.

2

Reimer states that "What the thirtieth year signifies is obscure...It may refer to the prophet's age (Hilmer thinks this is so, as do others; but others disagree (p. 1231). Reference to the Chebar canal locates the prophet near ancient Nippur (or, in modern terms, halfway between Baghdad and Basra) and thus not in the city of Babylon itself." (P. 1502) Hilmer thinks this may have been a place of prayer for the exiles (p. 1231). Cooke states that there, beside the Chebar river / canal, "the Jewish colony was settled, in a foreign country among the heathen [non-Jews; Ezekiel does not use the word 'heathen']; Yahweh can reveal Himself there as well as at Sinai or in Israel." (P. 4) Compare **Jeremiah 29:13-14**, "¹³ When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴ I will let you find me, says [YHWH], and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says [YHWH], and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile." (NRSV)

(continued...)

וְאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹלָה עַל-נְהַר-כְּבַר

And I (was) in (the) midst of the exile beside (the) River Kebhar--⁴

נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם

the heavens were opened,

²(...continued)

Eichrodt states that “Explanations of the number thirty must...be conjectural. Most think that it probably states the age of the writer...So, at the age at which he would under other circumstances have entered priestly office, Ezekiel was transplanted into unclean heathen soil [Babylonia / modern Iraq], experiencing the first major disappointment of his life. The Judgment which threatened his people first struck him, thus beginning at the house of [YHWH]. The mention of this event, so important to his own life, also throws a peculiar light upon all the subsequent events.” (P. 52)

3

Rabbi Fisch notes that the fourth month, Tammuz, was “an ominous month, since in it the first breaches in Jerusalem’s wall were made (Kimchi).” (P. 1) Jewish rabbis, as well as other students of the **Hebrew Bible**, constantly refer to the commentaries of David Kimchi. See end-note 1 for a **Wikipedia** article concerning his life.

4

Cooke states that “This was probably the artificial watercourse which started from the Euphrates above Babylon...The Sumerians called it the *Euphrates of Nippur (Purat Nippur)*; the Babylonians and Jews, *the great river (naru kabari, nehar kebar*; its modern name among the Arabs is *the river Nile (Shatt en-Nil)*. Recent excavations at Nippur have discovered abundant evidence of Jewish settlements in the neighborhood, from the fifteenth century B.C.E., and perhaps earlier down to the seventh century C.E.” (Pp. 4-5) See the **Wikipedia** article on Nippur, with a number of pictures of the archaeological work that has been done, and continues to be done there.

Eichrodt states that “The prophet was among the exiled Jews, carried off to Babylonia along with king Jehoiachin in the year 598 B.C.E., and settled along the river Chebar. According to Babylonian contracts of the fifth century discovered in that same district, the river is to be identified with the *nar Kabari*, a navigable channel of the Euphrates south-east of Babylon, which is thought to be the same as the present Satt-en-nil...

“The king himself, along with his family, his retinue, and a few nobles, was kept in imprisonment in Babylon. (Lists of persons receiving rations from the royal storehouses have been discovered in the southern zone of Babylon, containing [king Jehoiachin’s] name for the years 595-570 B.C.E.). Most of the other exiles were settled in country districts south of Babylon, as colonists in separate villages, whose task it was to till wastelands belonging to the state.” (P. 52)

“There in that unclean land there was nothing to hope for, and no improvement could be effected. Jerusalem was the only place from which any light came. If that light were to be put out, then Israel would sink into the hopeless night of total alienation from [YHWH], and be wiped off the face of creation.” (P. 54) So, at least, it was commonly thought. But Ezekiel’s visions of God revealed something quite different.

וַאֲרָאָה מְרֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

And I saw visions of God.⁵

5

Eichrodt continues: “Then something took place to deliver [Ezekiel] from doubt and despair and give him new firm ground upon which he could stand...The heavens were opened, and...he was granted a wonderful glimpse into the Divine world...[It was] the powerful breaking through of a new Reality into Ezekiel’s life, where up to that point all his prayers and hopes had seemed to beat in vain against a brazen heaven...The Hand of [YHWH], the Power not his own which compels a man, came down upon Ezekiel, just as It Had Forced Isaiah on to a new career (**Isaiah 8:11**), and Torn Jeremiah away from the company of the merry-makers (**Jeremiah 15:17**). It Overpowered his thoughts and feelings, so as to make them serve a vision different from everything before...

“Ezekiel therefore possesses an unshakable certitude, that the indescribable vision which he has been found worthy to see does not proceed from his own spiritual power, but that [YHWH] in Person Is Introducing him into a new dimension of reality, the strangeness and terrifying sublimity of which far transcend all that is imaginable to man.” (P. 54)

It is important to us in our study of Hebrew prophecy to emphasize the fact that the prophetic Message was founded on visions (and dreams), such as Ezekiel is depicted as experiencing here; and this means their message should not be taken as a direct, Mouth to mouth / Face to face revelation from YHWH, as is so often done in “Bible-belt” areas, but which is a serious mistake that leads to all sorts of bizarre conclusions and contradictions such as have characterized 20th century Christians over whether the **Bible** teaches “Amillennialism,” or “Premillennialism,” or “Postmillennialism,” or “Preterism,” or “Panmillennialism,” and which has led Bible literalists to give dates for the “end of the world.” Every one of these views has been supported by proof-texts taken from the prophets of Israel, and from writers of the **New Testament**, all based on the assumption that the biblical writers had exact “road-maps to the future,” based on Direct Revelation from YHWH such as Moses had when giving the Ten Commandments. But such was not the case. Their Revelation was based on enigmatic visions and dreams, which simply cannot provide such exact information.

The key passage for this matter is **Numbers 12:6-8**, where the two prophetic figures, Aaron and Miriam, are contrasted with Moses. Moses is said to have direct, Mouth to mouth Revelations from God (as well as visionary Revelations), whereas Aaron and Miriam’s Revelations are limited to visions and dreams, that are characterized by *chiddoth*, puzzles, translated into Greek by ἀινιγμαῶν, enigmas.

12:6 וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּנָא דְבַרִּי
And He [YHWH] said, Listen now (to) My words:
אִם־יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֵכֶם יְהוָה
If YHWH will be your (plural) Prophet:
בְּמִרְאָה אֵלָיו אֶתְוַדַּע
in the vision, I Will Make Myself Known to him;
בְּחֵלֹם אֶדְבַּר־בוֹ:
in the dream I Will Speak with him.

(continued...)

⁵(...continued)

12:7 לֹא-כֵן עֲבָדִי מֹשֶׁה
(It is) not this way (for) My servant, Moses;
בְּכָל-בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא:
in all My House, he was confirmed / faithful.

12:8 פֶּה אֶל-פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ
Mouth to mouth I Will Speak with him,
וּמִרְאֵה וְלֹא בְחִידֹת
and (in) a vision, and not in riddles;
וְתִמְנַת יְהוָה יִבִּיט
and YHWH's likeness he will see.
וּמִדּוּעַ לֹא יִרְאַתֶּם
And for what reason were you (plural) not afraid
לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדִּי בְּמֹשֶׁה:
to speak against My servant, against Moses?

And we add, in the light of this passage in **Numbers**, it becomes clearer as to why Paul in **1 Corinthians 13:12**, speaking of his own “prophesying,” states:

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι,
For now we see through a mirror in an enigma / puzzle / something difficult to under-
stand or explain,
τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον·
but then Face to face [that is, like Moses in **Numbers 12!**]
ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους,
now I know partially,
τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθη.
but then I will know fully, even as also I was fully known.

Paul's use of “mirror” and “enigma” in this statement, reflects his knowledge of **Numbers 12:6**. Paul is acknowledging the limitations of his knowledge, and letting his readers know that his teachings are characterized by enigmas or puzzles, just as are those of the **Hebrew Bible's** seers and visionaries, and especially the **Scroll of Ezekiel!** Strangely, very few students of Paul ack-nnowledge this fact, treating Paul's teachings as if they are direct, Face to face Revelations from God, that can all be taken literally and exactly—disregarding his statement concerning the limita-tions of his knowledge.

We insist that we do not do well to assume that Paul's teachings were completely clear and to be taken literally, as if he was a “new Moses,” as if he had a direct pipe-line to YHWH! He was, undoubtedly, one of the Church's greatest evangelists and pastors—but he was wise enough to admit his limitations. It was his hope that one day he would gain such knowledge-- but he denies that this was the case as he wrote his **First Letter to the Corinthians**. Still,

(continued...)

1:2⁶ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ

On the fifth (day) of the month--

הַיָּא הַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית

it (was) the fifth year

לְגָלוּת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹאָכִיָן:

of exile of the king Yoyakhiyn,⁷

⁵(...continued)

Christian interpreters quote Paul as if every word he wrote was the infallible, inerrant word of [YHWH]! I wonder what Paul would think of that--and what he would think of religious leaders today who claim to have a full and accurate knowledge of YHWH and His ways!

However this may be, in our study of **Ezekiel** we are forewarned by this language to expect puzzling, enigmatic statements in his Message--and we can be assured that this is exactly what we will find, especially in this first chapter! Puzzling, enigmatic--Yes! But at the same time, while not giving us a detailed and exact "road-map to the future," or enabling us to know and describe YHWH and His nature, his visions point us to the reality of YHWH our God, His Presence with us, and the basis for our hope!

Hilmer notes that the phrase "visions of God" is "a special term, always in the plural and always with the word 'God' (not with the more personal 'YHWH'). The expression precedes this and the two other major visions of the prophet (**8:3; 40:2**)." (P. 1231)

Cooke comments that we must take the phrase to mean that "the prophet was allowed to see, not God directly, but *visions of God, an appearance of the Glory of Yahweh (verse 28)*. A distinction is to be observed. In His absolute Being God surpasses the reach of human apprehension [Yes, a thousand times over!]; but there is a relative aspect of His Being, which He Has Revealed to prophets and saints; 'the large face and the small face,' as the **Talmud** puts it (**Hagigah 13b**)." (P. 5)

6

Hilmer comments that "**Verses 2-3**, written in the third person (the only third-person narrative in the [**Scroll**]), clarify the date in **verse 1**. King Jehoiachin led an early group of exiles to Babylon in 597 B.C.E...Ezekiel was among them and received his prophetic call in 593 B.C.E." (P. 1231)

King Yoyakhiyn / Jehoiachin went into exile in 597 B.C.E., and Ezekiel was among those going into captivity with him, to the Land of Babylonia, evidently near the City of Nippur, beside the River Kebar, about 50 miles to the southeast of Babylon.

7

Rabbi Fisch states that "The vision occurred at a most appropriate time, because in that year a plot against the Babylonian invader was being planned by patriots in Jerusalem and some exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, saw in this movement a rebellion against [YHWH's] Judgment and therefore a threat to the national existence. During the critical years which preceded the fall of Jerusalem, his addresses were (continued...)

1:3 הַיְהוָה הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יְחִזְקִאל

YHWH's⁸ Word⁹ certainly was / came¹⁰ to Yechezqel¹¹ / Ezekiel,

בֶּן־בּוּזִי הַכֹּהֵן

son of Buziy the priest.¹²

⁷(...continued)

in the nature of exhortations against this dangerous policy and a prediction of the final fall of Jerusalem.” (P. 2)

Note that the Hebrew name יְיָכִיִן, *yoyakhiyn*, is commonly given as Jehoiachin in English translations. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has Ἰωακίμ, *Ioakim*.

8

This is the first occurrence of the Divine name יְהוָה, YHWH, in the **Scroll** of Ezekiel— the name occurs some 6,007 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, including numerous times in the prophets, including Ezekiel. We understand why Rabbi Fisch does not use the Divine name, but are puzzled by Christian translators who fail to use it. We will try throughout this series of notes to always use YHWH where it is appropriate, oftentimes changing the comments of Christian scholars and Bible translations to say YHWH instead of “the Lord.” YHWH is the Personal name; “the Lord” is YHWH’s title, not His name.

9

We have capitalized “Word” although there is no capitalization in the Hebrew text. We do this because Ezekiel believed he had received a Divine communication through his visions and through his revelatory experiences. It was a communication that transformed his life, and from which he never backed down for the rest of his life. We too believe that it was a Divine communication which Ezekiel received—but, as we have stated, it was a communication marked by puzzling, enigmatic elements, not easily understood.

Cooke comments that “The *coming* of the Divine Message is frequently mentioned in **Jeremiah** (29 times); in **Ezekiel** it is especially emphasized, and with the addition of *unto me* (48 times; compare **Jeremiah** 11 times)...The prophet lays stress on the objective character of the Message, and the frequent access of his inspiration.” (P. 6)

10

The Hebrew text doubles the verb here, הָיָה הָיָה, “it was / came, it was / came.” Rabbi Fisch translates by “came expressly,” and states that “the verb [is] being duplicated for the sake of emphasis.” We agree.

11

We understand the Hebrew name יְחִזְקִאל, **yechezqel** to mean either “He strengthens Supreme God,” or more likely, “Supreme God strengthens.”

12

(continued...)

בְּאֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים עַל-נְהַר-כְּבַר

In (the) land of (the) Chaldeans,¹³ upon / beside (the) River Kebhar.

וַתְּהִי עָלָיו יַד-יְהוָה:

And YHWH's Hand Was Upon him there.¹⁴

¹²(...continued)

The fact that Ezekiel's father was a priest (כֹּהֵן, **kohen**), we take to mean that he, the priest's son, would also be a priest. His father's name occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**. It is not found in any of the genealogies of the priestly families.

13

The name of a land and its people, כַּשְׂדִּים, **kasdiyim**, occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** some 40 times, at **Genesis 11:28, 31; 15:7** (all concerning Abram's home-land; the "father of the faithful" comes from Ur of Kasdiyim); then in **2 Kings 24:2; 25:5, 10, 13, 26; 2 Chronicles 36:17; Nehemiah 9:7; Job 1:17; Isaiah 13:19; 23:13; 47:1, 5; 48:14; Jeremiah 24:5; 25:12; 37:10; 39:5; 50:1, 8, 10, 25, 35, 45; 51:4, 24, 35, 54; 52:8, 14, 17; Ezekiel 1:3 (here); 12:13; 23:14, 15, 23; Daniel 1:4; 9:1.**

Wikipedia (6/13/2020) states: "Chaldea was a country that existed between the late 10th or early 9th and mid-6th centuries B.C.E., after which the country and its people were absorbed and assimilated into Babylonia. Semitic-speaking, it was located in the marshy land of the far southeastern corner of Mesopotamia and briefly came to rule Babylon. The **Hebrew Bible** uses the term כַּשְׂדִּים (Kasdim) and this is translated as Chaldeans in the **Greek Old Testament**, although there is some dispute as to whether Kasdim in fact means Chaldean or refers to the south Mesopotamian Kaldu.

"During a period of weakness in the East Semitic-speaking kingdom of Babylonia, new tribes of West Semitic-speaking migrants arrived in the region from the Levant between the 11th and 9th centuries B.C.E. The earliest waves consisted of Suteans and Arameans, followed a century or so later by the Kaldu, a group who became known later as the Chaldeans or the Chaldees. These migrations did not affect the powerful kingdom of Assyria in the north-ern half of Mesopotamia, which repelled these incursions.

"The short-lived 11th dynasty of the Kings of Babylon (6th century B.C.E.) is conventionally known to historians as the Chaldean Dynasty, although the last rulers, Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar, were from Assyria. These nomadic Chaldeans settled in the far southeastern portion of Babylonia, chiefly on the left bank of the Euphrates. Though for a short time the name commonly referred to the whole of southern Mesopotamia in Hebraic literature, this was a geographical and historical misnomer as Chaldea proper was in fact only the plain in the far southeast formed by the deposits of the Euphrates and the Tigris, extending about four hundred miles along the course of these rivers and averaging about a hundred miles in width."

14

Rabbi Fisch quotes Rashi [Rabbi Shelomo Yitzchaki, today generally known by the acronym Rashi] a medieval French rabbi and author of a comprehensive commentary on the **Talmud** and commentary on the **Tanakh**. Acclaimed for his ability to present the basic meaning of the Text in a

(continued...)

Verses 1:4-3:15, Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision¹⁵

Verses 1:4-28, The Astounding, Puzzling Approach of YHWH's Throne / Chariot.¹⁶

¹⁴(...continued)

concise and lucid fashion, Rashi appeals to both learned scholars and beginner students]. Like David Qimchi, Rashi is commonly quoted, especially by students of the **Hebrew Bible**. Rashi states that “The Spirit of prophecy overwhelmed the prophet like the grasp of a mighty hand.” (Rabbi Fisch, p. 2)

The Hebrew phrase יָדַיִן־יְהוָה, “hand of YHWH,” occurs some 20 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at: **Exodus 9:3; Deuteronomy 2:15; Joshua 4:24; Judges 2:15; Ruth 1:13; 1 Samuel 5:6, 9; 7:13; 12:5; 2 Kings 3:15; Job 12:9; Isaiah 19:16; 25:10; 41:20; 59:1; 66:14; Ezekiel 1:3 (here); 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1** (which Hilmer says “indicates an overpowering experience of Divine Revelation” (P. 1231)

¹⁵

We use the term “inaugural” vision because it was this vision which meant the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry as a prophet of YHWH.

¹⁶

My Navajo son Phillip, as a little boy, loved this first chapter of **Ezekiel**, with its strange, mystifying depiction of YHWH on His Mysterious Chariot. We adopted him when he was 30 days old, and I can't imagine any experience on the Navajo Reservation which he might have had to impress him, unless his mother, during her pregnancy, or shortly after his birth, had been involved in a Navajo sand-painting, deeply religious in meaning—and similarly puzzling in design. Those sand-paintings, like **Ezekiel 1**, are attempts to describe the indescribable; and some that I have seen, look remarkably like **Ezekiel 1**.

“In the sandpainting of southwestern Native Americans (the most famous of which are the Navajo), the Medicine Man paints loosely upon the ground of a hogan, where the ceremony takes place, or on a buckskin or cloth tarpaulin, by letting the colored sands flow through his fingers with control and skill. There are 600 to 1,000 different traditional designs for sand-paintings known to the Navajo. They do not view the paintings as static objects, but as Spiritual, Living Beings to be treated with great respect. More than 30 different sand-paintings may be associated with one ceremony.

“The colors for the painting are usually accomplished with naturally colored sand, crushed gypsum (white), yellow ochre, red sandstone, charcoal and a mixture of charcoal and gypsum (blue). Brown can be made by mixing red and black; red and white make pink. Other coloring agents include corn meal, flower pollen, or powdered roots and bark.

“The paintings are for healing purposes only. Many of them contain images of the Holy People. While creating the painting, the medicine man will chant, asking the Holy People to come into the painting and help heal the patient. When the medicine man finishes painting, he checks its accuracy. The order and symmetry of the painting symbolize the harmony which a patient wishes to reestablish in his or her life. The accuracy of a sandpainting is believed to determine its efficacy as a sacred tool. The patient will be asked to sit on the sandpainting as the medicine man proceeds with the healing chant. It is claimed the sandpainting acts as a portal to attract the spirits and allow them to come and go. Practitioners believe sitting on the sandpainting helps the patient to absorb spiritual power, while in turn

(continued...)

“1:4 And I saw, and look--a stormy wind coming from the north--(with) a great cloud, and fire taking hold of itself / flashing forth continually, and it had a brightness around (it), and from its midst like an eye / spring of shining metal from the fire’s midst. 1:5 And from its midst a likeness of four Living Creatures; and this (was) their appearance: (the) likeness of a human to these. 1:6 And four faces to one / each one, and four wings to one / each one of them. 1:7 And their legs--a straight leg. And (the) sole of their feet--like (the) sole of a calf’s foot, and sparkling like an eye of burnished bronze. 1:8 And hands of a human beneath their wings, upon their four sides. And their faces and their wings--to (the) four of them. 1:9 Each one (feminine) touching its sister (with their) wings. They did not turn around as they went, each one (masculine) to beyond its faces they went. 1:10 And (the) likeness of their faces--faces of a human, and faces of a lion, to the right of the four of them; and faces of an ox from the left of (the) four of them; and faces of a griffon vulture to (the) four of them. 1:11 And their faces and their wings (were) spread out from above; to each one two, joining each; and two covering their bodies. 1:12 And each one to beyond his faces would walk / go; to wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit would be walking, they would walk / go. They did not turn around as they went. 1:13 And (the) likeness of the Living Creatures’ appearance--(it was) like burning-coals of fire, burning; it (was) like (the) appearance of the torches, walking / going to and fro between the Living Creatures. And brightness belonged to the fire. And from the fire was going forth lightning. 1:14 And the Living Creatures (were) running and returning, like (the) appearance of the lightning-flash. 1:15 And I saw the Living Creatures --and look--one wheel in the earth / land, next to the Living Creatures, to four of its faces. 1:16 (The) appearance of the wheels, and their structure, (was) like a spring / eye of jasper; and (there was) one likeness to the four of them; and their appearance and their structure, (was) just like the wheel would be in the midst of the wheel, 1:17 upon their four sides. As they went, they went. They did not turn around as they went. 1:18 And their [the wheels’] backs / sides--and a height to them, and He would see by means of them; and their backs / sides (were) full of eyes, (all) around, to the four of them. 1:19 And as the Living Creatures went, the wheels went next to them; and when the Living Creatures were lifted up from upon the earth / land, the wheels were lifted up. 1:20 Because wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit, was, to go, they would go there, where the wind / spirit / Spirit was to go. And the wheels would be lifted up beside them--because the Living creature’s wind / spirit / Spirit (was) in the wheels. 1:21 When they went, they went; and when they stood still, they stood still. And when they were lifted up from upon the land / earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them. Because the Living creature’s spirit / Spirit (was) in the wheels. 1:22 And a likeness over (the) heads of the Living creature(s), an extended surface / expanse, like an eye / spring of the fearsome / awe-inspiring frost / crystal, stretched out over their heads, from above. 1:23 And beneath the extended surface / expanse, their straight wings--each one (pointing) to its sister. To each (living creature) two (wings), covering to these; and to each two, covering to these, their bodies. 1:24 And I heard (the) voice / sound of their wings, like a voice / sound of many waters, like a voice / sound of Shaddai as they (the Living Creatures) went--a voice / sound of a

¹⁶(...continued)

the Holy People will absorb the illness and take it away. Afterward, when the sandpainting has served its purpose, it is considered to be toxic, since it has absorbed the illness. For this reason, the painting is destroyed. Because of the sacred nature of the ceremonies, the sandpaintings are begun, finished, used and destroyed within 12 hours.” (Wikipedia, 10/31/2021 See the beautiful examples of sandpaintings accompanying this **Wikipedia** article.)

I have wondered why Ezekiel’s vision of the Divine Chariot has appealed to my son. Could it be that his mother, during her difficult pregnancy, and then during the first 30 days of Phillip’s life, participated in the Navajo sandpainting, and this was impressed upon the fetus, and then the baby boy, Phillip?

rainstorm / rushing wind / tumult, like the) voice / sound of an (army) camp. When they stood still, they slackened / let down their wings. 1:25 And there was a voice / sound from over the extended surface / expanse which (was) over their head. When they stood still, they slackened / let down their wings. 1:26 And from above the extend-ed surface / expanse which (was) over their head, like an appearance of a sapphire stone, a likeness of a throne. And upon (the) likeness of the throne, a likeness like an appearance of a human upon it from above. 1:27 And I saw, like an eye / spring of shining metal, like an appearance of fire. It had a house, all around--from (the) appearance of His waist and upwards; and from (the) appearance of His waist and upwards I saw like an appearance of fire, and it had a brightness all around. 1:28 Like an appearance of the (rain-)bow, which will be in the cloud on a day of the rain shower--in this way, an appearance of the brightness all around. It is a vision of (the) likeness of YHWH's Glorious Radiance! And I saw, and I fell upon my face. And I heard a voice speaking."

1:4¹⁷

17

Reimer also entitles **1:4-3:15** "Inaugural Vision." He comments that The vision forms a unified whole, in spite of its being comprised of distinct episodes. It is symmetrically structured, having onion-like layers: the 'frame' (**1:1-3** and **3:14-15**) is wrapped around the approach and departure of the cherub-throne [chariot] (**1:4-28** and **3:12-13**), with the prophet's audience before the Lord contained in **2:1-3:11.**" (P. 1502)

Reimer entitles **1:4-28** "The Throne of [YHWH] Approaches." He comments that "The richness of detail in Ezekiel's account of this vision is both inspiring and perplexing. It recalls the tradition of the ark of the covenant especially within the context of Solomon's temple:

Exodus 25:20-22,

²⁰ The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the covenant that I shall give you. ²² There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites." (NRSV)

1 Kings 8:6-8,

⁶ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of The LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles." (NRSV)

"[Ezekiel's vision] stands at the head of the later mystical *merkavah* ['chariot,' the name commonly given to **Ezekiel 1** by Jews] tradition within Judaism." (P. 1502) "Merkabah or Merkavah mysticism is a school of early Jewish mysticism, from around 100 B.C.E. to 1000 C.E., centered on visions such as those found in **Ezekiel chapter 1**, or in the *heikhalot* ['temples'] literature, concerning stories of ascents to the heavenly palaces and the Throne of God. The main corpus of the Merkabah literature was composed in the period 200–700 C.E." (Wikipedia, 10/31/ 2021)

(continued...)

¹⁷(...continued)

Matties notes that Ezekiel's vision "has shaped similar biblical and postbiblical descriptions.

See:

Daniel 10:5-6,

⁵ I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist.

⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude." (NRSV)

Qumran Sabbath Song 12, "The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, also referred to as the **Angelic Liturgy,** are a series of thirteen songs, one for each of the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year, contained in fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Songs were found in 10 fragmentary copies: nine at Qumran (4Q400–407; 11Q17) and one at Masada. The dating is difficult to determine, but it is thought to have been written around 100 B.C.E. "Although nine copies were found at Qumran, the scroll is not generally believed to be a sectarian document. The common sectarian language normally found in the scrolls (such as references to laws applying to the Yahad) is not present in the songs. The fact that a copy of the songs was found at Masada suggests this was a widely circulated text and may imply the scrolls were used by other communities; which negates the likelihood of this text being composed at Qumran. The songs also use Elohim to refer to God, and the use of that word is extremely rare throughout the other scrolls thought to be sectarian in origin. The Songs describe worship around the throne of God in the heavenly realms. Reference is made to angelic tongues. Throughout the thirteen songs there is everything ranging from accounts of how the angels lead their prayer service in the temple on high to detailed descriptions of the inner throne room where the presence of God and the other God-like beings reside. The scrolls can be categorized into three larger sections: 1–5, 6–8, 9–13. The first section is badly fragmented, but seems to be centered on descriptions of the heavenly priests and their practices. The second section is concerned with the praises and blessings offered by the seven orders of angels, with the seventh song functioning as a peak of the series of thirteen. The final section offers descriptions of the heavenly temple, throne room, and throne (*merkavah*) of God. The text seems to have been written with imagery from sources like **Ezekiel, Isaiah, Exodus,** and **1 Enoch.** The text invokes lofty imagery of angels, God-like beings, and intense descriptions of the Heavenly Throne. The entire text has the imagery of the biblical mystical books, with one significant difference: there is no narrative framework describing the vision being given to a prophet or mystic. Rather, the vision is presented directly, as if inviting those who are reciting the text to experience something similar. If these songs were used by an entire congregation, then the entire group would be chanting and singing these in unison, thus creating a mystical experience. It seems that these songs would have been used to create a sense of union with the angels and their heavenly worship on high." (Wikipedia, 10/31/2021)

Revelation 4,

¹ After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

³ And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow

(continued...)

וַיֵּרָא וַיִּהְיֶה

And I saw, and look--¹⁸

רוּחַ סַעֲרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן

a stormy wind coming from the north--¹⁹

עָנָן גָּדוֹל וְאֵשׁ מִתְּלַקַּחַת

(with) a great cloud,²⁰ and fire taking hold of itself / flashing forth continually,²¹

¹⁷(...continued)

that looks like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; ⁶ and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four Living Creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying griffon-vulture. ⁸ And the four Living Creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, Who Was and Is and Is To Come." ⁹ And whenever the Living Creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the One Who Is Seated on the Throne, Who Lives Forever and Ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall before the One Who Is Seated on the Throne and worship the One Who Lives Forever and Ever; they cast their crowns before the Throne, singing, ¹¹ "You Are Worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You Created all things, and by Your Will they existed and were Created." (NRSV) (Matties, P. 1156)

¹⁸

Hilmer states that this opening line of **verse 4** "Introduces the first part of the vision... The 'I looked' of **verse 15** introduces the second part." (P. 1231)

¹⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that the stormy wind coming out of the north is "an indication of the forthcoming invasion of Judea by the Babylonians whose empire extended to the land of the Chaldeans to the north of the holy land." (Pp. 2-3) See **Jeremiah 1:14**, "And YHWH said to me: From [the] north the evil will be opened [up], over all those living (in) the land!" (NRSV)

²⁰

Rabbi Fisch states that the "great cloud" is "A portent of impending calamity." For the cloud, compare Theophanies described in **Exodus 19:16**, **Psalms 18:11-12** and **77:18**.

²¹

Rabbi Fisch translates by "a fire flashing up," and states that this is "indicative of the burning of the temple by the invading forces. The Hebrew phrase is literally 'a fire taking hold of itself,' i.e. a succession of outbursts of flame." (P. 3)

(continued...)

וְנִגְהָ לּוֹ סָבִיב

and it had a brightness around (it).

וּמִתּוֹכָהּ כְּעֵין הַחֲשָׁמַל

And from its midst like an eye / spring of shining metal,²²

מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ:

from the fire's midst.

1:5²³

²¹(...continued)

Perhaps this points to the burning of the temple, but this is not made clear by the text. Cooke translates by “and a streaming fire...i.e., forming a continuous stream [of fire].” (P. 10)

Cooke comments that “In a shining circle of light the prophet recognized, though he hardly dared to put it into words, the Presence of the Glory of Yahweh, **verses 27, 28...**

“Like other prophets, Ezekiel began his ministry by a direct, personal encounter with Yahweh. This experience not only convinced him of the Supreme Reality, but imparted the Truth which he was to proclaim. The Revelation of [YHWH’s] Being and Purpose came to him in the form of a vision, seen in a state of ecstasy [the text says nothing about ‘ecstasy’], and it constituted his call to the work of a prophet. Moses, Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah received their call in the same way (**Exodus 3; Amos 7:15; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1:4-10**); but Ezekiel describes the spiritual event much more fully than any of his predecessors...

“The central Object of the vision is the Glory of the Divine Presence, Seated in Splendor yet not stationary, for the Living Creatures with their wings, the wheels and the Spirit which impels them, are engaged in giving movement to the Throne: it is as though Yahweh, Lord of heaven and earth, Had Traveled to Reveal Himself in distant Babylonia...but...the text remains difficult, owing to the difficulty of the matter with which it deals. Such Marvels had never been seen before, and the prophet labors to make distinct to his readers what was dazzlingly clear to his own eyes.” (Pp. 8-9)

22

Rabbi Fisch’s translation is “electrum.” He states that “The Hebrew *chashmal* ‘denotes some kind of bright metal; it is a foreign word, and most likely identical with Akkadian *esmaru*, polished bronze, and the Egyptian *chesmen* (?), bronze.” (P. 3) Rabbi Fisch is quoting Cooke from the **International Critical Commentary**.

23

Reimer comments on **1:5-14** that “The piling up of detail contrasts with the bland label of Living Creatures, only later identified as ‘cherubim’ in **10:20**. The first impression (**1:6-9**) is followed by closer detail (**verses 10-13**)...

A beautiful carved ivory that may depict one of these composite creatures has been found, dating to the 9th century B.C.E. It probably comes from the site of Arslan Tash in northern Syria. The figure
(continued...)

וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דְּמֹת אַרְבַּע חַיֹּת

And from its midst a likeness²⁴ of four Living Creatures.²⁵

וְזֶה מְרֵאֵיהֶן

And this (was) their appearance:

דְּמֹת אָדָם לְהֵנָּה:

(the) likeness of a human-being belonged to these.²⁶

²³(...continued)

combines all four features described in **chapter 1**; a human figure, wings of an eagle [our [griffon-vulture], forelegs of a lion, and hind legs of an ox.” (P. 1502) See “Arslan Tash Ivory Images” on the Internet, where there a number of photographs of this figure.

24

Reimer notes that “The many uses of the term ‘likeness’ (דְּמֹת, **demuth**, 10 times in **chapter 1**) emphasize the impressionistic nature of the vision’s description.” (P. 1502) Yes! Matties says, “The repetition of ‘something like’ throughout the passage suggests that the Divine defies description.” (P. 1156) But of course—Ezekiel is attempting to describe the in-describable! The Reality is unlike anything we human beings have ever seen!

25

Cooke comments that “The prophet does not call them Cherubim, for they were unlike the figures which he remembered in the temple at Jerusalem; he gives them a vaguer, general name, חַיֹּת, *hayyoth*, ‘living beings.’ a designation adopted late for creatures of the same symbolic character, though with different functions, in **Daniel 7:3, 17; Revelation 4:6-9, 5:6, 8, 14** etc. Not till **Ezekiel 10:15, 20** are the חַיֹּת, *hayyoth* recognized as Cherubim. In the description of his visions, Ezekiel has to search for analogies in the world of sense; how inadequate he feels them to be is shown by his constant use of the word likeness (15 times).” (P. 11)

Eichrodt states that “The bizarre ‘Living Creatures,’ also called cherubim, as in **chapter 10** of [**Ezekiel**], are known all over the ancient East, under a similar form, as throne-bearers or guardians of temple or palace thresholds. The half-human, half-bestial shape and attributes load them with all the powers of both species, and express how awe-inspiring such guardians of holy things must be.” (P. 55) See the pictures of “guardians of temple thresholds” on the Internet—and notice that all of those shown have their bottom half that of a bull, while the head is that of a human—but none with the four-faces of this depiction in **Ezekiel**.

Matties likewise states that “The four creatures resemble those that guard Assyrian and Babylonian sanctuaries and palaces.” (P. 1156) Yes, somewhat—but those guarding Assyrian and Babylonian sanctuaries and palaces are made of stone, immovable—while these in Ezekiel’s vision are “on the move”! These are alive—those are dead!

26

(continued...)

1:6 וְאַרְבַּעַה פָּנִים לְאַחַת

And four faces to one / each one,²⁷

וְאַרְבַּע כַּנְּפֹיִם לְאַחַת לָהֶם:

and four wings to one / each one to / of them.²⁸

1:7 וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And their legs—a straight leg.

וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כְּכַף רַגְלֵי עֵגֶל

And (the) sole of their feet—like (the) sole of a calf’s foot,²⁹

וְנֹצְצִים כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלִיל:

and sparkling like an eye of burnished bronze.³⁰

²⁶(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The bodies of the Living Creatures stood upright and were shaped like the human body, but some of the faces...resembled those of various animals. The point that Ezekiel makes is that, despite their abnormal appearance, the supporters of the *Merkabah* [Hebrew word for ‘chariot,’ the Hebrew name given to Ezekiel’s vision in **chapters 1-3**] were essentially human in form.” (P. 3)

Cooke translates by “the likeness of a man was theirs,” and he comments that “They were standing upright [though it is not expressly stated, we may picture the Creatures with two legs and two feet each, since they are standing upright and have human hands], and so far the human form predominated in their aspect, though the next verses portray figures unlike anything human...[Ezekiel] would remember the two-winged Cherubim in the temple (**1 Kings 6:27**), perhaps also the six-winged Seraphim in Isaiah’s vision; while the conception of super-natural beings as half-human and half-animal was widely spread in the ancient Semitic world.” (Pp. 11-13)

²⁷

Rabbi Fisch states that “Each of the four Living Creatures had the face of a man in front, of a lion on the right side, of an ox on the left side, and of an eagle [our ‘griffon-vulture’] behind.” (P. 3)

²⁸

Cooke comments that “The four pairs of wings seemed to be *coupled together* (compare **Exodus 26:2**), touching one another at the tips, compare **1 Kings 6:27**: thus they formed a square.” (P. 13)

²⁹

Yes, the Living Creatures had the appearance of a human, but then when Ezekiel looked down at their feet, they had the feet of calves, i.e., hooves, instead of feet and shoes.

³⁰

Yes, even their feet sparkled—so marvelous and unusual was their appearance!

1:8 וַיִּדְרוּ [וַיִּדְרִי] אָדָם מִתַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם

And hands of a human beneath their wings;

עַל אַרְבַּעַת רַבְעֵיהֶם

upon their four sides.³¹

וּפְנֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם לְאַרְבַּעֵתָם:

And their faces and their wings—belonging to (the) four of them,

1:9 חִבְרַת אִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחֹתָהּ כַּנְפֵיהֶם

each one (feminine)³² touching its sister (with their) wings.³³

לֹא-יָסְבוּ בְּלִכְתָּן

They did not turn around in / as they went--³⁴

31

Yes, the Living Creatures had the appearance of both animals and griffon vultures with wings-- but also the appearance of humans, with hands appearing beneath their wings! So unusual, so marvelous was their appearance!

32

Cooke comments that “Though the Hebrew word for *Living Creatures* is feminine, no consistency is observed in the use of genders; sometimes the pronouns (in Hebrew pronominal suffixes) which refer to the חַיִּיּוֹת, *chayyoth* [Living Creatures] are feminine, e.g. in **verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 12**; but more often masculine, e.g. in **verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13** etc., partly because the predominating aspect was that of male figures, partly because Hebrew writers instinctively preferred masculine forms to feminine; perhaps, too, the author...had the masculine Cherubim in his mind at the time. St. Jerome finds a mystical significance in the mixture of genders, particularly in the Hebrew idiom used in **verses 9, 23** (אִשָּׁה and אִישׁ, *each and other*, literally *woman, man*).” (P. 13)

33

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Two of the four wings of each creature were spread above the face and were joined on both sides to the wings of its neighbor, so that each face was hidden by the wings (Rashi).” (P. 4) We do not think the text makes this clear.

34

Rabbi Fisch states that “Each creature having a face on each side, it had no need to turn round when it desired to alter its course; the face towards the intended course moved forward in that direction.” (P. 4) Reimer explains that “The four-sided form of the creatures ensures that they can always do the impossible: go straight forward in any direction but without turning.” (P. 1052) Yes, we are in the realm of the “vision-story,” in which the impossible becomes possible!

(continued...)

אִישׁ אֶל-עֵבֶר פָּנָיו יֵלְכוּ:

each one (masculine) beyond its faces they went.³⁵

1:10 וְדַמּוּת פְּנֵיהֶם פְּנֵי אָדָם

And (the) likeness of their faces—faces of a human,

וּפְנֵי אַרְיֵה אֶל-הַיְמִין לְאַרְבַּעָתָם

and faces of a lion, to the right of the four of them;

וּפְנֵי-שׁוֹר מִהַשְּׂמֹאל לְאַרְבַּעָתָן

and faces of an ox from the left of (the) four of them;

וּפְנֵי-נְשָׁר לְאַרְבַּעָתָן:

and faces of a griffon vulture to (the) four of them.³⁶

³⁴(...continued)

Cooke comments that “In whatever direction they moved, the Living Creatures presented the same front: there was no need to turn around.” (P. 14)

³⁵

Translations of **verse 9** vary:

King James, “Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.”

Tanakh, “Each one's wings touched those of the other. They did not turn when they moved; each could move in the direction of any of its faces.”

New Revised Standard, “their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved.”

Rahlfs, οὐκ ἐπεστρέφοντο ἐν τῷ βαδίσει αὐτά ἕκαστον κατέναντι τοῦ προσώπου αὐτῶν ἐπορεύοντο, “They were not turning as they walked, each one was proceeding opposite their face.”

³⁶

Translations of **verse 10** vary:

King James, “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.”

Tanakh, “Each of them had a human face the front; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right; each of the four had the face of an ox on the left; and each of the four had the face of an eagle the back.”

New Revised Standard, “As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle;”

(continued...)

1:11 וּפְנֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם פָּרְדוּת מִלְמַעְלָה

And their faces and their wings (were) spread out from above;

לְאִישׁ שְׁתֵּים חִבְרוּת אִישׁ

to each one two, joining each--

וּשְׁתֵּים מְכַסּוֹת אֶת גּוֹיֵיהֶנָּה:

and two covering their bodies.³⁷

³⁶(...continued)

Rahfs, καὶ ὁμοίωσις τῶν προσώπων αὐτῶν πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπου καὶ πρόσωπον λέοντος ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν καὶ πρόσωπον μόσχου ἐξ ἀριστερῶν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν καὶ πρόσωπον ἄετοῦ τοῖς τέσσαρσιν, “and (the) likeness of their faces: a face of a person / man, and face of a lion out of (the) right to the four; and face of a calf out of (the) left to the four; and a face of an eagle to the four.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Representatives of the lion, ox and eagle were common in Babylonian sculpture, and so naturally appeared to the mind of a Judean who was resident in this country.” (P. 4) Yes, but according to the text, the vision was not originated in Ezekiel the Judean’s mind, but rather came from [YHWH]. What do you think?

Cooke comments that “The symbolism of the faces is well explained by the Rabbis: ‘man is exalted among creatures; the eagle [our ‘griffon-vulture’] is exalted among birds; the ox is exalted among domestic animals; the lion is exalted among wild beasts; and all of them have received dominion, and greatness has been given them, yet they are stationed below the chariot of the Holy One,’ **Midrash Rabbah Shemoth # 23** (on **Exodus 15:1**); similarly **Babylonian Talmud Hagiga 13b**. Christian writers interpreted the four faces as symbols of the Evangelists.” (P. 14)

Reimer comments that “The creatures had a predominantly human shape, but each had four different faces. This assemblage is unique, although complex combinations of supernatural beings are known throughout the ancient Near East. Many suggestions have been made to explain their symbolism. Certainly each creature is majestic in its realm, whether among the wild (lion; **Proverbs 30:30**) and domestic (ox; **Proverbs 14:4**) animals, or in the air (eagle [our griffon vulture]; **Proverbs 23:5**; compare **Obadiah 4**), with each of them noticed subsequently to the human face (compare **Genesis 1:26**). This imagery is later echoed in the four (separate) creatures before the Divine throne in **Revelation 4:7**.” (Pp. 1502-03)

Hilmer states that the four Living Creatures represent “[YHWH’s] creation: ‘man,’ [YHWH’s] ordained ruler of creation (see **Genesis 1:26-28**; **Psalm 8**); ‘lion,’ the strongest of the wild beasts; ‘ox,’ the most powerful of the domesticated animals’; ‘eagle [our griffon-vulture], the mightiest of the birds. These four creatures appear again in **Revelation 4:7**, and often are seen in the paintings and sculpture of the Middle Ages, where they represent the four Gospels.” (P. 1231)

37

(continued...)

1:12 וְאִישׁ אֶל-עֵבֶר פָּנָיו יֵלְכוּ

And each one to beyond his faces would walk / go;

אֶל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה-שָׁמָּה הַרוּחַ לִלְכֹת יֵלְכוּ

to wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit would be walking, they would walk / go.³⁸

לֹא יָסְבוּ בְּלִכְתָּן:

They did not turn around as they went.³⁹

³⁷(...continued)

Translations of **verse 11** vary:

King James, “Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.”

Tanakh, “Such were their faces. As for their wings, they were separated: above, each had two touching those of the others, while the other two covered its body.”

New Revised Standard, “such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies.”

Rahlfs, καὶ αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν ἐκτεταμέναι ἄνωθεν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν ἑκατέρω δύο συνεζευγμέναι πρὸς ἀλλήλας καὶ δύο ἐπεκάλυπτον ἐπάνω τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν, “and their wings stretched out above to the four, both two joined to (the) other, and two were covering up over their body.”

Cooke comments that “Apparently **verse 11** mentions, first, a characteristic of all four Living Creatures, and then certain particulars about each. But the text is unintelligible as it stands.” (P. 14) And what did you expect, in a vision characterized by “puzzles / enigmas”?

³⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The spirit is the Divine will which guided the movements of the creatures.

³⁹

Translations of **verse 12** vary:

King James, “And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; *and* they turned not when they went.”

Tanakh, “And each could move in the direction of any of its faces; they went wherever the spirit impelled them to go, without turning when they moved.”

New Revised Standard, “Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went.”

Rahlfs, καὶ ἑκάτερον κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπορεύετο οὐ ἂν ἦν τὸ πνεῦμα πορευόμενον ἐπορεύοντο καὶ οὐκ ἐπέστρεφον, “and both / each one went according to (its) face; it went wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit was moving, it went and did not turn around.”

(continued...)

³⁹(...continued)

Yes, according to Ezekiel's mysterious, highly symbolical depiction, the Divine chariot / throne was mobile, not stationary, like the chest / ark of the covenant. It had wheels, and it moved in all possible directions, wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit led. It could go in all directions at once without turning, something impossible in the normal world of human experience, but not at all impossible in the visionary / symbolical world of the prophet!

Ezekiel himself was experiencing the Presence of YHWH and His Chariot-Throne in Babylon, and there is an inherent universalism in his depiction of YHWH's Throne! Jeremiah had taught that the chest / ark of the covenant would no longer be at the center or even part of Israel's religion: **Jeremiah 3:16,**

וְהָיָה כִּי תִרְבוּ וּפְרִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ

And it will happen when you multiply and are fruitful in the land

בְּיָמִים הַהֵמָּה

in those days--

נֹאמֵי-יְהוָה

--(it is) a saying of YHWH--

לֹא-יֵאמְרוּ עוֹד

you will not say again,

אֲרוֹן בְּרִית-יְהוָה

Ark / Chest of YHWH's covenant!

וְלֹא יַעֲלֶה עַל-לֵב

And it will not come up in (your) heart / mind;

וְלֹא יִזְכְּרוּ-בּוֹ

and they will not remember it,

וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ

and they will not visit (it),

וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד:

and it will not be made again!

Yes. And now Ezekiel depicts a Divine Chariot-Throne that is mobile, that moves mysteriously in all directions at once--certainly not just in the land of Israel! It is no longer the same old ark of the covenant, but it is still the Divine Throne, now mobile, movable, and the Divine Presence, hitherto considered by Ezekiel and his fellow Jews to be located exclusively in the Jerusalem temple, is now seen to be present in the City of Nippur, in the non-Jewish Babylonia, of all places!

And what will this vision do to the old idea that YHWH is the God of Israel, Who is Present in the temple in Jerusalem? Suddenly, for Ezekiel, it is realized that YHWH is the God of all the earth, Who is present in Nippur, Babylonia, just as he was in Jerusalem, Judah! What an impact this will make (continued...)

1:13 וְדַמוֹת הַחַיּוֹת מֵרְאִיֵּיהֶם

And (the) likeness of the Living Creatures' appearance—

כְּנֹחַלֵי־אֵשׁ בִּעְרוֹת

(it was) like burning-coals of fire, burning,⁴⁰

כְּמֵרְאֵה הַלְּפָדִים הִיא

it (was) like (the) appearance of the torches

מִתְהַלְכֶת בֵּין הַחַיּוֹת

walking to and fro between the Living Creatures,

וְנֹגַהּ לְאֵשׁ

and brightness belonged to the fire.

וּמִן־הָאֵשׁ יוֹצֵא בָרָק:

and from the fire was going forth lightning.⁴¹

³⁹(...continued)

on Ezekiel's theology! But we must wait to see how Ezekiel himself develops his theology in the light of this new conviction.

40

Rabbi Fisch notes that “A similar account of [YHWH's] manifestation is given in **Psalm 18:9**.” (P. 6) Yes, but **Psalm 18**, with its **51 verses** in Hebrew, is also quite different. It is David's account of how in the midst of battle it seemed like all was lost, and his enemies had conquered him. But then, at the very darkest hour, suddenly YHWH appeared: “⁶ In my distress I called upon [YHWH]; to my God I cried for help. From His temple He Heard my voice, and my cry to Him reached His Ears. ⁷ Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because He Was Angry. ⁸ Smoke went up from His Nostrils, and devouring fire from His Mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from Him. ⁹ He Bowed the heavens, and Came Down; thick darkness was under His Feet. ¹⁰ He Rode on a cherub, and flew; He Came Swiftly upon the wings of the wind. ¹¹ He Made darkness His covering around Him, His canopy thick clouds dark with water. ¹² Out of the brightness before Him there broke through His clouds hailstones and coals of fire. Smoke went up in His Nose, and fire from His Mouth devours! Coals burned, coming from Him!”

Psalm 18 is the depiction of YHWH's Coming from the temple to His anointed king in the midst of battle and the threat of defeat, to Rescue him and Enable him to win the battle. But it is not at all the depiction of YHWH as Present in foreign, unclean lands, Moving His Throne from Israel to some foreign land, to Be With His people there. What do you think?

41

(continued...)

1:14 וְהַחַיּוֹת רָצוּ וְשׁוּב

And the Living Creatures (were) running and returning;⁴²

כְּמֵרָאָה הַבֹּזֵק;

like (the) appearance of the lightning-flash.⁴³

1:15⁴⁴ וַאֲרָא הַחַיּוֹת

And I saw the Living Creatures--

⁴¹(...continued)

Cooke comments that this verse, “as a whole mentions another remarkable element in the vision, namely, the fire, radiating a diffused light (compare **verse 4**), and sending out flashes, from the center of the square formed by the Living Creatures: it is alluded to again in **Ezekiel 10:7**. So elsewhere in descriptions of a Theophany: with the burning coals of fire compare **Psalms 18:9**; with the torches, compare **Genesis 15:7**, **Exodus 20:18**; with the lightning compare **Psalms 18:15**; **77:19**.” (P. 15)

⁴²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Creatures were not stationary, but galloped to and fro with the speed of lightning.” (P. 5)

⁴³

Verse 14 is omitted by the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**).

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Hebrew word for lightning here is *bazak*, another form of *barak*, the letters ו and כ in Hebrew interchanging.” (P. 5) But this is the only occurrence of *bazak* in the **Hebrew Bible**, and we think it best to consider it a mistake in spelling. We remember no examples for the interchange of ו and כ in Hebrew; but have oftentimes seen the letter כ mistaken for the letter ו.

Cooke comments that “In **verse 13** the torch-like flames move to and fro between the Living Creatures, and the central fire sends out lightning; here [in **verse 14**] the Living Creatures themselves dart about like lightning.” (Pp. 15-16)

⁴⁴

Reimer notes on **verses 15-21** that “The complex structure of the wheels is difficult to envisage, though something gyroscopic seems to be suggested.” (P. 1503) “A gyroscope (from Classical Greek γυροσ, ‘circle’ and σκοπέω, ‘to look’) is a device used for measuring or maintaining orientation and angular velocity. It is a spinning wheel or disc in which the axis of rotation (spin axis) is free to assume any orientation by itself. When rotating, the orientation of this axis is unaffected by tilting or rotation of the mounting, according to the conservation of angular momentum.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/7/2020)

That’s a pretty modern idea for understanding the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, wouldn’t you say? John Serson invented the first gyroscope, nicknamed the whirling speculum, in 1743.

וְהִנֵּה אֶפְסֹן אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ

and look—one wheel in the earth / land,

אֶצֶל הַחַיּוֹת לְאַרְבַּעַת פָּנָיו:

next to the Living Creatures, to four of its faces.⁴⁵

45

Translations of **verse 15** vary:

King James, “Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.”

Tanakh, “As I gazed on the creatures, I saw one wheel on the ground next to each of the four-faced creatures.”

New Revised Standard, “As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.”

New International, “As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces.”

New Jerusalem, “Now, as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel touching the ground beside each of the four-faced living creatures.”

Rahlfs, καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ τροχὸς εἰς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐχόμενος τῶν ζώων τοῖς τέσσαρσιν, “and I saw, and look—one wheel upon the earth, having / belonging to the living creatures, to the four.”

We understand why translators want to make the text depict a chariot with four wheels, one for each of the Living Creatures. But in fact, this is not what the text says. The Hebrew has אֶפְסֹן אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ אֶצֶל הַחַיּוֹת לְאַרְבַּעַת פָּנָיו: בְּאֶרֶץ אֶצֶל הַחַיּוֹת לְאַרְבַּעַת פָּנָיו, literally “a wheel, one, on the earth, beside the Living Creatures, (belonging) to four of his / its faces”. The Greek text omits “its faces”, but has “one wheel upon the earth, having / belonging to the Living Creatures, to the four.”

And we wonder—Does the text say Ezekiel saw “one wheel,” or “four wheels,” as **New Revised Standard** has it? I.e., is this a one-wheel vehicle, or a four-wheel vehicle? Notice that in **verse 16** the plural “wheels” occurs, apparently confirming the view that it has more than one wheel. But such is not the case in **verse 15**! Could this verse mean that one wheel (of the plural wheels) was touching the earth, the other / others were not?

Regardless of how we answer this question, it is clear that for Ezekiel the Divine Throne is not stationary, but rather, mobile. It is not located in one permanent location (such as the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem), but rather can be located in the foreign land of Babylonia, and if there, anywhere and everywhere!

Matties comments that in **verses 15-21** “Three features of the wheels emerge: the ability to move effortlessly [the wheels do not turn] in any direction and in consonance with the creatures, the glittering beauty of the construction (the eyes are eye-shaped jewels), and the energizing spirit of the Living Creatures in the wheels.” (P. 1157)

1:16 מְרֵאָה הָאוֹפָנִים וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כְּעֵין תַּרְשִׁישׁ

(The) appearance of the wheels, and their structure, (was) like a spring / eye of jasper;⁴⁶

וְדַמּוּת אֶחָד לְאַרְבַּעֹתָן

and (there was) one likeness to the four of them;

וּמְרֵאֵיהֶם וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם

and their appearance and their structure,

כְּאִשֶּׁר יִהְיֶה הָאוֹפֵן בְּתוֹךְ הָאוֹפֵן:

(was) just like the wheel would be in the midst of the wheel,⁴⁷

46

Translations vary from “*was* like unto the colour of a beryl,” to “they gleamed like beryl,” to “was like the gleaming of beryl,” to “They sparkled like topaz,” to “were like glittering chrysolite.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) does not know what to do with the Hebrew noun תַּרְשִׁישׁ, **tarshiysh**, and simply transliterates it by θαρσις, “ὥς εἶδος θαρσις,” like a sight of tharsis.”

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The stone was a species of chrysolite, perhaps the topaz. It is mentioned again in **Ezekiel 28:13**. Kimchi explains that the wheel resembled the beryl both in its manifold colors (appearance) and in its transparent quality (work).” (P. 5)

See chrysolite, beryl, and topaz on the Internet, with numerous samples of each—the chrysolite is green, the beryl is bright red, the topaz has many colors, wine red, pale gray, reddish-orange, pale green, or pink (rare), and opaque to translucent / transparent. It seems apparent that Ezekiel saw a Chariot with four strikingly beautiful wheels—in some ways they looked like a human eye, or a spring of water—but there is no way to depict them accurately, or to know their color. Suffice it to say they were the color of a precious jewel.

47

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “as it were a wheel within a wheel.” He states that “One wheel was fixed into another crosswise [what does that mean?], so that in whatever direction the creature turned the wheel revolved that way.” (P. 5) Why couldn’t one wheel do just as well as a wheel within a wheel, when it comes to turning?

Hilmer’s translation has “a wheel intersecting a wheel,” and he comments that this probably means “two wheels intersecting at right angles in order to move in all directions (see **verse 17**). The imagery symbolizes the omnipresence of [YHWH].” (P. 1231)

Translations vary, from “as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel,” to “as of two wheels cutting through each other,” to “something like a wheel within a wheel,” to “made like a wheel intersecting a wheel,” to “each wheel seemed to have another wheel inside it.”

(continued...)

1:17 עַל-אַרְבַּעַת רַבְעֵיהֶן

upon their four sides.

בְּלִכְתָּם יֵלְכוּ

As they went, they went.

לֹא יָסְבוּ בְּלִכְתָּן:

They did not turn around as they went.⁴⁸

⁴⁷(...continued)

On the Internet, look at “a wheel within a wheel”—and see hundreds of artistic drawings of what this could look like.

Cooke comments that in **verse 16** the appearance and construction of the wheels are described. “They gleamed with a yellow radiance, and, viewed from the angle at which the spectator stood, they seemed to revolve one within another...The prophet was looking at the whole group from an angle, because he could see all four wheels at the same time; seen from this point, they would appear to be revolving within another.” (Pp. 16-17)

48

Translations of **verse 17** vary:

King James, “When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.”

Tanakh, “And when they moved, each could move in the direction of any of its four quarters; they did not veer when they moved.”

New Revised Standard, “When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved.”

New International, “As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went.”

New Jerusalem, “In whichever of the four directions they moved, they did not need to turn as they moved.”

Rahlfs, ἐπὶ τὰ τέσσαρα μέρη αὐτῶν ἐπορεύοντο οὐκ ἐπέστρεφον ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτὰ, “upon their four parts they went; they did not turn around / return as they went.”

Not only was the Divine Throne which Ezekiel saw mobile; it was apparently able to move in four different directions at once without its wheels moving! It is certainly a mysterious “supernatural vehicle”—an impossibility in the prophet’s everyday, natural world; but completely possible in Ezekiel’s visionary, symbolical world when YHWH Reveals Himself! To our knowledge, there is nothing really like Ezekiel’s vision found in the literature of the ancient Near East. There are similar images of part-human, part-animal creatures standing guard at the entrances to sanctuaries and palaces, but nothing like this overall vision of Ezekiel, depicting the Chariot of the Invisible, Non-iconic YHWH, Who Is Present in a foreign country, far from His Sanctuary in Jerusalem, and Who is a Mobile God, Able to Move and Be Present anywhere He Desires.

(continued...)

1:18 וְנִבְיָהֶן וְגִבַּה לָהֶם

And their [the wheels'] backs / sides—and a height to them,

וַיִּרְאֶה לָהֶם

and He would see by means of them,⁴⁹

וְגִבְתָּם מִלְּאֵת עֵינַיִם

and their backs / sides (were) full of eyes,⁵⁰

סָבִיב לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן:

(all) around, to the four of them.⁵¹

⁴⁸(...continued)

Cooke comments that “All four wheels moved together in whatever direction the Throne traveled; like the Living Creatures (**verses 9b, 12**), they had no need to turn in order to face the particular direction taken...

“The Supernatural World is not governed by the laws of the world we live in: no wonder that the prophet’s sentences are far from clear, and that he finds it difficult to convey any intelligible idea of movements so contrary to all known laws.” (Pp. 17-18)

⁴⁹

Cooke comments that the opening lines of **verse 18** are “corrupt, and can only be restored by conjecture, with some help from the versions.” (P. 18) And again we ask, What did you expect, coming from a vision characterized by puzzles / enigmas? We say, leave the text as it is, with its puzzling language. Don’t rewrite the sentence, to make it say what you think it ought to say, and then comment on it as if you are commenting on the biblical text. You are not.

Cooke agrees with Kraetzschmar that “The eyes on the rims of the wheels may symbolize life and intelligence.” (P. 18) We think they symbolize the fact that YHWH can see everything going on in the universes.

⁵⁰

Hilmer notes that being “full of eyes” “symbolizes [YHWH’s] all-seeing nature.” (P. 1231)

⁵¹

Translations of **verse 18** vary:

King James, “As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four.”

Tanakh, “Their rims were tall and frightening, for the rims of all four were covered all over with eyes.”

New Revised Standard, “Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around.” **New International**, same;

(continued...)

1:19⁵² וּבִלְכַתְּ הַחַיִּוֹת יֵלְכוּ הָאוֹפָנִים אַצְלָם

And as the Living Creatures went, the wheels went next to them.

וּבִהֲנִשָּׂא הַחַיִּוֹת מִעַל הָאָרֶץ

and when the Living Creatures were lifted up from upon the earth / land,

יִנָּשְׂאוּ הָאוֹפָנִים:

the wheels were lifted up.

1:20 עַל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה-שָׁם הַרוּחַ לֵלְכַתְּ

Because wherever the wind / spirit / Spirit^{53, 2} was, to go,

יֵלְכוּ שָׁמָּה הַרוּחַ לֵלְכַתְּ

they would go there, where the wind / spirit / Spirit was to go.⁵⁴

וְהָאוֹפָנִים יִנָּשְׂאוּ לְעִמָּתָם

And the wheels would be lifted up beside them--

⁵¹(...continued)

New Jerusalem, “Their circumference was of awe-inspiring size, and the rims of all four sparkled all the way round.”

Rahlfs, οὐδ’ οἱ νῶτοι αὐτῶν καὶ ὕψος ἦν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶδον αὐτά καὶ οἱ νῶτοι αὐτῶν πλήρεις ὀφθαλμῶν κυκλόθεν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν, “neither their backs; and they had a height; and I saw them. And their backs (were) full of eyes, all around the four.”

This puzzling feature of the moveable Divine Throne, with wheels covered with eyes, seems weird—as the eyes would get crushed with the turning of the wheels—but Ezekiel has stated that the wheels did not turn as they went. Strange as it may seem, the wheels which can turn in every direction are the location of numerous eyes, able to see what is going on wherever the Divine Throne goes. We think this is a depiction of YHWH’s omniscience, His ability to see and know all that is going on in the universes. There is nothing hidden from His sight! But what a strange way to depict it!

⁵²

Cooke comments that “The point insisted upon in **verses 19-21** is the unity between the Living Creatures and the wheels close to them (**verse 15**), parallel to them (**verse 20**), below them (**Ezekiel 10:2**), in their movements: it was due to an impulse common to them all.” (P. 18)

⁵³

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἡ νεφέλη, “the cloud.”

⁵⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Both creatures and wheels moved as intended by the Divine Presence in the *Merkabah* (Rashi).” (P. 6)

כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בְּאוֹפָנִים:

because the Living creature's wind / spirit / Spirit (was) in the wheels.

1:21 בְּלָכְתָּם יֵלְכוּ

When they went, they went;

וּבְעִמּוּדָם יַעֲמֻדוּ

and when they stood still, they stood still.⁵⁵

וּבְהִנְשָׂאֵם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ

and when they were lifted up from upon the land / earth,

יִנְשְׂאוּ הָאוֹפָנִים לְעִמָּתָם

the wheels were lifted up beside them.

כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בְּאוֹפָנִים:

Because the Living creature's spirit / Spirit⁵⁶ (was) in the wheels.

1:22⁵⁷

55

Rabbi Fisch comments that “When the creatures moved the wheels moved with them. The repetition emphasizes the coordination between the creatures and the wheels.” (P. 6)

56

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has πνεῦμα ζωῆς, “a spirit / Spirit of life.”

57

Eichrodt states that “The Living Creatures bear the vaulted platform on which the Throne of [YHWH] stands, so that they exercise the same function as the cherubim associated with the Holy Ark, on which Yahweh has His Throne, according to **1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:14-15**...The four Living Creatures are thus shown to be the representatives of the four corners of the earth [do you see this in Ezekiel's vision? We do not], and therefore of the world-embracing sovereignty of Him Who is enthroned upon them, as is also suggested by their fourfold faces and wings...

“While they are related to the world, the World-Ruler has no dwelling within the world, but is Enthroned in other-worldly Glory above the dome of heaven [does the vision show this? We do not see it]...The Almighty Power, Whose Wonders unfold before the prophet's eyes, turns towards the nations [do the prophet's eyes turn ‘towards the nations,’ or only toward Babylon?], and no thought of Israel is involved [but yes, the thought it there, of the old Ark of the Covenant, located in Israel, not going beyond Israel]...

“The cumulative effect of all the details of the vision is clearly evident to the consciousness of the prophet. It serves in very fact to raise him from this present state, and the oppressive feeling of being
(continued...)

וְדַמּוּת עַל־רֵאשֵׁי הַחַיָּה

And a likeness over (the) heads of the living creature(s),

רָקִיעַ

an extended surface / expanse,⁵⁸

כְּעֵין הַקָּרַח הַנּוֹרָא

like an eye / spring of the fearsome / awe-inspiring frost / crystal,

נֹטְוֵי עַל־רֵאשֵׁיהֶם מִלְּמַעְלָה:

stretched out over their heads, from above.⁵⁹

⁵⁷(...continued)

without any expedient, by showing him the Power hidden behind the curtain of earthly reality...Divine Perfection, Power and Authority are themselves impressively symbolized by the glittering vision with all its gleaming colors. They make a deep impression upon this outcast in a heathen land...This [Divine Glory of YHWH, כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה], according to the priestly view dwelt only in the tabernacle, or in the Holy of Holies of the temple at Zion...But now he sees that it is not indissolubly tied to those places, but is Manifesting Itself, by preference, to a lost and banished one like himself...[as] not the national God of Zion to whom Israel lays an exclusive claim, but [YHWH], free from all earthly limitations, and able to command the whole universe.” (Pp. 56, 58, 59)

Reimer comments that **verses 22-28** contain “The climax of the vision: a Form can be discerned above the wheels, above the creatures, above the expanse, on a Throne. Wrapped in light, the Glory of [YHWH] cannot be captured in human language.” (P. 1503) However, we take the depiction as daring to say that the Form is like a human-being. What do you think?

⁵⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Over the heads of the creatures appeared a kind of flooring upon which rested the Throne of the Glory of the Lord (**verse 26**).” (Pp. 6-7)

Reimer notes that “Expanse [רָקִיעַ], **raqiy(a)** appears four times in the immediate context (**verses 22-23, 25-26**) and forms a strong link to **Genesis 1:6-8, 14-20**, where it is used nine times (out of a total of 17 times in the whole **Old Testament**). There the expanse forms the dome of the sky; here it is borne on the wings of the creatures and forms a boundary beyond which comes the culmination of the vision.” (P. 1503) We say Yes! Ezekiel’s vision has to do with YHWH, the God of Creation, the God of all the earth. That is why he adopts the language of the Creation story in **Genesis 1**.

⁵⁹

Translations of **verse 22** vary:

King James, “And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.”

(continued...)

1:23 וְתַחַת הַרְקִיעַ כְּנִפְיֵיהֶם יִשְׂרוּת

And beneath the extended surface / expanse, their straight wings--⁶⁰

אִשָּׁה אֶל-אָחֹתָהּ

each one (pointing)⁶¹ to its sister.

וּלְאִישׁ שְׁתֵּימָּם מְכַסּוֹת לְהִנָּה

To each (living creature) two (wings), covering to these;

וּלְאִישׁ שְׁתֵּימָּם מְכַסּוֹת לְהִנָּה אֶת גּוּיֵיהֶם:

And to each two, covering to these, their bodies.⁶²

⁵⁹(...continued)

Tanakh, “Above the heads of the creatures was a form: an expanse, with an awe-inspiring gleam as of crystal, was spread out above their heads.”

New Revised Standard, “Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads.”

New International, “Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome.”

Rahlf's, καὶ ὁμοίωμα ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτοῖς τῶν ζώων ὡσεὶ στερέωμα ὡς ὄρασις κρυστάλλου ἐκτεταμένον ἐπὶ τῶν πτερύγων αὐτῶν ἐπάνωθεν, “and a likeness above the head of the living creatures, like a firmness / firmament, like a vision of rock-crystal, stretched out upon their wings, from above (them).”

Here Ezekiel’s language borrows language from the story of creation in **Genesis 1:6**, with its **רַקִּיעַ**, **raqiya**, “extended surface,” something “beaten thin.” But in Ezekiel’s vision-story, the extended surface is solid, enabling the Divine Chariot to rest upon it.

Cooke comments on **verse 22** that “Over the heads of the Living Creatures appeared what looked like a firm and level *platform*; presently this is seen to furnish the base of Yahweh’s Throne (**verse 26**)... In speaking of supernatural realities the prophet can only suggest a *likeness* to familiar things.” (P. 19)

⁶⁰

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Their outstretched wings did not extend to the sphere above the firmament, nor did they reach the firmament itself, but were beneath it.” (P. 7)

⁶¹

This line in Hebrew is incomplete: **אִשָּׁה אֶל-אָחֹתָהּ**, “each one to its sister.” We have interpolated the word “pointing.” Rabbi Fisch’s translation interpolates the word “conformable.” Others have “toward” or “touching.”

⁶²

Translations of **verse 23** vary:

(continued...)

1:24 וַאֲשַׁמַע אֶת-קוֹל כְּנַפְיָהֶם

And I heard (the) voice / sound of their wings,

כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים

like a voice / sound of many waters,

כְּקוֹל-שַׁדַּי בְּלִכְתָּם

Like a voice / sound of Shaddai⁶³ as they (the Living Creatures) went

⁶²(...continued)

King James, “And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.”

Tanakh, “Under the expanse, each had one pair of wings extended toward those of the others; and each had another pair covering its body.” (Eliminating the Hebrew’s over-wordiness)

New Revised Standard, “Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body.” (Also eliminating the Hebrew’s wordiness)

Rahlfs, καὶ ὑποκάτω τοῦ στερεώματος αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν ἐκτεταμέναι πτερουσόμεναι ἑτέρα τῇ ἑτέρᾳ ἐκάστῳ δύο συνεζευγμέναι ἐπικαλύπτουσαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν, “and beneath the firmness / firmament, their wings, stretched out, flapping each one to the other, to each one two, being joined, covering their bodies.”

Even the Living Creatures do not want to appear naked before YHWH. We are reminded of Isaiah’s vision in **Isaiah 6**, in which the seraphim cover their feet / genitals with their wings. Cooke comments that “The sentence is too clumsy to be original.” (P. 20) So he thinks. But if we keep in mind the statement made in **Numbers 12** concerning the prophetic message, that it will be rooted in visions and dreams, characterized by puzzles / enigmas, we will expect such clumsiness in the prophet’s language, and not demand exact precision. Instead, we will leave the text as it is, admitting its clumsiness / puzzle / enigma, and not attempt to rewrite the biblical text, then comment on what we ourselves have written, as if we are commenting on the prophet Ezekiel’s writing!

63

The Divine name שַׁדַּי, **shadday** occurs some 48 time in the **Hebrew Bible**. There are two main theories with regards to its meaning:

(1) Aquila, Symacchus and Theodotian all translated it by ἰκανός, “sufficient”; some ancient Jewish rabbis understood it as combining שַׁדַּי + הוּא (who is / self-) *sufficient*, but few if any modern Jewish scholars continue to hold this view.

(2) A number of modern scholars hold that the name equals “almighty, from the root שַׁדַּי + י, or from the root שַׁדַּי = שַׁדַּי, but שַׁדַּי means “deal violently,” not simply “mightily.” Compare the
(continued...)

קוֹל הַמְּלָאָה

a voice / sound of a rainstorm / rushing wind / tumult,⁶⁴

⁶³(...continued)

Greek (**Rahlfs**) παντοκράτωρ, “almighty,” which occurs some 14 times, (but in the **Five Scrolls of Moses** the translation of El Shadday is ὁ Θεός μου, σου, “the God of mine, yours, etc.). The Latin Vulgate mostly translates by *omnipotens*, “omnipotent.”

For its occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible** see:

1. שְׁרֵי Numbers 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20, 21; Psalm 68:15; 91:1; Joel 1:15 = Isaiah 13:6; Ezekiel 1:24 (here); especially often in Job--5:17 + 30 times.
2. אֱלֹהֵי שְׁרֵי Divine Name used in the stories of Israel’s patriarchs, Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:3; and once in Ezekiel 10:5.

Rabbi Fisch translates “like the voice of the Almighty,” and comments that this means the One “Who Spoke with a Mighty Voice on Mount Sinai.” (P. 7) Compare **Deuteronomy 5:23-26**,

- 23 And it happened, as you people heard the voice
from (the) midst of the darkness,
and the mountain burning with the fire—
and you drew near to me,
all (the) heads of your tribes and your officials / elders.
- 24 And you people said, Look—YHWH our God caused us to see
His Glorious Radiance, and His greatness,
and we heard His voice from the fire’s midst;
this very day we saw that God will speak with the human,
and he will live!
- 25 And now, for what reason shall we die?
Because this great fire will devour us,
if we are continuing to hear
YHWH our God’s Voice any more,
and we will die!
- 26 Because, who (of) all flesh heard (the) living God’s Voice,
Speaking from (the) midst of the fire like us, and lived?

⁶⁴

The feminine singular noun הַמְּלָאָה, also spelled הַמוֹלָה, means “rain-storm” (?), “rushing or roaring sound” (?). It occurs twice in the **Hebrew Bible**: קוֹל הַמוֹלָה גְּדָלָה Jeremiah 11:16, the “sound of a great storm, of wind fanning flames in a tree,” (in figure of Yahweh's judgement on Judah); קוֹל הַמְּלָאָה פְּקוֹל Ezekiel 1:24 (here), perhaps “tumult,” of noise of wings of Living Creatures in Ezekiel's vision.

כְּקוֹל מַחֲנֵה

like the) voice / sound of an (army) camp.⁶⁵

בְּעִמּוּדָם תִּרְפִּינָה כְּנִפְיָהֶן:

When they stood still, they slackened / let down their wings.

1:25 וַיְהִי־קוֹל מֵעַל לָרְקִיעַ

And there was a voice from over the extended surface / expanse

אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁם

which (was) over their head.⁶⁶

בְּעִמּוּדָם תִּרְפִּינָה כְּנִפְיָהֶן:

When they stood still, they slackened / let down their wings.⁶⁷

1:26 וּמִמַּעַל לָרְקִיעַ

And from above the extended surface / expanse

אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁם

which (was) over their head,

⁶⁵

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits lines 3, 4 and 5. The Hebrew text affirms that in the midst of the voices / sounds, there is heard the Voice of Shaddai, an ancient Canaanite name for God.

We believe that in the midst of all the noisy voices and sounds around us (including the many contrasting interpretations of the **Bible**), we can at times hear the Divine Voice, Speaking to our hearts—a Mysterious, Hidden Voice, but one that brings conviction and conversion to its hearers. What do you think? Have you ever heard such a Voice?

⁶⁶

Cooke comments on **verse 25** that “As the text stands, another *voice* is heard coming from above the firmament. It cannot be the Divine Voice, for Yahweh does not speak till **verse 28b**.” (P. 20) But nothing is said in the text about the Voice in **verse 28b** being the first time that Yahweh Speaks, and we may well consider the Voice here to be the Divine Voice, Giving Command to the Living Creatures to let down their wings.

⁶⁷

Note the repetition of this line from the preceding verse—meaning, we take it, that the noise of the flapping wings of the Living Creatures ceases.

כְּמֵרָאָה אֲבֵן־סַפִּיר

like an appearance of a sapphire stone,⁶⁸

דְּמוּת כֶּסֶא

a likeness of a throne,

וְעַל דְּמוּת הַכֶּסֶא

and upon (the) likeness of the Throne,

דְּמוּת כְּמֵרָאָה אָדָם עָלָיו מִלְּמַעְלָה:

a likeness like an appearance of a human upon it from above.⁶⁹

68

Compare **Exodus 24:10**,

24.10 וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And they (74 of Israel's leaders) saw Israel's God;

וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבִנְת הַסַּפִּיר

and beneath His feet, like tile-work, the (blue-) sapphire kind;

וּכְעֶצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר:

and like the heaven itself for purity.

Yes, the 74 saw [YHWH], and we want very much to ask them, What did [YHWH] look like? But all the text tells us is what the tile-work, beneath His Feet, looked like. Is that all they saw, all they can report? We really get no more from Ezekiel's vision, when it comes to saying what [YHWH] looks like! What do you think?

69

Note how guarded, how careful Ezekiel's language is. He is leading his readers into a vision of the Inner Sanctum, of the Throne-room of YHWH—far above and beyond the earthly throne room. Nothing is to be taken exactly. Everything has to do with “likeness”: “the likeness of a Throne,” “in appearance like sapphire,” “above the likeness of a Throne,” “a likeness with a human appearance,” “what had the appearance of his waist,” “as it were the appearance of fire,” “like the appearance of the bow.” Ezekiel finally says the reality of YHWH is “like a human,” but Ezekiel does not dare to go beyond that. Truly here, Ezekiel is “walking on holy ground.”

Cooke comments that in **verse 26**, “Avoiding definite outlines, and with the reticence of a holy fear, Ezekiel describes the Throne and the Form upon it. The features of the vision already seen, together with the current conception of Yahweh as seated upon the Cherubim (**2 Kings 19:15 = Isaiah 37:16, Psalm 80:2**), would have prepared the prophet's mind for what was coming: the vision of Yahweh on the Throne of Supreme Dominion (compare **Isaiah 6:1, 1 Kings 22:19 = 2 Chronicles 18:18, Daniel 7:9**) usually imagined as established in Heaven (compare **Isaiah 66:1, Psalms 11:4, 103:19**), but here seen in motion (compare **Psalm 18:11**), approaching the earth for the purpose of a Revelation. The Throne, resting upon the platform, seemed to be made of sapphire, like the pavement (continued...)

⁶⁹(...continued)

under the Feet of Yahweh in **Exodus 24:10**. Some lustrous blue marble is meant, such as lapis lazuli, which was highly valued in the ancient world...

“*A likeness as the appearance of a man...*No doubt in Hebrew religion God was thought of as wearing a human form, supernaturally glorified...The natural impulse to conceive of God in this way, though immeasurably below the truth, yet had something prophetic about it; in the **New Testament** the Divine Christ is said to have laid aside His glory, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, ‘becoming / coming in (the) likeness of men / people’ (**Philippians 2:7**).” (P. 21)

Matties states, “The figure is like a human being [אָדָם, **adham**]. Repetition of ‘likeness’ and ‘appearance’ suggests that the vision resists description.” (P. 1157) No easy talk about “the Old Man Upstairs” in Ezekiel’s careful language!

As Hilmer puts it, Ezekiel “carefully avoids saying he saw [YHWH] directly.” (P. 1232) And so it is with the **Hebrew Bible’s Theophanies**, Appearances of YHWH to humans. Though rare, they do occur, and YHWH is seen. But never is YHWH described in any full way—the depictions are almost always of the surroundings, never of YHWH Himself. Ezekiel approaches it very carefully, “treading on holy ground”: “Like a human being,” but no more than that. YHWH is the Hidden, Invisible Creator, Who Manifests Himself to human beings enough for them to know His Reality, but never in such a way as to enable them to describe Him! He is “like” us humans—but that is all the vision tells us. The Hebrew prophets will go on to tell us that YHWH is our “Redeemer,” our “Next-of-Kin”—again depicting YHWH in human terms, but not daring to draw philosophical / theological conclusions such as far too many theologians attempt to do. We say, Leave it at that! YHWH is Invisible—and all attempts to make YHWH visible will be dangerously near to idolatry!

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Anthropomorphism [the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities, especially in the **Hebrew Bible**, where it is stated that God / YHWH is not a man, but still God / YHWH is depicted in human terms] is employed here by the prophet to portray the Divine Presence Departing from the temple in the *Merkabah* [Divine Chariot] like an earthly king on a journey. That Ezekiel saw no actual human likeness on the Throne is apparent from the verses that follow.” (P. 8) It was something “like the appearance of a human,” or “like an appearance of fire,” but beyond that, Ezekiel will not go. And we are appalled at Athanasius and his followers in the Nicene Creed daring to go much further, thinking themselves able to say far more concerning the Divine Nature than Ezekiel dared to say, making the Invisible Visible, saying dogmatically what is the Nature of the Trinity, etc. etc.

70

Cooke entitles **verse 27** “The Form on the throne.” He comments that “Two degrees of light seem to be indicated: the upper part of the Form shone with the gleam of electrum (compare **verse 4**), the lower with the appearance of fire (compare **Ezekiel 8:2**). The first of these comparisons is duplicated by the addition of *as the appearance of fire which had a covering* (literally, *a house*) *round about*; this may mean that the upper part looked like a fire enclosed and so far dimmed, while the lower part glowed like an open fire (Ehrlich)...

(continued...)

וַאֲרָא׀ כְּעֵיִן חֲשֹׁמֶל כְּמִרְאֵה-אֵשׁ

And I saw, like an eye / spring of shining metal, like an appearance of fire.

בֵּית-לָהּ סָבִיב

It had a house, all around--⁷¹

מִמִּרְאֵה מִתְּנִיּוֹ וְלִמְעַלָּהּ

from (the) appearance of His waist and upwards;

וּמִמִּרְאֵה מִתְּנִיּוֹ וְלִמְטָה רְאִיתִי׀

and from (the) appearance of His waist and upwards I saw

כְּמִרְאֵה-אֵשׁ וְנִגְהָ לּוֹ סָבִיב׃

like an appearance of fire, and it had a brightness all around.⁷²

⁷⁰(...continued)

“As he reaches the climax, the prophet is careful to ‘keep the door of his lips’: *it*, i.e. the entire subject of these last verses was *the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of Yahweh*. He will not name Yahweh directly, but resorts to a circumlocution...In **Ezekiel**, *the Glory of Yahweh*, *the Glory of the God of Israel*, denotes an outward manifestation of the Divine Presence, seen by the prophet in ecstasy, but invisible to the natural eye...In the earlier literature *the Glory of Yahweh* meant something quite different: the Power and Majesty of Yahweh displayed in nature and history, a fundamental conception with Isaiah and his followers...In the **New Testament** this Glory belongs to the manifestation of Christ...In his state of ecstasy the prophet saw the vision before he fell upon his face; the ecstasy, therefore, was not brought on by a cataleptic seizure, as some think...

“Ezekiel himself does not call ‘the fiery-wheeled Throne’ a Chariot (*merkabha*); in later times, however, the word came to be applied not only to the Throne, but to the whole vision... To this day the Synagogue reads **Ezekiel 1** in Hebrew only, on the first day of the Feast of Weeks. A whole cycle of legends gathered round the objects of Ezekiel’s vision, which became a favorite topic for speculation... The angelic Throne Bearers in the **Kuran 69.17** and **40.7** come ultimately from Ezekiel.” (Pp. 21-23)

⁷¹

This line, with its phrase בֵּית-לָהּ, “a house to it,” or “it had a house,” is not translated “house” in any of the English translations we are consulting. **King James** has “within it”; **Tanakh** has “encased in a frame”; **New Revised Standard** has “enclosed all around”; it appears that the other translations, including the Greek (**Rahlfs**) simply omit any mention of the phrase.

⁷²

Translations of **verse 27** vary somewhat:

(continued...)

Like an appearance of the (rain-)bow,⁷³

⁷²(...continued)

King James, “And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.”

Tanakh, “From what appeared as his loins up, I saw a gleam as of amber -- what looked like a fire encased in a frame; and from what appeared as his loins down, I saw what looked like fire. There was a radiance all about him.”

New Revised Standard, “Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around.”

New International, “I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.”

New Jerusalem, “I saw a brilliance like amber, like fire, radiating from what appeared to be the waist upwards; and from what appeared to be the waist downwards, I saw what looked like fire, giving a brilliant light all round.”

Rahfs, καὶ εἶδον ὡς ὄψιν ἠλέκτρου ἀπὸ ὀράσεως ὀσφύος καὶ ἐπάνω καὶ ἀπὸ ὀράσεως ὀσφύος καὶ ἔως κάτω εἶδον ὡς ὄρασιν πυρὸς καὶ τὸ φέγγος αὐτοῦ κύκλω, “and I saw like an outward appearance / countenance of electrum / amber from a vision of (the) waist and upwards; and from a vision of (the) waist and downwards I saw like a vision of fire, and its light / brightness all around.”

The guarded language continues. Nothing is to be taken literally, and exactly—all is approximate, “like...” YHWH is somewhat “like a human being,” and somewhat “like a shining fire.” But there the description ends.

⁷³

Rabbi Fisch quotes Malbim [Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser, better known as the Malbim, a rabbi, master of Hebrew grammar, and **Bible** commentator. The name ‘Malbim’ was derived from the Hebrew initials of his name] as stating, “just as the colors of the rainbow are not real but merely the effect of sunlight, so the likeness of the Glory of the Lord as visualized by the prophet was only the reflection of the Divine light.” (P. 8)

What do you make of Malbim’s statement? Would you agree that the colors of the rainbow are “not real, but merely the effect of sunlight”? We say the colors of the rainbow are real, but it takes sunlight passing through the rain cloud to reveal them in all their beauty. The atheist will say that the likeness of YHWH’s glory is not real, but only a misconception formed by the religious mind. We say YHWH’s Glory is far more Real than the rainbow, but it can only be seen by those who are like children, who have learned to see through the eyes of faith, and have rejected the temptation to refuse to believe in the unseen. What do you say?

אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְּעָנָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

Which will be in the cloud on a day of the rain shower.⁷⁴

כֵּן מֵרָאָה הַנִּגְוָה סָבִיב

In this way, an appearance of the brightness all around.

הוּא מֵרָאָה דְּמִוֹת כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה

It is a vision of (the) likeness of YHWH's Glorious Radiance!⁷⁵

74

Do you believe in rainbows? Are they real? Yes—you can see them for a brief, but fleeting moment. You've been amazed at their sudden appearance and beauty. But you can't touch them; and in just a few minutes after you have seen them, they disappear.

Is [YHWH] like that? Yes—on rare occasions, you can see Him, or at least, reflections of His Glorious Radiance. But you can't get hold of Him physically. You can hear His Voice, at least as Moses tells it, in the Ten Commandments (the Words He spoke at Mount Sinai, the Words He wrote with His finger on stone tablets). And sometimes, we can hear Him whisper our name, in the dark of night, or in moments of crisis, etc. This One Who is like the rainbow is inviting us to get in touch with Him, through opening our hearts to His Hidden Presence. Do we dare to respond, to enter into a life of seeking this Hidden [YHWH], and fulfilling His Purposes in our lives? What a blessing is in store for us if we are willing to be open for His Presence and His word! What a turn-about it will mean for us! It will give us a solid, ethical basis for our lives, and will guide us out into the future. Ezekiel has seen that fleeting vision, and he has listened for the Divine Voice. That is why he writes his “vision-stories,” his acted-out “vignettes.” He wants his readers to share in his life-transforming experience.

75

Rabbi Fisch quotes Maimonides as stating that “The prophet...says *This was the appearance of the glory of the LORD*; but *the glory of the LORD* is different from the LORD Himself. All the figures in this vision refer to the glory of the LORD, to the chariot, and not to Him Who rides upon the chariot; for God cannot be compared to anything’ (**Guide for the Perplexed**, III.7).” (P. 8)

What do you think? Do you agree with Maimonides, 1138-1204 C.E., one of Israel's greatest philosophers and teachers, respected even by Muslims? We disagree with Maimonides at this point. We say that Ezekiel's vision shows us that YHWH can be compared to human beings. He is “like a human.” He is humanity's “Redeemer / Next-of-Kin.”

Matties states that “The Glory (Hebrew כְּבוֹד, **kabhdh**) of [YHWH] shatters the wilderness of Ezekiel's refugee experience...This Glory is grander and more elusive than the priestly Glory Theology of **Exodus**.” (P. 1157) See **Exodus 40:34-38**,

34 וַיִּכֶס הָעָנָן אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

And the cloud covered (the) tent of meeting

(continued...)

וַאֲרָאָהָ וַאֲפַל עַל־פָּנָי

And I saw, and I fell upon my face.

⁷⁵(...continued)

וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה מָלֵא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

and YHWH's Glorious Radiance filled the dwelling-place

35 וְלֹא־יָכַל מֹשֶׁה לָּבוֹא אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

And Moses was not able to enter into (the) tent of meeting

כִּי־שָׁכַן עָלָיו הָעֶנָן

because the cloud tented over it,

וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה מָלֵא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

and YHWH's Glorious Radiance filled the dwelling-place.

36 וּבַהֲעֹלֹת הָעֶנָן מֵעַל הַמִּשְׁכָּן

And when the cloud would go up from over the dwelling-place,

יִסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכֹל מַסְעֵיהֶם:

Israel's children would pull out on all their journeys.

37 וְאִם־לֹא יַעֲלֶה הָעֶנָן

And if the cloud would not go up

וְלֹא יִסְעוּ

and they would not pull out

עַד־יוֹם הָעֲלֹתוֹ:

until (the) day of its going up.

38 כִּי עֲנַן יְהוָה עַל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן יוֹמָם

Because YHWH's cloud (was) over the dwelling-place by day,

וְאֵשׁ תִּהְיֶה לַיְלָה בּוֹ

and fire would be (by) night in it

לְעֵינֵי כָל־בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל

in (the) eyes of all Israel's house

בְּכָל־מַסְעֵיהֶם:

in all their journeys.

Matties is right. This Radiant Glory seen by Ezekiel is far grander and far more elusive than the Glorious Radiance of YHWH seen by the Israelite refugees from Egypt in their wilderness wanderings, located in a physical tent of meeting / sanctuary, moving through the desert. As Matties goes on to say, "This inaugural word-picture radiates [YHWH's] transcendent holiness [set-apartness] far above the earth, not confined to a sanctuary, proclaims the Divine sovereignty [rulership over nature and history], and affirms [YHWH's] attentive Presence among the exiles [in Babylonia]." (P. 1157)

We affirm the same thing with reference to the temple of Solomon, although the biblical story in **1 Kings 8:27-30** depicts Solomon as acknowledging that the heavens cannot contain YHWH, much less a tiny temple built on earth, still affirming that YHWH's Name would be in that temple.

The vision of the four Living Creatures and its culmination in the Glorious Radiance of YHWH is puzzling and enigmatic, impossible of clear artistic presentation. The reason is that it is a "vision of the invisible," an attempt to describe in human language a Divine Reality that far surpasses the ability of human language to describe accurately. The Divine Presence is real--far more real than human descriptions are able to portray. And so, any human portrayal is of necessity highly symbolical in nature, and leaves the reader with a sense of trembling awe before a Tremendous Mystery that far exceeds any human apprehension, but that is reaching out to Ezekiel, calling him into His service as His prophet.

Here again, as we have observed on a number of previous occasions, the Glorious Radiance of YHWH comes "with the clouds" (**1:4**; compare **Psalm 18:10-12**). The four Living Creatures have a four-fold symbolism, representing all of creation--they represent humanity (ordained by [YHWH] to be rulers over all of creation), the wild beasts (over which the lion is "king"), domesticated animals (of which the ox is perhaps the strongest), and the birds (one of the mightiest representatives is the **neshet**, the huge griffon vulture that in ancient Israel soared through the clouds). Over and above this awesome, mysterious reality, that moves on wheels filled with eyes [in fertility religions, the wheels are filled with humans and animals engaged in sexual intercourse], is the sound "like the roar of rushing waters, like the Voice of Shaddai [an ancient name for YHWH or God, which probably means "My Breast," or "The One Who Is Sufficient"], like the tumult of an army; above all of that Ezekiel saw a throne of precious stones, and high above on the throne "a Figure like that of a human being."

We repeat: Ezekiel's language is highly guarded and careful, using the words "likeness" and "like" over and over, letting the reader know that what he has seen is only an approximation, not in any way a literal, word-for-word photographic description of the Divine Reality. And we say, That doesn't make his vision any less real--it makes it all the more real! There is nothing here that can be turned into an idol!

It was in the light of this vision of [YHWH] that Ezekiel received his Divine call as recorded in the next chapter. We are reminded of Isaiah's call in **Isaiah 6**, and Jeremiah's call in **Jeremiah 1**. Throughout the **Hebrew Bible** thus far, we have seen the "Glorious Radiance of YHWH" connected with the tabernacle in the wilderness, and with the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. But now Ezekiel sees the vision of [YHWH], in which the Glorious Radiance of YHWH is Present far from the temple in Jerusalem. The immovable chest / ark of the covenant Throne is replaced with a mobile Chariot-Throne on wheels, moving in all directions; the God of Israel is the God of all the earth, and the Glorious Radiance of YHWH may be seen by His people even in the very depths of their darkest experience, in the Babylonian captivity.

It is this vision that enables Ezekiel to find the strength and the reason to proclaim YHWH's Word to his fellow exiles!

Hilmer states that "What is remarkable about Ezekiel's experience is that [YHWH's] Glory had for centuries been associated with the temple in Jerusalem (see **1 Kings 8:11**; **Psalm 26:8**; **63:2**; **96:6**; **102:16**). Now [YHWH] had left His temple and was appearing to His exiled people in Babylon--a major (continued...)"

The Equipping and Commissioning of Ezekiel for His Task as YHWH's Prophet (2:1-3:11)

2:1 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you! 2:2 And wind / spirit / Spirit came into me, and He caused me to stand upon my feet. And I heard Him speaking to me. 2:3 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, I am sending you forth, to (the) children of Israel, to nations, the rebellious ones, who rebelled against Me. They, and their fathers, have transgressed against Me, until this very day! 2:4 And the sons (are) hard-faced / stubborn, and hard hearted! I am sending you forth to them; and you shall say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke! 2:5 And they, if they will listen, and if they will refuse (to listen)--because they are a rebellious house. And they will know that a prophet was in their midst! 2:6 And you, son of Adam / Humanity, you shall not be afraid of them; and from their words you shall not be afraid--though briars and thorns (are) with you, and upon scorpions you are sitting / dwelling--from their words you shall not be afraid! And from their faces / countenances you shall not be dismayed! Because they (are) a rebellious house! 2:7 And you shall speak My words to them, whether they will listen, and whether they will refuse (to listen)! Because they are rebellious! 2:8 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, listen to that which I am saying to you! You shall not be rebellious, like (the) house of the rebellion! Open your mouth, and eat that which I am giving to you! 2:9 And I saw, and look--a hand sent forth to me; and look--in it a writing of a Scroll! 2:10 And He spread / rolled it out before me. And it was written upon, front and back. And written to / upon it: (funeral) dirges, and moaning, and wailing! 3:1 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, that which you shall find, eat! Eat this writing--And go! Speak to (the) house of Israel! 3:2 And I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat this writing. 3:3 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, your belly shall eat, and your internal organs will be filled with this writing which I am giving to you. And I ate. And it was in my mouth like honey for sweetness! 3:4 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, go / come to Israel's house; and you shall speak with My words to them! 3:5 Because not to a people of deep / unintelligible lip / speech and of heavy / hard tongue / language you (singular) were sent forth--(but) to (the) house of Israel! 3:6 Not to many peoples, and heavy / hard of tongue / language of deep / unintelligible lip / speech whose words you will not hear / understand, if not to them I sent you forth / if to them I sent you forth--they would hear / listen to you! 3:7 But / and (the) house of Israel will not be willing to hear / listen to you--because they are not willing to hear / listen to Me! Because all (the) house of Israel (is) heavy / hard of forehead and they (are) hard ones of heart! 3:8 Look--I have given / made your face / countenance strong / stout, side-by-side with their face / countenance; and your forehead strong, side-by-side with their forehead! 3:9 Like flint-rock, stronger than hard pebble(s) I have given / made your forehead! You will not be afraid of them, and you will not be dismayed from before them. Because they (are) a house of rebellion! 3:10 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, all My words which I will speak to you, take into your heart and with your ears, hear / listen! 3:11 And go, come to the exile / exiles to (the) sons / children of your people; and you shall speak to them and you shall say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--whether they (plural) will hear, and whether they will refuse (to hear)!"

2:1⁷⁷

⁷⁶(...continued)

theme in the first half of Ezekiel's message (see **10:4; 11:23**). In his vision of the restored Jerusalem [with its new temple] the prophet saw the Glory of [the God of Israel] returning (**43:2**)." (P. 1222)

77

(continued...)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם עֲמֹד עַל-רַגְלֶיךָ

Son of Adam / Humanity, stand upon your feet,⁷⁸

וְאָדַבְר אִתְּךָ:

and I will speak with you!

⁷⁷(...continued)

Reimer entitles **2:1-3:11** “The Prophet Commissioned.” Rabbi Fisch entitles **2:1-7** “The Mission of Ezekiel.”

YHWH addresses Ezekiel as "Son of Adam / Humanity," and some 93 times in the **Scroll of Ezekiel** this same title is repeated. Compare **Daniel 7:13** and **8:17**. This is the title chosen by Jesus for his own "self-designation," and it may well be that Jesus means that he is a prophet for YHWH after the order of Ezekiel, as well as the heavenly בֶּן אָנָשׁ (Aramaic) "Son of man" envisioned in **Daniel 7:13**.

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “Son of man” (our “Son of Adam / Humanity”) that “This phrase, which frequently occurs in the **Scroll** as a designation of Ezekiel, is intended to emphasize that though he was privileged to witness the majestic, heavenly vision of the *Merkabah* [Divine Chariot] he was nevertheless nothing more than a human being...In later literature, e.g. the **Scroll of Enoch**...the words are invested with a messianic significance; but that is absent in the **Bible**.” (P. 9) Remember that Rabbi Fisch is a Jewish rabbi, and for him the “Bible” is the **Tanakh**, the **Hebrew Bible**, with no **New Testament**.

Hilmer notes that this address to Ezekiel as בֶּן-אָדָם, **ben)adham** “is a term used 93 times in **Ezekiel**, emphasizing the prophet’s humanity as he was addressed by the transcend-ent God...**Daniel 7:13** and **8:17** are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the **Old Testament**. Jesus’ frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the eschatological figure spoken of in **Daniel 7:13** (see **Mark 8:3**).” (P. 1232)

Cooke comments that “The title answers to Ezekiel’s habit of thought: as a creature he receives from his Creator a designation which is all that a mere man can claim; as a prophet he is the mouthpiece, and nothing more, of the Divine Will.” (P. 31)

⁷⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Awe-struck by the majestic sight of the Divine Glory, the prophet had fallen upon his face (**1:28**). He is now bidden to stand on his feet and be prepared to receive [YHWH’s] message.” (P. 9)

2:2 וַתָּבֵא בִי רוּחַ

and wind / spirit / Spirit came into me,⁷⁹

וַתַּעֲמֵדְנִי עַל-רַגְלָי

and He caused me to stand upon my feet.⁸⁰

וַאֲשַׁמְעֵ אֶת מִדְבַּר אֵלָי:

And I heard Him speaking⁸¹ to me.

79

Cooke explains the spirit / Spirit that entered into Ezekiel as “The Divine impulse... [which] is often noted by Ezekiel in connection with his ecstasies [emotional or religious frenzies or trance-like states, originally one involving an experience of mystic self-transcendence]...The two passages, **Ezekiel 1:28b** and **2:1-2**, may well describe different stages in the prophetic apprehension. When the vision ended he fell upon his face, and only heard a mysterious voice; now he has risen to his feet, prepared to listen, and he hears one speaking words which he can understand.” (P. 31)

80

Hilmer notes that “The Spirit of [YHWH], Who empowered the chariot wheels (**1:12, 19; 10:16-17**) and the creatures (**1:20**), now entered Ezekiel—symbolizing [YHWH’s] empowering of the prophet’s entire ministry.” (P. 1232) Yes!

81

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The verb is not pointed *medabber* [מִדְבֵּר, piel participle, masculine singular] as in **1:28**, but [מִדְבַּר, hithpael participle, masculine singular] *middabber*, i.e. the reflexive mood. It may be translated ‘Who was addressing Himself unto me,’ and convey the idea of intimate relationship.” (P. 9) These two verbs, in an unpointed text, as all the original biblical manuscripts were, are spelled exactly the same. It was only as the Masoretes did their work, pointing the original text which had almost no vowels, that the difference between piel and hithpael was read into the biblical text.

The Masoretic Text is the authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the 24 scrolls of **Tanakh** in Rabbinic Judaism. The Masoretic Text defines the Jewish canon and its precise letter-text, with its vocalization and accentuation known as the Masorah. It was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries of the Common Era. We Christians all too often think of the Jewish **Bible** as having been completed, and its canon decided upon, before the coming of Jesus Christ. But such was not the case. The finalization of the Masoretic Text of the **Hebrew Bible** was not until about 1,008 C.E.!

The outstanding example of their completed work is **Codex Leningradensis**, “the oldest complete manuscript of the **Hebrew Bible**, using the Masoretic Text and Tiberian vocalization. It is dated 1008 C.E. according to its colophon. The **Aleppo Codex**, against which the Leningrad Codex was corrected, is several decades older, but parts of it have been missing since 1947, making the **Leningrad Codex** the oldest complete codex of the Tiberian Masorah that has survived intact to this day.” (**Wikipedia**, 6/13/2020) It is the text of **Codex Leningradensis** that we are translating and commenting on in these notes.

2:3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם שׁוֹלַח אֲנִי אֹתְךָ

Son of Adam / Humanity, I am sending you forth,⁸²

אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

to (the) children of Israel.⁸³

אֶל-גּוֹיִם הַמּוֹרְדִים

to nations, the rebellious ones,⁸⁴

אֲשֶׁר מָרְדוּ-בִּי

who rebelled against Me.

82

Cooke comments on the phrase “I am sending you forth” that this was said to other prophets—see **Isaiah 6:8** and **Jeremiah 1:7**. It was also said to the apostles of Jesus—see **Mark 6:7**; **Matthew 10:5**; **Luke 9:2** and compare **Luke 10:1**.

83

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The mission of the prophet is to the whole nation, to his fellow-exiles in Babylon as well as to the people still living in the homeland.” (P. 9) In fact, Ezekiel is “the only prophet whose sphere of activity lay outside the land of Israel.” (P. ix.) Do you agree? What about the prophet Jonah, whose mission was to Nineveh? And what about the prophecies to other nations in **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah**? We think Rabbi Fisch is overstating the limitations of YHWH’s prophets. What do you think?

Cooke comments that “Though the prophet [Ezekiel] could only reach his fellow-exiles, his mission is to the nation as a whole, at home and in Babylonia.” (P. 31)

84

Rabbi Fisch holds that “This is a reference to the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, who formed the southern kingdom. For an instance of Israel’s tribes being called ‘nations,’ compare **Genesis 35:11** where the blessing of Jacob foretells that he will become a *company of nations*.” (Pp. 9-10)

Reimer states that “The characterization of the people of Israel as rebels sounds a distinctive note throughout the commissioning vision. This deep-seated trait...will be emphasized again in Ezekiel’s retrospective of Israel’s history in **chapter 20**. Ezekiel is sent to speak on [YHWH’s] behalf...but no content is given—yet.” (P. 1504) Hilmer calls the phrase “rebellious nation” [in Hebrew it is a plural phrase, הַמּוֹרְדִים גּוֹיִם, ‘nations, the rebelling ones’] “A key-note of Ezekiel’s preaching: the entire nation throughout its history had been rebellious against [YHWH].” (P. 1222) But the nature of human beings as rebellious to YHWH is not limited to Israel—it is true of all the nations!

הִמָּה וְאֲבוֹתָם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי

They, and their fathers, have transgressed against Me,⁸⁵

עַד־עַצְמוֹת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

until this very day!

2:4 וְהַבָּנִים קָשִׁי וְחִזְקֵי־לֵב

And the sons (are) hard-faced / stubborn, and hard hearted!

אֲנִי שׁוֹלֵחַ אוֹתְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם

I am sending you forth to them;

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

and you shall say to them,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke!⁸⁶

85

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has παραπικραναύ με, “they embittered Me.” Rabbi Fisch comments that “They were as sinful as their fathers and had not learned from the experience of the past that the consequence of sin is retribution.” (P. 10)

Cooke comments that “Ezekiel can see no signs of goodness in Israel’s past; a theme which he develops in **chapters 16** and **23**. Jeremiah took a similar view, e.g. **Jeremiah 2:20; 7:24-25; 22:21; 32:30**, and it comes out in the Deuteronomic compilers of the historical books. But Ezekiel goes further than any of them in unqualified condemnation.” (P. 32)

86

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet was to preface his messages with this formula to impress upon the people the Divine origin of his communications.” (P. 10)

Cooke comments that “The use of the two-fold Name Adonai Yahweh is one of the remarkable features of the [**Scroll**]...The double Name occurs 217 times, and, according to Herrmann’s analysis,

- a. in the announcement of the Divine Message, 122 times;
- b. at the conclusion of a prophetic oracle, 81 times;
- c. when the prophet addresses [YHWH] directly, 5 times.

There remain nine instances: I am Adonai Yahweh 5 times; the word of Adonai Yah-weh 3 times; the hand of Adonai Yahweh once. At the same time it is to be noticed that Yahweh alone is used just as often, 218 times,

(continued...)

2:5 וְהִמָּה אִם־יִשְׁמְעוּ

And they, if they will listen,

וְאִם־יִחָדְלוּ

and if they will refuse (to listen)--

כִּי בֵּית מְרִי הִמָּה

because they are a rebellious house.⁸⁷

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי נָבִיא הָיָה בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

And they will know that a prophet was in their midst!⁸⁸

⁸⁶(...continued)

- a. in the formula I am Yahweh, they or you shall know that I am Yaweh, 87 times;
- b. in...such phrases as the Word, the Hand, the Glory of Yahweh, 131 times.” (P. 32)

⁸⁷

Reimer states that “The label ‘rebellious house,’ used almost like a refrain in these verses, is unique to **Ezekiel** (see also **3:9, 26-27; 12:2-3, 9, 25; 24:3**). This label joins **2:2-4** in pointing to a deeply ingrained bent to rebellion, while treating the Judean nation as a whole.” (P. 1504) Cooke agrees, stating that the phrase is “Ezekiel’s invariable estimate of his country-men repeated 15 times.” (P. 34)

⁸⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Though Ezekiel may doubt whether his words would find a responsive heart among his rebellious people, he is nevertheless urged to deliver his Message, which would have the value of convincing them of their guilt when his predictions of calamity came upon them.” (P. 10)

Yes, Israel’s “Prophets of Doom” were rejected, and their deeply pessimistic Message of coming destruction and captivity for both Northern Israel and the Southern Kingdom, Judah, was rejected—that is, until their Message was demonstrated by history to have been the Truth! Then their scrolls became precious documents, to be preserved and handed down to all coming generations!

Cooke comments that “They shall know by the fulfilment of his predictions that a prophet has been among them: for Ezekiel’s version of the test proposed in **Deuteronomy 18:21-22**, compare **Jeremiah 28:9**. Neither his fellow-exiles, nor his countrymen left behind in the land of Israel, would listen to him, or if they listened would not take him seriously...It was always a prophet’s lot to be in opposition, and to deliver a message which his people did not want or expect (compare **Isaiah 6:10; Jeremiah 1:17ff.**). But here Ezekiel is comforted with the assurance, repeated at the beginning of his second period (**33:33**), that the truth which he utters and his Lord reveals will in the end be recognized: *they shall know that a prophet* etc. finds its counterpart in *they shall know that I am Yahweh*, which echoes through the [**Scroll**].” (P. 34)

2:6 וַאֲתָהּ בֶן־אָדָם

And you, son of Adam / Humanity,

אֶל־תִּירָא מֵהֶם

you shall not be afraid of them;

וּמִדְבַרֵיהֶם אֶל־תִּירָא

and from their words you shall not be afraid--

כִּי סָרְבִים וְסַלּוֹנִים אִתְּךָ

though briars⁸⁹ and thorns⁹⁰ (are) with you,

וְאֶל־עַקְרָבִים אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב

and upon scorpions you are sitting / dwelling--⁹¹

89

This is the only place in the **Hebrew Bible** where this plural noun, סָרְבִים, **sarabhiym** occurs.

Brown-Driver-Briggs suggests that the singular noun סָרַב, **sarabh** may mean “rebel.” They also state that it is probably an Aramaic loan-word, meaning “to contradict, chatter, tell lies. The fact is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the meaning of a word occurring only once in the **Hebrew Bible**. And it is extremely foolish to become dogmatic concerning the meaning of such words. “It may mean” means we do not know the meaning, and are only guessing!

90

This plural noun is also rare, occurring only twice in the **Hebrew Bible**, both times in **Ezekiel**, **2:6** (here in the plural, סַלּוֹנִים, **salloniym**) and **28:24** where it occurs in the singular, as part of a phrase, סִלּוֹן מִמַּאִיר, **silon mamiyr**, “a pricking brier” a figure of national distress, parallel to the phrase קוֹץ מִכָּאֵב, “a painful thorn. This later usage of the word helps us to understand its meaning here.

91

Rabbi Fisch comments that “‘Briers and thorns,’ among which scorpions lurk, is an expressive way of describing dangerous opponents.” (P. 11) The plural noun for scorpions, עַקְרָבִים, (**aqrabhiym** in the singular is עַקְרָב, apparently a quadrilateral noun. The singular occurs at **Deuteronomy 8:15**, where it is collective, describing Israel’s experience in the wilderness. Elsewhere the plural form occurs, at:

Ezekiel 2:6 (here; perhaps being used figuratively for Ezekiel’s enemies); and elsewhere in the phrase

יִסֵּר בְּעַקְרָבִים, **1 Kings 12:11**, where Rehoboam tells the people that:

11 אָבִי יִסֵּר אֶתְכֶם בְּשׁוֹטִים

My father disciplined you people with the whips,

(continued...)

מִדְבָרֵיהֶם אֶל-תִּירָא

from their words you shall not be afraid!⁹²

⁹¹(...continued)

וְאֲנִי אִיסַר אֶתְכֶם בְּעֵקְרָבִים

but / and I, I will discipline you people with the scorpions!

(Meaning, we think, using whips with points, stings like the sting of scorpions;

See the same usage at **1 Kings 12:14 = 2 Chronicles 10:11, 10:14.**)

Have you ever been stung by a scorpion? Mayo Clinic informs us that Scorpion stings are painful but rarely life-threatening. Young children and older adults are most at risk of serious complications. In the United States, the bark scorpion, found mainly in the desert Southwest, is the only scorpion species with venom potent enough to cause severe symptoms. Worldwide, only about 30 of the estimated 1,500 species of scorpions produce venom toxic enough to be fatal. But with more than a million scorpion stings taking place each year, deaths from these stings are a significant public health problem in areas where access to medical care is limited. Healthy adults usually don't need treatment for scorpion stings. But a scorpion sting can have serious effects in young children. (Internet, 6/15/2020)

What do you think? Is Ezekiel being warned about literal scorpions that live in his house in Babylonian exile? Or are the scorpions figurative for his opponents who will attack him for his prophesying? We think the latter is most probably the case. Your opponents will say things that sting like a scorpion!

Hilmer states that “briers and thorns...scorpions” are “vivid images of those who would make life difficult for the prophet.” (P. 1232) And after a long life of ministry, I have to state that the same thing is all too often true of the minister who dares to take the Biblical Message seriously and proclaim it, applying it to his hearers. The Biblical Message is one of “doom” to all those who are impenitent; but that same Message is one of hope for those willing to be reprimanded and guided by it.

Cooke comments that “The prophet must expect hostility even from his companions in exile.” (P. 34)

⁹²

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Jeremiah was similarly encouraged at the beginning of his prophetic career.” (P. 10) See **Jeremiah 1:7-8**,

- 7 And YHWH spoke to me:
You'll not say I am [but] a youth!
For to all to whom I'll Send you, you'll go!
And everything which I'll Command you, you'll speak!
- 8 You'll not be afraid of them!
For I Am With you, to Deliver you!"
--an Utterance of YHWH!

Jeremiah 1:17,

(continued...)

וּמִפְּנֵיהֶם אֶל־תִּחַת

and from their faces / countenances you shall not be dismayed!⁹³

כִּי בֵּית מְרִי הֵמָּה:

Because they (are) a rebellious house!⁹⁴

2:7 וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֶת־דְּבָרַי אֲלֵיהֶם

And you shall speak My words to them,

אִם־יִשְׁמְעוּ

whether they will listen,

וְאִם־יִחְדְּלוּ

and whether they will refuse (to listen)!

כִּי מְרִי הֵמָּה:

Because they are rebellious!

⁹²(...continued)

And you--you'll get ready, and you'll stand;

and you'll speak to them all that I, I Will Command you!

You'll not be dismayed before them--

or else I'll Cause you to be dismayed before them!

Yes, the words of Ezekiel's opponents will sting like a scorpion—but the sting will not be fatal. Ezekiel can and must endure those stings to fulfill his ministry.

93

What do you think this means? We think it means the “dirty looks” that Ezekiel's opponents will give him as he seeks to speak YHWH's Message. Sometimes his opponents won't have to say a word—he can see their hatred of his Message in their eyes, in their countenances. I can't forget the tall treasurer in a Texas church I served—who hated me for insisting on reaching out to Spanish-speaking people. He would stand in the front row of the church balcony, staring at me all the while I preached, seeking to intimidate me. “If looks could kill...”

94

Yes, Ezekiel, they claim to be the people of YHWH, members of the “Household of [YHWH].” But they are little more than rebels, a “rebellious household”! They say all the right words, they have the pious looks and actions. But their hearts are closed to YHWH, and to His Desires for their lives. They will love you and appreciate your ministry, and lavish you with gifts—if you will just tone down your Message, and say the kind of things they want you to say. But the minute you speak YHWH's Message of Doom, calling them to repentance, they will turn against you, and do everything in their power to undermine your ministry! The same thing is still true in our present day! I testify to that!

Rabbi Fisch entitles **2:8-3:3** “The Charge to the Prophet.” He comments that “The eating of the roll [our ‘scroll’] by Ezekiel was performed in a vision or is an allegory. Its symbolic meaning is a call to the prophet to ‘digest,’ as it were, the contents of the roll. He should make himself familiar with the writing on the roll by reading it as eagerly and attentively as one eats food to satisfy hunger.

Eichrodt strongly opposes this view that the eating of the scroll was only symbolical. He states that Ezekiel’s commission “is expressed by an unusual, an almost grotesque, transaction; he is to consume, as though it were food, a scroll announcing the approach of grave disasters...The Word Revealed to the prophet is already extant as a ready-made whole, fixed in a written form...The Message with which he is entrusted is independent of his own subjective judgments, and is Divine in origin. That he sees this under the form of a written scroll has no connection with **Deuteronomy** or with the ‘book religion’ alleged to have arisen out of it. It points to the preaching of the prophets, already at that time frequently recorded in writing, the most influential example of which is the collected words of Jeremiah dictated to Baruch. That writing, which had appeared ten years before and had attracted great attention, was without doubt known to and revered by Ezekiel as a record of Divinely authorized prophetic speech...

“The more consciously a prophet felt his responsibility, the more he needed a conviction...of the objectivity of the Word with which he had been entrusted as something other than, and distinct from, his own inward feelings. Jeremiah was therefore assured that the word of [YHWH] was being imparted to him by [YHWH’s] hand touching his lips, while Ezekiel received a similar assurance through the delivery of a written scroll, containing words already inscribed there without his knowledge...

“[In **3:2a** we find] the highly realistic terms which the prophet, evidently intentionally, employs, as he speaks of having to take this unusual food into his mouth, to eat it and to fill his body and stomach with it. A symbolic interpretation of the phenomenon will, of course, at once suggest itself: that Ezekiel is to be fully united with the Word committed to him, that it is, as it were, to enter into his very flesh and blood. But if that is all, then the way of expressing it is too extreme and too contradictory of all bodily experience...

“Two other things ought really to be taken into account. First of all, there is the great importance of compulsive experiences, which plays so large a part in Ezekiel’s life, in such a way as to invade the physical sphere; he, more intensively than any other prophet, finds his experience as a prophet claiming and controlling his body...

“From another aspect, unusual sensations of eating and drinking appear to be typical of certain types of trance, as is shown by descriptions from Arabia and Jewish mystics. The ecstatic experience of eating a scroll is therefore far from being an isolated occurrence in the ancient world; such things are referred to in Egyptian accounts...

“But even though such analogies may serve to illustrate it, the precise significance of this particular piece of visionary experience to Ezekiel himself will not become intelligible to us until we become aware of the point of view from which the whole matter is presented. The complete renunciation of the attitude of his community on the part of the man who has been called by [YHWH] must be expressed by a decisive act, closely associated with his task; their rebelliousness is to be offset by his

(continued...)

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

שִׁמַע אֶת אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ

listen to that which I am saying to you!⁹⁶

⁹⁵(...continued)

unqualified obedience, and what the entire people should achieve is to be realized in the One Son of Man who is their Representative. Complete adoption of, and incorporation into, the alien Divine Will is to become a law of life for the whole man, even to the extent of his overcoming even the natural reluctance of his physical body. No other prophet ever expressed with such strength and consistency as did Ezekiel the manner in which, in actual event, even his corporeality is over-mastered by the all-embracing claim of [YHWH]. He is to go forth and speak to the house of Israel in this particular way, and there is no other way in which he could do it...

“The inner liberation bestowed by the carrying out of obedient action is mirrored in the sweet taste of the strange food.” (Pp. 62-65)

What do you think? Do you agree with Eichrodt? Did Ezekiel literally eat a scroll, presumably a scroll made out of animal skin, leather? And could a human body consume such an object? We think it most probable that the eating of the scroll was part of one of Ezekiel’s acted out vision-stories, which would be enacted before prominent members of the exile community, to symbolize and enforce the prophetic Message he had been given to proclaim to them—that is, it is an example of “street theater.”

Eichrodt holds that it was the **Scroll of Jeremiah** [which, by the way, has the most words of any scroll in the **Hebrew Bible**] that Ezekiel was commanded to eat / devour / digest. We think this is probably correct. Ezekiel’s Message is very similar to that of Jeremiah, and time and again we will find statements that Ezekiel makes explaining his vision-stories that remind us of Jeremiah. However we answer these questions, there can be no doubt that Ezekiel became totally involved with the prophetic Message, and gave his entire life to it.

⁹⁶

This is Ezekiel’s first responsibility, to listen for the Divine Message. Nothing else can take its place. And so it is, for any and all who seek to be messengers for YHWH. Listen for the Divine Voice!

No copying of messages from others. No short-cuts. Only quiet, patient waiting and listening, searching for the Divine Voice. YHWH Is Speaking. His Message can be heard by all who have ears to hear, who have hearts open, willing to be disciplined, to be changed. He Is Speaking through nature, through dreams and visions, through those He has called to speak for Him. But there are many other voices speaking, sometimes drowning out the Divine Voice with their pseudo-Divine messages, with their cultic claims, with their rejection of YHWH’s Voice with its demand for righteousness and justice for all, especially for the poor—the widow, the orphan, the emigrant. So get ready to listen, to truly listen for YHWH’s Voice. Don’t pretend that you’ve already heard it, that there’s nothing more to hear. In the midst of the babble, all the noisy confusion around us, we will be able to discern the Divine Voice,

(continued...)

אַל־תִּהְיֶיִם כְּבֵית הַמִּרְי

You shall not be rebellious, like (the) house of the rebellion!⁹⁷

פִּיךָ וְאָכַל

Open your mouth, and eat,⁹⁸

אֵת אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֵלֶיךָ:

that which I am giving to you!

2:9 וָאֵרָאָה וְהִנֵּה־יָד שְׁלֹחַת אֵלַי

And I saw, and look—a hand sent forth to me;

וְהִנֵּה־בּוֹ מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר:

and look—in it a writing of a scroll!⁹⁹

⁹⁶(...continued)

Calling us to self-sacrificing obedience, to a life-long service in His Kingdom! Our own lives will be changed, and we will be blessed for so doing!

⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Like Moses, Jeremiah and Jonah, Ezekiel may have been reluctant to accept the dangerous task of bringing the Divine Truth to a corrupt people, fearing their resentment and hostility, and also conscious of his inability to do justice to the mission committed to him. Hence the stern warning not to be like the rebellious nation and act disloyally against the Divine Command.” (P. 11)

⁹⁸

Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase “open your mouth and eat,” is interpreted by Kimchi “as happening in a vision, while Rashi understands it as allegorical. Whichever it may be, the symbolic meaning is clear. Ezekiel is instructed to ‘devour’ each word on the scroll and learn its contents by heart.” (P. 11) We say, Ezekiel is instructed to devour or eat the scroll itself. Nothing is said concerning “each word on the scroll,” nor is anything said about “learning its content by heart.” What do you think? We agree with Fisch, that the literal “eating” of the scroll is probably not intended.

⁹⁹

This exact phrase, מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר, “scroll of a writing,” occurs only three times in the **Hebrew Bible**: here, at **Ezekiel 2:9** and twice in **Jeremiah 36:1-4**.

- 1 And it happened in the fourth year of Yehoyaqim, son of Josiah, King of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from YHWH, saying:
- 2 Take for yourself a scroll of writing / writing-scroll [מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר], and you shall write upon it all the words which I spoke to you, concerning Israel and concerning Judah and concerning all the nations—

(continued...)

2:10 וַיִּפְרֹשׂ אֹתָהּ לְפָנַי

And He spread / rolled it out before me.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹(...continued)

from (the) day I spoke to you,
from (the) days of Josiah and until this day!

3 Perhaps Judah's House will hear

all the evil which I am intending to do to them,
in order that they will repent, each one from his evil way,
and I will forgive their iniquity and their missing-of-the mark / sin!

4 And Jeremiah called Baruch, son of Neriyah;

and Baruch wrote all YHWH's words from Jeremiah's mouth,
which he spoke to him,

upon (the) scroll of writing / writing-scroll [עַל-מִגְלַת-סֵפֶר].

5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying,

I (am) restrained / banned; I will not be able to enter YHWH's house / temple.

6 And / but you shall go, and you shall read / proclaim by the scroll [בְּמִגְלָה]

which you wrote from my mouth,
YHWH's Words in (the) ears of the people (in / of) YHWH's house,
on a day of fasting;
and also in (the) ears of all Judah,
the ones coming from their cities—
you shall read / proclaim them!

We do not think it is by accident that these two passages, **Ezekiel 2:8-10** and **Jeremiah 36:1-6** are so similar and so intimately related. We would agree with Eichrodt that the scroll Ezekiel is commanded to eat is no other than the same scroll spoken of in **Jeremiah 36**. What do you think?

100

For this matter of “spreading out / unrolling a scroll,” see the following three passages from the **Hebrew Bible**, and one passage from the **Greek New Testament**:

2 Kings 19:14,

וַיִּקַּח חֶזְקִיָּהוּ אֶת-הַסְּפָרִים מִיַּד הַמַּלְאָכִים

And Hezekiah took the letters / writings from the messengers' hand,

וַיִּקְרָאֵם

and he read them.

וַיַּעַל בֵּית יְהוָה

And he went up (to) YHWH's house,

וַיִּפְרֹשֶׁהוּ חֶזְקִיָּהוּ

and Hezekiah spread it out, / unrolled it,

לְפָנַי יְהוָה:

(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

before YHWH. (**Isaiah 37:14** is identical to **2 Kings 19:14**. The spreading out of the scroll is not that it is being served to be eaten, but rather that it is being readied for reading! If it was intended for literal eating, it would be cut up into small portions.)

Ezekiel 2:10,

וַיִּפְרֹשׂ אֹתָהּ לִפְנָי

And He spread it out before me.

וְהָיָא כְּתוּבָהּ

And it was written upon,

פְּנִים וְאָחֳרֵי

front and back.

וְכָתוּב אֵלֶיהָ

And written to / upon it:

קְנִים וְהִגָּה וְהִי:

(funeral) dirges, and moaning, and wailing!

Luke 4:16-21,

16 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά, οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος,

And he [Jesus] came into Nazareth, where he had been raised;

καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ

and he entered, according to his custom,

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων

on the day of the sabbaths,

εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν

into the synagogue.

καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι.

And he [Jesus] stood up to read.

17 καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαίου

And it was given to him, a Scroll of the prophet Isaiah;

καὶ ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον

and unrolling the Scroll,

εὗρεν τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον·

he found the place where it had been written:

18 πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ

Spirit of (the) Lord (is) upon me;

οὗ ἕνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς,

for this reason He anointed me to announce good news to poor people;

ἀπέσταλκέν με,

He sent me forth

κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν

to preach release to captives,

καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν,

and to blind people renewal of sight;

(continued...)

וְהָיָא כְּתוּבָה

And it was written upon,

פְּנִים וְאָחֳרָיִם

front and back.¹⁰¹

וְכָתוּב אֵלָיָהּ

And written upon it:

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

ἀποστείλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει,

to send forth oppressed ones in release,

19 κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

to preach a year of (the) Lord's acceptance / welcome!

20 καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον

And rolling up the Scroll,

ἀποδοὺς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ ἐκάθισεν·

giving it back to the attendant, he sat down.

καὶ πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ.

And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were staring at him.

21 ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὅτι

So then he began to say to them that

σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσίν ὑμῶν.

Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears.

¹⁰¹

Hilmer's translation has "on both sides." He comments that "Normally, ancient scrolls were written on one side only. The implication here is that the scroll was thoroughly saturated with words of Divine judgment." (P. 1232) See:

Revelation 5:1,

Καὶ εἶδον ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου

And I saw upon the right (hand) of the One sitting upon the throne,

βιβλίον γεγραμμένον ἔσωθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν

a scroll having been written (upon) within and without / on the front and back;

κατεσφραγισμένον σφραγῖσιν ἑπτὰ.

having been sealed up (with) seven seals.

Cooke comments that "A [scroll] was usually written on one side only; this was so full that its contents ran over the front and covered the back...The prophecies of the first period [of Ezekiel's prophesying] 593 to 586 B.C.E., are filled with denunciations and threats; then, in the second period, they speak mainly of restoration and the new age; it would follow, therefore, from the present description of its contents that the [scroll] was occupied with the burden of Ezekiel's Message during the first seven years of his ministry." (P. 35)

קִנִּים וְהִגָּה וְהִי:

(funeral) dirges, and moaning, and wailing!¹⁰²

3:1 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם אֲשֶׁר-תִּמְצָא אֹכֹל

Son of Adam / Humanity,¹⁰³ that which you shall find, eat!¹⁰⁴

אֹכֹל אֶת-הַמִּגִּלָּה הַזֹּאת

Eat this writing--

102

This sounds much more like the **Scroll of Lamentations** than the **Scroll of Jeremiah**.

Hilmer observes that “Although Ezekiel was later commanded to preach hope (see **33:1**), his initial commission (until the fall of Jerusalem) was to declare [YHWH’s] displeasure and the certainty of His Judgment on Jerusalem and all of Judah.” (P. 1232)

103

The title given to Ezekiel, בֶּן-אָדָם, **ben)-adham**, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, “son of man” (well known to students of the **Greek New Testament** as the title given to Jesus in the **Gospels**)--the Hebrew phrase is commonly translated “son of man,” but we translate by “Son of Adam / Humanity.”

Eichrodt states that this title, “by which the prophet is addressed instead of by his proper name... is quite unique, and imparts a special stamp to Ezekiel’s prophecy. That this form of address indicates the weakness and lowliness of the creature over against the world-filling Glory of [YHWH] of Israel is taken for granted by all interpreters...The condescension by which [YHWH] bows down to one born of the dust and makes him worthy to serve as His messenger accentuates the wonder of the approach of His grace in the midst of judgment.” (P. 14)

104

Rabbi Fisch comments that this command means “make yourself familiar with the whole of the contents on both sides of the scroll.” (P. 12)

Ezekiel is to go on a search—that will be the nature of his walk / pilgrimage / ministry. He is to search for the Truth; that is what he is searching to find. What he finds is what he is to proclaim. And the search is to begin with the writing he is being given. He is to search through it, carefully, diligently. There are rich treasures to be found there—and Ezekiel is commanded to “eat” or “devour” them. He is to take them into his innermost-being, to make them his “food” that sustains and nourishes him.

Cooke comments that “Ezekiel is accustomed to think and act in symbols (see **chapter 4:1-3**); he receives his Message also in a symbolic form.” (P. 37) But this is the first of those acted out symbols, and it is, we think, too early to assume that Ezekiel is accustomed to thinking and acting in symbols. Beginning with this first symbolic action, he will be learning as he furthers his prophetic ministry.

וּלְךָ דְבַר אֶל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And go! Speak to (the) house of Israel!

3:2 וָאֶפְתַּח אֶת-פִּי

And I opened my mouth,¹⁰⁵

וַיֹּאכְלֵנִי אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת:

and He caused me to eat this writing.

3:3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם

And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity,

בְּשֹׁנְךָ תֹאכַל

your belly shall eat,

וּמַעֲיֶיךָ תִמְלֵא אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת

and your internal organs will be filled with this writing

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֵלֶיךָ

which I am giving to you.

וָאֲכַלְתִּי

And I ate.

וַתְּהִי בְּפִי כְדֶבֶשׁ לְמִתְּוֶק:

And it was in my mouth like honey for sweetness!¹⁰⁶

105

Ezekiel's response does not sound like he understood the command to be symbolical; rather, it sounds like he took the command to be literal—he “opened his mouth.” He doesn't say he took the scroll and read it from front to back, or that he memorized its words and meditated on them day and night. No, he depicts himself as opening his mouth and literally eating the scroll, and as a result sensing its sweetness in his mouth. What do you think?

We say this is the language of “street theater,” as Ezekiel acts out his role as a prophet before the people.

106

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel “obeyed and mentally digested the ominous contents of the scroll, readily and gladly, as if they were of a delightful nature, because they emanated from God.” (P. 12)

(continued...)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים

¹⁰⁶(...continued)Hilmer notes that for what Jeremiah experienced emotionally, see **Jeremiah 15:16**,

נִמְצְאוּ דְבָרַיְךָ וְאֶכְלֵם

Your Words were found, and I am devouring them;

וַיְהִי (דְבָרַיְךָ) לִי [דְבָרְךָ]

and Your Word became for me

לְשִׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחַת לִבִּי

for rejoicing and for gladness of my heart!

כִּי־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלַי

Because Your name was called over me,

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת:

YHWH, God of Armies!

“This same thing was experienced by Ezekiel in a more sensory way: Words from [YHWH] are sweet to the taste (see **Psalm 19:10; 119:103**)—even when their content is bitter.” See:

Revelation 10:9-10,

9 καὶ ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον

So I went to the angel

λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναί μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον.

saying to him to give me the little scroll.

καὶ λέγει μοι·

And he says to me,

λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό,

Take and eat it down;

καὶ πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν,

it will make your stomach bitter,

ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὸν ὡς μέλι.

but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.

10 Καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου

And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel

καὶ κατέφαγον αὐτό,

and I ate it.

καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκὸν

And it was sweet as honey in my mouth,

καὶ ὅτε ἔφαγον αὐτό,

and / but when I had eaten it

evpikra,nqh h' koili,a mou

my stomach was made bitter.

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 4-9** “Ezekiel Assured of Moral Strength for His Task.”

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם לְךָ-בֵּא אֶל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

Son of Adam / Humanity, go / come to Israel's house;

וְדַבַּרְתָּ בְּדִבְרֵי אֵלֵיהֶם:

and you shall speak with My words to them!¹⁰⁸

כִּי לֹא אֶל-עַם 3:5¹⁰⁹

Because not to a people

עֲמֻקֵי שִׁפְהָ

108

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet was instructed to convey [YHWH’s] Message to the people in the holy language in which he received it. Though the exiles were already using the Chaldaic language, they were still familiar with the Hebrew tongue (Malbim).” (P. 13)

The phrase “holy language” is not found in the text, but is a typical Jewish idea that somehow the Hebrew language is “holy,” while other languages are not. But strangely, if the “holy language” is Hebrew, as soon as the Persians gained control over Israel, the “holy language” suddenly became half Hebrew, half Aramaic (the language of the Persians) in the biblical **Scrolls of Ezra and Daniel**. And then, when Alexander the Great conquered Persia, and taught the known world to speak Greek, the “holy language” suddenly became Greek, as the Jews translated their Scrolls into Greek, and began writing in Greek (the language of the **Apocrypha** and the **New Testament**). No, the “holy language” is not exclusively Hebrew! The Divine Revelation comes in whatever language its human recipients are speaking. And that is why it is the duty of believers to learn all the languages of the earth, and translate the Divine Revelation into those languages, something the Wycliffe Bible Translators have well understood with their careful, thoroughly researched translations!

Cooke entitles **verses 4-9** “The prophet’s mission.” He comments that “This passage repeats **Ezekiel 2:3-7**, but with greater emphasis on the contumacy [stubborn refusal to obey an authority] of the house of Israel: they are worse than the barbarians; foreigners would listen, but Israel will not!

109

Reimer comments on **verses 5-7** that “Contrary to expectation, Ezekiel is cautioned that a cross-cultural mission would be easier than taking words of [YHWH] to his own people. There is nothing inherently derogatory about foreign speech and a hard language, although the terms could be negatively applied to a foreign oppressor (compare **Isaiah 33:19**).” (P. 1505)

Cooke comments on **verse 5** that “The prophet is not sent to a nation which talks a barbarous language. *A people of deep lip and heavy tongue* means a people whose speech sounded guttural and thick to Hebrew ears; the Greeks called foreigners Βάρβαροι [barbarians] for the same reason.” (P. 39)

of deep / unintelligible lip / speech

וּכְבֹּדִי לְשׁוֹן

and of heavy / hard tongue / language

אַתָּה שְׁלוּחַ

you (singular) were sent forth--

אֶל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(but) to (the) house of Israel!¹¹⁰

3:6 לֹא אֶל-עַמִּים רַבִּים

Not to many peoples,

וּכְבֹּדִי לְשׁוֹן

and heavy / hard of tongue / language

עַמִּי שְׂפָה

of deep / unintelligible lip / speech

אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִשְׁמַע דְּבָרֵיהֶם

whose words you will not hear / understand,

אִם-לֹא אֶלֵיהֶם שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ

if not to them I sent you forth / if to them I sent you forth--¹¹¹

הֲמָה יִשְׁמְעוּ אֵלַיךְ:

110

That is, Ezekiel is not being sent forth as a missionary to a foreign country or a distant people whose language he doesn't know or understand. He has been sent to the "house of Israel," to his own native people, whose language he has known since his childhood—a people who can hear and understand Ezekiel's message, if they are willing.

111

This line in Hebrew is אִם-לֹא אֶלֵיהֶם שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ, "if not to them I sent you forth"; but the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ εἰ πρὸς τοιούτους ἐξαπέστειλά σε, "and if to them I sent you forth," omitting the negative לֹא, "not." English translations follow the Greek, not the Hebrew, with "Surely, had I sent thee to them," or "If I sent you to them." Eichrodt has a note stating that the "not" is nothing more than "a slip of the pen." (P. 60) And we wonder why the Jewish Masoretes have not noted this. The "not" destroys the meaning of the line.

they would hear / listen to you!¹¹²

3:7 וּבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יֵאָבֵד לְשָׁמֹעַ אֵלַיךָ

But / and (the) house of Israel will not be willing to hear / listen to you--

כִּי־אֵינָם אֹבִיִּים לְשָׁמֹעַ אֵלַי

because they are not willing to hear / listen to Me!¹¹³

כִּי כָל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

112

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Here we have a thought which is not infrequently found in the prophetic literature, viz. that the Israelites are less loyal to God than heathen nations to their Deities...and these peoples would be more receptive of Divine communications if made to them.” (P. 13) Compare **Jeremiah 2:10-11**:

10 כִּי עֲבַרְוּ אֵינִי כְּתִיִּים וְרָאוּ

Because cross over (the) coastlands of the Mediterranean, and see;

וְקָדַר שְׁלַחוּ וְהִתְבּוֹנְנוּ מֵאֲדָר

and send to Arabia’s desert, and become exceedingly wise;

וְרָאוּ הֲנָּה הִיְתָה כְּזֹאת:

and see if there has been (anything) like this.

11 הֲהִימִיר גּוֹי אֱלֹהִים

Has a nation exchanged Gods,

וְהִמָּה לֹא אֱלֹהִים

and they (are) not God (or, Gods’)?

וְעַמִּי הִמִּיר כְּבוֹדוֹ

And my people exchanged His Glorious Radiance

בְּלֹא יוֹעִיל:

for what will not profit!

We think of the **Scroll of Jonah**, with its depiction of Nineveh repenting at the preaching of the Jewish prophet Jonah, who hated the very thought of preaching to a non-Jewish people.

Compare **Matthew 11:21**, where Jesus contrasts the hardness of heart of villages in Galilee with the so-called “pagan” cities of Tyre and Sidon who would have repented upon hearing His Preaching.

113

Rabbi Fisch quotes Kimchi as stating that “The reason why they refuse to listen to the prophet is not personal antipathy to him, but because he is the mouthpiece of God.” (P. 13) We say No—the reason is that the Message condemns them for their disobedience, and they are too hard-hearted to even consider the Message to be true. What do you think?

Because all (the) house of Israel

חֲזָקֵי־מִצְחַח

(is) heavy / hard of forehead

וְקִשְׁי־לֵב הֵמָּה:

and they (are) hard ones of heart!¹¹⁴

3:8 הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ חֲזָקִים

Look—I have given / made your face / countenance strong / stout,

לְעַמַּת פְּנֵיהֶם

side-by-side with their face / countenance;

וְאֶת־מִצְחֶךָ חֲזָק

and your forehead strong,

לְעַמַּת מִצְחָם:

side-by-side with their forehead!¹¹⁵

114

Cooke comments that “The prophet is not sent to the heathen world in general...The prophet will meet with fierce opposition from his own countrymen.” (P. 39)

115

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 8** that Ezekiel “is assured that God has endowed him with moral strength to withstand the opposition which he will encounter.” (P. 13) Yes, Ezekiel’s opponents will have a hard countenance, an appearance of strength and confidence; but YHWH will make Ezekiel’s countenance even stronger, and more confident.

Hilmer comments that “Strength and courage were necessary equipment for a prophet, especially when preaching judgment. Jeremiah was similarly equipped.” (P. 1233) See **Jeremiah 1:18**,

וְאֲנִי הִנֵּה נִתְּתִיךָ הַיּוֹם לְעִיר מְבֻצָּר

And I--look, I've today made you a fortified city,

וְלְעַמּוּד בְּרִזָּל

and an iron pillar,

וְלַחֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

and copper[-plated] walls, over all the land—

לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה

for (the) kings of Judah,

לְשָׂרֵיהָ לְכַהֲנֵיהָ

for her officials, for her priests,

(continued...)

3:9 כְּשַׁמִּיר חֲזָק מִצֶּדֶן נָתַתִּי מִצֶּחֶד

Like flint-rock,¹¹⁶ stronger than hard pebble(s) I have given / made your forehead!

¹¹⁵(...continued)

וְלֵעָם הָאָרֶץ:

and for the people of the land!

116

The Hebrew masculine singular noun שַׁמִּיר, **shamiyr**, occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** as follows:

1. as a collective noun, “thorns, thorn-bushes,” token of waste-land, only in the **Scroll of Isaiah**, with the added + שַׁיִת, **shayith**, a collective noun also meaning “thorn-bushes,” **Isaiah 5:6; 7:23, 24, 25; 27:4**; used figuratively, **Isaiah 9:17; 10:17**; קוֹץ שַׁיִת, “thorn of a thornbush”: **Isaiah 32:13**.
2. meaning “adamant,” as sharp, **Jeremiah 17:1** (parallel to בְּרֹל בְּעֵט; meaning “flint,” as hard, figurative of prophet’s firmness **Ezekiel 3:9; Zechariah 7:12**, figurative of a hard heart.

The word “adamant” is used both as an adjective and as a noun: as an adjective it means “refusing to be persuaded or to change one's mind.” Synonyms include: unshakeable, immovable, inflexible, unwavering, uncompromising.” As an archaic noun, it is “a legendary rock or mineral to which many, often contradictory, properties were attributed, formerly associated with diamond or lodestone (a naturally magnetized piece of the mineral magnetite).

YHWH will make His prophet as sharp and as hard, or even sharper and harder than his opponents. As Rabbi Fisch puts it, Ezekiel “need not feel inferior to his opponents; they are a sinful people and as such will not prevail against the messenger of God.” (P. 13) Those in our day who seriously commit their lives to the task of speaking for YHWH to our modern world, need to claim this promise as their own. We will face opponents who are hardened and sharp, skilled in debate. But YHWH assures us He will make us harder and sharper, enabling us to prevail.

As a young minister, just out of seminary, and building an inter-racial church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in the 1960's, I was suddenly challenged by the Grand Klud of the Ku Klux Klan to a televised public debate in the large First Presbyterian Church. I agreed to join in the debate, but had absolutely no idea of what the Grand Klud would present in his arguments. The church was packed with newspaper reporters, and television cameras, and the Grand Klud was the first to speak. He began to quote from the **Scrolls of Ezra and Nehemiah** concerning their demanding the exclusion of half-breed people (Samaritans) from the Jewish church—and then spoke directly to me, saying, “Young Sir, we all know that you are a man of God; and we are calling upon you to get those niggers out of your church!” I went before the mikes and cameras, as my mind raced to find a proper response. I said something like, “Yes, you are right about **Ezra and Nehemiah**. But neither Ezra nor Nehemiah is the Lord of the church --Jesus Christ is. And Jesus went to those very people that Ezra and Nehemiah demanded to be exclud-

ed, and welcomed them. I spoke about the Samaritan woman of **John 4**, as an illustration of what I meant.

(continued...)

לֹא־תִירָא אוֹתָם׃

You will not be afraid of them,

וְלֹא־תִתַּת מִפְּנֵיהֶם׃

and you will not be dismayed from before them.

כִּי בַיִת־מְרִי הֵמָּה׃

Because they (are) a house of rebellion!¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶(...continued)

Some two weeks later, after the dust had settled, I got a phone call from the Grand Klud, telling me I had to come to his Assembly of God Church on Sunday night. I told him I wasn't interested in such a thing, and he told me, "Get off your high horse, and come on to share with us." So I told him I would come. That Sunday night I got there a little late, and the worship service had begun. A deacon welcomed me at the door, and said they were expecting me. I went in, and there was a black congregation worshipping with the Grand Klud's white congregation. When he saw me enter, he said from the pulpit, "Here's that young minister who thinks you can't teach old dogs new tricks." I could hardly believe my eyes—a leading Ku Klux Klansman integrating his congregation!

I believe that YHWH had sharpened my mind and my tongue in that debate, and put the right words in my mouth. And I came out of that experience with a much greater respect for that Grand Klud, who was willing to listen, and change—which was not true of most of the ministers I knew in North Carolina in the 1960's. What do you think? Has it changed that much in the 2020's?

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Yes, the Jewish community in exile, and the Jewish community remaining in Israel, not yet carried into captivity, constituted a "rebellious house." They, the ones who inhabited Jerusalem with its temple, the children of Abraham and Jacob and Isaac; the ones with whom the covenant at Sinai had been made, and who had the symbols of that covenant in their temple, the ark of the covenant and the ten commandments—they were a "rebellious house." Can you imagine that?

Can you imagine that this could be true of the Christian Churches of all denominations in our time, in the 21st century? Have we, in our time, refused to really listen to the prophetic word, as made known in Israel's writing prophets? Have we failed to speak strongly to our governments concerning the necessity of justice and righteousness, failing to hear the voice of minorities who have been belittled and pushed aside in our society? Have we built churches with beautiful stained glass windows, and magnificent organs, and air-conditioning, and comfortable pews, but refused to reach out to the prisoners in our numerous jails, or to the foreigners living in our cities, the people of other races, rejecting the prophetic call for the people of YHWH to be suffering servants, taking upon ourselves the sins of our fellow human beings?

Something like that had happened in Ezekiel's day, and he was called by YHWH to speak directly to that "rebellious house"—to be unafraid of rejection, and the denials that he was certain to meet. Do you think that YHWH is calling upon those who love and respect Him, to take up the task of Ezekiel in

(continued...)

3:10¹¹⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרַי אֲשֶׁר אֶדְבֹר אֵלֶיךָ

all My Words which I will speak to you,

קַח בְּלִבְךָ

take into your heart

וּבְאָזְנוֹךָ שְׁמַע:

and with your ears, hear / listen!¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷(...continued)

our time and place? What about your and my congregation? Is it a “rebellious house”—or is it a “House of prayer for all nations / peoples”? I, for one, believe that unless we are willing to become just that—a House of Prayer for all Nations / Peoples, we are headed for YHWH’s Judgment of destruction.

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Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 10-15** “The Prophet Enters Upon His Mission.” He comments that Ezekiel’s work “begins with the exiled community among whom he is living; but before he sets out on his task, he experiences another vision to hearten him.” (P. 14) It is the vision of the Divine chariot, the *Merkabah*, Present in Babylonia, among the exiles!

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Ezekiel has “eaten” the scroll containing the Message that YHWH wants him to speak to the rebellious house. But there is more for Ezekiel to learn. YHWH will be continually speaking to him. Just as he has “devoured” that scroll, so now he must listen to YHWH’s Words, hearing them with his ears, letting them sink into his heart. It is not enough just to repeat the message proclaimed by Jeremiah; YHWH has additional words to speak to Ezekiel.

And so it is, we think, still today. It is not enough for the committed minister to simply quote the ancient biblical texts, to repeat the Messages of the prophets. He or she must be attuned to the living Voice of YHWH, applying and adjusting that Prophetic Word to the ever new situations confronted by on-coming generations! If not, the Biblical Word will quickly become a “dead word,” suitable only for the museums.

Let YHWH’s ministers remember this—YHWH hears every cry of oppression, and answers those cries. Let His ministers likewise be attuned to the cries of oppression in the modern world, and respond to those cries in the way YHWH leads!

Hilmer comments that “The prophet is to stand in marked contrast to the people, who do not

(continued...)

3:11 וַיֵּךְ בָּא אֶל-הַגּוֹלָה׃

And go, come to the exile / exiles

אֶל-בְּנֵי עַמּוֹךְ׃

to (the) sons / children of your people;¹²⁰

וַדַּבַּרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם׃

and you shall speak to them

וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם׃

and you shall say to them,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה׃

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--¹²¹

¹¹⁹(...continued)

listen.” (P. 1233)

¹²⁰

Rabbi Fisch suggests that YHWH’s phrase “your people” “may be used here in a disparaging sense. Since they are ‘a rebellious house,’ they are not described as ‘My people.’ Compare **Exodus 32:7** where the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf are called “your (Moses’) people.” (P. 14)

Hilmer comments that “Ezekiel’s ministry was to the exilic community, most of whom refused to believe that [YHWH] would abandon Jerusalem and the temple. After the fall of Jerusalem, therefore, they were strongly inclined to despair.” (P. 1233)

We think that Ezekiel must have faced strong opposition within the exilic community, because of his preaching a Message of Judgment / Doom when surrounded by other prophets proclaiming salvation and peace. No doubt many of the exiles became angry with Ezekiel. But when his Message was demonstrated to be the truth of YHWH, and both Jerusalem and Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar, as Ezekiel had consistently proclaimed, and then as his Message began to speak Words of Restoration and Renewal, surely many of those who had been angry with him would have a change of heart. But human hearts are fickle. At any rate, because his Message was True, it came to be part of Israel’s **Tanakh / Bible**.

¹²¹

Rabbi Fisch notes that Ezekiel “must make clear to his audience that he is speaking in the name of [YHWH] and not expressing his own thoughts.” (P. 14)

How important it is for every minister of YHWH to make it clear to the people he or she serves, that the Message is non-negotiable. It is YHWH’s Message, already written in the **Bible**, and constantly being repeated and expounded upon in the ministers’ study, as they listen for the living voice of God. Such a ministry has nothing to do with trying to please the hearers, or being concerned for how those who hear will respond to the Mess-age. Whether they like it or not; whether they will listen or not,

(continued...)

אִם־יִשְׁמְעוּ

If / whether they (plural) will hear,

וְאִם־יִחְדְּלוּ:

and if / whether they will refuse (to hear)!

Verses 12-13, Ezekiel is Moved, and the Chariot-Throne of YHWH Moves:

“3:12 And a wind / Spirit lifted me up; and I heard behind me a sound of a great shaking (saying): Blessed is YHWH’s Glorious Radiance, from His Place! 3:13 And a sound of the Living Creatures’ wings, touching, each one to its sister; and a voice / sound of the wheels beside them; and a sound of a great shaking.

3:12¹²² וַתִּשְׂאֵנִי רוּחַ

And a wind / Spirit lifted me up;

וַאֲשַׁמְעַ אַחֲרַי קוֹל רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל

and I heard behind me a sound of a great shaking (saying):¹²³

בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:

¹²¹(...continued)

makes no difference. It is a Message with dynamic power, able to change human hearts and lives, to save the lost, to correct the erring, to give hope to the dying. Speak that Message! Repeat it over and over! Don’t get discouraged, and never give up! This is YHWH’s charge to Ezekiel, and to all those who want to be His representatives!

¹²²

Reimer entitles **verses 12-13** “The Throne of [YHWH] Withdraws.” He comments on **verse 12** that “Simultaneous events are being described: Ezekiel is being taken away, but at the same time the throne of [YHWH] is departing.” (P. 1505)

¹²³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In his vision the prophet felt himself lifted up and carried away to the main colony of his fellow-captives...The loud sound of a rushing noise heard by the prophet was that of the *Merkabah* [Divine chariot] which was present in the vision.” He quotes the Christian Hebraist Davidson as saying, “The prophet had been in the presence of the Theophany...during all that has hitherto been narrated (2:1-3:12), and thus when he was lifted up and carried away it seemed to him that he left the Theophany *behind* him.” (P. 14)

Blessed is YHWH's Glorious Radiance, from His place!¹²⁴

3:13 וְקוֹל פְּנֵי הַחַיּוֹת

And a sound of the Living Creatures' wings,

מְשִׁיקוֹת אֶל-אַחֹתָהּ

touching, each one to its sister;

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Translations of this last line of **verse 12** vary:

King James, “Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place.”

Tanakh, “Blessed is the Presence of the LORD, in His place”;

New Revised Standard, “and as the glory of the LORD rose from its place”;

New International, “the glory of the LORD rose from the place where it was standing.”

New Jerusalem, “Blessed be the glory of Yahweh in his dwelling-place!”

Rahlfs, εὐλογημένη ἡ δόξα κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτοῦ, “spoken well of (is) the glory of (the) Lord out of its place.”

We see nothing concerning YHWH's Glorious Radiance “rising from its place.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “These words of praise were presumably uttered by the celestial beings and heard by the prophet as he turns away from the scene. Though the *Merkabah* [Divine chariot] is moving away—a foreboding of the departure of [YHWH's] Presence from the temple--the glory of the LORD yet remained in the place from which it is departing, since His place is universal (compare **Isaiah 6:3**). Alternatively, as Malbim explains, His place may signify Jerusalem which continues to be the abode of the Divine glory.” (P. 15)

The text does not make explicit to whom the voices belonged that Ezekiel heard. Neither does it make explicit what is meant by YHWH's “place.” It could mean wherever it is that we think YHWH is located, whether the city of Jerusalem or the temple, or heaven. Wherever the “place of YHWH” may be, there praise is offered. And Rabbi Fisch is right in referring to **Isaiah 6:3**, which states that one of the seraphim surrounding the throne of YHWH in the temple in Jerusalem cried out to the other, saying:

קְדוֹשׁ | קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת

Set-apart, set-apart, set-apart (is) YHWH of Armies

מְלֵא כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

fullness of all the land / earth (is) His Glorious Radiance!

YHWH's Glorious Radiance fills the earth (and we would add, the heavens as well)! The Jews have long looked upon Jerusalem and its temple as the particular location of that Glorious Radiance. But it is not the whole truth. The truth is that YHWH's Glorious Radiance fills the whole earth, and YHWH's Presence and His Word can be sensed and heard in the remotest island of the earth, and as well in the world's biggest cities. Ezekiel will soon learn that this means YHWH's Presence and His Word can be in Babylon, among the exiles—just as much as it could ever have been in Jerusalem and its temple. That is an astounding thing for a Jewish priest to learn!

וְקוֹל הָאוֹפָנִים לְעִמָּתָם

and a voice / sound of the wheels beside them;

וְקוֹל רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל:

and a sound of a great shaking.

Verses 14-15, Ezekiel's Divine Vision Comes to an End:

“3:14 And a wind / Spirit lifted me and took me, and I went, bitter with the heat of my spirit. And YHWH's hand (was) upon me, heavily! 3:15 And I came to the exile / exiles (in) Tel Abhibh, the ones dwelling to / beside Kebhar-river; and I sat / dwelt—they were dwelling there; and I sat there seven days, appalled / overwhelmed, in their midst.

3:14¹²⁵ וְרוּחַ נִשְׂאָתָנִי וְתִקְחָנִי

And a wind / Spirit lifted me and took me,

וְאֵלַי מִרְּבַחַמַּת רוּחִי

and I went, bitter with the heat of my spirit.¹²⁶

וַיִּדְ-יָהוָה עָלַי חֲזָקָה:

And YHWH's hand (was) upon me, heavily!¹²⁷

3:15 וָאָבֹא אֶל-הַגּוֹלָה תֵּל אַבְיִב

And I came to the exile / exiles (in) Tel Abhibh,

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Reimer entitles **verses 14-15** “The Vision Concludes.” He comments that “In language echoing **1:1-3**, Ezekiel's visionary encounter with the Spirit draws to an end. It is tempting to think of *going in bitterness in the heat of my spirit* simply as a state of agitation following this traumatic encounter, and the translation ‘in the heat’ leaves open this possibility. But this idiom appears 30 times in the **Old Testament**, and the **English Standard Version** generally translates it ‘in wrath’ or ‘in fury’ or the like. Probably this nuance also applies here. Ezekiel has gained a Divine perspective on his people's sin, and his anger reflects that shared viewpoint.” (P. 1505)

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Rabbi Fisch comments that this means Ezekiel was “in distress. The prophet was deeply grieved to have to deliver so calamitous a Message to his countrymen (Rashi).” (P. 16)

127

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The reluctance of the prophet to undertake his mission gave way to the overwhelming compulsion of the prophetic spirit.” (P. 15) Compare **1:3**.

הַיֹּשְׁבִים אֶל־נְהַר־כְּבַר׃

the ones dwelling to / beside Kebhar-river;

(וַאֲשֶׁר) [וַאֲשַׁב] הָמָּה יוֹשְׁבִים שָׁם

and I sat / dwelt—¹²⁸ they were dwelling there;

וַאֲשַׁב שָׁם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים

and I sat there seven days,

מִשְׁמִים בְּתוֹכָם:

appalled / overwhelmed, in their midst.¹²⁹

¹²⁸The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” וַאֲשֶׁר; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” וַאֲשַׁב, “and I sat / dwelt.”

¹²⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “For seven days the prophet sat among his people silent and motionless, probably waiting for further instructions which he then received...In the view of Kimchi, this and the other incidents narrated to the end of **chapter eleven** were not actually performed but were suggested to Ezekiel during his visionary state. Only then, as mentioned in **11:25**, he was allowed to speak to the people and tell them all his experiences.” (P. 16)

Hilmer comments that “Ezekiel was in the same state of spiritual shock that others in the **Bible** experienced after an encounter with [YHWH].” (P. 1233) See **Ezra 9:4**, not an encounter with YHWH, but an encounter with Israelite intermarriages:

וּכְשָׁמַעִי אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה

And as I heard this word / report,

קָרַעְתִּי אֶת־בְּגָדִי וּמְעִילִי

I tore my garment and my robe;

וַאֲמַרְטָה מִשְׁעַר רֹאשִׁי וּזְקָנִי

and I pulled out some hair of my head, and my beard--

וַאֲשַׁבָּה מִשׁוֹמָם:

and I sat (there), appalled!

Job 2:13, not an encounter with YHWH, but an encounter with Job’s sufferings:

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִתּוֹ לָאָרֶץ

And they sat with him on the earth

שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת לַיְלֹת

(continued...)

**Verses 16-21, Ezekiel Is Assigned His Task–
He Is To Be The Watchman on the Wall.¹³⁰**

¹²⁹(...continued)

seven days, and seven nights;
וְאִין־דָּבַר אֵלָיו דְּבָר
and no one was speaking to him a word,
כִּי רָאוּ כִי־גָדַל הַפָּאֵב מְאֹד:
because they saw the pain was exceedingly great.

Job 40:4–5, Job speaks, after an encounter with YHWH:

4 הֲנִן קָלְתִּי
Look—I am small / trifling.
מָה אֲשִׁיבָךְ
What shall I respond to You?
יָדִי שָׁמַתִּי לְמוֹפְּי:
My hand I placed on my mouth!

5 אַחַת דִּבַּרְתִּי
I spoke once—
וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה
and (now) I will not answer;
וּשְׁתִּים
and a second time—
וְלֹא אוֹסִיף:
and I will not (speak) again.

Acts 9:9, where Saul of Tarsus, having been encountered by the risen Jesus,

καὶ ἦν ἡμέρας τρεῖς μὴ βλέπων
And for three days he was without sight / not seeing,
καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲ ἔπιεν.
and he did not eat, neither did he drink.

¹³⁰

Compare **Ezekiel 18**, and **33:7-9**. The watchman on the wall's job is to watch for dan-ger, specifically that of an enemy army approaching, and to warn the people of the danger. With this done, his job is completed--he is not responsible for what response his hearers may make.

Rabbi Fisch states that “Ezekiel’s function is now more precisely defined. His task was not only to preach and rebuke, but also to warn against the imminent danger of the fall of Jerusalem and the consequent suffering of the people.” (P. 16) We agree.

“3:16 And it happened at (the) end of seven days--and YHWH’s Word was / came to me, saying: 3:17 Son of Adam / Humanity, I have given / made you a watchman to (the) house of Israel. And you will hear / listen to a Word from My mouth, and You will warn them from Me. 3:18 When I speak to the wicked person, You will surely die! And you do not warn him, and you do not speak to warn a wicked person of his wicked way, to cause him to live / preserve his life, he (is) a wicked person; in his iniquity he will die! But / and his blood I will seek from your hand! 3:19 And you, if you warned a wicked person, and he did not turn from his evil and from his wicked way, he will die in / by his iniquity, but / and you, have delivered your innermost-being life!3:20 And when a righteous person turns from his righteousness, and will do injustice / unrighteousness; and I will give / place a stumbling-block before him, he will die. If you did not warn him, by his sin he will die; and his righteousness will not be remembered which he did / practiced; and his blood from your hand I will seek! 3:21 And you, if you warned him, a righteous person, so as not to sin, a righteous person; and he, he did not sin, he will surely live, because he was warned. And you, you delivered your innermost-being / life! 3:21 And you, because you warned him, a righteous one, so as not to sin—a righteous one, and he, he did not sin—he will surely live, because he was warned; and you, you delivered your innermost-being!”

3:16 וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים

And it happened at (the) end of seven days--

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

and YHWH’s word was / came to me, saying:

3:17 בֶן־אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

צִפָּה נֹתֵיךְ לְבַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

I have given / made you a watchman to (the) house of Israel.¹³¹

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Hilmer notes that “In ancient Israel, watchmen were stationed on the highest parts of the city wall to inform its inhabitants of the progress of a battle (**1 Samuel 14:16**) or of ap-proaching messengers (**2 Samuel 18:24-27**; **2 Kings 9:17-20**). The prophets were spiritual watchmen, relaying [YHWH’s] Word to the people.” (P. 1233) See:

Jeremiah 6:17,

וְהִקְמַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם צִפִּים

And I will raise up watchmen over you.

הִקְשִׁיבוּ לְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר

Pay attention to (the) voice / sound of a ram’s horn trumpet!

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נִקְשִׁיב:

And they said, We will not pay attention!

(continued...)

וּשְׁמַעְתָּ מִפִּי דְבָר

And you will hear / listen to a Word from My mouth,

וְהִזְהַרְתָּ אוֹתָם מִמֶּנִּי:

And You will warn them from Me.

3:18 בְּאִמְרֵי לְרָשָׁע

When I speak to the wicked person,

מוֹת תָּמוּת

You will surely die!

וְלֹא תִזְהַרְתּוֹ

and you do not warn him,

¹³¹(...continued)

Hosea 9:8,

צִפְּהָ אֶפְרַיִם עִם־אֱלֹהֵי נְבִיא

A prophet is a watchman of Ephraim with my God;

פֶּחַ יִקוּשׁ עַל־כָּל־דְּרָכָיו

a bird-hunter's trap (lies) upon all his paths,

מִשְׂטֵמָה בְּבַיִת אֱלֹהָיו:

animosity / hostility in (the) house of his God!

Habakkuk 2:1

עַל־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי אֶעֱמְדָה

I will stand upon my watch-post,

וְאֶתִּיצְבָּה עַל־מְצוֹר

and I will station myself upon a siege-enclosure;

וְאֶצְפֶּה לְרֹאוֹת מִה־יִדְבַר־בִּי

and I will watch closely to see what He will say in / to me;

וּמָה אָשִׁיב עַל־תּוֹכַחְתִּי:

and what I will return concerning my reproof / argument

Hilmer states that “Ezekiel’s function as a watchman was not so much to warn the exiles of the impending doom of Jerusalem as to teach that [YHWH] holds each one res-ponsible for his own behavior. This commission, repeated in 33:7-9, is spelled out in **chapter 18.**” (P. 1233)

וְלֹא דַבַּרְתָּ לְהַזְהִיר רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ הַרְשָׁעָה

and you do not speak to warn a wicked person of his wicked way,

לְחַיֵּיתוֹ

to cause him to live / preserve his life,

הוּא רָשָׁע

he (is) a wicked person;

בְּעֹנֹוֹ יָמוּת

in his iniquity he will die!

וְדָמוֹ מִיָּדְךָ אֶבְקָשׁ:

But / and his blood I will seek from your hand!¹³²

3:19 וְאַתָּה כִּי־הִזְהַרְתָּ רָשָׁע

And you, if you warned a wicked person

וְלֹא־שָׁב מִרְשָׁעוֹ וּמִדַּרְכּוֹ הַרְשָׁעָה

and he did not turn from his evil and from his wicked way,

הוּא בְּעֹנֹוֹ יָמוּת

he will die in / by his iniquity,

וְאַתָּה אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ הִצַּלְתָּ:

but / and you, have delivered your innermost-being life!

3:20 וּבְשׁוֹב צְדִיק מִצְדִּיקוֹ

And when a righteous person turns from his righteousness,

וַעֲשָׂה עוֹל

and will do injustice / unrighteousness;

132

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The failure to save life corresponds to murder. The grave responsibility resting upon the prophet is made very clear in this verse.” (P. 16)

Reimer likewise states that ‘Although the intent is clearly to warn the wicked and thus save his life (compare 33:8), the more fundamental concern here remains the fidelity of the prophet to deliver the warnings faithfully. Both scenarios result in the death of the wicked; but in the second, if the warning is issued, the prophet’s life is saved.’ (P. 1505)

וְנָתַתִּי מִכְשׁוֹל לְפָנָיו

and I will give / place a stumbling-block before him,¹³³

הוּא יָמוּת

he will die.

כִּי לֹא הִזְהַרְתּוֹ

if you did not warn him,

בְּחַטָּאתוֹ יָמוּת

by his sin he will die;

וְלֹא תִזְכָּרֶנּוּ צְדִיקְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

and his righteousness will not be remembered which he did / practiced;

וְדַמּוֹ מִיַּדְךָ אֶבְקָשׁ׃

and his blood from your hand I will seek!

3:21 וְאַתָּה כִּי הִזְהַרְתּוֹ צְדִיק

And you, if you warned him, a righteous person,

לְבַלְתִּי חַטָּא צְדִיק

so as not to sin, a righteous person;¹³⁴

133

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The rabbis (**Babylonina Talmud Yoma 86b**) understand the verse to refer to a righteous man who has turned apostate inwardly but hypocritically still professes to be pious. Such hypocrisy would be exposed, for God would put a stumbling-block in his way which causes him to commit sin in public.” (P. 17)

134

Twice, this verse speaks of a person who is צְדִיק, **tsaddiyq**, “righteous.” Many Christians, reading this, remember the teaching of Paul, quoting passages from the **Hebrew Bible**, claiming that there is “none righteous, no not one” (**Romans 3:9-12**). See in the **Hebrew Bible** the following passages which Paul refers to: **Psalm 14:2-4; 53:1-3;**

Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalm 5:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}; Psalm 140:3^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}; Psalm 10:7; Proverbs 1:16; Isaiah 59:7-8 and Psalm 36:1.

Yes, Paul, and these verses from the **Hebrew Bible** teach there is none righteous. But here in **Ezekiel 3** people are spoken of as “righteous”—and there are many other places in the **Hebrew Bible**, and in the **Greek New Testament**, where people are called “righteous.”

(continued...)

וְהוּא לֹא־חָטָא

and he, he did not sin,¹³⁵

חַיּוֹ יְחִיָּה׃

he will surely live,^{136, 3}

כִּי נִזְהַר׃

because he was warned.¹³⁷

וְאַתָּה אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ הַצַּלְתָּ׃

And you, you delivered your innermost-being / life!

3:21 וְאַתָּה כִּי הִזְהַרְתָּו׃

And you, because you warned him,

¹³⁴(...continued)

As a lover of YHWH, and a follower of Jesus the Christ, what will you do about this? Will you throw up your hands in despair, saying the **Bible** is contradictory? We will not. We will affirm with Paul that humanity is terribly sinful, so sinful that both he and the **Heb-rew Bible** sometimes overstate the case, committing the “all fallacy,” saying there is none righteous, no not one. But we will also affirm with Ezekiel that there are righteous people— thanks be to God, who should not be included in that generalization. And I ask you, have you never committed the “all fallacy,” especially in times of heated argument?

¹³⁵

In terms of the preceding footnote, where it is affirmed that “all have sinned,” what do you make of this statement that the righteous person did not sin? And what do you make of the statement attributed to Jesus that he has come to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous? (**Luke 5:32**)?

¹³⁶

And in terms of the two preceding footnotes, if the wages of sin is death, then can we conclude in the light of Ezekiel’s statement that the wages of being righteous is life?

¹³⁷

Yes, the “prophets of doom” were commissioned to proclaim YHWH’s warning to their hearers, warning them of the deathly dangers confronting them if they did not repent. And YHWH is depicted as telling Ezekiel that if his hearers heeded the warning, they would live, not die! What do you think? If the people of Judah, and the Jews in exile had responded positively to the preaching of Ezekiel, would the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar not have happened?

How can you honestly deal with these contrasting theologies, both found in the **Bible**? Will you dogmatically side with Paul, and reject the teaching of **Ezekiel 3, 18** and **33**? We have wondered why Christians have been so neglectful of studying and comment-ing on the **Scroll of Ezekiel**. Could it be because his theology challenges their theologies?

צָדִיק לְבַלְתִּי חָטָא

a righteous one, so as not to sin–

צָדִיק וְהוּא לֹא־חָטָא

a righteous one, and he, he did not sin–

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה כִּי נִזְהָר

he will surely live, because he was warned;

וְאַתָּה אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ הַצַּלְתָּ:

and you, you delivered your innermost-being!¹³⁸

Symbolic Acts Portraying Ezekiel's Ministry

and the Siege of Jerusalem (3:22-4:17)

Ezekiel Shut Up At Home, Tied With Ropes,

and Commanded to Remain Silent (3:22-27):¹³⁹

“3:22 And YHWH’s hand was upon me there; and He said to me, Arise! Go forth to the valley / plain, and there I will speak with you! 3:23 And I arose, and I went forth to the valley / plain. And look–there YHWH’s Glorious Radiance was standing--like the Glorious Radiance which I saw beside (the) River Kebhar. And I fell upon my face. 3:24 And a wind / Spirit came on / into me, and it cause me to stand upon my feet. `And He spoke with me, and He said to me, Come! Be shut up in (the) midst of your house! 3:25 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, look–I have given / placed ropes upon you. And they will bind you in them; and you will not go forth in their midst! 3:26 And your tongue I will cause to stick to your jaw; and you will be silent / mute; and you shall not be to them for a man reproving! Because they (are) a house of rebellion! 3:27 ‘And when I speak with you, I will open your mouth. And you shall say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--The one listening will listen; and the one refusing will refuse (to listen). Because they (are) a house of rebellion!

138

For this promise in **3:21**, “he shall live,” see end-note 9, with its long list of passages from the **Hebrew Bible**.

139

Out on the Babylonian plain, just as previously beside the Kebar River, YHWH's Glorious Radiance is present; the Spirit commands Ezekiel to shut himself inside his house, and to be tied with ropes, and to wait in silence--the first of the acted parables, laden with a terrifying Divine Message of judgment and destruction upon Israel. Ezekiel is to speak only when the Divine Spirit opens his mouth.

Rabbi Fisch states that “This section is to be regarded as an introduction to **chapters 4-24.**” (P. 17)

3:22 וַתְּהִי עָלַי שֵׁם יְדִי־הוָה

And YHWH's hand was upon me there;¹⁴⁰

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

and He said to me,

קוּם צֵא אֶל־הַבְּקָעָה

Arise! Go forth to the valley / plain,

וְשָׁם אֲדַבֵּר אִתְּךָ:

and there I will speak with you!¹⁴¹

3:23 וָאֶקוּמָה וָאֵצֵא אֶל־הַבְּקָעָה

And I arose, and I went forth to the valley / plain.

וַהֲנִי־שָׁם כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה עִמּוֹד

And look--there YHWH's Glorious Radiance was standing--

כְּכְבוֹד אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר

like the Glorious Radiance which I saw upon / beside (the) River Kebhar.¹⁴²

וְאָפַל עַל־פְּנָי:

140

See **Ezekiel 1:3**, with its footnote concerning YHWH's "hand."

141

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel "was ordered to leave Tel-abib for an uninhabited place which was more suitable for the appearance of the Glory of the Lord." (P. 17)

142

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel "found himself again in the presence of the *Merkabah* [Divine chariot] which he saw on the occasion of his call to the prophetic office. The vision occurred to him on one more occasion (compare **Ezekiel 8:2ff.**).” (P. 18)

What do you take this to mean? Surely at the very least it means that YHWH is present with His people who are in Babylonian exile, just as truly and real as He was with them in the confines of Jerusalem and its temple. But we would go beyond this conclusion and affirm that it means YHWH's presence is not confined to any one place, such as the temple in Jerusalem. He is the God of all the earth; and those with ears to hear, and hearts open to His touch, can see and hear and feel His presence anywhere they may be. Read again the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in **John 4**, where Jesus is depicted as teaching that God can be known and served--not in one specific place, such as on a Samaritan mountain, or on the temple mountain in Jerusalem, but in human hearts every-where, "in spirit / Spirit and in truth." That's the lesson that Ezekiel is beginning to learn!

And I fell upon my face.¹⁴³

3:24¹⁴⁴ וַתֵּבֵא־בִי רוּחַ

And a wind / Spirit came on / into me,

וַתַּעֲמִדְנִי עַל-רַגְלָי

and it cause me to stand upon my feet.

וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתִי

And he spoke with me,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָי

and He said to me,

בֵּא הַסָּגֵר בְּתוֹךְ בַּיִתְּךָ:

Come! Be shut up in (the) midst of your house!

3:25¹⁴⁵

143

We say, That’s worship—real worship. It’s not saying, “What a fine sermon!” Or, “I really enjoyed the choir today!” It’s acknowledging the reality of YHWH as present in our midst, wherever we may be. The person falling on his face is the person who is ready to hear and obey whatever YHWH commands, ready for costly obedience. Have you respon-ded to YHWH in this way? And if so, what has it meant for your life?

For Ezekiel, it meant some very strange responses, including a long ministry of vision-stories / vignettes and symbolic actions, all intended to warn and exhort and teach Israel YHWH’s will. Has it meant your doing anything “strange,” or costly?

144

Matties notes that in **Ezekiel 3:24-27**, “The Spirit commands several sign-actions (analogous to ‘street theater’) all representing forms of restriction. The first involves self-imposed house arrest (**verse 24b**); the second, binding with ropes (**verse 25**); and the third, a form of speechlessness (**verse 26**; see **24:27**; **33:22** for report of recovered speech). Ezekiel is no longer free to determine the course of his own actions or speech. That Ezekiel moves about and speaks is clear from the rest of the [Scroll]. But his movements and his speaking are determined solely by Divine authorization. Ezekiel, as *mortal* [בֶּן-אָדָם], will become the Divine mouth...He will speak whenever, and only when, [YHWH] has something to say.” (P. 1160)

145

Reimer comments on **verses 25-27** that “Ezekiel has already ingested the Message (**verses 1-3**) and absorbed the Divine perspective (**verse 14**). His identification with the prophetic Message is pushed even further, with his actions and words under direct Divine control. Ezekiel will be mute until Jerusalem’s fall (see **Ezekiel 33:22**). Such constraint raises the problem: how will he warn if he cannot

(continued...)

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

הִנֵּה נָתַנּוּ עֲלֶיךָ עֲבוֹתִים

look—I have given / placed ropes upon you.

וְאִסְרוּךְ בָּהֶם

And they will bind you in them;

וְלֹא תֵצֵא בְּתוֹכָם:

and you will not go forth in their midst!

3:26 וְלִשׁוֹנְךָ אֶדְבִיק אֶל-חִפְּךָ

And your tongue I will cause to stick to your jaw;

וְנִאֲלַמְתָּ

and you will be silent / mute;¹⁴⁶

וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאִישׁ מוֹכִיחַ

and you shall not be to them for a man reproving!

כִּי בֵּית מְרִי הֵמָּה:

Because they (are) a house of rebellion!¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵(...continued)

speak? The solution: oracles of [YHWH] will be Divinely enabled—‘I will open your mouth.’ The concluding words are familiar, echoing the terms of the Divine commission in **Ezekiel 2:4, 7**.” (P. 1506)

¹⁴⁶

Hilmer comments that “**Verses 26-27** indicate that the prophet would be unable to speak except when he had a direct word from [YHWH]. His enforced silence underscored Israel’s stubborn refusal to take [YHWH’s] Word seriously. This condition was relieved only after the fall of Jerusalem (**24:27; 33:22**). From that time on, Ezekiel was given messages of hope, which he continually shared with his fellow exiles.” (P. 1243)

We think YHWH’s prohibition of Ezekiel speaking is YHWH’s way of protecting Ezekiel from the harm that would come to him for continuing to reprove the exiles, denying their expectations of soon coming salvation and restoration. What do you think?

¹⁴⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verses 24-26** that “The purpose of [Ezekiel’s being shut up within
(continued...)

¹⁴⁷(...continued)

his house] was to prevent him from reproving the people before he had received all [YHWH's] instructions and beheld all the visions which are narrated up to the end of **chapter 11** (Kimchi)...God forbids Ezekiel to converse with his fellow-captives; he is to act as though he were dumb [unable to speak]...Evidently the time had not yet arrived when he was to address the community...Only after God had communicated to him all the prophecies and visions was he allowed to speak to the people. This happened when the vision finally depart-ed, as stated in **Ezekiel 11:24-25.**" (P. 18)

We are reminded of Saul of Tarsus' conversion experience, as he saw the risen Lord Jesus on the way to persecute Christians in Damascus, Syria. What a sudden, dramatic change that was for this Pharisee, totally transforming his life and his understanding of [YHWH]. But Paul tells us in Galatians **1:15-24**,

15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born,
and who called me by his grace,
16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me,
in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,
I did not immediately consult with anyone;
17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me,
but I went away into Arabia,
and returned again to Damascus.
18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem
to visit Cephas [Peter] and remained with him fifteen days.
19 But I saw none of the other apostles
except James the Lord's brother.
20 (In what I am writing to you,
before God, I do not lie!)
21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
22 And I was still unknown in person
to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
23 They only were hearing it said,
He who used to persecute us
is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.
24 And they glorified God because of me.

Why do you think it was that Paul went away into Arabia, and it wasn't for three years before he finally returned to Jerusalem? Christians have traditionally demanded that those who feel the call to ministry go to seminary for three years, to get prepared to preach. Is that what Paul was doing? What seminary did he attend? Was he simply being quiet as Ezekiel was told to be? How long does it take for a conversion experience to be understood and articulated in a positive way? I myself believe it takes a lot longer time than three years—and that those called by God need to become

listeners and learners throughout the rest of their lives, always open to the Spirit, always ready to change as the Divine vision impels them. What do you think?

In the **Gospel of Luke, 2:41-52**, the story is told of how Jesus, at the age of twelve, was filled
(continued...)

3:27 וּבְדַבְרֵי אֹתָךְ

And when I speak with you,

אֶפְתַּח אֶת־פִּיךָ

I will open your mouth.¹⁴⁸

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

And you shall say to them,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--

הַשֹּׁמֵעַ | יִשְׁמַע

The one listening will listen;

וְהַחֲדָל | יִחְדָּל

and the one refusing will refuse (to listen).

כִּי בֵּית מְרֵי הַמָּוָה:

¹⁴⁷(...continued)

with an amazing understanding, and that in the years following he was submissive to his parents, and was constantly increasing in wisdom...Then **Luke 3:23** tells us that it was not until Jesus was thirty years of age that he “began his ministry.” Why wait so long? Why not begin from the age of twelve? If the Son of God had to wait until he was thirty, do you think you and I should just start out preaching as soon as we can? Or should we do like Ezekiel, and be silent until we have learned much more? Should we be like Paul, going off into who knows where, waiting some three years to begin our speaking? Especially, should we not be like Jesus, waiting submissively, learning and growing, until the “right time” comes to speak?

From my personal perspective, having taught ministers in seminary, I say, Don’t rush the matter. If you have the ability, take the time to learn proper English—and then learn the biblical languages—Hebrew, and Aramaic, and Koine Greek. That’s quite a chore, and many of us who feel the call of [YHWH] will back down, opting for something else. We can’t take that much time...it’s too demanding...it’s too difficult. And we consign ourselves to preaching a half-baked message for the rest of our lives. I say, Take the time! Learn the languages! Listen to others, hear the voices calling for help. Relate them genuinely to the biblical teaching. YHWH will let you know when the right time comes!

148

We say, Yes, Ezekiel was to keep silent, to say nothing until YHWH told him to speak. But there would be times when YHWH revealed Himself to Ezekiel, telling him to speak, and at that time he could break his silence, telling the people what YHWH had said. But then he would return to his silence—which would continue until the fall of Jerusalem.

Because they (are) a house of rebellion!

**A Vision-Story Play, in Four Acts,
Depicting How YHWH Is Against Jerusalem--4:1-5:17:¹⁴⁹**

**Verses 4:1-5:4, A Street Theater Enactment
of YHWH's Being Against Jerusalem:**

“4:1 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, take for yourself, a (large, clay) brick; and you shall give / place it before you. And you shall inscribe / engrave upon it a city--Jerusalem! 4:2 And you shall give / place against it siege-works. And you shall build upon it a siege-wall. And you shall pour out against it a siege-mound. And you shall place against it armed camps. And place against it battering-rams, all around (it). 4:3 And you, take for yourself an iron pan, and give / place it (as an) iron wall between yourself and the city. And set / prepare your face towards / against it! And it (Jerusalem) will be in the (surrounding) siege-works. And besiege against it (for a) sign--for (the) house of Israel!

Ezekiel immobilized for 390, then 40 days (4:4-8)

4:4 And you, lie / sleep upon your left side. And you shall place (the) house of Israel's iniquity / guilt upon it, (for the) number of the days which you shall lie / sleep upon it--you shall lift up / bear their iniquity / guilt! 4:5 And I, I have given / assigned to you two (signs?) of their iniquity / guilt--to (the) number of days--three hundred and ninety day(s); and you shall lift up / bear forgive (the) iniquity / guilt of (the) house of Israel! 4:6 And you will complete these; and you will lie / sleep upon your right side, a second (time). and you shall lift up / bear (the) iniquity / guilt of (the) house of Judah, forty day(s), a day

149

Rabbi Fisch comments that “This chapter and the first four verses of the next [chapter] narrate four symbolic acts, which, in a vision, Ezekiel was commanded to perform: **4:1-3** relates to the siege of Jerusalem; **4:4-8** relates to the iniquity of Israel; **4:9-17** relates to the famine suffered during the siege; and **5:1-4** relates to the fate of the population of the doomed city.” (P. 19)

We agree with Rabbi Fisch that these four sections are all symbolical, and that they cannot be taken literally, as if Ezekiel was to literally eat a leather scroll, or lie first on one side and then on the other for over a year in front of the people--would any group watch a play lasting that long? No, these are not literal actions for Ezekiel to undertake physically, but rather, visionary, symbolical actions, which Ezekiel was to perform in a “vision-story-play,” a kind of “street theater” enacted before the leaders of the exiles, warning them of the forth-coming destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Reimer agrees, stating that in **4:1-5:4** “[YHWH] against Jerusalem [is] enacted. Poetry is typically the vehicle for prophetic oracles--but not here. Ezekiel is called upon to perform ‘street theater’: actions (rather than words) that convey a Divine message. In most cases in **Ezekiel**, like this one, only the instructions are recorded, and not the report of the performance and its reception.” (P. 1506)

for the year, a day for the year. I have given / assigned (it) to you! 4:7 And towards (the) siege-works of Jerusalem you shall set your face, and your arm stripped bare--and you shall prophesy against it. 4:8 And look--I have given / placed upon you ropes; and you shall not turn from your side to your (other) side, until your finishing (the) days of your siege.

Diet for the Siege and Exile (4:9-17)

4:9 And you, take for yourself wheat and barley and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt. And you shall give / place them in one vessel; and you shall make / prepare them for yourself for bread / food--(for the) number of the days which you are lying / sleeping upon your side; (for) three hundreds and ninety day(s) you shall eat it. 4:10 And your food which you shall eat--(will be) by weight, twenty shekel(s) to / by the day. From time until / to time you shall eat it. 4:11 And water(s) by measure you shall drink--a sixth of the *hiyn*--from time until / to time, you shall drink (it). 4:12 A round flat loaf of barley, you shall eat it; and it--with balls of dung, excrement of the human--you shall bake it in their eyes. 4:13 And YHWH said, Like this Israel's people / children will eat their unclean food / bread in the nations where I will banish them. 4:14 And I said, Aha, my Lord YHWH! Look--my innermost-being was not made unclean / polluted! And I have not eaten (from the flesh of) a corpse, or torn flesh, from my youth and until now! And flesh of an unclean animal has not entered into my mouth! 4:15 And He said to me, See, I have given to you excrements of the cattle instead of excrements (synonym) of the human. And you shall make / prepare your bread / food upon them. 4:16 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, Look at Me, breaking (the) staff / supply of bread / food in Jerusalem. And they will eat bread / food by weight and in / with anxiety, and water by measure, and with horror they will drink! 4:17 In order that they may lack bread / food and water. And they will be desolate, each man and his brother; and they will rot away in their iniquity / guilt!

Verses 5:1-4--The Divine Razor and Its Consequences The Nations Fate

5:1 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, take for yourself a sword, a sharp one--a razor of the barbers--take it for yourself, and pass it over your head and over your chin / beard. And you shall take for yourself weight-scales, and you shall divide them (into three parts). 5:2 A third part (of the hair) you shall burn in the fire, in (the) midst of the city, as (the) days of the siege are completed. And you shall take the (next) third part--strike (it) with the sword, all around it (the city). And the (last) third part you shall scatter to the wind. And I will unsheathe a sword, and the third part after them. 5:3 And you shall take from there a small number, and you shall bind them in your wings / robe-skirts. 5:4 And from them again you shall take, and you shall throw them (in)to (the) midst of the fire. And you shall burn them in the fire. From it fire will come forth to every house (in) Israel.

4:1¹⁵⁰

150

Matties comments that in **Ezekiel 4:1-5:17** there is "A thematic (not consecutive) sequence of instructions regarding street theater performances (**4:1-5:4**) and an oral an-nouncement (**5:5-17**) depicting the siege and fall of Jerusalem and the deportation of the population. These acts are embodied messages that seek to shape the exilic audience's perception of reality and to acknowledge [YHWH] as sovereign in history (**5:13**)." (P. 1160)

(continued...)

וַאֲתָהּ בֶן־אָדָם׃

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

קַח־לְךָ לְבִנָּה׃

take for yourself, a (large, clay) brick;

וְנָתַתָּה אוֹתָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ׃

and you shall give / place it before you.

וְחָקַוְתָּ עָלֶיהָ עִיר׃

And you shall inscribe / engrave upon it a city--

אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם׃

Jerusalem!¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰(...continued)

The first performance, **4:1-3**, depicts the City of Jerusalem as under siege on a clay tablet.

151

Note here the Hebrew spelling of “Jerusalem”--יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, which in an unpointed text would be pronounced **yerushalam**; but the Masoretes have pointed it in such a way as to cause it to be pronounced **yerushalayim**, what grammarians call a “perpetual *qere*,” that is, it is always to be read in this way. The full / correct spelling would be יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, **yerush-alayim**. In the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, the name Jerusalem is always spelled יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, without the final *yodh* (for a total of 26 times).

Wikipedia states that “A brick is building material used to make walls, pavements and other elements in masonry construction. Traditionally, the term brick referred to a unit composed of clay, but it is now used to denote rectangular units made of clay-bearing soil, sand, and lime, or concrete materials...

“Bricks are produced in numerous classes, types, materials, and sizes which vary with region and time period, and are produced in bulk quantities. Two basic categories of bricks are fired and non-fired bricks...Fired bricks are one of the longest-lasting and strong-est building materials, sometimes referred to as artificial stone, and have been used since circa 4000 B.C.E. Air-dried bricks, also known as mudbricks, have a history older than fired bricks, and have an additional ingredient of a mechanical binder such as straw.” (2/22/2020)

As we modern Americans read the [**Scroll**] of **Ezekiel**, we automatically think in terms of a fired brick, and immediately wonder how Ezekiel could have inscribed or en-graved a city on such a rock-hard, small surface. But having grown up in Old Albuquerque, New Mexico, in “Old Town,” where our home was surrounded by adobe houses, built out of large mud-bricks, it is much easier for me to understand how a much softer and much larger mud-brick could have some of the details of a city

(continued...)

4:2 וַנִּתְּנָהּ עָלֶיהָ מִצֹּר

And you shall give / place against it siege-works.

וּבְנִיתָ עָלֶיהָ דִּיק

And you shall build upon it a siege-wall.

¹⁵¹(...continued)

engraved or inscribed into its surface, including the depiction of the temple and the city walls, and armies attacking the city from without.

Rabbi Fisch notes that “A slab of clay was the common material used for writing in Assyria and Babylonia. The inscription was engraved with a stylus [a writing utensil or a small tool for some other form of marking or shaping, for example, in pottery] while the clay was moist and it was then exposed to the sun for hardening. Very large numbers have been discovered during the last century and deciphered, some with designs of buildings on them.” (P. 19)

See on the Internet, “Writings on Tablets of Clay from Assyria and Babylonia,” for pictures of some of those clay tablets, and see also “The Royal Library of Ashurbanipal.”

That library, named after Ashurbanipal, the last great king of the Assyrian Empire, is a collection of some thirty thousand clay tablets and fragments containing texts of all kinds from the 7th century B.C.E. Among its holdings was the famous **Epic of Gilgamesh**...Ash-urbanipal's library, now located in the British Museum, gives modern historians information regarding people of the ancient Near East. I myself would make reading and study of the **Epic of Gilgamesh** and **Enuma Elis** required reading for anyone wanting to understand the background of the **Hebrew Bible**, especially the **Scroll of Genesis**.

What Ezekiel is commanded to do is something the Assyrians and the Babylonians had been doing for decades, writing, drawing pictures, celebrating their victories by art-work on clay tablets. He is to depict the city of Jerusalem—with its walls, its temple complex, and some of the other buildings, surrounded by enemy soldiers, holding the city under siege. He would depict the siege-towers erected around the city, and the mounds thrown up against its walls, as well as the camps for the enemy soldiers. He would even build tiny battering-rams, being brought up against Jerusalem’s walls.

I recall from my youth my Sunday-school teachers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with their flannel-boards, using their ingenuity to depict the biblical stories. Ezekiel was doing just such a thing, engraving a large clay tablet with the depiction of Jerusalem under siege. It was an acted “vision-story.”

Hilmer explains that “After inscribing a likeness of the city of Jerusalem on a moist clay tablet, such as those commonly used in Babylonia, Ezekiel was to place around it models of siege works to represent the city under attack (**verse 2**). He was then to place an iron pan (perhaps a baking griddle) between himself and the symbolized city (**verse 3**) to indicate the unbreakable strength of the siege.” (P. 1234)

Matties thinks the iron pan was intended as “a barrier between the city and the Divine Presence.” (P. 1160) We think Hilmer’s view is the better of the two. What do you think? Can you suggest another meaning for the baking griddle?

וּשְׂפַכְתָּ עָלֶיהָ סִלְלָה

And you shall pour out against it a siege-mound.

וְנִתְּתָה עָלֶיהָ מַחְנֹת

And you shall place against it armed camps.

וְשִׁים-עָלֶיהָ כְּרִים סָבִיב:

And place against it battering-rams, all around (it).¹⁵²

4:3 וְאַתָּה קַח-לְךָ מַחְבַּת בְּרִזָּל

And you, take for yourself an iron pan,

וְנִתְּתָה אוֹתָהּ קִיר בְּרִזָּל

and give / place it (as an) iron wall

בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָעִיר

between yourself and the city.¹⁵³

וְהִכִּינְתָה אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ אֵלֶיהָ

And set / prepare your face towards / against it!¹⁵⁴

152

Rabbi Fisch quotes Josephus, **The Jewish War, III. VII. 19**, as giving the following description of the battering ram used by Vespasian against Jerusalem: “This is a vast beam of wood like the mast of a ship; its forepart is armed with a thick piece of iron as the head of it, which is so carved as to be like the head of a ram, whence its name is taken. This ram is slung in the air by ropes passing over its middle, and is hung like the balance in a pair of scales from another beam, and braced by strong beams that pass on both sides of it...When this ram is pulled backward by a great number of men with united force, and then thrust forward by the same men, it batters the walls with that iron part which is prominent.” (P. 19)

Just as we would want students of the **Hebrew Bible** to learn the **Epic of Gilgamesh**, so we would want students of the **Greek New Testament** to learn Josephus’ **The Jewish War**, as an indispensable introduction to the Roman world of Jesus’ day.

153

Hilmer notes that “Ezekiel’s own presence in the scene signified that the siege would actually be laid by [YHWH] Himself.” (P. 1234)

154

Rabbi Fisch comments that the griddle was “a kind of flat pan such as was used for baking a meal-offering (**Leviticus 2:5**). This was to represent a *wall of iron* denoting the strength of the defense. ‘It might, however, be a symbol of the implacable and iron sever-ity of the siege, which itself...shows the inexorable grasp [with] which the judgment of God had taken [taken hold] of the city’ (Davidson).” (P.

(continued...)

וְהִיְתָה בְּמָצוֹר

And it (Jerusalem) will be (with)in the (surrounding) siege-works.

וְצָרְתָּ עָלֶיהָ אוֹת

And you will besiege against it (for a) sign--

הִיא לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

it (is) for (the) house of Israel!¹⁵⁵

Ezekiel immobilized for 390, then 40 days (4:4-8)¹⁵⁶

4:4 וְאַתָּה שָׁכַב עַל-צִדְךָ הַשְּׂמָאלִי

And you, lie / sleep upon your left side.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴(...continued)

20) That is, while the symbolism of the siege-works and the battering-ram is clear, the symbolism of the griddle is more ambiguous, and can be understood as the symbol of Jerusalem's defense, or of YHWH's iron-clad judgment against the city. However, it seems that as Ezekiel is told to "set his face against the city," it is most probable that the iron skillet in his hand is symbolic of the judgment that is coming on Jerusalem.

What would you think, if your trusted minister engaged in drawing such a picture, taking an iron skillet in his hand, and gazing with a stern look at your home-town? Would you think he was losing his mind? Would you be willing to listen to his message that would come later?

¹⁵⁵

Yes, the vision-story is for the house of Israel. Its capital city, Jerusalem, is about to undergo siege by the Babylonians, and both the city and its temple will be destroyed!

¹⁵⁶

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 4-6** "Symbol of the People's Sins." He comments that "The prophet now reverses his role. First he personified the enemy. Now he represents the sinful nation which is to suffer calamity." (P. 20)

We hold that these verses contain act 2 of Ezekiel's vision-story, enacted as a "street theater" play before the leaders of the Judeans in exile.

¹⁵⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that "The hardship which he suffered by lying on one side for a considerable time [390 days! That's much more than 'a considerable time'! And we think this can only be understood as part of a "play"] is emblematic of the iniquity of which the people was guilty. The *left side* is symbolic of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel whose territory was in the north...Each day was to represent a year for the condemned nation...The guilt of the Northern Kingdom extended over a

(continued...)

וּשְׂמַתָּ אֶת־עֲוֹן בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָיו

And you shall place (the) house of Israel's iniquity / guilt upon it,

מִסְפַּר הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁכַּב עָלָיו

(for the) number of the days which you shall lie / sleep upon it--

תִּשָּׂא אֶת־עֲוֹנָם:

you shall lift up / bear their iniquity / guilt!¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷(...continued)

period of 390 years (**Seder Olam**, Rashi and Ibn Ezra). Abarbanel, quoted by Malbim, reckons the period of Samaria's guilt from the time when the schism took place under Rehoboam about 932 B.C.E.) until the fall of Jerusalem [586 B.C.E., which would be some 346 years]. Corresponding to the 390 years of Israel's sinning, the prophet was ordered to lie on his left side the same number of days to atone for their iniquity." (P. 21)

To take this matter literally, and hold that Ezekiel lay upon his left side for 390 days, and then on his right side for 40 days, strains credulity. Who is he doing this in front of? Who is keeping track of the time? Talk about long sermons! We think street theater can be entertaining, but a play lasting a good deal longer than a year? You've got to be kidding me! We can see the vision-play being acted out, with Ezekiel sleeping upon his side, and helpers with signs indicating the length of his sleep. What do you think?

No, it is much better to understand this as a symbolic action, done in a dramatic play, with the number of days being announced and the symbolism explained to the audience—and the play lasting no longer than an hour at the most. What do you think?

Matties comments that "The number of days / years remains puzzling (especially since the **Septuagint (Rahlfs)** has different numbers, adding 150 years to the end of **verse 4** and having 190 instead of 390 in **verse 5**)...It is possible that the 390 years refers to Israel's iniquitous behavior which had its beginning in the temple cults established during Solomon's reign and would culminate in the destruction of the temple in 587 B.C.E. That time frame situates Israel's iniquity within the bounds of temple theology. The 40 years refer to the generation in exile experiencing the consequences of Divine judgment." (P. 1160)

¹⁵⁸

We are reminded here of Isaiah's language concerning the "suffering servant" who "bears Israel's iniquity" in **Isaiah 53**. Is Ezekiel a "suffering servant," a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy? Does this mean that YHWH forgives Northern Israel's sinning, letting Ezekiel bear it? But how would sleeping on his left side for 390 or 190 days (see the next footnote) be a means of atoning for Northern Israel's sin? Is that the kind of "suffering" **Isaiah 53** depicts? We think not.

Hilmer states that Ezekiel's bearing their sin was "a representative rather a substitutionary bearing of sin. The prophet's action symbolized Israel's sins; it did not remove them." (P. 1234)

4:5 וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָךְ אֶת־שְׁנֵי עֹנָם

And I, I have given / assigned to you two (signs?) of their iniquity / guilt--

לְמִסְפַּר יָמִים שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת וּתְשַׁע־יָוֵם

to (the) number of days--three hundred and ninety day(s)¹⁵⁹

וְנִשְׂאתָ עֲוֹן בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

and you shall lift up / bear forgive (the) iniquity / guilt of (the) house of Israel!

4:6 וְכָלִיתָ אֶת־אֵלֶּה

And you will complete these;

וְשָׁכַבְתָּ עַל־צִדְּךָ (הַיְמוֹנִי) [הַיְמָנִי] שְׁנֵית

and you will lie / sleep upon your right¹⁶⁰ side, a second (time).

וְנִשְׂאתָ אֶת־עֲוֹן בֵּית־יְהוּדָה

and you shall lift up / bear (the) iniquity / guilt of (the) house of Judah,

אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם לַשָּׁנָה יוֹם לַשָּׁנָה יוֹם לַשָּׁנָה

forty day(s), a day for the year, a day for the year.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐνενηκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν ἡμέρας, “ninety and a hundred days.”

Hilmer notes that “The 390 years may represent the period from the time of Solomon’s unfaithfulness to the fall of Jerusalem. Correspondingly, the 40 years of **verse 6** may represent the long reign of wicked Manasseh before his repentance (see **2 Kings 21:11-15; 23:26-27; 24:3-4; 2 Chronicles 33:12-13**.)” (P. 1234)

¹⁶⁰

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” הַיְמוֹנִי; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” הַיְמָנִי, “the right”—correcting what the Masoretes considered to be a mis-spelling.

¹⁶¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The *right* indicates the south, i.e. the kingdom of Judah which lay to the south or right. Judah’s corruption lasted forty years beginning soon after Samaria’s fall. According to Malbim, the time is reckoned from the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (626 B.C.E.) when Jeremiah began his ministry (**Jeremiah 1:2**). Ibn Ezra suggests that the prophet’s lying on his sides for a great number of days occurred in a vision.” (P. 21)

(continued...)

נִתְּנִי לָךְ:

I have given / assigned (it) to you!

4:7 וְאֶל-מְצֹר יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּכְיֶן פָּנֶיךָ

and towards (the) siege-works of Jerusalem¹⁶² you shall set your face,

וְזַרְעֶךָ חֲשׂוּפָה

and your arm stripped bare--

וְנִבֵּאתָ עָלֶיהָ:

and you shall prophesy against it.

4:8 וְהִנֵּה נִתְּנִי עָלֶיךָ עֲבוֹתִים

And look—I have given / place upon you ropes;

וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה מִצְדֶּךָ אֶל-צִדְךָ

and you shall not turn from your side to your (other) side,

עַד-כְּלוֹתְךָ יְמֵי מְצֹרְךָ:

until your finishing (the) days of your siege.

Diet for the Siege and Exile (4:9-17)¹⁶³

¹⁶¹(...continued)

We agree. Such a thing could hardly have been literally acted out by the prophet over such a long period of time. But as a vision-story, so familiar to the prophet Ezekiel, and especially if the vision-story was enacted in a public play, with officials of the Israelite exiles in attendance, these actions become much more possible and realistic. The large clay brick with its depictions of Jerusalem and its siege would be in front of the audience, and Ezekiel would enact the sleeping on the left and then on the right, with his arm uncov-ered, holding the iron skillet towards the city of Jerusalem on the clay brick, with his body bound, and with announcers telling the number of years being symbolized, and also per-haps, the meaning of the iron skillet. What do you think?

¹⁶²

See footnote 122 for the spelling of Jerusalem in Hebrew.

¹⁶³

We hold that **verses 9-17** are the third act of Ezekiel's vision-story enacted in a play before the leaders of the Judeans in exile. Ezekiel is depicted as still lying upon first his left, and then on his right side, but getting up from his sleeping position, to prepare the kinds of food and drink that would be eaten by the Judeans during their siege.

(continued...)

4:9 וְאַתָּה קַח-לָךְ חֲטָיִן וְשַׁעֲרִים

And you, take for yourself wheat and barley¹⁶⁴

וּפּוֹל וְעֲרָשִׁים וְדַחַן וְכַסְמִים

and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt.¹⁶⁵

וְנָתַתָּה אוֹתָם בְּכֵלִי אֶחָד

And you shall give / place them in one vessel;

וְעָשִׂיתָ לָךְ לֶלֶחֶם

and you shall make / prepare them for yourself for bread / food--

מִסְפַּר הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה שׁוֹכֵב עַל-צִדְךָ

(for the) number of the days which you are lying / sleeping upon your side;

¹⁶³(...continued)

Matties comments that the signs in **verses 9-17** “represent food eaten during the siege and in exile...**Verses 9-11** depict the “meager portions that are to be eaten during siege: eight ounces of whatever grains and legumes [beans, lentils, peas and peanuts, etc] might be found, and two-thirds of a quart of water (explained in **verses 16-17**).” (Pp. 1160-61)

¹⁶⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that this taking of various food elements to be mixed for baking bread “was presumably to be done while Ezekiel was lying immobile on his side. If so, it is evident that it all happened in a vision in which such an inconsistency need not arouse surprise.” (P. 21)

We agree. Hardly any of these elements, in each of the four acts, can be understood literally—i.e., Ezekiel couldn’t be tied down, immovable, and be able to get up and gather all these food elements, and then bake bread, etc. But in a vision-story, enacted as a four-part play, all of this would be completely possible, and understandable. What do you think?

¹⁶⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The bread made of such a strange mixture indicates the great scarcity during the siege. Instead of the normal wheaten bread, various kinds of cereals would have to be gathered and mixed to obtain the quantity required to make a loaf...The bread of the mixed ingredients was to last for 390 days as stated in the verse and 40 days in addition.” (P. 22)

Hilmer states that these instructions have to do with “a scant, vegetarian diet representing the meager provisions of a besieged city.” (P.1234)

We think it the height of biblicism to claim that here in **Ezekiel 4:9** a biblical recipe for bread is being given, which people should follow at all times, i.e., “the biblical recipe for bread.” This bread is intended for a time of siege, when other normal ingredients are not obtainable. What do you think? Have you ever bought “Ezekiel’s bread” at the grocery store? It is based on this passage.

שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת וְתִשְׁעִים יוֹם תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ:

(for) three hundreds and ninety day(s) you shall eat it.¹⁶⁶

4:10 וּמֵאֲכָלְךָ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ

And your food which you shall eat—

בְּמִשְׁקָל עֶשְׂרִים שֶׁקֶל לַיּוֹם

(will be) by weight, twenty shekel(s) to / by the day.¹⁶⁷

מֵעַתַּת עַד-עַתַּת תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ:

from time until / to time you shall eat it.

4:11 וַיְמִים בְּמִשׁוּרָה תִּשְׁתֶּה

And water(s) by measure you shall drink--

שִׁשִּׁית הַהֵינ

a sixth of the *hiyn*--¹⁶⁸

מֵעַתַּת עַד-עַתַּת תִּשְׁתֶּה:

from time until / to time, you shall drink (it).

4:12 וְעֵגַת שְׂעִרִים תֹּאכְלֶנָּה

A round flat loaf of barley, you shall eat it;

166

The same diet for 390 days without change! Do you think that diet might have grown old? Here again, the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the number ἐνενηκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν ἡμέρας, “ninety and a hundred days.” That’s still a mighty long time for a street-theater performance to last, don’t you think?

167

Rabbi Fisch comments on twenty shekels a day that “a shekel struck by a Maccabe-an king and still extant weighs 219 grains. Accordingly, Ezekiel’s food for a whole day amounted to a little over nine ounces”—a mighty slim diet! (P. 22)

168

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “sixth part of a *hiyn*” that “A *hiyn* was a liquid measure of about twelve pints, so that two pints of water was to be his daily ration, a very small quantity in a hot climate.” (P. 22)

וְהָיָא בְּגִלְלֵי צִאֲת הָאָדָם

and it--with balls of dung, excrement of the human--¹⁶⁹

תַּעֲנֶנָּה לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

you shall bake it in their eyes.

4:13 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה

And YHWH said,

כִּכְהָ יֹאכְלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־לֶחֶמָם טָמֵא

Like this Israel's people / children will eat their unclean food / bread

בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אֲדִיחֶם שָׁם:

in the nations where I will banish them.

4:14 וַאֲמַר אֶהְיֶה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה

And I said, Aha, my Lord YHWH!

הִנֵּה נַפְשִׁי לֹא מְטֻמָּאָה

Look--my innermost-being was not made unclean / polluted!

169

Rabbi Fisch quotes the Christian Hebraist Davidson as stating that “It was customary in the east to use the dung of animals when perfectly dried as fuel. The hot ashes remaining from it being perfectly clean, and retaining their glow for a considerable time, were used for firing cakes...The material for firing which the prophet is commanded to use would certainly be unclean (**Deuteronomy 23:13ff.**) as well as loathsome’ [tell that to the Japanese!]...

“The meaning of the symbol is that the Israelites will eat unclean food in exile.” (P. 24)
Compare **Hosea 9:3**, speaking concerning northern Israel:

לֹא יֵשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוָה

They will not remain / dwell in YHWH's land;

וְשָׁב אֶפְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם

and Ephraim will return to Egypt.

וּבְאַשּׁוּר טָמֵא יֹאכְלוּ:

and in Assyria they will eat unclean (food)!

וְנִבְלָה וְטֵרֵפָה לֹא־אֲכַלְתִּי

And I have not eaten (from the flesh of) a corpse, or torn flesh,¹⁷⁰

מִנְעוּרִי וְעַד־עַתָּה

from my youth and until now!

וְלֹא־בָא בְּפִי בֶּשֶׂר פְּגוּל:

And flesh of an unclean animal has not entered into my mouth!¹⁷¹

4:15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

170

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Such flesh was forbidden.” (P. 24) See: **Leviticus 17:15**,

And every person that shall eat a carcass and flesh torn by animals,
among native(s) and among temporary resident(s);
and he shall wash his garments,
and shall wash (synonym) in the water;
and he shall be unclean until the evening;
and he shall be clean.

Deuteronomy 14:21a-d,

You shall not eat any carcass!

To the temporary resident who is within your gates
you shall give it, and he will eat it.

Or sell (it) to a foreigner.

Because you (singular) are a set-apart people for the YHWH your God!

171

Readers of the **Greek New Testament** are reminded of the story of Peter in **Acts 10:1-11:18**, which involved a vision-story that Peter had, in which a large sheet filled with all sorts of animals was let down from heaven, and Peter was told to kill and eat some of those animals. He objected, saying nothing unclean had ever entered his mouth. But the Divine voice told Peter “What God has made clean, do not call common / unclean!” Once again, biblical symbolism is evident. The meaning of the vision-story / vignette (worthy of Ezekiel) was that Peter should go and visit in the home of Cornelius, a Roman soldier—considered “unclean” by the Jews, and by Peter before his seeing the vision—but leading to the movement of Christianity from a Jewish sect to a universal proclamation of [YHWH’s] good news. Vision-stories / vignettes are powerful teaching tools!

What do you think? Are visions important? Are they an indispensable teaching aid? Do they need interpretation?

רָאָה נָתַתִּי לְךָ אֶת־צְפוּעִי [צְפִיעַי] הַבָּקָר

See, I have given to you excrements¹⁷² of the cattle

תַּחַת גִּלְלֵי הָאָדָם

instead of excrements (synonym) of the human;

וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־לֶחֶמְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם:

And you shall make your bread / food upon them.¹⁷³

4:16 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן־אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

הֲנִנִּי שֹׁבֵר מַטֵּה־לֶּחֶם בִּירוּשָׁלַם

Look at Me, breaking (the) staff / supply of bread / food in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁴

וַאֲכָלוּ־לֶחֶם בְּמִשְׁקָל וּבְדָאָגָה

And they will eat bread / food by weight and in / with anxiety,

וּמַיִם בְּמִשׁוּרָה וּבִשְׂמֹמֹן יִשְׁתּוּ:

and water by measure, and with horror they will drink!

¹⁷²

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” צְפוּעִי; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” צְפִיעַי, “excrements”—a correction of what the Masoretes considered a mistaken spelling.

¹⁷³

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The substitution was granted in response to the prophet’s feeling of abhorrence. ‘Dried cow-dung or camel-dung is still used for fuel by the Bedouin and fellahin’ (Cooke).” (P. 23)

Hilmer comments that cow manure is “commonly used in the Near East as a fuel for baking, even today. Ezekiel again showed his sensitivity to things ceremonially unclean... and [YHWH] graciously responded to the prophet’s objection by allowing this substitute for human excrement.” (P. 1234)

¹⁷⁴

See footnote 122 for the spelling of Jerusalem in Hebrew. So it will be for all of the further occurrences of the name in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**.

4:17 לַמֶּעַן יַחְסְרוּ לֶחֶם וּמַיִם

In order that they may lack bread / food and water.

וְנִשְׁמְרוּ אִישׁ וְאָחִיו

And they will be desolate, each man and his brother;

וְנִמְקוּ בְּעוֹנָם:

and they will rot away in their iniquity / guilt!

The Divine Razor and Its Consequences (Chapter 5)¹⁷⁵

The Nations Fate, Verses 1-4¹⁷⁶

5:1 וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

קַח-לְךָ חֶרֶב חֲדָה

take for yourself a sword, a sharp one¹⁷⁷

175

The results of the Divine Destruction of Israel will be that "...They will know that I, YHWH, have spoken!" This is the first of some 65 occurrences of this or very similar declarations in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**. YHWH's Mighty Acts in history reveal His Nature and Identity as the Lord of History, the Divine Warrior Who Acts to Punish the wicked and Who Comes to the Rescue of the weak and the oppressed. But since His people would not listen to His words spoken through the chosen prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, they would have to be taught in another way--through experiencing the Wrath of YHWH and His Deliverance in their history--a terrifying way to have to learn!

176

We hold that **5:1-4** contains the fourth and final act of Ezekiel's 4-part vision-story, enacted as a play by Ezekiel—a play that would not have lasted longer than an hour. Ezekiel would bring out a razor-sharp sword, and proceed to shave his or another man's entire body of all its hair, and then symbolize the future of the Judeans by his different methods of disposing of the shaven hair. Rabbi Fisch comments that "By means of another symbolic act Ezekiel was to indicate the impending destruction of the people by massacre and dispersion." (P. 24)

Matties comments that "The sign-act (of **5:1-4**) emphasizes both destruction and preservation." (P. 1161)

177

Rabbi Fisch notes that "The razor is described as a *sword*, emblematic of the invading army which Nebuchadnezzar would send against them. The same imagery had been previously used by **Isaiah**." (P. 24) Well, not exactly. See:

(continued...)

תֵּעַר הַנְּגָלִיּוֹת

a razor of the barbers--

תִּקְחֶנָּה לָךְ

take it for yourself,

וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ עַל-רֹאשְׁךָ וְעַל-זְקִנְךָ

and pass it over your head and over your chin / beard.¹⁷⁸

וְלָקַחְתָּ לָךְ מֵאֲזֵנֵי מִשְׁקָל

And you shall take for yourself weight-scales,

וְחִלַּקְתֶּם:

and you shall divide them (into three parts).¹⁷⁹

5:2 שְׁלִישִׁית בְּאֹר תִּבְעֵיר

A third part (of the hair) you shall burn in the fire,

בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר

in (the) midst of the city,¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷(...continued)

Isaiah 7:20,

In that day, my Lord will shave

with the razor [תֵּעַר, razor, not sword] hired in regions across (the) Euphrates,

with Assyria's king--

the head and pubic hair,

and also the beard will be swept away.

Hilmer notes here that “Ezekiel acted out in prophetic symbolism.” (Pp. 1234-35) Yes, these “vision-stories” or “acted out vignettes,” are Ezekiel’s powerful way of proclaiming the Divine Message to his fellow exiles in captivity!

¹⁷⁸

Matties notes that “According to **Leviticus 21:5**, priests were restricted from shaving in this way.” (P. 1161)

¹⁷⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The hair is to be divided into three equal parts. [The] *balances* may be a symbol of Divine justice.” (P. 24)

¹⁸⁰

(continued...)

כְּמִלְאֵת יְמֵי הַמָּצוֹר

as (the) days of the siege are completed.¹⁸¹

וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישִׁית

And you shall take the (next) third part--

¹⁸⁰(...continued)

We say the action takes place in Ezekiel's acted out play or vision-story--in its fourth and last act, which vividly warns of the coming destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Fisch notes that "Some suppose that the reference is to the plan of the city which was drawn on the tile [our clay brick / tablet] (4:1). Others are of the opinion that the actual city of Jerusalem is intended. The action obviously takes place in a vision." (P. 24) We do not think it is a vision--but rather, an enacted play. What do you think?

181

Rabbi Fisch comments that this is referring to "the 430 days during which the prophet was commanded to lie on his sides and play the role of besieger...The third of the prophet's hair burned in the midst of the city signifies that a third of the population will perish by fire, sword, famine and pestilence within the city during the siege. [Another third part of the prophet's hair, to be struck with the sword] symbolizes the fate of those who seek to escape before and after the fall of the city, as, for example, king Zedekiah and his retinue (compare **2 Kings 25:4ff.**). [The other third part of the prophet's hair is scattered to the wind, symbolizing] that a third of the population will be dispersed in foreign lands. [And even there, YHWH will draw out a sword after them, symbolizing the fact that] they will not find peace in the lands of dispersion. The same fate is predicted by Jeremiah." (Pp. 24-25) See:

Jeremiah 9:15^{Heb} / **16**^{Eng},

וְהַפְּצוּתִים בְּגוֹיִם

And I will scatter them among the nations,

אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ הֵמָּה וְאֲבוֹתָם

whom they did not know, and their fathers;

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב

and I will send after them the sword,

עַד כְּלוּתִי אוֹתָם:

until I have finished them off!

However, this prediction of total destruction of the exiles did not happen. Instead, as **Isaiah 40-55** proclaims with joy, the Divine Anger ceased, and YHWH Totally Forgave the captives, Announcing the Good News / Gospel of their Forgiveness and Return to their home-land. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel likewise, in spite of their drastic predictions of destruction, hear the Good News from YHWH of His Forgiveness and of the Return of the exiles, and join with Isaiah in gladly proclaiming it. See **Jeremiah 30:1-33:26**, and **Ezekiel 36-48**. Yes, we may say with confidence, the prophetic Message of Doom was suddenly transformed by YHWH into the prophetic Message of Hope!

תִּפֹּה בַחֶרֶב סְבִיבוֹתֶיהָ

strike (it) with the sword, all around it (the city).

וְהִשְׁלַשְׁתָּ תְזַרְהָ לָרוּחַ

And the (last) third part you shall scatter to the wind.

וַחֲרַב אֲרִיק

And I will unsheathe a sword,

וְהִשְׁלַשְׁתָּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

and the third part after them.¹⁸²

5:3 וּלְקַחְתָּ מִשָּׁם מְעַט בְּמִסְפָּר

And you shall take from there a small number,

וַצַּרְתָּ אוֹתָם בְּכַנְפֶיךָ:

and you shall bind them in your wings / robe-skirts.

5:4 וּמֵהֶם עוֹד תִּקַּח

And from them again you shall take,

וְהִשְׁלַכְתָּ אוֹתָם אֶל-תּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ

and you shall throw them (in)to (the) midst of the fire.

וְשָׂרַפְתָּ אֹתָם בָּאֵשׁ

And you shall burn them in the fire.

182

Translations of these lasts two lines of **verse 2** vary:

King James, “and I will draw out a sword after them.”

Tanakh, “and unsheathe a sword after them.”

New Revised Standard, “and I will unsheathe the sword after them.”

New International, “For I will pursue them with drawn sword.”

New Jerusalem, “while I unsheathe the sword behind them.”

Rahlfs, καὶ μάχαιραν ἐκκενώσω ὀπίσω αὐτῶν, “and a sword I will empty out after them.”

It seems obvious that the English translations have all followed the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**), not being able to make sense out of the Hebrew last phrase—just as we cannot.

מִמֶּנּוּ תֵצֵא אֵשׁ

From it fire will come forth

אֶל-כָּל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

to every house (in) Israel.¹⁸³

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה 5:5¹⁸⁴

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

זֹאת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹיִם שִׁמְתִיהָ

This Jerusalem—in (the) midst of the nations I have placed her;¹⁸⁵

183

Matties notes that according to **5:2** “the judgment is exacting, with none managing to escape unscathed...Still, in **5:3-4**, the prophet is to gather some hair into the folds of his clothing and to throw some into the fire. Although the exiles are graciously preserved, the fire can still touch them.” (P. 1161)

184

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 5-17** “The Four Symbols Explained.” We would change that title to “The Four Acts of Ezekiel’s Vision-Play Explained.” And we think the further explanation of the basic meaning of the four symbols continues through **chapter 7**. Perhaps the rest of **chapter 5** through the end of **chapter seven** depict the essence of conversations held between Ezekiel and his hearers following the 4-act play, with Ezekiel explaining what he meant by his bizarre actions. What do you think?

Reimer entitles **5:5-17** “[YHWH] Against Jerusalem Explained.” He comments that “Naturally, these symbolic actions carry enigmatic elements, not the least of which is the motivation behind them. This oracular commentary on Ezekiel’s street theater offers the rationale and alludes to each of the three phases of Jerusalem’ destruction previously acted out. Since this passage is intended to be commentary, it is also in large part self-explanatory.” (P. 1507)

Hilmer states that “After wordlessly acting out the symbols (beginning in **4:1**), Ezekiel received and probably related the Divine explanations.” (P. 1234)

We understand the text to mean that although Ezekiel was commanded to keep silent (as a protection against violent reaction to his message of doom), when the Divine revelation was given to him he could open his mouth and explain the acted symbolism of his strange actions to the people.

185

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Rabbis held Jerusalem to be located in the center of the world, and the same thought was current in the Middle Ages. ‘Following Ezekiel, Dante places Jerusalem at the center of the world, with the Ganges [River—flowing from the western Himalayas through the middle of India, emptying into the Bay of Bengal] at the extreme east, and the pillars of Hercules [the phrase that was applied in Antiquity to the promontories that flank the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar. The northern Pillar, Calpe Mons, is the Rock of Gibraltar. A corresponding North African peak not being

(continued...)

וּסְבִיבוֹתֶיהָ אֲרָצוֹת:

and all around her (are) lands / countries.

5:6 וַתִּמְרָ אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי

And she has rebelled against My Judicial Decisions—

¹⁸⁵(...continued)

predominant, the identity of the southern Pillar, Abila Mons, has been disputed throughout history, with the two most likely candidates being Monte Hacho in Ceuta and Jebel Musa in Morocco] (Rabbi Fisch is quoting Lofthouse). The prophet, however, is thinking less of geography and more of Jerusalem intended to be the radiating center of the knowledge of God for all peoples. Her rejection of God was accordingly a serious hindrance to His cause and she must be punished in the sight of the nations (**verse 8**).” (P. 25)

Hilmer comments that Jerusalem’s being “in the center of the nations” means Jerusalem held “a privileged position, which made Israel’s responsibility and judgment all the more severe.” (P. 1235) Compare **Ezekiel 38:12**, where the intentions of Gog, from the land of Magog are stated:

לְשַׁלֵּל שְׁלָל

to seize spoil,

וּלְבַז בָּז

and to carry off plunder;

לְהָשִׁיב יָדְךָ עַל-חֲרָבוֹת נְוֹשְׁבוֹת

to return your hand upon waste places (now) inhabited,

וְאֶל-עַם מְאַסַּף מִגּוֹיִם

and to / upon a people gathered from (the) nations,

עֹשֶׂה מְקַנְהָ וְקַנְיָן

doing / working with cattle and acquisitions

יֹשֵׁב עַל-טֶבֶר הָאָרֶץ:

dwelling upon (the) navel / highest part of the land / earth.

Matties notes, “On Jerusalem as [YHWH’s] dwelling, center of the universe, and sign for the nations, see **Psalms 46, 48 and 132** [all of which praise Jerusalem / Zion but do not mention the navel of the earth]; **1 Kings 8:41-43** [which says nothing concerning the navel of the earth] and **Ezekiel 38:12** [which states that the returned exiles with their cattle live at עַל-טֶבֶר הָאָרֶץ, ‘upon the earth’s navel.’” (P. 1161) We think this incidental mention is a very weak basis for concluding the Jerusalem and its temple constituted the navel of the earth, such as was held by some Near Eastern religions concerning their temples. If this was truly an Israelite doctrine, it would have played a central role in **Genesis 1-3**, as well as in such passages as **1 Kings 8**, regarding the building of Solomon’s temple. What do you think?

לְרָשָׁעָה מִן־הַגּוֹיִם

for wickedness more than the nations,

וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי

and (rebelled against) My statutes

מִן־הָאָרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֶיהָ

more than the lands that surround her!

כִּי בְמִשְׁפָּטַי מָאָסוּ

Because My judicial decisions they rejected,

וְחֻקֹּתַי לֹא־הֲלָכוּ בָהֶם:

and My statutes, they did not walk in / by them!¹⁸⁶

5:7 לֵינן כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יֵעַן הַמְּנַכֶּם

Because your uproar / opportunity¹⁸⁷ (is greater)

186

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of **verse 6** is somewhat different: καὶ ἐρεῖς τὰ δικαιώματά μου τῇ ἀνόμῳ ἐκ τῶν ἔθνων καὶ τὰ νόμιμά μου ἐκ τῶν χωρῶν τῶν κύκλῳ αὐτῆς διότι τὰ δικαιώματά μου ἀπώσαντο καὶ ἐν τοῖς νομίμοις μου οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, “and you (singular) shall speak My righteous decisions to the lawless out of the nations, and My laws out of the countries, those surrounding her—because My righteous decisions they rejected, and in / by the laws of Mine—they did not go / proceed!”

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 6** that “Israel’s guilt surpasses the wickedness committed by other peoples, because to him had been revealed [YHWH’s] ordinances and statutes. By the former, *mishpatim*, Jewish commentators understand commandments which concern the relationship between man and man, whereas the latter, **chukkim**, are the duties of man towards God.” (P. 25)

We do not think such a distinction is correct. Rather, we believe that commandments in the **Hebrew Bible** concern both the relationship between man and [YHWH], and the relationship between man and man as well, see the “ten commandments” for proof. We also think the same thing holds true with reference to “statutes.” Numerous statutes have to do with humanity’s relationship with [YHWH], and at the same time, numerous statutes have to do with humanity’s relationship with one another.

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(continued...)

מִן־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם

than (that of) the nations which surround you--

בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא הִלַּכְתֶּם

in / by My Statutes you did not walk;

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי לֹא עָשִׂיתֶם

and My Judicial Decisions you did not do / obey,

וְכַמִּשְׁפָּטֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם

and according to (the) judicial decisions of the nations which surround you,

לֹא עָשִׂיתֶם:

you did not do / obey--¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The Hebrew word **הַמְנַחֵם**, **hamankhem**, which occurs only here, is difficult and of uncertain meaning.” (P. 26)

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that the root verb is **הָמַן**, **haman**, which means “rage,” or “be turbulent,” perhaps a denominative from the noun **הַמּוֹן**, “sound,” “roar.” This is Rabbi Fisch’s view: “The meaning may be: ‘you (plural) are a worse crowd than the nations.’ You have all the vices of the heathen nations and have not emulated their virtues.” (P. 26) This (**Ezekiel 5:7**) is its only occurrence in the **Hebrew Bible**, and that makes it practically impossible to determine its meaning.

Translations vary from “multiplied,” to “outdone,” to “more turbulent,” to “more unruly,” to “your disorders,” to ἀφορμὴ ὑμῶν, “your occasion / opportunity.”

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Rabbi Fisch translates by “neither have done after the ordinances of the nations.” He comments that To reconcile the apparent contradiction between these words and the statement in **Ezekiel 11:12**, ‘but have done after the ordinances of the nations,’ the **Talmud (Sanhedrin 39b)** interprets the passage to mean: ‘In your conduct you have not followed the example of the righteous Gentiles, but you have copied the evils of the corrupt peoples.’ The phrase may, however, be explained in this sense: You have not fallen to the level of heathens but sunk even deeper in wickedness.” (P. 26) Compare the indictment in **Ezekiel 16:47**, speaking about Sodom and Gomorrah:

47 וְלֹא הִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶן

And have you not walked in their ways,

(continued...)

5:8 לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִנְנִי עֲלֶיךָ גַם־אֲנִי

Look at Me—against you, even I!¹⁸⁹

וְעָשִׂיתִי בְּתוֹכְךָ מִשְׁפָּטִים לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם:

And I Will Make / Do in your midst Judicial Decisions to / in (the) eyes of the nations.

5:9 וְעָשִׂיתִי בָּךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשִׂיתִי

And I Will Make / Do against you that which I Have Not Made / Done,

וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּמְהוּ עוֹד

and which I will not make / do like it again,

יַעַן כָּל־תּוֹעֲבֹתֶיךָ:

because of all your abominations!¹⁹⁰

5:10 לָכֵן אָבוֹת יֹאכְלוּ בָנִים בְּתוֹכְךָ

Therefore fathers will eat / devour sons in your midst,

¹⁸⁸(...continued)

וּבְתוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶן (עָשִׂיתִי)

and practiced their disgusting actions?

כִּמְעַט קָטַ

He was barely disgusted (with them),

וַתִּשְׁחָתִי מֵהֶן

and you have acted corruptly more than they,

בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ:

in all your ways!

¹⁸⁹

Hilmer notes that the phrase “I Myself am against you” is “A short and effective phrase of judgment used often by Ezekiel (see 13:8; 21:3; 26:3; 28:22; 29:3, 10; 30:22; 34:10; 35:3; 38:3; 39:1. See also **Jeremiah 23:30-32; 50:31; 51:25; Nahum2:13; 3:5**.” (P. 1235)

¹⁹⁰

Matties notes that the noun here, תּוֹעֲבָה, **to(ebhah**, “abomination” or “revulsion” occurs some 45 times in **Ezekiel**. (P. 1161)

וּבְנֵים יֹאכְלוּ אֲבוֹתָם

and sons will eat / devour their fathers.¹⁹¹

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “This frightful threat of what would happen during the siege of Jerusalem goes beyond **Leviticus 26:29**; **Deuteronomy 28:53** and **Jeremiah 19:9**, in that the phrase ‘and the sons shall eat their fathers’ is added. While **Lamentations 4:10** records the flesh of children being devoured, nowhere is mention made of sons killing their parents during the extremities of famine. This part of the verse is the interpretation of the third of the hair being burned in the fire (**verse 2**).” (P. 27)

Leviticus 26:29,

וְאֹכְלֹתֶם בֶּשֶׂר בְּנֵיכֶם

And you people will eat your sons’ flesh,

וּבֶשֶׂר בְּנֹתֵיכֶם תֹּאכְלוּ:

and your daughters’ flesh you will eat!

Deuteronomy 28:53,

וְאָכַלְתָּ פְּרִי־בִטְנְךָ

And you will eat your womb’s fruit,

בֶּשֶׂר בְּנֵיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ

(the) flesh of your sons and your daughters,

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

whom YHWH your God Gave to you—

בְּמָצוֹר

in (the) siege

וּבְמָצוֹק אֲשֶׁר־יִצְיִק לְךָ אִיבֹדְךָ:

and in (the) distress with which your enemy shall distress you.

Jeremiah 19:9,

וְהֵאֲכַלְתִּים אֶת־בֶּשֶׂר בְּנֵיהֶם

And I will cause them to eat their sons’ flesh,

וְאֵת בֶּשֶׂר בְּנֹתֵיהֶם

and (the) flesh of their daughters,

וְאִישׁ בֶּשֶׂר־רֵעֵהוּ יֹאכְלוּ

and each one / man, flesh of his neighbor will eat—

בְּמָצוֹר וּבְמָצוֹק

in (the) siege and in (the) straits / difficulties

אֲשֶׁר יִצְיִקוּ לָהֶם אִיבֵיהֶם

with which their enemies afflict them,

וּמִבְּקָשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם:

and those seeking their life.

Lamentations 4:10,

(continued...)

וְעָשִׂיתִי בְךָ שְׁפָטִים

And I will make / do judgments in you,

¹⁹¹(...continued)

י 4:10 יָדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת

Hands of compassionate women

בְּשָׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן

boiled / cooked their children--

הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ

they became food for them

בְּשֹׁבֵר בֵּת-עַמִּי:

in (the) breaking of (the) daughter of my people!

Hilmer notes that “Cannibalism, the most gruesome extremity of life under siege, was threatened as a consequence of breaking the covenant.” (P. 1235) In addition to the passages just quoted, see:

Lamentations 2:20,

ר 2:20 רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה

See, YHWH, and observe--

לְמִי עוֹלַלְתָּ כֹּה

to whom did You act severely?

אִם-תֹּאכְלֵנָה נָשִׁים פְּרִים

If women devour their fruit,

עֲלֵי טַפְחִים

children of their dandling / tender care?--

אִם-יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי

If he is murdered in my Lord's sanctuary,

כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא:

priest and prophet?

Zechariah 11:9,

וְאָמַר לֹא אֶרְעָה אֶתְכֶם

And I said, I will not shepherd you people!

הַמֵּתָה תָמוּת

The one dying, let her die!

וְהַנְּכַחֶדֶת תִּכְחָד

And the one being hidden / effaced, let her be hidden / effaced!

וְהַנִּשְׁאָרוֹת תֹּאכְלֵנָה אִשָּׁה אֶת-בֶּשֶׂר רֵעוּתָהּ:

And the ones remaining, let them each one eat her fellow woman's flesh!

וּזְרִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־שְׁאֵרֵי־ךָ לְכָל־רוּחַ:

and I will scatter all your remainder / remnant to every wind!

5:11 לָכֵן חִי־אֲנִי

Therefore (as) I live--

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

אִם־לֹא יַעַן אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי טִמְאַת

Because My sanctuary you defiled

בְּכָל־שְׁקוּצֵיךָ וּבְכָל־תּוֹעֵבֹתֶיךָ

with all your detested things and with all your abominations--

וְגַם־אֲנִי אֶגְרַע

and I also will withdraw,¹⁹²

וְלֹא־תַחֲוֶס עֵינַי

And My eye will not have pity,

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The Hebrew verb אֶגְרַע, *eghra*, is 1st person singular; the verb occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** with the following meanings according to **Brown-Driver-Briggs**:

1. “diminish,” usually followed by the preposition מִן, “from”: **Exodus 5:8, 19** (the number of bricks the Jewish slaves had to make in Egypt); **Deuteronomy 4:2; 13:1** (in both, YHWH’s word cannot be diminished or added to); compare **Ecclesiastes 3:14**, and also **Jeremiah 26:2, Exodus 21:10** (food etc.); compare also **Ezekiel 16:27**. As a passive participle it occurs meaning “diminished,” “clipped,” of beard, **Jeremiah 48:37** and **Isaiah 15:2**.
2. “restrain,” **Job 15:4** (with the accusative שִׁיחָה meditation, devotion); **Job 15:8** (with the accusative חֲכָמָה, followed by אֵלַיךָ, i.e. to, for yourself, monopolize).
3. “withdraw,” **Job 36:7** (object עַיִן, eye, followed by מִן, “from”; **Ezekiel 5:11** (here);
Niphal: וְנִגְרַע, “and be withdrawn,” **Leviticus 27:18; Numbers 36:3; 27:4; 36:4; 9:7; 27:4** a name withdrawn out of a family; **Exodus 5:11**.

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Instead of *egra*, “I will diminish,” there is another reading in many manuscripts, *egda*, “I will cut off” (your seed; so the Targum).” (P. 27)

וְגַם־אֲנִי לֹא אֶחְמוּל:

and also I, I will not spare.

5:12 שְׁלִשְׁתֵּיךָ בַדָּבָר יָמוּתוּ

And a third of you will die by the plague;

וּבִרְעָב יִכְלוּ בְתוֹכְךָ

And by the famine they will be finished in your midst.

וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁית בַּחֶרֶב יִפְלוּ סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ

And the (other) third by the sword will fall in your surroundings.

וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁית לְכָל־רוּחַ אֲזָרָה

And the (last) third, I will scatter to every wind.¹⁹³

וַחֶרֶב אֲרִיק אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

And I will unsheathe a sword (to follow) after them!

5:13¹⁹⁴ וְכָל־הָאֲפִי וְהַנְּחֹמֹתַי חָמַתִּי בָם

And My Anger Will Be Finished, and My Wrath Will Rest on them,

וְהִנְחַמְתִּי

and I will comfort Myself.

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי בְקִנְאָתִי

And they will know that I YHWH Have Spoken in My Jealousy,

בְּכַלּוֹתִי חָמַתִּי בָם:

when I Have Completed My Wrath on them!¹⁹⁵

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Rabbi Fisch notes that “The symbol of dividing the hair into three parts (**verses 1-4**) is more explicitly defined here after being generally explained in **verse 10**.” (P. 27)

194

Rabbi Fisch notes that **verse 13** contains “strongly anthropomorphic language.” (P. 28) Yes, indeed. He holds that the phrase “I will satisfy My fury” is more literally, “I will make My fury quiet”; the heat of the Divine wrath will die down. The phrase is used again in **Ezekiel 16:42; 21:22** and **24:13**.” (P. 28)

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(continued...)

5:14¹⁹⁶ וְאַתָּנָךְ לְחַרְבָּהּ וְלַחֲרָפָהּ

And I will give / make you for a desolation and for a reproach¹⁹⁷

בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ

among the nations which surround you--

לְעֵינֵי כָל-עוֹבֵר:

to / in (the) eyes of everyone passing by.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “When the punishment which is predicted has been inflicted, they will recognize that the calamity was the decree of God and not due to chance.” (P. 28)

Hilmer states that this is “the first of 65 occurrences in **Ezekiel** of this or similar declarations. [YHWH’s] acts of judgment and salvation reveal Who He is. Since the people would not listen to [YHWH’s] words, they would be taught by His actions.” (P. 1235)

¹⁹⁶

Matties comments on **verses 14-15** that “Ironically, Israel is now no longer the model at the center of the nations (see **5:5**) but the object of derision.” (P. 1162)

¹⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch translates by “an amazement and a reproach,” and comments that “To ape the manners of the surrounding peoples Israel defied God; His retribution will have the effect of earning Him their contempt.” (P. 28)

¹⁹⁸

Compare **Lamentations 2:15**,

סָפְקוּ עֲלֶיךָ כַּפָּיִם

They clapped (their) hands over you,

כָּל-עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ

all those passing by a road;

שָׂרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֹאשָׁם

they hissed and shook their head

עַל-בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם

at (the) Daughter of Jerusalem,

הֲזֹאת הָעִיר שֶׁאָמְרוּ

(saying:) Is this the City which they said

כְּלִילַת יָפִי

Perfection of beauty,

מְשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ:

a rejoicing for all the earth?

5:15 וְהִיְתָה חֲרָפָה וְגִירוּפָה

And she will be¹⁹⁹ a reproach and a taunt,

מוֹסֵר וּמִשְׁמָה

a disciplinary warning and a horror

לְגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ

to the nations which surround you,

בְּעֲשׂוֹתַי בְּךָ שְׁפָטִים

when I Do / Make Judgments against you

בְּאַף וּבְחֵמָה

in Anger and in Hot Rage,

וּבַתְּכַחֲוֹת חֵמָה

and in Reproofs of Hot Rage--

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי:

I YHWH Have Spoken!²⁰⁰

5:16²⁰¹

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The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the second person singular verb, ἔσῃ, “you will be,” where the Hebrew text has the third person singular verb וְהִיְתָה, “and she will be.” English translations commonly follow the Greek rather than the Hebrew.

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Yes, YHWH has made the threat, and as Rabbi Fisch says, it is “in His Power to carry out the threat.” (P. 28)

201

Matties comments on **verses 16-17** that “Famine, wild animals, plague, and bloodshed allude to **Deuteronomy 32:23-25** (see also the transformed world of **Ezekiel 34:25-31**). The symbolic sword introduced in **verse 1** is now a deadly instrument in [YHWH’s] hand. As warfare comes at [YHWH’s] initiative, so the Babylonian army comes to destroy. The text assumes that the exilic community sees itself as those among the nations and, therefore, remains a potential recipient of this very judgment despite having been spared once.” (P. 1162)

NJB notes that “This catalog of disaster: sword, famine and plague is very common in **Jeremiah (14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13)**. It also frequently recurs with variations in **Ezekiel (6:11-12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21; see also 33:27)**.” (P. 1411)

(continued...)

בְּשִׁלְחֵי אֶת־חֲצִי הַרְעָב

When I Send Forth arrows of the famine,

הַרְעִים בָּהֶם

the bad ones against them,

אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְמִשְׁחִית

which were for ruin / destruction--

אֲשֶׁר־אֶשְׁלַח אֹתָם

which I Will Send Forth against them,

לְשַׁחְתְּכֶם

for your ruin / destruction--

וְרָעַב אֶסַּף עֲלֵיכֶם

and I will add famine against you (plural),

וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי לָכֶם מִטֶּה־לֶחֶם:

and I will break for you (your) staff / supply of food / bread!²⁰²

5:17 וְשִׁלְחֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם רָעַב וְחַיָּה רָעָה

And I will send forth against you famine and wild beast(s);

²⁰¹(...continued)

Cooke states that **verses 16-17** “seem to be an appendix made up of conventional phrases, which do not connect with what goes before, and add nothing to the exposition of the symbols in **verses 5-10, 11-15.**” (P. 62)

Darr states that “Ezekiel’s reference to Yahweh’s ‘deadly arrows of famine’ echoes **Deuteronomy 32:23-24**, where such arrows are identified as ‘wasting hunger, burning consumption, bitter pestilence’ (NRSV). According to Israel’s traditions, Yahweh fought as a mighty Warrior against Israel’s foes. Here, however, the Divine Warrior turns weaponry against [His] Own people with devastating effect (note the repetition of ‘staff of bread’ from **Ezekiel 4:16**). Like this text, **Leviticus 26:22** threatens that wild animals will kill Israel’s children, while **Leviticus 26:33** speaks of Yahweh’s unsheathed sword.” (P. 65)

²⁰²

Compare **Ezekiel 4:16**.

וְשָׂכְלָךְ

and they will bereave you / make you childless;²⁰³

וְדַבַּר וָדָם יַעֲבֹר־בְּךָ

and plague / pestilence and blood will pass over against you

וְחֶרֶב אָבִיא עֲלֶיךָ

and a sword I will bring against you--

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי:

I, YHWH have spoken!

Messages Explaining the Divine Judgment of Destruction on the Land of Israel

(Chapters 6-7)

6:1-14, Doom for the Mountains of Israel²⁰⁴

“6:1 And YHWH’s Word was / came to me, saying: 6:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, place your face towards Israel’s mountains; and prophesy to them. 6:3 And you shall say, Mountains of Israel, listen to / hear my Lord YHWH’s word: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke, to the mountains, and to the hills; to the channels / ravines and to the valleys: Look at Me—I am bringing a sword against you! And I will destroy your high places! 6:4 And your altars will be desolate, and your sun-pillars will be broken; and I will cause your corpses to fall before your idols! 6:5 And I will give / place (the) carcasses of Israel’s people / children before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars! 6:6 In all your dwelling-places, the cities will be laid waste; and the high places will be desolate--so that Your altars of sacrifice will be dried up and held guilty. And your idols will be broken and caused to cease; and your incense altars will be cut down, and your works wiped out! 6:7 And a pierced person will fall in your midst, and you will know that I (am) YHWH! 6:8 And / but I will leave remaining—when you will have escapees from (the) sword among the nations, when you are scattered among the lands / countries. 6:9 And your escapees will remember Me, among the nations where they were captured, whose prostituting heart I broke, who turned away from Me; and their prostituting eyes (went)

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Rabbi Fisch notes that “Famine and beasts of prey will work havoc particularly among the children whose power of resistance is far less than that of adults (Kimchi).” (P. 29)

204

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In this **chapter [6]** the prophet inveighs against the places of idolatrous worship which were located upon the mountains and in the valleys. These will be made desolate. The seats of idolatry, where carcasses and bones of animal sacrifices are strewn, will become the scene of slain Israelites. The remnant which will escape into foreign lands will eventually repent of their sins and return to God.”

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-10** “Address to the Mountains in the Land of Israel.”

after their idols; and they will feel loathing in their eyes to / towards the evils which they did by all their abominations. 6:10 And they will know that I (am) YHWH--not for nothing did I say / promise to do to them this evil! 6:11 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Strike / clap with your hand, and stamp / beat out with your foot, and say, Alas! to all evil abominations, house of Israel, because with the sword, with the famine, and with the plague, they will fall! 6:12 The one far off by the plague / pestilence will die; and the one near by the sword will fall; and the one left and the one guarded, by the famine will die. And I will complete My wrath on them! 6:13 And you shall know that I (am) YHWH when their pierced / slain ones are in (the) midst of their idols, surrounding their sacrificial altars, on every high hill, on all tops of the mountains, and beneath every luxuriant / green tree, and beneath every leafy terebinth--a place where they gave pleasing aroma to all their idols. 6:14 And I will stretch out My hand against them; and I will give / make their land a devastation / waste, and a devastation / waste (synonym) from (the) desert to Diblah, in all their dwelling-places--and they will know that I (am) YHWH!

6:1 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying:

6:2 בֶּן־אָדָם שִׁים פְּנֶיךָ אֶל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Son of Adam / Humanity, place your face towards Israel's mountains;²⁰⁵

וְהִנַּבְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם:

and prophesy to them.

6:3 וְאָמַרְתָּ הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you shall say, Mountains of Israel,

שִׁמְעוּ דְבַר־אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה

listen to / hear my Lord YHWH's word:

כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke,

לְהָרִים וְלִגְבוּעוֹת

to the mountains, and to the hills;

205

For a similar prophecy, see **Ezekiel 36:1-15**. As Rabbi Fisch notes, the mountains of Israel were “the seats of idolatrous worship.” (P. 29)

Matties comments that “The expression ‘mountains of Israel’ is found only in **Ezekiel**. Ezekiel introduces the word ‘idols’ (Hebrew *gillulim*, which is used 39 times in **Ezekiel**), primarily in **chapters 6, 8, 14, 18, 20** and **23**. It is only used 9 times elsewhere in the **Old Testament**. The word derives from the Hebrew *galal*, ‘to roll,’ implying the appearance of human excrement (another form of the word refers to dung in **4:12, 15**).” (P. 1162) See end-note 1.

לְאַפְיָקִים (וְלַגְּאִיֹּת) וְלַגְּאִיֹּת

to the channels / ravines and to the valleys.²⁰⁶

הִנְנִי אֲנִי

Look at Me—

מְבִיא עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב

I am bringing a sword²⁰⁷ against you!

וְאַבְדֹתַי בְּמוֹתֵיכֶם:

And I will destroy your high places!²⁰⁸

206

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” וְלַגְּאִיֹּת; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” וְלַגְּאִיֹּת, “and to the valleys”—a matter of correct spelling.

Rabbi Fisch notes that the mountains, hills, ravines and valleys “were scenes of idolatry. The latter two were chosen for pagan worship because of the leafy trees that flourished there near the streams which ran through them.” (P. 29) Compare **Deuteronomy 12:2**,

12:2 אַבֵּר הָאֲבָדוֹן אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּקוֹמוֹת

You shall certainly destroy all the places

אֲשֶׁר עִבְדוּ-שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

where the nations which you are dispossessing served their Gods

עַל-הַהַרְרִים הַרְּמִים וְעַל-הַגְּבְעוֹת

upon the high mountains and upon the hills,

וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רֵעָנָן:

and beneath every luxurious tree!

207

Rabbi Fisch comments concerning a “sword,” that The Hebrew noun חֶרֶב, **cherebh**, ‘sword’ denotes any instrument designed to destroy materials (compare **Exodus 20:25**, where the sword, **cherebh**, is a tool for hewing rocks)...

“Both the idols and their worshipers, coupled together in the next verse, are doomed to destruction.” (P. 29)

208

Rabbi Fisch notes that “*Bamah* means in the first instance ‘a high place,’ and in a wider sense a natural or artificial elevation used as an altar for the sacrificial worship of God or of idols...

“The attitude of the religious authorities towards the *bamoth* [plural of *bamah*] varied from time to time in accordance with the change of circumstances. According to Rabbinic tradition, they were allowed until the time of the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness, but forbidden during its

(continued...)

6:4 וְנִשְׁמֹר מִזְבְּחֹתֵיכֶם

And your altars²⁰⁹ will be desolate,

וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ חַמְנֵיכֶם

and your sun-pillars²¹⁰ will be broken;

²⁰⁸(...continued)

existence for thirty-nine years. When the people of Israel entered Canaan and reached Gilgal, where they had a temporary sanctuary for a period of fourteen years while engaged in conquering and distributing the land, the *bamoth* were again permitted. With the erection of the sanctuary at Shiloh, which continued in existence for 369 years, they were again prohibited. After the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh in the time of Eli, when the sacrificial worship was transferred first to Nob and after the destruction of Nob by Saul to Gibeon for fifty-seven years, *bamoth* were once more permitted; but with the erection of the temple by Solomon they were finally forbidden (**Mishnah Zebachim XIV. 4-8; Babylonian Talmud Zebachim 118b**)...

“High places have recently been discovered at Taanach, Gezer and Petra. Their general features were an altar, standing stones and *asherah* or sacred pole, laver, sacred cave, and depository for refuse’ (Lofthouse, Christian Hebraist).” (P. 30) See the numerous photographs of biblical high places on the Internet.

Hilmer states that the high places were “Open-air sanctuaries of Canaanite origin, condemned throughout the **Old Testament**. The high places, together with the ‘altars,’ ‘incense altars’ and ‘idols’ (**verse 4**) make up a list of four objects (see **1:5**).” (P. 1235) What do you make of the difference between Rabbi Fisch and Hilmer. Do you agree with Fisch that high places were sometimes permitted by YHWH, while at other times prohibited? We agree with Rabbi Fisch.

²⁰⁹

Hilmer claims that these were “incense altars,” that were “made of burnt clay, about two feet high, usually inscribed with animal figures and idols of Canaanite Gods.” (P. 1235)

²¹⁰

The Hebrew word is חַמְנֵיכֶם, **chammaneykhem**, the plural form plus 2nd person plural suffix of the noun חַמָּן, **chamman**. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** states that it means “sun-pillar, used in idolatrous worship. In Phoenician writings the phrase לְבַעַל חַמָּן, “to Baal of (the) sun-pillar” is often found as epithet of solar Baal). In the **Hebrew Bible** the word occurs only in the plural, חַמְנֵי, **Isaiah 27:9** + 4 times; with the suffix חַמְנֵיכֶם, **Leviticus 26:30** + 2 times; with the parallel בְּמוֹת, “high places,” **Leviticus 26:30; 2 Chronicles 14:4**, compare **Ezekiel 6:4** (here) and **6:6**; as a parallel to מִזְבְּחוֹת הַבַּעַלִּים, “sacrificial altars of the Baals,” **2 Chronicles 34:4**; with the parallel אֲשֵׁרִים, Asherim, Canaanite Goddesses, **Isaiah 17:8, 27:9**; with the parallel אֲשֵׁרִים and פְּסִלִים, “Canaanite Goddesses and images, **2 Chronicles 34:7**.

(continued...)

וְהִפַּלְתִּי חַלְלֵיכֶם לְפָנַי גְּלוּלֵיכֶם:

and I will cause your corpses to fall before your idols!^{211, 1}

²¹⁰(...continued)

Translations vary from “images,” to “incense stands,” to “incense altars,” to “incense burners,” to τὰ τεμένη ὑμῶν, “your sacred precincts.” Rabbi Fisch translates by “sun-images,” and comments that they were “set up to represent the Sun-God and shaped as pillars or obelisks [columns, pillars].” (P. 30)

211

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The dead bodies of the slain will lie unburied, in itself a serious indignity, before the objects of their adoration when the Israelites were alive, as evidence of the helplessness of the idols. A similar threat was made by Jeremiah.” (P. 30) See **Jeremiah 8:1-2**,

בְּעֵת הַהִיא

At that time

נֹאֵם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH—

וְיָצִיאוּ [וְיָצִיאוּ] אֶת־עֲצָמוֹת מַלְכֵי־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־עֲצָמוֹת־שָׂרָיו

they will bring forth bones of Judah’s kings, and bones of its princes,

וְאֶת־עֲצָמוֹת הַכֹּהֲנִים וְאֶת־עֲצָמוֹת הַנְּבִיאִים

and bones of the priests, and bones of the prophets

וְאֶת־עֲצָמוֹת יוֹשְׁבֵי־יְרוּשָׁלַם מִקְבְּרֵיהֶם:

and bones of those inhabiting Jerusalem from their graves.

8:2 וְשָׂטְחוּם לְשֶׁמֶשׁ וּלְיָרֵחַ

And they will spread them for the sun and for the moon

וּלְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר אָהָבוּ

and for all the heavens’ army—which they loved,

וְאֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּם

and which they served,

וְאֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם

and after which they walked,

וְאֲשֶׁר דָּרְשׂוּם

and which they sought,

וְאֲשֶׁר הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהֶם

and which they worshiped.

לֹא יֵאָסְפוּ וְלֹא יִקְבְּרוּ

They will not be gathered, and they will not be buried.

לְדָמֶן עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה יִהְיוּ:

For dung upon the surface of the ground they will be!

(continued...)

6:5 וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־פְּגָרַי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And I will give place (the) carcasses of Israel's people / children

לְפָנַי גִּלּוּלֵיהֶם

before their idols,

וְזָרַתִּי אֶת־עַצְמוֹתֵיכֶם

and I will scatter your bones

סְבִיבוֹת מִזְבְּחֹתֵיכֶם:

around your altars!²¹²

6:6 בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם

In all your dwelling-places,

הָעָרִים תִּחְרַבְנָה

the cities will be laid waste;

וְהַבְּמוֹת תִּשְׁמָנָה

and the high places will be desolate--

לְמַעַן יִחַרְבוּ וַיֵּאשְׁמוּ מִזְבְּחֹתֵיכֶם

so that Your altars of sacrifice will be dried up and held guilty.

וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ וְנִשְׁבְּתוּ גִלּוּלֵיכֶם

And your idols will be broken and caused to cease;

וְנִגְדְּעוּ חַמְנֵיכֶם

and your incense altars will be cut down,

²¹¹(...continued)

Hilmer comments on the Hebrew word גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם, *gilluleykhem*, that it is “a derisive term (literally ‘dung pellets’), used especially by Ezekiel (38 times, as opposed to only 9 times elsewhere in the [Hebrew Bible].” (Pp. 1235-36) This is a possible, but not certain definition of the Hebrew word. See the article by H. D. Preuss in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, III, pp. 1-5, from which we quote in end-note 2.

²¹²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Where once were found the remains of animal sacrifices will now be found the skeletons of the men who had brought the offerings.” (P. 30) No women?

וּנְמָחוּ מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם:

and your works²¹³ wiped out!

6:7 וְנָפַל חָלָל בְּתוֹכְכֶם

and a pierced person will fall in your midst,

וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you will know that I (am) YHWH!²¹⁴

6:8²¹⁵ וְהוֹתַרְתִּי

And / but I will leave remaining–

בְּהֵיֹוֹת לְכֶם פְּלִיטֵי חֶרֶב בְּגוֹיִם

when you will have escapees from (the) sword among the nations,²¹⁶

בְּהִזְרוֹתֵיכֶם בְּאַרְצוֹת:

when you are scattered among the lands / countries.

6:9 וּזְכְּרוּ פְּלִיטֵיכֶם אוֹתִי

And your escapees will remember Me,²¹⁷

213

Rabbi Fisch holds that by “your works” is meant “the idols. Compare **Hosea 14:4**, ‘neither will we call any more the work of our hands our Gods.’” (P. 31)

214

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The sovereignty of God will be acknowledged when He has inflicted judgment on those who worshiped false Gods whose futility would thereby be exposed.” (P. 31)

215

Matties comments on **6:8-10** that “In an about-face, [YHWH] declares an intention to spare some of the house of Israel, even though they will be scattered.” (P. 1163)

216

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “yet will I leave a remnant,” and he comments that “Not all will perish by the sword; a remnant will survive in foreign lands.” (P. 31) Yes, but elsewhere Ezekiel seems to teach that even the remnant would be destroyed. See **chapter five** with its statements concerning the last third of Ezekiel’s severed hair, especially **5:12-13**.

217

Hilmer comments that this is “the corrective outcome [YHWH] intends from the severe judgment to come.” (P. 1236)

בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבוּ-שָׁם

among the nations where they were captured,

אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת-לִבִּי הַזֹּנֶה

whose prostituting heart I broke,²¹⁸

אֲשֶׁר-סָר מֵעָלַי

who turned away from Me;

וְאֵת עֵינֵיהֶם הַזֹּנֹת אַחֲרֵי גִלּוּלֵיהֶם

and their prostituting eyes (went) after their idols;²¹⁹

וְנִקְטְוּ בְּפְנֵיהֶם אֶל-הַרְעוֹת

and they will feel loathing²²⁰ in their eyes to / towards the evils

218

Translations of this line vary, from “I am broken with their whorish heart,” to “I was broken-hearted through their faithless hearts,” to “I was crushed by their wanton heart,” to “I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts,” to **New Jerusalem’s** “I shall have broken their adulterous hearts,” to the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) ὁμώμοκα τῆ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν τῆ ἐκπορευούσῃ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, “I have sworn to their heart, the one prostituting away from Me.”

My translation is “whose prostituting heart I broke.” The Hebrew line is אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת-לִבִּי הַזֹּנֶה, literally “who I was broken their heart, the prostituting one.” It is clear to me that the heart that is prostituting is not YHWH’s heart, but rather, the heart of the captives who now come to their senses. And we wonder, can the niphal be used here in an active sense rather than its normal passive sense? We think that is most likely the case.

Rabbi Fisch’s translation is “I have been anguished / I have been broken with their straying heart which has departed from Me.” He comments that “In exile they will recall how God was grieved because of their hearts which strayed from Him.” (P. 31)

219

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτῶν τοῖς πορευούσιν ὀπίσω τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων αὐτῶν, “and with their eyes, the ones prostituting after their pursuits / ways of living,” i.e., not something sexual, but simply pursuits or ways of living that do not take YHWH and His will into consideration.

220

The phrase here is וְנִקְטְוּ, **wenaqotu**. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** states that it is from the root קָטַט, “feel a loathing,” which is a parallel form of קָיַץ, “feel a loathing, abhorrence, sickening dread.” For occurrences of the root קָטַט in the **Hebrew Bible**, see **Psalms 95:10**, “I felt a loathing at the generation”;

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לְכָל תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיהֶם:

which they did to / by all their abominations.²²¹

6:10 וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH--²²²

לֹא אֶל־חֲנָם דִּבַּרְתִּי

not for nothing did I say / promise

לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם הַרְעָה הַזֹּאת:

to do to them this evil!²²³

²²⁰(...continued)

Ezekiel 20:43 you (plural) shall feel loathing against your faces (at yourselves), **36:31**; **Ezekiel 6:9** (here); **Job 10:1**; **Psalms 139:21**.

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Kimchi gives the root as *katat*, and he is supported by Eitan who connects it with the Ethiopic root which has the meaning ‘to be thin’ and renders ‘they shall be belittled against their faces’ (i.e. at themselves).” (P. 31)

²²¹

For these last two lines of **verse 9**, the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ κόψονται πρόσωπα αὐτῶν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς βδελύγμασιν αὐτῶν, “and they will strike their faces over all their detestable things / abominations.”

²²²

The phrase “They will know that I am YHWH” occurs again and again in the **Scroll of Ezekiel** –it is YHWH’s goal, not only for Israel, and every individual in Israel, but also for the nations of the world. It is His universal goal.

Eichrodt states that “the knowledge envisaged here is not...instruction about a time-less truth, but an inward realization of [YHWH’s] Will to Reveal Himself in a direct encounter with His Action in history, which lays claim to [humanity] and brings [them] to the point of decision [about who they are, and what their purpose in life is]...[It is] not as some eternal matter but as the encounter with Yahweh’s Manifestation of Himself; it seeks to lead [humanity] to worship and yield in obedience to the Will of [YHWH] Who Reveals Himself and Takes [humanity] into Full Fellowship with Himself...[It teaches that] the world is governed, not by some impenetrably mysterious fate, but by [YHWH] Who comes out of His Hiddenness to Reveal Himself by His name. In Wrath and Judgment, as in Grace and Renewal, He Seeks to enter into personal relationship with individuals and with nations, and to bring them into His Presence through His Actions.” (Pp. 38-39) Yes, indeed!

²²³

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the last two lines of **verse 10**.

6:11²²⁴ כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַבֵּר יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִכָּה בְּכַפְּךָ

Strike / clap with your hand,²²⁵

וּרְקַע בְּרִגְלֶךָ

and stamp / beat out with your foot,²²⁶

וְאָמַר־אָח

and say, Alas!²²⁷

אֵל כָּל־תּוֹעֵבוֹת רָעוֹת בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

to all evil abominations, house of Israel,

224

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 11-14** “Recapitulation of Preceding Threats.” He comments that “Such repetition is frequently found in this **Scroll**. ‘It must be remembered that these passages were not necessarily delivered at one time; and the repetition has an epic impressiveness of its own’ (Lofthouse).” (Pp. 31-32)

225

Hilmer’s translation has “Strike your hands together,” and he comments that this is “a command to Ezekiel, calling for his personal involvement in the tragedy—though Israel’s enemies were condemned for the same practice (see **25:6**).” (P. 1236)

Well, yes. The enemies of Israel were clapping their hands in joy; Ezekiel will be striking his hands and stomping his foot in grief!

226

Rabbi Fisch comments that these are “gestures expressive of grief and mourning. Some commentators understand them as signifying malicious satisfaction on the part of the prophet over the pending calamity of his people and in support quote **25:6** where these actions unmistakably express exultation over a fallen enemy. This interpretation is unacceptable. Such an attitude towards Israel’s disaster would be contrary to the prophet’s mission and his belief in Divine mercy. In fact, Ezekiel explicitly states his deep sympathy with his people in their misfortune (**11:13**). The truth is that clapping the hands and stamping the feet are a display of intense emotion and excitement whether caused by joy or sorrow, and are therefore used in both circumstances.” (P. 32)

227

The Hebrew word אָח, **ach** is ambiguous. It can be an exclamation, “Ah!” “Alas!” It can also mean “brother.” It can also mean “a firepot.” Here it seems apparent that it is being used as an exclamation.

אֲשֶׁר בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעַב

because with the sword, with the famine,

וּבַדָּבָר יִפְּלוּ:

and with the plague, they will fall!

6:12 הָרְחֹק בַּדָּבָר יָמוּת

The one far off by the plague / pestilence will die;

וְהַקְּרוֹב בַּחֶרֶב יָפֹל

And the one near by the sword will fall;²²⁸

וְהַנְּשָׂאֵר וְהַנְּצוּר בָּרָעַב יָמוּת

and the one left and the one guarded, by the famine will die.

וְכִלִּיתִי חֲמָתִי בָּם:

And I Will Complete My Wrath on them!²²⁹

6:13 וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And you shall know that I (am) YHWH

בְּהֵיטֹת חַלְלֵיהֶם בְּתוֹךְ גִּלּוּלֵיהֶם

when their pierced / slain ones are in (the) midst of their idols,

סְבִיבוֹת מִזְבְּחֹתֵיהֶם

surrounding their sacrificial altars,

אֶל־כָּל־גִּבְעָה רָמָה

to / on every high hill,

228

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrases “far off...near,” that they mean “Far from and near to the scene of battle. Those who escape to other countries will die of pestilence, and those who are near to the battlefield will fall by the sword of the enemy.” (P. 32)

229

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of **verse 12** is: ὁ ἐγγὺς ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ πεσεῖται ὁ δὲ μακρὰν ἐν θανάτῳ τελευτήσει καὶ ὁ περιεχόμενος ἐν λιμῷ συντελεσθήσεται καὶ συντελέσω τὴν ὀργήν μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς, “The one near by a sword will fall; but then the one far off by death will come to an end; and the one gripped by famine will be finished off. And I will finish off / complete the wrath of Mine upon them!”

בְּכָל־רֵאשֵׁי הַהָרִים

on all tops of the mountains,

וְתַחַת כָּל־עֵץ רֵעָנָן

and beneath every luxuriant / green tree,²³⁰

וְתַחַת כָּל־אֵלֶּה עֵבְתָהּ

and beneath every leafy terebinth--

מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתְנוּ־שָׁם

a place where they gave

רִיחַ נִיחִיחַ לְכָל גְּלוּלֵיהֶם:

pleasing aroma²³¹ to all their idols.

6:14 וְנִטַּיִתִּי אֶת־יָדִי עֲלֵיהֶם

And I will stretch out My hand against them;²³²

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׂמָמָה

and I will give / make their land a devastation / waste,

וּמִשְׂמָה מִמִּדְבָּר דְּבַלְתָּהּ

and a devastation / waste (synonym) from (the) desert to Dibhlah,²³³

230

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as stating that “Trees, generally solitary and conspicuous, are still revered as sacred by the *fellahin* [country people] in Palestine.” (P. 32)

231

Rabbi Fisch notes that the phrase “sweet savour” is “used of the smoke of the sacrificial fat or incense burnt on the altar for the worship of God or an idol.” (P. 33)

232

Hilmer notes that the phrase “I will stretch out My hand against” is “a common expression in **Ezekiel** (see **14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7; 35:3**.)” (P. 1236)

233

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has Diblah, and he comments that “Diblah is identical with Riblah situated on the northern frontier of the country (**Numbers 24:11**). The letters ך and ך interchange as in Deuel and Reuel (**Numbers 1:14; 2:14**). Mention is made here of this place because it served as the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar when he besieged Jerusalem, and it was there that Zedekiah was blinded and his sons slain (**2 Kings 25:6-7**.)” (P. 33)

(continued...)

בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבוֹתֵיהֶם

in all their dwelling-places--

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and they will know that I (am) YHWH!

Verses 7:1-27 The End Coming on Israel and Her Land

“7:1 And YHWH’s word was / came to me, saying: 7:2 And you, son of Adam / Humanity, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke to (the) land of Israel: An end! The end came / is coming upon four wings / extremities / corners of the land! 7:3 Now the end (is) upon you, and I Will Send Forth My Anger upon you, and I Will Judge you according to your ways, and I Will Give / Place upon you all your abominations! 7:4 And My Eye Will Not Show Pity upon you, and I Will Not Spare; because I Will Place your ways upon you, and your abominations will be in your midst! And you will know that I (Am) YHWH! 7:5 In this way my Lord YHWH Spoke: An evil, one evil, look–it came / is coming! 7:6 An end came / is coming! The end came / is coming! It awakened to / against you! Look–it came / is coming! 7:7 The *tsephirah* / doom (?) came / is coming to you, inhabitant of the land / earth! The time came / is coming! Near (is) the day of tumult / confusion! And (there is) no shouting of mountains! 7:8 Now from nearby I Will Pour Out My Wrath upon you; and I Will Finish / Spend My Anger on you! And I Will Judge you according to your ways; and I Will Give / place upon you all your abominations! 7:9 And My Eye Will Not Spare / Have Pity, and I Will Not Have Compassion! According to your ways, I Will Give / Place upon you; and your abominations will be in your midst! And you (plural) will know that I (am) YHWH, One Striking (you)! 7:10 Look–the day! Look–it came / is coming! The *tseph-irah* / doom (?) has gone forth upon you, inhabitant of the land / earth! The time has come / is coming! The day (is) near! (A day) of tumult / confusion, and not shouting / cheering (on) the mountains! 7:11 The violence / wrong has stood up / arisen, to (become) a rod of wickedness. Not from them, and not from their crowd, and not from their wealth--and not a distinction in them. 7:12 The time has come / is coming! The day has arrived! The one buying shall not rejoice, and the one selling shall not mourn. Because burning anger is towards / upon (the) whole crowd. 7:13 Because the one selling shall not return to the thing sold / sale, and still among the living (is) their life. Because (the) vision to / concerning all its crowd / abundance shall not return; and a man by his iniquity / guilt will not strengthen his life. 7:14 They blew on the trumpet / wind-instrument, and he made ready the whole. And there is no one going to the battle / war. Because My hot anger (is) toward its whole crowd. 7:15 The sword (is) in the street, and the plague / pestilence and the famine are inside the house. Whoever (is) in the field will die by the sword; and whoever (is) in the city, famine and the plague / pestilence will devour him! 7:16 And their escapees will escape, and they will be (going) to the mountains--like doves of the valleys, all of them murmuring, each one over its iniquity / guilt. 7:17 All the hands will sink; and all knees will walk (on) water! 7:18 And they will gird (themselves with) sack-cloth, and shuddering will cover them. And to all faces (there is) shame; and on all their heads baldness! 7:19 Their silver / money they throw in the streets, and their gold will be for an unclean thing / menstrual rag / worthless.

²³³(...continued)

Hilmer thinks that “Perhaps the Beth Diblathaim of **Jeremiah 48:22**, a city in Moab; or Riblah, a city north of Damascus on the Orontes River.” (P. 1236)

Their silver / money and their gold will not be able to deliver them, on a day of YHWH's fury. Their innermost-being will not be satisfied, and their stomachs will not be filled. Because their iniquity / guilt was / became a stumbling-block! 7:20 And (the) beauty of his ornament—he placed it for pride; and images--their abominations, their detestable things--they made with it! Therefore I Gave / Made it for them for an unclean thing / menstrual rag! 7:21 And I will give it into (the) hand of the foreigners for the plunder, and to wicked people of the land / earth for spoil. And they will profane it. 7:22 And I will cause My face to turn from them. And they will pollute / defile My treasured place; and violent ones will come into it and will pollute / defile it. 7:23 Make the chain! Because the land / earth was filled (with) judgment of bloods / bloody crimes, and the city was filled (with) violence / wrong! 7:24 And I will bring in evil ones of (the) nations; and they will possess / inherit their houses. And I will cause to cease (the) pride of (the) strong / mighty ones, and their set-apart places will be polluted / defiled! 7:25 Shuddering came / was coming; and they will seek peace / welfare, and it is not / there is none! 7:26 Disaster upon disaster will come; and there will be rumor to / upon rumor; and they will seek a vision from a prophet. And **Torah** / Instruction will perish from (the) priest, and counsel from (the) elderly. 7:27 The king will mourn, and (the) prince / chief will dress (in) devastation / waste. And (the) hands of (the) people of the land / earth will be disturbed. From their way (of life) I Will Do to them; and by their judicial decisions I Will Judge them. And they will know that I (am) YHWH!^{234, 3}

7:1²³⁵ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's word was / came to me, saying:

234

It is a terrifying, devastating announcement of judgment and final destruction upon the entire land of Israel. More than a dozen times the cry rings out in this chapter that "The end came / is coming! The end has come / is coming! Doom came / is coming, the time came / is coming, the day is near, is here, it has come!" It sounds like the cry of a religious fanatic, or mentally ill person, predicting the soon-coming end of the world! And we may well ask ourselves whether or not Ezekiel meant these words seriously—and if not, why all this repetition of “the end”? Is he predicting the end of Judah, or of the earth?

See our end-note 3 for a **Wikipedia** article concerning the numerous predictions of the end of the world that have occurred throughout history, and that have all been proven false by history when their date has passed. Ezekiel's prediction, on the other hand, came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and brought the kingdom of Judah to its end. Ezekiel was no religious fanatic, and his words turned out to be the sober truth of history!

235

Rabbi Fisch comments that **chapter seven** “deals with the imminent destruction of the Judean State, and stresses that the end is come upon the four corners of the land. It repeatedly makes the point that the approaching judgment comes upon the nation as pun-ishment for their evil practices. The latter part gives a detailed and vivid description of the catastrophe, and to add to their distressed feeling the people are told that their beautiful houses from which they are to be banished will be occupied by their ruthless enemy.” (P. 33)

Reimer states that **chapter 7** contains a “sermon, whose text is **Amos 8**. The resonance of language and overlap of themes and sequence between these chapters is impressive, and it seems likely that Ezekiel's oracle develops Amos's earlier prophecy.” (P. 1509)

7:2 וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, son of Adam / Humanity,

כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke

לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל

to (the) land of Israel:

קֵץ

An end!

בֹּא הַקֵּץ עַל-(אַרְבַּעַת) [אַרְבַּעַן] כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

The end came / is coming upon four²³⁶ wings / extremities / corners of the land!²³⁷

7:3 עַתָּה הַקֵּץ עֲלֶיךָ

Now the end (is) upon you,²³⁸

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אַפִּי בָּךְ

and I Will Send Forth My Anger upon you,²³⁹

236

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” אַרְבַּעַת, the construct form of the numeral “four”; second, the *qere*, “to be read,” אַרְבַּע, another way of spelling the construct form of the numeral “four.”

237

Rabbi Fisch notes that this means “No town in the land will escape desolation.” (P. 33) We say, No part of the land will escape desolation.

Hilmer’s translation has “four corners of the land,” and he comments that this means “The whole world would be affected by [YHWH’s] Judgment on the land of Israel.” (P. 1236) We think that the expression “four corners of the land” means “all Israel.”

238

The preposition עֲלֶיךָ has the second person feminine singular suffix, and the noun it relates to is either the “land / ground of Israel” or “the land / earth,” both of which are feminine.

239

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The catastrophe will not be accidental but an Act of God.” (P. 34)

וּשְׁפֹטֶיךָ כְּדַרְכֶיךָ

and I Will Judge you according to your ways,

וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֶיךָ אֶת כָּל-תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ:

and I Will Give / Place upon you all your abominations!

7:4 וְלֹא-תַחֲוֶה עֵינַי עָלֶיךָ

And My Eye Will Not Show Pity upon you,²⁴⁰, 4

וְלֹא אֶחְמוֹל

and I Will Not Spare;

כִּי דַרְכֶיךָ עָלֶיךָ אָתֵּן

because I Will Place your ways upon you,

וְתוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ בְּתוֹכָךָ תִּהְיוּן

and your abominations will be in your midst!

וַיֵּדְעֻם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you will know²⁴¹ that I (Am) YHWH!

7:5²⁴² כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

240

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Besides being a Father of Mercy, He is also a God of Justice; or rather, the exercise of justice is in itself an act of mercy, since its purpose is purification from sin and the restoration of harmony between God and man...”

“God’s verdict will be executed upon them while they yet worship idols. It will then be evident that their images are helpless to save them, and consequently they will learn to recognize that He alone is the Lord (Ehrlich, German **Bible** exegete).” (P. 34) See end-note 4 for the Polish / German / American Jew / Christian / Jew’s life-work in the study, translation, and commentary on the **Hebrew Bible**.

241

The phrase וַיֵּדְעֻם, and you will know,” has the 2nd person masculine plural verb.

242

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 5-9** “The Population Is Doomed.”

רעה אחת רעה הנה באה:

An evil, one evil,²⁴³ look–it came / is coming!

7:6 קץ בא

An end came / is coming!

בא תקץ

The end came / is coming!

תקץ אליך

It awakened to / against you!²⁴⁴

הנה באה:

Look–it came / is coming!

7:7 באה תצפירה אליך

The *tsephirah* / doom (?)²⁴⁵ came / is coming to you,

יושב הארץ

inhabitant of the land / earth!

243

Rabbi Fisch translates by “a singular evil,” and states that it is literally ‘evil which is one,’ i.e. a most disastrous evil, referring to the destruction of the temple (Rashi). The Targum renders ‘an evil after an evil,’ apparently reading *achar* (after) instead of *achath* (one)...The sense is probably a calamity which suffices in itself to fulfil God’s sentence of national destruction.” (P. 34)

244

Again the second person feminine singular suffix is used here.

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The long predicted doom will now awaken, as it were, from its sleep and be carried into effect. In the Hebrew text there is a play on the words *haqqets* (the end) and *heqits* (it awakens).” (P. 34) The two similar sounding words side by side in the Hebrew text are: תקץ תקיץ, **haqqets heqitys**, which in English is “the end has awakened.”

245

The Hebrew noun תצפירה a feminine singular noun, defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as “plait, chaplet, coronet, diadem” occurs only three times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at **Ezekiel 7:7** (here), **10**; and **Isaiah 28:5**. Its meaning is dubious, hence the many definitions in the translations we are consulting: from “morning” to “cycle,” to “doom,” to “your turn,” to ὁ καιρός, “the time.” None of the definitions given by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** are suitable here at **Ezekiel 7:7**.

בֵּא הַעֵת

The time came / is coming!

קָרִיב הַיּוֹם מִהוֹמָה

Near (is) the day of tumult / confusion!²⁴⁶

246

Rabbi Fisch say this is literally “the day tumult,” meaning “the day characterized by clamor and confusion when the invading army appears.” (P. 35)

Hilmer thinks of “The day of [YHWH],” and comments that “Beginning with **Amos (5:18-20)**, that day is seen by all the prophets as a day of great judgment—and often (though not here) as a judgment that sweeps away all the enemies that threaten [YHWH’s] people, thereby bringing peace.” (P. 1236) We think the Day of YHWH as found in the **Hebrew Bible** is most often a day of judgment that comes on people and nations because of their sinfulness.

M. Saebo in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VI**, states that “God is Lord of time, not only because He created the constant alternation between day and night, thus laying the foundation for the course of history, but because He also Intervenes Mightily in the course of history. In the context of the theology of history, the most important expression of His Activity is the genitive phrase *yom YHWH*, ‘day of Yahweh’...

“It occurs 16 times, all in the prophets (from the southern kingdom): **Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4^{Heb} / 2:31^{Eng}; 4:14^{Heb} 3:14^{Eng}; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14 (twice); and Malachi 3:23^{Heb} / 4:5^{Eng}**. In 3 passages the genitive [‘of’] is replaced by לְ, [‘belonging to’]: **Isaiah 2:12; Ezekiel 30:3**; and (expanded by the addition of בֵּא, ‘comes / came’ **Zechariah 14:1**. In 8 passages there is an additional qualification: **יּוֹם עֲבָרַת יְהוָה**, ‘day of YHWH’s Wrath’: **Ezekiel 7:19; Zephaniah 1:18** and **יּוֹם אַף־יְהוָה**, ‘day of YHWH’s Anger’: **Zephaniah 2:2, 3; Lamentations 2:22**); **יּוֹם נִקְמָ לַיהוָה**, ‘a day of vengeance belongs to YHWH’: **Isaiah 34:8** (compare **Jeremiah 46:10**); **יּוֹם זִבְחַ יְהוָה**, ‘a day of sacrifice of YHWH’: **Zephaniah 1:8**; **יּוֹם מְהוֹמָה וּמְבוֹסָה וּמְבוֹכָה לְאֲדֹנָי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**, ‘a day of tumult and trampling down and confusion belong to my Lord YHWH of Armies’...

“Modern scholars have interpreted [all of this] ...very differently...Gressman hypothesized a very ancient complex of eschatological ideas involving salvation and deliverance, rooted in nature mythology, which underwent further development in the **Old Testament**... Mowinckel explained the eschatology of the prophets and their talk of the ‘day of Yahweh’ on the basis of the Israelite cult, especially the enthronement festival of Yahweh...Cerny and Herrmann have suggested Israel’s traditions of (theological) history as a better interpretative background, as have Couturier and most recently Preuss and van Leeuwen...

(continued...)

²⁴⁶(...continued)

Von Rad, on the other hand, has proposed interpreting the particular phraseology of the ‘day of Yahweh’ primarily on the basis of traditions associated with the ancient holy war. He has been followed more or less by Mueller and Schunck, while Lutz has modified von Rad’s theory substantially. Jeremias has studied the relationship of the day of Yahweh to ideas associated with the Theophany...

“In contrast to the earlier approach, scholars today generally attempt to understand the ‘day of Yahweh’ within the terms of the **Old Testament** itself. Scholars (still) often inquire into the origin of the expression; but, despite many theories, they know almost nothing about what (if anything) it was before Amos, but only what it developed into among the prophets. And the picture is puzzlingly varied...

“The earliest passage is **Amos 5:18-20**, which states metaphorically that Yahweh has appointed a ‘day’ when He Will Intervene, from which no one can escape. This ‘day’ will bring the opposite of what the people hope for from Yahweh, namely disaster (‘darkness’) rather than deliverance (‘light’)...In like fashion, the form and phraseology of Isaiah’s discourse concerning the ‘day of Yahweh’ in **Isaiah 2**...is part of his proclamation of Judgment for the people in the present day...The ‘day of Yahweh’ of which Amos and Isaiah speak, each in his own historical setting, thus refers to the immediate future of the people, which will be radically altered...

“In the prophets that follow Amos and Isaiah, mention of the ‘day of Yahweh’ appears to have become a prophetic Theologoumenon [something spoken by God] of a very different kind. Highly informative in this regard are both **Zephaniah 1:7-2:3** and **Ezekiel 7:2-4, 5-27**...(where) terms like *haqqets* [‘the end,’ *ra’ a*, ‘disaster,’ and *hayyom*, ‘the day,’ which appear elsewhere in various contexts, are juxtaposed in baroque [ornate detail] abundance...

“In a sense, the exile marked a turning point. Now—in **Lamentations 1:12; 2:1, 21-22**, for example—people look back upon the ‘day of the wrath of Yahweh.’ With the fall of Jerusalem and the temple, the ‘day’ has already come and the prediction has been fulfilled (compare also **Obadiah 15; Psalm 137:7**. But the history of the ‘day of Yahweh’ has not thereby come to an end.

“In postexilic prophecy, the formation of the didactic tradition continues. The ‘day of Yahweh’ gradually becomes the nucleus around which crystallizes a complex eschatological drama, as we see above all in **Joel 1-4**^{Heb} / **1-3**^{Eng} and **Zechariah 12-14**. The ‘day of Yahweh’ can bring both disaster and deliverance; it can come to both Israel and the ‘nations.’ The final stage is the apocalypticism of **Daniel**, where *yom YHWH* is replaced by *qets*, ‘end,’ and other fixed terminology...

“Various words for time...cluster about the ‘day of Yahweh’: *bayyom hahu*, ‘on that day’; *bayyamim hahem*, ‘in those days’; *ba’et hahi*, ‘in that time’; *hinneh yamim ba’im*, ‘behold, days are coming’; *be’acharit hayyamim*, ‘at the end of the days.’ Most of these formulas, which have undergone some development and take on eschatological character only in the later texts, not only define an eventful point in time, but refer to actual ‘days’ or ‘time,’ the ‘time of the end’...

“Within the context of prophetic eschatology, which is largely a question of definition among the preexilic prophets, too much importance should not be attached to the *yom YHWH*; nevertheless, the expression makes an essential contribution to the Theocentric emphasis of the prophetic (eschatological)

(continued...)

וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה הַרְרִים:

And (there is) no shouting of mountains!²⁴⁷

7:8²⁴⁸ עֲתָה מִקְרֹב אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ חַמְתִּי עָלֶיךָ

Now from nearby²⁴⁹ I Will Pour Out My Wrath upon you;²⁵⁰

וְכִלִּיתִי אִפִּי בְךָ

And I Will Finish / Spend My Anger on you!

וּשְׁפַטְתִּיךָ כְּדַרְכֶיךָ

And I Will Judge you according to your ways;

וְנָתַתִּי עָלֶיךָ אֶת כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ:

and I Will Give / Place upon you all your abominations!

7:9 וְלֹא־תַחֲוֶה עֵינַי

And My Eye Will Not Spare / Have Pity,

וְלֹא אַחֲמוּל

and I Will Not Have Compassion!

כְּדַרְכֶיךָ עָלֶיךָ אֶתֶּן

According to your ways, I Will Give / Place upon you;

²⁴⁶(...continued)

message: it is [YHWH][Who Holds the Initiative in Doing Mighty Acts, it is [YHWH Who Holds Dominion over time, over the ‘history’ of the people of Israel and the nations.” (Pp. 28-31)

²⁴⁷

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as saying “The mountains will no longer resound with the joyous cries of harvest, or the shouts of the familiar idolatrous worship.” (P. 35)

²⁴⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that **verses 8-9** are “a virtual repetition of **verses 3-4** with some variations, to give the warning more emphasis.” (P. 35)

²⁴⁹

For the Hebrew text’s מִקְרֹב, literally “from near,” our English translations have “shortly,” or “very soon,” or “soon now,” or “about to,” or simply “soon.” **Rahlf’s** has ἐγγύθεν, “from near at hand.”

²⁵⁰

Hilmer notes that the phrase “pour out My wrath” is “a common expression in **Ezekiel** (see **9:8; 14:19; 20:8, 13, 21; 22:31; 30:15** and **36:18**.)” (P. 1236)

וְתוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ בְּתוֹכְךָ תִּהְיוּן׃

and your abominations will be in your midst!

וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מִכָּה׃

And you (plural) will know that I (am) YHWH, One Striking (you)!

7:10²⁵¹ הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם׃

Look—the day!

הִנֵּה בָּאָה׃

Look—it came / is coming!

יֵצְאָה הַצִּפְרָה אֵלֶיךָ׃

the *tsephirah* / doom (?)²⁵² has gone forth upon you,

יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ׃

inhabitant of the land / earth!

בֵּא הַיָּמָה׃

The time has come / is coming!

קָרוֹב הַיּוֹם׃

The day (is) near!

מִהוֹמָה׃

(A day) of tumult / confusion,

וְלֹא-תִרָד הַרִימ׃

and not shouting / cheering (on) the mountains!

251

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 10-13** “None Will Escape.” Remier entitles **verses 10-27** “Behold the Day!” He comments that “The ‘day of [YHWH]’ is a prominent theme in the Hebrew prophets, with origins in **Amos 5:18-20** (and see **Isaiah 13:5-6**). Ezekiel’s development relates most closely to **Amos 8:9-10**. It was a time of great expectation but was turn-ed to bitter anguish at the hands of [YHWH], Who was wrongly assumed to be coming in blessing. Among the many motifs shared between **Ezekiel 7** and **Amos 8** are the ‘day’ itself, violence and wealth, agricultural metaphors, foiled commerce, desecration of holy things, and withholding of Divine direction. In contrast to the first-person oracle of **Ezekiel 7:1-9**, the action of **verses 10-27** is mostly carried by third-person descriptions of the coming disaster.” (P. 1509)

252

See **verse 7** with its footnote.

7:11 הַחַמַּס׃ קָם

The violence / wrong has stood up / arisen,²⁵³

לְמִטֵּה־רָשָׁע

to (become) a rod of wickedness.²⁵⁴

לֹא־מֵהֶם וְלֹא מֵהַמֹּנֶם וְלֹא מֵהֵמָּה

Not from them, and not from their crowd, and not from their wealth--

וְלֹא־נִהְיָ בָהֶם:

and not a distinction in them.²⁵⁵

253

Matties observes that “Wealth and abundance (7:11b) are often at the heart of violence.” (P. 1164)

254

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Both the rod and arrogance are an allusion to Nebuchadnezzar...See **Isaiah 10:5** and **Jeremiah 50:31**. Babylon is described as most arrogant. The arrogance and striking force of the enemy to chastise Israel are ready for action (Rashi, Kimchi). But, as Lofthouse observes, Ezekiel never attacks Babylon, and therefore suggests the interpretation, ‘the boastful confidence of Judah, whether under the [protection of Babylon or in rebellion against it, has at last borne its fruit.’”

“The violence they have perpetrated has forged the weapon for their chastisement.” (Pp. 35-36) **Isaiah 10:5**,

הוּי אַשּׁוּר שֶׁבֶט אֲפִי

Alas, Assyria—rod of My anger!

וּמִטֵּה־הוּא בְיָדִים זַעֲמִי:

And he (is) a staff / scepter in the hand of My indignation!

Jeremiah 50:31,

הֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ זָרוֹן

Look at Me--against you, O proud one--

נֹאמֵ־אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH of Armies--

כִּי בֹא יוֹמֶךָ

for your day has come,

עַתַּת פְּקֻדֹתֶיךָ:

a time of your visitation for punishment.

255

The last two lines of **verse 11** are given varying translations:

(continued...)

7:12 בָּא הַיָּמָה

The time has come / is coming!

הַיָּמָה הַיּוֹם

The day has arrived!

הַקּוֹנֶה אֶל-יִשְׁמַח

The one buying shall not rejoice,²⁵⁶

וְהַמוֹכֵר אֶל-יִתְאָבֵל

And the one selling shall not mourn.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵(...continued)

King James, “none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither *shall there be* wailing for them.”

Tanakh, “Nothing comes of them, nor of their abundance, nor of their wealth; nor is there preeminence among them.”

New Revised Standard, “None of them shall remain, not their abundance, not their wealth; no pre-eminence among them.”

New International, “None of the people will be left, none of that crowd-- none of their wealth, nothing of value.”

New Jerusalem, omits these two lines;

Rahlfs, the entire verse: καὶ συτρίψει στήριγμα ἀνόμου καὶ οὐ μετὰ θορύβου οὐδὲ μετὰ σπουδῆς, “and it shall break in pieces (the) support of a lawless one; and not with an uproar, nor with haste.”

What do you make of these last two lines? We say they are an example of the enigmatic, puzzling quality that so often appears in the prophetic Message (see **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**). Their overall interpretation is puzzling and unclear; the Greek translation seemingly has nothing to do with the Hebrew original.

²⁵⁶

Hilmer comments on the phrase “Let not the buyer rejoice” that this is “end-time advice similar to that of Jesus (see **Matthew 24:17-18**).” (P. 1236)

²⁵⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In the sale of hereditary land it is usually the buyer who is happy, while the impoverished seller is unhappy. This will not be so in Judea, for neither of them will remain in possession of the estate; they will all be overwhelmed in the catastrophe (compare **Isaiah 24:2**)...In normal times an estate reverted to its original owner in the Jubilee year (**Leviticus 25**). But the approaching calamity will make an end both of the rights of ownership and the Jubilee institution...They would not recover their land in the Jubilee year, although they have escaped death, because they will be in exile (Kimchi).” (P. 36)

כִּי חֲרוֹן אֶל-כָּל-הַמּוֹנֵה:

Because burning anger is towards / upon (the) whole crowd.

7:13 כִּי הַמוֹכֵר אֶל-הַמִּמְכָּר לֹא יָשׁוּב

Because the one selling shall not return to the thing sold / sale,

וְעוֹד בְּחַיִּים חַיָּתָם

and still among the living (is) their life.

כִּי-חֲזוֹן אֶל-כָּל-הַמּוֹנֵה לֹא יָשׁוּב

Because (the) vision to / concerning all its crowd / abundance shall not return;

וְאִישׁ בְּעוֹנוֹ חַיָּתוֹ לֹא יִתְחַזְּקוּ:

and a man by his iniquity / guilt will not strengthen his life.²⁵⁸

7:14²⁵⁹ תִּקְעוּ בַתְּקוּעַ

They blew on the trumpet / wind-instrument,

וְהִכִּין הַכֹּל

and he made ready the whole.

וְאֵין הַלֵּךְ לַמִּלְחָמָה

And there is no one going to the battle / war.²⁶⁰

כִּי חֲרוֹנִי אֶל-כָּל-הַמּוֹנֵה:

Because My Hot Anger (is) toward its whole crowd.

258

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "neither shall any stand possessed of the iniquity of his life." He comments that this is "an unintelligible translation which is not borne out by the Hebrew, which is literally 'neither shall they strengthen themselves, a man whose life is in his iniquity.' Rashi and Kimchi interpret: and the life of every one was corrupted by his iniquity, and they did not strengthen themselves to abandon their wicked ways. Davidson suggests: 'Neither shall any one keep hold of his life in his iniquity,' i.e. those driven out shall not return, and those remaining shall die in their sins." (P. 37) We think the Hebrew text is close to being obscure.

259

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 14-27** "Collapse of Organized Resistance Amid General Despair."

260

Rabbi Fisch comments that "*They have blown the horn* to give the alarm of the approaching invader; but although preparations are made to withstand attack, none will have the courage to face battle, because God's wrath has sapped their powers of resistance." (P. 37)

7:15 תַּחֲרַב בַּחוּץ

The sword (is) in the street,

וְהַדָּבָר וְהָרֶעַב מִבַּיִת

And the plague / pestilence and the famine are inside a house.

אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בַּחֲרַב יָמוּת

Whoever (is) in the field will die by the sword;

וְאֲשֶׁר בְּעִיר רֶעַב וְדָבָר יֹאכְלֵנוּ:

And whoever (is) in the city, famine and the plague / pestilence will devour him!

7:16 וּפְלִטוּ פְּלִיטֵיהֶם

And their escapees will escape,

וְהָיוּ אֶל-הַהָרִים

and they will be (going) to the mountains.

כִּיּוֹנֵי הַגְּאִיּוֹת כָּלֵם הַמּוֹת

Like doves of the valleys, all of them murmuring,

אִישׁ בְּעוֹנוֹ:

each one over its iniquity / guilt.²⁶¹

7:17 כָּל-הַיָּדַיִם תִּרְפִּינָה

All the hands will sink;²⁶²

261

For these last two lines of **verse 16** the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has πάντα ἀποκτενῶ ἕκαστου ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτοῦ, “all (of them) I will kill, each one in his injustices.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In their perilous plight they will be conscience-stricken and realize that they are suffering the consequences of their sins.” (P. 37)

262

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Despair will render them helpless so that they have no heart for the fight...[and as the verse goes on to say] they are unable to contain themselves through cowardly terror.” (P. 37)

וְכָל-בְּרָכָיִם תֵּלְכְנָה מַיִם:

and all knees will walk (on) water!²⁶³

7:18 וַחֲגָרוּ שַׁקִּים

And they will gird (themselves with) sack-cloth,²⁶⁴

וְכִסְתָּהּ אוֹתָם פְּלָצוֹת

and shuddering will cover them.

וְאֵל כָּל-פָּנִים בּוֹשָׁה

and to all faces (there is) shame;

וּבְכָל-רֵאשֵׁיהֶם קָרְחָה:

and on all their heads baldness!²⁶⁵

263

This last line of **verse 17** is given varying translations:

King James, “and all knees shall be weak *as* water.”

Tanakh, “and all knees shall turn to water.”

Revised Standard Version, “all knees turn to water.”

New International, “every leg will be wet with urine.”

Rahlfs, καὶ πάντες μηροὶ μολυνθήσονται ὑγρασίᾳ, “and all thighs will be stained / defiled with urine.”

Evidently the meaning is that all hands are weak, and everyone wets their pants! As Reimer notes, “The Hebrew formulation suggests a loss of bladder control with the onset of panic.” (P. 1510)

264

Rabbi Fisch states that the sack-cloth is “a sign of mourning over the national catastrophe, or a mark of repentance. The former is the more probable.” (P. 38)

265

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They will shave or pluck out their hair as a sign of mourning. This was a heathen practice forbidden to Israel.” (P. 38) See **Deuteronomy 14:1**,

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

You (are) children belonging to the YHWH your God.

לֹא תִתְגַּדְדוּ

You shall not cut yourselves;

וְלֹא-תַשְׂיִמוּ קָרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֹת:

and you shall not make baldness between your eyes / on your foreheads for the dead! (See **Leviticus 19:27-28**.)

7:19²⁶⁶ כִּסְפָם בַּחוּצוֹת יִשְׁלִיכוּ

Their silver / money they throw in the streets,²⁶⁷

וְזָהָבָם לְנֹדָה יִהְיֶה׃

and their gold will be for an unclean thing / menstrual rag / worthless.²⁶⁸

כִּסְפָם וְזָהָבָם לֹא-יִוְכַל לְהַצִּילֵם

their silver / money and their gold will not be able to deliver them,

בְּיוֹם עֲבָרַת יְהוָה

on a day of YHWH's fury.

נַפְשָׁם לֹא יִשְׂבְּעוּ

Their innermost-being will not be satisfied,

וּמַעֲיָהֶם לֹא יִמְלֵאוּ

and their stomachs will not be filled.

266

Matties comments that “The unit concludes by depicting the irrational actions that arise when wealth becomes worthless (**verse 19**).” (P. 1164)

267

See **Isaiah 2:20**.

268

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Hebrew term *niddah* denotes menstrual impurity. On the day of reckoning, the desperate inhabitants will cast away their wealth as something of extreme impurity (compare **Ezekiel 36:17**), because they will neither be able to buy food nor ransom their lives with it.” (P. 38)

Ezekiel 36:17,

בֶּן-אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבֵי עַל-אֲדָמָתָם

Son of Adam / Humanity, (the) House of Israel—they (were) dwelling upon their ground;

וַיִּטְמְאוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכָּם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם

and they made it unclean / defiled it by their way and by their deeds,

כְּטִמְאַת הַנֹּדָה

like the menstruating woman's uncleanness,

הִיְתָה דַרְכָּם לִפְנֵי:

their way became before Me!

כִּי־מִכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹנָם הָיָה:

Because their iniquity / guilt was / became a stumbling-block!²⁶⁹

7:20 וַצָּבִי עֲדִיּוֹ לְנֹאֵן שָׁמָּהוּ

And (the) beauty of his ornament—he placed it for pride;²⁷⁰

וַיְצַלְמֵי תוֹעֵבֹתָם שִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם עָשׂוּ בּוֹ

and images--their abominations, their detestable things—they made with it!²⁷¹

עַל־כֵּן נָתַתִּיו לָהֶם לְנֹדָה:

Therefore I gave / made it for them for an unclean thing / menstrual rag!

269

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Their wealth has been the cause of their sinning.” (P. 38) See: **Ezekiel 44:12**,

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתּוּ אוֹתָם לְפָנַי גְּלוּלֵיהֶם

Because they served them before their idols,

וְהָיוּ לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹן

and they were a stumbling-block of iniquity / guilt for (the) House of Israel.

עַל־כֵּן נִשְׂאתִי יָדִי עֲלֵיהֶם

Therefore I lifted My hand over them—

נֵאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

וְנִשְׂאוּ עֲוֹנָם:

(swearing) And they shall bear their iniquity / guilt!

Hosea 2:10^{Heb} / 8^{Eng}

וְהָיָה לֹא יָדְעָה כִּי אֲנִי

And she did not know that I,

נָתַתִּי לָהּ הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֵּצֶהָר

I gave to her the grain and the new wine and the fresh oil;

וְכִסְף־הַרְבִּיתִי לָהּ וְזָהָב עָשׂוּ לְבַעַל:

and I multiplied silver for her, and gold—they used (them) for the Baal!

270

Reimer comments that “The *beautiful ornament* is an obscure reference, but imagery of the temple is probably in mind.” (P. 1510) See **Exodus 32:2-4**.

271

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 20** that “Like the Israelites when they made the golden calf, the present generation donated the precious metal of their jewelry for the manufacture of graven images.” (P. 38)

7:21 וַנְתַתֵּנוּ בְיַד־הַזָּרִים לְבָז

And I will give it into (the) hand of the foreigners for the plunder,

וְלְרָשָׁעֵי הָאָרֶץ לְשָׁלַל

and to wicked people of the land / earth for spoil.²⁷²

וְחִלְלֻהוּ: (וְחִלְלָהּ)

And they will profane it.²⁷³

7:22 וְהִסְבֹּתִי פָנַי מֵהֶם

And I will cause My face to turn from them.²⁷⁴

וְחִלְלוּ אֶת־צִפּוּנִי

And they will pollute / defile My treasured place;²⁷⁵

וּבְאוּ־בָהּ פְּרִיזִים וְחִלְלוּהָ:

and violent ones will come into it and will pollute / defile it.

272

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The idols of gold and silver will provide loot for the enemy.” (P. 38)

273

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” וְחִלְלָהּ; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” וְחִלְלוּהוּ, “and they will profane it,” a correction of the gender of the pronominal suffix.

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The Israelites had dedicated their gold and silver to a ‘religious’ purpose; the Chaldeans will make a ‘profane’ use of the metal.” (P. 39)

274

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Divine Presence will depart from the Israelites so that they will suffer defeat at the hands of their enemies, with the dreadful sequel which is described.” (P. 39)

275

Rabbi Fisch’s translation of the Hebrew צִפּוּנִי, *tsephuniy*, is “My secret place,” and he explains that this is “traditionally explained as a reference to the holy of holies, but it may indicate the temple generally.” (P. 39) Translations vary, from “my secret place,” to “My treasures,” to “my treasured place,” to “the place I treasure,” to “my treasure house,” to the Greek (**Rahlfs**) τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς μου, “the visitation of Mine.” (P. 39) Hilmer holds that it means “the Jerusalem temple.” (P. 1237) What do you think it means?

7:23²⁷⁶ עֲשֵׂה הַרְתוּק

Make the chain!²⁷⁷

כִּי הָאָרֶץ מְלֵאָה מִשִּׁפְט דָּמִים

Because the land / earth was filled (with) judgment of bloods / bloody crimes,²⁷⁸

וְהָעִיר מְלֵאָה חָמָס:

and the city was filled (with) violence / wrong!²⁷⁹

7:24 וְהִבֵּאתִי רְעֵי גוֹיִם

And I will bring in evil ones of (the) nations;²⁸⁰

וַיִּרְשׁוּ אֶת-בְּתֵיהֶם

and they will possess / inherit their houses.

276

Matties comments on **verses 23-24** that “Criminal judicial murder and violence characterize the activity of the strong and the powerful (8:17; 12:19; 19:3, 6; 22:6, 27; 45:9). Echoing **Genesis 6:11**, with its’ full of violence’ Ezekiel notes that *the worst of the nations* (**verse 24**) is set to invade with tragic consequences to both houses and holy places.” (P. 1164)

277

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet is ordered to make a chain as a symbol that the remnant of the inhabitants will be carried away in fetters into captivity.” (P. 39)

278

Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase “judgment of bloods” may mean “crimes the penalty for which is death.” (P. 39)

279

The Hebrew noun חָמָס, **chamas**, “violence,” “wrong,” is exactly what YHWH doesn’t want! Its first occurrence in the **Hebrew Bible** is at **Genesis 6:11**, stating the reason for the coming of the flood in Noah’s day—the earth was filled with violence / wrong! The noun occurs some 44 other times in the **Hebrew Bible**, involving physical violence, but also wrong-doing, including injurious language and harsh treatment. It is used in a general way of the rude wickedness of men, their noisy, wild, ruthlessness, and particularly with regard to violence done to the poor. See footnote 1414, with Haag’s article in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament**.

280

Where the Hebrew text has רְעֵי גוֹיִם, “evil ones of nations,” English translations are prone to exaggerate the phrase: from “the worst of the heathen,” to “the worst of the nations,” to “the most wicked of nations,” to “the cruelest of the nations.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the phrase.

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי גִּבּוֹרֵי עֲזִים

And I will cause to cease (the) pride of (the) strong / mighty ones,²⁸¹

וְנִחְלוּ מְקַדְשֵׁיהֶם:

and their set-apart places will be polluted / defiled!

7:25 קִפְדָּהָ בָּא

Shuddering came / was coming;

וּבִקְשׁוּ שְׁלוֹם

And they will seek peace / welfare,

וְאֵין:

and it is not / there is none!

7:26 הִנֵּה עַל-הַהוּה' תָּבוֹא

Disaster upon disaster will come;²⁸²

וּשְׂמוּעָה אֶל-שְׂמוּעָה תִּהְיֶה

and there will be rumor to / upon rumor;

וּבִקְשׁוּ חִזּוֹן מִנְבִּיא

and they will seek a vision from a prophet.²⁸³

281

Rabbi Fisch states that “the pride of the strong” may be an allusion to “Israel’s monarchy and priesthood.” (P. 39)

282

Compare **Jeremiah 4:20**,

שָׁבַר עַל-שָׁבַר נִקְרָא

Crash upon crash was heard!

כִּי שִׁדְדָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ

Because all the land was devastated

פִּתְאֹם שִׁדְדוּ אֹהֲלַי

Suddenly my tents were devastated;

רָגַע יְרִיעֹתַי:

(in) a moment, my curtains!

283

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In their bewilderment they will look for guidance from their prophets, but in vain (compare **Lamentations 2:9b** ‘there is no *torah* / teaching; also her prophets did (continued...))

וְתוֹרָה תֵּאֲבֹד מִפֶּהוּן

And *Torah* / instruction will perish from a priest,

וְעֵצָה מִזְקֵנִים:

and counsel from (the) elderly.²⁸⁴

7:27 הַמֶּלֶךְ יִתְאַבֵּל

The king will mourn,

וְנָשִׂיא יִלְבַּשׁ שְׂמֹמָה

and (the) prince / chief²⁸⁵ will dress (in) devastation / waste.

וְיָדֵי עַם-הָאָרֶץ תִּבְהַלְנָה

And (the) hands of (the) people of the land / earth will be disturbed.²⁸⁶

²⁸³(...continued)

not find vision from YHWH!’). Nor will they derive instruction from the priest and counsel from the elders. The crisis will leave them without direction from their religious and national leaders.” (P. 39) Compare **Jeremiah 18:18b**,

And they said, Come,
and we will make plans against Jeremiah!
Because *torah* / teaching till not perish from (the) priest;
and counsel from (the) wise person,
and (the) word from (the) prophet...

²⁸⁴

Hilmer comments that “There would be no guidance from [YHWH] and no direction from the elders (see **1 Samuel 38:6**; **Amos 8:11-12** and **Micah 3:6-7**.”

²⁸⁵

Hilmer comments on the two titles, king and prince, that “Here both nouns describe the same person. Ezekiel considered Johoiachin to be the true king (**1:2**) and Zedekiah a mere prince (**2:12**.” (P. 1237)

²⁸⁶

This phrase, “people of the land,” occurs some 42 times in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Genesis 23:12-13, people at large;
Genesis 42:6, native Egyptians;
Exodus 5:5, the Israelites in Egyptian slavery;
Leviticus 20:2, 4, the people at large;
Numbers 14:9, the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine;
2 Kings 11:14, 18, 19, 20; **2 Kings 15:5**; **16:15**; **21:24**; **23:30, 35**; **25:29**; **2 Chronicles 23:13, 20, 21**; **2 Chronicles 26:21**; **2 Chronicles 33:25**, **2 Chronicles 36:1**; **Ezekiel 7:27**; **22:29**; **33:2**, the

(continued...)

²⁸⁶(...continued)

people inhabiting Judah;

2 Kings 24:14, the poorest people of the land of Judah;

Ezra 4:4, the “Samaritans”;

Job 12:24, God takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth / land;

Isaiah 24:4, the “highest people of the land / earth.”

Jeremiah 34:19; 52:25, the common people, over against the officials; **Ezekiel 12:19; 45:22; 46:3, 9;**

Daniel 9:6; Haggai 2:4; Zechariah 7:5.

Ezekiel 39:13, all the people living in the restored land of Judah, following Gog’s demise.

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that עַם הָאֲרֶצַּת (am ha)arets, denotes “the people at large,” as a body **2 Kings 11:14, 18, 19, 20; 15:5, 16:15, 21:24, 24 +, Jeremiah 37:2; 44:21; Leviticus 20:2; Genesis 23:7, 12, 13**; common people, **Jeremiah 34:19; 2 K 24:14**; distinguished from prince, **Ezekiel 45:22; 46:3, 9**; from priests, **Haggai 2:4; Zechariah 7:5 = Canaanites, Numbers 14:9.**

The plural phrase, עַמֵּי הָאֲרֶצַּת, “peoples of the land / earth,” **1 Chronicles 5:25**; mixed post-exilic population **Ezra 4:4**. But more usually the plural phrase עַמֵּי הָאֲרֶצַּת, “peoples of the earth,” **Joshua 4:24; 2 Chronicles 32:19 +**, denotes [non-Jewish] peoples around and in Palestine after the exile: **Ezra 10:2, 11**; traders **Nehemiah 10:31**; עַמֵּי הָאֲרָצוֹת, “peoples of the lands,” **Nehemiah 9:30, 10:29, 2 Chronicles 32:13.**

E. Lipinski, in an article on the word עַם, (am, “people,” in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament**, Volume XI, states that “The semantic content of the word (am developed primarily in an urban milieu, taking on a variety of collective nuances in which the notion of kinship among members of a clan or with the tribal ‘totem’ [an emblem of a group of people, such as a family, clan, lineage, or tribe] was lost...and (am came to be used in synonymous paralleism with goy [‘people,’ ‘nation’]...The term (am frequently suggests the notion of totality, of the people as a whole...It is used in connection with political, civil, and religious institutions; levy of troops, popular assembly, populace, congregation of the faithful, and religious community.”

Lipinski enumerates the following usages:

1. “Assembly of the Israelites...(am can refer to the totality of an urban population enjoying full civil rights (**Ruth 4:4, 9**), e.g., the people of Jerusalem (**2 Chronicles 32:18**). When they meet to make decisions, they constitute the popular assembly, called simply ha(am or kol-ha(am...[see] **Judges 10:18** (the assembly of the inhabitants of Gilead, **Judges 11:5-11**); **1 Samuel 10:17, 22-24** (the people assembled at Mizpah that elevates Saul to kingship)...A more inclusive assembly appears in **1 Kings 12** (where the (am at Shechem comprises the northern tribes, i.e., Israel...

2. “The People of the Land of Judah. In Judah the popular assembly of all citizens –during the monarchy, distinct from the inhabitants of Jerusalem–bore the special designation (am ha)arets, literally “people of the land” (compare **2 Kings 14:21** with **2 Kings 23:30**)...It is distinguished from or contrasted with the king or prince (**2 Kings 16:15; Ezekiel 7:27; 45:22; Daniel 9:6**) the king and his ministers

(continued...)

²⁸⁶(...continued)

(**Jeremiah 37:2**), and the notables, priests, and prophets (**Jeremiah 1:18; 34:19; 44:21; Ezekiel 22:24-29**). It is also distinct from the population of the royal city of Jerusalem (**2 Kings 11:20**; compare **Jeremiah 25:2**), which comprised primarily functionaries, mercenaries and their families, court personnel, and temple servants. As a consequence, the **(am ha)arets** consisted essentially of the people inhabiting the province. Nevertheless, it acclaimed Joash (**2 Kings 11:14, 18; 2 Chronicles 23:3**) and subsequently Josiah (**2 Kings 21:14; 2 Chronicles 33:25**) as king. It also decided to destroy the temple of Baal and to execute both Mattan the priest of Baal and Queen Athaliah (**2 Kings 11:18, 20; 2 Chronicles 23:17, 21**), thus functioning as defender of autochthonous [indigenous, native] Judahite traditions against foreign influences associated with the entourage of Athaliah.” (P. 174)

“After the exile, this notion of an [indigenous, native] people comprising the inhabitants of the province was adopted by the exiles who returned from Babylonia. ‘The poorest of the **(am ha)arets**,’ who had remained in Judah (**2 Kings 24:14**) and intermarried with non-Jews (compare **Nehemiah 13:23**), the revenants [people who had returned, especially supposedly from the dead] were looked on as people who neither knew nor obeyed the law, hindered observance of the sabbath, and interfered with the work of national and religious restoration (**Ezra 9:1-2, 11; 10:2, 11; Nehemiah 10:29, 31-32**). On the basis of this notion, the term **(am ha)arets** was applied to the Samaritans (**Ezra 4:4**), then to the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine (**Ezra 3:3; 9:1; Nehemiah 9:30; Genesis 23:12-13; Numbers 14:9**), and finally to natives in general, e.g., the Egyptians in Egypt (**Genesis 42:6**). This pejorative [derogatory] sense of **(am ha)arets** continued in Mishnaic Hebrew usage. As in **Ezra 9:1-2, 11; 10:2, 11; Nehemiah 10:29, 31-32**, the term referred to Jews who do not know the law and hence are suspected of not observing the ritual regulations and not offering in the temple tithes of the fruits of the field.” (P. 175)

3. “The Postexilic Assembly. In the postexilic period, the term **(am** also continued to denote the popular assembly, which played an active role in postexilic Jerusalem, e.g., in **Nehemiah 8**, at the hour of the birth of Judaism. Even when the text uses the term קהל, **qahal** (verses 2, 17) the expression **kol-ha(am** [‘all the people’] predominates]...

4. “The People as a Whole. The word **(am** was used in a still broader sense, without any institutional connotations and even more inclusively than in the postexilic usage of **(am ha)arets**. The word can mean a chance gathering, a multitude (**Deuteronomy 13:10 / 9**), **kol-ha(am**, ‘everybody’, or the laity **(ha)am**) in contrast to the priests (**Deuteronomy 18:3; Isaiah 24:2; Jeremiah 26:7; 28:5; Nehemiah 10:35**). Elsewhere **(am** refers to the people in the vicinity of a prophet (**1 Kings 19:21**) or the people in general (**2 Kings 4:41**). The subjects of a king are called his **(am...**(Pp. 175-76)

5. “Warriors. Another ancient meaning of **(am** is ‘troops’; it derives from the obligation to provide armed assistance...imposed upon members of a clan or tribe assumed to be descended from a common ancestor...

6. “The People of God. The cultic and religious assembly of Yahweh’s faithful is frequently called the ‘people of Yahweh’ (**Number 11:29, (am YHWH)**), the ‘people of God’ (**Judges 20:2, (am)elohim**), or simply ‘the people’ **(ha(am)**...as the notion of religious and cultic dependence and ties won the upper hand...(P. 176)

(continued...)

מִדְרָכְכֶם אֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָם

From their way (of life) I will do to them;

וּבְמִשְׁפָּטֵיהֶם אֶשְׁפֹּטֵם

and by their judicial decisions I will judge them.

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH!

²⁸⁶(...continued)

7. “Foreign Peoples. Finally, (**am** can refer to a foreign nation like Cush or Egypt...a meaning found also in the expressions (**amme ha**)arets (**Esther 8:17**) and (**amme ha**)aratsoth (**Nehemiah 9:30**). This usage appears frequently in the Essene literature, where (**amme ha**)aratsoth (**1QM 10:9; 1QH 4:26**), **kol ha(ammim** (**1QpHab 3:6, 11, 13; 6:7; 85**), and **ha(ammim** (**CD 8:10**; etc.) refer to the gentile nations...The Essene writings put special emphasis on the holiness of the chosen people by identifying them with the righteous, the ‘sons of light.’ The chapter of the **War Scroll** describing the standards specifies that the words (**am**)el, ‘people of [Supreme] God,’ are to be written upon the great banner that will go ‘at the head of all the people,’ i.e., the army (**1QM 3:3**; compare **1:5**)...Apart from the emphasis on the holiness of the true people of God, the usage of (**am** in the Dead Sea Scrolls hardly differs from **Old Testament** usage.” (P. 177)

Rabbi Fisch states that “In **chapters 8-11** a new series of visions [we say, ‘vision-stories’] is recounted including the final one of the *Merkabah* [Divine chariot]. While in the company of the elders of Judah in his house the Spirit of God transported him from Babylon to Jerusalem. Set down in the temple court, he beheld there the *likeness* which he had seen on two previous occasions in association with the *Merkabah*, and he is shown four scenes of idolatry within the precincts of the sanctuary. A Divine voice calls his attention to the abominable rites practiced by all classes in the house of God, and concludes with a reaffirmation of imminent catastrophe.” (P. 40)

Hilmer states that “The vision contained in these four chapters vividly depicts the departure of the Divine glory from the corrupted temple (see **8:4; 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:23**).” (P. 1237)

Darr comments with reference to **chapters 8-11** that “In Babylonia, the New Year was celebrated with the *akitu* ceremony. This eleven day festival took place...during the first eleven days of the month. Jacob Klein [in the **Anchor Bible Dictionary** 1:138] describes the ritual, based on a detailed description in a Seleucid-era (third century B.C.E.) text containing instructions to the high priest (*sesgallu*) concerning cultic rituals to be performed in the temple during the second to fifth days of the festival:

“During these days, prayers and incantations are recited to Marduk, beseeching Him to calm His anger and bless the king and the people for the coming year. On the fourth day, the great Babylonian mythic poem *enuma elis*, describing Marduk’s victory over Tiamat (the primeval sea) and the creation of the world by Him, is recited before the God. On the fifth day, after the temple has been thoroughly purified, the king is led before Marduk. The high priest takes away from him his royal insignia, strikes him on his cheeks, pulls his ears, and makes him bow down to the ground. At this point, the king has to utter a declaration of innocence, in which he asserts that he did not neglect the worship of the God, nor did he harm the sacred city of Babylon or its protected people. Thereupon, the high priest utters a favorable oracle, assuring the king that Marduk listened to his prayer and will bless his kingship and destroy his enemies. After the high priest returns to the king his royal insignia, he again strikes his cheek, and if ‘his tears flow—Bel [Marduk] is appeased; if his tears do not flow—Bel is angry; an enemy will rise and bring about his downfall.” (**Ancient Near-Eastern Texts**, pp. 334, 429-52).

“In addition to comparing Ezekiel’s final vision with the *akitu* festival, scholars point to similarities between the **Scroll of Ezekiel** and the neo-Babylonian ‘Poem of Erra,’ a literary classic in the ancient Near Eastern world. Daniel Bodi has highlighted a theme common to certain ancient Near Eastern texts including the Poem of Erra: ‘The absence of Divinity from its shrine.’ This poem describes the grave consequences when the Gods Erra and Marduk are angered by neglect of their rituals, moral decay, the tumult of the peoples, and the threat humans pose to the Deities. Marduk abandons His shrine; and in His absence, Erra—the God of destruction and chaos—destroys Babylon and forces the Babylonians into exile, there to serve as slaves for seventy years. After only eleven years, Marduk’s wrath is abated, however, and he brings the exiles back to rebuild Babylon.

“Bodi compares this poem with the **Scroll of Ezekiel** and more specifically with Ezekiel’s second visionary report (**Ezekiel 8-11**), wherein Yahweh’s glory abandons Jerusalem and its temple on account of cultic abuses and moral decay, leaving the land vulnerable to attack by the Babylonians. The departure of the Deity from Its shrine because of society’s moral, social, cultural, and political offenses

(continued...)

8:1-18 Ezekiel Is Transported to Jerusalem

Where He Witnesses Detestable Things Happening in the Temple²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷(...continued)

is a theme that the **Scroll of Ezekiel** shares with the Erra Epic and a number of other Akkadian texts. **Ezekiel 8** describes the cultic abominations found in the Jerusalem temple, while **9:9** cites additional moral and social crimes as the reasons for [YHWH's] merciless destruction of Israel's population.

“Stevenson argues persuasively that together, the ‘absence of Divinity from His shrine,’ theme and the *akitu* ceremony, which enacts Marduk's return to His temple, are crucial for a reader's understanding of the structure of the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, especially **Ezekiel 40-48**. Ezekiel's fourth visionary report narrates [YHWH's] return from exile to [YHWH's] shrine in order to renew Divine rule and take possession of [YHWH's] house. Unlike in the Babylonian *akitu* ceremony, God comes alone.” (P. 372)

See Bodi, **The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra**; and Kalinda Rose Stevenson, **The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48**, SBLDS 154 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996)

Reimer entitles **8:1-11:25** “Ezekiel's Temple Vision.” He comments that “This is the second of Ezekiel's four dramatic visions [**chapter 1**; **chapters 8-11**; **chapter 37:1-14**; and **chapters 40-48**, the new temple], having overt connections with the opening vision (**chapters 1-3**). It also has strong links to the concluding vision (**chapters 40-48**), which offers a mirror image to this one...

“Ezekiel is shown a mounting series of vignettes [short impressionistic scenes that focus on one moment or character and give a trenchant impression about that character, an idea, setting, and / or object. It is a short, descriptive passage, more about evoking meaning through imagery than about plot—much like our ‘vision story’] of idolatrous worship in the temple (**chapter 8**), the citywide slaughter of idolaters (**chapter 9**), the destruction of Jerusalem by fire, and the gradual withdrawal of the Presence of the [YHWH] from the temple (**chapter 10**)...

“The vision [-story] culminates in the contrast of judgment on wicked officials (**11:1-13**) with an oracle of hope (**11:14-21**) before [YHWH's] glory departs completely (**11:22-25**). As a whole, the vision emphasizes [YHWH's] rejection of this generation of Judeans and demonstrates the justice of [YHWH's] stance.” (P. 1510)

Matties comments on **8:1-11:25** that “This second vision emphasizes how conditions in Judah drive [YHWH] from the sanctuary. Mesopotamian texts describe the Gods abandoning their temples for similar reasons (e.g., Esarhaddon's annals describe Marduk's departure from and return to Babylon [there is nothing to this effect in Pritchard's **Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament**, demonstrating how already this classic work is becoming out of date].

“The vision serves notice on misguided worship and on its power to shape character toward destructive ends. [YHWH] remains sovereign in history; free to protect the Divine reputation; and unencumbered by places, shrines, or human ideological constructs.” (P. 1165)

“8:1 And it happened in the year, the sixth one, in the sixth (month), on the fifth (day) of the month, I was dwelling / sitting in my house, And Judah’s elders were sitting before me; and my Lord YHWH’s hand fell upon me there. 8:2 And I saw, and look--a likeness like a vision / appearance of fire, from (the) vision / appearance of his loins / waist and downwards, fire; and from his loins / waist and upwards, like a vision / appearance of brightness, like an eye / spring of the shining metal. 8:3 And it sent forth (the) likeness of a hand; and It took me by a lock of my head, and a wind / Spirit lifted me between the earth and (between) the heavens. And It brought me to Jerusalem, in visions of God, to (the) door / opening of (the) gate, the inner one, the one opening to (the) north. where there was (the) dwelling-place of an image of the jealousy that makes jealous! 8:4 And look--there (was the) Glorious Radiance of Israel’s God--like the vision which I saw in the valley. 8:5 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, lift now your eyes (to the) north road / in the northerly direction. And I lifted my eyes (to the) north road / in the northerly direction, and look--from / at (the) north to / of (the) gate, the altar of sacrifice of (the) image of the jealousy, this very one, in the entrance! 8:6 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, are you seeing what they (are) doing / making--abominations, great ones, which Israel’s house (is) making here, to distance (Me) from (being) in My sanctuary? And still / again you will return--you will see great abominations! 8:7 And He brought me to the court-yard’s door; and I saw, and look--one hole in the wall! 8:8 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, dig now / please in the wall! And I dug in the wall, and look--one door. 8:9 And He said to me, Enter! And see the evil abominations which they are doing here! 8:10 And I entered, and I saw, and look--every likeness of creeping thing(s) and cattle / beast(s), and detestable thing(s), and every idol of Israel’s household, carved upon the wall-- around, around. 8:11 And seventy men from Israel’s household elders / officials; and Yaazneyahu, son of Shaphan standing in their midst, standing in front of them; and each one (with) an incense burner in his hand. And (the) odor of a cloud of sweet-smelling smoke going up. 8:12 And He said to me, Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity, that which (the) elders of Is-rael’s house are doing in the darkness? Each man in chambers of show-pieces / figures / imaginations? Because (they are) saying, YHWH is not seeing us! YHWH has forsaken / left the land! 8:13 And He said to me, Again / still you will return; you will see great abominations which they are doing! 8:14 And He brought me to (the) opening of (the) gate of YHWH’s house which (was) to the north. And look--there (were) the women dwelling / sitting, weeping (for) the Tammuz! 8:15 And He said to me, Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity? Again / still you will return; you will see abominations greater than these! 8:16 And He brought me to a court of YHWH’s house, the inner one. And look--a door of YHWH’s temple, between the porch and the altar of sacrifice--about twenty and five man / men, their backs to / towards YHWH’s temple, and their faces to (the) east. And they were worshiping towards (the) east, to the Sun! 8:17 And He said to me, Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity? Is it a trifling thing for (the) house of

²⁸⁸(...continued)

Ezekiel is carried in visions of God back to Jerusalem to the temple, where he is shown "the idol that provokes to jealousy." The Glorious Radiance of the God of Israel which Ezekiel had seen in the plain in Babylonia was there; but it was obviously irritated with the utterly detestable things that were going on in the temple. Ezekiel was shown crawling things and unclean animals, pictured on the walls of the rooms where idols were worshiped at their individual shrines. He saw women mourning the death of Tammuz, a Babylonian fertility God. He saw men worshiping the Sun. He also saw the people of Israel engaging in rituals taken from fertility religion. It was these detestable things that would cause the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

All of this, we think, could be easily enacted in a vision-play / an acted-out vignette before the Judean elders in captivity, explaining to them the reason for the soon-coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Judah from making / doing the abominations which they made / did here, that they have filled the land (with) violence / wrong? And they returned to provoke Me--And look at them--sending forth the branch / twig to their nose! 8:18 And also I, I Will Act with Rage! My Eye Will Not Have Pity, and I Will Not Spare! And they will cry out in My Ears, (with) a great voice, and I Will Not Hear / Listen to them!"

8:1²⁸⁹ וַיְהִי בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית

And it happened in the year, the sixth one,

בַּשָּׁשִׁי בַּחֹמֶשֶׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ

in the sixth (month), on the fifth (day) to / of the month,²⁹⁰

אֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵיתִי

I was dwelling / sitting in my house,²⁹¹

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Reimer comments on **8:1-4** that “The vision begins with Ezekiel’s ‘physical’ transportation from his home in Babylon (**verse 1**) to the Jerusalem temple (**verse 3**), a detail without parallel in the canonical **Old Testament** (but compare **Bel and the Dragon 14:33-36**). Otherwise the setting is reminiscent of the inaugural vision (**Ezekiel 1-3**).” (P. 1510)

Matties calls **8:1-4** the “preamble,” that “dates the vision from Jehoiachin’s exile (September 18, 592 B.C.E.), describes Ezekiel’s visionary experience, and provides an orientation to the visionary events that follow.” (P. 1165)

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Rabbi Fisch notes that it is the sixth year “of Jehoiachin’s captivity, i.e. in 592 or 591 B.C.E.,” and that the sixth month means that “an interval of one year and two months elapsed between the present vision and the first when Ezekiel was called to his prophetic mission. Since the period—a lunar year and two months (413 days)—falls short of the number of 430 days during which he had to lie on his sides (**Ezekiel 4:5-6**), **Seder Olam** suggests that the year had an intercalary month added (the second Adar). Accordingly Ezekiel had this experience twelve days after he ended the time of his immobility.” (P. 40)

We say, No, no need to change the calendar and add a month. The 430 days of lying on one side was part of a vision-story-play-vignette, and should not be taken literally.

Reimer comments that “The date formula places this vision in September 592 B.C.E., just over a year from the inaugural vision. No triggering event can be linked to this date with certainty, but the events leading up to the sinking of the anti-Babylonian scroll related in **Jeremiah 51:59-64** may lurk in the background. Clearly there were ‘prophets’ among the exiles fomenting rebellion (see **Jeremiah 29:20-23**). The elders (**Ezekiel 8:1**) seek a word from Ezekiel.” (P. 1510)

Hilmer notes that this date is “September 17, 592 B.C.E.—the second of 13 dates in Ezekiel. This one, like those in **1:2** and **40:1**, introduces a vision [-story].” (P. 1237)

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(continued...)

וְזָקְנֵי יְהוּדָה יוֹשְׁבִים לְפָנַי

And Judah's elders²⁹² were sitting before me;²⁹³

וַתִּפֹּל עָלַי יַד אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

and my Lord YHWH's Hand Fell upon me there.²⁹⁴

8:2 וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה

And I saw, and look--

²⁹¹(...continued)

Hilmer observes that the phrase “sitting in my house” shows how “the exiles were free to build houses.” (P. 1237) See **Jeremiah 29:5**, where Jeremiah tells the exiles,

בְּנוּ בָתִּים וְשִׁבוּ

Build houses, and settle down!

וְנִטְעוּ גִּנּוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיָן:

And plant gardens and eat their fruit!

This text in **Ezekiel** lets us know that Ezekiel had followed Jeremiah's instructions!

²⁹²

Rabbi Fisch comments that the elders of Judah “who were in captivity...apparently retained their former status. This supports the view that the exiles in Babylon were an organized community.” (P. 40)

Hilmer likewise states that the elders of Judah “also had freedom of movement, assembly and worship. A year and two months after his inaugural vision and preaching, the prophet commanded a hearing. Some have seen in such meetings the beginning of the synagogue form of worship.” (P. 1237)

We think the text clearly shows their freedom of movement and assembly. But the text itself says nothing concerning worship or “the beginning of the synagogue form of worship. This has to be read into the text.

²⁹³

We are interpreting the **Scroll of Ezekiel** as containing a number of vision-story-plays, acted out by Ezekiel before the Judean officials in exile. Here Ezekiel's words set the stage. It is in Ezekiel's house, and the elders / officials of Judah are present, as Ezekiel enacts another of his vision-story-plays. We imagine Ezekiel's having helpers, with spoken parts, or large “flash-cards” indicating localities and times involved. In this instance, we imagine the large clay-brick model of Jerusalem could have been used to illustrate Ezekiel's going to Jerusalem and its temple.

²⁹⁴

See **Ezekiel 1:3** with its footnote.

דְּמוּת כְּמֵרָאֵה-אֵשׁ

a likeness like a vision / appearance of fire,²⁹⁵

מִמֵּרָאֵה מִתְּנַיִו וְלִמְטָה אֵשׁ

from (the) vision / appearance of his loins / waist and downwards, fire;

וּמִמֵּרָאֵה וְלִמְעָלָה כְּמֵרָאֵה-זֹהָר

and from his loins / waist and upwards, like a vision / appearance of brightness

כְּעֵין הַחֹשֶׁמְלָה:

like an eye / spring of the shining metal.²⁹⁶

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “Modern commentators follow the [Septuagint (Rahlfs)] and read *ish* (man) for *esh* (fire) in conformity with **Ezekiel 1:26**; but there the noun is *adam* and no explanation is offered why Ezekiel did not use it here. This verse is obviously based on **Ezekiel 1:27** which supports the Masoretic Text.” (P. 41)

In the English translations we are consulting, **King James** and **Tanakh** both have “fire”; while **New Revised Standard**, **New International** and **New Jerusalem** have “man” or “human being.” The Hebrew word אֵשׁ, *esh*, is “fire”; the Hebrew word אִישׁ, *iysh*, is “man.”

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Immediately in **verse 2** everything becomes symbolic, and we are reminded of the symbolic vision of **chapter 1**. Nothing is precise or exact; everything is “like” or “as”—it is a mysterious vision, that cannot be exactly portrayed. Again we are in the realm of the mysterious, hidden supernatural.

We translate the phrase הַחֹשֶׁמְלָה כְּעֵין, *ke(eyn hachashemalah* by “like an eye / spring of the shining metal,” but translations vary:

King James, “as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber”;

Tanakh, “his appearance was resplendent and had the color of amber.”

New Revised Standard, “it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber.”

New International, “his appearance was as bright as glowing metal.”

New Jerusalem, “there was a brilliance like the glitter of amber.”

Rahlfs, ὡς ὄρασις ἠλέκτρου, “like a vision / appearance of amber / pale-gold.”

And we ask, What did you expect the text to say? “As the appearance of a black hole”?

Hilmer says it was an angel that Ezekiel saw, “similar in appearance to [YHWH] in **1:26-27**.” The phrases “like fire,” and “as bright as glowing metal” are, according to Hilmer, “a way to describe the blinding brightness of the Divine messenger.” (P. 1237) See:

Matthew 28:3, where an “angel of the Lord” is described:

(continued...)

8:3 וַיִּשְׁלַח תְּבִנִית יָד

And it sent forth (the) likeness of a hand;²⁹⁷

וַיִּקְחֵנִי בְצִיצַת רֹאשִׁי

and It took me by a lock of my head,²⁹⁸

וַתִּשָּׂא אֶתִּי רוּחַ

and a wind / Spirit lifted me

בֵּין-הָאָרֶץ וּבֵין הַשָּׁמַיִם

between the earth and (between) the heavens.

²⁹⁶(...continued)

ἦν δὲ ἡ εἰδέα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἀστραπή

But then his appearance / form was being like lightning,

καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιῶν.

and his clothing white as snow.

Acts 9:3, where Saul of Tarsus' vision of the risen Lord Jesus is depicted beginning with:

Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι

But then as he went on his way,

ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐγγίξειν τῇ Δαμασκῶ,

he approached Damascus,

ἐξαίφνης τε αὐτὸν περιήστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

and suddenly a light out of the heaven shone around him.

²⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch translates by “the form of a hand was put forth.” He comments that “The prophet carefully avoids the anthropomorphic suggestion as far as possible; hence *the form of a hand* instead of ‘a hand.’” (P. 41)

²⁹⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The noun for *lock* [or ‘strand’ of hair] is **צִיצִית**, **tsiytsith**, used of the fringe in the corner of the garment (**Numbers 15:38**). He was transported to Jerusalem only in spirit.” (P. 41)

We think that Ezekiel experienced all of this is a vision; and now, in his vision-story-play, he enacts it in front of the elders / officials of Judah. We wonder how Ezekiel would enact this being carried from Babylonia to Jerusalem, but think it would be entirely possible.

וַתְּבִיֵא אֶתִי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

And It brought me to Jerusalem,²⁹⁹

בְּמַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים

in visions of God,³⁰⁰

אֶל־פֶּתַח שַׁעַר הַפְּנִימִית

to (the) door / opening of (the) gate, the inner one,

הַפּוֹנֶה צָפוֹנָה

the one opening to (the) north.

אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם מוֹשֵׁב סֶמֶל

where there was (the) dwelling-place of an image

הַקְּנָאָה הַמְּקַנָּה:

of the jealousy that makes jealous!³⁰¹

299

Hilmer comments that “Ezekiel had been directed to prophesy stern judgments on Jerusalem (**chapters 1-7**). Now he was transported to Jerusalem in visions of God (see 11:24) and shown the reason for the stern judgments.” (P. 1237)

300

See our footnote on the phrase “visions of God” at **Ezekiel 1:1**. It is not a literal, physical trip that Ezekiel is describing, but a trip taken in “visions of God.” And now Ezekiel is enacting that trip before his fellow exiles.

301

The phrase in Hebrew is: **אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם מוֹשֵׁב סֶמֶל הַקְּנָאָה הַמְּקַנָּה**, literally “which there a dwelling-place of an image / statue of the jealousy that makes jealous (a hiphil participle).” It is a unique phrase, which has varying translations:

King James, “where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.”

Tanakh, “that was the site of the infuriating image that provokes fury.”

New Revised Standard, “to the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.”

New International, “where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood.”

New Jerusalem, “where stands the idol that provokes jealousy.”

Rahfs, οὐ ἦν ἡ στήλη τοῦ κτωμένου, “where there was the stele [stone pillar / monument] of the one buying.”

Rabbi Fisch states that “The translation of **הַקְּנָאָה**, **haqqin)ah** by ‘the jealousy’ fails to convey its true meaning. [It should be] explained as ‘the image of outraged authority which provoked Him to vindicate His exclusive rights.’ The allusion must be to an idolatrous object set up in the temple, possi-
(continued...)

8:4 וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And look–there (was the) Glorious Radiance of Israel’s God!

כַּמֶּרְאָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּבִקְעָה:

like the vision which I saw in the valley.³⁰²

8:5³⁰³

³⁰¹(...continued)

bly *the graven image of Asherah* placed there by king Manasseh (**2 Kings 21:7**).” (P. 42) That is, an image of the Canaanite Mother Goddess, Asherah, the wife of Baal.

Hilmer states that “Any idol in the temple provoked [YHWH] to jealousy, but this one seems to be a statue of Asherah, the Canaanite Goddess of fertility, which Josiah had removed some 30 years previously.” (P. 1237) See **2 Kings 23:6**,

וַיֵּצֵא אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה מִמִּבֵּית יְהוָה

And he [Josiah] brought out the Asherah / Goddess from YHWH’s house,

מִחוּץ לְיִירוּשָׁלַם אֶל־נַחַל קִדְרוֹן

outside of Jerusalem, to (the) Qidron wadi.

וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֹתָהּ בְּנַחַל קִדְרוֹן

And he burned it in Qidron wadi,

וַיִּדְק לְעֹפָר

and crushed (it) to ashes / dust;

וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ אֶת־עֹפָרָהּ עַל־קֶבֶר בְּנֵי הָעָם:

and he threw its dust / ashes over / upon a grave of the people’s children.

302

Matties comments on **8:5-18** that “In four visual scenes, each moving closer toward the heart of holiness in the inner sanctuary, the Divine guide leads Ezekiel through the evidence for Israel’s violation of covenant relationship: disobeying the first two commandments (**Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 4:1-20; 5:7-12**).” (P. 1165)

See **Ezekiel 3:23** and then **1:1ff**. It is the same *Merkabah* / Divine chariot that appears to him as he looks towards the image of jealousy that makes jealous. In essence, it is the likeness of YHWH, the God of Israel, over against Asherah, the Mother Goddess Wife of Baal, one of the Gods of the Canaanites. The outcome / conclusion of the vision-story-play is that the two Gods cannot coexist in the same temple, and therefore YHWH is leaving the temple in Jerusalem. YHWH is jealous of His exclusive worship. The Asherah-image is that of a false God, that cannot save–and YHWH will not endure His peoples being harmed in that way!

303

Reimer comments on **8:5-6** that it contains “The first of the four vignettes,” and “situates Ezekiel with his back to the altar, facing an image of jealousy, which remains unidentified...”

(continued...)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם שָׂא-נָא עֵינֶיךָ הַרְדָּךְ צָפוֹנָה

Son of Adam / Humanity, lift now your eyes (to the) north road / in the northerly direction.

וְאֲשָׂא עֵינַי הַרְדָּךְ צָפוֹנָה

And I lifted my eyes (to the) north road / in the northerly direction,

וַהֲנֶה מִצְפוֹן לְשַׁעַר

and look-from / at (the) north to / of (the) gate,

הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סַמְלֵי הַקְּנָאָה

the altar of sacrifice of (the) image of the jealousy,

הַזֶּה בַּבְּאֵה:

this very one, in the entrance!

8:6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם

And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity,

הֲרֹאֶה אַתָּה (מִהֶם) [מַה] [הֵם] עֹשִׂים

are you seeing what they³⁰⁴ (are) doing / making--

³⁰³(...continued)

“The vagueness is deliberate: focus remains on the provocation of Divine outrage, not on the specifics of the image itself. It will get worse (*still greater abominations*; compare **verses 13, 15**). These sins are ‘greater’ in the sense of being more hateful to [YHWH]; this can be because of such factors as bringing Him more dishonor, bringing greater harm to others, expressing more and more defiance to [YHWH’s] warnings or indifference to His love, being more boldly done in public, or being committed by those with greater responsibility.” (P. 1511)

304

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” מָזָה; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” מָה הֵם “what they,” a correction of an obvious mistake in the text.

What do you make of this, if you hold to the view of an “infallible,” “inerrant” original text of the **Bible**? The Jewish Masoretes tell us that what was written in **Codex Leningradensis** was a mistake, and that something else should be read. Are you willing to change your view in the light of the evidence?

תועבות גדלות

abominations, great ones,

אשר בית-ישראל עשים פה

which Israel's house (is) doing / making here,³⁰⁵

לרחקה מעל מקדשי

to distance (Me) from (being) upon / in My sanctuary!

ועוד תשוב

And still / again you will return--

תראה תועבות גדלות:

you will see great abominations!³⁰⁶

8:7³⁰⁷ ויבא אתי אל-פתח החצר

And He brought me to the court-yard's door;³⁰⁸

305

What do you think it was that the Israelites were “doing” or “making” at the image of the jealousy? Ezekiel names them “great abominations”? What were they? We suspect that they were making / offering sacrifices to the Goddess, and engaging in sexual intercourse with the sacred prostitutes of the Goddess. What do you think?

306

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verses 5-6** that “Ezekiel, who was standing outside the northern gate leading to the inner court, was commanded to look in the direction of the north where the image was located...By the image Ezekiel is shown men paying homage to it...In practicing these abominations they, as it were, compel God's withdrawal from the temple.” (P. 42)

307

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 7-13** “Scene of the Elders Practicing Secret Idolatry.” This would be a scene of great interest to the Judean elders before whom Ezekiel was revealing this vision in his acted vision. They would probably have known at least some of these elders by name. Surely, they would have thought, our fellow-elders in Judea cannot have gone this far astray! But Ezekiel assures them, in the name of YHWH, that this is exactly what has happened. And that is why destruction of the city is certain!

Reimer states that “This second scenario demonstrates the impossible possibilities of visions [we say ‘vision-stories,’ ‘vignettes’ acted out in ‘street theater’]. To look inside the wall for a literal ‘room’ that could hold 70 men is to miss the force of what Ezekiel is being shown: the interior of self-deceived (**verse 12**) idolaters.” (P. 1511) We don't understand what Reimer means, do you?

308

(continued...)

וַיֵּרְאֵה וְהִנֵּה חֹרֶת־אֶחָד בְּקִיר:

and I saw, and look—one hole in the wall!

8:8 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן־אָדָם חַתֵּר־נָא בְּקִיר

Son of Adam / Humanity, dig now / please in the wall!

וַאֲחַתֵּר בְּקִיר וְהִנֵּה פֶתַח אֶחָד:

And I dug in the wall, and look—one door.³⁰⁹

8:9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֵּא

And He said to me, Enter!

וּרְאֵה אֶת־הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הַרְעוֹת

And see the evil abominations

אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים פֹּה:

which they are doing here!

8:10 וַאֲבֹא וַאֲרֵאֶה וְהִנֵּה

And I entered, and I saw, and look—

³⁰⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “This is the door mentioned in **verse 3**. Hitherto the prophet was standing outside the entrance of the inner court; now he is brought into its interior where he is shown a hole in the wall of the chamber near the entrance. ‘The hole is meant to suggest that entrance into the chamber was obtained secretly by those who practiced their rites there’ (Davidson, Christian Hebraist).” (P. 42

³⁰⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel “was to enlarge the hole in the wall through which his body would be able to pass [why so? Was Ezekiel that much larger than the men who had previously entered through the hole? Or had the hole been partially covered up, and not used recently?]. Either the enlarged hole served him as a door to get through into the secret chamber or more probably he discovered a door which was used by the men who practiced the cult.” (P. 43) Even more probable is the view that this is a “vision-story,” a vignette acted out in “street theater”—in which the impossible becomes possible—in order to get the Message across.

כָּל־תְּבִנֵי־רֶמֶשׂ וּבְהֵמָה שֶׁקָּץ

every likeness of creeping thing(s) and cattle / beast(s), and detestable thing(s),

וְכָל־גִּלּוּלֵי־בַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

and every idol of Israel's household,

מִחֻקָּה עַל־הַקִּיר סָבִיב | סָבִיב:

carved upon the wall-around, around.³¹⁰

310

Rabbi Fisch comments to “compare **Ezekiel 23:14**, where images of human beings drawn by the Chaldeans are said to have been depicted on the wall. Some authorities see here the adoption by Israelites of the worship of animals as practiced in Egypt. ‘At this period, Judah was peculiarly susceptible to the political influence of both Babylon and Egypt, and the cults of both countries may have joined with that of the Canaanite in suggesting new modes of worship’ (Lofthouse, Christian Hebraist).” (P. 43)

Reimer states that “The images engraved in the walls contravene not only the second commandment (**Exodus 20:4**) but also the list enumerated in **Deuteronomy 4:15-18**.” (P. 1511)

Hilmer holds that this “Probably reflects Egyptian influence.” (P. 1238) See: **2 Kings 23:31-35**,

31 בֶּן־עֶשְׂרִים וְשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנָה יְהוֹאָחָז בְּמָלְכוֹ
Jehoahaz (was) a son of twenty and three year(s) when he reigned as king;

וְשָׁלֹשׁ חֳדָשִׁים מָלַךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם
and (for) three months he reigned in Jerusalem.

וְשֵׁם אִמּוֹ חַמוּטָל

And his mother's name (was) Chamutal,

בַּת־יִרְמְיָהוּ מִלִּבְנָה:

daughter of Jeremiah from Libhnah.

32 וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
And he did what was evil in YHWH's eyes,

כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ אֲבֹתָיו:
according to all that his fathers did.

33 וַיֹּאסְרֵהוּ פַרְעֹה נֹכַח
And Pharaoh Nekho bound him (as a prisoner),

בְּרִבְלָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַמָּת
in Riblah, in (the) land of Chamath,
בְּמִלְדָּה [בְּמִלְדָּה] בִּירוּשָׁלַם
from / preventing his reign as king in Jerusalem.

(continued...)

8:11 וּשְׁבַעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל

And seventy men from Israel's household--elders / officials;^{311, 5}

³¹⁰(...continued)

וַיִּתֵּן עֲנֹשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ

And he gave / placed an indemnity / fine over / on the land,

מֵאָה כֶּפֶר־כֶּסֶף וְכֶפֶר זָהָב:

a hundred talent(s) of silver, and a talent of gold.

34 וַיִּמְלֹךְ פַּרְעֹה נֶכְחָה אֶת־אֱלִיאִיקִים בֶּן־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ

And Pharaoh Nekho caused *elyaqiyim* / Eliakim, son of Josiah, to reign as king,

תַּחַת יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ אָבִיו

in the place of Josiah, his father.

וַיִּסַּב אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְהוֹיָאִיקִים

And he turned his name (to) *yehoyaqiyim* / Yehoyaqim.

וַאֲתֵּיהוּאָחָז לָקַח וַיָּבֵא מִצְרַיִם

And he took Jehoahaz and came to Egypt.

וַיָּמָת שָׁם:

And he died there.

35 וְהַכֶּסֶף וְהַזָּהָב נָתַן יְהוֹיָאִיקִים לְפַרְעֹה

And the silver and the gold, Yehoyaqim gave / paid to Pharaoh.

אֲדָהּ הָעֲרִיף אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

However he taxed the land,

לְתַת אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף עַל־פִּי פַרְעֹה

to give / pay the silver upon / according to Pharaoh's mouth / order:

אִישׁ כְּעֶרְכוֹ

(from) each man according to his estimate

נָגַשׁ אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־הַזָּהָב

he exacted the silver and the gold—

אֶת־עַם הָאָרֶץ לְתַת לְפַרְעֹה נֶכְחָה:

to / from (the) people of the land, to give / pay to Pharaoh Nekhoh.

311

Rabbi Fisch states that “These were the seventy leaders or Sanhedrin whose duty it was to instruct and guide the people, but who instead led them astray into idolatry...Although the institution of a Sanhedrin of seventy is later, the Israelite community from early times had a ruling body of that number to represent them (compare **Exodus 24:1** [seventy of the elders of Israel go up with Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, to meet with and see YHWH!]; **Numbers 11:16** [seventy elders / officers of Israel are selected to help Moses in his work]).” (P. 43) See end-note 5 for the Jewish Sanhedrin.

וַיֵּאָזְנֵיהוּ בֶן־שָׁפָן עֹמֵד בְּתוֹכְכֶם עֹמֵד לְפָנֵיהֶם

and Yaazneyahu, son of Shaphan³¹² standing in their midst, standing in front of them;

וְאִישׁ מִקְטָרְתּוֹ בְּיָדוֹ

and each one (with) his incense burner in his hand.

וַעֲתַר עֲנַן־הַקְטָרֶת עֲלֶיהָ:

And (the) odor of a cloud of sweet-smelling smoke going up.³¹³

8:12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

הֲרָאִיתָ בֶן־אָדָם

Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity,

אֲשֶׁר זָקְנֵי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשִׂים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ

that which (the) elders of Israel's house are doing in the darkness?

אִישׁ בַּחֲדָרָי מִשְׁכִּיתוֹ

Each man in chambers of his show-pieces / figures / imaginations?³¹⁴

312

Rabbi Fisch comments on “Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan,” that “Shaphan, if the same as mentioned here, was a ‘scribe’ during the reign of Josiah who read to the king the text of the newly discovered Scroll of the Law (2 Kings 22:8-10; see also Jeremiah 26:24). There is reference to his sons Gemariah and Ahikam in Jeremiah 36:10, 39:14 who were apparently pious Israelites. If Jaazaniah was their brother, he broke from the tradition of his family.” (P. 43)

Hilmer bluntly states, “Not the same person as in 11:1. Ironically the name means ‘[YHWH] hears,’ and the irony is sharpened by the quotation in verse 12.” (P. 1238)

313

It is a depiction of Israel's temple that has abandoned the worship commanded in the **Torah**, to take up the idolatrous worship of the surrounding Near-Eastern religions, with Israelites taking the role of the Canaanite religious leaders in worship. These depictions in **Ezekiel** of Canaanite worship are unique for the **Hebrew Bible**, just as are the depictions of “garden worship” in the **Scroll of Isaiah** (65:3 and 66:17).

314

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐν τῷ κολιτῶνι τῷ κρυπτῷ, “in the hidden bed-room.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that the plural “chambers” suggests “that there was more than one secret chamber where these rites were carried out, or that each worshiper was in a separate cell.” (P. 44) When Ezekiel unveils the new temple in the closing **chapters, 40-48**, he will depict a temple with

(continued...)

כִּי אֹמְרִים אֵין יְהוָה רֹאֵה אֶתֶּנּוּ

Because (they are) saying, YHWH is not seeing us!

עָזַב יְהוָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

YHWH has forsaken / left the land!³¹⁵

8:13 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

עוֹד תָּשׁוּב

Again / still you will return;

³¹⁴(...continued)

numerous such small cells and additional rooms in the temple buildings—leaving us wondering what exactly they were intended for.

Matties notes that “The rare expression **מַשְׂכִּית**, **maskiyth**, [‘show-piece,’ ‘figure,’ ‘imagination’], ‘images,’ are forbidden Canaanite images (see also **Leviticus 26:1** [the figured-stone is bowed down to]; **Numbers 33:52** [figured-stones are to be included in the religious objects to be destroyed as the Israelites invade and conquer the Canaanites]).” (P. 1166) Perhaps the best definition is “(religious) figured stone.”

315

Rabbi Fisch comments that these men “hide their abominable practices from the public eye, but have no scruples about violating the law of God, believing that He is not interested in the affairs of men (compare **Psalms 10:11; 73:11**). Moreover, the evils which had befallen the country proved that He had abandoned His people and the land.” (P. 44)

Psalm 10:11,

אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ שָׁכַח אֵל

He said in his heart, Supreme God has forgotten!

הִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו בְּלִרְאָה לִנְצַח:

He has hidden His face, He has never seen!

Psalm 73:11,

וַאֲמָרוּ אֵיכָה יָדַע־אֵל

And they will say, How did El / Supreme God know?

וַיֵּשׁ יְדַעַה בְּעֵלְיוֹן:

And (how is there) knowledge in (the) Highest One?

Let us never be like these Israelite official religious leaders, thinking that YHWH / God does not see and know what we are doing! Who do we think we are fooling, Reverends, when we do things behind closed doors, in secret? Didn't your grandmother teach you, “Be sure, your sins will find you out”? Mine did. And they did.

תִּרְאֶה תּוֹעֲבוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת

you will see great abominations

אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה עֹשִׂים:

which they are doing!³¹⁶

8:14 וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי אֶל־פֶּתַח שַׁעַר בֵּית־יְהוָה

And He brought me to (the) opening of (the) gate of YHWH's house

אֲשֶׁר אֶל־הַצָּפוֹנָה

which (was) to the north.

וְהָיָה שָׁם הַנָּשִׂים יֹשְׁבוֹת מִבְּכוֹת

And look—there (were) the women dwelling / sitting, weeping

אֶת־הַתְּמוּזִי:

(for) the Tammuz!³¹⁷, ⁶

8:15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

הֲרֵאִית בֶּן־אָדָם

Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity?

316

Compare **8:6** for very similar language.

317

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verse 14** “The Tammuz Cult.” He comments that Ezekiel “was now brought into the inner court in front of the northern gate of the temple. *There sat the women weeping for Tammuz.* This is the only place in the [Hebrew] Bible where the wor-ship of Tammuz is mentioned. ‘It came from Babylonia, and can be traced there as far back as 3,000 B.C.E., so that it is one of the oldest forms of religious worship in the world, and has not altogether disappeared even now...

“Tammuz (Akkadian Duzue, from the Sumerian Dumuzi meaning ‘faithful son’), the youthful husband or son or lover of Ishtar [Ishtar, (Akkadian), Sumerian Inanna, in Mesopotamian religion, Goddess of war and sexual love. Ishtar is the Akkadian counterpart of the West Semitic Goddess Astarte] was looked upon as the God of vegetation and beneficent floods...Every year, at the time of greatest heat, when plants wither and rivers ran dry, he was believed to vanish into the underworld, and in the following spring to return again... The time of his departure was celebrated with public dirges [funeral laments].” (P. 44) See end-note 6.

עֹד תָּשׁוּב

Again / still you will return;

תִּרְאֶה תוֹעֲבוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת מֵאֵלֶּה:

you will see abominations greater than these!

8:16³¹⁸

318

Matties comments on **8:16-18** that “Finally, Ezekiel arrives at the inner court. Facing away from the altar, the men signify their rejection of [YHWH] and their embrace of the sun God (on solar and astral cults, see **2 Kings 21:5; 23:11-12; Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:2-5**).” (P. 1166)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 16-18** “Sun-Worship in the Inner Court.” He comments that “The prophet had already been in the inner court...but he was now brought from the northern gate to the eastern side of the temple between the porch and the sacrificial altar which stood in the inner court opposite the porch (Kimchi)...

“The entrance to the temple was on the east side and the holy of holies on the west in order to eliminate the popular sun-worship which was practiced toward the east. These idolaters turned deliberately in that direction to demonstrate their denial of God and their belief in the Sun-God.” (P. 45)

Reimer calls this “The final vignette [vision-story], also the briefest, states simply and starkly the climax of abominations. The twenty-five men are not further identified, but the location between the porch and the altar would normally be reserved for priests. At this sacred place they venerate the sun. Solar worship is prohibited in **Deuteronomy 4:19** (see also **2 King 23:11**). The outrage of this action contrasts with what priests ought to do here.” (P. 1511) Compare **Psalms 26:6-7**,

6 אֶרְחֵץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כַּפַּי

I will wash my hands in innocence,

וְאֶסְבְּבָה אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַךְ יְהוָה:

and I will go around Your altar, O YHWH,

7 לְשִׁמְעַת בְּקוֹל תוֹדָה

to cause to be heard with a voice of thanksgiving,

וְלִסְפֹּר כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

and to declare all Your wonders!

Joel 2:17,

בֵּין הָאוֹלָם וְלִמְזִבְחַ

Between the porch and the altar

יִבְכוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מִשְׁרְתֵי יְהוָה

let the priests--ministers (of) YHWH weep;

וַיֹּאמְרוּ חוֹסֵה יְהוָה עַל-עַמּוֹךְ

and let them say, Look upon Your people with compassion YHWH,

(continued...)

וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי אֶל-חֲצֵר בַּיִת-יְהוָה הַפְּנִימִית׃

And He brought me to a court of YHWH's house, the inner one.

וַהֲנֵה-פֶתַח הַיְכָל יְהוָה

And look—a door of YHWH's temple,

בֵּין הָאוֹלָם וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

between the porch and the altar of sacrifice--

כְּעֶשְׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ

about twenty and five man / men,

אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶל-הַיְכָל יְהוָה׃

their backs to / towards YHWH's temple,³¹⁹

וּפְנֵיהֶם קְדָמָה

and their faces to (the) east.

וַהֲמָה מִשְׁתַּחֲוִייתָם קְדָמָה

And they were worshipping³²⁰ towards (the) east,

³¹⁸(...continued)

וְאַל-תִּתֶּן נַחֲלַתְךָ לְחֶרְפָּה

and do not give Your inheritance / possession up to scorn

לְמִשְׁלַבֵּם גּוֹיִם

for a taunt-song among them, the nations!

לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ בְּעַמִּים

Why should they say among the peoples,

אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

Where is their God?

³¹⁹

Hilmer comments that “Almost all ancient temples were oriented toward the east. Worshiping the sun as it rose required one to turn his back to the temple.” (P. 1238) But whether one would have to turn his back to the temple would depend on his location.

³²⁰

The verb מִשְׁתַּחֲוִייתָם, **mishtachawiythem**, is a rather unusual form, called by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** a masculine plural hishtaphel participle, and they advocate dropping out the final ת, resulting in the much more common form מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּם, **mishtachawiyim**, “worshipping.”

(continued...)

לְשֶׁמֶשׁ:

to the Sun!

8:17³²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

הֲרֵאִיתָ בֶן-אָדָם

Did you see, Son of Adam / Humanity?

הֲנִקְלָ לְבַיִת יְהוּדָה

Is it a trifling thing for (the) house of Judah

מֵעֲשׂוֹת אֲתֵּהְתּוֹעֲבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ-פֹה

from making / doing the abominations which they made / did here,

כִּי-מָלְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חָמָס

that they have filled the land (with) violence / wrong?

וַיָּשְׁבוּ לְהַכְעִיסֵנִי

And they returned to provoke Me--

וְהֵנַם שִׁלְחִים אֶת-הַזְּמוּרָה אֶל-אַפָּם:

And look at them—sending forth the branch / twig to their nose!³²²

³²⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The unusual Hebrew form **מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּתָם** is traditionally explained as a compound of two verbs, **mashchithim** (they destroy) and **mishtachawim** (they worship), signifying the dual nature of their offence: the degradation of the temple and the worshipping of the Sun-God (**Talmud Yerushalmi** and **Targum**).” (P. 45)

³²¹

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 17** that “All the acts of idolatry committed by the house of Judah in the precincts of the temple are bad enough, but what follows surpasses them in outrageous blasphemy.” (P. 46)

³²²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The phrase [‘they put the branch to their nose’] is very obscure. Some interpret literally. ‘The religious custom alluded to in Ezekiel undoubtedly refers to the religion of the Magi. The prophet complains that some of the Jews worship the sun, holding towards their face certain twigs. Exactly the same custom of holding a bunch of twigs in the hands is reported by **Stabo 15.3, 14**), as being observed by the Magi when engaged in prayer. It is the so-called Barsom, still used by the Parsi priests when engaged in worship (M Haug, **Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis**, p. 4)...

(continued...)

8:18 וְגַם־אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה בְחַמָּה

And also I, I Will Act with Rage!

לֹא־תַחֲוֶה עֵינַי וְלֹא אֶחַמֵּל

My Eye Will Not Have Pity, and I Will Not Spare!

וְקָרְאוּ בְּאָזְנֵי קוֹל גָּדוֹל

And they will cry out in My ears, (with) a great voice,

וְלֹא אֶשְׁמַע אוֹתָם:

and I Will Not Hear / Listen to them!

Verses 9:1-11, Slaughter of the Unfaithful in the City of Jerusalem:³²³

³²²(...continued)

“The objection to this explanation is that it fails to account for the exceptional horror in which it is here mentioned. The traditional Jewish interpretation sees in the words an obscene rite, and we have here one of the eighteen ‘emendations of the scribes’ (*tikkune hasopherim*) in Scripture made from reverence of God, viz. *appam* (their nose) for *appi* (My nose). Rashi and others explain *zemorah* (branch) as ‘the breaking of wind’ (*ventris crep-itus*, ‘stomach crash’). Whatever the act was, Lofthouse thinks ‘that the Jewish commentators are right in understanding the words to conceal some shocking or obscene rite...If this is so, we can see why this ritual is regarded as worst of all.’” (P. 46)

Hilmer calls the “putting the branch to their nose” a “ceremonial gesture in nature worship, not documented elsewhere in the **Bible**.” (P. 1238)

Matties states that “The enigmatic act of *holding a branch to their nose* may be a vulgar or insulting gesture that epitomizes rejection of [YHWH].” (P. 1166)

³²³

Reimer entitles **9:1-11** “Slaughter in Jerusalem.” He comments that “A team of seven angels carries out the execution of the unfaithful in Jerusalem at [YHWH’s] command. Only one of them is assigned the job of protecting the faithful. The prophet’s anguished intervention does not dissuade [YHWH] from judgment. Compare the Passover (**Exodus 12**): a mark protects the faithful from [YHWH’s] agents of death.” (P. 1511)

Only those receiving the Divine Mark would be exempted from the coming destruction on Jerusalem and its temple. The land, full of bloodshed and injustice would bring down upon its own head the deeds that it had done. Compare the **New Testament Scroll of Revelation 7:2-4** (etc.).

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The preceding chapter ended with a warning of condign [well deserved] punishment for the people’s outrageous sins. Now Ezekiel is shown in a vision the execution of the stern warning. Deeply moved by the scene of destruction, he intercedes on behalf of the remnant of Israel. But his intercession is in vain; the sentence stands unrepealed.” (P. 47)

(continued...)

“9:1 And He cried out in my ears, (with) a great voice, saying: (The) visitations (for punishment) of the city have drawn near; and each one (with) a vessel of (the city’s) destruction in its hand!
 9:2 And look—six men coming from (the) road (to the) upper gate, which turned back / looked back northward; and each one (had) a vessel of its (the city’s) shattering in his hand. And one man in their midst dressed (in) linen; and an ink-pot of the writer in his loins / at his waist. And they came and they stood next to the bronze altar of sacrifice. 9:3 And (the) Glorious Radiance of Israel’s God was brought up from upon / above the cherub which was on / over it to (the) threshold of the house. And He cried out to the man, the one dressed (in) the linen, who (had) an ink-horn of the writer / secretary in his loins / at his waist. 9:4 And YHWH said to him, Pass over in (the) midst of the city, in (the) midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark / (the letter) *taw* [ת] on (the) foreheads of the men, the ones sighing and groaning over all the abominations, the ones done in its (the city’s) midst! 9:5 And to these He said in my ears / hearing: Pass through in the city after him, and strike! Your eyes shall not pity and you shall not spare! 9:6 Old man, chosen young man and virgin, and child and women--you shall kill to destruction! And to every man who has the mark / *taw* [ת] on him, you shall not draw near! And from My sanctuary, you shall begin! And they began with the men, the old ones, who were in front of the house. 9:7 And he said to them, Defile the house! And fill the courts (with) pierced bodies! Go forth! And they went forth, and they struck in the city. 9:8 And it happened as they were striking, and I was left, I--and I fell upon my face and I cried out. And I said, Ahah, my Lord YHWH! Are You destroying the entire remnant of Israel in / by Your Pouring Out Your Wrath upon Jerusalem? 9:9 And He said to me, (The) house of Israel’s and Judah’s iniquity / guilt (is) great--with exceeding muchness, exceeding muchness! and the land was filled (with) bloods / bloody murders! And the city was full of perverseness / perverted justice! Because they said, YHWH has left / forsaken the city, and YHWH is not seeing. 9:10 And also I, My eye will not show pity, and I will not spare! I have given / placed their way (of life) on their head! 9:11 And look--the man dressed (in) the linen, who (had) the ink-horn in his loins / waist, was returning a word, saying, I have done according to all that You commanded me!

9:1 וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי קוֹל גָּדוֹל לְאָמֹר

And He cried out in my ears, (with) a great voice, saying:³²⁴

³²³(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-3** “The Destroyers Are Summoned to Execute God’s Judgment.”

³²⁴

Hilmer’s translation has “loud voice,” and he comments that it is “the thunderous voice of [YHWH].” See **Exodus 19:19**,

וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֹזֵק מְאֹד

And the sound of the ram’s horn (was) advancing and became exceedingly loud;

מֹשֶׁה יִדְבֹר וְהָאֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל:

Moses would speak, and the God Would Answer him with a Voice.

(Remember how afterwards, the people were afraid to hear [YHWH’s] voice, and asked [YHWH] to only speak to them through Moses.)

Psalm 29:3-9,

3 קוֹל יְהוָה עַל-הַמַּיִם

YHWH’s voice (is) over the waters!

(continued...)

³²⁴(...continued)

אֱלֹהֵי-הַכְּבוֹד הִרְעִים

Supreme God of the glory thundered,
יְהוָה עַל-מַיִם רַבִּים:
YHWH over many waters!

4 קוֹל-יְהוָה בַּכֹּחַ

YHWH's voice with the strength--
קוֹל יְהוָה בְּהַדְרָה:
YHWH's voice with the splendor!

5 קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים

YHWH's voice is breaking cedar-trees!
וַיִּשְׁבֶּר יְהוָה אֶת-אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן:
And YHWH will break cedars of the Lebanon!

6 וַיִּרְקְדוּם כְּמוֹ-עֵגֶל

And He caused them to skip about like a calf,
לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיֹן כְּמוֹ בֶן-רְאֵמִים:
Lebanon and Siryon like a calf of wild oxen!

7 קוֹל-יְהוָה חֹצֵב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ:

YHWH's voice (is) hewing / digging out flames of fire!

8 קוֹל יְהוָה יַחִיל מִדְּבָר

YHWH's voice will cause a desert / wilderness to be in anguish / labor-pains;
יַחִיל יְהוָה מִדְּבָר קָדֵשׁ:
YHWH will cause to be in anguish / labor-pains Qadesh desert / wilderness!

9 קוֹל יְהוָה יַחֲלִיל אֵילוֹת

YHWH's voice causes female deer to writhe in labor-pains;
וַיַּחֲשֵׁף יַעֲרוֹת
and He strips bare forests;
וּבְהִיכְלוֹ כָּלֹּא אָמַר כְּבוֹד:
and in His temple, every one is saying, Glory!

While a teen-ager, I worked on a ranch in southwestern New Mexico, riding horse-back with visitors in the Gila mountains--with English hunting-dogs supposedly chasing mountain lions and bears. I myself never saw a lion or a bear--a few bobcats, that's all! Often in the afternoons, there would come violent thunder-showers, which seemed to cause the mountains and forests to shake--sometimes causing forest-fires. We suspect that someone who has been through just such a violent thunder-storm has written this psalm.

קָרְבוּ פְקֻדוֹת הָעִיר

(The) Visitations (for Punishment)³²⁵ of the city have drawn near;

וְאִישׁ כְּלִי מִשְׁחַתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ:

and each one (with) a vessel of (the city's) destruction in its hand!

9:2 וַהֲנִיחַ שֵׁשָׁה אַנְשִׁים בָּאִים מִדֶּרֶךְ-שַׁעַר הָעֲלִיּוֹן

And look—six men³²⁶ coming from (the) road (to the) upper gate,

אֲשֶׁר מִפְּנֵה צָפוֹנָה

which turned back / looked back northward,³²⁷

325

Translations of the phrase פְקֻדוֹת הָעִיר, **pequddoth ha(iyr)**, vary, from “them that have charge over the city,” to “you men in charge of the city” (but the noun is feminine plural), to “you executioners of the city,” to “those who are appointed to execute judgment on the city,” to “The scourges of the city,” to ἡ ἐκδίκησις τῆς πόλεως, “the vengeance / vindication of the city.”

We think the feminine noun פְקֻדָה, **pequddah** is used for “visitation,” especially YHWH’s Visitation to Bless or to Punish, depending upon the condition of those He visits. Here, the Divine Visitations (feminine plural) have drawn near in the form of the six men involved in administering the Punishments upon the sinful city.

326

Rabbi Fisch comments that the six men “appeared as human beings to the eyes of the prophet, but the Rabbis declared them to have been powers of destruction in the form of angels charged with the carrying out of God’s sentence (**Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 55a**). The seventh, clothed in linen garments with writing implements at his side, had the duty to set a mark upon the righteous who were to be spared. In the Talmud (**Yoma 77a**) he is identified with the angel Gabriel.” (P. 47)

Hilmer evidently agrees with the Rabbinic interpretation. He states that “These six guardian angels of the city, plus the seventh clothed in linen (compare the seven angels of judgment in **Revelation 8:2, 6**), came from the place where the idol that provoked to jealousy stood (see **8:3**) with deadly weapons—probably war clubs or battle-axes.” (P. 1238)

327

Translations of the phrase אֲשֶׁר מִפְּנֵה צָפוֹנָה vary, from “which lieth toward the north,” to “that / which faces north,” to “from the upper north gate,” to τῆς βλεπούσης πρὸς βορρᾶν, “the one looking / seeing towards north.” However this may be, it is from the north, the direction from which Babylon will approach, that the destructive visitation for punishment is seen coming.

מִפְּנֵה, is a hophal participle which means, we think, “turned back,” or perhaps, “looked back (north).”

וְאִישׁ כָּלִי מִפָּצוֹ בְיָדוֹ

and each one (had) a vessel of its (the city's) shattering in his hand.

וְאִישׁ־אַחַד בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְבָשׁ בְּדָיִם

And one man in their midst dressed (in) linen;³²⁸

וְקֶסֶת הַסֹּפֵר בְּמִתְנָיו

and an ink-pot of the writer in his loins / at his waist.

וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדּוּ אֶצְלֵ מִזְבַּח הַנְּחֹשֶׁת:

And they came and they stood next to the bronze altar of sacrifice.³²⁹

9:3 וַכְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִעְלָה

And (the) Glorious Radiance of Israel's God was brought up³³⁰

מֵעַל הַכְּרוּב אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עָלָיו

from upon / above the cherub³³¹ which was on / over it

אֶל מַפְתַּן הַבַּיִת

to (the) threshold of the house.

328

Rabbi Fisch comments that the linen robe is “indicative of high rank; similarly in Daniel’s visions of an angelic being (**Daniel 10:5; 12:6**).” (P. 47)

329

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The seven men took up their position beside the brazen altar in the place where sun-worship was practiced (**8:16**).” (P. 47)

330

Hilmer’s translation has “the glory...went up,” and he comments that “[YHWH] began to vacate the temple, His glory moving to the door.” (P. 1238)

331

Where the Hebrew text has the singular הַכְּרוּב, “the cherubh,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the plural, τῶν χερουβιμ, “the cherubim / cherubs.” Jewish exegesis seeks to piece together the movement of the Divine chariot in ten stages as it “went up.”

Rabbi Fisch states that “The seat of the Divine Presence was in the holy of holies above the ark-cover between the two cherubim (compare **Numbers 7:89**). The use of the singular, cherub, is explained by the Talmudic tradition (**Rosh Hashanah 31a**) that the departure of the Divine Presence before the invasion of Jerusalem occurred in ten stages, the first two being from the ark-cover to one cherub and from it to the other cherub.” (Pp. 47-48) Jews are not the only ones who have attempted to read things into the text that aren’t there!

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-הָאִישׁ הַלְבָּשׁ הַבְּדִים

And He cried out to the man, the one dressed (in) the linen,

אֲשֶׁר קָסַת הַסֶּפֶר בְּמִתְנָיו:

who (had) an ink-horn of the writer / secretary in his loins / at his waist.

9:4³³² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה (אֵלֹו) [אֵלָיו]

And YHWH said to him,

עָבֵר בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם

Pass over in (the) midst of the city, in (the) midst of Jerusalem,

וְהִתְיִיתָ לָּו עַל-מִצְחֹת הָאָנָשִׁים

and set a mark / (the letter) *taw* ת on (the) foreheads of the men,³³³

הַנִּנְאָחִים וְהַנִּשְׁעָבֹת עַל כָּל-הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת

the ones sighing and groaning over all the abominations,³³⁴

הַנֶּעֱשׂוֹת בְּתוֹכָהּ:

the ones done in its (the city's) midst!

332

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 4-7** “The Righteous To Be Spared and the Rest Slain.”

333

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The mark on the foreheads of the righteous was intended to distinguish them from the condemned and give them Divine protection. Similarly, on the night when the Egyptian first-born were slain the houses of the Israelites were marked with blood for protection (**Exodus 12:22-23**). Cain was also provided with a sign of Divine protection (**Genesis 4:15**), probably on his forehead. The word for mark (*taw*) is the Hebrew letter ת, the last in the Hebrew alphabet.” (P. 48)

Reimer states that “Here, the mark is the Hebrew *taw*, ת and in the script of Ezekiel’s day would be an X. Ancient Christian interpretation saw in this symbol an anticipation of the cross.” (P. 1512)

Of course, those who follow Paul’s teaching in **Romans 3**, based on quotations from the **Hebrew Bible / Greek Bible (Rahlfs)** will insist that this distinguishing is impossible, since “there is none righteous, no not one.” See **Ezekiel 3:21** with its footnote.

334

Hilmer identifies those who grieve and lament as “the remnant.” See **Exodus 12:23** and **1 Kings 19:18** for similar groups of Israelites forming a “remnant.”

9:5 וְלֵאמֹר בְּאָזְנֵי

And to these He said in my ears / hearing:

עֲבְרוּ בְּעִיר אַחֲרָיו וְהַכּוּ

Pass through in the city after him, and strike!

(עַל-) [אַל-] תַּחַס (עֵינֵיכֶם) [עֵינֵיכֶם] וְאַל-תַּחְמְלוּ:

Your eyes shall not pity and you shall not spare!³³⁵

9:6 זָקֵן בְּחֹר וּבְתוּלָה וְטַף וְנָשִׁים

Old man, chosen young man and virgin, and child and women--

תַּהַרְגוּ לְמִשְׁחִית

you shall kill to destruction!³³⁶

וְעַל-כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו הַתָּו הָאֵל-תִּגְּשׁוּ

and to every man who has the mark / *taw* on him, you shall not draw near!

וּמִמְקַדְשֵׁי תַחֲלוּ

And from My sanctuary, you shall begin!³³⁷

335

Rabbi Fisch comments that the ones spoken to in this verse were “the six executioners mentioned in **verse 2**. These were ordered to follow the seventh man and slay all who bore no protective mark.” (P. 48)

336

Matties comments that “Strangely, the most vulnerable (including little children) are destined to destruction, even though those with the mark are to be spared. The incongruity here suggests that the text is more than a vision of the way things should be, it depicts what conquering armies have always done.” (P. 1166)

337

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Those who practiced idolatry in the house of God were to be the first to experience God’s judgment.” (P. 49)

In the **Greek New Testament**, compare **1 Peter 4:17**,

ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ·

Because (it is) the time for beginning the Judgment from the house of the God--

εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ’ ἡμῶν,

but, if first from us,

τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ;

what (will be) the end of the ones being disobedient to the Good News of the God?

וַיַּחֲלוּ בְּאֲנָשִׁים הַזְקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר לְפָנַי הַבַּיִת:

And they began with the men, the old ones, who were in front of the house.

9:7 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם טַמְאוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת

And he said to them, Defile the house!

וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הַחֲצֵרוֹת חֲלָלִים

And fill the courts (with) pierced bodies!³³⁸

צֵאוּ

Go forth!

וַיֵּצְאוּ וַהֲכוּ בְּעִיר:

And they went forth, and they struck in the city.³³⁹

9:8³⁴⁰ וַיְהִי כְּהִכּוֹתָם

And it happened as they were striking,

וְנִשְׁאַר אֲנִי

and I was left, I--³⁴¹

וָאֶפְלָה עַל־פָּנַי וָאֲזַעַק

and I fell upon my face and I cried out.³⁴²

338

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The presence of a corpse communicates defilement; but that consideration must not weigh with the executioners because the sanctuary had already been desecrated by idolatry.” (P. 49)

339

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After slaying those in the sanctuary, they were to turn to the population in the city; and they did so.” (P. 49)

340

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 8-10** “Ezekiel’s Consternation and Intercession.”

341

This line is omitted by the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**). Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet was the only one left alive in the temple after the departure of the executioners since, with his exception, none of those present was worthy of being marked with the protective sign. Or the phrase may mean, ‘I was left alone with the dead.’ The form of the very is irregular and some Manuscripts read *wenishar*, [‘and he was left’] the niphal participle.” (P. 49)

342

(continued...)

וַאֲמַר אָהָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

And I said, Ahah, my Lord YHWH!³⁴³

הַמְשַׁחֵת אֶתְּךָ אֶת כָּל־שְׂאֲרֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Are You destroying the entire remnant of Israel

בְּשִׁפְכְּךָ אֶת־חֲמַתְךָ עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם:

in / by Your pouring out Your wrath upon Jerusalem?³⁴⁴

9:9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

עוֹן בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה גָּדוֹל

(The) house of Israel's and Judah's iniquity / guilt³⁴⁵ (is) great--

בְּמְאֹד מְאֹד

with exceeding muchness!

וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ דַּמִּים

and the land was filled (with) bloods / bloody murders!

³⁴²(...continued)

Matties comments that “In the face of this carnage, Ezekiel falls on his face and intercedes for Jerusalem (see also **Ezekiel 1:28b; 3:23**), the only remaining semblance of hope for the survival of [YHWH's] people.” (P. 1167)

³⁴³

Hilmer notes that this is “One of the few times Ezekiel questioned [YHWH].” Compare **Ezekiel 4:14** and **11:13**.

Ezekiel is probably the most emphatic of the “prophets of doom” (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah)! But here, as he sees the fulfillment of his prophecies of doom beginning, he cries out in astonishment. And we ask, Why? Didn't he expect his prophecies to actually happen? Or did he hope that his preaching would cause the people to repent, and thereby avoid the necessity for their fulfillment? One thing is for sure—Ezekiel dearly loved his nation, and he didn't want it to be destroyed! What an insight this is, into the heart and motivation of the Prophets of Doom!

³⁴⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.E. and the Judean captivity in 597, the population in the holy city was considered to be the residue of Israel.” (P. 49)

³⁴⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The remnant of Israel after the fall of the Northern Kingdom had joined Judah, and it is to them the prophet now refers.” (Pp. 49-50)

וְהָעִיר מְלֵאָה מִטֵּה

And the city was full of perverseness / perverted justice!³⁴⁶

כִּי אָמְרוּ עֹבֵי יְהוָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

Because they said, YHWH has left / forsaken the city,

וְאֵין יְהוָה רֹאֶה:

and YHWH is not seeing.³⁴⁷

9:10 וְגַם־אֲנִי לֹא־תַחֹס עֵינִי

And also I, My Eye Will Not Show Pity,

וְלֹא אֶחְמַל

and I Will Not Spare!

דְּרַכֵּם בְּרַאשֵׁם נָתַתִּי:

I have given / placed their way (of life) on their head!³⁴⁸

9:11³⁴⁹ וְהִנֵּה הָאִישׁ לְבָשׁ הַבְּדִים

And look—the man dressed (in) the linen,

אֲשֶׁר הִקְסֵת בְּמַתְנָיו

who (had) the ink-horn in his loins / waist,

מֹשִׁיב דְּבַר לֵאמֹר

346

This is the only occurrence of the noun **מִטֵּה**, **mutteh** in the **Hebrew Bible**, and so it is very difficult to determine its meaning. It apparently comes from the root **נָטָה**, a verb that means “stretch out, spread out, extend, incline, bend,” and thus may mean something stretched or bent, “out of shape.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἀδικία, “injustice.” Rabbi Fisch comments that “Jerusalem was once full of justice (**Isaiah 1:21**) but has now lost that distinction.” (P. 50)

347

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Instead of attributing their calamities to punishment for their sins, they maintained that God had forsaken them and was no longer interested in their fate. This false belief led to a breaking down of moral restraint.” (P. 50) Compare **Ezekiel 8:12**.

348

Rabbi Fisch comments, “Measure for measure. As they have no pity on the needy and weak, so will I have no pity on them (compare **Ezekiel 8:18**).” (P. 50)

349

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verse 11** “God’s Command Obeyed.”

was returning a word, saying,

עָשִׂיתִי (כְּאֲשֶׁר) [כְּכֹל] [אֲשֶׁר] צִוִּיתָנִי:

I have done according to all³⁵⁰ that You Commanded me!

Verses 10:1-22 YHWH's Glorious Radiance Leaves Jerusalem in Flames³⁵¹

“10:1 And I saw, and look--to / above the expanse which (was) over (the) head of the cherubim, (something) like a sapphire, like (the) vision / appearance of a likeness of a throne, was seen above them. 10:2 And He spoke to the man dressed (in) the linen, and he said, Come to (the) intervals of the wheel, to beneath the cherub. And fill your palms (with) coals of fire from (the) intervals to the cherubim. And scatter (them) over the city! And it came into / he came into before my eyes. 10:3 And the cherubim (were) standing on (the) right to / of the house in / while the man entered; and the cloud filled the inner court. 10:4 And YHWH's Glorious Radiance Arose from upon / above the cherub, over / above (the) threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of (the) brightness of YHWH's Glorious Radiance. 10:5 And (the) voice / sound of (the) wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like a Voice / Sound of Supreme God Shadday when He Speaks. 10:6 And it happened when He Commanded the man dressed (in) the linen, Saying Take fire from (the) intervals belonging to the wheel, from (the) intervals belonging to the cherubim; and he came and he stood next to the wheel (synonym). 10:7 And the cherub sent forth his hand from (the) intervals belonging to the cherubim, to the fire which was (in the) intervals of the cherubim. And he lifted up (fire), and he gave (it) to / into (the) palms of one dressed in the linen; and he took (it) and he went forth.

350

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” כְּאֲשֶׁר; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר, “according to everything that.”

351

Rabbi Fisch comments on **chapter 10** that “The main feature of this chapter is the Divine command to the man clothed in linen to take coals of fire from between the cherubim and set the city of Jerusalem ablaze. All else is a repeated description of the *Merkabah* [Divine Chariot] which now departs from the temple.” (P. 50)

The vision of YHWH's Glorious Radiance is very similar to that which Ezekiel has seen in **chapter one**. Only here, the vision is that of YHWH's Glorious Radiance departing from Jerusalem and its temple. It is obvious from a comparison of **chapter one** with **chapter eleven** that the "cherub" is the same as the "ox."

Darr states that “**Chapter 10** consists of two sections (**verses 1-8** and **verses 9-22**), both beginning with the phrase ‘Then I looked (וַאֲרָאָה וַהֲנֵה).’ Section one notes the arrival of God’s cherubim throne, the Glory’s departure from the Holy of Holies, and the commissioning and equipping of the linen-clothed man who, having marked some Jerusalemites for survival, now functions as the agent of the city’s destruction by fire. Section two presents interwoven descriptions of the cherubim and their wheels and signals the movement of Yahweh’s Glory from the temple’s threshold to its east gate.” (P. 86)

10:8 And It was seen, belonging to the cherubim--a likeness of a human hand, beneath their wings. 10:9 And I saw, and look--four wheels next to the cherubim: one wheel next to the one cherub, and one wheel next to the one cherub. And (the) vision / appearance of the wheels was like an eye / spring of a Tarshish stone. 10:10 And their vision / appearance--one likeness to (the) four of them--just like the wheel would be in (the) midst of the wheel! 10:11 As they went, to / upon their four sides they would go; they would not turn as they went. Because the place towards which the head would turn, following it they would go. They would not turn as they went. 10:12 And all their flesh, and their backs / rims (?), and their hands / spokes (?), and their wings, and the wheels--(were) full of eyes--all around to (the) four of them, their wheels. 10:13 To the wheels--to them it was called The Galgal / the Wheel / Whirl / Whirlwind, in my ears. 10:14 And (there were) four faces to (each) one: faces of the first, faces of the cherub; and faces of the second, faces of a human; and the third, faces of a lion; and the fourth, faces of a griffon-vulture. 10:15 And the cherubim lifted themselves up. It (was) the Living creature which I saw by (the) River Kebhar! 10:16 And as the cherubim were going, the wheels went next to them. And as the cherubim lifted up their wings, to rise up from upon the land / earth, the wheels did not turn, also those next to them. 10:17 When they stood / stopped, they stood / stopped; and when they arose, they arose with them. Because (the) spirit / Spirit of the Living Creature (was) in them. 10:18 and YHWH's Glorious Radiance went forth from upon / above the house's threshold; and it stood / stopped upon / above the cherubim. 10:19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings; and they arose / went up from the land / earth to / in my eyes. When the wheels went forth beside them; and it stood / stopped (at the) door / opening of (the) gate of YHWH's house / temple, the east one. And (the) God of Israel's Glorious Radiance (was) over / above them, from above. 10:20 It (was) the Living Creature which I saw beneath Israel's God, by (the) River Kebhar. And I knew that they (were) cherubim. 10:21 Four, four faces to (each) one; and four wings to (each) one. And a likeness of human hands beneath their wings. 10:22 And (the) likeness of their faces--they (were) the faces which I saw upon / beside (the) River Kebhar--their vision / appearance and they--each one to the side of its faces they went.

10:1³⁵²

352

Reimer entitles **10:1-22** "The Fire and the Glory." He comments that "Two actions are interwoven here: the second (visionary) phase of city destruction (**verses 1-8**), and the further withdrawal of the glory of [YHWH] from the temple (**verses 9-22**).

He comments on **verses 1-8** that "The man clothed in linen (**verse 2**), a 'preserving angel' in **chapter 9**, here becomes an incendiary agent of destruction. The narrative remains elusive, as attention oscillates between the angel (**10:2, 6-7**) and the cherubim, who are both the 'throne' for [YHWH's] Presence and the source of the burning coals that will ignite the city (**verses 1, 3-5, 8**). On a natural level, sword and fire would coincide; in the vision, they are distinct phases." (P. 1512)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-8** "The Vision of Jerusalem Condemned to Destruction by Fire." He notes that **verse 1** "is in the main a repetition of **Ezekiel 1:26**...The cherubim are identical with the Living Creatures in **chapter 1**." (P. 50)

Matties comments that "The Babylonian invasion is to history what the Divine departure is to theology. By emphasizing the absence of [YHWH], and by positing a moveable Glory (Hebrew כְּבוֹד, **kabhdh**), Ezekiel's vision maintains [YHWH's] Transcendence and allows the exilic community to
(continued...)

וַאֲרָאָהּ וַהֲנֵה

And I saw, and look--³⁵³

אֶל-הַרְקִיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל-רֹאשׁ הַכְּרֻבִים

to / above the expanse / dome³⁵⁴ which (was) over (the) head of the cherubim,³⁵⁵

כְּאֶבֶן סַפִּיר

(something) like a sapphire stone (paving?)³⁵⁶

³⁵²(...continued)

imagine [YHWH] as free from physical locale, thus enabling them to perceive [YHWH's] Presence in exile." (P. 1167)

³⁵³

Hilmer states that "**Chapter 10** echoes **chapter 1**, underscoring the identity of what Ezekiel saw at the Kebar River with what he now sees in his vision (see **8:4**). The creatures in **chapter 1** are here called cherubim (see **1:5**)." (P. 1239)

³⁵⁴

The reader of Hebrew will immediately recognize this definite noun, הַרְקִיעַ, **haraqiyā**(, from the Creation story in **Genesis 1:6, 14**. It is literally "that which is beaten out thin," and is applied in **Genesis** to the "expanse," or "dome," or "atmosphere" which separates between the waters covering the earth below it, and the waters which are above it, in the clouds. The **King James** translation is "firmament."

³⁵⁵

Matties notes that "The Living Creatures of **1:26** are now cherubim (see also 'cherub' in **Ezekiel 9:3**)...Ezekiel's cherubim portray a Divine throne that is not fixed in Jerusalem but is free to come and go at will." (P. 1167)

Darr states that "While **verse 1** is reminiscent of **1:22, 26**, its reference to cherubim is alien to Ezekiel's inaugural vision by the Chebar Canal. What creatures are these, and what has become of the 'living beings'?" (P. 87)

Our answer is, The "living beings" of **chapter 1**, are now the cherubim, which have hands like those of human beings, and who are moving, lifting up the Throne of YHWH. The cherubim of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and of the temple of Solomon, were non-living, immobile figures carved out of pure gold, part of the ark of the covenant. These cherubim are in fact "living beings," who, according to Ezekiel's vision, serve to lift up and transport YHWH's Glorious Radiance from Jerusalem to the banks of the River Chebar in Babylon.

³⁵⁶The mention of "sapphire" reminds us of the story in **Exodus 24:9–10** of the large group of Israelites who saw something like a sapphire pavement beneath the feet of YHWH:

9 וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן

And Moses went up, and Aaron,

(continued...)

³⁵⁶(...continued)

נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Nadab and Abihu, and seventy from the elderly men of Israel.

10 וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And they saw (the) God of Israel.

וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבִנְת הַסַּפִּיר

And beneath His Feet, like a work of the sapphire tile,

וּכְעֵצִים הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר:

and like the heavens themselves for the purity.

And here, where we anxiously ask, What did God look like?, the only answer the text gives us is that beneath God's Feet there was a sapphire tile flooring of some sort. And so it is here in **Ezekiel 10**. In **chapter 1** there is a mysterious figure seen, something like a human, high up above the living creatures. But here, in **chapter 10**, up above the cherubim, Ezekiel sees no likeness of a human—all that he tells us that he sees is “(something) like a sapphire stone (paving?),” and something “like (the) vision / appearance of a likeness of a throne.” That's all Ezekiel tells us—the sapphire paving, and the likeness of a throne. Later Ezekiel will tell us that the Glorious Radiance of YHWH was being lifted up and carried by the cherubim, but there will be no description of YHWH / God. The mystery continues!

Darr states that Ezekiel “locates the living cherubim—the sapphire-like form of an (empty) throne above their heads, and the wheelwork beneath and between them—to the right / south of the ‘house’ (temple) [locating the cherubim to the right / south of the temple distances the vehicle of God's Glory from the abominations...north of the temple.” (P. 87)

But No!—the throne is not “empty.” It is just that Ezekiel cannot see, or will not tell us what he sees. It is YHWH's throne, and we can assume that YHWH is Sitting on it. But He is Invisible, and Ezekiel must leave it at that. All that he can say is that he saw something like a throne.

And we ask, Why can't you be more exact, Ezekiel? Why can't you tell us more about what YHWH looks like? Are you trying to confuse us, to mix us up? Just tell us what you saw! But no. Either Ezekiel cant, or he wont.

And then we come to the **New Testament**, and there we read about a baby, and a boy, and a man named Jesus. And the Gospel writers tell us they have seen God in him—in a human being, much like ourselves. A fragile baby, almost put to death by Herod the Great. A boy, accompanying his earthly father and mother on yearly trips to Jerusalem and the temple. A man, devoting himself fully to reaching out to the unclean, the unwanted, the half-breeds, the hated Roman soldiers, the prostitutes, granting them forgiveness, and healing, and acceptance into the Kingdom of God—and being put to a horrific death for so doing. That's God? Yes, the writers of the **New Testament** dare to say, That's God. That's not just like God. That's God. If you want to see God, look long and hard at Jesus. That's God. He is on the Throne! Looking at him will save you! So, look to Jesus if you want to know God!

כְּמֵרָאָה דְּמִוֵּת כִּסֵּא

like (the) vision / appearance of a likeness of a throne,³⁵⁷

נִרְאָה עֲלֵיהֶם:

was seen above them.

10:2 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִישׁ | לְבָשׂ הַבְּדִים

And He Spoke to the man dressed (in) the linen,

וַיֹּאמֶר בֹּא אֶל-בֵּינֹת לְגִלְגָּל

and he said,³⁵⁸ Come to (the) between / intervals of the wheel / whirl / whirlwind,³⁵⁹

אֶל-תַּחַת לְכְרוּב

to beneath the cherub.

וּמִלֵּא חֲפְנֶיךָ גַחְלֵי-אֵשׁ

And fill your palms (with) coals of fire³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷Notice how similar this language is to the language of **chapter 1**—“like a vision / appearance of a likeness of a throne,” Nothing definite there, only “like,” “vision,” “appearance of a likeness.” No, we are treading on holy ground. We have to take off our shoes. We have to bow like Job, confessing how little we are, how little we know. So it is with Ezekiel’s vision. He doesn’t pretend to know exactly, to be able to describe the indescribable.

³⁵⁸

Rabbi Fisch observes that “It appears that the Divine Presence, which had previously departed from the *Merkabah* [Divine chariot] (9:3), now returns to the sanctuary (verse 4) before it leaves again.” (P. 51) Yes...but when it seems apparent that YHWH is Absent, or Has left—He is Hiddenly, Mysteriously, still Present, Communicating with His people.

³⁵⁹This phrase, לְגִלְגָּל, *lagalgal*, means “to the *galgal*,” “to the wheel, whirl, whirlwind.”

The noun *galgal* occurs in the following places in the **Hebrew Bible**, with varying meanings:

1. *wheel*,

- a. of war-chariot **Isaiah 5:28, Jeremiah 47:3**, also collectively, **Ezekiel 23:24, 26:10**;
perhaps also in Ezekiel's vision, **Ezekiel 10:2** (here), **10:6, 10:13** (cf. *wheelwork*)
- b. for drawing water **Ecclesiastes 12:6**.

2. *whirl*,

- a. *whirl* (of dust or chaff) **Psalms 83:14, Isaiah 17:13**, simile of foes put to flight by God.
- b. perhaps *whirling* of wheels **Ezekiel 10:2** (here), **10:6, 10:13**.
- c. *whirlwind* **Psalms 77:19**.

³⁶⁰

(continued...)

מִבִּינּוֹת לַכְּרֻבִּים

from (the) intervals to the cherubim.

³⁶⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “For coals of fire as a symbol for purgation [cleansing], compare **Isaiah 6:6-7**, where one of the seraphim is said to have touched Isaiah’s lips with a coal of fire to cleanse him from sin. The general similarity of that chapter to Ezekiel’s vision should be noted.” (P. 51)

And we say Yes indeed! YHWH’s fire is a cleansing fire, that purges out the impurities within the silver and gold, purifying them, cleansing them, making them pure. But is that the case here in **Ezekiel 10**? Some will read **Ezekiel 10** and conclude that YHWH is “done with Jerusalem.” He Is Sending the man in linen (evidently a priest figure) to burn the city up—because that’s what the city deserves. But what if those coals of fire are YHWH’s fire, the fire of our Father God, Who deeply loves every one of His children, no matter how grievously they have sinned, no matter how far away from Him they have wandered. Can we believe that it is possible that His coals of fire will touch their lips, like Isaiah’s, with forgiveness and mission? What do you think?

And if you say YHWH is “done with Jerusalem,” we say, Read **chapters 40-48**, with their depiction of YHWH’s new temple, yes, in the City of Jerusalem. In **43:1-5** see Ezekiel’s depiction of the return of YHWH’s Glorious Radiance to Jerusalem, filling that new temple. In **chapter 47** see Ezekiel’s vision of the Water of Life flowing from that new temple down into the deepest valley on earth, to the “Dead Sea,” bringing new life to that place of death, filling the Sea with fish, with fruit trees growing on its banks. And at the end of **chapter 48**, see the new name given to Jerusalem—**יְהוָה שָׁמָּה**, “YHWH Is There”!

No, in spite of all the harsh language of **Ezekiel 9-10**, YHWH is not “done with Jerusalem! No, not at all. He Is Angry with Jerusalem; His Wrath Is Burning against Jerusalem. But His Anger Will Subside, as Will His Wrath. His Love Will Win. YHWH Is Not Done with Jerusalem!

Hilmer comments that “While in **1:13** the Living Creatures looked like burning coals, here there are real coals.” (P. 1239) Yes, and Darr comments that “**Verse 2** returns the reader to a familiar figure: the man clothed in linen. But how his function has changed! In **chapter 9**, his mark meant survival; here, God instructs him to go in to the wheelwork (called haggalgal, ‘the wheel / whirl / whirlwind’) beneath the cherubim, and having filled his hands with burning coals, to scatter them over the city... Here, ironically, it depicts the process by which Jerusalem will be set ablaze.” (P. 87)

But in fact, Ezekiel does not say what the mission of the man in linen with the coals in his hands is. He does not depict him setting the city of Jerusalem ablaze, something that would only happen a number of years later by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, hardly a priestly figure clothed in linen. And so we ask, could the purpose of these coals be the same as the purpose of the coal in **Isaiah 6**—to touch the tongues of those who though admittedly sinful, are reaching out to YHWH, longing to see and serve Him, thus bringing them forgiveness and a mission to witness to their fellow Jerusalemites concerning YHWH and His Purposes like Isaiah? The text does not inform us of the purpose of the coals, and we are left to guessing.

וְזָרַק עַל־הָעִיר

And scatter (them) over the city!³⁶¹

וַיָּבֹא לְעֵינָי:

And it / he came into / before my eyes.³⁶²

10:3³⁶³ וְהַכְּרֻבִּים עֹמְדִים מִיְמִין לְבַיִת

And the cherubim (were) standing on (the) right / south³⁶⁴ of the house / temple,³⁶⁵

בְּבֹאֵי הָאִישׁ

in / while the man entered.³⁶⁶

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Hilmer calls this “A judgment by fire (see **Genesis 19:24** [depicting YHWH’s raining sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah]; **Amos 7:4** [depicting YHWH calling for a judgment by fire on northern Israel].” (P. 1239)

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The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ εἰσῆλθεν ἐνώπιόν μου, “and he entered before me.” The Hebrew line is highly ambiguous—another example of how Hebrew prepositions in later Hebrew have lost their precise meanings, and are used interchangeably. And once again we note the enigmatic nature of this statement, along with others. We read the text in Hebrew; we translate it. But we are unsure of its meaning. We are left wondering. Did you want more certainty than that? Beware of those who create certainty when there is none in the text!

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Matties comments that “Unlike the temple ‘dwelling place’ (**1 Kings 6:13; 8:30**), Ezekiel’s Glory, like that of the tabernacle, is moveable.” (P. 1167)

Yes, but much more moveable than the ancient tabernacle, in which the Divine Glory was located. Now the Divine Glory is rising up above, completely free from the Jerusalem temple, and moving into enemy territory, into the area where the captive exiles live.

³⁶⁴Remember that in Israel, all directions are determined by facing east. East is “in front”; north is “on the left”; south is “on the right,” and west is “yammah,” to the Mediterranean Sea, in back of you.

Darr comments that Ezekiel “Locating the cherubim to the south of the temple distances the vehicle of God’s Glory from the abominations, as well as the executions, north of the temple,” and he observes that ‘the cloud’ has filled the inner court.” (P. 87)

³⁶⁵Oftentimes in the Hebrew, the word בַּיִת, “house,” is used for the temple. That is, the temple is YHWH’s “House.”

³⁶⁶We take “the man” to mean “the man in linen,” as will become clear in **verse 6**.

וְהֶעֱנַן מָלֵא אֶת־הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית:

and the cloud filled the inner court.³⁶⁷

10:4 וַיֵּרָם כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה

And YHWH's Glorious Radiance arose

מֵעַל הַכְּרוּב

from upon / above the cherub,³⁶⁸

עַל מַפְתָּן הַבַּיִת

over / above (the) threshold / podium / platform of the house / temple,³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷The Hebrew **הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית**, “the court, the inner one,” translated by the Greek as τῆς αὐλλῆς τῆς ἐσωτέρας, “the court, the inner one,” was the court of the priests, into which only priests were allowed to enter. The crowd of ordinary Jewish worshipers were in the “outer court,” and beyond them was the “court of the Gentiles.”

We understand the statement here to mean that whereas the “cloud” had formerly been located in the Holy of holies (and perhaps including the Holy place), now it also filled the inner court, the court of the priests, no longer being confined to the innermost sanctuary. We see the text as depicting a gradual movement of the Glorious Radiance from its earlier confinement, to ever greater dimensions, first the court of the priests, then the entire temple complex, and then expanding onto the Mount of Olives, and from there into the non-Jewish, gentile world, with specific mention of Babylon, where Ezekiel was among the Jewish exiles.

³⁶⁸We are at a loss for why Ezekiel uses the singular here, “the cherub.” We think he probably used the singular for the two cherubs formed as part of the solid golden cover of the ark of the covenant, above which was considered the location of the Divine Presence in the tabernacle / temple. As attached to the cover of the ark of the covenant, these golden cherubs were non-living, and incapable of movement, except as the ark of the covenant was moved. In contrast, the cherubim rising up above them are the “living creatures” of **Ezekiel 1**, which are moving upwards and outwards, above the temple, then through its eastern gate, onto the Mount of Olives, and from there into the gentile world, specifically Babylon.

Darr comments that “As God’s Glory abandons its position above the replica [we take this to mean the stationary gold cherubs on the top of the ark of the covenant], the real thing arrives—its appearance signaled by the sound of the cherubim’s wings (verse 5)—ready to transport the Glory as needed.” (P. 88)

³⁶⁹What do you think the **מַפְתָּן** “threshold / podium / platform of the house / temple” means? Is it the threshold of the eastern door of the temple complex? Or is the threshold / thresholds of the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place, so that the Divine Glory is Present throughout the entire temple and its courts? Or does it mean the “platform” on which the temple complex rests, surrounded by its huge retaining walls? Solomon’s temple, and then the temple of
(continued...)

וַיִּמְלֵא הַבַּיִת אֶת־הָעָנָן

and the house / temple was filled with the cloud,

וַהֲחִצֵּר מְלֵאָה אֶת־נֹגַהּ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה:

and the court³⁷⁰ was full of (the) brightness of YHWH's Glorious Radiance.³⁷¹

10:5 וְקוֹל כַּנְּפֵי הַכְּרוּבִים נִשְׁמָע

And (the) voice / sound of (the) wings of the cherubim was heard³⁷²

³⁶⁹(...continued)

Herod the Great, were surrounded by the retaining walls that we still see today, enabling the building of the large acreage within them, upon which the temple complex was built, and which today holds the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque El Aqsa. But the text is ambiguous, and not nearly as precise as we wish it was. However, we think the translation “platform” is best. The Divine Glory is rising up, no longer confined to the narrow limits of the Holy of Holies, or the court of the priests. Now It is Present throughout the temple complex, and the Divine Voice is heard throughout the temple complex. The Divine Glory is not limited to the temple, but is reaching out, filling the space all around the temple. Do you agree? How do you understand this?

³⁷⁰In contrast to the “inner court of the priests,” this “court” will mean the outer court, where the ordinary Jewish worshipers met, and then probably include the even further out “court of the gentiles.” YHWH's Glorious Radiance is reaching out, covering them all—especially as will be seen in the further statements about its movement to the Mount of Olives, and then all the way to Babylon.

³⁷¹For Ezekiel's vision of the constantly expanding Presence of the Divine Glorious Radiance, see the earlier statement in **Isaiah 6:3**, where it is said of the Seraphim in the temple of YHWH:

וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה

And this one called out to this one,

וַאֲמַר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

and it said, Holy, Holy, Holy—YHWH of Armies!

מְלֵא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

His Glorious Radiance Fills all the earth!

No, it didn't begin with Ezekiel's vision of YHWH leaving the temple in Jerusalem. It has always been the Truth. YHWH is the Universal God, the God of all the earth, the God Whose Glorious Radiance fills the whole earth, from east to west, from north to south! Ezekiel's visions only make this all the clearer!

³⁷²Oh no—these are not the lifeless, golden likenesses of cherubs such as were formed on the cover of the ark of the covenant. These are living creatures (as in **Ezekiel 1**); their wings are
(continued...)

עַרְהַחֲצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה

as far as the outer court,

כְּקוֹל אֵל־שַׁדַּי בְּדַבְּרוֹ:

like a Voice / Sound of El / Supreme God Shadday when He Speaks.³⁷³

10:6 וַיְהִי בְצֻוּתוֹ אֶת־הָאִישׁ לְבַשׂ־הַבְּדִים

And it happened when He Commanded the man dressed (in) the linen,

לֵאמֹר קַח אֵשׁ מִבֵּינֹת לְגִלְגָּל

saying Take fire from (the) between / intervals³⁷⁴ belonging to the wheel,

מִבֵּינֹת לְכְרוּבִים

from (the) between / intervals belonging to the cherubim;

וַיָּבֹא וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶצְלֵ הָאוֹפֶן:

and he came and he stood next to the wheel (synonym).

10:7 וַיִּשְׁלַח הַכְּרוּב הַכְּרוּב אֶת־יָדוֹ

³⁷²(...continued)

moving, flapping noisously, as they fly upward in Ezekiel's vision, carrying the Divine Glory to the Mount of Olives, and then all the way to Babylon.

³⁷³What do you think this line of Ezekiel's text means, "like a Voice / Sound of El / Supreme God Shadday when He Speaks"? אֵל, El, is the Canaanite Name for the Supreme God of the Canaanites. It has been taken up by the writers of the Hebrew Bible, and applied to YHWH—He is in Truth the "Supreme God." The Divine Name שַׁדַּי, Shadday, is found some 48 times throughout the **Hebrew Bible**, especially in the **Book of Job**, some 31 times, as an alternative Name for YHWH. See **Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; 49:25; Exodus 6:3 4:16; Isaiah 13:6; Ezekiel 1:24; 10:5; Ruth 1:20, 1:21, Psalm 68:15, 91:1**, Numerous theories are given as to its meaning (see **Brown-Driver-Briggs**). The Greek transliterates here at **Ezekiel 10:5** by Σαδδαι.

We think Ezekiel is referring to the way the Israelites at Mount Sinai became afraid upon hearing the Voice of YHWH, and begged Moses to speak for YHWH rather than having to hear the Divine Voice directly. Hearing the sound / voice of the flapping wings of the cherubim filled the people with fear.

³⁷⁴This is strange language, "between / intervals." But the student of Hebrew, beginning to read the **Scroll of Genesis**, at **1:4** quickly becomes acquainted with the Hebrew substantive בַּיִן, bayin, in the construct בֵּין, beyn, meaning "interval," or "space between."

And the cherub sent forth his hand³⁷⁵

מִבֵּינֹת לְכֶרֻבִים

from (the) between / intervals belonging to the cherubim,

אֶל-הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר בֵּינֹת הַכְּרֻבִים

to the fire which was (in the) between / intervals of the cherubim.

וַיִּשָּׂא וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-חֲפְנֵי לְבַשׁ הַבְּדִים

And he lifted up (fire), and he gave (it) to / into (the) palms (of one) dressed in the
linen;³⁷⁶

וַיִּקַּח וַיֵּצֵא:

and he took (it) and he went forth.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵No, this is no lifeless golden image of a cherub that Ezekiel is depicting in his vision; it is a living creature, that has a hand like a human hand. And as we remark the difference between the two lifeless golden cherubs carved out on the covering of the ark of the covenant and the living creatures / cherubim here in **Ezekiel 10**, we are reminded of **Jeremiah 3:16**, where Jeremiah insists that in the future the ark of the covenant will no longer be remembered or missed. Why do you think that was the case? We say it is the difference between a “dead religion,” and a religion that is filled with life and vitality; it is the difference between a religion that is located in one tiny temple, in one city, in one country of the world, and a religion that is universal, that is alive wherever human life exists, and that worships at a Heavenly Throne rather than an earthly, man-made throne in a man-made temple. What do you think? See the **New Testament Scroll of Hebrews** for further elucidation of this theme.

Darr comments that “As the man moves in to obey Yahweh’s command, one of the cherubs stretches out its hand, takes some of the fire, and gives it to him. He then sets out. As was the case with his earlier mission, the narrative does not follow him. The stage for Ezekiel’s vision remains the temple precinct. Like the audience of a play, his reader assumes that significant events are transpiring off-stage.” (P. 88)

³⁷⁶

Hilmer comments that “Though the ‘man clothed in linen’ was initially commanded to get the coals himself (**verse 2**), he received them from the hand of one of the creatures (see **1:8**).” (P. 1239) Yes, the cherubim / living creatures are alive, able to act, to give into the hands of the man dressed in linen.

³⁷⁷

Rabbi Fisch states that this means the man in linen went out “from the temple to execute the command to set fire to the city; but the fulfilment of the symbolic act took place six years later.” (P. 52) This is no problem for vision-stories, for symbolic visions, for theater vignettes, which are not concerned for exact times and sequences.

(continued...)

10:8 וַיֵּרָא לְכַרְבַּיִם

And it was seen, belonging to the cherubim—

תְּבִנִית יְדֵ-אָדָם תַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם:

a likeness of a human hand,³⁷⁸ beneath their wings.

10:9³⁷⁹ וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה

³⁷⁷(...continued)

Hilmer likewise comments that “No further report is given, but the destructive spreading of the coals over Jerusalem is assumed.” (P. 1239) Do you agree with Rabbi Fisch and Hilmer? We do not. The text simply stops with the statement that the man in linen went forth. It doesn’t indicate what he did with the hot coals, or what their effect on the city of Jerusalem was. There is no mention of setting fire to the city, no mention of the destructive spreading of the coals. All that the text says is “he took (it, the burning coals) and he went forth.” What the man in linen did with the coals is not mentioned.

³⁷⁸

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the plural, χερῶν ἀνθρώπων, “hands of humans.”

³⁷⁹

Reimer comments on **verses 9-22** that “Much of the description of the cherubim here overlaps with the account of the ‘Living Creatures’ in **chapter 1**, and reference would be made to that passage for explanation of the common features. Although the description itself already signals this equivalence, the visionary account makes it explicit in **10:15, 20-22**...

“The assault of sight and sound on the senses seems overpowering, as it was in the inaugural vision. While description dominates this section, the action, confined to **verses 18-19**, is crucial. At the threshold (**verse 18**) of the east gate (**verse 19**), the Glory of the God of Israel is Poised to Depart from the midst of His sinful people slowly and in stages (perhaps symbolizing how He gives the people every opportunity to repent). The language is deliberate: אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, ‘God of Israel’ is used five times in this vision (**8:4; 9:3; 10: 19-20; 11:22**), and four of those with ‘Glory of.’ Beyond these, this phrasing occurs in **Ezekiel** only at **43:22** and **44:2**, when [YHWH’s] Glory returns.” (Pp. 1512-13)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 9-17** “Repeated Description of the *Merkabah* [Divine Chariot].” He quotes Davidson (a Christian Hebraist) as stating that “‘Instead of depicting the conflagration of the city, which would have been impossible [since it did not occur for some time afterwards], the prophet’s attention is anew drawn to the cherubim, and a fresh description of the Living Creatures and of the Divine Chariot follows.’ This description heightens the solemnity of the scene in which the *Merkabah* departs.” (P. 53)

Darr quotes Block as stating, “Where material from **chapter 1** is repeated, most of the grammatical difficulties have been smoothed out..much of the analogical language has disappeared. The indefinite expression ‘creatures...has been replaced by the specific ‘cherubim’...the wheels are identified specifically as *galgal* (**10:13**), and the sheer brilliance of the first vision has been toned down. Furthermore, the description of the creatures has been rationalized (**10:14**; compare **1:10**), and details that seemed out of place in **chapter 1** now have vital parts to play (the burning coals and the wheels).” Darr adds that

(continued...)

And I saw, and look—

אַרְבַּעָה אֹפְנִים אֶצֶל הַכְּרוּבִים׃

four wheels next to the cherubim:

אֶחָד אֶצֶל הַכְּרוּב אֶחָד

one wheel next to the one cherub,

וְאֶחָד אֶצֶל הַכְּרוּב אֶחָד

and one wheel next to the one cherub.

וּמַרְאֵה הָאֹפְנִים

and (the) vision / appearance of the wheels

כְּעֵין אֶבֶן תַּרְשִׁישׁ׃

was like an eye / spring of a Tarshish stone.³⁸⁰

10:10 וּמַרְאֵיהֶם דְּמוּת אֶחָד לְאַרְבַּעֵתָם

And their vision / appearance—one likeness to (the) four of them—

כַּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאֹפֶן בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹפֶן׃

just like the wheel would be in (the) midst of the wheel!

³⁷⁹(...continued)

“The discrepancy between **1:18**, which speaks of ‘eyes’ (decorative studs?) covering the rims of the chariot wheels, and **10:12**, which apparently envisions eyes covering not only the four wheels, but also the cherubim’s entire bodies—backs, hands, and wings (**NIV**; compare **NRSV**), and the replacement of the ox face (**1:10**) with the face of a cherub (**10:14**)” (P. 88)

³⁸⁰Translations of the last two lines vary:

King James, “and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.”

Tanakh, “as for the appearance of the wheels, they gleamed like the beryl stone.”

New Revised Standard, “and the appearance of the wheels was like gleaming beryl.”

New International, “the wheels sparkled like topaz.”

New Jerusalem, “and the appearance of the wheels was like the sparkle of chrysolite.”

Hebrew, וּמַרְאֵה הָאֹפְנִים כְּעֵין אֶבֶן תַּרְשִׁישׁ׃

Greek, καὶ ἡ ὄψις τῶν τροχῶν ὡς ὄψις λίθου ἄνθρακος

NETS, “and the appearance of the wheels was as the appearance of a stone of carbuncle.”

10:11 בְּלַכְתֶּם אֶל-אַרְבַּעַת רַבְעֵיהֶם יֵלְכוּ

As they went, to / upon their four sides they would go;

לֹא יִסְבוּ בְּלַכְתֶּם

they would not turn as they went.

כִּי הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִפְנֶה הָרֹאשׁ

Because the place towards which the head would turn,

אַחֲרָיו יֵלְכוּ

following it they would go.

לֹא יִסְבוּ בְּלַכְתֶּם:

They would not turn as they went.

10:12 וְכָל-בָּשָׂרָם וְגַבֵּיהֶם

And all their flesh, and their backs / rims (?),

וְיָדֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם

and their hands / spokes (?), and their wings,

וְהָאוֹפָנִים מְלֵאִים עֵינִים

and the wheels--(were) full of eyes--

סָבִיב לְאַרְבַּעַתָּם אוֹפְנֵיהֶם:

all around to (the) four of them, their wheels.

10:13 לְאוֹפָנִים לָהֶם קוֹרָא

To the wheels--to them it was called

הַגִּלְגָּל בְּאָזְנֵי:

The Galgal / the Whirlwind, in my ears.

10:14 וְאַרְבַּעַת פָּנִים לְאַחַד

And (there were) four faces to (each) one:

פְּנֵי הָאֶחָד פְּנֵי הַכְּרוּב

faces of the first, faces of the cherub;³⁸¹

וּפְנֵי הַשֵּׁנִי פְּנֵי אָדָם

and faces of the second, faces of a human;

וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁי פְּנֵי אַרְיֵה

And the third, faces of a lion;

וְהָרְבִיעִי פְּנֵי-נְשָׁר:

and the fourth, faces of a griffon-vulture.

10:15 וַיִּרְמוּ הַכְּרוּבִים

And the cherubim lifted themselves up.

הִיא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּנְהַר-כְּבַר:

It (was) the Living Creature which I saw by (the) River Kebhar!

10:16 וּבְלָכְתָּ הַכְּרוּבִים

And as the cherubim were going,

יָלְכוּ הָאוֹפָנִים אֲצֵלָם

the wheels went next to them.

וּבִשְׂאֵת הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת-פְּנֵיהֶם

and as the cherubim lifted up their wings,

לָרוֹם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ

to rise up from upon the land / earth,

לֹא-יָסְבוּ הָאוֹפָנִים

the wheels did not turn,

גַּם-הֵם מֵאֲצֵלָם:

also those next to them.

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Hilmer observes that “While the faces of the man, lion and eagle [our ‘griffon-vulture’] are identical with those in **1:10**, the ox is here called a cherub.” (P. 1239) See the Internet for depictions of a cherub that looks like a large ox-like animal.

10:17 בְּעִמְדוֹם יַעֲמֹדוּ

When they stood / stopped, they stood / stopped;

וּבְרוֹמָם יִרְוּמוּ אוֹתָם

And when they arose, they arose with them.

כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בָּהֶם:

Because (the) Spirit of the Living Creature (was) in them.

10:18³⁸² וַיֵּצֵא כְבוֹד יְהוָה

and YHWH's Glorious Radiance went forth

מֵעַל מַפְתַּן הַבַּיִת

from upon / above the house's threshold / podium / platform;³⁸³

וַיַּעֲמֹד עַל־הַכְּרוּבִים:

And it stood / stopped upon / above the cherubim.³⁸⁴

10:19 וַיִּשְׂאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם

and the cherubim lifted up their wings;

וַיִּרְוּמוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ לְעֵינַי

and they arose / went up from the land / earth to / in my eyes.

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Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 18-22** “The Divine Presence leaves the Temple.” He comments that “The Divine Glory [הַכְבוֹד יְהוָה], ‘Glorious Radiance of YHWH’] after leaving the Holy of Holies, remained on the threshold, as stated in **9:3**. Now mention is made of the third state of the departure (see **9:3** with Rabbi Fisch’s comment there).” (P. 55)

Matties comments that “The departure of the Glory is a massive reversal of four hundred years of theology about the location of the Divine Presence.” (P. 1168) Yes!

³⁸³See footnote 360 for the “threshold.”

³⁸⁴We understand this to mean that the Glorious Radiance of YHWH was rising up above the cherubs, the golden figures on the cover of the ark of the covenant. And then the next line tells us that the cherubim also arose, as if the Glorious Radiance was resting on top of them as they flew. What do you think?

Darr comments that “With **verse 18**, Yahweh’s Glory departs the temple’s threshold [platform] and takes its place above the cherubim. In the prophets sight, they lift off from the earth, bearing the Glory to the temple’s east gate.” (P. 88)

בְּצֵאתָם וְהָאוֹפָנִים לְעִמָּתָם

When the wheels went forth beside them;

וַיַּעֲמֹד פֶּתַח שַׁעַר

and it stood / stopped (at the) door / opening of (the) gate

בֵּית־יְהוָה הַקֶּדְמוֹנִי

of YHWH's house / temple, the east one.

וְכְבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

and (the) God of Israel's Glorious Radiance (was)

עֲלֵיהֶם מִלְּמַעְלָה:

over / above them, from above.³⁸⁵

10:20³⁸⁶ הִיא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי

It (was) the Living Creature which I saw

תַּחַת אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנְהַר־כְּבָר

beneath Israel's God, by (the) River Kebhar.³⁸⁷

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Hilmer notes that this was “a second movement of the Glory of the God of Israel, again in an easterly direction.” (P. 1239)

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Matties comments on **verses 20-22** that “The concluding verses again link this vision to **chapter 1**. The Divine glory is about to abandon the dwelling place and the city that had become identified as [YHWH's] home. The veiled language of likeness in **1:28** is now clearly identified as ‘the God of Israel’ (**10:20**). In that way, the text hints that abandonment of place need not require abandonment of people.” (P. 1168)

387

Rabbi Fisch comments that “On the Jewish interpretation, though the face of the ox was in this vision changed into that of a cherub (see on **verse 14**), the prophet realized that the *Merkabah* [Divine Chariot] was the same which he had seen in his first vision by the river Chebar. But Lofthouse remarks: ‘This verse can only be explained if Ezekiel is understood to be transcribing his own experience exactly. *This is what I saw previously by the Chebar* has already entered his mind (**verse 15**). It recurs here, and he naturally uses the word for the animals which he had previously used, instead of ‘cherub,’ the word characteristic of this chapter. This recognition of the identity between the two visions he further presses by the last clause of the verse. But why did this second vision suggest to him at first ‘cherubim’ and not simply ‘Living Creatures’? The question cannot be answered with certainty. May not the explanation be that the thought of the cherub in **9:3**, and of the general connection between cherubs, God and the ark (of the covenant) suggests to the prophet that the winged supporters of the chariot would naturally be cheru-

(continued...)

וַאֲדַע כִּי כְרוּבִים הֵמָּה:

And I knew that they (were) cherubim.

10:21 אַרְבַּעַה אַרְבַּעַה פְּנִים לְאַחַד

Four, four faces to (each) one;³⁸⁸

וְאַרְבַּע כַּנְפִים לְאַחַד

and four wings to (each) one.

וְדַמוֹת יָדַי אָדָם תַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם:

And a likeness of human hands beneath their wings.

10:22 וְדַמוֹת פְּנֵיהֶם

And (the) likeness of their faces--

הֵמָּה הַפְּנִים אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי עַל-נְהַר-כְּבָר

they (were) the faces which I saw upon / beside (the) River Kebhar--

מִרְאֵיהֶם וְאוֹתָם

their vision / appearance and they--

אִישׁ אֶל-עֵבֶר פְּנָיו יֵלְכוּ:

each one to the side of its faces they went.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷(...continued)

bim; hence only after an interval does he recognize explicitly that these winged beings are the Living Creatures of his former vision? This he still further emphasizes in **verse 22**.” (P. 55)

We do not expect prophetic visions to be exact and explicit, but rather, to be obscure, mysterious, raising questions like this that are difficult to answer. **Numbers 12:6-8** makes it very clear that the visions and dreams of the prophets will be riddle-like, enigmatic. Ezekiel’s vision-story / theater-play is certainly of that nature, and we do not need to try and clean it up, getting rid of the enigmas!

³⁸⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Each of the four Living Creatures had four faces, a face in each direction, and each face had four wings and hands like those of a man...From their appearance and form Ezekiel concluded that these were identical with the faces he had seen before.” (Pp. 55-56)

³⁸⁹

This last line of **verse 22** is given varying translations, from “they went everyone straight forward,” to “and each could move in the direction of any of its faces,” to “each one moved straight ahead,” to καὶ αὐτὰ ἕκαστου κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν ἐπορεύοντο, “and they, each one, according to their face, they were going.” We think the statement is obscure, and typical of the enigmatic nature of

(continued...)

1.

³⁸⁹(...continued)
prophetic speech. What do you think?

David Kimchi, Jewish Biblical Commentator

“David Kimchi (Hebrew: דָּוִד קִמְחִי , also Kimchi or Qimhi) (1160–1235 C.E.), also known by the Hebrew acronym as the RaDaK (Rabbi David Kimhi), was a medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

“Kimhi was born in Narbonne, a city in southern France, the youngest son of Rabbi Joseph Kimhi and the brother of Rabbi Moses Kimhi, both also biblical commentators and grammarians. He was raised by his older brother Moses following the untimely death of their father. Later, he supported himself by teaching Talmud to the young. He was well versed in the whole range of Hebrew literature, and became the most illustrious representative of his family name.

“Kimhi saw himself primarily as a compiler and summarizer. As a noted Hebrew grammarian, his book Michlol (מִיְלֻל) and his dictionary of the Hebrew language called Sefer HaShorashim (Book of the Roots) draws heavily on the earlier works of Rabbi Judah ben David Hayyuj and Rabbi Jonah ibn Janah, as well as from the work of his father. These two books were originally written as one, although over the years they have come to be printed separately. This book, while based on his predecessors, shows a significant amount of innovation, stakes out new territory in his scholarly fields, and from a methodological point of view is superior to what came before. For example, in Michlol, Kimhi expounds on his predecessors' opinions in a clear, straightforward way with a comprehensive approach to the Hebrew structure. Sefer Hashorashim highlights his talent as a writer because of its logical organization, particularly the way he bases his definitions upon etymology and comparisons between languages. Another of Kimhi's works was a sort of abridged version of Michlol and acted as a manual for Biblical scribes. This was a necessary compilation of rules for the writing of Bible-scrolls, Masoretic notes, and accents, due to widespread ignorance among the scribes of the 12th century.

“Kimhi also delved into philosophy and the sciences, and was very much influenced by both Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides. In later life, he took part in the controversy surrounding the works of Maimonides and staunchly defended him. His stance on philosophy was moderate and therefore permitted its study to those whose belief in God and fear of heaven was firm.

“Kimhi also participated in public debates with Christians. According to Kimhi, Christian interpretation demonstrated a corruption of the text and in some cases was inapplicable and irrational. He mostly attacks the allegorical method of interpretation and Christian claims towards the "true Israel" by stressing the superior morality and religiosity of the Jews. His interpretations were the favorite of the translators of the **King James Version**.

Kimhi is known primarily for his biblical commentaries on the books of the Prophets. He also wrote commentaries on the books of **Genesis**, **Psalms**, and **Chronicles**. His biblical work mirrors his grammatical work, and focuses on issues of language and form as well as upon content.” **Wikipedia**, 10/31/2021

2.

The Hebrew Noun רוּחַ, **ruach**, “wind”; “spirit” and “Spirit” occurs in the [scroll] of Ezekiel as follows:

1:4 As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze.

1:12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit [Spirit] would go, they went, without turning as they went.

1:20 Wherever the spirit [Spirit] would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the Living Creatures was in the wheels.

1:21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the Living Creatures was in the wheels.

2:2 And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me.

3:12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of [YHWH] arose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake;

3:14 The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me;

3:24 But the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself within your house.

5:2 A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed; and a third part you shall take and strike with the sword round about the city; and a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them.

5:10 Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in the midst of you, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds.

5:12 A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in the midst of you; a third part shall fall by the sword round about you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them.

8:3 He put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.

10:17 When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them; for the spirit of the Living Creatures was in them.

- 11:1 The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the house of [YHWH], which faces east. And behold, at the door of the gateway there were twenty-five men; and I saw among them Ja-azani'ah the son of Azzur, and Pelati'ah the son of Benai'ah, princes of the people.
- 11:5 And the Spirit of [YHWH] fell upon me, and he said to me, Say, Thus says [YHWH]: So you think, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.
- 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit [/ Spirit] within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,
- 11:24 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chalde'a, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me.
- 12:14 And I will scatter toward every wind all who are round about him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will unsheathe the sword after them.
- 13:3 Thus says [my Lord YHWH], Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!
- 13:11 say to those who daub it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind break out;
- 13:13 Therefore thus says [my Lord YHWH]: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath; and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to destroy it.
- 17:10 Behold, when it is transplanted, will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it -- wither away on the bed where it grew?
- 17:21 And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, [YHWH], have spoken.
- 18:31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit [Spirit]! Why will you die, O house of Israel?
- 19:12 But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried it up; its fruit was stripped off, its strong stem was withered; the fire consumed it.
- 20:32 What is in your mind [מַה־בְּדַעְתְּךָ] shall never happen--the thought, Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.
- 21:7 And when they say to you, Why do you sigh?' you shall say, Because of the tidings. When it comes, every heart will melt and all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will be fulfilled, says [my Lord YHWH].
- 27:26 Your rowers have brought you out into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas.

- 36:26 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit [/ Spirit] I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
- 36:27 And I will put my spirit [/ Spirit] within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.
- 37:1 The hand of [YHWH] was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of [YHWH] and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones.
- 37:5 Thus says [my Lord YHWH] to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.
- 37:6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath [רוּחַ] in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am [YHWH].
- 37:8 And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath [רוּחַ] in them.
- 37:9 Then he said to me, Prophecy to the breath [רוּחַ], prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath [רוּחַ], Thus says [my Lord YHWH]: Come from the four winds [רוּחוֹת] O breath [רוּחַ], and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.
- 37:10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath [רוּחַ] came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great host.
- 37:14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, [YHWH], have spoken, and I have done it, says [YHWH].
- 39:29 and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says [YHWH].
- 42:16 He measured the east side [רוּחַ הַקְּדָיִם], literally ‘the east wind’] with the measuring reed, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.
- 42:17 Then he turned and measured the north side [רוּחַ הַצְּפוֹן], literally ‘the north wind’], five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.
- 42:18 Then he turned and measured the south side [רוּחַ הַדְּרָוִם], literally ‘the south wind’], five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.
- 42:19 Then he turned to the west side [רוּחַ הַיָּם], literally ‘wind of the sea,’ or ‘the west wind’] and measured, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.

42:20 He measured it on the four sides [לְאַרְבַּע רוֹחֹת], literally ‘to four winds’. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits broad, to make a separation between the holy and the common.

43:5 the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of [YHWH] filled the temple.

3. For This Promise, “He Shall Live / Shall Not Live” in the Hebrew Bible, See:

Genesis 17:18,

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים

And Abraham spoke to the God,

לֹא יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל יַחִיָּה לְפָנֶיךָ:

If only Ishmael might live before you!

Genesis 31:32, where Jacob speaks to Laban:

עִם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶת־אֱלֹהֶיךָ

With whomever you may find your Gods,

לֹא יַחִיָּה

he will not live.

נֶגְדַי אֲחֵינוּ

In the sight of our brothers

הִכַּרְלֶךָ מָה עִמָּדִי

see for yourself what is with me,

וְקַח־לְךָ

and take for yourself.

וְלֹא־יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל גָּנְבָתָם:

And Jacob did not know that Rachel stole them.

Exodus 19:13,

לֹא־תִגַּע בּוֹ יָד

A hand will not touch it,

אִם־בְּהֵמָה אִם־אִישׁ

because whether animal or person,

לֹא יַחִיָּה

it will not live—

סָקוּל יִסָּקֵל

it will surely be stoned,

או־יִירָה יִירָה

or surely be shot (with an arrow).

כִּי־בְמִשְׁךְ הַיָּבֵל הַמָּה

because when the ram's horn sounds,

יֵעָלוּ בְהָר:

they will go up on the mountain.

Numbers 24:23, speaking of Balaam, YHWH's prophet from a foreign country:

וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ

And he lifted up his proverbial saying

וַיֹּאמֶר

and he said:

אֹי מִי יִחִיָּה

Woe! Who shall live / survive

מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל:

from Supreme God's placement of him?

Deuteronomy 8:3, speaking of a higher form of life than simply physical life:

וַיַּעֲבֹד וַיִּרְעֹבֶךָ

And He humbled you (singular), and He caused you to hunger;

וַיִּאֲכַלְךָ אֶת־הַמָּן

and He fed you with the manna,

אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתָּ

which you did not know,

וְלֹא יָדְעוּן אֲבֹתֶיךָ

and your fathers did not know,

לְמַעַן הוֹדִיעֶךָ

in order to make it known to you that

כִּי לֹא עַל־הַלֶּחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יִחִיָּה הָאָדָם

not upon the bread by itself will the human live,

כִּי עַל־כָּל־מוֹצֵא פִי־יְהוָה

but upon everything that goes forth (from) YHWH's mouth,

יִחִיָּה הָאָדָם:

the human shall live.

2 Samuel 1:10a, An Amalekite tells David concerning Saul's death,

וַאֲעֹמַד עָלָיו

And I stood over him,

וַאֲמַתֵּתֵהוּ

and I killed him--

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא יִחִיָּה אַחֲרָי נִפְלוֹ

because I knew that he would not live after his falling.

1 Kings 20:31, where Ben Hadad's servants tell him to throw himself on the steadfast-love of Israel's kings, who will "let him live."

2 Kings 10:19, where Jehu tells the servants of Baal that anyone of them who does not gather together at his call "will not live."

Nehemiah 2:3, where Nehemiah expresses the wish that the Persian king will live to long-lasting time.

Psalm 89:49^{Heb} / 48^{Eng}, where the psalmist asks:

מִי גִבֹּר יִחִיָּה

What strong man will live,

וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מוֹת

and will not see death?--

יִמְלֹט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיַּד־שְׂאוֹל סֶלָה:

he will deliver his innermost-being from (the) hand of sheol / (the) grave? Selah

Proverbs 15:27,

עֵכָר בֵּיתוֹ בּוֹצֵעַ בְּצַע

One troubling his house / household—one making profit by violence;

וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יְחִיָּה:

and / but one hating gifts will live.

Ecclesiastes 6:3,

אִם־יּוֹלִיד אִישׁ מֵאָה

If a man should give birth to a hundred (children),

וְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת יִחִיָּה

and should live many years,

וְרַב שְׁיֵהֵיוּ יְמֵי־שָׁנָיו

and they should be many--days of his years;

וְנַפְשׁוֹ לֹא־תִשְׂבַּע מִן־הַטּוֹבָה

and his innermost-being should not be satisfied from the good,

וְגַם־קְבוּרָה לֹא־הָיְתָה לוֹ

and also there was no burial for him; ,

אֲמַרְתִּי טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ הַנֶּפֶל:

I say, better than him, the aborted fetus!

Ecclesiastes 11:8,

כִּי אִם־שָׁנִים הַרְבֵּה יִחִיָּה הָאָדָם

Even if the human shall live years *many* (הַרְבֵּה),

בְּכֻלָּם יִשְׂמַח

in all of them let him rejoice.

וְיִזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ

And let him remember the days of darkness,

כִּי־הַרְבֵּה יִהְיוּ

because they will be *many* (הַרְבֵּה).

כֹּל־שָׁבָא הָבֵל:

All that comes—a vapor / breath!

Jeremiah 21:9,

הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת

The one dwelling in this city will die,

בְּחֶרֶב וּבְרָעַב וּבַדָּבָר

by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence!

וְהַיּוֹצֵא וְנָפַל עַל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים

And the one going forth, and he will fall upon / by the Chaldeans,

הַצָּרִים עֲלֵיכֶם

the ones besieging upon you people,

(יְחִיָּה) [וְיָחִיָּה] וְהָיְתָה־לוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל:

and he will live, and his innermost-being will become for him a spoil (of battle)!

Jeremiah 38:2, same.

Ezekiel 3:21,

וַאֲתָהּ כִּי הִזְהַרְתִּיו

And you, because you warned him,

צַדִּיק לְבִלְתִּי חַטָּא

a righteous one, so as not to sin—

צַדִּיק וְהוּא לֹא-חַטָּא

a righteous one, and he, he did not sin—

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה כִּי נִזְהַר

he will surely live, because he was warned;

וַאֲתָהּ אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ הִצַּלְתָּ:

and you, you delivered your innermost-being!

Ezekiel 18:9,

בְּחֻקוֹתַי יִהְלֵךְ

In / by My statutes he walks,

וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי שָׁמַר

and My legal decisions he kept,

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱמֶת

to do / practice true-faithfulness

צַדִּיק הוּא חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה

Righteous (is) he! He shall surely live!

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

Ezekiel 18:13,

בְּנִשְׂךְ נָתַן וּתְרִבִּית לָקַח

With / at the interest he gave / loaned, and increase he received;

וְחַי

and shall he live?

לֹא יִחְיֶה

he shall surely not live!

אֵת כָּל-הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה

All of these abominations he did—

מוֹת יוֹמָת

he shall surely die!

דָּמָיו בּוֹ יִהְיֶה:

His blood will be upon him!

Ezekiel 18:17,

מֵעֲנֵי הַשִּׁיב יָדוֹ

From an afflicted poor person he withdrew his hand;

נִשְׂךְ וּתְרִבִּית לֹא לָקַח

interest and increase he did not take.

מִשְׁפָּטַי עָשָׂה בְּחֻקֹּתַי הַלֵּךְ

My judicial decisions he did; in / by My statutes he walked.

הוּא לֹא יָמוּת בְּעוֹן אָבִיו

He will not die in / for the iniquity of his father.

חַיָּה יִחְיֶה:

He shall surely live!

Ezekiel 18:19,

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם מַדּוּעַ לֹא־נֹשֵׂא הַבֵּן בְּעוֹן הָאָב

And you (plural) say, For what reason shall not the son bear the iniquity of the father?

וְהַבֵּן מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה עָשָׂה

And the son—justice and righteousness he did;

אֵת כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי שָׁמַר וַיַּעַשׂ אֹתָם

all My statutes he observed, and he did them--

חַיָּה יִחְיֶה:

he shall surely live!

Ezekiel 18:21,

וְהִרְשָׁע כִּי יָשׁוּב מִכָּל־[חַטָּאתוֹ] [חַטָּאתָיו] אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

And the wicked person that turns around / repents from all his sins which he did,

וְשָׁמַר אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי וַעֲשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה

and observes all My statutes, and does justice and righteousness,

חַיָּה יִחְיֶה לֹא יָמוּת:

he shall surely live—he will not die!

Ezekiel 18:22,

כָּל־פְּשָׁעָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לֹא יִזְכְּרוּ לוֹ

All his transgressions which he did will not be remembered to / for him;

בְּצִדְקָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִחְיֶה:

in / by his righteousness which he did, he shall live!

Ezekiel 18:28,

וַיִּרְאֶה [וַיָּשׁוּב] מִכָּל־פְּשָׁעָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

And he feared, and he repented from all his transgressions which he did—

חַיָּה יִחְיֶה לֹא יָמוּת:

he shall surely live, he will not die!

Ezekiel 33:13,

בְּאֹמְרִי לְצַדִּיק חַיָּה יִחְיֶה

When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live—

וְהוּא־בָטַח עַל־צִדְקָתוֹ וַעֲשָׂה עוֹל

and he trusted in his righteousness, and did injustice,

כָּל־[צִדְקָתוֹ] [צִדְקָתוֹ] לֹא תִזְכְּרָנָה

all his righteousness will not be remembered,

וּבְעוֹלוֹ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה
and in his injustice which he did,

בּוֹ יָמוּת:
in / by it he will die!

Ezekiel 33:15,

חָבַל יָשִׁיב רָשָׁע
a wicked person shall return a pledge;
וְזָלָה יִשְׁלֹם
he shall restore anything stolen;

בְּחֻקֹת הַחַיִּים הֵלֵךְ
by statutes of the life he walked
לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת עוֹל
in order to not do injustice;

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה
he shall surely live;
לֹא יָמוּת:
he shall not die!

Ezekiel 33:16,

כָּל- (חַטָּאתוֹ) [חַטָּאתָיו] אֲשֶׁר חָטָא
All his sins which he sinned
לֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה לוֹ
will not be remembered against him;

מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה עָשָׂה
justice and righteousness he did--
חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה:
He shall surely live!

Ezekiel 33:19,

וּבִשְׁבוֹב רָשָׁע מִרְשָׁעָתוֹ
and when a wicked person turns from his wickedness,
וַעֲשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה
and does justice and righteousness,
עֲלֵיהֶם הוּא יִחְיֶה:
because of them he shall live.

Ezekiel 47:9,

וְהָיָה
And it will happen--
כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה | אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׂרָץ
every living creature that swarms--

אֵל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹא שָׁם נַחְלִים יִחְיֶה
to all—wherever its two wadis / torrent-valleys come—it will live!

וְהָיָה הַדָּגָה רַבָּה מְאֹד
And it will happen—the fish—exceedingly many!

כִּי בָאוּ שָׁמָּה הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה
Because they came there—these waters,

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ
and they were healed,
וְחָי כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יָבוֹא שָׁמָּה הַנַּחֲלִים:
and it will live—everything wherever the wadi / torrent-valley will come!

Habakkuk 2:4,

הִנֵּה עִפְלָה
Look—he is heedless / presumptuous—

לֹא-יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
his innermost being was not right within him.

וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה:
But a righteous person will live by his / His true-faithfulness / steadfastness.,

For the Future Phrase, וְחָי, “and He Will Live,” see:

Genesis 3:22,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
And YHWH God said,
הֲנִי הָאָדָם הַזֶּה כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ
Look—the human being became like one of Us,

לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע
to know good and evil;
וְעַתָּה פֶּן-יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ
and now, lest / in order that he will not stretch out his hand

וְלָקַח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים
and will also take from (the) tree of the life / lives—

וְאָכַל
and he will eat,
וְחָי לְעֹלָם:
and he will live to long-lasting time...

Exodus 33:20,

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פָּנָי
And He said, You will not be able to see my faces

כִּי לֹא-יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחָי:
because the human being will not see Me and live!

Leviticus 18:5,

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי

And you shall keep My statutes, and My judicial-decisions—

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם

which, the human being who will do them—

וַחַי בָּהֶם

and he will live by them!

Leviticus 25:35,

וְכִי־יִמְוֶךְ אָחִיךָ

And if your brother grows poor

וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ

and his hand shakes with you;

וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ

and you shall take firm hold on him—

גֵּר וְתוֹשֵׁב

a temporary resident and stranger;

וַחַי עִמָּךְ:

and he shall live with you.

Leviticus 25:36,

אַל־תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ נִשְׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית

You (singular) shall not take from him interest and profit;

וִירָאָתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ

and you shall tremble in awe from (before) your God;

וַחַי אָחִיךָ עִמָּךְ:

And your brother shall live with you.

Numbers 21:8,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

And YHWH said to Moses,

עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שָׂרָף

Make for yourself a flying serpent

וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־נֹס

and set it on a pole,

וְהָיָה כָּל־הַנִּשּׁוּף

and it will happen, everyone who is bitten,

וַרְאָה אֹתוֹ וַחַי:

and he will see it, and he shall live.

Numbers 21:9,

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נְחָשׁ נְחָשֶׁת

So Moses made a bronze serpent

וַיִּשְׂמְהוּ עַל־הַנֹּס

and set it on a pole.

וְהָיָה אִם־נִשְׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ

And it would happen, if the serpent bit a man--

וְהִבִּיט אֶל־נִחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וַחֲיִי:

And he would look at the bronze serpent and he would live.

Deuteronomy 4:42,

לָנוּם שָׂמָּה רוֹצֵחַ

to flee there [to a city of refuge], one murdering

אֲשֶׁר יִרְצַח אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ בְּבִלְי־דַעַת

who murders his neighbor without knowing,

וְהוּא לֹא־שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם

and he was not hating him previously,

וְנָס אֶל־אַחַת מִן־הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּ

and he will flee to one of these cities,

וַחֲיִי:

and he will live!

Deuteronomy 5:24,

וַתֹּאמְרוּ הֵן הָרָאנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

And you people said, Look—YHWH our God caused us to see

אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ וְאֶת־גְּדְלוֹ

His Glorious Radiance, and His greatness,

וְאֶת־קוֹלוֹ שָׁמַעְנוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ

and we heard His voice from the fire's midst;

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה רָאִינוּ

this very day we saw

כִּי־יְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם

that God will speak with the human,

וַחֲיִי:

and he will live!

Deuteronomy 19:4-5,

4 וְזֶה דְבַר הַרְצָח אֲשֶׁר־יָנוּס שָׂמָּה וַחֲיִי

And this (is the) word (for) the murderer who shall flee there and will live--

אֲשֶׁר יַכֶּה אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ בְּבִלְי־דַעַת

who (fatally) struck his neighbor without knowing,

וְהוּא לֹא־שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשָׁם:

and he was not hating him, in the past;

5 וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֵא אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ בִיעַר לְחַטֵּב עֵצִים

and one who will go with his neighbor into the forest to chop / cut down trees;

וְנִדְחָה יָדוֹ בַּגִּרְזֵן לְכַרֵּת הָעֵץ

and his hand slips on the ax, (aimed) to cut down the tree,

וְנָשַׁל הַבְּרָזֶל מִן־הָעֵץ

and the iron (axe-head) slips off from the tree,

וּמִצָּא אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וּמָת

and finds his neighbor he dies—
הוּא יָנוּס אֶל-אַחַת הָעָרִים-הָאֵלֶּה וְחָי:
he shall flee to one of these cities, and he shall live...

Nehemiah 6:11,

וְאָמַרְהָ הַאִישׁ כְּמוֹנִי יִבְרַח

And I said, Should a person like me run away?

וּמִי כְמוֹנִי אֲשֶׁר-יָבֹא אֶל-הַהֵיכָל וְחָי

And who like me, who would come into the temple, and live?

לֹא אָבֹא:

I will not come!

Jeremiah 38:2,

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת

The one dwelling in this city will die,

בַּחֶרֶב בְּרָעָב וּבַדָּבָר

by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence.

וְהַיֹּצֵא אֶל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים (וַיְחִיָּה) [וְחָיָה]

And the one going forth to the Chaldeans—and he will live;

וְהִיחָה-לּוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל

and his innermost-being / life will be to / for him for spoil;

וְחָי:

and he will live!

Ezekiel 18:13, (see above)

Ezekiel 18:24,

וּבָשׁוּב צַדִּיק מִצְדָּקָתוֹ וַעֲשָׂה עוֹל

And when a righteous person turns from his righteousness, and does injustice,

כָּל הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הַרְשָׁע יַעֲשֶׂה וְחָי

like all the abominations which the wicked person did, shall he do (them) and live?

כָּל-צְדָקָתוֹ [צְדָקָתוֹ] אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה

All his righteousnesses which he did will not be remembered;

בְּמַעֲלוֹ אֲשֶׁר-מַעַל

by his unfaithfulness which he did unfaithfully,

וּבַחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-חָטָא

and by his sin by which he sinned,

בָּם יָמוּת:

by them he shall die!

Ezekiel 20:11,

וָאֶתַּן לָהֶם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי

And I gave to them My statutes (feminine plural),

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי הוֹרַעְתִּי אֹתָם
 and My commandments I made known to them,
 אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם
 which the human / man shall do,
 וַחַי בָּהֶם:
 and he will live by them.

Ezekiel 20:13,

וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר
 And Israel's household rebelled against Me in the desert / wilderness.

בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא־הָלְכוּ
 By My statutes (feminine plural) they did not walk,

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי מָאָסוּ
 and My commandments they rejected / refused,

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם
 which a human / man will do,

וַחַי בָּהֶם
 and he will live by them.

וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ מְאֹד
 And My sabbaths they polluted / profaned exceedingly.

וָאָמַר לְשַׁפֹּךְ חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם
 And I said / determined to pour out My wrath against them

בַּמִּדְבָּר לְכֹלֹתָם:
 in the desert / wilderness, to finish them off!

Ezekiel 20:21,

וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי הַבָּנִים
 And the children / sons rebelled against Me.

בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא־הָלְכוּ
 By My statutes (feminine plural) they did not walk,

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ
 and My commandments they did not keep,

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָם
 to do them—

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם
 which the human / man will do them,

וַחַי בָּהֶם
 and he will live by them.

אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ
 My sabbaths they polluted / profaned.

וָאָמַר לְשַׁפֹּךְ חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם
 And I said / determined to pour out My wrath upon them,

לְכַלּוֹת אַפִּי בָם בַּמִּדְבָּר:

to finish off My anger against them in the desert / wilderness.

Ezekiel 47:9,

וְהָיָה

And it will happen--

כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה | אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁרָץ

every living creature that swarms--

אֵל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא שָׁם נַחֲלִים יַחְיֶה

to all--wherever its two wadis / torrent-valleys come--it will live!

וְהָיָה הַדָּגָה רַבָּה מְאֹד

And it will happen--the fish--exceedingly many!

כִּי בָאוּ שָׁמָּה הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה

Because they came there--these waters,

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ

and they were healed,

וְחָי כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יָבֹא שָׁמָּה הַנַּחֲלִים:

and it will live--everything wherever the wadi / torrent-valley will come!

H. D. Preuss, in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament III**, gives the following information concerning this noun in the **Hebrew Bible**:

“The frequency of occurrences of *gillul* [in the plural, *gillulim*] in **Ezekiel** leads one to suppose that he coined this word...In **Ezekiel** *gillulim* is used mainly to denote a sin of idolatry committed by Israel in the past and also in the exilic present. He employs it in ‘Demonstration Oracles’ [Zimmerli’s phrase] which contain announcements of judgment and the reasons for it. In **Ezekiel 6:2-10, 11-14**...Yahweh announces judgment. The primary reason for it is that Judah has turned back after *gillulim* (**6:8-10**; compare **8:10**; **16:36**...and especially **chapters 20** and **23**), and when it takes place the Israelites will no longer fall down before ‘their’ idols in worship...but will fall down before them slain (**6:4**...compare **Leviticus 26:30**)...

“Furthermore, the idols that the people have served (**Ezekiel 6:13**) and with which they have practiced ‘harlotry,’ i.e., cultic apostasy (**6:9**...), will be destroyed as well (**6:6**). Yahweh will demonstrate the impotence of these idols by His historical acts (**6:1-7**...**8-10**), and the knowledge of Yahweh will stand in contrast to their end (**6:13**). The problem of idols is not limited to **chapter 6**, but also runs through **chapters 16, 20** and **23** ‘like a crimson thread’ (Wolff)...

“In **6:11-14** we also encounter the more specific statement that Judah’s apostasy to idols is a תועבה, **to(ebhah**, ‘an abomination,’ to Yahweh—a common phrase in **Ezekiel** (compare **8:9-10**; **18:12**; **22:1-4**). This (possibly cultic) word is used especially in **Deuteronomy, Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel** as a more specific definition of syncretistic forms of worship that are foreign to Yahwism, and in **Ezekiel** it is a ‘collective noun for all cultically defiling sins’ (quoting Zimmerli)...

“The frequent connection between *gillulim* and טמא, **tame**, ‘to be unclean, to defile oneself’ in **Ezekiel (20:7, 13, 31; 22:3-4; 23:7, 30; 36:18, 25)**—idols are uncleanness personified; *sheqets*, ‘detestable thing,’ in **8:10; 20:7**; and also *gel*, ‘dung,’ in **4:12, 15; 11:18**...also emphasizes the fact that the very name *gillulim* indicates an essential feature of impurity, so that the word denotes what is totally foreign to Yahweh, concretely defines Judah’s preceding apostasy from Yahweh, and thus provides the reason for judgment. Yahweh will now deliver up the temple that has been defiled in this way (**Ezekiel 8:9-10**) to complete defilement (**9:7**)...

“This emphasis on uncleanness and defilement, which calls to mind the not infrequent priestly influence in **Ezekiel**, goes hand in hand with the prophet’s basic insistence in his historical surveys on understanding the whole history of Israel as a struggle between Yahweh and idols...Idolatry is *the* sin of Israel. Anyone who clings to idols (even if he is in exile) can expect to receive nothing but a corresponding word of judgment from Yahweh Himself (**14:7ff.**; compare **18:12**), and even death, since idolatry carries its own punishment as one falls under its curse (**18:12-3**). Yahweh calls for repentance, for separation from idols (**14:6ff.**; compare **18:6, 12, 15**). The righteous does not practice idolatry (**18:6, 15**); hence he can and should ‘live’...

“When Ezekiel speaks about the gift of the new heart and spirit, it is obvious to him that this must be connected with a cleansing from the sin of idolatry, which makes one unclean (**Ezekiel 36:24-28**).” (Pp. 2-4)

3.

Predictions / Proclamations of the “End of the World.”

- 66–70 C.E. Simon bar Giora, Jewish Essene. The Essene sect of Jewish ascetics saw the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 66–70 in Judea as the final end-time battle before the arrival of the Messiah. By the authority of Simon, coins were minted declaring the redemption of Israel.
- 365 Hilary of Poitiers announced that the end of the world would happen during that year.
- 375–400 Martin of Tours stated that the world would end before 400, writing, "There is no doubt that the Antichrist has already been born. Firmly established already in his early years, he will, after reaching maturity, achieve supreme power."
- 500 Hippolytus of Rome, Sextus Julius Africanus, and Irenaeus. All three predicted Jesus would return during the year 500. One of the predictions was based on the dimensions of Noah's ark.
- 793, April 6 Beatus of Liébana a Spanish monk prophesied the second coming of Christ and the end of the world on that day to a crowd of people.
- 800 Sextus Julius Africanus revised the date of Doomsday to the year 800.
- 799–806 Gregory of Tours calculated the end would occur between 799 and 806.
- 848 Thiota Declared that the world would end during that year.
- 992–995 Various Christians maintained that Good Friday coincided with the Feast of the Annunciation; this had long been believed to be the event that would bring forth the Antichrist, and thus the end-times, within 3 years.
- 1000, January 1 Pope Sylvester II predicted the millennium apocalypse at the end of the Christian millennium. Various Christian clerics predicted the end of the world on this date, including Pope Sylvester II. Riots occurred in Europe and pilgrims headed east to Jerusalem.
- 1033 Various Christians, following the failure of the January 1, 1000 prediction, some theorists proposed that the end would occur 1000 years after Jesus' death, instead of his birth.
- Late 1000's. Various Christians, leading up to the crusades, made pilgrimage to Jerusalem in hope of being saved, for the "dread day of wrath was upon them: men no longer tilled the earth, fearing the end of all things."
- 1260 Joachim of Fiore, an Italian mystic determined that the millennium would begin between 1200 and 1260.
- 1284 Pope Innocent III (died 1216) predicted that the world would end 666 years after the rise of Islam.
- 1290 The followers of Joachim of Fiore rescheduled the end to 1290, and then 1335, when his 1260 prophecy failed.
- 1346–1351 The black plague spreading across Europe was interpreted by many Europeans as the sign of the end of times.
- 1370 Jean de Roquetaillade predicted the Antichrist was to come in 1366, and the millennium would begin either in 1368 or 1370.
- 1378 Arnaldus de Villa Nova wrote that the antichrist was to come in this year.
- 1504 Sandro Botticelli believed he was living during the tribulation, and that the millennium would begin in three and a half years from 1500. He wrote into his *The Mystical Nativity* that the Devil was loose and would soon be chained.
- 1524, February 1 A group of astrologers in London predicted the world would end by a flood starting in London, based on calculations made the previous June. 20,000 Londoners left their homes and headed for higher ground in anticipation.
- 1524, February 20 Johannes Stöffler predicted that a planetary alignment in Pisces was seen as a sign of the millennium.
- 1524–1526 The Anabaptist, Thomas Müntzer predicted that 1525 would mark the beginning of the millennium. His followers were killed by cannon fire in an uneven battle with government

- troops. He died under torture and was beheaded.
- 1528, May 27 Hans Hut predicted the end would occur on this day.
- 1528 Johannes Stöfler gave a revised date after his 1524 prediction failed to come true.
- 1533, October 19 The mathematician Michael Stifel calculated that the judgement day would begin at 8:00 am on this day.
- 1533 The Anabaptist prophet Melchior Hoffman predicted Christ's second coming to take place this year in Strasbourg. He claimed that 144,000 people would be saved, while the rest of the world would be consumed by fire.
- 1534, April 5 Jan Matthys predicted that the apocalypse would take place on this day and only the city of Münster would be spared.
- 1555 The French theologian Pierre d'Ailly around the year 1400 wrote that 6845 years of human history had already passed, and the end of the world would be in the 7000th year.
- 1585 Michael Servetus in his book *The Restoration of Christianity*, the Spanish born reformer claimed that the Devil's reign in this world had started in 325 A.D., at the Council of Nicea, and would last for 1260 years, thus ending in 1585.
- 1588 Regiomontanus predicted the end of the world during this year.
- 1600 Martin Luther predicted the end of the world would occur no later than 1600.
- 1624, February 1 London astrologers who had predicted the deluge of February 1, 1524 recalculated the date to February 1, 1624 after their first prophecy failed.
- 1648 Sabbatai Zevi, a rabbi from Smyrna, Turkey, using the kabbalah (the ancient Jewish tradition of mystical interpretation of the **Bible**) proclaimed that the Messiah would come during that year.
- 1654 Helisaeus Roeslin, a physician, predicted that the world would end this year based on a nova [a star that suddenly increases its light output tremendously and then fades away to its former obscurity in a few months or years] that occurred in 1572.
- 1656 Christopher Columbus In his *Book of Prophecies* (1501), predicted that the world would end during 1656.
- 1657 Fifth Monarchists, a group of radical Christians predicted that the final apocalyptic battle and the destruction of the antichrist were to take place between 1655 and 1657.
- 1658 Christopher Columbus claimed that the world was created in 5343 B.C.E., and would last 7000 years. Assuming no year zero, that means the end would come in 1658.
- 1649-1661 Fifth Monarchists: the presence of 666 in the date, the death of 100,000 Londoners to bubonic plague, and the great fire of London led to superstitious fears of the end of the world from some Christians.
- 1660 Joseph Mede claimed that the antichrist had appeared in 456, and the end would come in 1660.
- 1666 Sabbatai Zevi, following his failed prediction of 1648, recalculated the end of the earth in 1666
- 1673 William Aspinwall, a Fifth Monarchist claimed the millennium would begin by this year.
- 1688 John Napier, a mathematician, calculated the end of the world would be this year based on calculations from the **Book of Revelation**.
- 1689 Pierre Jurieu prophesied that judgment day would occur this year.
- 1694 John Mason, an Anglican priest, predicted the millennium would begin by this year.
 Johann Heinrich Alsted predicted the millennium would begin by this year.
 Johann Jacob Zimmermann believed that Jesus would return and the world would end this year.
- 1697 Cotton Mather, a Puritan minister predicted the world would end this year. After the prediction failed, he revised the date of the end two more times.
- 1700 John Napier, who after his 1688 prediction failed to come true, revised his end of the world prediction to this year.
 Henry Archer In his 1642 work, *The Personall Reigne of Christ Upon Earth*, predicted the second coming of Jesus would occur in approximately this year.
- 1705, 1707 and 1708 Camisard prophets [Huguenots, French Protestants] of the rugged and isolated

- Cévennes region of south-central France predicted the end of the world would occur in one of these years.
- 1716 Cotton Mather, who after his 1697 prediction failed to come true, changed it to this year.
- 1719, April 5 Jacob Bernoulli, a mathematician, predicted a comet would destroy the earth on this day.
- 1700–1734 Nicholas of Cusa, a Roman Catholic cardinal, predicted the end would occur between 1700 and 1734.
- 1736, October 16 William Whiston, known for his translation of the works of Josephus, predicted a comet colliding with the earth this year.
- 1736 Cotton Mather's third and final prediction for the end of the world.
- 1757 Emanuel Swedenborg claimed that the last judgment occurred in the spiritual world this year.
- 1780, May 19 Connecticut General Assembly members, New Englanders, interpreted the sky turning dark during the day as a sign of the end times. The primary cause of the event is believed to have been a combination of smoke from forest fires, a thick fog, and cloud cover.
- 1789 Pierre d'Ailly, a 14th century Roman Catholic cardinal, claimed that the year 1789 would bring the coming of the antichrist.
- 1792 and 1794 Shakers predicted the world would end in both 1792 and 1794.
- 1795, November 19 Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, while campaigning for Richard Brothers' release, proclaimed that the world would end on this day.
- 1793–1795 Richard Brothers, a retired sailor stated the millennium would begin between the years 1793 and 1795. He was eventually committed to an insane asylum.
- 1805 Christopher Love, a Presbyterian minister, predicted the destruction of the world by earthquake in 1805, followed by an age of everlasting peace when God would be known by all.
- 1806 Mary Bateman In Leeds, England in 1806 discovered a hen that began laying eggs on which the phrase "Christ is coming" was written. Eventually it was discovered to be a hoax. The owner, Mary Bateman, had written on the eggs in a corrosive ink so as to etch the eggs, and reinserted the eggs back into the hen's oviduct.
- 1814, October 19 Joanna Southcott, a 64-year-old self-described prophet, claimed she was pregnant with the Christ child, and that he would be born on October 19, 1814. She died later that year, not having delivered a child, and an autopsy proved she had not been pregnant.
- 1836 Johann Albrecht Bengel, a widely known interpreter of the **Bible**, in the 1730's proclaimed that, based on a careful study of the prophecies of the **Bible**, judgment day would come in 1836, with the Pope as the anti-Christ and the Freemasons representing the "false prophet" of the **Book of Revelation**.
- 1836 John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, foresaw the millennium beginning this year. He wrote that **Revelation 12:14** referred to the years 1058–1836, "when Christ should come."
- 1843, April 28 Although it was not officially endorsed by their leadership, many Millerites expected the second coming to occur on April 28 or at the end of 1843.
- 1843 Harriet Livermore, a preacher, predicted the world would end.
- 1844, March 21 William Miller predicted Christ would return on this day.
- 1844, October 22 After Christ did not return on March 21, 1844, the Millerites then revised William Miller's prediction to October 22, 1844, claiming to have miscalculated Scripture. The realization that the predictions were incorrect resulted in the "Great Disappointment," the reaction that followed Baptist preacher William Miller's proclamations that Jesus Christ would return to the earth in 1844. Many followers had given away all of their possessions and were left bereft when the prophecy proved false.
- 1847, August 7 George Rapp, founder of the Harmony Society, preached that Jesus would return in his lifetime, even as he lay dying on August 7, 1847.
- 1847 Harriet Livermore made this her second prediction of the end of the world.

- 1853–1856 Many people thought the Crimean War was the Battle of Armageddon.
- 1862 John Cumming, a Scottish clergyman, stated it was 6000 years since creation in 1862, and that the world would end in this year. Joseph Morris, an English convert to Mormonism, had revelations to gather his followers and wait for the second coming, through successive prophesied days.
- 1863 John Wroe, founder of the Christian Israelite Church, calculated that the millennium would begin this year.
- 1873 Jonas Wendell, in 1870, published his views in the booklet entitled *The Present Truth, or Meat in Due Season* concluding that the second advent was sure to occur in 1873.
- 1874 Charles Taze Russell predicted the return of Jesus in 1874, and after this date reinterpreted the prediction to say that Jesus had indeed returned in invisible form.
- 1881 Mother Shipton, a 15th-century prophet was quoted as saying "The world to an end shall come, In eighteen hundred and eighty one" in a book published in 1862. In 1873 it was revealed to be a forgery; however, this did not stop some people from expecting the end.
- 1890 Wovoka, founder of the Ghost Dance movement which originated among the Paiute Indians around 1870, with the tide of the movement coming in 1889 with the Paiute shaman Wovoka, Jack Wilson. Wovoka had a vision during a sun eclipse in 1889. In this vision he saw the second coming of Christ in 1890, and received warning about the evils of the white man.
- 1901 The Catholic Apostolic Church, founded in 1831, claimed that Jesus would return by the time the last of its 12 founding members died. The last member died in 1901.
- 1910 Camille Flammarion predicted that the 1910 appearance of Halley's Comet "would impregnate that atmosphere and possibly snuff out all life on the planet", but not the planet itself. "Comet pills" were sold to protect against toxic gases. The comet indicated the second coming of Christ to many.
- 1892–1911 Charles Piazzi Smyth, a pyramidologist concluded from his research on the dimensions of the Great Pyramid of Giza that the second coming would occur between 1892 and 1911.
- 1914 Charles Taze Russell wrote concerning "...the battle of the great day of God Almighty ...The date of the close of that "battle" is definitely marked in Scripture as October 1914. It is already in progress, its beginning dating from October, 1874."
- 1915 John Chilembwe, a Baptist educator and leader of a rebellion in Nyasaland [present day Malawi], predicted the millennium would begin this year.
- 1918 International Bible Students Association announced that Christendom shall be cut off and glorification of the Little Flock (The Church) in the Spring of 1918 A. D.
- 1920 International Bible Students Association In 1918 proclaimed that Christendom would go down as a system to oblivion and be succeeded by revolutionary governments. God would "destroy the churches wholesale and the church members by the millions." Church members would "perish by the sword of war, revolution and anarchy." The dead would lie unburied. In 1920 all earthly governments would disappear, with worldwide anarchy prevailing.
- 1925, February 13 Margaret Rowen, a Seventh-day Adventist, claimed that the angel Gabriel appeared before her in a vision and told her that the world would end at midnight on this date.
- 1926 Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister of Britain, a stern moralist, believed that the world was growing nearer and nearer to the apocalypse due to what he viewed as the rampant immorality of the times in Europe.
- 1935 Sep Wilbur Glenn Voliva, an evangelist, announced that "the world is going to go 'puff' and disappear" in September 1935.
- 1936 Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God told members of his church that the rapture was to take place in 1936, and that only they would be saved. After the prophecy failed, he changed the date three more times.

- 1941 Jehovah's Witnesses, which branched off from the Bible Student movement, made a prediction of the end of the world.
- 1943 Herbert W. Armstrong gave the first of three revised dates after his 1936 prediction failed to come true.
- 1947 John Ballou Newbrough, author of *Oahspe: A New Bible*, foresaw the destruction of all nations and the beginning of post-apocalyptic anarchy in this year.
- 1954, December 21 Dorothy Martin predicted that the world was to be destroyed by terrible flooding on this date. She was the leader of a UFO cult called Brotherhood of the Seven Rays. The fallout of the group after the prediction failed was the basis for the 1956 book *When Prophecy Fails*.
- 1959, April 22 Florence Houteff, the 2nd Prophet of the Branch Davidians predicted the apocalypse foretold in the would proceeded on this date. The failure of the prophecy led to the split of the sect into several sub-sects, the most prominent led by Benjamin and Lois Roden.
- 1962, February 4 Jeane Dixon, along with various Indian astrologers, predicted a planetary alignment on this day was to bring destruction to the world. Mass prayer meetings were held in India.
- 1967, August 20 George Van Tassel, a UFO prophet who claimed to have channeled an alien named Ashtar, predicted that this day would mark the beginning of the third woe of the **Apocalypse**, during which the southeastern United States would be destroyed by a Soviet nuclear attack.
- 1967 Jim Jones, founder of the Peoples Temple stated he had visions that a nuclear holocaust was to take place in 1967.
- 1969, August 9 George Williams, founder of the Church of the Firstborn, predicted the second coming of Christ would occur on this day.
- 1969 Charles Manson, later convicted of murder, predicted that an apocalyptic race war would occur in 1969 and ordered the Tate-LaBianca murders in an attempt to bring it about. Manson based his prediction on his interpretation of the Beatles' "Helter-Skelter."
- 1972 Herbert W. Armstrong's second of three revised dates after his 1936 and 1943 predictions failed to come true.
- 1974, January 11–21 David Berg, the leader of Children of God, predicted that there would be a colossal doomsday event heralded by Comet Kohoutek.
- 1975 Herbert W. Armstrong's fourth and final false prediction. From 1966 on, Jehovah's Witnesses published articles which stated that the fall of 1975 would be 6000 years since man's creation, and suggested that Armageddon could be finished by then.
- 1976 Lekhraj Kirpalani's third false prediction. Lekhraj Kirpalani, founder of the Brahma Kumaris, has made a number of false predictions of a global Armageddon which the religion believes it will inspire, internally calling it "Destruction" but externally presenting it as "Transformation." During Destruction, Brahma Kumari leaders teach the world will be purified, all of the rest of humanity killed by nuclear or civil wars and natural disasters which will include the sinking of all other continents except India. All other religions will also be destroyed, so that they alone will inherit the earth for 2,500 years. These predictions are generally hidden from outsiders and, as they have failed, have been removed from their literature.
- 1977 John Wroe, founder of the Christian Israelite Church, predicted this year for the Battle of Armageddon to occur.
William M. Branham, a Christian minister, predicted the rapture would occur no later than the year 1977.
- 1980 Leland Jensen in 1978 predicted that there would be a nuclear disaster in 1980, followed by two decades of conflict, culminating in God's kingdom being established on earth.
- 1981 Chuck Smith, founder of Calvary Chapel, predicted the generation of 1948 would be the last generation, and that the world would end by 1981. Smith admitted that he "could be wrong" but continued to say in the same sentence that his prediction was "a deep conviction in my heart, and all my plans are predicated upon that belief."

1982, April–June

Full-page ads were published in many newspapers April 24–25, 1982, stating that "The Christ is Now Here!" and that he would make himself known "within the next two months."

- 1982, March 10 John Gribbin and Stephen Plagemann predicted in their 1974 book *The Jupiter Effect* that combined gravitational forces of aligned planets would create a number of catastrophes, including a great earthquake on the San Andreas Fault.
- 1982, June 21 Benjamin Creme took out an ad in the *Los Angeles Times* stating that the second coming would occur in June 1982 with the Maitreya [a self-proclaimed world teacher] announcing it on worldwide television.
- 1982 Pat Robertson, in late 1976, predicted that the end of the world would come in 1982.
- 1985 Lester Sumrall, a Christian minister, predicted the end in this year, even writing a book about it entitled "I Predict 1985."
- 1986, April 29 Leland Jensen predicted that Halley's Comet would be pulled into earth's orbit on April 29, 1986, causing widespread destruction.
- 1987, August 17 José Argüelles claimed that the Battle of Armageddon would take place unless 144,000 people gathered in certain places in the world in order to "resonate in harmony" on this day.
- 1988, September 13 and October 3 Edgar C. Whisenant predicted in his book *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988* that the rapture of the Christian Church would occur between September 11 and 13, 1988. After his September predictions failed to come true, Whisenant revised his prediction date to October 3.
- 1989, September 30 After all his 1988 predictions failed to come true, Whisenant revised his prediction date to this day.
- 1990, April 23 Elizabeth Clare Prophet predicted a nuclear war would start on this day, with the world ending 12 years later, leading her followers to stockpile a shelter with supplies and weapons. Later, after Prophet's prediction did not come to pass, she was diagnosed with epilepsy and Alzheimer's disease.
- 1991, September 9 Menachem Mendel Schneerson, a Russian-born rabbi, called for the Messiah to come by the start of the Jewish New Year.
- Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam declared that the Gulf War would be the "War of Armageddon which is the final war."
- 1992, September 28 Rollen Stewart, a born-again Christian predicted the rapture would take place on this day.
- 1992, October 28 Lee Jang Rim, leader of the Dami Mission church, predicted the rapture would occur on this day.
- 1993 David Berg predicted the tribulation would start in 1989 and that the second coming would take place in 1993.
- 1994, May 2, Neal Chase, a Bahá'í sect leader predicted that New York would be destroyed by a nuclear bomb on March 23, 1994, and the Battle of Armageddon would take place 40 days later.
- 1994, September 6 and September 29; October 2 Harold Camping predicted the rapture would occur on September 6, 1994. When it failed to occur he revised the date to September 29 and then to October 2.
- 1995, March 31 Harold Camping's fourth predicted date for the end. This would be Camping's last prediction until 2011.
- 1996, December 17 Sheldan Nidle, a California psychic, predicted that the world would end on this date, with the arrival of 16 million space ships and a host of angels.
- 1997, March 26 Marshall Applewhite, leader of the Heaven's Gate cult, claimed that a spacecraft was trailing the Comet Hale-Bopp and argued that suicide was "the only way to evacuate this Earth"

- so that the cult members' souls could board the supposed craft and be taken to another "level of existence above human." Applewhite and 38 of his followers committed mass suicide.
- 1997, October 23 James Ussher, a 17th century Irish Archbishop predicted this date to be 6000 years since creation, and therefore the end of the world.
- 1998, March 31 Hon-Ming Chen, leader of the Taiwanese cult God's Salvation Church, or Chen Tao –"The True Way"–claimed that God would come to earth in a flying saucer at 10:00 am on this date. Moreover, God would have the same physical appearance as Chen himself. Chen chose to base his cult in Garland, Texas, because he thought it sounded like "God's Land." On March 25, God was to appear on Channel 18 on every TV set in the United States.
- 1999 A prediction attributed to Nostradamus / Humanityus stating the "King of Terror" would come from the sky in "1999 and seven months" led to fears of the end.
- 1999, August 18 The well known psychic Amazing Criswell predicted this date for the end of the world.
- 1999, September 11 Philip Berg Berg, dean of the worldwide Kabbalah Centre, stated that on this date "a ball of fire will descend, destroying almost all of mankind, all vegetation, all forms of life."
- 1999 The renowned linguist Charles Berlitz predicted the end would occur in this year. He did not predict how it would occur, stating that it might involve nuclear devastation, asteroid impact, pole shift or other earth changes.
- Hon-Ming Chen's cult God's Salvation Church, now relocated to upstate New York, preached that a nuclear holocaust would destroy Europe and Asia sometime between October 1 and December 31.
- James Gordon Lindsay, founder of Christ for the Nations Institute, predicted the great tribulation would begin before the year 2000.
- Timothy Dwight IV, President of Yale University foresaw Christ's millennium starting by 2000.
- Nazim Al-Haqqani, a Turkish Cypriot Sufi Muslim sheykh and spiritual leader, predicted that the last judgment would occur before the year 2000.
- 2000, January 1 During and before 1999 there were widespread predictions of a Y2K (Year Two Thousand) computer bug that would crash many computers on midnight of December 31 1999 and cause malfunctions leading to major catastrophes worldwide, and that society would cease to function.
- Credonia Mwerinde, Joseph Kibweteere An estimated 778 followers of this Ugandan religious movement perished in a devastating fire and a series of poisonings and killings that were either a group suicide or an orchestrated mass murder by group leaders after their predictions of the apocalypse failed to come about.
- Jerry Falwell foresaw God pouring out his judgment on the world on this day.
- Authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins stated that the Y2K bug would trigger global economic chaos, which the antichrist would use to rise to power. As the date approached, however, they changed their minds.
- 2000, April 6 James Harmston, leader of the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days predicted the second coming of Christ would occur on this day.
- 2000, May 5 The Nuwaubian Nation movement claimed that the planetary lineup would cause a "star holocaust," pulling the planets toward the sun on this day.
- Richard W. Noone In his book '5/5/2000: ICE, The Ultimate Disaster', Noone predicted that a "planetary alignment" on this date would trigger a series of natural disasters, beginning with a disruption of earth's polar ice.
- 2000 Peter Olivi, a 13th-century theologian wrote that the antichrist would come to power between the years 1300 and 1340, and the last judgment would take place around the year 2000.
- Isaac Newton, an English physicist and mathematician (described in his own day as a "natural philosopher") who is widely recognized as one of the most influential scientists of all time and a key figure in the scientific revolution, predicted that Christ's millennium would begin in the year

2000 in his book *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John*. Ruth Montgomery, a self-described Christian psychic, predicted the earth's axis would shift and the antichrist would reveal himself in this year.

Edgar Cayce, a Christian psychic, predicted the second coming would occur this year. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, predicted the Kingdom of Heaven would be established in this year.

Christian pastor Ed Dobson predicted the end would occur in his book *The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000*.

Christian minister Lester Sumrall predicted the end in his book *I Predict 2000*.

18th century preacher Jonathan Edwards predicted that Christ's thousand-year reign would begin in this year.

2001 Tynnetta Muhammad, columnist for the Nation of Islam predicted the end would occur in this year.

2002 Various Yoruba priests, of the people of southwestern Nigeria and Benin, predicted dramatic tragedy and crisis in 2002, including coups, war, disease, and flooding.

2003, May 27 Nancy Lieder, founder of the website ZetaTalk, who claims to be a contactee with the ability to receive messages from extraterrestrials from the Zeta Reticuli star system through an implant in her brain. She states that she was chosen to warn mankind that the object would sweep through the inner Solar System in May 2003 (though that date was later postponed) causing Earth to undergo a physical pole shift that would destroy most of humanity.

2003, November 29 Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult predicted the world would be destroyed by a nuclear war between October 30 and November 29, 2003.

2006, September 12 Yisrayl Hawkins, Pastor and Overseer of the House of Yahweh, Abilene, Texas in the February 2006 newsletter predicted the start of a nuclear war on September 12, 2006.

2007, April 29 Pat Robertson in his 1990 book *The New Millennium*, suggests this date as the day of Earth's destruction.

2010 Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn predicted the world would end during this year.

2011, May 21 Harold Camping predicted that the rapture and devastating earthquakes would occur with God taking approximately 3% of the world's population into heaven, and that the end of the world would occur five months later on October 21, 2011.

2011, September 29 Ronald Weinland stated Jesus Christ would return on this day. He prophesied nuclear explosions in United States port cities by July 2008 as the blowing of the second trumpet of **Revelation**. After his prophecy failed to come true he changed the date for the return of Jesus Christ to May 27, 2012.

2011, October 21 When his original date failed to come about, Harold Camping revised his prediction and said that on May 21, a "Spiritual Judgment" took place, and that both the physical rapture and the end of the world would occur on October 21, 2011.

2011 August–October There were fears amongst the public that Comet Elenin travelling almost directly between earth and the sun would cause disturbances to the earth's crust, causing massive earthquakes and tidal waves. Others predicted that Elenin would collide with earth on October 16. Scientists tried to calm fears by stating that none of these events were possible.

2012, May 27 Ronald Weinland stated that Jesus Christ would return and the world would end on this day.

2012, June 30 José Luis de Jesús predicted that the world's governments and economies would fail on this day, and that he and his followers would undergo a transformation that would allow them to fly and walk through walls.

2012, December 21 The supposed Mayan apocalypse at the end of the 13th b'ak'tun. The earth would be destroyed by an asteroid, Nibiru, or some other interplanetary object; an alien invasion; or a supernova. Mayanist scholars stated that no extant classic Maya accounts forecast impending doom, and that the idea that the Long Count calendar ends in 2012 misrepresented Maya history

and culture. Scientists from NASA, along with expert archeologists, stated that none of those events were possible.

- 2013, August 23 Grigori Rasputin, a Russian peasant, mystical faith healer, and trusted friend of the family of Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. He became an influential figure in Saint Petersburg, especially after August 1915, when Nicholas took command of the army fighting in World War I. He prophesied a storm would take place on this day where fire would destroy most life on land and Jesus Christ would come back to earth to comfort those in distress.
- 2014, April–September 2015 The so-called Blood Moon Prophecy, first predicted by Mark Blitz in 2008 and then by John Hagee in 2014. These Christian ministers claim that the tetrad in 2014 and 2015 may allegedly represent prophecies given in the **Bible** relating to the second coming of Jesus Christ. A “tetrad” is a series of four consecutive lunar eclipses--coinciding on Jewish holidays--with six full moons in between, and no intervening partial lunar eclipses, which began with the April 2014 lunar eclipse. Hagee and Blitz hold that these eclipses are a sign of the end times as described in the **Bible** in **Acts 2:20** (quoting **Joel 2:32**) and **Revelation 6:12**.

Predictions for the future

- 2020–2037 Jeane Dixon claimed that Armageddon would take place in 2020 and Jesus will return to defeat the unholy trinity of the antichrist, Satan and the false prophet between 2020 and 2037. She had also previously predicted the world would end on February 4, 1962.
- 2021 F. Kenton Beshore bases his prediction on the prior suggestion that Jesus would return in 1988, i.e., within one Biblical generation (40 years) of the founding of Israel in 1948. Beshore argues that the prediction was correct, but that the definition of a biblical generation was incorrect and was actually 70–80 years, placing the second coming of Jesus between 2018 and 2028 and the rapture by 2021 at the latest.
- 2025 See the youtubes on the Internet of Jews for Jesus Rabbis predicting the second coming of Jesus Christ in 2025 or perhaps earlier.
- 2026 Messiah Foundation International members predict that the world will end in 2026, when an asteroid would collide with earth in accordance with Riaz Ahmed Gohar Shahi's predictions in *The Religion of God*. The chances are only 1 out of 300,000.
- 2060 According to Sir Isaac Newton's research of the **Bible**, Jesus will rapture his church one jubilee from the time of Israel reacquiring Jerusalem. [But if a jubilee is fifty years, this would imply Israel's reacquiring Jerusalem in 2010.]
- 2120 Adnan Oktar, a Sunni Muslim creationist, that according to the abjad interpretation of a hadith, claims that the last day will come about in 2120, when Nemesis would collide with the Earth.
- 2129 Said Nursî, a Sunni Muslim theologian who wrote the *Risale-I Nur* Collection, claims that according to abjad interpretation of a hadith, expects the end in 2129.
- 2200 Various people, using a cricket analogy of the doomsday argument, claim that the last humans will be born before the start of the year 2200.
- 2239 According to an opinion on the Talmud in mainstream Orthodox Judaism, the Messiah will come within 6000 years from the creation of Adam / Humanity, and the world could possibly be destroyed 1000 years later. This would put the beginning of the period of desolation in the year 2239 and the end of the period of desolation in the year 3239.
- 2280 According to Rashad Khalifa's research on the Quran Code, the world will end during that year. According to Abdurrahman Ayyıldız's research on the Quran Code, the universe will end January 17, 2280.
- 11120 According to John A. Leslie's figures for the doomsday argument the last humans will be born within the next 9120 years.

500 million (estimate) Scientist James Kasting suggests the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will drop dramatically, making the earth uninhabitable.

5 billion (estimate) Various scientists give this estimated end of our sun's current phase of development, after which it will swell into a red giant, either swallowing the earth or at least completely scorching it. It is widely accepted by the scientific community that the earth will be destroyed around this time. However, as the sun grows gradually hotter (over millions of years), the earth may become too hot for life in only a billion years from now.

10100 (estimate) Various scientists estimate that the heat death of the universe, in which the universe will diminish to a state of no thermodynamic free energy and therefore will no longer sustain motion or life.

No, what Ezekiel means is the end of Israel's statehood, the end of her government and national life, as she is being carried away by the Babylonians into a captivity that would last from 597 and 586 until 537 / 536 B.C.E.! This is "the end" of which Ezekiel speaks--just as Jesus' announcement of the end in **Mark 13** / **Matthew 24** / **Luke 22** has to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and its second temple in 70 C.E.--not the absolute

end of planet earth! It is so important for biblical theology to learn this, and avoid the mistake of attempting to date "the end of planet earth," such as has been done by Martin Luther, Christopher Columbus, William Whiston, John Wesley, and even Sir Isaac Newton.

4.

**Ehrlich, Polish / German / American Jew / Christian / Jew's Life-work
in the Hebrew Bible.**

“Ehrlich, Arnold Bogumil (1848–1919), biblical exegete. Ehrlich was born in Wlodawa in Russian Poland. As a youth he studied in Jewish schools, married at an early age, and had two daughters. Despairing of his narrow Jewish world, Ehrlich, still quite young, divorced his wife, and, in 1865, went to Germany. There he worked as a librarian in the Semitics department of the Berlin Royal Library. In Leipzig, under the influence of Christian missionaries and tempted by the greater opportunities available to Christians, Ehrlich converted to Christianity...

“He worked with Franz Delitzsch (1813–99) in the missionary Institutum Judaicum, helping to translate the New Testament into Hebrew (1877) for the purpose of a Christian mission to the Jews. At the age of 30, Ehrlich migrated to the U.S., married again, and raised a family under difficult economic conditions, working at various jobs including social work, portraiture, and Hebrew teaching. According to Richard J.H. Gottheil, when Ehrlich reached New York in 1876 he called on Rabbi R. Gustav Gottheil of Temple Emanu-El (Richard's father), confessed that he had been converted to Christianity at the age of 23 while working for Delitzsch, and expressed a desire to be reaccepted formally into the Jewish faith. He accordingly appeared before a bet din [Jewish court] on March 7, 1876, and was readmitted to the Jewish community after making the necessary declarations in both German and English (which are quoted by Richard in his biography of his father). The proceedings were duly recorded...

“Ehrlich, who weighed three hundred pounds, never obtained a real academic post. On the one hand, Jews with academic influence suspected his Christian connections, while on the other hand Christians probably saw him as too much of an East European Jew. In 1884 he published a chrestomathy containing selections from the Talmud and the Midrashim, ‘for youths and students.’ His main work, however, was devoted to biblical exegesis. From 1899 to 1901 his Hebrew commentary on the Bible *Mikra ki-Feshuto* was published in Berlin in three volumes (of the four he planned; reprinted, 1969). He subscribed the title page with the pseudonym "Shabbetai b. Yom Tov ibn Boded." In the introduction he explained that he had written the commentary in Hebrew so that the Hebrew reader would study his words and comments. His book, however, received only scant attention. The Jewish press on the whole reacted to the book with exceptionally sharp criticism (also because of his skeptical attitude to tradition and his attacks on the medieval commentators), and the Christian scholars, who had great difficulty with Modern Hebrew, almost completely disregarded the commentary...

“The publication of his German commentary on the Psalms (1905), which included a new translation, was a turning point in his life. It served as an introduction to his German commentary on the Bible, which like his Hebrew one consists of notes on the Bible, *Randglossen zur hebraeischen Bibel* (7 vols., 1908–14). Ehrlich included part of the material from his Hebrew commentary, but in an expanded form, as well as new interpretations arrived at since its publication; many of his earlier opinions are changed here...

“Although Ehrlich does not mention the Documentary Hypothesis, he employs evidence from language, religious concepts, and institutions to assign relative "late" and "early" dates to specific passages. Historical assessments such as the denial of Egyptian enslavement and of the Exodus are buried in comments to individual verses. He concentrates on textual criticism and reconstructions, and his very numerous emendations (especially in his German commentary) are at times conjectural (such as haplography or dittography, letters having a similar appearance in the ancient or in the square script, the use of abbreviations, glosses, etc.), and in most cases are not based on ancient translations. His

comments, which are distinguished by their originality, at times have the quality of homiletics and are derived from Ehrlich's innovating spirit; yet through his sound linguistic instinct and fine linguistic differentiations he succeeded in illuminating and explaining, with great acumen and profundity, many verses and linguistic usages. Ehrlich's exegetical work is an important contribution to modern biblical exegesis. Ehrlich's work was highly influential on the Jewish translation produced by the Jewish Publication Society in 1917 and its successor of 1962–82.

5.

The Jewish Sanhedrin

“The Sanhedrin (Hebrew and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic: סנהדרין; Greek: Συνέδριον, ‘sitting together,’ hence ‘assembly’ or ‘council’) were assemblies of either twenty-three or seventy-one elders (known as ‘rabbis’ after the destruction of the second temple), appointed to sit as a tribunal in every city in the ancient Land of Israel.

“There were two classes of Jewish courts called Sanhedrin, the Great Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin. A lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges was appointed to each city, but there was to be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts. In general usage, ‘The Sanhedrin’ without qualifier normally refers to the Great Sanhedrin, which was composed of the Nasi, who functioned as head or representing president, and was a member of the court; the Av Beit Din or chief of the court, who was second to the nasi; and sixty-nine general members (Mufla).

“In the second temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the temple in Jerusalem, in a building called the Hall of Hewn Stones. The Great Sanhedrin convened every day except festivals and the sabbath day (Shabbat).

“After the destruction of the second temple and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt, the Great Sanhedrin moved to Galilee, which became part of the Roman province of Syria Palaestina. In this period the Sanhedrin was sometimes referred as the Galilean Patriarchate or Patriarchate of Palaestina, being the governing legal body of Galilean Jewry. In the late 200's C.E., to avoid persecution, the name ‘Sanhedrin’ was dropped and its decisions were issued under the name of Beit HaMidrash (house of learning). The last universally binding decision of the Great Sanhedrin appeared in 358 C.E., when the Hebrew Calendar was abandoned. The Great Sanhedrin was finally disbanded in 425 C.E. after continued persecution by the Eastern Roman Empire.

“Over the centuries, there have been attempts to revive the institution, such as the Grand Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon Bonaparte, and modern attempts in Israel.” (**Wikipedia** 6/20/2020)

6.

The God Tammuz

“Dumuzid, later known by the alternative form Tammuz, is an ancient Mesopotamian God associated with shepherds, who was also the primary consort of the Goddess Inanna (later known as Ishtar). In Sumerian mythology, Dumuzid's sister was Geshtinanna, the Goddess of agriculture, fertility, and dream interpretation. In the Sumerian King List, Dumuzid is listed as an antediluvian king of the city of Bad-tibira and also an early king of the city of Uruk. In the Sumerian poem Inanna Prefers the Farmer, Dumuzid competes against the farmer Enkimdu for Inanna's hand in marriage. In Inanna's Descent into the Underworld, Dumuzid fails to mourn Inanna's death and, when she returns from the underworld, she allows the galla demons to drag him down to the underworld as her replacement. Inanna later regrets this decision and decrees that Dumuzid will spend half the year in the underworld, but the other half of the year with her, while his sister Geshtinanna stays in the underworld in his place, thus resulting in the cycle of the seasons.

“Gilgamesh references Tammuz in Tablet VI of the Epic of Gilgamesh as one of Ishtar's past lovers, who was turned into an allalu bird with a broken wing. Dumuzid was associated with fertility and vegetation and the hot, dry summers of Mesopotamia were believed to be caused by Dumuzid's yearly death. During the month in midsummer bearing His name, people all across Mesopotamia would engage in public, ritual mourning for Him. During the late twentieth century, scholars widely thought that, during the Sumerian Akitu festival, kings may have established their legitimacy by taking on the role of Dumuzid and engaging in ritualized sexual intercourse with the high priestess of Inanna as part of a sacred marriage ceremony. This notion is now generally rejected by scholars as a misinterpretation of Sumerian literary texts. The cult of Dumuzid was later spread to the Levant and to Greece, where He became known under the West Semitic name Adonis.

“The cult of Ishtar and Tammuz continued to thrive until the eleventh century C.E., and survived in parts of Mesopotamia as late as the eighteenth century. Tammuz is mentioned by name in the **Scroll of Ezekiel** and possibly alluded to in other passages from the **Hebrew Bible**. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship of religion, Tammuz was widely seen as a prime example of the archetypal dying-and-rising God, but the discovery of the full Sumerian text of Inanna's Descent in the mid-twentieth century disproved the previous scholarly assumption that the narrative ended with Dumuzid's resurrection and instead revealed that it ended with Dumuzid's death. The rescue of Dumuzid from the underworld and his ascension to Heaven was later found in the text Return of Dumuzid, translated in 1963. The existence of the "dying-and-rising God" archetype has been largely rejected by modern scholars...

“In **Ezekiel 8:14**, the prophet Ezekiel witnesses women mourning the death of Tammuz...The cult of Ishtar and Tammuz may have been introduced to the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Manasseh and the **Old Testament** contains numerous allusions to them. **Ezekiel 8:14** mentions Tammuz by name: "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Ezekiel's testimony is the only direct mention of Tammuz in the **Hebrew Bible**, but the cult of Tammuz may also be alluded to in **Isaiah 17:10–11**. This passage may be describing the miniature gardens that women would plant in honor of Tammuz during his festival. **Isaiah 1:29–30; 65:3, 66:17** all denounce sacrifices made "in the gardens," which may also be connected to the cult of Tammuz.

“The **Hebrew Bible** also contains references to Tammuz's consort Inanna-Ishtar. **Jeremiah 7:18; 44:15–19** mention "the Queen of Heaven", who is probably a syncretism of Inanna-Ishtar and the West Semitic Goddess Astarte. The **Song of Songs** bears strong similarities to the Sumerian love poems involving Inanna and Dumuzid, particularly in its usage of natural symbolism to represent the lovers'

physicality. **Song of Songs 6:10** ("Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?") is almost certainly a reference to Inanna-Ishtar.

“The myth of Inanna and Dumuzid later became the basis for the Greek myth of Aphrodite and Adonis.” (**Wikipedia**, 2/26/2020)