

Symbolic Acts Portraying Jerusalem's Exile (Chapter 12)

Verses 12:1-16 An Exile's Baggage, and Making an Escape in the Night:

12:1 And it happened—YHWH's Word (Was / Came) to me, Saying: 12:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, in (the) midst of a house of the rebellion you are dwelling--they have eyes to see, and did not see; they have ears to hear, and did not hear! Because they (are) a house of rebellion! 12:3 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, make for yourself vessels / baggage of exile. And go into exile by day to / in their eyes. And you shall go into exile from your place to another place to / in their eyes. Perhaps they will see that they (are) a house of rebellion! 12:4 And you shall bring out your vessels / baggage like vessels / baggage of exile by day to / in their eyes. And you shall go forth in the evening to / in their eyes like those being brought forth (to) exile. 12:5 To / in their eyes, dig for yourself (a hole) in the wall; and you shall bring forth (your baggage) through it. 12:6 'To / in their eyes upon your shoulder you shall lift up; in the thick darkness you shall bring out (your vessels / baggage). Your face you shall cover, and you shall not see the land / earth--because I have given / made you a sign for Israel's house. 12:7 And I did so, just as I was commanded. My vessels / baggage I brought forth like vessels / baggage of exile by day; and in the evening I dug for myself in the wall by hand. In the thick darkness I brought forth--upon (my) shoulder I lifted (my vessels / baggage) in their eyes.

12:8 And YHWH's Word Was / Came to me in the morning, Saying: 12:9 Son of Adam / Humanity, did they not say to you (the) house of Israel, a house of rebellion, What (are) you doing? 12:10 Say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH Spoke: (To) the prince, this Oracle / Burden--in Jerusalem, and all Israel's house who are in their midst. 12:11 Say, I (am) your sign; just as I have done, so it will be done to them. Into the exile, into the captivity, they will go! 12:12 And the prince who (is) in their midst, upon a shoulder he will lift up in the thick darkness, and he will go forth through the wall--they will dig to bring forth through it--his face he will cover, so that he will not see the land / earth to / by the eye. 12:13 And I will spread My Net over him, and he will be seized in My *Masada* / Stronghold / Snare. And I Will Bring him to Babylon, land of (the) Chaldeans. And it (Babylon) he will not see, and there he will die! 12:14 And all who (are) around him, his help, and all his army / troops, I Will Scatter to every wind; and I Will Unsheath a sword after / following them! 12:15 And they will know that I (Am) YHWH, when I Am Scattering / in My Scattering them among the nations. And I Will Scatter (synonym) them among the lands. 12:16 And I Will Cause a small number of men to remain from them, from sword, from famine, and from plague / pestilence; so that they will tell all their abominations among the nations where they came. And they will know that I (Am) YHWH!

12:1¹

1

Rabbi Fisch comments on **chapter 12** that “A new section begins at this point and extends to the end of **chapter 19**, containing a fresh series of denunciations of the people's sinfulness which must
(continued...)

¹(...continued)

eventuate in national downfall...In the present chapter, the prophet receives the command to demonstrate to the captives in Babylon through the medium of symbolical actions the certainty of the nation's approaching doom. They were still possessed of a false confidence in the security of Israel, the indestructibility of the temple and the permanence of the Davidic dynasty. Ezekiel assumes the role of a refugee who tries to escape from a beleaguered city. By so doing he personifies what is about to happen to the population of Judea...The remnant of the people will be banished from their land, and the king who will attempt to flee from the condemned city will be captured and brought to Babylon where he will die...

“In another symbolical act, Ezekiel portrays the hardships in the besieged Jerusalem. As for the current argument that prophecies which foretell evil need not be taken seriously, he emphatically warns the people that the impending disaster is near at hand and they would be soon convinced of the authenticity of his prediction.” (P. 63)

Matties comments on **12:1-20** that “Like a pantomine artist [a type of musical comedy stage production designed for family entertainment], Ezekiel acts out the exile in two sign-actions...These actions, like those of **chapters 4-5**, are followed by clarifying oracles (**12:21-28**).” (P. 1172)

But while modern pantomine artistry is designed for fun and laughter, not so with Ezekiel's sign-actions—they are meant with all seriousness! As Matties states with regards to **verses 1-2**, “The unit begins as a judgment oracle [in which] [YHWH's] speech describes the exilic community as a *rebellious house*...The designation is shocking...Now the exiles are depicted as being without sight or hearing.”

Matties observes that in this first sign Ezekiel “plays two roles: like the invader, he digs through the wall of the house from the outside; like the exiles (not fugitives), he carries his pack out at night.” (P. 1170)

Reimer entitles **12:1-28** “Anticipating Exile.” He comments that “The unfolding of events surrounding the collapse of Judah must always be borne in mind when reading **Ezekiel**. This is especially true for this chapter, as its predictions of exile come during a time when the exile has already begun. This only makes sense in the context of the uncertain decade between 597 B.C.E. (the deportation during the reign of Jehoiachin, during which Ezekiel [and Daniel were] exiled) and 586 (the final fall of Jerusalem, during the reign of Zedekiah). It is the latter complex of events toward which these oracles point. Formulaic markers group them into two pairs: symbolic action is again a vehicle for the Divine Word in **verses 1-16** and **17-20**; the passage of time prompted doubts about this further exile, and these are confronted in the pair of oracles in **verses 21-25** and **26-28**.” (P. 1514)

Darr comments that “Yahweh's next address to the prophet begins with a negative assessment of the exiles in whose midst he dwells...Having eyes to see, they do not see; having ears to hear, they do not hear (see, e.g., **Isaiah 6:9-10; 43:8; Jeremiah 5:21**). ‘For more than a year in act and word,’ Greenberg observes, ‘Ezekiel had exhibited his message to their eyes and ears, but they had disregarded him and held fast to their hope in Jerusalem's survival and their speedy return to it.’ Perhaps, God suggests, the
(continued...)

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And it happened—YHWH’s Word (was / came) to me, Saying:

12:2 בֶּן־אָדָם בְּתוֹךְ בַּיִת־הַמְּרִי אַתָּה יֹשֵׁב

Son of Adam / Humanity, in (the) midst of a house of the rebellion you are dwelling--

אֲשֶׁר עֵינַיִם לָהֶם לְרֹאוֹת וְלֹא רָאוּ

they have eyes to see, and did not see;²

¹(...continued)

performance of a new sign act in their sight (this phrase [‘in their eyes’] will appear seven times in **verses 3-7**) will break through their rebelliousness.” (P. 95)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **12:1-16** “Symbols of the Imminent Fall of Jerusalem and Banishment of the Nation.”

2

Hilmer comments that the phrase “eyes to see but do not see” are “the hardening about which [YHWH] had spoken to Isaiah.” (P. 1241) See **Isaiah 6:9-10**,

9 וַיֹּאמֶר

And He said,

לֵךְ וְאָמַרְתָּ לָעָם הַזֶּה

Go! And you shall say to this people:

שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמַעוּ

Listen, you people, listening--

וְאַל־תִּבְיֵנוּ

and you will not understand;

וּרְאוּ רְאוּ

and see, you people, seeing--

וְאַל־תִּדְעוּ:

and you will not know!

10 תִּשְׂמֵן לִב־הָעָם הַזֶּה

Make fat this people’s heart;

וְאִזְנֵי הַכֶּבֶד

and make heavy its ears;

וְעֵינָיו הִשָּׁע

and its eyes, smear [over]--

(continued...)

אֲזַנַיִם לָהֶם לְשִׁמְעַ וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ

they have ears to hear, and did not hear!³

כִּי בַיִת מְרִי הֵם:

Because they (are) a house of rebellion!

12:3 וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

עֲשֵׂה לְךָ כֵּלֵי גֹלָה

make for yourself vessels / baggage of exile.

וְגָלָה יוֹמָם לְעֵינֵיהֶם

And go into exile by day to / in their eyes.

וְגָלִיתָ מִמְּקוֹמְךָ אֶל-מְקוֹם אַחֵר לְעֵינֵיהֶם

And you shall go into exile from your place to another place to / in their eyes.⁴

²(...continued)

פֶּן-יִרְאֶה בְּעֵינָיו

for fear that it should see with its eyes,

וּבְאָזְנוֹ יִשְׁמַע

and with its ears should hear,

וְלִבּוֹ יִבִּין

and its heart / mind should understand--

וְשָׁב

and it will turn around / repent--

וְרָפָא לוֹ:

and He will heal it!

3

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The exiles who have witnessed the tragedy in 597 B.C.E. [when] the first wave of exiles were taken into captivity, including the king Jehoiachin, Ezekiel [and Daniel] learned no lesson from the event. They even refused to listen to the moral [teaching concerning right and wrong] when brought home to them by the prophet in sign and word.” (P. 63)

4

(continued...)

אֲוֹלֵי יִרְאוּ כִּי בַיִת מְרִי הֵמָּה:

Perhaps they will see that they (are) a house of rebellion!⁵

12:4 וְהוֹצֵאתָ כְּלֵיךָ

And you shall bring out your vessels / baggage

כְּכֵלֵי גֹלָה

like vessels / baggage of exile

יוֹמָם לְעֵינֵיהֶם

by day to / in their eyes.

וְאַתָּה תֵצֵא בְעָרְב־לְעֵינֵיהֶם

And you shall go forth in the evening to / in their eyes

⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel was to gather “articles for use on the journey into exile, such as staff, knapsack, drinking-cup, water-bottle...He was to make his preparation for flight at a time of the day when his action could be seen, because the purpose was to bring home to the people what was in store for them...He is to take the articles out of his house and deposit them in a convenient place where he can lay hands on them when required...After leaving the house by day with the articles he is taking with him, he is to make his escape in the evening when the chance of evading the enemy is better...Having left his house (by digging through the wall, not using the door), he is to proceed to the spot where he secreted his baggage and carry it upon his shoulder...All this was to be done [in the eyes of the people] to serve as a warning of what was about to befall the nation.” (Pp. 63-64)

And we wonder. If all of this was done in order to warn the remnant of the Israelites still living in Jerusalem, how could they know of Ezekiel’s actions, and their meaning? Were they to be told by messengers returning to Jerusalem concerning Ezekiel’s strange actions? It sounds as if these things would have had to be done in Jerusalem, in the eyes of those not having yet gone into exile, to have any effect. What do you think?

5

Darr comments that “Characteristically, the sign-act begins with God’s command (**verses 1-6**), reports Ezekiel’s execution of the assignment (**verse 7**), and then explains its significance (**verses 8-16**). The prophet must reenact a painful episode from his own past, preparing an exile’s baggage—a cloth or skin containing the meager necessities of life—and then, in broad daylight and before the deportees’ eyes, exiting his own house for a different (unspecified locale.” (P. 95)

כְּמוֹצְאֵי גּוֹלָה:

like those being brought forth, an exile.⁶

12:5 לְעֵינֵיהֶם חָתַר לְךָ בְּקִיר

To / in their eyes, dig for yourself (a hole) in the wall;⁷

וְהוֹצֵאתָ בוֹ:

and you shall bring forth (your baggage) through it.

12:6 לְעֵינֵיהֶם עַל-כַּתֶּף תִּשָּׂא

To / in their eyes upon your shoulder you shall lift up;

בְּעֲלֻטָּה תּוֹצִיא

in the thick darkness you shall bring out (your vessels / baggage).

פְּנֵיךָ תִּכְסֶה

Your face you shall cover,⁸

6

Darr states that “**Verse 4** expands upon God’s command. Although Ezekiel must bring out his baggage in daylight, he is not to leave until the evening. Burrowing through a mud-brick wall (as if in hopes of avoiding detection?), he must shoulder his burden and depart in darkness. Moreover, he must cover his face (as if in hopes of concealing his identity?)...In this context, however, its stated purpose is to prevent Ezekiel from seeing the ground. Does his covered head portend that those forced into exile will never see their homeland again (see **Jeremiah 22:10-12**)?” (P. 95)

7

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The noun *kir* which is in the text generally means the wall of a house, while *chomah* usually denotes the wall of a city. Nevertheless some commentators hold that the city-wall is here indicated. This is improbable because of the thickness of such a wall... [Ezekiel’s] departure from the house in this manner [by digging a hole in the wall of his house with his hand], and not through the door, merely indicates the idea of stealth.” (P. 64) What do you think? If Ezekiel is in exile, is he here to be understood as digging a hole in the wall of the miniature city of Jerusalem which he had made on a clay brick?

Hilmer states that it was “not the city wall, which was made of stone and was many feet thick, but the sun-dried brick wall of his house.” (P. 1241) Perhaps, but the text does not make this clear.

8

(continued...)

וְלֹא תִרְאֶה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

and you shall not see the land / earth--

כִּי־מוֹפֵת נִתְּתִיךָ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Because I have given / made you a sign for Israel's house.⁹

12:7 וַאֲעַשׂ כֵּן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי

And I did so, just as I was commanded.

כְּלִי הַוָּצֵאתִי

My vessels / baggage I brought forth

כְּכֵלֵי גֹזְלָהּ יוֹמָם

like vessels / baggage of exile by day;

וּבַעֲרֵב חָתַרְתִּי־לִי בַקִּיר בַּיָּד

and in the evening I dug for myself in the wall by hand.¹⁰

בְּעֵלְמָה הַוָּצֵאתִי

In the thick darkness I brought forth--

⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that Ezekiel's being told to cover his face "is variously explained. It may be a mark of humiliation. Others regard it as symbolical of Zedekiah's attempt to avoid recognition by throwing a cloak over his head. When connected with *that you see not the ground*, 'the more probable meaning is that even Zedekiah in his last journey was not even to see the land he was deserting' (Lofthouse)." (P. 64)

9

Hilmer comments that "Prophets were often instructed to perform symbolic acts (see, e.g., **verse 11; 24:24, 27**)." (P. 1241)

10

Rabbi Fisch notes that "Digging with the hand, without using tools, indicates great haste, as though there was no time to look for a pick. It also symbolizes fear lest the sound of tools were heard (Kimchi)." (Pp. 64-65)

עַל־כְּתֵף נִשְׂאתִי לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

upon (my) shoulder I lifted (my vessels / baggage) in their eyes.¹¹

12:8 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי

And YHWH's Word Was / Came to me

בַּבֹּקֶר לְאֹמֵר:

in the morning, saying:¹²

11

Darr comments that “The prophet apparently performs in silence, leaving his fellow exiles to ponder the import of his actions. Certainly, they admit more than one interpretation. ‘Ezekiel had made preparations for a long journey,’ Eichrodt observes, ‘and before setting off had begun to demolish his temporary dwelling—in such circumstances, why could that not be the signal for them to knock down their improvised adobe huts and start upon the longed-for journey home?’ (P. 151) Had not Ezekiel himself declared Yahweh’s promise that the exilic community would return to Judah (**Ezekiel 11:17-20**)? Perhaps the time has come for that prophecy to be fulfilled!” (P. 95)

12

Hilmer comments that “Again the Divine explanation follows the prophet’s unquestioning obedience.” (P. 1241) See **8:3**.

Darr comments that “Not until morning does God authorize Ezekiel to explain his actions (in Yahweh’s Own Words). His immediate response to the exiles’ question in **verse 10** dashes any hope that his performance presages their return home...

“The precise meaning of **verse 10b** is elusive. Both the **NRSV** and the **NIV** translate, ‘This oracle (הַמָּשָׁא הַזֶּה, *hammassa hazzeh*) concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the (NIV, ‘the whole’) house of Israel.’ The noun מַשָּׂא (*massa*) means ‘oracle’ in many contexts (e.g., **Isaiah 13:1; 15:1; 17:1**), though Ezekiel nowhere (else?) uses it in that way. Equally plausible, however, is the suggestion of Greenberg and Block that in this context, *massa*) means ‘burden.’ So translated, ‘this burden’ refers to Ezekiel’s baggage, and it, in turn, represents Judah’s ‘prince’ (נָשִׂיא, *nasy*) and his subjects, who will be carried into exile. Ezekiel is, indeed, a ‘sign’ for the exiles (see **verse 6**) in the sense that what he has done (taken his baggage into exile) will be done to their king and comrades back home.” (Pp. 95-96)

“The ‘prince in Jerusalem’ (**verse 10**) is Judah’s last king, Zedekiah, though Ezekiel does not deign to speak his name or to give him that title. His fate is recorded in **2 Kings 25:4-7**...Ezekiel’s ability

(continued...)

12:9 בן־אָדָם הֲלֹא אָמְרוּ אֵלַיךָ

Son of Adam / Humanity, did they not say to you

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּיִת הַמְּרִי

(the) house of Israel, a house of rebellion,

מָה אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה:

What (are) you doing?¹³

12:10 אָמַר אֵלֵיהֶם כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

Say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH¹⁴ spoke:

הַנָּשִׂיא הַמִּשָּׂא הַזֶּה

(To) the prince,¹⁵ this oracle / burden--

¹²(...continued)

to presage the monarch's fate further enhances the reader's assessment that he is truly God's authentic prophet." (P. 96)

13

Rabbi Fisch notes that "In Hebrew the interrogative often expresses an affirmation. The meaning is, the people have surely asked you." (P. 65)

Hilmer comments that this is the **Scroll of Ezekiel's** "first indication of the people's response to the prophet's symbolic acts." (P. 1241) Yes...it is not just what Ezekiel says, but what he does that conveys the Divine message.

And should we followers of Jesus just be known for the Message that we speak? Just as important is the lives we live, the love that we show in action every day of our lives! "And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love..." What about you? What about me?

14

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) translates the Hebrew "my Lord YHWH" by κύριος κύριος. This same translation occurs in **Judges 2:1** (Codex Alexandrinus); **Amos 5:3; 9:5; Jeremiah 51:26**, and then all of the other occurrences of this translation are found in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, beginning here in **Ezekiel 12:10**. See **13:20; 14:6; 20:39, 40; 21:3, 12, 18; 22:3, 1; 23:28, 46; 26:15, 19; 21; 28:12, 25; 29:19, 20; 30:10, 13, 22; 31:15, 18; 32:8, 16, 31, 32; 33:25; 34:2, 8, 10, 15, 17, 20, 31; 35:3, 6; 36:2, 3, 5, 13, 14, 15, 32; 37:21; 38:3, 10, 17, 18; 39:8, 25, 29**.

15

(continued...)

בִּירוּשָׁלַם וְכָל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

in Jerusalem, and all Israel's house

אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

who are in their midst.¹⁶

12:11 אָמַר אֲנִי מוֹפֶתְכֶם

Say, I (am) your sign;

כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם

just as I have done, so it will be done to them.

בְּגוֹלָה בְּשָׁבִי יֵלְכוּ:

Into the exile, into the captivity, they will go!¹⁷

12:12 וְהַנָּשִׂיא אֲשֶׁר־בְּתוֹכְכֶם

And the prince who (is) in their midst,¹⁸

¹⁵(...continued)

Hilmer states that the prince in Jerusalem is Zedekiah. See **Ezekiel 7:27** with its footnote.

¹⁶

The last three lines of **verse 10** are obscure, and English translations cover up the obscurity, uniting to translate by “This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel in it.” But we do not see any way to get this translation out of the obscure Hebrew text. Translators understandably want to give a translation that makes sense—but such a translation is not genuinely possible here—in our opinion. We insist that the statement of **Numbers 12:6-8** must be kept in mind. The prophetic revelation is through visions and dreams that are characterized by riddles / enigmas—and we think these three lines are a good example of that! Rabbi Fisch, the Jewish Rabbi / commentator agrees, stating that “The construction of the verse is obscure.” (P. 65)

¹⁷

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Not only will they be driven from their homeland (*into exile*), but they will be forced to settle in a district chosen for them by their conquerors (*into captivity*).” (P. 65)

Matties holds that “Although the pantomime concerns Jerusalem, Ezekiel reminds his exilic audience of his functions as a sign for them (**verse 11**).” (P. 1170) Perhaps...but is this made clear in the text?

¹⁸

(continued...)

אֶל־כְּתֵף יִשָּׂא בְּעֲלֻטָּה

to / upon a shoulder he will lift up in the thick darkness

וַיֵּצֵא בַקִּיר

and he will go forth in / through the wall--

יַחְתְּרוּ לְהוֹצִיא בּוֹ

they will dig to bring forth in / through it--

פָּנָיו יִכְסֶה

his face he will cover,¹⁹

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִרְאֶה לְעֵין הוּא אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

So that he will not see the land / earth to / by the eye.

12:13²⁰ וּפְרִשְׁתִּי אֶת־רְשֵׁתִי עָלָיו

And I will spread My net over him,²¹

וְנִתְפַּשׂ בְּמִצְוֹדֹתַי

and he will be seized in My *masada* / stronghold / snare.

וְהֵבֵאתִי אֹתוֹ בְּבִלְהָ אֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים

And I will bring him to Babylon, land of (the) Chaldeans.

¹⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch states that “the prince” is “an allusion to Zedekiah’s flight and capture.” (P. 65) See our footnote 386.

¹⁹

Compare **Ezekiel 12:6**.

²⁰

Matties comments on **verses 13-14** that “Divine actions now come into focus. [YHWH’s] agent is the Babylonian army. **Verse 13b** is probably an echo of **Jeremiah 22:10-12**, and likely refers to not seeing the land of Israel again (as in **verses 6 and 12**) and to dying far away.” (P. 1170)

²¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The king’s intended flight from the doomed city will be frustrated by God.” (P. 66)

וְאוֹתָהּ לֹא־יִרְאֶה

But / and it (Babylon) he will not see,²²

יָשָׁם יָמוּת:

and there he will die!

12:14 וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתָיו (עֲזָרָה) [עֲזָרוֹ]

And all who (are) around him, his help,²³

22

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Zedekiah was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah.” (P. 66) See **2 Kings 25:7**,

וְאֶת־בְּנֵי צְדָקְיָהוּ שָׁחַטוּ לְעֵינָיו

And Zedekiah’s sons they slaughtered to / in his eye-sight;

וְאֶת־עֵינָיו צְדָקְיָהוּ עָוָר

and Zedekiah’s eyes he blinded;

וַיֹּאסְרֵהוּ בַנְּחֹשֶׁתִּים

and they bound him with bronze (chains);

וַיְבִיאוּהוּ בַבֶּל:

and they brought him (to) Babylon.

Jeremiah 39:7,

וְאֶת־עֵינָיו צְדָקְיָהוּ עָוָר

And (the) eyes of Tsidhqiyyahu / Zedekiah, he blinded;

וַיֹּאסְרֵהוּ בַנְּחֹשֶׁתִּים

and he bound him in bronze (chains)

לְבִיא אֶתּוֹ בַבֶּלָה:

to bring him into the Babylon.

23

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” עֲזָרָה; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” עֲזָרוֹ, “his help”—a correction of a mis-spelling. And we ask, Did you think inspired writers could not misspell words? Readers of the **Hebrew Bible** with its Masoretic notes, constantly pointing to the difference between “what is written” and “to be read,” quickly rid the student of claims concerning an “inerrant **Bible**”! Of course, you can refuse to read the Masoretic corrections of the text—but what you are left with is a text with numerous misspelled words and other mistakes which the Masoretes have tried to clear up.

(continued...)

וְכָל־אֲנָפָיו אֲזַרְהָ לְכָל־רוּחַ

and all his army / troops, I will scatter to every wind;

וְחָרַב אֶרֶץ אַחֲרֵיהֶם:

and I will unsheath a sword after / following them!

12:15 וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH,

בְּהַפִּיצִי אֹתָם בְּגוֹיִם

When I am scattering / in My scattering them among the nations.²⁴

וְזָרִיתִי אֹתָם בְּאֲרָצוֹת:

And I will scatter (synonym) them among the lands.

12:16 וְהוֹתַרְתִּי מֵהֶם אֲנָשֵׁי מִסְפָּר

And I will cause a small number of men to remain from them,

²³(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that the phrase “all that are round about him” is referring to “His body-guard as distinct from the general army.” (P. 66)

24

Rabbi Fisch comments that “When the prophecies of doom are fulfilled, the remnant of Israel which is scattered among the nations will realize that God is not only the Creator, but also the Ruler of the universe, and that punishment of the wicked is an essential feature of His Sovereignty over mankind. This they will transmit to their conquerors, so that these will also learn the true nature of God (Kimchi).” (P. 66)

Yes...but we add, on the basis of our study of **Isaiah** and **Exodus**, and now of **Ezekiel**, an even more essential feature of YHWH is His Steadfast-Love that is thousands of times greater than His Visitations for Punishment, and His Free Forgiveness of sinful people! The exiles will learn this great truth when YHWH Freely Forgives them apart from any temple or sacrifice, and brings them back to their homeland as His Forgiven, Redeemed people –see especially **Isaiah 40:1-2**. It is that unbelievably Generous Grace and Forgiveness that the returned exiles are called to proclaim to the ends of the earth–see **Isaiah 40-66**! We say, That’s the True Nature of our God YHWH! O yes, He Visits in Punishment, Seeking to get His wayward people to repent of their sins–but beyond that punishment is His Never Failing Steadfast Love and Grace, that Forgives and Restores the sinful! Is this the God you believe in?

מִחֶרֶב מִרָעָב וּמִדָּבָר

from sword, from famine, and from plague / pestilence;

לְמַעַן יִסְפְּרוּ אֶת־כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶם בְּגוֹיִם

so that they will tell all their abominations among the nations

אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם

where they came.

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH!

**Verses 12:17-20, Trembling Eating and Shuddering Drinking by Ezekiel
as a Sign of the Coming Exile of Jerusalem:**

“12:17 And YHWH’s Word Was / Came to me, saying: 12:18 Son of Adam / Humanity, you will eat your bread / food with quaking / shaking; and you will drink your water with quivering and with anxiety! 12:19 And you shall say to (the) people of the land: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to Jerusalem’s inhabitants (and) to Israel’s land: Your bread / food with anxiety they will eat; and your water with horror / dismay they will drink; so that her land will be desolate from her fullness, from (the) violence / wrong of all the ones dwelling in her! 12:20 And the cities, the ones inhabited, will be dried up; and the land will be a devastation / waste. And you shall know that I (am) YHWH!

12:17 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH’s Word Was / Came to me, saying:

12:18 בֶּן־אָדָם לֶחֱמֹךְ בְּרָעַשׁ תֹּאכֵל

Son of Adam / Humanity, you will eat your bread / food with quaking / shaking;²⁵

Rabbi Fisch observes that this is “another command with symbolical meaning. Ezekiel is to partake of meager rations of bread and water, to typify the conditions of a siege, and eat and drink in a state of fear and anxiety.” (P. 66)

Hilmer comments that “Ezekiel’s trembling must have been particularly violent, because the Hebrew word for ‘tremble’ is used elsewhere to describe an earthquake.” (P. 1241) See **Amos 1:1; 1**
(continued...)

וּמִיָּיֶדְךָ בְּרִגְזָה וּבְדֹאגָה תִּשְׁתֶּה:

and you will drink your water with quivering and with anxiety!²⁶

12:19 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-עַם הָאָרֶץ

And you shall say to (the) people of the land:²⁷

²⁵(...continued)

Kings 19:11. The Hebrew word is רַעַשׁ, **ra(ash).**

26

Darr comments that “In two parallel lines, Yahweh commands Ezekiel to eat his bread with quaking and to drink his water with trembling and fearfulness...This passage focuses upon Ezekiel’s deportment as he eats and drinks.” The two Hebrew words referred to here are רִגְזָה, **roghezah**, “quivering,” “quaking” and דֹּאגָה, **de)aghah**, “anxiety,” “anxious care.” Can’t you imagine what Ezekiel looked like as he ate in this way? Darr notes that “Elsewhere, *ra(ash* is associated with the quaking of the earth (see, e.g., **Ezekiel 37:7**); only here does it denote human shaking. The noun *rogezah* appears nowhere else in Hebrew Scripture, but various forms of the root, applied to the body, can describe grief (**2 Samuel 19:10**), rage (**Habakkuk 3:2**), joyous celebration (**Jeremiah 33:9**), or adrenaline-fueled agitation (of a combat horse, **Job 39:24**). The third noun, then, specifies the emotion associated with Ezekiel’s behavior: he quakes and trembles uncontrollably from fear, and the resulting impairment of dexterity imperils even the routine activities of eating and drinking...But according to **verse 18**, the prophet quavers at God’s command.” (P. 97)

27

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrase “the people of the land” means “Ezekiel’s fellow-exiles” (that is, those in Babylon). (P. 68) We doubt that this is the case. We think it is much more likely that the phrase means the people still living in Jerusalem and the land of Judah, to whom this symbolical prophetic Message is directed—see the next two lines of this verse, “In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to Jerusalem’s inhabitants (and) to Israel’s land.” What do you think?

But we wonder...How could Ezekiel’s message be spoken to Jerusalem’s inhabitants, so far away from Babylon—over 500 miles as the crow flies, much farther by land route (the fertile crescent)? Were his messages being written down, and then carried to Jerusalem to be read there? See **Jeremiah 29**, which tells of letters being written to the exiles in Babylon by Jeremiah and others; it also tells of letters being written by the exiles to the people of Jerusalem (see especially **Jeremiah 29:24-28**). Was there some kind of “pony express” between Babylon and Jerusalem, going in both directions? We think that evidently there was! And this answers the question I have been asking myself concerning how Ezekiel could be speaking to two audiences, one in exile, and the other still in the land of Judah. What do you think?

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke

לְיוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶל־אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל

to Jerusalem's inhabitants (and) to Israel's land:²⁸

לֶחֶמָם בְּדָאָגָה יֹאכְלוּ

Their bread / food with anxiety they will eat;

וּמִיַּמֵּיהֶם בְּשֹׁמֶמוֹן יִשְׁתּוּ

and their water with horror / dismay they will drink;

לְמַעַן תִּשָּׁם אֶרֶץ מְמֹלָאָה

so that her land will be desolate from her fullness,²⁹

מִחַמָּס כָּל־הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ:

from (the) violence / wrong of all the ones dwelling in her!

12:20 וְהָעָרִים הַנּוֹשְׁבוֹת תִּחְרַבְנָה

And the cities, the ones inhabited, will be dried up;

28

Darr comments that “Ezekiel’s explanation of the sign act is addressed to ‘the people of the land.’ Wuerthwein has demonstrated that during the pre-exilic period, this phrase referred to Judah’s landowning, full citizens...In this context Ezekiel’s use of the epithet strikes an ironic chord, since the landowners own land no longer (recall the arrogant boasts of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘They (the exiles) have gone far from the Lord; to us this land is given for a possession,’ **11:15**...

“Although he addresses his fellow deportees, Ezekiel’s physical performance anticipates the behavior of ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel.’ They, like he, shall eat with fearfulness and drink with dismay...at the prospect of their land’s being stripped from them as a consequence of their violence.” (P. 97)

29

Rabbi Fisch notes that the Land of Judah / Jerusalem, the Country of which Jerusalem was the capital, “will be stripped of its possessions. The desolation of the land will be the cause of the people’s anxiety and being appalled.” (P. 67)

וְהָאָרֶץ שְׂמָמָה תְּהִיָּה

and the land will be a devastation / waste.

וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you shall know that I (am) YHWH! ³⁰

Verses 21-28, The Nearness of Judgment— Judah’s Coming Exile Confirmed:³¹

12:21 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

30

Darr comments that “The intended effect of all this devastation is that ‘you (the exiles) shall know that I am Yahweh’ ...Hence, this sign act, like the immediately preceding one, is designed to make the exiles accept the idea that Yahweh has determined to make Judah desolate. The fact that Ezekiel has returned to this theme time and again bespeaks the deportees’ adamant refusal to accept the inevitability and extent of God’s Judgment.” (P. 98)

31

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 21-28** “A Warning to Doubters of the Prophecy.” A proverb was being spoken in Israel that meant the Divine visions seen by YHWH's prophets such as Ezekiel would not come to pass in their day (or never come to pass at all). But YHWH assures the people of Israel that the vision is for their time--not for some far distant future!

We are reminded of Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong, both of whom insisted that the message of **Ezekiel** is centered in Britain and America over 1,500 years after Ezekiel's time, and the similar treatments given to the **Scroll of Revelation** by futurist interpreters, who held that John in the **Scroll of Revelation** was speaking concerning a distant generation, some 1,900 years after his time. This biblical word shows how mistaken the Armstrongs have been in their interpretation of Ezekiel's visions; the same thing is becoming ever more obvious in modern study of the **Scroll of Revelation**, which is showing in convincing manner how deeply rooted in and applicable to the life of confessing churches at the close of the first century, facing the beastly persecution of Rome, John's visions are!

Reimer comments that “Apparently, the delay in fulfillment of the prophecy opened a window for counter-prophecies, which are here rebutted. This pair of oracles may be a longer and shorter version of the same prophecy given on different occasions, somewhat like **7:1-9**. These **verses [21-28]** provide an affirmation of the predictive element among the Hebrew prophets: their ‘forth-telling’ is sometime emphasized, but ‘foretelling’ constituted a significant factor in their preaching.” (P. 1515)

12:22 בֶּן-אָדָם מִה־הַמָּשָׁל הַזֶּה לָכֶם

Son of Adam / Humanity, what (does) this proverb (mean) to you people

עַל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

concerning Israel's land, saying

יֵאָרְכוּ הַיָּמִים וְאֵבֶר כָּל-חַזוֹן:

The days grow long, and every vision³² perishes?³³

32

Hilmer observes that the Hebrew word for “vision” is חֲזוֹן, **chazon**—the very first word of the title for the **Scroll of Isaiah**--יְשַׁעְיָהוּ חֲזוֹן, **chaazon yesha(yahu)**, “Vision of Isaiah.” Yes, all of the prophets were “visionary,” they received their Divine revelations through dreams and visions—and we will constantly misrepresent them if we take their Messages to be direct, Face to face, Mouth to mouth revelations from YHWH, such as Moses experienced in the original giving of the Ten Commandments. That is why we insist that the student of Israel’s prophets should begin with an understanding of **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**. If we pay attention to these passages, we will not continue to make the basic mistake of taking prophets and apostles as having direct pipe-lines to YHWH, like Moses had. We will learn to expect puzzles, enigmas, and not expect to solve every problem, every question that arises in their interpretation! But the fact is, we don’t want that. We want to pretend that we have final, absolute answers—which the prophets and apostles did not have. What about you? Are you willing to live with uncertainty, i.e., in the language of Paul, to live by faith and not by sight? All that Hilmer says about this word “vision” is that it refers to “a message that could be written down,” p. 1242. What an oversight for this excellent interpreter who has taught us so much!

33

Matties states the in **12:21-25** “the first cynical saying implies that, with the passing of time, prophetic visions are proved empty and ineffectual...**Verse 25** summarizes and issues a theological verdict: [YHWH’s] words are always effectual and are about to be fulfilled.” (P. 1171)

Rabbi Fisch comments that this first cynical saying means “A prophet comes with a communication from God predicting national calamity. Time passes, but it does not happen. The proverb, accordingly, expresses carelessness among the people with regard to such forebodings.” (Pp. 67-68)

Reimer states that “The proverb that authorizes ignoring Ezekiel’s warning, quoted in **verse 22**, is inverted in **verse 23**. It requires refutation, much as another proverb will in **Ezekiel 18:2-3**.” (P. 1515)

Hilmer notes that it is “a mocking proverb (probably coined by false prophets). See **Ezekiel 13** and **Jeremiah 23:9-40; chapter 28**.” (P. 1241)

(continued...)

12:23 לֵכֵן אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

³³(...continued)

I myself have all too often thought of prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as isolated, standing alone, with no other prophets around them. The truth is, however, that they were lonely voices in the midst of crowds of prophets, who rejected their Message as insane, and did everything they could to undermine them. It was in their unyielding holding to the truth of their Divine Revelations, which went against the current, that the validity of their message appeared. What they predicted, happened; what their opponents claimed, was proven to be false. Amazingly, these “prophets of doom,” were the very ones who would be led by YHWH to become voices of Hope in the midst of tragedy. Especially is this true of Ezekiel—whose message of doom is so strong and powerful and unyielding—until YHWH changes his message into one of Hope.

Darr comments that in the first of two disputation oracles, “God asks Ezekiel a question, more rhetorical than real, concerning a proverb making the rounds back in Judah...The proverb quoted by Yahweh in **verse 22** (‘Time passes, and every vision fails’) fits well Fontaine’s definition of the “traditional saying’ as: ‘A statement, current among the folk, which is concise, syntactically complete, consisting of at least one topic and comment which may or may not be metaphorical, but which exhibits a logical relationship between its terms. The referents which form the image are most likely to be drawn from the experience of common, everyday life, but the meaning (message) of the saying may vary from context to context, and any ‘truth claim’ for that message must be considered ‘relative’ rather than ‘absolute.’ The transmission of the saying, however achieved, is always purposeful, but specific details of contextual use may be necessary to determine the purpose in any given situation. (C.R. Fontaine, **Traditional Sayings in the Old Testament: A contextual Study, Bible and Literature Series 5** (Sheffield: Almond, 1982, p. 64)

“The reader has it on God’s authority that this proverb is circulating among ‘the folk’ in Israel’s land. A ‘concise, syntactically complete’ statement, it consists of two topics and two comments...

“If, as appears to be the case here, the proverb speaks to the ongoing failure of doom oracles to be realized, then it functions not only to express popular doubts about the efficacy of prophetic predictions, but also to justify a cynical attitude toward them.

“Yahweh’s immediate response to the quoted saying is a command: Ezekiel must announce in the Lord’s Own words (note the messenger formula) God’s intention to render the people’s proverb obsolete (since the imminent fulfillment of prophetic doom oracles will put the lie to its ‘truth claim’). Now the prophet must proclaim a proverb of Yahweh’s coining which is the antithesis of the folk’s own: ‘The time is at hand, and the event (realization) of every vision!’ Concomitant with the abandonment of the people’s proverb will be the cessation of every false vision and empty (deluding) divination, with the result that only Yahweh’s authentic Word will remain. And it will be fulfilled—not at some ill-defined time in the distant future, but within the lifetime of the present generation.” (Pp.98-99)

הַשְּׁבִתִי אֶת־הַמִּשְׁלֵּ הַזֶּה

I have caused this proverb to cease,

וְלֹא־יִמְשְׁלוּ אֹתוֹ עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

and they shall not use it as a proverb again in Israel.

כִּי אִם־דַּבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם

But rather say to them,³⁴

קָרְבוּ הַיָּמִים וְדַבֵּר כָּל־חֲזוֹן:

The days drew near, and (the) word of every vision!³⁵

34

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Although Ezekiel is in Babylon, he is to address himself to his kinfolks in Judea.” (P. 67)

Yes, and again we wonder how this could be. In Ezekiel’s day, long before telephone and telegraph, and television and face-phones, how could Ezekiel be commanded to speak to the people of Judea from Babylon? Are Ezekiel’s prophetic symbols and acted-out visions simply to be recorded for a future time, which will demonstrate the truth of his Message, such as was true of Isaiah’s Message according to **Isaiah 8:16**? Or did the prophet have assistants / runners / camel-riders who could go as swiftly as possible between Babylon and Judea, relaying Ezekiel’s signs and Messages to Jerusalem, perhaps acting the vision-stories out as Ezekiel himself had done in Babylon? We think this is the case. What do you think?

35

Rabbi Fisch comments that “To prove the popular saying invalid, Ezekiel is to emphasize that the prophecy which he delivers, announcing the fall of the state with all its implications, will not be fulfilled in the distant future, but is very near at hand.” (P. 68)

And yes, very soon the predictions made by Ezekiel, along with his predecessors, Jeremiah and Isaiah, did happen. The proverb was proven to be false, just as were the messages of peace and hope of the prophets who hated and denied these “prophets of doom.”

I have been asked over and over by my non-believing friends, Do you really believe the **Bible** is true? Do you really believe in Miracles, in there being prophets who truly spoke for YHWH / God? I answer, Yes, I do. And I think anyone who studies **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel**, will reach a similar conclusion. These great prophets risked their lives to speak the Message they believed YHWH was giving them. They spoke their Message in the midst of harsh, violent opposition, at the risk of their lives. And in time, their Message proved to be the Truth.

(continued...)

12:24 כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה עוֹד °

Because there will not be again

כָּל-חִזוֹן שׁוֹא

any empty vision,

וּמְקַסֵּם חֶלֶק

and / or smooth / flattering divination

בְּתוֹךְ בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

in (the) midst of Israel's house.³⁶

³⁵(...continued)

But that negative Message was not all they spoke. In the midst of the destruction and hopelessness they had predicted, they also received and spoke a Message of vibrant Hope for the future—a Message that continues to speak to our hearts even today.

What about you? Do you dare to believe the prophets? And if you dare to believe, will you also be willing to admit the limitations of their Revelations, the enigmatic nature of their Message? Believing the prophets will transform your life. It will cause you to fall on your face before YHWH, their God, and your God. But it will not cause you to think you have all the answers to every question. It will fill you with powerful ethical guidance, yes— but also with humility, and openness to learning new truth, every day, admitting your limitations.

36

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Opposed to the prophets of God were false prophets who assured the people that all would be well with them and they need pay no attention to predictions of woe. Jeremiah, in particular, had to contend with such opponents.” (P. 68) See:

Jeremiah 8:11,

And they healed (the) daughter of my people's brokenness superficially,
saying, Peace, Peace!

And there is no peace.

Jeremiah 14:14,

And YHWH said to me,
The prophets are prophesying a falsehood in My name.

I did not send them, and I did not command them.

And I did not speak to them!

A false vision, and divination,
and insufficiency / worthlessness, and deceitfulness of their heart
they are prophesying to you!

Jeremiah 28:1-17,

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

- 1 And it happened in that year,
at (the) beginning of (the) kingdom of Zedekiah, king of Judah,
in the fourth year, in the fifth month,
He spoke to me, Chananyah,
son of Azzur the prophet who was from Gibeon,
in YHWH's house,
to / in (the) eyes of the priests and all the people, saying:
- 2 In this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel, spoke, saying:
I have broken (the) yoke of (the) king of Babylon!
- 3 Within two years of days,
I am bringing back / returning to this place,
every vessel of YHWH's house,
which Nechuchadnezzar, King of Bablon took
from this place--
and he brought them (to) Babylon.
- 4 And Jeconiah, son of Yehoyaqim, king of Judah;
and all (the) exiles from Judah, the ones coming into the Babylon,
I am returning to this place--
(it is) a saying of YHWH--
because I will break (the) yoke of (the) king of Babylon!
- 5 And Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Chananyah the prophet,
to / in (the) eyes of the priests,
and to / in (the) eyes of all the people,
the ones standing in YHWH's house;
- 6 And Jeremiah the prophet said Amen!
Even so may YHWH do!
May YHWH cause His words to stand,
which you prophesied, to return (the) vessels of YHWH's house,
and all the exiles from Babylon,
to this place!
- 7 However, hear now this Word,
which I am speaking in your ears,
and in (the) ears of all the people:
- 8 The prophets who were before me,
and before you, from the distant past,
and they prophesied to / against many lands,
and against great kingdoms,
to / of war, and to / of evil, and to / of pestilence.
- 9 The prophet who will prophesy to / of peace / welfare,
when (the) Word of the prophet comes / happens,
the prophet will be known (that) YHWH sent him in true-faithfulness.

(continued...)

12:25 כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה

Because I, YHWH,

אֲדַבֵּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲדַבֵּר

I will speak whatever I will speak--

³⁶(...continued)

- 10 And Chananyah the prophet took the yoke-poles
from upon Jeremiah the prophet's neck
and he broke it.
- 11 And Chananyah spoke to / in (the) eyes of all the people, saying:
In this way YHWH spoke:
Thus I will break Nebukhadnetzar, king of Babylon's yoke,
while yet two years of days,
from upon (the) neck of all the nations!
And Jeremiah the prophet went to his way.
- 12 And YHWH's Word happened / came to Jeremiah,
after Chananyah the prophet's breaking the yoke-poles
from upon Jeremiah the prophet's neck, saying:
- 13 Go, and you shall speak to Chananyah the prophet, saying:
In this way YHWH spoke:
Yoke-poles of wood you have broken.
And you shall make instead of them yoke-bars of iron!
- 14 Because in this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel spoke:
I have given an iron yoke upon (the) neck of all these nations,
to serve Nebukhadnetzar, king of Babylon; and they will serve him.
And also (the) wild animal(s) of the field I have given to him.
- 15 And Jeremiah the prophet said to Chananyah the prophet,
Hear now, Chananyah--
YHWH did not send you forth;
and you have caused this people to trust upon / in a lie / falsehood!
- 16 Look at Me, sending you away from upon (the) face of the ground;
this year, you are a dead person,
because you spoke apostasy to / against YHWH!
- 17 And Chananyah the prophet died in that year,
in the seventh month.

We say, These struggles of the prophets of doom against the prophets of *shalom*, peace, are not "made up." They are real. They are an integral part of Israel's history.

דְּבַר וַיַּעֲשֶׂה

a Word—and It will be done.

לֹא תִמְשָׁךְ עוֹד

It will not be drawn out / delayed again--³⁷

כִּי בַיָּמֵיכֶם בֵּית הַמְּרִי

because in your (plural) days, House of rebellion,

אֲדַבֵּר דְּבַר וַעֲשִׂיתִיו

I Will Speak a Word and I Will Do It!

נֵאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

12:26³⁸ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's Word Was / Came to me saying:

12:27 בֶּן־אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

37

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In the past He Deferred the Execution of His Threats to enable the people to avert them by their repentance. On the present occasion the Judgment He Decrees Will Be Performed *in your days*: there will be no deferment.” (P. 68)

38

Rabbi Fisch comments that **verses 26-28** repeat “the thought of **verses 21-25**. The repetition is intended to emphasize that the Predicted Judgment is both absolute and imminent; it does not belong to the class of prophecies which are conditional upon the future conduct of the people.” (P. 68)

Reimer adds that “Here, the tone is not so much the assumed failure of vision as its supposed interminable delay. But the God Who Gives the Word will also Bring It to Pass, without fail.” (P. 1515)

Matties states that “The second cynical saying implies impatience among the exilic community, who are convinced of the irrelevance of Ezekiel’s prophetic Word. The response reiterates and underlines the reply of **verse 25**.” (P. 1171)

הִנֵּה בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹמְרִים

Look–Israel’s house (is) saying,

הַחֲזוֹן אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חֹזֶה

The vision which he is seeing

לְיָמִים רַבִּים

(is) for many days (in the future),

וּלְעֵתִים רְחוֹקוֹת הוּא נֹבֵא:

and for times far off he is prophesying.³⁹

Hilmer comments that “Whereas the first proverb denied that Ezekiel’s Word would ever be fulfilled, this one allows that they might be fulfilled in the distant future, beyond the concern of the present generation.” (P. 1242)

See footnote 399, where we comment on Herbert W. Armstrong and his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, who insisted that the **Scroll of Ezekiel** was not about Israel and Babylon, but about Great Britain and America in the twentieth century. And we say, What a tragic misunderstanding of the Prophet Ezekiel!

Darr comments that “In the second disputation speech, Yahweh again quotes a proverb of Israel: ‘The vision which he visions is for many days (hence), and regarding distant times he prophesies’...Unlike the previous proverb, this one appears to have circulated among the Babylonian exiles, perhaps in response to Ezekiel’s own oracles of doom concerning Jerusalem and its inhabitants. This proverb does not challenge the credibility of his ‘vision,’ but insists that its fulfillment lies far in the future. Perhaps the exiles cling to hope that a successful rebellion against Babylonia by its vassal states will force a delay of Jerusalem’s destruction (see **Jeremiah 27**). Perhaps they hold out hope that Ezekiel’s prophecies are conditional after all. Such a perception had its precedents: ‘Oracles of doom might be deferred–not canceled–for a generation or more because of the contrition of the condemned (**1 Kings 21:29**, Ahab); **2 Kings 22:19-20**, Josiah) or God’s long-suffering...Hezekiah’s punishment was expressly postponed, to his relief, until the time of his descendants (**Isaiah 39:6-7**). It was therefore possible to defuse Ezekiel’s dooms without impugning their validity (as did the proverb of the first oracle) simply by ‘putting them off’...Indeed, Ezekiel will himself speak of Yahweh’s decision to postpone punishment, especially in order to protect the Divine reputation from ridicule among the nations (**20:9, 14, 22**)....Ezekiel was by no means the first of Israel’s prophets whose oracles met with popular skepticism.” (Pp. 99-100) See **Isaiah 5:19** and **Jeremiah 17:15**.

12:28 לִכֵּן אֵמַר אֲלֵיהֶם

Therefore say to them,

כֹּה אֵמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

לֹא-תִמְשַׁךְ עוֹד כָּל-דְּבָרִי

All My Words–It will not be drawn out / delayed again!

אֲשֶׁר אֲדַבֵּר דְּבַר

When I Will Speak a Word–

וַיַּעֲשֶׂה

and it will be done!

נֵאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!